

# A COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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## Why Democrats Won't Stop the War

By David Sirota

The nationwide opposition to the Iraq War is based on a host of populist impulses. Some people hate it because they think lives are being sacrificed to pursue the oil industry's agenda. Some despise it because, without a military draft, the U.S. casualties — 4,000-plus and counting — are disproportionately working-class kids. Still others abhor the war because it drains scarce resources away from pressing priorities at home. And yet, despite this groundswell of antiwar sentiment, the campaign to stop the war is adrift and dysfunctional.

On the one side are groups like United for Peace and Justice, that head what progressive activist Matt Stoller has deemed "The Protest Industry" — a clan "made up of those who decided that participation in the system was immoral" because they "have seen 'compromise' many times before and think they know where it leads."

At Protest Industry rallies against the war in Iraq, you will find no effort to hone a basic message. You will see a sea of signs demanding (1) the end to a war with Iran that hasn't happened, (2) the impeachment of President George W. Bush, (3) the arrest of Vice President Dick Cheney, (4) the elimination of the death penalty, or (5) the overthrow of the U.S. government by Maoists who reason that the "world can't wait to drive out the Bush regime."

These demonstrations are boisterous but ephemeral displays whose chaos and lack of message reinforce a self-defeating fringe image.

On the other side of the antiwar movement is a group of organizations and apparatchiks that have launched an operation called Americans Against Escalation in Iraq (AAEI) — a coalition of mainly Washington, D.C.-based advocacy groups, pooling cash and staff for "a major, multimillion dollar national campaign to oppose the president's 'surge' proposal to escalate the war in Iraq," as its website says.

Within the uprising against the war in Iraq, AAEI and its allies are the "professional" side of the antiwar effort. Consider them The Players.

The Players imagine that the war will end not after a massive investment in long-term, on-the-ground local organizing against war, but by the short-term coordination of a few elite actors — political consultants, donors, politicians and maybe one or two organization heads — in front of a map of media markets and congressional districts.

The Players make their moves with campaign contributions, TV spots and PR campaigns — the conventional weapons in a media war — and they are playing their game in Washington for Washington. In contrast to the Protest Industry, they believe the only way to effect change is to play an inside game.

### Hollywood for ugly people

Media coverage is currency in the nation's capital. There, celebrities are people like Washington Post columnist David



Broder, MSNBC's Chris Matthews and Time magazine's Joe Klein — people known to almost no one in the country at large.

Within the Beltway, however, they are influential celebrities because they appear on obscure chat shows, from C-SPAN's "Washington Journal" to Fox News' "Special Report" to MSNBC's "Hardball."

### Our nation's capital has become Hollywood for ugly people.

Washington's self-absorbed fetishization of tiny-audience TV shows might be funny — except that the Iraq War was largely started because of this closed-circuit media obsession.

In the march to war, neoconservatives, like The Weekly Standard's William Kristol, staked out beachheads on Fox News sets, while so-called liberal hawks, like The New Republic's former editor Peter Beinart, dug trenches in CNN studios. These pundits established support for the war as a criterion of political respectability and a mark of worthiness for media access.

Now, out in the real world, beyond the confines of the TV studios, it's all gone to shit — all of it. The American public — which was ambivalent about supporting the unilateral invasion — is now firmly opposed to continuing the conflict.

Many of Washington's pro-war TV "celebrities" are trying to flee their previously televised warmongering. Klein of Time magazine, for instance, appeared on CNBC a month before the Iraq invasion to state, "War may well be the right decision at this point — in fact, I think it probably is." By 2007, he claimed with a straight face, "I've been opposed to the Iraq War ever since 2002."

In light of this, The Players believe that by funneling money

into organizations like AAEI, pulling PR stunts and putting attack ads on television against pro-war legislators in Congress, they can make this antiwar uprising successful without organizing millions of Americans into a cohesive long-term movement. They believe, in short, that if a war can be started because of Washington's obsession with television, it can be ended because of that same obsession.

### Washington's rules

Both the Protest Industry chanting on the Mall and The Players scheming in their downtown Washington offices are necessary parts of an effective antiwar uprising. The outraged rabble provides the boots on the ground that can pressure lawmakers in their local communities. And that popular ferment could be enhanced by a professional presence playing the Beltway's media game.

The crippling problem for The Players is the increasing difficulty of operating in Washington without being corrupted by it. As blogger Chris Bowers says, "In Washington, D.C., for those who run the government, the public is quite distant and faceless."

If the rules of Washington were written down, the first one would say: Anyone wishing to play its games has to sign up big-name political consultants who are perceived to have "influence." That buys you instant credibility with politicians and reporters there — "those folks who write the stories, and appear on television and radio to talk about the state of play in Washington," as the Washington Post's Chris Cillizza says. "Like it or not, the opinions expressed by these people tend to set the parameters of the debate when an election year rolls around."

As a Washington pundit, Cillizza's analysis inflates his own importance. But as biased as he is — and as much as his statement reeks of elitism — inside the Beltway his self-aggrandizement is a religious doctrine that creates a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This poses a problem for even the best-intentioned advocacy organizations in D.C. The same consultants they need to hire to play this Washington game and to influence these people who "set the parameters of the debate," are often simultaneously paid by the very politicians who should be in their crosshairs.

The result is that ideological organizations become fused to the partisan political structure they seek to pressure. Hot Pocket politics

Take the leadership of AAEI. The group is guided by Hildebrand Tewes, a consulting firm named for its original partners, Steve Hildebrand and Paul Tewes — both long-time Democratic Party operatives.

The firm is one of a new breed of companies that attempts to bring to uprising politics the ease of microwave TV dinners. Don't feel like making dinner? Throw a Hot Pocket into the microwave. Don't feel like doing the hard work of local organizing to build a sustaining, durable movement that lasts beyond the issue du jour? Put together a pile of money to hire a firm like Hildebrand Tewes and you can have your instant "uprising" — one that provides about as much nutrition to your cause as microwaved junk food provides to your body.

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

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

## Letter to the Editor

Many people are oblivious to the pet overpopulation crisis and pay little heed to appeals for sterilization of companion animals. My own community in southeast Fresno is a perfect example.

Most of my neighbors do not bother to spay/neuter their animals and the poor creatures bear litter after litter every time they come into heat. The puppies and kittens are sold or given away to just about anyone who happens to come along. Many of these babies end up in ghastly situations, used for snake food, dog-fighting, bait, experimentation without anesthesia, you name it — horrors you would not wish even on your worst enemy.

I have approached my neighbors numerous times and explained to them the importance of sterilizing their animals. I have given them flyers and multiple copies of applications for free sterilization and transportation to and from the veterinary clinic. I have made the children read, in my presence, articles describing the gruesome fates befalling animals given away to unscrupulous individuals.

All this to no avail.

Education, persuasion, free transportation — these approaches are simply not working. We need a mandatory spay/neuter program whereby every animal in every household is examined and, health-permitting, sterilized.

Questions? Suggestions?

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## From the Editor

Don't be alarmed by the headline on the front cover of this month's Community Alliance newspaper. We have not turned into a Democratic Party bashing tool of the ruling (Republican Party) elite. The Republican Party doesn't even want to stop the war - their presidential candidate John McCain says we

could be in Iraq for another 100 years, if he is elected president. No thanks! But, why has the Democratic Party, after winning a majority of seats in Congress, still not ended the war? Why did they vote, just last month (June 2008), to continue funding the war and occupation of Iraq and why is Obama not talking about an immediate withdrawal? I'm sure you will find the mental gymnastics it takes to justify the continuation of an immoral and totally unjustified war, interesting reading.

The Community Alliance coverage of electoral politics does not stop with the analysis about why the Democrats won't stop the war. Howard Watkins, the chairperson of the Central Valley Progressive PAC, analyzes local election results from the June primary in his article on page 7. According to Watkins there were some victories for progressives in the last election, particularly Susan Anderson's win in the race for her Board of Supervisors seat.

We also have a very interesting article by Steven Hill and Larry Mullen about the need for electoral reform. How can we make simple changes in the electoral process to expand voter participation, secure the vote, increase voter choice with Instant Runoff Voting, and scrap winner take all elections? Tired of politicians selling themselves like a tube of tooth paste? Read this article which is on page 24.

The race for mayor between Ashley Swearengen and Henry Perea is going to be the race to watch in November. Here is why: there is a significant difference between the two candidates. Swearengen is a Republican, she is a member of the Peoples Church (like so many of Fresno's current elected officials), and is very pro-business. Perea is a Democrat that supports alternative and renewable energy, he is supported by organized labor, and will advance the progressive

agenda if elected as mayor.

Henry will bring to the mayor's office a completely different approach to how the city deals with homelessness, he is totally against building a nuclear power plant in West Fresno, he is against privatizing city services, he supports smart growth (more in-fill, better public transportation, etc), and he will bring back the Human Relations Commission. One issue the progressive community disagrees with Henry on is the need for an Independent Police Auditor (IPA). We believe the public has the right to a fair and impartial agency that will look independently at any accusations of police misconduct. An IPA would protect both the police and the community and build trust. Members of the progressive community will lobby Perea to support an IPA, but most progressives realize that it is unrealistic to demand that a candidate agrees with you on every issue.

What makes this race for mayor so unique is that there is the possibility to shift the balance of power away from the ruling elite who have dominated Fresno politics for decades. The builders, developers, and business interests that have poured money into the electoral process and benefitted with endless re-zoning rulings in favor of urban sprawl. Do you want to know why our air quality is so bad and public transportation is inadequate - it is because these forces have dominated local politics and enriched themselves at our expense. Organized labor, groups like Strengthening our Lives (see the story on page 25), and the progressive community can be a counter-balance to the builders and developers. Organized labor will put the resources into this race that will put working peoples interests ahead of the special interests of the ruling elite. Health Care for All, Clean Air, and a Living Wage are the special interests of the progressive community, and united with organized labor, it is possible to get Perea elected and put an end to the reign of terror imposed on Fresno's by the policies of Alan "Bubba" Autry and Sunny Jim Patterson.

The progressive community celebrated several major victories in June. On page 3 you will read about how the homeless stood up for their rights and beat City Hall. In a Class Action Lawsuit that will have national implications, they won a \$2.3 million settlement and have stopped the city from taking and destroying their property. In a Community Alliance exclusive,

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# Homeless Victory in Fresno has Implications for the Nation

By Mike Rhodes

Homeless people and their allies won a legal victory in Fresno that could have nationwide implications. The class action lawsuit against the City of Fresno resulted in a \$2.3 million settlement and has stopped the city from taking and immediately destroying homeless peoples property. City officials, including mayor Alan Autry, argued that the city had a right to keep city streets clean and that city sanitation workers were just doing their job. Government agencies in communities throughout the country make the same argument as they conduct sweeps through homeless encampments. The Federal Court in Fresno found that these sweeps are illegal and violate the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> amendment of the U.S. constitution.

"The Court's ruling in this class-action lawsuit makes it clear that our Constitution protects the rights of everybody, rich or poor," said attorney Michael Risher of the ACLU of Northern California. "It should send a strong message to other cities throughout our country that if they violate the rights of their most vulnerable residents, they will be held accountable." The homeless plaintiffs in the lawsuit, Kincaid v. Fresno, were represented by a team of attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California (ACLU-NC), the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights (LCCR) and the law firm of Heller Ehrman LLP.

The lawsuit began two years ago, after the City of Fresno repeatedly used bulldozers to plow through homeless encampments in the downtown area. The city's policy, designed by a low ranking police officer in the code enforcement division, was to provide residents of the encampments with written notice that a "clean up" was about to take place. Many homeless people say they never received a copy of the notice. According to the city's policy and testimony in court, the city would deploy the sanitation department, backed up by police officers, who would then clear the area of anything that the homeless did not remove. The city claimed that everything left was rubbish. The problem with the policy, according to the court, was that it treated homeless peoples property differently than the property of anyone else in the community. For example, if you lose your bike and the police find it, they do not call in a bulldozer, crush the bike, and put it in a garbage truck. The likely policy would be to take the bike into possession and try to find the owner.

Homeless people in Fresno, during the sweeps conducted between 2004 - 2006 lost bicycles, tents, clothing, their ID, and everything of value they had in the world. One person lost an urn that contained her grand-daughters ashes. Al Williams, who is homeless, suffered the effects of the raids on three occasions. In addition to losing clothes and food, his wife's wheelchair was destroyed and her medicines confiscated by Fresno police officers. "I felt like everything was taken away from me, but this settlement gives me hope for the future for myself and all the other people who suffered," said Williams.

Lead Plaintiff Pamela Kincaid died in August of 2007. Kincaid occasionally stayed at the only women's shelter in Fresno, but she suffered from claustrophobia, which made it difficult for her to remain there. When sanitation workers and police officers seized her belongings, Kincaid lost her birth certificate, her address book, photos of her sister, daughter and mother, and a toolbox with tools she used for the recycling and crafts work she does to earn money, among other items.

In a declaration before the court in October 2006, Kincaid said "Before I became homeless, I used to have a house and a job. I lost both when I developed injuries at work...I hope that someday I will be able to get off the streets and into permanent housing. But the fact that the city keeps taking and destroying my property makes that goal seem that much harder to achieve. I always live with the fear that the city will come and take what few possessions I have left."

Charlene Clay and her husband left their apartment in 2006 because they could not afford the \$850 in rent. They were camped on a hill off of G Street when City of Fresno workers destroyed their belongings - including Clay's teeth, medications, sleeping bags, and personal papers - without warning. A second time, Clay was staying near San Benito and H Streets when police tipped her shopping cart, threw her possessions on the ground, and hauled her cart away.

Clay said "the City of Fresno has made it clear to me by destroying my property twice and by the way in which they did that, that because I am a homeless person, I will always be vulnerable to having my property taken and destroyed by City of Fresno workers and police."

Joanna Garcia was born and raised in Fresno. She lost her job after she was mistakenly implicated in a robbery committed by her husband. She has worked at Holy Cross Women's Shelter, earning food vouchers. City work-

ing advantage of the homeless, played for days in the local media.

The mayor's ability to shift the news away from the City of Fresno's criminal attack on the homeless and gain traction with his attack on the ACLU and how out of town lawyers were exploiting the homeless was a tribute to his ability to manipulate corporate media and to re-frame the debate on this issue.

Attorneys for the homeless pointed out that there would not have been any legal fees if the City of Fresno had not violated homeless peoples rights by taking and destroying their property. In a written response to the situation, published in The Fresno Bee, attorneys for the plaintiffs Alan Schlosser (ACLU) and Elisa Della- Pena (Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights) argued that "the city had an opportunity to avoid a lawsuit by respecting the constitutional rights of its residents. We wrote to the city attorney shortly before filing suit and asked that the city voluntarily agree to stop breaking the law. The city refused to cooperate. We were forced to obtain an emergency restraining order in federal court."

Schlosser and Della-Pena continue: "The fee settlement in this case - \$750,000 - amounts to a fraction of the fees that we would have been entitled to under federal and state laws. If this case had proceeded to trial, it is extremely likely that the fee award would have been far greater." The ACLU and LCCR will use the attorneys' fees awarded in the case for programs to protect the legal rights of poor and homeless people, and to oppose the abuse of government power.



**Celebrating the victory outside the federal building in downtown Fresno, immediately after the settlement was announced, are the named plaintiffs and their attorneys who they have nicknamed the "Dream Team."**

ers have seized and destroyed her property five times. "...my belongings and my boyfriend's belongings were on the grassy strip across the highway from E Street. They were neatly kept. My boyfriend and I had left for the day; I was working at Holy Cross. When we came back that evening, I said to my boyfriend, 'I can't see our home.' All of our belongings were gone, including tents, blankets, personal papers, clothes, my pink bicycle, and irreplaceable pictures of my grandmother and my son."

Douglas Deatherage, 43, worked part time at a trucking company. He watched as City of Fresno workers threw his belongings into a garbage truck. "My relatively small amount of personal possessions were not bothering anyone and I was ready and willing to move if the City of Fresno workers wanted to clean the area where they were. It was obvious that my property was not abandoned since I was there with it. I was given no opportunity to move my personal property in order to save it from this destruction that morning."

**Mayor Alan Autry Objects**

*The settlement is expected to get final approval on July 25, at 3 PM in Judge Oliver Wanger's court.*

On the day the historic settlement between the City of Fresno and the homeless was announced, mayor Autry issued a statement. Autry wrote that the "white collar exploitation of the homeless by the Court and the lawyers is unconscionable. I am calling upon the ACLU and Judge Wanger to require half of the exorbitant lawyer fees of \$750,000 to be donated to homeless programs."

Judge Oliver Wanger immediately issued an order, that was delivered to City Hall by a Federal Marshal, for mayor Autry to appear before the court and explain why he was attacking the agreement that the City of Fresno and the homeless plaintiffs had voluntarily entered into. Speaking before judge Wanger, Autry said his problem with the settlement was that he "felt as if the homeless and all the people of Fresno had a gun to their head." Looking at the plaintiffs legal counsel, Autry said he felt the city was up against overwhelming power - "we are up against a group that will stop at nothing to win. These lawyer fees are outrageous." Autry said "I believe the homeless were being taken advantage of here." Autry's portrayal of big city lawyers, coming to Fresno and tak-

## Terms of the Settlement

The settlement agreement contains a series of procedures created to ensure that the violations against the homeless will not recur. The City of Fresno will require authorities to post written notice at least three days before clearing any personal property from an encampment area, and items of apparent value will be stored for 90 days. The Department of Transportation has also agreed to comply with the legal principles set forth in the Court's preliminary injunction, throughout the state. The Court will retain jurisdiction over the case for five years to ensure that the City complies with this agreement.

Damages awarded by the Court total \$1,485,000, to be allocated as follows:

The City of Fresno will pay \$1,000,000 into a Housing Allowance Account. Funds from the account will assist the approximately 225 class members in the lawsuit to meet costs related to housing including security deposits, first and last months rent, or monthly rental payments, or to purchase a vehicle or medical care. The money will be issued by the Settlement Administrator to landlords or other providers of basic goods or services.

The City and Caltrans will set aside \$485,000 in cash to compensate a pool of individuals who suffered harm as a result of the unconstitutional seizure of property. Individuals will file claim forms describing the extent of their losses and the number of times they were subjected to the illegal sweeps. Disbursements from this portion of the settlement will range from \$500 - \$5000, and will be paid over time in currency or by check, or be deposited into plaintiff's individual bank accounts. The court is expected to finalize the agreement on July 25, 2008.

## Where do we go from here?

In addition to the lawsuit against the City of Fresno, homeless people and their allies held a sleep in at City Hall, the Homelessness Marathon radio show was broadcast from Fresno putting a national spotlight on this city's illegal practices, and intense pressure was brought upon city government to end their attacks on the homeless. The efforts have had an effect and mayor Autry has declared the city's previous policy a failure. Earlier this year, Autry

**Continued on page 4**

said “we have failed, government has failed on this issue. We are the status quo that has chosen through our wisdom over the last 40 or 50 years to pick the most expensive and ineffective, dis-compassionate way to address the homeless situation.”

Autry admitted this failure while addressing the joint meeting of leadership and planning councils of the County/City of Fresno as they established a task force that was empowered to develop a 10 year plan to end chronic homelessness. Autry told the task force that he wanted them to come up with a blueprint for how to develop a Housing First model that will provide homeless people a place to live without pre conditions. The mayor said “I’m having to change my thinking because we are talking about a home in a neighborhood where a guy comes up and passes out on the front yard. That is part of the process of getting well. There is no requirement on those individuals. I’m ready to go there.”

The task force, which started in mid April, was given 100 days to formulate a plan to provide homeless people decent and affordable housing. Proponents of the Housing First model, including mayor Autry, claim that it will be less expensive to provide homeless people with housing than to maintain the failed model (Rescue Mission, Poverello House, etc) that currently addresses homeless needs. But, Al Williams who is homeless and a member of the task force, has his doubts that things will change anytime soon. Williams says the task force is dominated by builders/developers, other business interests, & social service providers from the Rescue Mission and Poverello House. Williams says that “there are powerful forces that want to maintain business as usual and the poverty pimps have too much influence in the group.”

Proponents of the Housing First model say it costs up to \$100,000 a year for each homeless person under the failed

social service model currently in use. The cost is high because homeless people use the emergency room for most medical care they receive, they stay in the hospital longer, return frequently, and interact with law enforcement more than people with permanent housing. For the amount of money used to maintain business as usual, every homeless person could be given a luxury apartment and limo service and it would cost less than what is being spent now.

Why then did the City of Fresno put \$3 million into this year’s city budget to buy property to address the homeless issue and not spend a dime of it? Gregory Barfield, City Council member Cynthia Sterling’s aide, told me it was because they are waiting for the plan from the task force so that the use of funds are coordinated for maximum utilization. Perhaps that is why the city also did not spend \$1 million that was designated for the Spirit of Women, to provide shelter and services for homeless women. A more cynical analyst might conclude that the city put millions of dollars into the budget to give the appearance that they are spending money on the issue, but the reality is the money gets re-allocated to other departments - like the police.

The task force to end homelessness is due to release the results of their recommendations in July. The Community Alliance wants to see a plan presented that provides the homeless with decent/affordable housing and a way out of the intense poverty they currently live in. We demand an end to all attacks against the homeless community, plots of public land where the homeless can live safely (with drinkable water, toilets, and trash bins), more shelter space (particularly for homeless women), and a rapid transition to a Housing First program that provides the homeless with safe and secure housing.

For a list of articles and documents about the struggle for civil liberties for homeless people in Fresno, see: <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/home/homelessness.htm>

# Lawsuit Filed Against The Rescue Mission

By Mike Rhodes



Attorneys for six homeless people have filed a new lawsuit in Fresno County Superior Court alleging that the Rescue Mission (a homeless shelter in downtown Fresno) has taken and destroyed personal belongings that are critical to their survival, such as clothing, medication, tents and blankets, as well as irreplaceable personal possessions, such as family photographs, identification, personal records and documents.

In the class action lawsuit that was just settled (see the story on pages 3 & 4), homeless people were given \$2.3 by the City of Fresno and Caltrans. The city and Caltrans admitted taking and destroying homeless peoples property and agreed to settle the case before it went to trial. This was the largest settlement of its kind in the United States.

For the last several years Larry Arce, the CEO of the Rescue Mission, has directed his staff to take and destroy homeless peoples property. In October 2006, when he was called as a witness in the federal lawsuit, he said “we clean the street in front of the Rescue Mission every day and throw everything away that is left behind.” When asked if they would throw someone’s property away if they had left it in a cart in front of the mission while they got a warm meal, he said “if someone leaves their property in front of the Fresno Rescue Mission, they have no sense.” Arce said they have thrown many shopping carts full of homeless peoples possessions away over the last several years.

On October 26, 2006 I witnessed one of the Rescue Mission’s sweeps on Caltrans land near California and G street. The “clean up” crew called themselves “Disciples” and said they were directed to clear out the homeless encampment. They loaded tents, mattresses, and other property of the homeless into a dumpster and drove it back to the Rescue Mission in a fork lift.

The following is taken directly from the complaint filed in Superior Court:

During the winter of 2006, plaintiffs LORI BAILEY and her husband, WILLIAM BAILEY, were living “on the Hill”, an area of land across the street from the RESCUE MISSION and adjacent to an off-ramp to the Golden State Freeway, where they had been living for about two years.

Their home consisted of approximately 15 blankets, and sleeping bags laid out on the ground as their bed, numerous suitcases of clothing, backpacks containing various items including, but not limited to, jewelry, LORI BAILEY’s birth certificate and other documents, WILLIAM BAILEY’S heart and blood pressure medicine , his Paxil, and family pictures. They also had foodstuff items at their home.

The BAILEYS went to the Povorello House to seek medical treatment from a doctor, and while they were there, someone came up to them and told them that someone was throwing their belongings away.

The BAILEYS immediately left the Povorello House to go home, and upon arrival there, discovered that all of their belongings were gone.

Witnesses told the BAILEYS that agents of the RESCUE MISSION, commonly known as the “Disciples”, were the people responsible for taking all of their belongings.

WILLIAM BAILEY then went to the RESCUE MISSION to talk to ARCE, regarding the “Disciples” actions.

During his conversation with ARCE, ARCE admitted that his personnel had taken the BAILEY’S property, and stated that the reason that the property was taken was because the Fresno Police Department told him to do it, and that he sent “a few guys over there to clean it up because” they (the police department) “asked me to.”



**Task Force members (pictured above) have been directed by the City and County of Fresno to develop a Housing First program that will provide decent and affordable housing to the homeless. Here they are during a tour of the Poverello House. Later that day Task Force members visited a homeless encampment on H street, south of Ventura.**





# NOTICE OF SETTLEMENT TO THE CLASS OF ALL PERSONS IN THE CITY OF FRESNO WHO WERE OR ARE HOMELESS, WITHOUT RESIDENCE, AFTER OCTOBER 17, 2003 AND WHOSE PERSONAL BELONGINGS WERE UNLAWFULLY TAKEN AND DESTROYED IN A SWEEP, RAID, OR CLEAN UP BY ANY CITY OF FRESNO OR CALTRANS EMPLOYEE ON OR AFTER OCTOBER 17, 2003:

You may be affected by the settlement in a lawsuit if you were homeless in the City of Fresno after October 17, 2003 and either City of Fresno or Caltrans employees took and destroyed your personal property.

The lawsuit is called *Kincaid, et al. v. City of Fresno, et al.*, No. 06-CV-1445, and is in the United States District Court in Fresno. The parties have agreed to settle this case, and you may be entitled to proceeds from this settlement. This notice describes those who are entitled to benefit from the settlement (who are members of the plaintiff "Class") and also explains what you must do to make a claim to participate in the settlement.

**This notice is not an opinion by the court as to which side of the lawsuit is right or wrong. This notice is to tell you about the settlement so that if you are a verified member of the Class, you can participate in the settlement.**

## WHAT IS A CLASS ACTION AND WHO IS INVOLVED?

In a class action lawsuit, people called "Class Representatives" (in this case Pamela Kincaid, Doug Deatherage, Charlene Clay, Cynthia Greene, Joanna Garcia, Randy Johnson, Sandra Thomas, Alphonso Williams, and Jeannine Nelson) sue on behalf of other people who have similar claims. The Class Representatives and all the other people with similar claims are called a "Class," "Class Members," or "Plaintiffs." The settlement in this case will apply to the entire Class.

The City of Fresno and the City and Caltrans employees that were sued (in this case City of Fresno Mayor Alan Autry, Police Chief Jerry Dyer, Police Captain Greg Garner, Police Specialist Reynaud Wallace, Community Sanitation employee John Rogers, Community Sanitation employee Phillip Weathers, Caltrans Director Will Kempton, Caltrans employee James Province, and Caltrans employee Daryl Glenn) are called the Defendants. The case is pending in the United States District Court, Eastern District of California, before U.S. District Judge Oliver W. Wangen.

Pamela Kincaid died during the course of this case. However, the case has retained the title of *Kincaid, et al. v. City of Fresno, et al.*

## WHO IS THE CLASS AND ARE YOU AFFECTED?

The Class is all persons in the City of Fresno who were or are homeless, without residence, after October 17, 2003, AND whose personal belongings have been unlawfully taken and destroyed in a sweep, raid, or clean up by any City of Fresno or Caltrans employee. The Class includes people who are not homeless now or do not now live in Fresno, as long as they were homeless in Fresno any time after October 17, 2003, AND had their personal belongings taken and destroyed in a sweep, raid, or clean up by City of Fresno or Caltrans employees. People who have never had personal property taken and destroyed by City of Fresno or Caltrans employees are NOT included. People whose personal property was taken and destroyed by City of Fresno or Caltrans employees only *before* October 17, 2003 are NOT included.

If you are unsure whether you are in the Class, you can get free help by writing to the Settlement Administrator in this case at the address in this Notice.

If you are a member of the Class or you think you might be a Class member, you should read this Notice because it will affect your rights.

## WHAT WERE THE CLAIMS MADE IN THE LAWSUIT?

The Class Representatives sued the Defendants on October 17, 2006. The Plaintiffs claimed that the City of Fresno and the City and Caltrans employees conducted sweeps in different locations in the City of Fresno during which they took and destroyed the personal property of homeless people. The Court issued a court order (a "preliminary injunction") that stopped the City of Fresno and the City employees from taking and destroying the personal belongings of homeless people in the future. The City of Fresno Defendants and the Caltrans Defendants have denied all liability in the case. The parties have agreed to settle these claims before trial.

## WHAT ARE THE TERMS OF THE SETTLEMENT?

Each of the Defendants has entered into a Settlement Agreement and agreed to a Settlement Plan which governs the distribution of the proceeds from the Settlement. Under these Settlement Agreements, the Defendants have agreed to contribute money to two bank accounts for the

Who's Affected?
All persons in the City of Fresno who were or are homeless, without residence, after October 17, 2003 AND whose personal belongings have been unlawfully taken and destroyed in a sweep, raid or clean up by any City of Fresno or Caltrans employees.
Who's Not Affected?
People who have never had personal property taken and destroyed by City of Fresno or Caltrans employees.
People whose personal property was taken and destroyed by City of Fresno or Caltrans employees <i>before</i> October 17, 2003 only.

benefit of the Class: the "Cash Fund" and the "Living Allowance Fund." The Cash Fund will contain four hundred eighty-five thousand dollars (\$485,000), funded by a four hundred thousand dollar (\$400,000) contribution by the City of Fresno and an eighty-five thousand dollar (\$85,000) contribution by Caltrans. The Living Allowance Fund will contain one million dollars (\$1,000,000), funded entirely by the City of Fresno.

If you qualify to receive money from the Cash Fund, you will receive periodic installment payments in cash or check form, based on the level of your award. As a part of the Settlement Agreements, the Court will appoint Liza Apper as the Settlement Administrator to distribute the proceeds of both the Cash Fund and the Living Allowance Fund. Large amounts of cash will not be distributed at any one time unless the Settlement Administrator determines that it is safe to do so. Distributions from the Cash Fund can be made to individual bank accounts and, if you do not have a bank account, the Settlement Administrator will assist you in opening one if you are interested in doing so.

If you qualify to receive proceeds from the Living Allowance Fund, you may direct the Settlement Administrator to issue payments directly to third parties on your behalf to cover living expenses. Examples of what you may use your award from the Living Allowance Fund on include: rent, including pre-paid rent; move-in costs (such as first and last month's rent and security deposits); utilities, including pre-paid utilities; transportation costs; and other necessities of life.

In addition, the City of Fresno has agreed to follow to the terms of its Administrative Order No. 6-23 which resulted from this case and which sets forth the procedures for handling the personal property of homeless people for the next five years.

The City of Fresno has also agreed to pay one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) in out-of-pocket expenses and seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000) in attorneys' fees to Class counsel for their work on this case.

In addition to its cash payment, Caltrans has also agreed to follow the principles in the preliminary injunction for five years. The Court will retain jurisdiction of the case for five years to resolve any disputes that may arise about compliance with this part of the Settlement.

Further, as a part of the settlement with Caltrans, all homeless people in Fresno are encouraged not set up camps or otherwise trespass or illegally encroach upon Caltrans property.

If the Settlement Agreements are given final approval by the Court, the case will be dismissed and the Settlement Agreements will govern the rights of the parties.

## HOW DO I PARTICIPATE IN THE SETTLEMENT AND WHAT BENEFITS AM I ENTITLED TO?

In order to participate in this Settlement, you must file a claim with the Settlement Administrator. If the Settlement Administrator determines that your claim is valid, she will determine the level of your award based upon the criteria described in the Settlement Plan.

There are five levels of awards:

- Level 1: five hundred dollars (\$500) from the Cash Fund;
- Level 2: one thousand dollars (\$1000) from the Cash Fund;
- Level 3: one thousand dollars (\$1000) from the Cash Fund and one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1500) from the Living Allowance Fund;
- Level 4: one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1500)

from the Cash Fund and three thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500) from the Living Allowance Fund;

- Level 5: five thousand dollars (\$5,000) from the Cash Fund and nine thousand dollars (\$9,000) from the Living Allowance Fund.

**Important:** these levels may change – either up or down – depending upon how many valid claims are filed. The Settlement Administrator will determine the validity of the claim, the level at which the claim should be allowed, and whether any change in these levels may be required.

## WHO ARE THE LAWYERS IN THIS CASE?

The Class is represented by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights (San Francisco, CA), and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Northern California (San Francisco, CA), and lawyers from the law firms of Howrey, LLP and Heller Ehrman, LLP. These lawyers are experienced in handling similar cases and have been representing the Plaintiffs from the beginning of this case. More information about Class Counsel is available at [www.lccr.com](http://www.lccr.com), and [www.aclunc.org](http://www.aclunc.org), [www.hellerehrman.com](http://www.hellerehrman.com), and [www.Howrey.com](http://www.Howrey.com).

The City of Fresno Defendants are represented by the law firm Betts & Wright and the City Attorney's Office. The Caltrans Defendants are represented by the Legal Division of the California Department of Transportation.

## Should I Get My Own Lawyer?

You do not need to hire your own lawyer because Class Counsel is working for you already. If you want to hire your own lawyer you may do so. You will have to pay that lawyer and ask him or her to go to Court for you.

## HOW DO I FILE A CLAIM?

In order to file a claim and seek to receive an award from the settlement,

1. **You must submit the attached Class Member Claim Form ("claim form") to the Settlement Administrator, in person or by mail. If you choose to mail your claim form, it must be postmarked by JULY 18, 2008 or you will not receive any award. The address for claim forms to be mailed to is: KINCAID SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATOR, 4460 W. SHAW AVE., Suite 233, FRESNO, CA, 93722. Claim forms may also be delivered in person to 149 North Fulton, Fresno, CA, 93722.**
2. If your claim is determined to be valid by the Settlement Administrator, and the Court approves the settlement, you will be later notified about how to get any part of that money that you are entitled to receive.

YOU SHOULD KEEP ALL RECORDS AND PAPERS YOU MAY HAVE THAT RELATE TO THE CITY OF FRESNO AND THE CITY AND CALTRANS EMPLOYEES' DESTRUCTION OF THE PERSONAL PROPERTY OF HOMELESS PEOPLE.

You can see and copy the papers filed in the Court and all other records of this lawsuit any time during regular office hours in the office of the Clerk at the U.S. District Court, 2500 Tulare Street, Fresno, CA 93721. **Do not call or write the Clerk of the court with questions. Ask all questions to the attorneys for the Class or the Settlement Administrator.**

## HOW CAN YOU GET MORE INFORMATION?

If you have questions or want more details or other documents about this lawsuit and your rights, you can email the Settlement Administrator at [Lizaosb@aol.com](mailto:Lizaosb@aol.com) or leave a message for Liza Apper at 559-237-0851, or write to: Settlement Administrator, Kincaid v. City of Fresno Class Action, 4460 W. Shaw Ave., Suite 233, Fresno, CA., 93722.

## IS THERE A FINAL COURT HEARING ON THE SETTLEMENT? CAN I OBJECT TO IT?

On July 25, 2008 at 3:00 p.m. the Court will hold a hearing and decide whether to grant final approval to the Settlement Agreements and the Settlement Plan as fair and reasonable to the Class. If you have any objection to all or any part of the Settlement Agreement with the City of Fresno defendants or the Settlement Agreement with the Caltrans Defendants, or the Settlement Plan, you must either submit your objection in writing to the Court before that date or appear at the hearing on the Motion for Final Approval at the U.S. District Court, 2500 Tulare Street, Fresno, CA 93721, Courtroom 3, at 3:00 p.m. on July 25, 2008 to state your objection.

# Police Department Attempts to Take over Community Centers

## Lack of Communication a Problem

by Edie Jessup

Its Budget time in Fresno and not all is transparent to our neighbors. Decision making with funding without consulting communities in Fresno, particularly in South Fresno where poverty and health disparities are the focus of collaborative efforts has come to light. The issue is access to safe places in neighborhoods to grow food in Community Gardens and for accessible, safe neighborhood parks to keep families healthy. Two emerging illustrations are unresolved.

The Belmont DeWitt Community Garden is being sold by Parks and Recreation to the Police Department. Frank H. Ball City Playground programs and staff are being replaced by services of the Police Activities League (PAL), a non-profit entity. It is unclear how or why either of these examples are occurring or why the Police Department, feared by many community members, should be running recreational programs replacing City Parks and Recreation personnel, how the financing of these changes are being made, or if there are more instances of Park property being taken over by the Police Department.

### Loss of the Belmont De-Witt Community Garden

Three Meetings have been held since learning that the Community Garden at Belmont and DeWitt in South East Fresno on Fresno City Parks and Recreation Department land (4 acres) is being sold. The urban garden spot feeds about 300 people and is slated to be sold to the Fresno City Police Department for a 'substation'.

Unfortunately the farmers and National Hmong American Farmers Inc., Chukou Thao, Executive Director, were not notified directly about the sale and the timeline for their leaving the property. Fresno Metro Ministry contacted Chukou Thao, and he agreed to meet with interested parties to understand what was happening before he had face-to-face conversations with the Community Gardeners. There is still no written notice of this action to the farmers from the City beyond a request that they vacate by November.

The Community Garden Coalition met Tuesday, June 6, with approximately 12 people interested in retaining Community Gardens. They created a list of information needed to begin to understand why Parks and Recreation was selling the land to another City entity (Police Department), what agreements and history there was, why the people working the land were not directly involved in decision making by the City, and to collect information and documents that might help clarify what this was about.

A meeting with Metro Staff and Director Randall Cooper, Fresno Parks and Recreation Director was held a month ago about City Park work with afterschool activities and food policies, joint use policies, and community gardens. The particular garden at Belmont and DeWitt was discussed, and the plans for the 'Hmong Friendship Garden' were reviewed. When Director Cooper was asked what intention there was to enact the landscape and architectural plans the City had developed that would allow the Hmong Gardens to continue, his response was that there was 'no funding' currently. He made no suggestion that there were plans to sell the land. Sale of this property to the Police Department came as a surprise on May 30, 2008. The City Manager's Office requested to meet with Metro Staff Edie Jessup at City hall on Thursday, June 5, after the previous community collaborative meeting with the farmers. It was agreed that City Departments would meet with the farmers face to face. That meeting was held on 6/18, with City Department representatives from Parks and Recreation, Police, City Manager's office, and the Councilmember for the district, farmers' representatives and community members.

### Brief History Known of the Property at Belmont and DeWitt owned by the Fresno City Parks and Recreation Department.

Approximately 4 acres was purchased in 1996 with CBDG funds (\$360,000). The City has not produced records on this purchase, or any written agreements regarding use of the property over 10 years by resident Hmong Gardeners. Around 2001 Ca. Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) had an agreement with Parks and Recreation (Director Primavera)



**Presentation of support for the Hmong Gardens to assist in their move after City Parks and Recreation developed the 'Hmong Friendship Center' at Belmont and DeWitt. The Check for \$4,869.06 from Building Healthy Neighborhoods 2/20/07 presented to the community garden to also address hunger and obesity issues that affect the health and wellness of the area's underserved residents.' The Building Healthy Neighborhoods Taskforce includes financial support and representatives from the American Cancer Society; Barrios Unidos; Blue Cross of Ca.; Fresno County Public Health; Fresno Metro Ministry; Kaiser Permanente; Health Net; UC Cooperative Extension. Photo courtesy Fresno Metro Ministry.**

that allowed about 20-30 Hmong Farmers to raise produce for their extended families, supported by a small grant. Randall Cooper, current Director of Parks and Recreation, was hired in 2005, and was not aware of previous agreements around the land. In 2006 CRLA ended their sponsorship of the farmers and the National Hmong American Farmers, Inc. became sponsor of the garden, working with the farmers, meeting monthly, paying water bills, and organizing improvements to the gardens.

In 2006 Director Cooper planned a 'Hmong Friendship Garden' designed for the Belmont DeWitt Park Property that would develop a center, recreation development for traditional Hmong games and Hmong history, and retain the gardens in a different area of the property. The City paid for the landscape and architectural development. Then, the City presented their vision at 2 meetings for the Hmong



**Assistant City Manager Bruce Rudd has found himself in the middle of both the controversies. Here Rudd is seen in a meeting at the Frank Ball Center acknowledging that the City of Fresno needs to listen better and consult with the community before moving forward with plans to take over neighborhood facilities.**

Community to view the potential development of the first Hmong Garden in the United States. News of that spread across the nation among other Hmong communities, and was a celebration. The City later presented that the cost would be in excess of \$4 million, and the Hmong community would have to raise that money before the project could begin. And the farmers kept farming.

Meanwhile, Building Healthy Neighborhood Task Group/CCROPP/and the Fresno Co. Dept. of Public Health contributed to NHAH Hmong farmers over \$4,000 in 2005, to use for moving the gardens when the Hmong Friendship Park was built. The park has not been developed by the City. Randall

Cooper, Parks Director, said that no one from the Hmong groups 'ever got back to him with any money'. Meanwhile, the City developed Al Radka Park East of Clovis Avenue on Belmont. Randall says now that Radka Park will 'replace' access to parks in that area; though it is over a mile from the Belmont/DeWitt site (Park Equity standards are a park within ¼ mile radius from homes in urban areas, and without barriers like Clovis Avenue).

### Another Park being turned over to the Police Department or PAL?

The Frank Ball Recreation Area in West Fresno received news on Thursday, June 18 from the City that their park programming would be taken over by PAL and the Parks staff would be moved out to a site not yet purchased or constructed 5 blocks away (an EOC facility). The community was unhappy that this was being presented by the City as a done deal, without their input. They asked why 'PAL didn't take over the new building when it was built, and leave the West Fresno Community their historic facility (with improvements they have been requesting over the years).

The City presentation was reminiscent of the Hmong Community Center, (promised development for the community, without their input, and only promises of funding). However, this too seems essentially a done deal through the City Budget Process, and decided behind closed doors at City Hall. There is no written record of this decision making available, and there is not clarity that the program of site takeover by PAL was put out to bid to other non profits beyond the Police Activity League.

If this is true, that other parks are being sold through City budget 'transfers' or 'sales' to the Police Department or that the parks were being privatized to the PAL (Police Activities League) —evidently without other private organizations participating in an RFP for services— and, without transparency and public input on the process, these are legitimate concerns. Those concerns remain because it appears that there is a complicated process prior to public notification by the City. Publicly owned lands purchased with Community Block Grant Funds are disappearing and the revenues are going into the City General Fund, where they can be used for other purposes, including Police or Fire Department for example. The largest issue is lack of community involvement in community business, and a deficit in cultural and language communications by the City.

The apparent disparity in our community in park space in South East and South West Fresno, paired with the health disparities, obesity, chronic disease that our current community environment engenders, the idea of taking open space purchased by the City for parks and diminishing open space in the City of Fresno, especially in low income areas seems antithetical to the new Planning Department efforts for 'Greening' Fresno, and the direction our County Public Health Department advocates to create and repair healthier neighborhoods in Fresno.

We call on the City Councilmembers, City Departments, and especially the new mayoral candidates not to shut out the neighborhoods most in need of city transformation in the planning of improving spaces for good health. The Community must be engaged and consulted on quality of life issues in Fresno. Taking community centers and community gardens from the public and giving them to the police is questionable The creative transferring and sale of already inadequate park spaces out of the intent of parks and recreation, when Fresno already has a deficit is not thoughtful. The Community has concerns about creative financing with Community Block Grant Money intended to serve the good of Fresno's larger community.

###

Edie Jessup is the Hunger and Nutrition Program Director for Fresno Metro Ministry, and provides Technical Assistance on Environmental Change and Community Organizing to the Central Ca. Regional Obesity Prevention Project. She can be reached at edie@fresnometmin.org

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a flexible program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. A grantee must develop and follow a detailed plan that provides for and encourages citizen participation. This integral process emphasizes participation by persons of low or moderate income, particularly residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, slum or blighted areas, and areas in which the grantee proposes to use CDBG funds. The plan must provide citizens with the following: reasonable and timely access to local meetings; an opportunity to review proposed activities and program performance; provide for timely written answers to written complaints and grievances; and identify how the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate.

From the CDBG website.  
Mr. Rudd, Assistant City Manager, noted that after 5 years, if a City purchase has not been developed for the purpose intended it can be converted to another purpose.



# Voting Counts: a Look at the June 3<sup>rd</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup> Elections

By Howard K. Watkins

The June 3<sup>rd</sup> local election is over and the number one winner was apathy, as 70 percent of Fresno County's registered voters chose not to vote. With three Fresno City Council seats and two Fresno County Board of Supervisor seats being contested, the progressive community failed to take full advantage of the opportunity to make a difference in local government. A true bright spot was the outright re-election of Susan Anderson to the Board of Supervisors. With strong support from the progressive community and others, she received 2400 votes more than her two opponents combined.

In the other Board of Supervisors' race, Debbie Poochigian defeated Nathan Magsig by getting the vote of less than 17 percent of the voters in District 5. In the Fresno City Council District 4 race, incumbent Larry Westerlund defeated Susan Good by also getting less than 17 percent of the district voters' support. The only decisive City Council wins were Andreas Borgeas over Michael Karbassi in District 2 and Lee Brand over Michelle Jorgensen and Matt White in District 6.

The biggest action was in the race for Mayor of Fresno where Council Member Henry T. Perea placed first and Ashley Swearengen second with the two of them combining for nearly 55 percent of the vote in the eleven-candidate race. Despite a loyal following, former Council Member Tom Boyajian came in fifth with less than ten percent of the vote. In the one contested judicial race, Jim Kelley and Douglas Treisman will be in a run-off come November 4, 2008.



Ashley Swearengen is a Republican, pro-life, pro-business candidate for mayor. In the June primary, she won most of the more affluent precincts north of Shaw avenue.

## WHAT THE RESULTS MEAN

The June 3<sup>rd</sup> election means that the Fresno County Board of Supervisors will have a 3-2 conservative majority for the next two years when Supervisor Judy Case (District 4) and Phil Larson (District 1) will be up for re-election. On the Fresno City Council, the addition of Andreas Borgeas and Lee Brand can make for a better City Council. While they both were considered more conservative than their opponents, they also are reaching out to the broader community. Time will tell how they will do once they take office next January.

The big race at the local level for the progressive community will be the election of the Mayor of Fresno. Henry T. Perea has put together a broad coalition of support including the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, many labor unions, and various community leaders. His opponent, Ashley Swearengen, has the support of the Fresno Business Council, the Fresno Bee, and some community leaders. One very telling result from the June 3<sup>rd</sup> election is that Swearengen was strong north of Shaw Ave, while Perea was strong south of Shaw. An election-result map confirms current Mayor Alan Autry's concern that Fresno is the tale of two cities. A demographic map of Fresno shows that as one travels from the City's south-

ern end to the north, the City population gets whiter, more affluent, and more conservative.

The candidate forums likely to occur this fall should be most informative. While there are some similarities between them, there are clear differences between Perea, a Democrat, and Swearengen, a Republican. They both are bright and articulate, support downtown Fresno, want to bring jobs to Fresno, improve regional planning, and see Fresno at a major turning point that will affect our City's future for decades to come.

When it comes to hot button issues, there are some real differences though. Perea flat out opposes building nuclear power plants. Instead, he strongly supports dramatically expanding our use of renewable energy, especially solar power. While Swearengen opposes a nuclear power plant within the City of Fresno, she is willing to consider one coming to the Central Valley. Perea supports a woman's right to reproductive freedom; Swearengen opposes a woman's right to an abortion except in the case of rape or incest. While neither currently supports an Independent Police Auditor for Fresno, it will be interesting to see if either comes out for an IPA or a meaningful mechanism to address grievances about how people are treated by members of the Fresno Police Department.

When the Central Valley Progressive PAC began its candidate endorsement process earlier this year, each of the candidates for mayor was given a questionnaire to complete. Perea chose to do so and Swearengen declined. Based on Perea's responses, we know that he supports bringing back the Human Relations Commission, expanding public transportation, and opposes privatizing city services. Swearengen's campaign website provides no information on these issues.

The November 4<sup>th</sup> general election will have many clear distinctions. Foremost will be the Presidential race between Barack Obama and John McCain. Another will be the vote on the ballot initiative to overturn the recent California Supreme Court decision holding that it was a denial of equal protection of the law for the State of Cali-



Henry T. Perea is a Democrat, supportive of using more renewable energy, and backed by organized labor and many community groups. Perea won most of the precincts South of Shaw avenue.

fornia to deny same-sex couples the right to marry. [Often overlooked by critics of this decision is the Supreme Court's holding that the decision does not require any religion or religious leader to conduct a same-sex marriage.] This initiative will bring out the fundamental Christian community, of which Swearengen is a member, in large numbers. The initiative will also bring out the GBLT and the more liberal religious community and



Howard Watkins spoke at the CVPPAC candidate forum. CVPPAC forms give the public an opportunity to know where candidates stand on issues of interest in the progressive community.

others to oppose the initiative. To my knowledge, neither Perea nor Swearengen have taken a formal position on the initiative. However, it is difficult to see how Swearengen would go against much of her voting base and oppose the initiative. I think it is likely that Perea would join Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in saying the time has come to let the Supreme Court decision stand and oppose this amendment to our State Constitution..

For now, all readers of the Community Alliance need to make certain that if eligible, they and their friends and family members are registered to vote, become informed on the candidates and issues, and then VOTE in the November 4<sup>th</sup> election. Among many other things, the election of our next President and our next Mayor are at stake. A few votes can make a dramatic difference in our future. If you do not think so, consider that the nearly eight years of George Bush as President began by a 536-vote difference in the State of Florida.

###  
Howard K. Watkins is Chair of the Central Valley Progressive PAC.

559-485-4787

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**FRESNO FRIENDS MEETING**  
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**2219 San Joaquin, Fresno**  
**559-237-4102**

**ALL  
WELCOME**

PROGRESSIVE THURSDAY presents

**SWEET MISERY**  
**A Poisoned World**  
**Thursday, July 17, 2008**  
**Open 6:30 Video 7:00 Discussion following**  
**Round Table Pizza**  
5763 N. First Street, Fresno, CA  
[SW corner of First and Bullard]

This event is hosted by the Fresno County Green Party and is free, wheelchair accessible and open to anyone interested in progressive topics.  
Contact: Larry Mullen 559 227-0293 [www.fresnogreens.org](http://www.fresnogreens.org)

# Fearfully and Wonder-fully in the Making

Keith Bergthold, June 2008

The San Joaquin Valley must be a gift from God, like that of children, valuable beyond measure and full of pleasure, pain, and endless possibility. The San Joaquin Valley is also region of paradox. It is the best-endowed and most productive garden on the planet, yet situated in one of the fastest urbanizing regions of California. Valley farmers still manage each year to harvest and export food and fiber in larger quantities than most entire countries produce. But they do so in the context of a burgeoning population. The Valley population grew by more than 500,000 people in the past six years alone, and the region is expected to more than double in population from 3.3 million to more than 7 million by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

The physical possibilities for growing both food and cities in the Valley are of epic proportion. Less than 10 percent of the approximate 20,000 square miles of the Valley's eight-county "enclosed prairie" is now built upon. While farming presently rules the land, its sovereignty is being relentlessly eroded by low-density residential suburbs extending out to form growing metropolitan areas inter-connected by swaths of urban sprawl, which threaten to leave our Valley looking little different in one hundred years than Southern California does today.

Driving along the Valley's rural roads, one can still see tangible evidence of its small town heritage and family farms. In many wonderful and walkable downtowns with century-old facades, family merchants open doors for business each day. The occasional Victorian framed farm homestead, surrounded by suburban development, still remains, along with the fruit stands of new Americans who tend rows of strawberries, blackberries, and vegetables on our most recent versions of the family farm. Weathered tool sheds, abandoned harvest processing canopies, lonely roadside animal loading shoots, a Grange building here, a one-room school house there, all quietly speak of our land-based history and fortunes. So much is worth keeping, and yet there is so much pressure to wipe the slate clean to make more room for the latest real estate market fashions.

The San Joaquin Valley faces the distinct opportunity and risks associated with the demands of California's pervasive growth. It is a region uniquely blessed by nature, location, heritage, and inhabitants that now finds itself pressured by forces of change both within and beyond our control. These forces call for thoughtful attention and policies that will guide our region to a future that honors both our important past and productive present.

## Regional Challenges Facing the San Joaquin Valley

The challenges we face are approaching critical crisis stages, and must be articulated clearly and often in order for any shared aspirations to gain a foothold:

- **Deadly air pollution** is poisoning residents of the Valley, forcing many families to flee and others to not consider moving here in the first place. Poor air quality currently is costing an estimated \$3.3 billion annually in added expenses for medical care, premature deaths, lost work, and school absences.

<sup>2</sup> The bathtub-shaped Valley traps ozone and particulates, originating both locally and drifting in from other regions. This situation places us near the top of the list of most polluted air in the U.S. <sup>3</sup>

- **Conflicting demands for land and water resources** create a zero-sum contest between urban and agricultural uses. Our expanding cities and food production capacities are on a collision course, competing for the same land and diminishing water supplies. The San Joaquin Valley has been leading the state in recent trends of increasing conversion of prime farmland to urban uses. <sup>4</sup>

- **Economic disparity and debilitating poverty** currently threaten increasing numbers of our residents and the health of social and economic conditions of the entire region. The U.S. Census Bureau issued a report in 2007, which found that six San Joaquin Valley counties had the highest percentage of residents living below the federal poverty line in 2006. <sup>5</sup>

- **Low literacy, educational attainment, and workforce skills** add to the persistence of our poverty, and are formidable barriers to attracting companies and industries requiring educated and skilled workers. San Joaquin Valley counties have lower percentages of students completing college preparatory courses and taking college entrance exams than the rest of California. <sup>6</sup>

- **Anachronistic local jurisdictional boundaries**, and related political and fiscal models, continue to thwart larger goals and strategies, as well as the mutual cooperative action needed to effectively confront these challenges. Voices across the Valley still argue passionately for local government autonomy in the face of problems with no local or unilateral solutions. We compete with each other for sales tax generators rather than collaborating to build infrastructure and enterprises that will measurably benefit all.

## Regional Possibilities and the Power of Cooperation

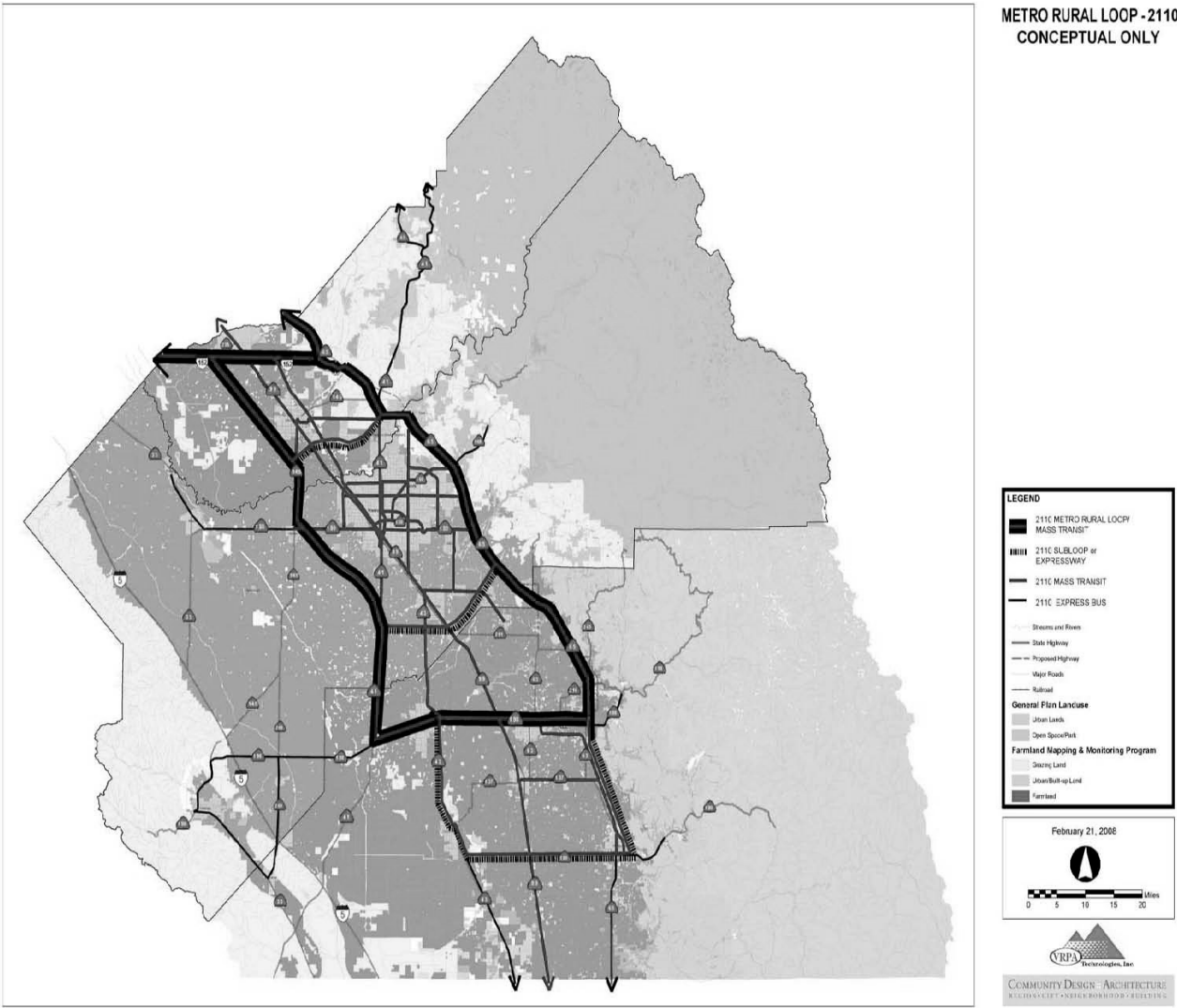
Despite these challenges, there is reason now for hope about the Valley's prospects, with the advent of the eight-county Regional Blueprint Planning Program and the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. The Regional Blueprint is an ongoing framework for collaboration among regional agencies, local governments and state agencies to promote mobility, housing and transportation choices, access to better jobs, healthy communities, and a thriving economy. Each of the eight counties has a blueprint planning process that will be merged into a Valley-wide vision and plan for 2050. <sup>7</sup> The California Partnership, meanwhile, was established in 2006 by Governor Schwarzenegger to improve the economic, social, and environmental quality of life of the San Joaquin Valley. "The Partnership brings to-

and natural features. <sup>9</sup>

## Metro Rural Loop: An Example of Regional Cooperation

Building on the momentum of such cooperative programs, some regional planners have decided to go beyond the Blueprint planning period of 2050, and look ahead 100 years to what might be the ultimate magnitude of growth facing the Valley. We hoped this might lead to common action to address our regional and global challenges, and help make the Regional Blueprint and the California Partnership strategic tools for lasting regional results. From studies conducted for the four county sub-regional focus area (Fresno, Madera, Tulare, and Kings Counties) using California Department of Finance projections for 2050, regional economic planning consultants are forecasting a population by 2110 of 6.5 to 7.5 million people. The growth anticipated from our 2007 base of 1.6 million people is staggering. Where will people work? How will people get to work? How and where will they live? How can we sustain agriculture? How can there possibly be enough water and clean air?

We began to imagine an integrated system of transportation and land uses that supply the physical infrastructure required to protect resources, health, and heritage, while encouraging economic growth, invest-



gether public and private leadership to drive action with public accountability for outcomes to realize the vision of the San Joaquin Valley as *California's 21st Century Opportunity*." <sup>8</sup>

These two regional initiatives are applying the ideas of broad-based regional planning and regional cooperation in an unprecedented way for the Valley. They are spawning numerous other collaborative efforts like the Metro Rural Loop and the Model Farmland Preservation Study. Related efforts include Fresno's Green Strategy, the Southeast Growth Area (SEGA) plan being shaped by Peter Calthorpe, and other smart, compact, mixed use, infill developments and related historic preservation efforts across the Valley. All attest to the emergence of a regional identity, the shared sense of our Valley's treasures, and a new spirit about our long-term possibilities.

Of particular significance is Fresno's Southeast Growth Area (SEGA) plan, being drafted by the City of Fresno with the expertise of Calthorpe Associates. SEGA is a 14-square-mile growth area of Fresno south of Clovis and west of Sanger. The emphasis in planning SEGA is on green, performance-based land use, transportation, development, and building systems. These systems, when employed in our Valley through SEGA, will reduce air pollution, green house gases, energy consumption, and water use. They also will create transit-oriented and walkable town centers and neighborhood villages with open spaces and trails that integrate historic landscapes, rural lifestyles, agriculture, cultural

ment, and opportunity. More particularly, we drew a conceptual design for a Metro Rural Loop of high-capacity, multi-modal transportation corridors supported by carefully-planned regional land use policies. Such a Loop would lead to the development of more dense, mixed use, transit-oriented nodes of industrial, commercial, residential, public, and recreational spaces connected by the corridors. Focusing more intense development in transit supportive activity centers would protect agricultural, environmental and habitat lands, historic landscapes, neighborhoods, and buildings throughout the region. It would conserve water and energy while reducing carbon emissions and increasing air quality.

If Fresno, Madera, Tulare, and Kings Counties crafted a four-county regional entity, the Metro Rural Loop might resemble the following spatial concept:

On the conceptual map above there are approximately 2,300 square miles within the Metro Rural Loop, 300 of which are now estimated to be urbanized. If we can direct new urban growth to existing cities with major urban activity centers adjoining and connected by the Loop's multi-modal transportation corridors—and produce average densities of 10,000 or more people per square mile versus the current average of just over 4,000 people per square mile—we can house an additional five to six million residents, and still protect more than 1,500 square miles of irreplaceable agricultural, environmental and habitat lands, and historic landscapes within the Metro Rural Loop. Otherwise, projected



growth at current densities and intensities of utilization will consume nearly all 2,300 square miles over the next 100 years.

The comprehensive thrust of the Metro Rural Loop concept targets the integrated achievement of growth and conservation goals in a regional framework:<sup>10</sup>

- **Strategic Land Protection:** The Metro Rural Loop concept calls for a new urban-rural regional spatial design plan for the south San Joaquin Valley of permanent urban land use boundaries, which protect strategic and community agriculture, environmental, habitat, and resource lands, and historic landscapes. Current plans do not provide this protection.
- **Water Policy and Management:** Our four-county focus area can barely add one million people (let alone five to six million) with current urban water consumption, waste, and management practices, and still irrigate important farmland—even using new water technologies. The Metro Rural Loop concept calls for new water and other resource development and use policies that substantially reduce average per-person urban consumption—all part of a companion focus upon SMART growth as described below.
- **Smart Growth:** The Metro Rural Loop is the ultimate Mixed-Use Transit Oriented Development. It would include high density, green, compact, walkable, mixed-use, transit-oriented development. The system would rely on a combination of rail-based transportation, Bus Rapid Transit, and local transit systems in order to substantially reduce polluting emissions, green house gases, vehicle miles traveled, and the consumption of energy, water, and other natural resources.
- **Constituency Building:** The Metro Rural Loop concept requires a level of regional cooperation and organization that can only be accomplished by public-private partnerships dedicated to sustainable, high-quality, urban and regional development, cooperation, and competitiveness. A joint powers authority of some type among participating jurisdictions is mandatory, but it must be sustained by an inclusive base network of constituents.
- **The Strategy:** Drawing upon emerging Regional Blueprint principles and strategy, and a seed grant from the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley with matching funds from the City of Fresno, we organized the Metro Rural Loop Corridor Preservation Feasibility Committee and Study. Study

- tasks and computer modeling are nearly completed and have already been adopted as a key design feature of the Fresno COG Blueprint and sent to U.C Davis for consideration in the eight-county Regional Blueprint modeling now being constructed. Assuming a broad consensus will be established about the value of preserving Metro Rural Loop corridor options and serious consideration given to the requisite regional land use policy development and plans—the real work begins of forging formal partnerships, agreements, protocols, budgets, staffing, and more to fund and develop the following:
- Natural resource management plans, policies, and funding strategies;
  - Agriculture preservation plans, policies, and funding strategies;
  - Detailed corridor rights-of way alignment and environmental studies, and alignment recommendations;
  - Joint powers agreements for adopting alignments, developing coordinated land use and zoning, and shared long-term corridor protection and administration;
  - Adoption of joint powers agreements by all participating jurisdictions and establishment of regional Metro Rural Loop authority of some type;
  - Adoption of specific corridor alignments and land use policies in all participating jurisdiction's General Plans;
  - State and federal legislation to encourage and preserve joint powers and/or regional authority, increase local, regional, and state bonding capacity, and provide formal priority for infrastructure funding from the State for agreed-upon phases of Metro Rural Loop land acquisition and system facility construction.;
  - Supportive planning, resource sharing, and technology infrastructure in all participating jurisdictions.

Conclusion

Our Valley faces difficult challenges, but also superlative possibilities if we work together. We are beginning our exploration of regional perspectives and solutions to shared problems—with the goal of honoring a rich past, sustaining generations to come, and fully competing in a global economy to grow and attract the best and brightest – all with the potential to contribute to a better world.

Keith Bergthold, born in downtown Fresno and proud of it, believes that the San Joaquin Valley is a gift from God, ordained to be sagaciously developed, or woe be to us and our heirs. Keith mostly reads, doodles, and sometimes composes coherent prose from the back bedroom of the home he shares with his wife Debbie in Clovis, loves BMW motorcycles and long rides to Canada, and gratefully travels each day down Highway 168 to explore the possibilities germinating from his current day job as Assistant Director of Planning and Development for the City of Fresno.

<sup>1</sup> Council of Fresno County Governments <http://www.fresnocog.org/document.php?pid=188&x=187> (accessed June 8, 2008)

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Anderson, Russell Clemings & Mark Grossi, "Fighting for Air," *Fresno Bee*, December 16, 2007, <http://www.fresnobee.com/868/story/263215.html>, (accessed June 8, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> "State of the Air: 2007: Best and Worst Cities," American Lung Association, 2007, [http://lungaction.org/reports/sota07\\_cities.html](http://lungaction.org/reports/sota07_cities.html), (accessed June 8,, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> California Farmland Conversion Report, CA Dept of Conservation, December 2006. [http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/pubs/2002-2004/FCR/Documents/FCR\\_02-04\\_intro.pdf](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/pubs/2002-2004/FCR/Documents/FCR_02-04_intro.pdf) (accessed June 8, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Brad Brannon, "Six San Joaquin Valley counties have the highest poverty rates in California, and among the highest rates in the country, new census figures show." *The Fresno Bee*, August 29, 2007. <http://www.99to5.com/?p=41> (accessed June 8, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, K12 Public Education Work Group Report. [www.bth.ca.gov/capartnership/pdf/K-12Education.pdf](http://www.bth.ca.gov/capartnership/pdf/K-12Education.pdf) (accessed June 8, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> "California Regional Blueprint Planning Program," California Department of Transportation, 2007, [www.calblueprint.dot.ca.gov](http://www.calblueprint.dot.ca.gov), (accessed June 8, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> "California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley: Partnership Overview," 2007, [http://www.sjvppartnership.org/map/overview.php?static\\_page\\_id=6&sc\\_id=4](http://www.sjvppartnership.org/map/overview.php?static_page_id=6&sc_id=4) (accessed June 8, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> City of Fresno, Revised SEGA Alternatives Powerpoint, <http://www.fresno.gov/NR/rdonlyres/FC00A541-4580-4894-81B0-82B7A2DE9169/9478/SEGAAlternativesMaster5122008.pdf> (Accessed June 8, 2008)

<sup>10</sup> Editorial, "Good planning crucial to Valley's future quality of life," *Fresno Bee*, January 6, 2008, [http://www.greatValley.org/sjpartnership/press/2008/0001\\_luha\\_01-06-08.pdf](http://www.greatValley.org/sjpartnership/press/2008/0001_luha_01-06-08.pdf) (accessed June 8, 2008).



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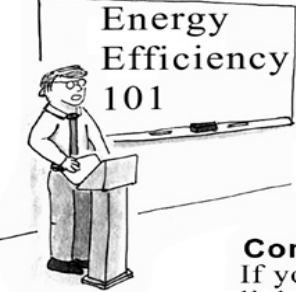
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# APPEALING THE IMPOSSIBLE Prisoner's Recourse Blocked

By: Boston Woodard

There are thousands of rules, regulations and policies governing California's prison system. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) is operated by a cornucopia of vague and ambiguous decrees and statutes.

The Penal Code (PC), the California Code of Regulations - Title 15 (CCR), the Departmental Operations Manual (DOM), Administrative Bulletins (ABs), Operational Procedures (OPs), Institutional Procedures (IPs), General Orders (GOs), General Policies (GPs), and a gamut of institutionally promulgated rules, usually ordered by the warden or his/her appointees govern the prison system. Many of these rules and policies contradict and/or conflict with each other while some are crystal clear. In the case of gray-area-rules, prison officials always write themselves into the winning end of all dispositions.

Among the rules are regulations that govern the prisoner's appeals process. All prisoners have a right to appeal any departmental decision, action, condition, or policy that he or she can demonstrate as having an adverse effect upon their welfare as codified in the CCR Title 15 #3084.1. "Right to Appeal." These regulations are supposed to be protected by United States Constitutional due process rights under the First Amendment. Prisoner's rights are routinely violated or ignored by prison Appeals Coordinators throughout the CDCR.

The CDCR prisoner appeal process affords prisoners and parolees their due process rights and the opportunity to obtain a meaningful remedy to a problem by allowing them to address their grievances in accordance with the provisions of the California Code of Regulations/Title 15. The process directs prisoner complaints through one informal and two formal levels of appeal at the institution Level and a final review at the director's (head of CDCR) level.

According to the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation's Operations Manual (DOM), Section 54100.2, the prisoner appeal process is to provide for the resolution of grievances in a timely manner and at the lowest possible Level. The prisoner appeals process is also intended to serve as a vehicle for improving department policies and procedures.

November 22, 2005, the CDCR implemented an Administration Bulletin, AB/05-O3, that announced changes in how prisoner appeals, CDC-FORM—602, specifically those identified as Staff Complaints, will be handled. All prisoner complaints which allege any misconduct by a staff member will continue to be logged (issued an appeal number) by the Appeals Coordinator (AC) as a Staff Complaint, Category 7.

At Solano State Prison (CSP-Solano) in Vacaville California (and in other prisons across the state), the prisoner appeals process has become a vehicle for use by institutional staff whereby they continually delay and deny prisoner's rights. Appeals are constantly returned late to the prisoner in an attempt to squeeze the available 15 day time limit, causing appellants to rush their response leaving little time for research. There is no accountability at the Informal Level of the appeal process at CSP-Solano. As it is now, Informal Level appeals on legitimate Staff Complaint issues are ignored by M.D. Corioso, S. Cervantes & L.N. Flores. Warden D.K. Sisto has been informed numerous times in writing and refuses to intervene. If an issue is argued, prisoners are told to "wait" until the appeal has been responded to. Those who then attempt to bypass the Informal Level with a duplicate appeal are reprimanded for filing more than one appeal, even though (prison) staff members know that they (the prisoner) will never receive an answer at the Informal level.

Staff are permitted to file for time extensions, sometime delaying the appeals process for many months beyond the expected due date, yet prisoners are not given the same opportunity if they are given a complex answer or decisions. If the time restrictions are exceeded by the prisoner, the appeal becomes "null and void."

Appeals are consistently "lost" at all levels. If and when an appeal does show up, the prisoner is penalized as if he were responsible for the lapse. Staff members consistently avoid issue within the appeal. Prison staff do not ad-

dress all the issues in the appeal, many times, specific Actions Requested are ignored.

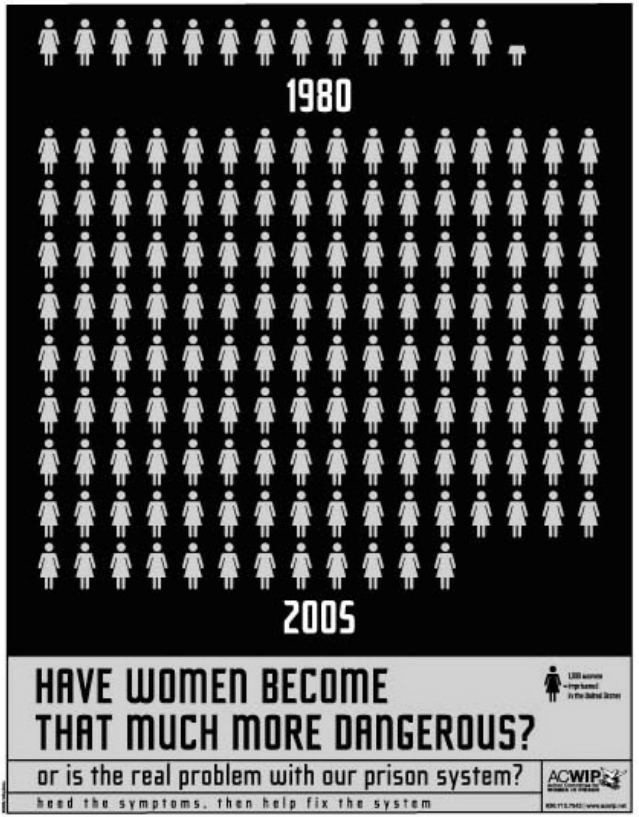
If a staff decision on an appeal is of a complex nature, prisoners can not add to the Actions Requested. The current appeals system takes advantage of the less-informed (prisoner) general population and typically traps them into an unfair decision because of the lack of insight into the appeals process.

Staff at CSP-Solano frequently employ subterfuge in their attempts to act as if an appealed issue is not as serious as it seems, or as if the prisoner is "mistaken" regarding the issue being appealed.

Prisoners are also limited to one (1) page to describe a problem or situation, while staff employ up to 4-5 pages, to answer an issue forces a prisoner to minimize his own response. This practice allows some points that would be made by a prisoner to go unanswered.

Appeal interviews at CSP-Solano routinely consist of a standard rehearsal of the appealed issue. Staff members rarely review the issue at hand and are frequently ill-prepared during interviews. They waste time by expecting the prisoner to restate what is already written within the appeal. "Cookie-cutter" (non related regulation cites) responses are then afforded/attached onto the appeal in an attempt to confuse the prisoner and clutter the response.

Filing a legitimate Staff complaint (or Citizen's Complaint) at CSP-Solano is nearly impossible. Countless Staff Com-



plaints filed are either dumbed-down into "program issues" or some other insignificant category, dumbing-down or eliminating the crux of the intended Staff Complaint.

Blatant disregard for regulations governing the processing (issuing a Log Numbers etc.) of 'Staff Complaints' is alive and well inside the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation CDCR- Several attempts were made to have the following two Staff Complaints filed (logged) against L.N. Flores and S. Cervants; two Appeals Coordinators at Solano State Prison, for misconduct, verbal threats and violation of due process rights. The Staff complaints stemmed from CSP-Solano's Appeals Office failing to allow me a fair and honest interview and response/decision regarding another appeal (#CSP-S-07-030B0) filed in August of 2007.

Solano State Prison's present Appeals Coordinator, S. Cervantes, erroneously rejected the aforementioned Staff Complaint against L.N. Flores three times claiming that it is a "duplicate" of the appeal filed against appeal procedures. One appeal is about departmental policy and the one against L.N. Flores is about his misconduct and verbal threats toward me. The appeals have absolutely different problems, different actions requested, different dates etc., they clearly do not duplicate one another. Appeals Coordinator Cervantes is in violation of the law and other regulations pertaining issuing Log Numbers to prisoners filing Staff Complaints. It should be noted that Appeals Coordinator S. Cervantes has been erroneously screening out multiple Staff Complaints filed against staff members at Solano State Prison; including at least one Staff Complaint on him.

In a California State Prison - Solano "Warden's Executive Staff Meeting" memorandum (minutes) last year, CSP-Solano's Appeals Office, specifically Appeals Coordina-

tors M.D. Corioso, S. Cervantes and P. Gutierrez, were praised and "thanked... for the dramatic decrease in appeal numbers" at this prison. This, after they systematically screened out hundreds of appeals (Staff Complaints included) for what many prisoners say are "erroneous" and "retaliatory" reasons. Prisoners have proof in writing of the abuses and blatant disregard for their due process rights by the Appeals Office.

Two months after I attempted to file the Staff Complaint against L.N. Flores, and after my appeal against the CDCR departmental policy (pertaining to appeals) has been investigated/reviewed at the Third (and final) Level at the Director of Correction's office in Sacramento, L.N. Flores, with blessings from the Appeals Office, has begun retaliating against me for filing what he now claims as "false allegations against a Peace Officer." Flores' retaliation against me is in the form of a CDC-128-A Disciplinary Custodial Counseling documentation dated 4/22/08. Flores is also attempting to cover his hide by writing the bogus CDC-128-A disciplinary action against me probably because the Appeals Branch in Sacramento has launched their own investigation into the dissatisfaction (response) I submitted on Flores' fraudulent Second Level interview.

The disciplinary action leveled against me is no doubt the beginning of much more forthcoming retaliation. This is not the first time prison officials have attempted to silence me for exercising my First Amendment Rights; or for filing grievances in order to continue my journalistic activities.

In October of 1999, the California Department of Corrections settled a lawsuit with me after prison officials violated my First Amendment Rights for my journalistic activities; WOODARD V. DUNCAN - U.S. Central District Court #No. CV 96-4186 ABC (RZx)

Mail tampering, verbal threats, refusing to process legitimate appeals against prison staff, documenting false disciplinary charges, ignoring written law, and a litany of other illegal and unprofessional tactics are again being leveled against me, and other prisoners, at Solano State Prison.

A *real* investigation of Solano State Prison's Appeals Office, would certainly uncover a multitude of serious deficiencies and violations regarding the practices of that office. Dozens of Staff Complaints are being dumbed-down, re-categorized, mishandled or lost. It seems what ever it takes to make a Staff Complaint go away — skies the limit here at CSP-Solano. Appeals Coordinators M.D-Corioso, S. Cervantes, P. Gutierrez and L.N. Flores have systematically denied the rights of prisoners to file (log) a Staff Complaint at CSP-Solano.

Warden D.K. Sisto and some administrative subordinates, condone and assist these actions by allowing these violations to continue

As California's prison "crisis" rolls on with no end in sight; inhumane overcrowding, despicable prisoner health care, filthy/unsafe housing milieus and a litany of other problems abound. A prisoner's only internal recourse, the appeals/grievance process, is being disrespected and dishonored by prison officials who are in violation of due process statutes regarding prisoner's rights.

The diseased prison appeals system in California is statewide, but none, if any, are as broken or are in violation of the law as the Appeals Office at Solano State Prison. I challenge any honest, independent audit and/or investigation to prove me wrong.

###

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

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# Grassroots Profile

By Richard Stone

This month’s profile has a small deviation from the usual format. The subject, Boston Woodard, is one of the Community Alliance’s regular “correspondents behind bars”, and I thought readers would appreciate a more personal sense of who he is. I asked to interview him and he agreed, saying he was familiar with the series and liked it.

Now the usual process is this. I start from a prepared set of questions, but the interviews are really conversations that can go in many directions; and the written profile frames the basic questions in a setting of my impressions. In Boston’s case, it was all handled by letter, so what we have is his own framing of the written questions I sent, approximating the spirit in which I write. Although it’s all in first person, I feel he has admirably fulfilled the intention of the profiles, with no need for me to intervene. So, in his own words, here’s Boston.

As Community Alliance readers know I am a prisoner. I have never claimed to float on gossamer wings. Growing up in a tumultuous environment no doubt contributed to my incarceration. I’ve always assumed responsibility for my actions and accept the consequences of those actions. I’ve made my bed, and take my word for it, I’m sleeping in it.

Early on in my incarceration I made a conscious decision to immerse my entire being into the positive; not an easy task in the prison milieu, but possible.

I have lots of interests which include music, writing and various art mediums. I believe it is important for us - - let’s say - - more experienced prisoners, to support and assist others who want to make this prison reality as beneficial and painless as possible.

Being a long—time musician (Bass guitar/main instrument), I got involved in the prison’s established music programs, organizing many others over the years. At San Quentin, Folsom, Soledad state prisons for example, I coordinated music programs with the help of other very talented prisoner musicians. The Containment Entertainment Program, Sounds Incarcerated and The Folsom Music Review were a few of the programs I was very proud to be part of.

There were (and are) many selfless Arts and Music Facilitators over the years who have spent decades coming into these rotten

hell-holes called prison, giving their all to afford the opportunity for prisoners to change their lives into something positive through the arts.

The instructors, teachers, facilitators and volunteers who crossed the line into the Arts In Corrections programs to help prisoners, run in the hundreds - possibly thousands. Some who I’ve personally appreciated and worked with over the years are; Earnie Shaver, Jack Bowers, Jim Carslon, Judeth Tannenbaum, Ann Green, Sojourn Rolle, Jeff Hessemeyer, and Bill Scholer. These folks who were and are major contributing factors in not only my life, but the lives of thousands of other prisoners who covet the opportunity to change their lives for the better. I stand privileged to have known and been part of the programs facilitated by these altruists who need our support. These folks love what they do and we as prisoners love what they do for us. They epitomize dedication.

Not having the educational background I feel necessary to define the complicated prison environment, I spent many hours reading as many books as I could muster and wrap my brain around. I was helped and instructed by some very articulate prisoner writers. Joe Morse (past, noted editor of the San Quentin News), James “Jim” Posten and Forest Tucker all extremely talented prison wordsmiths. One thing they all stressed was the importance of writing the truth about what goes on behind these prison walls. It was paramount to be honest as a prisoner writer; “Never write anything that can’t stand to be challenged” said Jim Posten.

I have received some criticism regarding some of my more recent articles; The Shell Game, Medical Snafu, Zip-Gun, Shake-Down and Appealing The Impossible (which is in this issue of the Community Alliance) to name a few, but that is to be expected as there are some who feel prisoners shouldn’t have the right to any part

of the U.S. Constitution. Then there are those who are glad to have the opportunity to hear the other side of the story or a side that they almost always never hear at all; the prisoners account.

My main allies are my closet friends out there in the free world who tell me what I am doing is important to them and I should continue defining my surroundings. For over three years, Community Alliance editor Mike Rhodes has been my premier ally by affording me an unfettered voice from behind these walls, giving me the opportunity to give a first hand account of prison events as they occur.

Some of the obstacles I have encountered are easy to describe. Prison officials from the head of The Department of Corrections, Wardens, Administrative Prison Staff all the way down to the rank-and-file guards have attempted to stop or intimidate me from my journalistic activities for years. I filed a First Amendment Lawsuit against the Corrections Department in the 1990s which they eventually settled with me.

My long-range goals are to stay productive in my positive programming while helping as many prisoners as I can to do the same. I also want to help and encourage other prisoners to write and define their surroundings, to get the word out to the public of how their billions of tax dollars are being spent and in so many cases, wasted. I also want to write about positive events and instances that occur behind these walls, but during this era of prison mismanagement and overall disregard for prisoner’s rights,, I find it hard to that.

My short term objective is to stay pro-active in getting as much help and attention as I can on the prison arts programs

Those who read what goes on behind these walls as described by a prisoner can help. Readers should demand (as tax payers) answers from prison officials regarding the allegations and claims brought forward by the prisoner. The last thing an honest prisoner journalist wants is to be exposed as a purveyor of false information regarding events and practices behind these walls.

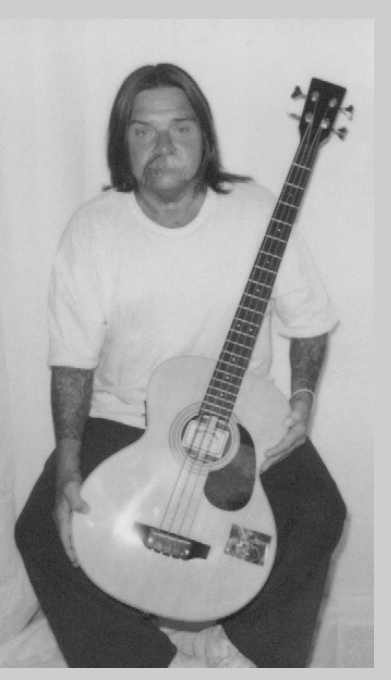
My contact information is: Boston Woodard, B-88207 CSP-Solano, 13-F-8-L Box 4000, Vacaville Ca 95696-4000.

Prisoners do not have access to the Internet. We can only make collect calls and write via snail-mail. I answer all letters.

## IDENTITY BOX

**Name: Boston Woodard**  
**Birthplace: New England**  
**Ethnic Identity: New Englander :-)**  
**Religious Affiliation: On Hold**  
**Political Affiliation: Perfectly Content Liberal**  
**People Who have Inspired Me: Jon Sievert, Denis Teigemeier, Diane Burkhart, Ron Woodard, Mumia Abu Jamal, Dannie ‘Red Dog’ Martin, Maria Telesco and all hard-working fishermen who were lost at sea.**  
**Personal Motto: “Don’t serve time, let time serve you!”**

**Un-Political Involvements: Music, exercise/good health; but first and foremost - Friends**  
**Unlikely pleasures: Making spaghetti sauce & feeding my pet lizard.**



## Poetry Corner

By Richard Stone

We have received these poems from Tim Young, who is on San Quentin’s Death Row. Tim’s sister-in-law, who I met, speaks convincingly about the innocence of Tim and his brother Donald. She can be reached through Maria Telesco’s Prison Ministry, a project of the Center for Nonviolence. Tim can be reached directly at Tim Young F23374; S.Q.S.P.; San Quentin, CA 94974.

### MEN IN TREES

On every channel I have seen them grieve  
They are seethingly at odds with U.C. Berkeley  
Apparently someone sought to uproot the trees  
They are pissed/they are peeved/  
They squawk about preserving the trees  
They squat/ they refuse to leave/  
They literally live in the trees  
Life or limb they vow to protect the trees  
They seek understanding/empathy/  
Meanwhile the State of California  
Celebrates my wrongful conviction and intends to kill me!  
From Death Row I languish in disbelief,  
Wishing I was just as cherished and esteemed  
As one of those damn oak trees!

So-called activists expend themselves extensively  
Endeavoring to be green and save nonhuman things:

The Whales  
The Beaches  
The Dolphins  
The Wetlands and Marshes  
The Owls  
The Ozone  
Even lab Rats and Rodents  
The Condors  
The Eagles  
And yes, the precious trees.

Am I worthy of the same affinity  
That Monkeys, Mammals, and Reptiles receive?  
Am I as precious as the sea of branches  
Which you covet, from which you cling?  
Hell, I love the environment, and everything in it,  
But we cannot allow racism, corruption, injustice,  
Or wrongful convictions to exist!  
Will real activists partake in reversing my fate  
Or will they only posture from a distance;  
Protesting outside the gates of San Quentin  
On the last day of my existence?

Is your activism truly about making a difference,  
Or is it just some narcissistic attempt  
To bask in media attention and publicity?

### DATE WITH DEATH

From conception to birth  
It is scientifically certain  
That all who survive shall eventually die  
We live/we strive/we die/  
But my date with death  
Has been molested at best,  
For it is not God’s will  
But rather the will of hate;  
Hand-picked “People of the State”  
Have biasedly decided my fate.  
However, my next breath is not guaranteed  
Nor is any woman’s or man’s,  
Therefore my date with death  
Remains in God’s hands!




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# Progressive Religion ... Is Not An Oxymoron!

By David E. Roy



In this column, I want to look at four arenas of religious activity that are worthy of interest to all progressives: Rabbi Michael Lerner's Tikkun community, Evangelical Christian Jim Wallis' Sojourner endeavor, the Islamic Hadith Project in Turkey and the Faith and Process project of the Center for Process Studies.

## The Tikkun Community

A major purpose of Rabbi Lerner's Tikkun community ([www.tikkun.org](http://www.tikkun.org)) is the effort to reconnect spirituality and religion to the political left in the US. (I say "reconnect" deliberately because some of the greatest movements for social change in the past have had their roots in religion. This includes, for example, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century drive to end slavery and the civil rights movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.) Rabbi Lerner's critique of the political left, developed in *The Left Hand of God: Taking Our Country Back from the Religions Right* (2006), is that liberals have increasingly ignored the "spiritual hunger" for deep meaning in our society, focusing instead primarily on the physical and material hungers.

The Tikkun movement (from the Hebrew *Tikkun Olam*, to repair the world) is the latest emergence out of Lerner's long and multi-faceted career that extends back at least to the Free Speech Movement in the mid-1960s. (He even had the honor in the late 60s of being called "one of the most dangerous criminals in America" by none other than J. Edgar Hoover!) The Tikkun community aims to bring together spiritual progressives from any and all faith traditions and focus their energies on effecting social change in the form of a new "Global Marshall Plan" for the world. The premise of this plan is as follows:

[We are] ... seeking to have the advanced industrial countries of the world use their resources to eliminate once and for all global poverty, homelessness, and hunger; provide quality education and health care for all; and repair the global environment. As an initial commitment, we want the U.S. to donate at least 1-2% of its Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty [years] ....

Among the benefits they anticipate is a decrease in poverty-fueled violence and therefore an increase in security, here and abroad. This is a much different, non-fear based approach to homeland security than what we have today.

Another of the important interfaith facets of the Tikkun community is called the New Spiritual Progressives or NSP. This NSP has four primary aims:

- Foster a New Bottom Line of love, generosity & ecological sensitivity in our economy, education, media, & government.
- Foster a new global consciousness and solidarity.
- Promote awe, radical amazement, gratitude & developing an inner spiritual life.
- Challenge the misuse of God & religion by the Religious Right and religio-phobia on the Left.

Rabbi Lerner and Tikkun are not without controversy within the American Jewish community, in particular because of his (and therefore Tikkun's) position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Lerner and Tikkun call for an approach that recognizes the worth of both peoples and that seeks peaceful approaches by all parties in the efforts at settling this long-standing and brutal conflict.

Nonetheless, this is an essential movement that is rooted in Judaism at the deepest levels, including its mystical side as well as its practical, heal-the-world side.

## Jim Wallis' Sojourners

Jim Wallis is a forthright evangelical Christian who is working diligently to pull that large and powerful group away from focusing almost exclusively on the polarizing issues of abortion rights and the GLBT communities and re-root evangelical Christians in the primary concerns of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament. These concerns include the poor and the sick, and the economic and social systems that work against those who are in the greatest need and have the least power. Today, Sojourners also includes a

major emphasis on the environment.

Yes, it is true that Wallis' Sojourners ([www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)) is not anywhere near 100% support for GLTB rights or what most progressives would understand to be an abortion-rights position. Within the Christian spectrum, Sojourners adopts a moderate to moderately conservative approach: Gay and lesbian relationships should have full legal and social protection and rights according to Sojourners, but it is opposed to gay and lesbian marriages. Sojourners stresses that abortions should be minimized; however (and unique within the evangelical community) the organization does *not* propose any legal restrictions on abortion.

Importantly, Wallis and Sojourners actively oppose what they consider to be the religious right, including James Dobson, Pat Robertson, the late Jerry Falwell, and others who have been featured by our major media as "the" Christian spokespersons. Sojourners' opposition is frequent and strong. Wallis refers to himself as a "left-of-center" evangelical. In keeping with that spirit, it is quite clear that on other key social and political issues, Wallis and Sojourners are full-court press on change in the direction that most secular political and social progressives would pursue.

To put Wallis' evangelical Christianity into perspective, it is helpful to understand that the Christian sacred writings (the New Testament) all have an historical context. While there may be timeless wisdom embedded in these texts, they are also temporally bound to the people who compiled them and in particular to the intended audience. (This theme will also come up in the next section on the Turkish Hadith Project.)

In addition, there is a strong consensus among biblical scholars that the early church, in response to the sacred energy that was experienced by Jesus' followers, wrote glowing commentary, including some that they put into the dialogue bubble connected to Jesus—even though Jesus most likely did not say nearly all that is attributed to him. (See the work of the so-called Jesus Seminar for details.)

A crucial example is the famous text in the Gospel of John, where Jesus seems to say that the only way to God is through him (John 3:16). This is understood by a great many biblical scholars today to be entirely the words of the early church, not Jesus. However, for most evangelicals, including quite likely Wallis, this idea is one of the cornerstones of their faith. (As is common knowledge, this text has been used throughout history to justify unspeakable atrocities in the name of the Prince of Peace.) This clearly has gotten in the way of ecumenical and interfaith work for many evangelicals. This is where Wallis is different. He is fully plugged into the radical vision that Jesus had, one that is clearly in keeping with the progressive movement in the US (tend the poor and the sick; what you do to the least among us, you do to me). So, Wallis and others in his camp are definitely allies with progressives – as long as secular progressives do not demand absolute philosophical purity.

## The Turkish Hadith Project

The Hadith are the collection of sayings by or attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. In Islam, they rank second only to the Qur'an in their importance as rules and guidance for the faithful Muslim community. The Hadith also serve as much of the basis for Islamic law or Sharia.

According to recent reports, including articles in *Newsweek* (5/31/08) and the *Christian Science Monitor* (3/11/08), the Turkish government through its Religious Affairs Directorate (headed by Mehmet Gormez) initiated a full-scale reexamination of all 170,000 sayings in order to better understand them in today's world society. The project is being carried out by the Hadith department at Ankara University's divinity school; Ismail Hakki Unal is head of the department.

The scholars involved have been careful to emphasize their aim is to recontextualize this massive body of sayings, many of which are perhaps 1,400 years old. These sayings were expressed in a particular setting and do not always make sense unless one understands the original context. One example that is given concerns the prohibition of women traveling alone. Gormez is quoted in *Newsweek* as saying that this prohibition resulted from the unsafe conditions at the time; that the Prophet Muhammad in other writings expressed regret for the days when it was possible for women to travel alone.

A second aim is to harmonize the Hadith with the Qur'an and to eliminate those sayings that contradict the Qur'an.

While some in the West are equating this project with the Christian Reformation, those involved in this enterprise flatly reject this interpretation. Unal, the Ankara University theologian, is quoted in the *Monitor* as saying that this is not reform, but an effort "to go back to the basics and

origins of Islam."

This aim poses a paradox. On the one hand, returning to the basics and origins sounds quite conservative. On the other, it will inevitably modernize and radically modify some deeply entrenched ways of looking at the Islamic way of life.

As Christians scholars have discovered, recontextualizing sacred writings is both enlivening and deeply unsettling. While new meaning emerges that can be profoundly transforming, this same phenomenon shakes apart the pictures and stories that millions of believers have used to make sense of their religion, their world, and themselves. It will be important to watch what happens when this material is published (scheduled for December of this year).

## Faith and Process

The Faith and Process project ([www.processandfaith.org](http://www.processandfaith.org)) was begun 25 years ago as an offshoot of the scholarly Center for Process Studies of the Claremont School of Theology. From humble and informal beginnings, the program has matured into an extraordinarily valuable resource for liberal and progressive thinkers.

The initial aim of Faith and Process was to help transform the more esoteric ideas generated by theologians and philosophers into more accessible and useful materials for lay people. This has resulted in a program that now is providing a clear, understandable voice to a theology that undergirds an extraordinarily powerful progressive approach to the interface between religion and the world.

Faith and Process and the Center for Process Studies spring from the radical reworking of the understanding of the nature of reality by Alfred North Whitehead. By affirming that *process* and not *substance* is the more fundamental dynamic of reality, the door is opened to a whole host of new perspectives for all fields of thought, including religion and theology.

Process and Faith has sought to provide thinking followers of diverse faith traditions a language that embraces all facets of life: science *and* religion; mind, body *and* spirit, faith *and* reason. The P&F web site is rich with resources that deal with a wide range of topics.

One of the most interesting resources for many site visitors is the "Ask Dr. Cobb" section. (John B. Cobb Jr., who is in his 80s, is the foremost process theologian, and one of the most important theological figures of the past 50 years.) Each month, he responds to a question from the public. There are more than 100 brief essays posted. While some of the topics may be of more interest to those within faith traditions (and those who are seeking to overcome bad theology and religious teachings), other topics are more generally interesting to progressives: animal rights, ethnic diversity, global warming, homosexuality, intelligent design, patriotism, process and science, process and Islam, among others.

While it is nearly impossible to sum up what makes process thought and process theology so unique and compelling for many, the web site has a quotation from Whitehead that helps: "God's aims always push us toward care for the world." In process theology, the Sacred is understood to be an intimate and integral part of every aspect of the world; and the Sacred is recognized as seeking the well-being of all. (Think about that for a moment.)

These ideas play themselves out in ways that are harmonious with progressive aims. Simultaneous, these concepts strongly oppose such nonsense as God being out there punishing people and whole nations for supposed bad behavior; as well as the idea that coercive domination over people and the natural world is somehow divinely sanctioned, caused or even desirable. In process thought, the divine form of power is *persuasive* and not coercive. (Tell that to those responsible for the interrogations at Guantanamo.)

The world certainly would be on the way to being a far better place if it were generally affirmed that the fundamental creative drive in the universe seeks the well-being of all, and does this in a persuasive manner – and that we humans are called to model this.

## Please Talk to Me

As musician Peter Gabriel once said, "Please talk to me!" I invite Alliance readers to let me know your questions and concerns. I would really like to have a dialogue with you on the topics that matter to you. For example, I could focus on the "pastor problems" that both Obama and McCain have had (with Jeremiah Wright and John Hagee, respectively). Both situations merit a closer look for progressives. Or, perhaps there are other topics. Please let me know via e-mail ([admin@cctnet.com](mailto:admin@cctnet.com)).



Lawsuit continued from page 4

ARCE then refused to return the BAILEYS' property to them. WILLIAM BAILEY told ARCE that his personal property and belongings were not trash and that all of his property and belongings were clean, neat, and orderly and there was no reason for the "Disciples" to have taken the property. He again asked ARCE if he could get his property back and ARCE responded "No, but you can get off my property."

During his conversation with ARCE, WILLIAM BAILEY started to experience chest pains due to his heart condition. Unfortunately, his heart medication was one of the items that the "Disciples" had taken and thrown away.

Due to the way he was feeling and the fact that he did not have any medication, WILLIAM BAILEY ended his conversation with ARCE and left the RESCUE MISSION.

After WILLIAM BAILEY left the RESCUE MISSION, he briefly explained to LORI BAILEY what ARCE had said. She then went into the RESCUE MISSION to talk with ARCE.

ARCE admitted to her that he "sent a few guys over there to clean it up." He also said that he did this because "the Fresno Police Department asked me to."

As she was leaving the RESCUE MISSION, LORI BAILEY ran into "Shaggy" who worked at the RESCUE MISSION, and told him what had happened and that ARCE would not return her property.

Shaggy then contacted a "Disciple" by walkie-talkie telephone and told him to remove the BAILEYS' property from the dumpster, because prior thereto, the "Disciples" had confiscated the BAILEYS' property and had thrown it into a dumpster located at the RESCUE MISSION.

LORI BAILEY then met a few "Disciples" at the dumpster, but she was only able to retrieve 3 blankets and a sleeping bag out of all of the BAILEYS' belongings and possessions, that had been taken. She was only allowed five minutes to retrieve the belongings.



Lori Bailey spoke on the nationwide radio broadcast of the Homelessness Marathon.

During her two years living on the Hill, LORI BAILEY saw the "Disciples" take other peoples' personal property and belongings that were on the sidewalk along G Street near where the RESCUE MISSION is located. The "Disciples" would remove people's belongings from the sidewalk if the belongings were left there before 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon.


At this time, William Bailey is working but he is having difficulty in processing his payroll paperwork since his drivers' license and/or social security card are required therefor, but they were included in the items that the "Disciples" threw away.

[End of complaint filed in Superior Court]

In a Public Records Act request I made to the City of Fresno, they denied giving Arce and the Rescue Mission authority to take and destroy homeless peoples property. I contacted Larry Arce for a comment on this article, but he did not get back to me.

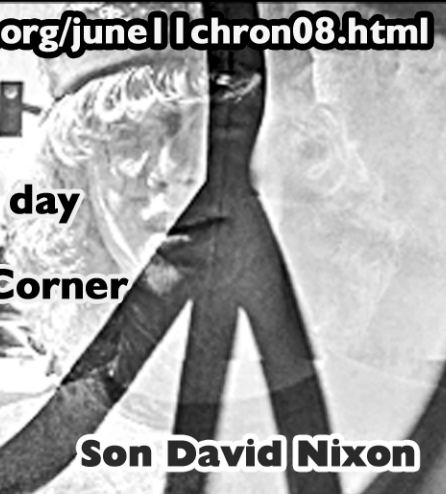



The "Disciples" caught in the act of taking and destroying homeless peoples property.



# Chronicles


Peace • Justice • Big Mama



[sunmt.org/june11chron08.html](http://sunmt.org/june11chron08.html)

**Family day at PeaceCorner**


**Mom Elizabeth Nixon**      **Son David Nixon**



**So Long, Utah it's been good to know ya**

Hear & see our fav clips of Utah Phillips singing songs of protest, peace & political history.

[sunmt.org/utahsolong.html](http://sunmt.org/utahsolong.html)



**Elfie & Honey Walk on Wild Side**

[sunmt.org/may15chron08.html](http://sunmt.org/may15chron08.html)

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# QUEER EYE

## Historic Day in Fresno

by Dan Waterhouse

They were lined up in front of the Fresno County clerk's office in downtown Fresno on Tuesday morning, June 17th. Over 100 gay and lesbian couples were waiting to either marry or to get their marriage license, on the first full day that same-sex couples could legally marry or obtain marriage licenses in California.

In the first hour after the doors opened, at least 25 couples had wed or were waiting to be married. Many others were filling out the license paperwork.

The first to be wed were Tinasha Broadus and Alicia Rice, both African-Americans who have been together for 11 years. Their moms were also present when they were married by retired Fresno judge A. Dennis Caeton.

As I walked around the office observing and taking photos, I was struck by the good will radiating from the clerk's staff and by all the happy faces. It turned into an emotional day for me: I stopped for a moment and suddenly got teary-eyed, out of amazement and joy that this was actually happening.

Noticeably absent were large numbers of anti-marriage protestors. A counter protest was expected, so County Clerk Victor Salazar had security in and around his offices increased. Fresno police on horseback and in vehicles, and county security officers were visible.

A few protestors showed up late in the morning. One man confronted Salazar, saying to him, "hey, you could have just stopped marrying everyone." The protestor was referring to the decision by Kern County's clerk, Ann Barnett, to cease all weddings by her office after she was told she legally could not refuse to perform ceremonies for same-sex couples if she continued doing weddings. She claimed that "for budgetary reasons" she would not perform ceremonies after June 13th. She left 25 heterosexual couples high and dry looking for new venues; at least one couple may sue Barnett.

Local supporters of same-sex marriage turned out in force to support those taking the plunge. Members of several community groups, including Central California Alliance, "Stop The Initiative", and United Student Pride (the LGBT group at Cal State, Fresno) mingled with the couples.

Elsewhere around the Valley, a small group of protestors showed up at the Tulare County Courthouse as marriages began in Visalia. Although the Kern County clerk opted to stop performing marriages altogether, ceremonies were held however on the grounds of the county administration building in downtown Bakersfield.

Two last-ditch efforts by anti-marriage groups to stop weddings until after the November election also failed on the 17th. The First District Court of Appeal flatly denied a stay request filed on June 12th by the Campaign for Children and Families. The opposition group argued that the Supreme Court did not have the power to change the law. A Sacramento Superior Court judge also denied an injunction to individual county supervisors from Yuba, Stanislaus, Nevada and Sutter counties later the same day. The supervisors argued the gender-neutral marriage form was illegal because it had not been reviewed by the public or approved by the Legislature.



Jason Scott (right) and Randy Gray (left) exchange vows at their wedding. Jason is the local leader of Marriage Equality USA.



Clark Willits (left) and Geoff Twitchell (right) at the front counter, beginning the application process.



Couples waiting outside the clerk's office.



Juan Bustamante and Jeffrey Robinson (of Community Link) waiting in line outside to legally marry. They consider themselves married for the last 15 years.

All photos on this page by Dan Waterhouse



County Clerk staffer entering information into her computer as happy couple looks on.



Assistant clerk explaining process to crowd.





## An Evening with Greek gods, goddesses and the *Muralistics*

By Francine Ramos

There are monumental events that happen right here in our ever-expanding city that often go unnoticed, moments when one person's influence can shape a generation and bring in images of antiquity that will forever change the future of Fresno. On Saturday, 6 June that is exactly what occurred at Fresno High School. Under the guidance of art instructor Samantha Canales Fresno's first student-created mural was unveiled. Those in attendance were taken back to a time in Greek mythology when gods and heroes walked the earth. Samantha Canales and after-school students also known as the Muralistics painted a rich and imaginative mural on a 12x54' wall, depicting their interpretation of Greek mythology.

In attendance were members of the community, elated family members from both The Muralists and artist Samantha Canales. Beckie Cortes, a family member of Canales, smiling said, "We (the family) are so proud of her and what she has done. She has been so great to the students."

During the event several of the students showered Canales with flowers and a few students also read letters to Canales. After the mural was unveiled, students and some school faculty toasted with champagne glasses full of cider to the colorful sight. The students were all smiles as they posed for pictures in front of their newly created art. The mural brings to Fresno High School-Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom arts and justice, Ares, the god of war, as well as several other pillars in Greek mythology. Along with the gods of the distant past there are remnants from each of the student's hearts and minds placed by each brush stroke into the mural.

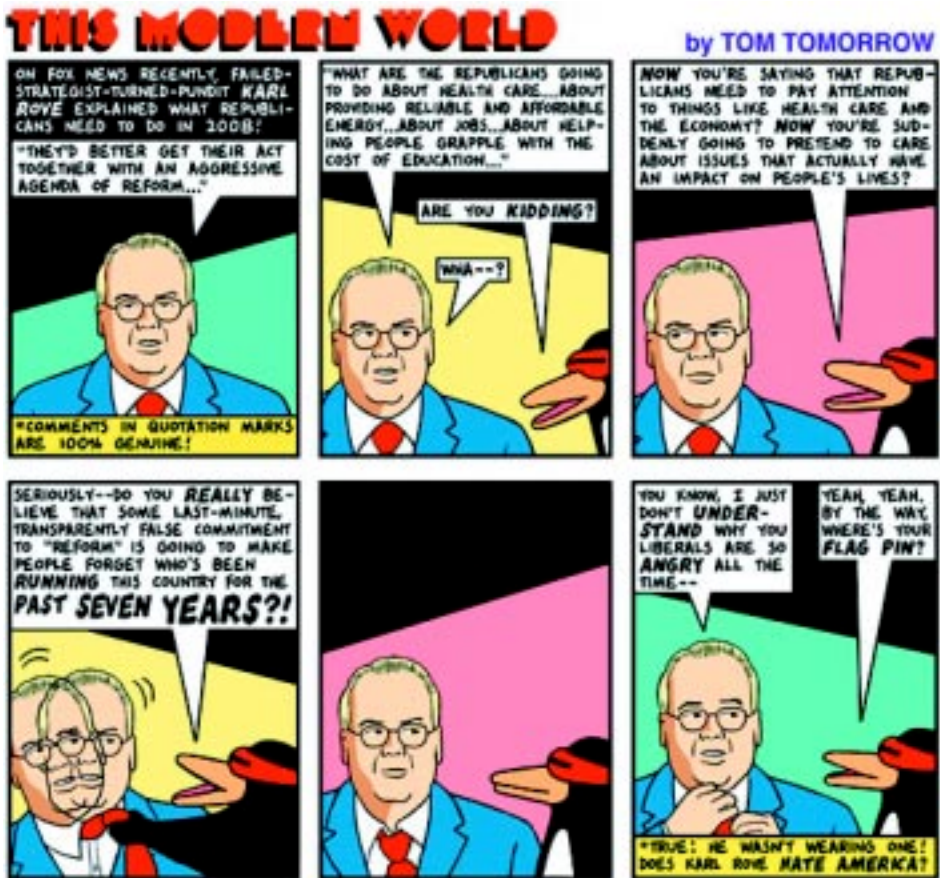
Canales, standing before the mural said, "I am so overwhelmed. When we began not one of knew how to paint." Scanning the large mural that stands before her, it is clear that each of them will leave with not only having learned to paint but also as a cemented part of Fresno High history for years to come as artists or as they self-proclaim, Muralistics. The Muralistics consist of Daniella Valencia, Pahoua Vang, Devon Jacoby, Martin Chacon, Bruno Gonzalez, Jaime Campos, Justin Green, Tuulima Maga, Idalia Garcia, Juan Gutierrez, Crystal Yang, Richardo Garciano and Eric Gonzalez.



Canales posing with Muralistics

The event carried on with performers bracing the windy weather to continue the celebration. Poet Brian Medina, as well as, other Fresno poets and live music by Lance Canales and Latif were heard. Rounding out the evening was a hip hop crew and Salsa dance performances. It was a monumental evening for not only the students who created the mural, but also for the many future students that will attend Fresno High School. The Mural will stand as a piece of Fresno history and the idea that one person's influence can change the course of one's

life and educate the community. The Muralistics artwork will go on just as the fascinating tales of Greek Mythology.



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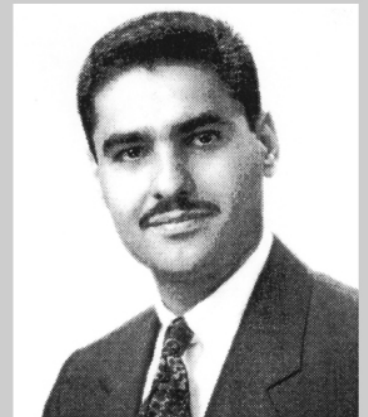
Ed & Toni Eames

For their hard-won achievements in gaining visibility and accessibility for us all; and for their sterling example of what personal independence and social interdependence can be.



Ingrid Carmean

For her generous contribution to peace and the environment. Her invaluable volunteer work with organizations like WILPF and FresCamp, as well as the Fresno Unified School District, has been done unobtrusively with intelligence and dedication.



Dr. Ali Rezapour

A deeply caring physician who has actively organized his peers and the community to fight for single payer, universal health care, and who, despite a busy medical practice, consistently makes time to participate in the Peace Corner, serve on the FFCF board, table the free speech area in Fresno State, and generally be everywhere that good people are standing up for what's right.



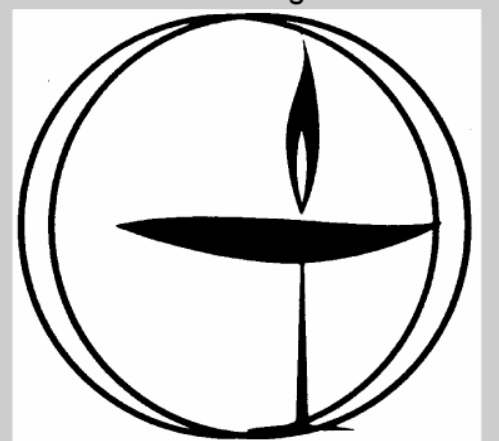
Becky & Aaron Kern

To Becky and Aaron Kern who have stood up for their beliefs including protesting the war and challenging the powers that be even when it caused them to be ostracized by their peers. They both regularly volunteer to provide food to low-income families in North Fork, and both plan to follow in their father's footsteps and grow healthy food for their community.



Tawanish Wyatt

For outstanding leadership in promoting higher education within the Native American community and advancing knowledge and understanding of American Indian culture, history and issues.



### Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Committee

Unitarian-Universalists believe in the worth and dignity of each human being, and in the ethical application of religion. The Social Justice Committee engages in and promotes Good Works as a manifestation of this faith.

## Stir it Up

Angela Price will host Gene Roza to talk about the Medicare for All program (HR 676 which would provide comprehensive health insurance coverage for all United States residents).

.Wednesday, July 9th- 3 p.m. - KFCF 88.1

### Second Wednesday Film Series

## Catch – 22

For our summer fun we will be showing the film "Catch 22". Mike Nichols superbly directs this cinematic adaptation of Joseph Heller's scathing black comedy about a small group of flyers in the Mediterranean in 1944. Capt. Yossarian (Alan Arkin) tries to escape the travesties of World War II by convincing his Air Force commanders that he is crazy. Hilarity ensues, but so does reality as he watches his close friends, played by MarTin Sheen and Art Garfunkel die in the ridiculousness of war. 121 minutes.

Wednesday, July 9th

7 pm @ the FCNV (No noon showings during the Summer months)

Potluck @ 6:30 / Discussion to follow evening showing

For more information call: 237-3223





# WOMEN’S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, PO Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

All content paid for by WILPF

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

June was a busy month for the local branch of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. On June 7 the first annual WILPF Celebration Brunch honored new members and acknowledged our many accomplishments since the branch year began in August of 2007. The event was held in the amazing Wolk garden in the shade of beautiful trees with welcomed cool breezes. Member Pat Wolk is a pro when it comes to outdoor entertaining! She was a part of the Brunch Committee which also included Nora DeWitt, Laura Fultz, Earlene Fiori, and Jean Hays. Meta Schettler provided beautiful table decorations. The potluck variety of food rivaled a five star restaurant. Entertainment was provided by the Raging Grannies who passed song sheets around the tables so everyone could join in. The Grannies were in top voice and led everyone in singing 5 politically radical songs to provide food for thought.

Besides officially welcoming more than 18 new members it was good to celebrate what the branch has done this year. We live in difficult times; it’s easy to become discouraged and to feel that we are not really making a difference. The revitalization, one of the products of gathering together to provide hope, humor and to realize that we are not alone in our efforts, helps to give the needed boost to our journey for peace and justice. This meeting of almost 50 people tells of the importance of WILPF in our community

Other WILPF events included the National Congress June 25-29 in Des Moines, Iowa. Representing the Fresno Branch were Ellie Bluestein, Joan Poss, Jan Slagter, and



Ellie Bluestein listens as Dr. Jean Kennedy was reading her biography that will go into the program of the International WILPF meeting.

### WILPF Coming Events:

**July 28 Next WILPF branch meeting. Location TBA**

**August 16 WILPF Branch Annual Retreat:  
Sandra Iyall's home - 4533 N. Del Mar Ave.**

Jean Hays. There will be a complete report in the WILPF section of the next issue of the Community Alliance.

A Report from Dr. Jean Kennedy, WILPF’s Building Beloved Community Committee Chairperson:

There is a major problem going on nationally and internationally and the problem is “Water”. Right here in Fresno we have a water problem that is impacting our homeless population. One thing I will never forget was a woman telling me she needed water.....something I took for granted and thought was easily accessible to the homeless population here in Fresno. Rene, the lady that was with me, asked one homeless lady, “If you could have anything out here (on the streets), what would it be?” The homeless sistah replied, “Water”. After hearing this, I began to wonder what it would take to get water to the homeless folks during the hot summer months, at least.

The homeless woman informed us that she needed water to take her HIV and TB medication, and that there

were others like her facing the same problem. She also wanted water to drink so she would not become dehydrated. All the homeless women also need water for hygienic purposes: to bathe, wash their hair, etc. I had no idea that obtaining fresh water was in fact, harder than it sounded, so we have started a water project to mobilize the social justice community at large, and to see if we can get water donated to the homeless. For those of you who wish to go down in person to drop off water, the homeless camp is off of H Street (under the 41 overpass, behind the Rescue Mission). If you prefer, you can also make a donation to purchase water. Call Dr. Jean Kennedy for details at 559-270-1023, or Sister Renee at 559-251-0540.

Water today is like black gold (oil). We, as a community sometimes take water for granted. It is a health issue and that is why KFCF’s Valley Black Talk show, “ Health Comes At a Premium”, hosted by Dr. Jean Kennedy the third Monday of the month at 8 p.m., is spearheading this project with the collaboration of several other groups which have been mobilized for this purpose. WILPF’s local branch has signed on to this effort and invites others to join in with them. After all, water is a human right and to not have water becomes a human rights issue. Filled containers of water, or clean, empty gallon containers, ready to fill may be dropped off at the KFCF studios, across Wishon from St. Therese Church. Donations with which to purchase water will also be greatly appreciated. Contact Dr. Jean Kennedy at the phone number listed above for further details.



Jean Hays (WILPF Fresno branch Chairperson) playing the keyboard for the Raging Grannies.

## Summer Pledge Drive: “Take Another Look!”

By Halfrid Nelson

Support local TV and the diverse programming by joining the summer on air pledge drive, “Take Another Look”, from July 14-19. KNXT-TV is the only full-power Catholic TV Station in the nation and serves the people of the San Joaquin Valley from Merced to Bakersfield, 24/7. Channel 49 (ch 9 on Comcast cable) strives to communicate the best in human and spiritual values through diverse inspirational, educational and cultural programming.

Channel 49 has recently expanded its programming to include daily, independent, competent and substantive news coverage that is not available on any other TV station in the Valley. Every weekday evening, Monday-Friday, you can tune into the news hour beginning at 6 PM with *Democracy Now*, the largest, award-winning media collaboration in he United States. *Deutsche Welle World Journal* follows from 7 to 7:30. The World Journal is produced by an independent German organization that broadcasts world wide in several languages and focuses on a global view of the news as seen from a European perspective. It can also be seen Monday-Friday at 8 AM.

**Attention news aficionados, social activists and political junkies!** We are seeking the support of those who are pleased with the addition of quality news programming to help in our summer pledge drive. Join us for the fun. Be on air talking to your friends, neighbors, and associates and encouraging them to support these excellent programs during the pledge drive. If you are reluctant to be on live television, we are in need of folks who are willing to answer phones and take pledges. We would like your help any night from 5:30 to 7:30, July 14-18. If you would like to participate as an organization, we would be happy to feature your organization the evening that you select to volunteer. PLEASE, contact Halfrid Nelson at 488-7440 for more details.

KNXT-TV, Channel 49 Fresno and 38 Bakersfield is a non-profit, educational corporation owned and operated by the Catholic Diocese of Fresno. All donations are tax deductible.

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Friday, July 4 • 9 AM - 1 PM**  
Interfaith Celebration of our Diversity. Brunch and Program at O'Neill Park on Barstow between Cedar and Chestnut. \$5 donation per person. \$20 maximum per family. Call Bryan Jessup 322-6146 for information.

**Sunday, July 6 • 2 PM**  
Gloria La Riva will speak at Comite Pro Uno, 435 Fresno Street in Fresno. Her topic will be Immigrants and the struggle for equality. The presentation will be in Spanish and English.

**Wednesday, July 9 • Pot Luck at 6:30, film at 7 PM**  
Video Presentation: for our Summer fun, we will show "Catch 22" at the Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N, Van Ness – Monthly Every Second Wednesday Mike Nichols superbly directs this cinematic adaptation of Joseph Heller's scathing black comedy about a small group of U. S. airmen in the Mediterranean in 1944. Capt. Yossarian (Alan Arkin) tries to escape the travesties of World War II by convincing his Air Force commanders he is crazy. Hilarity ensues, but so does reality, as he watches his close friends, played by Martin Sheen and Art Garfunkel, die in the ridiculousness of war. We'll add popcorn for an additional treat! 121 minutes. FREE. (Note: NO NOON-TIME SHOWING during summer, will resume in September)

**Wednesday, July 9 • 8:30 AM - 5:30 PM**  
California Emerging Clean Energy Technology Forum - includes discussion on hybrid trucks and plug-in hybrids at UC Merced. Sponsored by US EPA, Cal EPA, Valley Air District, South Coast Air District. For more information contact: Maricela Velasquez

Senior Public Information Representative  
San Joaquin Unified Air Pollution Control District  
1990 East Gettysburg Avenue | Fresno, California 93726  
(559) 230-5849 | FAX (559) 230-6111  
[www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org)

**Thursday, July 10 • 7 PM**  
Meeting of students and young adults interested in creating a peace group for their generation. Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno (Van Ness and McKinley by Fresno City College). Contact: Carolyn Hudson, 338-0162, [peaceedison@gmail.com](mailto:peaceedison@gmail.com)

**Tuesday, July 15**  
Deadline for articles and calendar items to the August 2008 Community Alliance newspaper. Send information to [AllianceEditor@Comcast.net](mailto:AllianceEditor@Comcast.net)

**Friday, July 18 • 5:30 and 8 PM**  
Fresno Filmworks presents "Priceless" at the Tower Theatre, starring Audrey Tautou. The film tells the story of Jean, a shy bartender who is mistaken for a millionaire by an opportunist named Irene (Tautou). When Jean comically transforms himself into a gigolo to gain Irene's affections, she slowly warms to him. In French, with English subtitles. Tickets cost \$10 general and \$8 for students and seniors. Tickets can be purchased by check or cash at the Tower Theatre box office, 815 E. Olive Ave.; at JA Photography, 2003 N. Van Ness; or via PayPal at [www.FresnoFilmworks.org](http://www.FresnoFilmworks.org). For details, visit [www.FresnoFilmworks.org](http://www.FresnoFilmworks.org) or call (559) 221-0755.

**Saturday, July 19 • 3:30 - 5 PM**  
Fresno City Council member and candidate for mayor Henry T. Perea will be the speaker at the Central Valley

Progressive PAC meeting. Members and the public are welcome to hear and ask questions of Henry as he discusses major issues facing the city of Fresno. The meeting is at the Fresno Center for Non-Violence (1584 N. Van Ness Ave. (at McKinley), Fresno. For more information, visit [www.cvppac.org](http://www.cvppac.org) or call 559-435-7360.

**Saturday, July 26, 2008 • 11 AM - 1PM**  
The Uprooting Racism Project and The Central Valley Cultural Heritage Institute Invites You to Attend An Islamic Cultural and Religious Diversity Workshop at the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno 2111 East Nees Ave (just east of SE Corner Nees & Maple).

The Islamic Center has prepared cultural and religious diversity seminars to fellow Americans so you will get to know Muslims and address issues of mutual concern. In addition, the Center has prepared special seminars to address the needs of law enforcement agencies, medical providers, educators and media agencies. The seminars provide information that will enhance the cultural competency of the participants and shed light on issues pertinent to the Muslim community. It will include the following:

- \* Basic Beliefs of Muslims
- \* Islamic practices, holidays and rituals
- \* Islamophobia and hate crimes
- \* Contributions of American Muslims
- \* The American Muslim Identity
- \* Muslim women and Leadership (leadership roles at home and Islamic institutions)

RSVP by July 20th to Vickie Fouts at [UprootingRacism@sti.net](mailto:UprootingRacism@sti.net) or 658-8260



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# These Hands - A Music Review

By Rick Flores

I'm writing this while staying in a lonely room at the Tenaya Lodge, glancing at the Lakers who at the moment are winning big over the Celtics, but the sound is off. What I'm really doing is listening to Lance Fluteman Canales sing about the Mighty Oak and the San Joaquin.

This is after a day of having driven an antique car from Fish Camp to Yosemite which makes me feel strangely connected to Lance's earthiness despite an obvious contrast between the gaudy and the beautiful.

The music brings me back

Lance is singing of catching rattlesnakes and then letting them go. Somehow he makes me feel that I could do that right now except for the fact I am deathly afraid of rattlesnakes. But Lance's slide guitar work takes me on a path, outside this typical swanky hotel room. I feel like I can cross that river even though I'm afraid of getting my feet wet. Today I have seen nature at its grandest while feeling the inescapable snare of encompassing capitalism. At this moment, I can't think of anything as diametrically opposed. I take a momentary break and notice the Lakers are up by more than 20. On a portable cd player, currently Lance sounds like he is a Mississippi Delta Blues man. Since I know his tribal roots are Yaqui, Cora and Mayo I am once again reminded of our universal connectedness. He sings the old sun is burned out and a new day is here. Odd how most every attraction on this Yosemite trip with a price tag attached to it labels itself with tribal words. Earlier today I was one of the many wandering around the Ahwahnee Inn. There, in the room with the walk-in fireplace is an old picture of a California Indian hanging on the wall next to one of John Muir. Lance sings about how we no longer listen to Mother Earth. It reminds me of the struggle it takes to get outside myself and my ego - enlarged by delusional self importance - so that I can truly appreciate this beautiful world.

Aboriginal aliens

Somehow Lance's guitar on this new CD album of his called "These Hands" seems more real than my sterile surroundings. I consider taking a break from writing and going down to the Jackalope Bar and ordering another Anchor Steam. Hell, I'd have one

brought up to my room if I wasn't so damn cheap

During NBA timeouts the television network runs ads for movies playing at theaters everywhere and they do this incessantly. I wonder if the Yaquis had a myth about a superhuman character like the Incredible Hulk. Lance is moaning about scars where shackles use to be. "Ain't got no chains on me but I can still feel that whip crack so hard." I ponder the possibility of one sitting in comfort, lap of luxury so to speak, and still being an unsuspecting prisoner?

On the way up to Fish Camp just before Coarsegold, I saw for the first time the monstrosity of the Chukchansi Resort. This is not the world Lance Canales

now. These hotel walls making me numb along with the alcohol and the NBA..

I remember Lance telling me a story of when he met the late Utah Phillips. How Utah took the time to admire Lance's flutes and fretwork on the guitar. I reflect on the many nice people I met today - many of them from European countries flexing the strength of their Euros against the weakening American dollar. I look up and it seems the Celtics are coming back. Lance is riding 45 mph on the shoulder of the road - that takes me back to earlier in the day how the Model A I drove wandered all over the road on its bicycle thin tires while other tourists snap digital photos from their 21st century vehicles. Lance sings of clear eyes and straight hands - something you need when driving an antique car on mountainous roads. He talks of these hills as the hills of his ancestors and how the spirit will carry his soul home, safely back. Back to some inner circle, I imagine, where those with strong spirits stand tall with the redwoods. I almost caught a glimpse of this today watching Bridalveil Falls amongst German and Japanese tourists. How such beauty touches us all and our connection not just by our humanity but something much greater, like this fleeting affinity we have with nature. It gives me hope.

Lance sings of holding on to a fragment of this beautiful timeless world. There is something we cannot afford to lose and perhaps something yet to be gained. Lance's slide guitar work on "Going Down South Texas" is powerful. He writes of leaving some roses on his grandma's grave. The thought comes we are still connected as long as we allow ourselves to be open to the connection. This notebook I write in has a Bible quote printed at the bottom of the page. In an odd way it connects with Lance's message. From Psalms: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." I contemplate this while listening to Lance's soul felt flute. It inspires a thought of how believing can be all important unto itself, the spiritual form is what takes us outside our small materialistic oppressed frames. I look in the hotel room mirror and see an aging short fat man who has stinky feet and uses magnifiers to read, but somehow Lance's flute playing takes me outside and I forget about such small packages. I am transported somewhere else, in my memory I am on the bank of the Merced watching the incredible power of the river, flowing with wild foamy current over timeless boulders. The flute instrumental is called "Desert Wind" but I feel the river. Another flute solo follows. It is called "Lonesome Wind," and I can hear the breeze through the pine trees, tall, thin and sometimes ghostly.

I no longer care who wins the basketball game, so long ago put on mute. It is Lance's lonesome sound that takes me home. I can feel him encouraging me to see that I am not the only living thing in this sterile but comfortable room. That if I only have the heart to take the journey and the soul to see - I can touch generations, not only of my ancestors or those of Lance's but of this whole great beautiful world with all its boundless energy, both seen and unseen. Lance Canales' new CD entitled "These Hands" is available at the American Indian Store on Blackstone Avenue in Fresno and at [www.blackoakrecords.com](http://www.blackoakrecords.com)

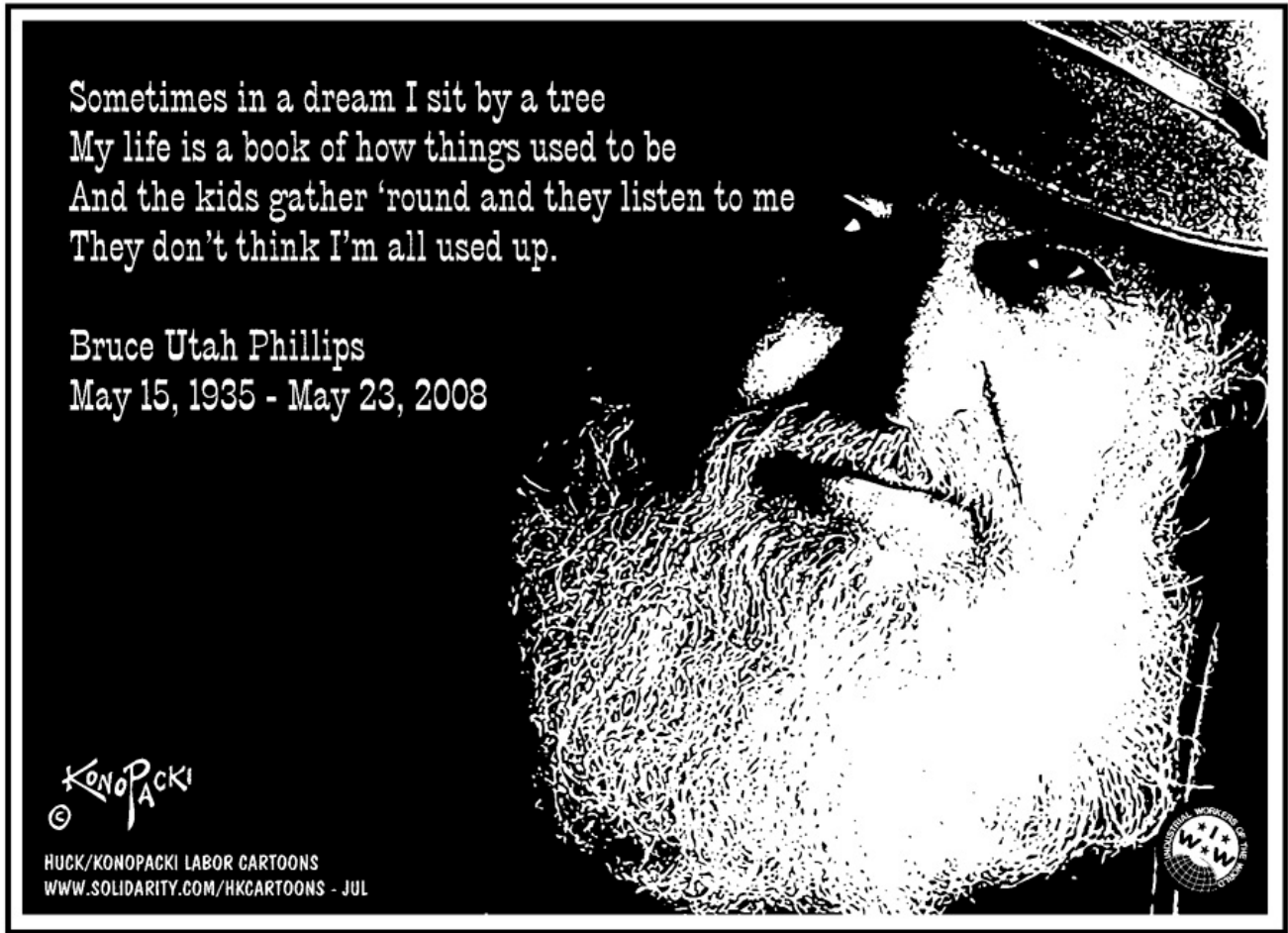
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Rick Flores hosts a music show called Wasteland of the Free on Tuesdays from 10 to noon on KFCF 88.1 FM. He lives and works on his family farm west of Easton.



sings about on "These Hands." He is all about something more permanent, a world where man's ugliness passes away and nature will once again have its way. It is in the past, in the stories of countless generations, that he sings of. "Prison walls of flesh and bone." I reflect on all the people gambling right now, what they might be looking for, possibly some part of a stolen identity taken by one-arm bandits who lost the other arm before they were ever born. A severed limb - invisible to the eye but missed by the soul.

Damn! I wish I had a better portable cd player because this one keeps skipping, playing the same three notes and chord from Lance's song about freedom. I move it from oak arm to wooden arm on this leather chair but it keeps repeating the same phrase about prison walls of flesh and bone. Lance is making me feel lonesome. I plead the same plead as he for a savior to save me. But only pain and tears can save me





## Fulfilling the Promise

By Ruth Gadebusch



One hundred and sixty years ago, an intrepid group of women, and a few male supporters, gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, on a hot sultry July day. Thus began the quest for the vote for women. Little did they expect it to be easy, but seventy-two years of blood, sweat and tears may have been somewhat more than expected.

Of course, they had a hint of it when the minister forgot to unlock the church which had been reserved, leaving someone to crawl in the window. Likewise it was necessary for Mr. Mott, a husband of one of the advocates, to preside — it being unseemly for a female to do so. The suffragist motto became, “Men their rights and nothing more. Women their rights and nothing less.” After all property rights, child custody and other such matters were also expected to change once women had the power of the vote. That just may be what struck such fear into the opponents.

When the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution passed in 1870, there was great joy, only to have it crushed upon learning that it did not include women. The recent collapse of Hillary Clinton’s campaign for the presidency has all too much of that same feeling. However, just as the suffragist of the 19th Century had to regroup and renew their efforts, women of the 21st Century must do the same. That does not mean that we desert the party that failed to give us a woman candidate in the coming election, for in recent years it is this party that has opened more doors for women. Then too, we must admitt that African-American men have also waited a long time for their rightful place in society.

When we get tired of the struggle ahead we should remind ourselves of the words of Carrie Chapman Catt: “It took George Washington six years to rectify man’s griev-

ances by war. But it took 72 years to establish women’s fights 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.” So it will be in obtaining a female president.

While the presidency was not to be this time, we cannot give up. Young women must not take for granted all that has been won for there are those who would roll the clock back rather than go forward. We must continue our step by step progress by becoming involved in the political progress.

It was in 1916, before women could vote, that Montana sent Jeannette Rankin as the first woman elected to Congress, but it was not until 1932 that Arkansas made Hattie Caraway the first female elected to the senate; although she had been preceded by Georgia’s Rebecca Felton who served a two day appointment! In 1924 Wyoming elected Nellie Taylor Ross as the first woman governor. Frances Perkins became the first woman to serve in the Cabinet when Franklin Roosevelt appointed her as Secretary of Labor in 1933. It wasn’t until 1997 that Madeleine Albright became the Secretary of State. Eleanor Roosevelt, appointed by Harry Truman in 1945 to the U.S. delegation to the United Nations, lead the drive for the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

For many years Margaret Chase Smith of Maine served as the lone female in the Senate. She was also the first woman to have her name placed in nomination for president at a party (Republican) convention; although not to be forgotten is Victoria Woodhull who had run for president, without party blessing, fifty years before women could vote. It was many years later before the Democrats had the name of Shirley Chisholm, the first African American women elected to Congress, placed in nomination and even later actually nominated Geraldine Ferraro as the vice-presidential candidate. California, which still awaits a woman governor, was the first state to have two women Senators (Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein) elected at the same time. It is also California’s Nancy Pelosi, who as Speaker of the House, holds the highest position ever held by a woman in the United States government.

It was in 1981 that Ronald Reagan appointed Sandra Day O’Connor to the Supreme Court where only one other woman, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, has ever served. It is no longer unique to have a woman doctor, or lawyer, or a commercial pilot. Most of the military is open to women with many holding high ranks. Business is more and more accommodating for women; though the pay differential remains, no matter the education of the job holder, or the level of the position. Nevertheless we have come a long way from the time that Dr. Mary Walker was arrested for wearing trousers on the street and her Congressional medal of Honor (bestowed on her for her work as an army surgeon during the Civil War) was revoked for her suffrage activities.

Still the Holy Grail of the United States presidency remains just out of reach. It most likely will not be achieved during the life time of this writer and the many women and men who have worked so hard to fulfill the dream of women’s equality, but this is no time to give up. We just pick up the pieces and go on. We owe it to those who fought for and won the rights that we have today —the women named above and the many others too numerous to name here. We owe it to ourselves and most especially to our daughters and their daughters. The world needs this talent but it will not bear fruit by resting on our laurels. It won’t happen with apathy. It won’t happen with sour grapes over the turn of events that we now face. It will happen only with more hard work.

There are issues in the coming election that deeply affect women. It is our responsibility to make those issues work for us. To name two: the next president will undoubtedly appoint more than one Supreme Court Justice and our California ballot will have another restriction regarding our reproductive life. Kathleen Brown in an unsuccessful campaign for governor noted that, “Men use power to get at issues. Women use issues to get power.” It may not be what we expected but the November election is still an opportunity for women to exercise power. Let’s get to work.

###

Ruth Gadebusch is a former naval officer, 13 years as a Fresno Unified School District Trustee, Vice-President of the Center for Civic Education, Community Activist.

## What We Teach Our Children

By Jem Bluestein

I try to teach my kids how to listen and read critically. It’s pretty easy, most of the time, like with TV advertisements or statements by the administration: just turn the statement 180 degrees to see the truth:

- Cigarette smoking is cool and will help you get laid/ Cigarette smoking will make you impotent, ill or dead.
- We are fighting for freedom and democracy/ We are fighting for world-wasting corporate greed, control and slavery.

Of course it is most crucial that young people learn this exercise, since more energy (money) is spent on convincing them to mindlessly consume the corporate line (advertising and other forms of propaganda) than on anything else in this world, with the possible exception of the business of killing humans. And in this business too, we are the world leaders. There should be some suspicious young minds when we assert that we are fighting for peace (!?! ) while we sell more weapons to the world than any other nation and spend more on our military than all the other countries combined.

Our economy is utterly dependent on the business of war, on distributing arms world-wide and fanning conflict everywhere. Our military has ever been the tool of the corporate fat cats. On all continents our m.o. is to brutally destroy (yes, even democratic) governments, install, train and arm vicious, bloody puppet regimes (Pinochet, Suharto, Noriega, Saddam Hussein, Musharraf, etc) to oppress and control their peoples through terror and death squads, while we literally and virtually rape their countries. (Look up Smedley Butler.) \*We are fighting a war on terrorism/ We are fighting a war of and for terrorism.\*

Increased violence, devastation of infrastructure (rearranging the rubble), instability, ter-

rorism and record opium production are just a few of the results of our ongoing efforts. And the whole world knows that information does not come from torture. Torture is for the purpose of making someone confess to anything that will stop the pain. It is for the purpose of terrorizing populations. When we engage in it we guarantee that our soldiers will be subjected to it as well. Now more than ever, what we inflict on others will bite us. The weapons we sell always end up in the hands of our enemies and kill our own. The trillions we throw to the war criminals/contractors/mercenaries are causing our own economic and social collapse.



Jem Bluestein and family - Cordia, Isaiah (now 9), Masha (now 14).  
Photo by Joshua Freeman

How about this one: \*We support our troops/ We abandon our troops.\* Our heroic children wish to give the ultimate sacrifice for their country, only to be used and trashed for the profits of the already disgustingly rich, while families and veterans struggle and suffer. Our soldiers, like other Americans are now considered disposable resources by the transnational corporations. (We used to be valuable as labor and for our consumer power. Anymore, we are relegated to the global human compost pile. In other words, we thought we had a home, a job, a pension, insurance, health care, a safety net, a planet capable of sustaining human life-well forget about it.

The fate of the gulf coast awaits us-we’ve been used and abandoned by our government, which has merged with corporate and other organized crime elements. I maintain we are fighting the wrong enemies. All soldiers are innocent, all civilians are innocent. Only those who profit from war are the enemies of the world. All the children are our children. We are united in the suffering that is brought upon us by the ultimate cynicism, unchecked corporate capitalism.

Think about it: if you have a system which recognizes only one value—ultimate accumulation of wealth, what result could we possibly have other than the devastation of every other supposed human value? Genocide, ecocide, suicide (corporate and global), rape and slavery are guaranteed, in fact required by the corporate logic, Q.E.D. We must agree on and articulate another set of values and stage a global revolution against the monster we have fed. The blood is on our hands, as if we were the Nazi public during that era. Until we change direction 180 degrees, we should recognize in ourselves what the world sees. We could call ourselves the United States of Death.

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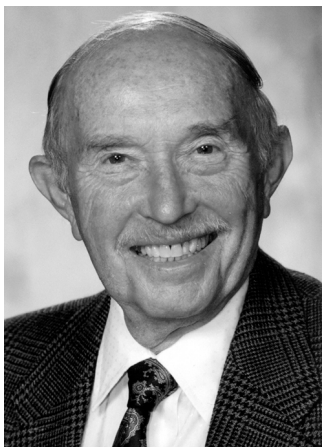
Jem Bluestein is a folk musician, forester and a massage therapist, living in Clovis. 298 1623

**From the  
Greenhouse**  
by Franz Weinschenk

Some Shorties in the News:

Mathew LaClair, a precocious New Jersey high school senior thought that some statements about global warming in his civics textbook were "just plain wrong." Published by Houghton Mifflin, the title of the book is "American Government." Though designed for use in college, it is widely utilized by high school students in "advanced placement" classes. James Hansen, the director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, totally agrees with Mathew. In a letter to the publishers he mentioned that in its discussion about global warming, the book contains "a large number of clearly erroneous statements" that give students "the mistaken impression that the scientific evidence of global warming is doubtful and uncertain." For example, the 2005 edition states that "science doesn't know whether we are experiencing a dangerous level of global warming or how bad the greenhouse effect is, if it exists at all." Although the 2007 edition modifies this a little, it still maintains that global warming is "enmeshed in scientific uncertainty" and that science "doesn't know how bad the greenhouse effect is." And who do you suppose the authors are? Surprise, surprise! One is John Dilulio, who recently served as the director of President Bush's Office of Faith-based Initiatives; the other is James Wilson currently the "Ronald Reagan Professor of Public Policy" at Pepperdine University. Man, these Bushies sure do get around, don't they?

Just last year the Baptist Convention adopted a reso-



lution urging their members to proceed cautiously when forming conclusions about global warming because "many scientists reject the idea of catastrophic human-induced global warming" Well, now only a year later, there's been a 180 degree turn-around inasmuch as 46 influential members of the Southern Baptist Convention, including three past presidents criticized their own denomination for being "too timid" in confronting global warming. "Our cautious response to these issues in the face of mounting evidence may be seen by the world as uncaring, reckless and ill-informed. . . We can do better," they said.

The Southern Baptist Convention is the largest Protestant denomination in the country. Its Washington policy director, the Rev. Richard Cizik, has for years advocated more action to combat climate change saying that "to harm this world by environmental degradation is an offense against God!" However, his advocacy has raised eyebrows among such religious luminaries as James Dobson and Gary Bauer because, as they see it, people like Cizik, give the impression that the denomination will be labeled "liberal, democratic, left wing, tied to population control and big government." And while there are still some holdouts, the fact that 46 Baptist leaders such as current President Frank Page, and past Presidents James Merritt and Jack Graham signed a document pledging themselves to do their part in fighting global warming "without any further lingering over the basic reality of the problem and of our responsibility to address it," says a lot. "Humans," they say, "must be proactive and take responsibility for our contribution to climate change—big and small." Amen.

Frito-Lay, the chip king is going to be using parabolic mirrors to generate the steam which it uses to cook its popular snacks at its Modesto plant. Usually, parabolic mirrors are used to generate electricity, but this time the company will use a football-sized field of trough-like mirrors to direct the sun's rays onto water-filled glass pipes that get so hot they

generate the steam which is used to cook those aptly named "Sun Chips." Plans are under way to bring a similar plant on line in Casa Grande, Arizona. "Chip ahoy!"

Meanwhile, the Southern California Edison is planning the largest solar energy installation in the nation. The company will be using the rooftops of a two-square mile area in Riverside and San Bernadino Counties to install enough solar panels to power 162,000 homes. And yet another power company, FPL (Florida Power and Light) plans to complete the Beacon Solar Project, a 2,000 acre parabolic solar plant in the Mojave Desert—enough power to electrify 200,000 homes by 2010.

About a mile off the coast of Montana de Oro State Park, located just south of Morro Bay, the Thousand Oak Company has applied for permission to study the possibility of using the up and down motion of waves to produce electricity. There are already half a dozen different companies claiming they can produce a constant flow of electricity from the vertical motion of ocean waves.

And finally, you might just want to know that while Sen. John McCain says he's all for fighting global warming, in 2007, out of 535 members of Congress, he was the only one who skipped every single one of 15 votes deemed critical for the environment by the League of Conservation Voters. I guess that way he can tell both sides he didn't vote against them.

###

Franz Weinschenk has been a teacher and school administrator in Fresno for over fifty years. He can be contacted by e-mail at [franzie@SCCDD.org](mailto:franzie@SCCDD.org)

 <p><b>Leslie E. Bullock, MSW, LCSW</b> Mindfulness Based Approaches In Adult, Adolescent and Family Psychotherapy</p> <p>5464 N. Palm Ave. Suite B Fresno, CA. 93704</p> <p>559-908-0925</p>	<p><b>WE DONT BURN HERETICS - WE WELCOME THEM!</b> Would you like to be welcomed too? <b>Central Valley Alliance of Atheists and Skeptics</b> Become a member and help us promote a secular, rational viewpoint throughout the Central Valley. Website: <a href="http://www.cvaas.org">www.cvaas.org</a></p>	 <p><b>ORGANIZATION DESIGN &amp; DEVELOPMENT</b> 636 EAST FLORADORA FRESNO, CA 93728 559.264.4421 <a href="mailto:PAULPIERCE@COMCAST.NET">PAULPIERCE@COMCAST.NET</a></p>
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***The Valley's Voice for Progressives***

**Saturday, July 19  
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Fresno City Council member and candidate for mayor Henry T. Perea will be the speaker at the Central Valley Progressive PAC meeting. Members and the public are welcome to hear and ask questions of Henry as he discusses major issues facing the city of Fresno. The meeting is at the Fresno Center for Non-Violence (1584 N. Van Ness Ave. (at McKinley), Fresno. For more information, visit [www.cvppac.org](http://www.cvppac.org) or call 559-435-7360.



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While the firm is supposedly leading an independent antiwar uprising by pressuring politicians in both parties, about half its employees — including the firm’s two principals — were staffers for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), the re-election arm of the same Democratic U.S. senators that the antiwar uprising now needs to pressure to end the war.

**But the conflict of interest only starts there.**

At the same time Hildebrand Tewes is working with AAEI, the firm is being paid by various Democratic politicians for its services — Democratic politicians who have a vested interest in avoiding attacks from the antiwar uprising.

The consequences of such incestuous overlaps between party and uprising are best exemplified by Brad Woodhouse, the Hildebrand Tewes consultant leading AAEI. He came directly to Hildebrand Tewes after years as the DSCC’s chief spokesperson and a mouthpiece for Democratic candidates. This supposed antiwar champion is the same guy who, as a campaign staffer, bragged to newspapers just before the Iraq invasion that the Democratic U.S. candidate he was working for, Erskine Bowles (N.C.), was more pro-war than the Republican candidate.

“No one has been stronger in this race [than Bowles] in supporting President Bush in the war on terror and his efforts to affect a regime change in Iraq,” Woodhouse fulminated in the Charlotte Observer in September 2002.

Woodhouse is no anomaly. His history closely mimics how many war-supporting politicians suddenly changed their positions when the political winds shifted.

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), whose record on Iraq has been abysmal, has undergone an improbable transformation into an antiwar candidate. And former President Bill Clinton showed a special kind of retroactive courage when he declared last November that he had opposed the war “from the beginning.” But it is the partisan conflicts of interest, not the hypocrisy, that pose the real problem.

You would think the central focus of any antiwar organization — whether inside Washington or out — would be

with Democratic congressional leadership and tell them, ‘Look, if you propose a timeline or you try to cut off the funding, the Republicans will tear you apart.’ ” But, Feingold continued, “The power structure in Washington [is] desperately trying to figure out how to explain why they made one of the biggest mistakes in the history of our country. And that’s why you gotta go right at them.”

But you can’t “go right at them” if your uprising is led by a tightly knit consultant class that has dual loyalties and has been part of the problem from the outset. The McGovern Fable

Conservatives have extrapolated President Nixon’s “silent majority” demonization of Sen. George McGovern and cultural critique of the anti-Vietnam War movement into a fantasy that supposedly explains every Republican victory in the last 30 years.

This McGovern Fable posits that the Left’s open confrontation with the Democratic Party may have helped end the Vietnam War, but it also resulted in the 1972 presidential nomination of McGovern, whose landslide loss in the general election supposedly gave Democrats a “national security gap” in public opinion polls. According to the Fable, this gap is singularly responsible for giving America 20 out of 28 years of Republican presidents, and came about not because Nixon ran a smarter race or because McGovern’s campaign tactically stumbled, but because McGovern opposed the Vietnam War.

**But as scholar Mark Schmitt has noted, the McGovern Fable is a sham.**

“The real reason the Vietnam War divided and discredited Democrats and splintered the liberal consensus was because — let’s not be afraid to admit it — Democrats started that war,” Schmitt wrote on his blog in 2006. “Opposition to the war didn’t unify or define the party, it divided it. Nixon won the 1968 election because [Hubert] Humphrey was associated with the war [and] couldn’t split with [Lyndon B. Johnson].”

In fact, Schmitt pointed out that in the 1974 mid-term election following that 1972 campaign, the 75 Democrats who won congressional seats were overwhelmingly antiwar.

*Say what you will about the anti-Cheney zealots and the pro-impeachment activists. Though utterly disorganized, their activism is at least more than just a sporting event.*

on forcing Democrats to use their constitutional power to end the war to do just that: end the war. But you would be wrong.

Almost all of AAEI’s “multimillion dollar national campaign” is being spent on TV ads or publicity stunts attacking pro-war Republican politicians up for reelection in 2008 — people like Sens. Susan Collins (Maine), John Sununu (N.H.), Norm Coleman (Minn.) and Mitch McConnell (Ky.), the minority leader who Woodhouse spent years attacking at the DSCC.

These are Republicans who Democrats (and thus Democratic consulting firms like Hildebrand Tewes) want to defeat in order to retain control of the Senate, regardless of whether the war ends.

Relatively few AAEI resources, by contrast, will be spent on ads attacking Democratic House and Senate lawmakers who have either repeatedly provided the critical votes to continue the war indefinitely, or who have refused to use all of Congress’s power to end the war.

Beyond its mission statement, AAEI does not even try to hide its partisan biases. In one classic display, Woodhouse used his AAEI position to defend Democrats when they refused to stop a war funding bill.

“We’re disappointed the war drags on with no end in sight,” he told Reuters in June of 2007, “but realize Democratic leaders can only accomplish what they have the votes for.” No mention of Democrats’ ability to use their majority to vote down war spending bills or to stop any funding bills from moving forward so as to cut off money for the war.

If you believe this ultrapartisan allocation of resources has nothing to do with the fact that the people guiding the spending decisions are former employees of — and are still being paid by — Democratic politicians, then I’m sure George W. Bush has another war to sell you.

As antiwar Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) has said, the battle to end the war is “us versus them” — not in terms of Republican versus Democrat, but in terms of the uprising versus the “Washington inside crowd that sets the parameters of this debate.”

In February 2007, Feingold told reporters, “The Washington consultants — especially those that were part of the previous Democratic administration — come into a room

‘wisely’ we prosecute them.”

Say what you will about the anti-Cheney zealots, the pro-impeachment activists and other assorted Protest Industry followers, they may be utterly disorganized and lack real-world political strategies, but at least their activism is about more than a sporting event. They aren’t just demonstrating to help one set of politicians defeat another set of politicians. And as importantly, they don’t dream of stopping just one war because that’s what is considered politically expedient.

They dream of changing society’s long-term outlook on war itself.

**Making them work for us**

Like an exotic species at the zoo, true campaign junkies exhibit the same special markings: bags under eyes, graying hair, half-shaven beards (among the males) and expressions of permanent fatigue, like they could fall asleep at any moment because they need to catch up on shut-eye from 25 years of late-night envelope-stuffing sessions.

Steve Rosenthal exhibits all of these telltale signs.

Rosenthal heads They Work for Us, a group whose mission is to pressure elected Democrats to uphold the uprising’s antiwar and economic agenda.

“There’s a lot of swirling mass communications going on right now,” he says between gulps of coffee as we eat breakfast at a hotel restaurant in downtown D.C. “But it really isn’t personalized or organized, and it isn’t particularly effective.”

He is a rare hybrid of an insider and an uprising guy who got his start (like many 50-ish movement activists) first as a volunteer for George McGovern’s 1972 campaign, then as staffer for Sen. Ted Kennedy’s 1980 presidential bid. Today, Rosenthal is fed up with the substitution of Washington games for real grassroots organizing.

“It’s the same thing I used to say about mail when we did a lot of mail in the labor movement,” he says. “What happened over the years was that mail became a lazy way to communicate with people. It’s much easier to hire a mail vendor and send out a lot of mail to union members than it is to organize people going workplace to workplace and set-

*Say what you will about the anti-Cheney zealots and the pro-impeachment activists. Though utterly disorganized, their activism is at least more than just a sporting event.*

ting up systems to deliver flyers and organize weekend walks. That’s really hard stuff, and people now avoid doing it because it’s hard.”

He fills me in on all the different Democratic incumbents his group is looking at trying to unseat in primaries, and how he wants to “make them sweat and bleed and raise money so they have to think differently about things.”

But beneath the strategy talk, he is worried. He fears that even on an issue as pressing as the war, partisan loyalties are going to trump everything. That’s not just because of the intertwined Washington culture or the McGovern Fable, he says, but because a lot of the people in the uprising today don’t really comprehend how power works.

“What many people don’t understand is that these politicians carry more water for you as a result of being frightened,” he says. “In other words, what are these politicians going to do in the face of a primary challenge? Say, ‘Go fuck you guys because you might come after me’? No, it’s going to be the other way around — they’ll try to appease us by being better, which is the point.”

**But, the flip side is also true.**

If Democratic office holders know that no functional antiwar uprising is ready to punish them for their war support, then they will just preserve the status quo — regardless of the TV ads against Republicans; regardless of the Protest Industry theatrics at rallies; regardless of The Players’ appearances on obscure shows like “Hardball”; and — worst of all — regardless of American troops dying in Iraq.

(Editor’s note: This article was adapted from “The Uprising: An Unauthorized Tour of the Populist Revolt Scaring Wall Street and Washington,” which was published by Crown Publishers, a division of Random House Inc., in June 2008.)

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David Sirota is a senior editor at In These Times ( <http://www.inthesetimes.com/> ) and a bestselling author whose newest book, “The Uprising,” will be released in May 2008. He is a fellow at the Campaign for America’s Future and a board member of the Progressive States Network — both nonpartisan organizations. His blog is at [www.credoaction.com/sirota](http://www.credoaction.com/sirota). This article was first published in the June 2008 issue of In These Times.



# Word on the Street

By Francine Ramos

The war in Iraq began over 5 years ago. One could go back and forth on whether the war was warranted or not. One could also go back and forth on whether America is any safer now than before. And the benefits, has there been any? Is America wealthier, healthier, is the “American Dream” life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness been any easier to pursue since the birth of the “Shock and Awe” Iraq war? There are some pretty hard facts of what the America- Iraq war has caused.

According to The Brookings Institution’s Iraq Index, as of early June, there were over 4,000 US soldiers killed. 30,182 seriously wounded and 20% of those were serious brain or spinal injuries. America has spent about 600 million of taxpayers’ dollars to fund the war. An estimated 50,000 to 100,000 Iraqi Civilians have been killed (3 of those being Saddam Hussein and his 2 sons), please take into consideration that this estimated number of Iraqi life is significantly flawed. Several other reports put the causalities to be as high as 600,000 and the majority of these deaths are men, leaving a trail of women and children behind. An Iraqi Red Crescent report, states that nearly 4 million Iraqi’s have fled their native land due to the occupation. Of that 4 million, more than 2 million are the trail of victims who lost their husbands and fathers in this continuous America-Iraq war. Since the war began there have been no further terrorist attacks on US soil, but since Iraq never had a direct role in 9-11, the last statement is void.

Since the beginning of the war, American’s had a chance to vote in a new President but the majority opted on the same one, good ole’ Georgie’. Fast



Doli Cortez



Claudia Garcia

forward, four years and America’s ready to do it again, vote that is, and who shall we now choose? The Democrat runner up is Barak Obama and GOP is John McCain. According to Obama’s numerous speeches, he never voted for the war in the first place, he wasn’t for it, isn’t for it, and would get the troops out of there as soon as possible. He has a lengthy “Judgment You Can Trust” plan on doing so on his official website. McCain has pretty much the same thing, a booklet of sorts, downloadable, in case one wants to read his detailed, however slow exit out of Iraq plan. For more information regarding the candidates’ views on the war visit their website, read every newspaper (especially this one), listen to every news station and for more information regarding the left behind Iraqi victims, read Haifa Zangana’s book, “City of Windows: An Iraqi Woman’s Account of War and Resistance.” Regardless of what party one chooses, Red, Blue or Green the decision made for American President will determine where the American people, the Iraqi people and the war are headed. On to the question.....

Question: With over 80% of people opposed to the war and occupation of Iraq, why are none of the major candidates for President (Democrat/Republican) calling for an immediate withdrawal of the troops?

“First off, I think that the war is a very controversial topic, especially politically. A lot of people want out of the occupation that is true. Some people think that it’s right and that if we leave now there will be only more chaos in Iraq. The candidates, I think chose not to address the issue as much because it would start a big debate. I’m not sure that pulling out so fast would be that easy. I know that Obama does want out of the war. I think that we need to get out but it has to be a slow process.”

Name: Doli Cortez  
Location: Fresno City College

“I think that the reason that you don’t hear that much from the candidates about the war is because they think that they might lose a vote. They all want as many votes as they can, so they just stay off the controversial stuff.”  
Name: Claudia Garcia  
Location: Near Fresno Community Hospital

“They [presidential candidates] know the issue is a matter of national security. They know it’s impossible to just withdraw our troops. They all know it. We all know it. Sometimes we forget what happened [9-11]. We forget what the terrorist want to do to the United States. We are going to have to fight this war out and if we don’t stay in Iraq then the war will be someplace else. It will probably come here that’s where the next war will be, if we don’t fight it over there. I would rather have our troops which have the proper armament being able to hold them back over there than kill our civilians over here. Here we don’t have any weapons; we don’t have any way to defend ourselves. The troops have proper weapons they are trained and have all the technology. The common guy walking down the street doesn’t have that. The presidential candidates know that they can’t just withdraw, we all know and I know they shouldn’t”  
Doyle Cox  
Fresno Location: Southeast Fresno



Doyle Cox

## Community Alliance Distribution Locations

- Woodward Park Library
- San Joaquin Gardens
- Senior Center Manchester Center
- Mommy Matters
- UU Church
- Ashtree Studio
- Au Lac
- Babylon
- Brass Unicorn
- Fresno Metro Ministry
- Grandma’s All Natural
- Hemp Shack
- Inkworks
- Barnes & Noble
- Irene’s
- Java Wava
- La Luna Loca
- KFCF
- California Prison Moratorium Project
- Planned Parenthood
- Revue
- SEIU-UHW
- Spectrum Gallery
- Stuffed Pipe
- Teazer
- Olive and Wishon (newsstand)

- Tower Bay Fish Company
- Tower Garden Supply
- Tower Health
- Tower Tatoo
- USPS Tower (news stand in front)
- Valentino’s
- Full Circle Brewery
- Ali Rezapour
- Arco
- CA Nurses Association
- College Community Congregational Church
- Fresno Teachers Association
- Great Escape Message
- Holistic & Integrative Family Medicine
- Badr Masjid
- Masjid Fresno
- Islamic Cultural Center
- Perfect Balance Yoga
- Politi Library
- Stuffed Pipe
- Tacos Marquitos
- Speedy Zapatos
- Saturday Food Not Bombs
- Cedar-Clinton Library
- Kaleidoscope
- Luis’ Cedar Heights Shoe Repair

- Canned Foods in Clovis
- Reedley library
- Parlier library
- Clovis Library
- DMV Clovis (newsstand)
- Payneless Gardening
- Sunnyside Library
- Fresno Center for Nonviolence
- Gillis Library
- Hume Printing
- La Boulangerie
- Pan Valley Institute
- Arte Americas
- Catholic Charities
- Central California Legal Services
- Central Library
- Comite Pro Uno
- El Colegio Popular
- Fresno Art Council
- Sequoia Health
- Planned Parenthood
- Irene Zupko Paralegal
- Reedley Social Service Center
- Reedley College
- Reedley Valero Station
- Masten Towers
- The Den

# Fresno Democracy Flunks on June 3

By Steven Hill and Larry Mullen

On June 3, the sound of hissing air leaking out of Fresno democracy was unmistakable. In the mayoral election, two candidates crawled into the runoff with barely 27% of the vote each, even as a very split field of 11 candidates spent well over a million dollars, a record amount of campaign cash. And that doesn't even count money spent by outside groups to support their candidates.

The Fresno Bee said it was the most expensive mayoral race ever – yet less than a third of registered voters bothered participating. It cost Fresno taxpayers an estimated \$1 million to pay for administration of this election in which a mere 56,000 voters pulled the lever. In case you don't have your calculator handy, that works out to about \$18 per voter, an expensive ticket to a no-show election.

In the Board of Supervisors race in District 5, another million dollars was spent by the candidates in what the Fresno Bee described as an “expensive slugfest.” Perhaps one could justify the expense if there was evidence that the campaign money led to better informed voters. But with the race descending “into the gutter,” as the Bee editorialized, the money too often was used by the leading candidates to trash each other. Instead of hearing what's best for the county, Fresno County voters heard what was worst about their future Supervisor. And with a November runoff looming for the mayor's race, in which the top two finishers will face off in head to head, mano-a-mano combat, that one is likely to slide into the gutter as well.

Expensive, nasty, negative campaigns all contribute to an increase in voter alienation and apathy – especially when voters witness it election after election. By this November, California voters will have had to endure three statewide elections in a single year, including the presidential primary in February held separately from the state's June primary and November's presidential election. After the most recent election, Fresno County Clerk Victor Salazar was quoted as saying, “There's a limit to how many elections we can have and still expect the voting public to turn out, and that is voter fatigue.”

So increasingly the timing and structure of Fresno elections is looking like a flat tire in need of repair. When it comes to electing the mayor or any other public office, holding two elections instead of one is expensive, inconvenient, and burns out voters.

Fortunately there are two political reforms that



Steven Hill spoke in Fresno, shortly before the June 3 primary, at the Unitarian Church. In the experimental IRV election conducted at the event, Tom Boyajian won the race for mayor.

could address these problems in Fresno – instant runoff voting and public financing of campaigns.

Instant runoff voting (also known as IRV) is an electoral method that elects a majority winner in a single election. Here's how it works. Voters rank the candidates in their order of preference instead of just picking one candidate. If a candidate wins a majority of first rankings, the election is over, just like now. But if no candidate wins a majority of first rankings, voters' other rankings are used to determine the winner instantly.

The candidate with the fewest first rankings is eliminated, and voters who ranked that candidate first can now have their second choice counted. All ballots are recounted in the “instant runoff,” and the process of dropping the last-place candidate and redistributing voters' rankings to remaining candidates continues until one candidate has a majority of the votes.

With IRV, voters and candidates can focus on a single election, and millions of tax dollars will be saved that currently are wasted on a second election in which few bother to participate.

In recent years, IRV has been implemented for local elections in several American cities, including San Francisco, Cary and Hendersonville, North Carolina, Takoma Park, Maryland and Burlington, Vermont. It also has been used for state elections to allow overseas voters to participate in runoff elections in such states as Louisiana, South Carolina, and Arkansas. IRV has been popular with voters, having won in 13 out of its last 14 ballot measures across the country, including landslide victories in 2006-2008 that averaged 69% of the vote in Oakland (CA), Minneapolis (MN), Santa Fee (NM) and Sarasota (FL).

San Francisco has used instant runoff voting for four successful elections. Exit polls show that voters like the system and find it easy to use. In some races, it has led to a decrease in negative campaigning because candidates realize that they may need second or third rankings from supporters of rival candidates to win. That creates an incentive to find common ground and build coalitions with other candidates, rather than tearing them down. Instead of using nasty attack ads, some candidates run more issue-based campaigns in order to win.

Because this method of voting would save millions of tax dollars by eliminating an unnecessary separate runoff election, that money could be used to fund public financing of campaigns in Fresno, which might produce better candidates

and more competition, which in turn could induce higher voter interest and turnout.

Public financing of campaigns – better electoral infrastructure

Some people oppose public financing as “welfare for politicians,” or object to forcing taxpayers to subsidize candidates they don't agree with. But public financing really is a matter of opening up the political system and offering more choice to voters. It should be viewed as a matter of electoral infrastructure.

For obvious reasons, we don't require that political parties privately finance the setting up of voting booths, staffing the polling sites with their partisans, and particularly we don't require the political parties to count their own ballots. To do so obviously would invite fraud, so these duties are left in the hands of paid, hopefully nonpartisan civil servants and election administrators.

Similarly, why should the vehicle for putting electoral information into the hands of voters be left to the vagaries of private financing and the corporate media? To do so invites another type of electoral fraud, namely that of distorting and misrepresenting the political information voters need to make an informed decision.

In the 18th century, Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government.” Voter information is the lifeblood of a democracy – a misinformed electorate cannot possibly make the best decisions. The most efficient vehicle for voters to learn about the political parties, their platforms, policies and candidates, is from the candidates themselves. But in a privately financed system this voter service is dependent on which parties and candidates have the most money and the wealthiest donors. That opens the door to distorted information and uninformed or misinformed voters.

Hence, public financing of campaigns is crucial to increasing our political IQ. It will create more robust political debate and discussion, which is of great value since the public has become so disengaged from formulaic campaign sound bites.

One type of low cost public financing that is practiced already by many counties in California is allowing each candidate a free, short statement in the Voters Information Pamphlet that is mailed to every registered voter at election time. This would ensure that every voter has an opportunity to hear at least something from every candidate, and would create a more robust and open campaign where there is more of a level playing field.

Fresno doesn't have to put up with expensive, low turnout elections filled with mudslinging attack ads. Instant runoff voting and public financing of campaigns are the right combination to put some air back into the tires of local democracy.

Steven Hill is director of the Political Reform Program for the New America Foundation and author of “10 Steps to Repair American Democracy” (www.10Steps.net). Larry Mullen is a member of Central Valley Electoral Reform (www.cver.org). Contact Mr. Mullen at www.cver.org or (559) 227-0293 for more information.



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Eugenia Melesio said "on the one hand it is too bad about all of this controversy, but on the other hand it makes me happy because it shows, by their reaction that they are afraid of us and what we are doing."

## Local Immigrant Activists Denounce Opposition's Tactics

By Mike Rhodes

The Fresno Bee, in a front page story printed (May 29, 2008) shortly before the primary election, claimed mayoral candidate Henry T. Perea would "benefit from \$750,000" that a "West Hollywood-based pro-labor political action committee" would use to help get him elected. The next day The Bee denounced Perea in an editorial saying "there's a reason special-interest groups put money into a race - they want something from their investment." The "special interest" group The Bee is critical of is Strengthening Our Lives (SOL),

a statewide group conducting a voter registration and get out the vote campaign in Southeast Fresno. SOL supports current City Council member and Democrat Henry Perea. The Bee supports Republican Ashley Swearengin. In fact, all of the candidates The Bee supported - for mayor, City Council, and the Board of Supervisors were Republicans.

Salvador "Chava" Bustamante, Northern California Director of SOL, spoke at a Press Conference right after The Bee's attacks. The Bee did not send a reporter to SOL's Press Conference. Bustamante said "It is a shame that The Fresno Bee who is so interested in talking about this issue is not here today. We denounce the tactics that the opposition is using in this campaign and we also want to set the record straight about who we are and what we do."

Bustamante says that the local SOL campaign has hired about two dozen workers to do "old-style person to person politics." He said they have spent something like \$50,000 - \$60,000 on the campaign, nowhere near the \$750,000 claimed by The Bee.

At the Press Conference, Bustamante said "SOL's campaign is new and unique. It is dedicated to helping regular folks - hard working humble Latino immigrants take part in politics, often for the first time. SOL's walkers have the opportunity to have their voices heard - increasing voter turnout after years of its steady decline.

Eugenia Melesio, also speaking at the Press Conference, said "on the one hand it is too bad about all of this controversy, but on the other hand it makes me happy because it shows, by their reaction that they are afraid

of us and what we are doing."

Bustamante said that "unlike other PAC's (Political Action Committees) that use their money to send attack pieces, we use our money to hire hard working people to go into the community and talk to our neighbors about the issues that are important to us. In Fresno, one of the big issues is clean air, we want to have a community where our children can grow and live without having to get sick all the time. We want to live in a city where we have safe streets and more after school programs. That is the kind of community we want and that is what this campaign is about."

SOL is a partnership of progressive labor, faith and community organizations dedicated to increasing the civic participation of California's immigrant communities. You can find out more by going to: [www.sol-california.com](http://www.sol-california.com) and [www.youtube.com/user/SOLCALI](http://www.youtube.com/user/SOLCALI)



Salvador "Chava" Bustamante is the Northern California Director of Strengthening Our Lives (SOL). SOL is conducting a grassroots voter registration drive and get out the vote campaign in southeast Fresno. Programs like this are empowering poor and working class people in this community.

# Update and Outcry for Help!

By Mike Rhodes

In January of 2008 the Community Alliance reported on the struggle for justice in the Lilly Mae Harmon case. At that time, Betty Harmon (Lilly's daughter) and the Rev. Floyd D. Harris announced that a lawsuit was being filed. They demanded an end to "The Tale of Two Cities" where there is one set of rules for those in affluent north Fresno and another for those living in West Fresno. A court hearing in this case will be held on July 7, 2008 at 3:30pm at the Superior Court, downtown Fresno at 1100 Van Ness Avenue.

Betty Harmon lost her mother under tragic and suspicious circumstances. When she took her concerns to the Fresno Police Department, she found that it was not easy to get assistance. Not only did she have to hire a private investigator to track down and prosecute her case, but she had to pay out of her own pockets for services that taxpayers delegate to the police.

The Justice For Mrs. Lilly M Harmon Committee writes "please join us in our efforts to restore confidence in our judicial system here in the City of Fresno. The daughter of victim, (Betty Harmon), has filed a civil lawsuit against the City of Fresno and others regarding the murder and mishandling and cover up of this case. Many are already aware, in the past 4 years the struggle with justice for homicide victim Mrs. Lilly Harmon, the daughter (Betty Harmon) and the organization (NNIA) the President Floyd Harris has had with the Fresno City Law enforcement agencies where they had initially denied and ultimately failed to provide a timely and efficient investigation, whereby murderers are still walking around in our community."

### How You Can Help:

The committee needs funds to uphold the rights of Mrs. Lilly M Harmon and prevent future tragedies here in the City of Fresno. The Needs Are:

- 1) To retain a lawyer for civil litigations in the Wrongful

Death/Malpractice and Civil Rights/ Mandated Reporter Violations.

- 2) Encourage the Department of Justice in Washington D.C. to perform a thorough investigation into why four major departments here in the City of Fresno refused/ failed after 2 ½ years to investigate a reported homicide.
- 3) Determine the level of crime the Fresno Police Department, a mandated reporter by federal law has committed by refusing to report to appropriate officials within 24-48 hours that an elder abuse crime had been committed.
- 4) Volunteer time/talent and suggestions for upcoming fundraisers if needed.

At this time we would like to thank all the community for their efforts at this point, and would encourage you now even more so to assist the call for help in the final step, which is justice in court.

Your donations will support this worthy cause for the common good of all our community. Together, we can make sure that Mrs Lilly M Harmon's case will have a fair, proper and much needed legal representation.

Justice For Mrs. Lilly M Harmon Committee  
3310 W Beran Way  
Fresno, Ca 93706  
Ph 559-994-3187, 612-961-7651

To get up to date information regarding this case please go to <http://justiceforlillymaeharmon.org/>



Rev Harris and Betty Harmon holding picture of Lilly M Harmon

### From the Editor continued from page 2

read about a new lawsuit that has been filed against the Rescue Mission for violating homeless peoples rights. You would think that the Rescue Mission was there to help the homeless. Unfortunately, they too have been caught on camera taking and destroying homeless peoples property. Read more - the story starts on page 4.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transsexual community finally won the right to marry who they want in June. Dan Waterhouse writes about this historic day in his Queer Eye column on page 14. Queer Eye is a regular feature in the Community Alliance, keeping our readers informed about events and issues in the LGBT community.

This paper also has regular first hand information from Boston Woodard, who is inside the beast of the Prison Industrial Complex. You might not know how unique it is to have unfiltered information from someone on the inside. I don't know of any other monthly community newspaper that gives prisoners a voice like we do. As a journalist, I can't even go into a state prison and interview a prisoner about an issue. But, Boston is able to tell us about the barbaric conditions in the prisons, although he has paid a heavy price to get that information into your hands. Boston is also featured in Grassroots Profile, a regular feature by CA board member Richard Stone.

A reminder to any prisoner reading this paper - the Community Alliance will send you a free subscription - all you have to do is write and ask to be put on our mailing list. A note to our non-prison readers - The Free Press isn't really free. We need your support to continue publishing this newspaper. You know the rich, corporations, and compromised government officials are not going to help us. We are counting on you, through a subscription or donation, to provide us with enough resources to keep printing. Every month for us is a struggle financially, so if you want an alternative/independent publication like this in Fresno, you need to subscribe. You can subscribe for as little as \$10 a year (low income) or \$35 regular. If you can make a one time donation or become a monthly contributor, that would be great. We have supporters giving us between \$10 and \$100 a month - please consider joining them to keep Free Speech alive! A subscription form is on page 18.

# 4<sup>th</sup> of July



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## Celebration of our Diversity

Friday, July 4, 2008  
**Brunch**  
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O'Neill Park, CSUF Campus  
(Barstow between Maple and Chestnut)

Non-smoking area

Suggested Donation: \$5  
Maximum/family: \$20



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