

A COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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Photo Credit: Daymon J. Hartley/People's Tribune

Rally in the Valley

By Bill Simon

Hopefully for the last time, the people of the Central Valley and the Foothills will again gather for the annual march and "Rally in the Valley for Peace and Justice: Bring the Troops Home Now" to insist that our government end this unjust, immoral, and illegal war against the Iraqi people which has already claimed the lives of 3,127 American military personnel (2/14/07), 256 military from other countries, an estimated 655,000 Iraqi civilians and an unknown number of American civilians.

The Rally is scheduled to take place at the new Eaton Plaza at Mariposa and 'N' Streets in downtown Fresno near the historic Water Tower on Sunday, March 18, from 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm.

So far, Rally cosponsors include The Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition, The Fresno Center for Nonviolence, The Fresno Free

College Foundation (KFCF), La Raza against War, The Peace and Freedom Party of Fresno County, Peace Fresno, and The South Valley Peace Center. Death Penalty Focus, Humanists of the San Joaquin Valley, and Sun Mt. are endorsing the Rally. Additional cosponsors and endorsers are expected to join in, and numerous peace and social justice organizations will table at the event.

Green Machine will supply music along with Lonesome Jem and Frank Moschella. Dolores Huerta will be our leadoff speaker. She will be followed by David Swanson of afterdowningstreet.org. And Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Representative from the Sixth Congressional District north of San Francisco, has tentatively agreed to address the Rally as the third speaker. We still need to resolve some transportation issues before the Congresswoman's appearance is definite.

A really large turnout at Rallies around the country on this fourth anniversary of the war will help convince the 110th Congress to end this war. We are working to get more than 1000 people to participate in The Rally in the Valley in Fresno. Put it on your calendar now! The American People shall overcome!

For additional information, see Peace Fresno's website: www.peacefresno.org or leave specific questions on our voicemail, 487-2515.

Bill Simon is president of Peace Fresno

**For Peace and Justice
Bring the Troops Home
NOW!**

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MARCH 2007

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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

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

Letters to the Editor

Lucile Wheaton was my P.D. Attorney in 1985-86. True to the words in Credo (January, 2007 Community Alliance), she spoke in my defense against some severe charges and became a friend to this day.

At said time, my life was in a wreck, due to drug addiction and various troubles. Besides the Attorney client relationship, in the friendship (humanitarian) aspects, Lucile was never condescending. What I do recall, is that she made statements (observations) which were crucial for me in transforming my life.

I've worked very hard, yet I owe a great debt of gratitude to Lucile and several others, who provided me with support in the form of encouragement, inspiring example, being a friend and believing in me. The D.A.'s may have called her "no deal Lucile," but out of utmost respect and in terms of endearments, I call her my lady Lucile.

In the effort to show my gratitude to Lucile, and in appreciation for the likewise worthy endeavors of the Community Alliance, I'd like to share two of the poems I've wrote.

Become a Good Writer

Sit in sight of the bright sunlight
Don't hesitate, just meditate and contemplate.

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Above all, have no hate.
For this is the date to speculate.
From your soul, the words will flow.
All is right, and your future is bright
That all may delight as you write.

The poem entitled "Love," was written on inspiration from my lady Lucile, who not only volunteered her time and energy to tutoring the children of farm workers, she loved them too.

Love

Continue loving the children
for they are the start.
Love them with all your heart,
then see heaven as they blossom
like flowers in the sun
to you and your love

Hector Hernandez
Soledad

Ever wonder why the Bush administration public statements about Iraq don't seem to make sense compared to actual events — phrases like "staying until we succeed", "democratization", "regime change"? Although they profess to be in Iraq, and even the Middle East and Central Asia, to give sovereign nations "democracy", their real intentions and "successes" in being there are to grab the oil and gas resources of those countries for multinational corporations. Right now, before they have to quit Iraq, they are making heavy pressure on the Iraqi government to privatize the previously nationalized oil resources, which had been bringing benefits to the Iraqi people, not big corporations.

When you examine the words and actions of the US military/industrial/Bush complex in light of their true intentions, what they say and do makes a little sense, although not the sense they wish to project. There is little likelihood that the US military will pull out of never-ending war in this region as long as the "corporate politicians" continue to make policy. Even the US government/corporations probably are doing all they can to prolong Iraq's civil war, thus enabling them to continue the US military's presence in Iraq, which ensures their oil field take-overs.

"Success" is really about getting control of Iraqi oil. But, after this "success", do you want US soldiers permanently stationed all

over this oil-rich area, fighting one war after the next as the corporations seek to enrich themselves on other peoples' natural resources?

Diane D. Marks

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

Over a month has passed since we packed our bags to rally our Senators to stop the escalation in Iraq and not much has really happened. Senator Jon Tester, the new Senator from Montana summed it up when he said that he has been in Washington D.C. for two weeks now and it frustrates him just how little bit gets done. It is not that the Senators are not busy. They are inundated all day with appointments; they preside on the floor of Congress; they attend special committee meetings; and they are busy with strategic political meetings with other Congressional Members. I just wonder if our system, including checks and balances, that regulates Congress is not broken.

A President with over a 70% disapproval rating is running the County in a way that not only counters the wishes of people, but works against their best interests. He puts his own interpretation amending passed legislation; he is setting up a person to monitor every agency to see that his office has final word and essentially total control; he is limiting funding to public broadcasting, the last places to see a semblance of truth with out the spin put in place by corporate media. I am just wondering how a person who took an oath of office to protect the Constitution of the United States can get away with behavior that clearly violates that same Constitution.

One of our talking points was to impeach the President. None of the Senators we spoke with showed any support for this particular point. Some gave the excuse that it was a waste of time, because by the time the process was completed he would be out of office. To me it would be the perfect solution to regaining American status in the world. To impeach the President for his flagrant violations of the Constitution and international law would show the world we the American People, contrary to the Bush Administration, believe in human rights, international law and the Constitution of the United States.

So while the Congress busies itself with political maneuvers at the expense of the status of the United States in the world, we need to tell our Congress People, who appear to be unable to get as much as a non-binding resolution against the policies of this administration, we are dissatisfied with their performance. Their political viability seems to be the impetus of their motivation. We need to continue writing hard and strong letters to our Congress people emphasizing our dissatisfaction with each ones individual performances. If we are going to regain our credibility as a nation, we can not endorse this administration's abominations through acquiesce. Our system is clearly broken and needs to begin mending now.

Marilyn Byrne

**Central Valley
Progressive
Political Action Committee**

cvppac.org PO Box 5845, Fresno, CA 93755 559-435-7360

PEACEfresno

In March 2003 the United States began its war in Iraq. Four years and many deaths later we mark that date to say:

NO to the agenda of war
NO to the U.S. attacks on our civil liberties &
NO to the degradation of environmental safeguards



(559) 487-2515
www.peacefresno.org

RALLY IN THE VALLEY FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!

MUSIC:

- ✓ GREEN MACHINE
- ✓ LONESOME JEM & FRANK MOSCHELLA
- ✓ The RAGING GRANNIES

SPEAKERS:

- ✓ DOLORES HUERTA
- ✓ DAVID SWANSON
- ✓ REP. LYNN WOOLSEY
(tentatively)

**SUNDAY MARCH 18, 2007
EATON PLAZA
MARIPOSA & "N" STs
(between the Library & the Watertower)
FRESNO
1:30 - 5:00 PM**



Nadia McCaffrey, who lost her son in the war, spoke at the 2006 Rally in the Valley. This year's Rally in the Valley will be held in downtown Fresno on March 18. Photo by Mike Rhodes



The 2006 Rally in the Valley was held at CSUF. Photo by Mike Rhodes



The 2005 Rally in the Valley was held at Courthouse Park in downtown Fresno. Photo by Marlina McClain

RALLY IN THE VALLEY FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE: BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW

Sunday, March 18, 2007

Eaton Plaza at Mariposa and 'N' Streets near the Water Tower

Music by Lonesome Jem and Frank Moschella and by Green Machine

Tentative Program

- 1:30 pm Tabling and Music (Tabling continues until 5:00 pm)
- 1:40 pm Opening Remarks
- 1:45 pm Songs
- 1:50 pm March: The March will go from Eaton Plaza across Mariposa Mall to Van Ness to Tulare to the Federal Building at 'O' St., where we will stage a 'die-in', to Mariposa and back to Eaton Plaza.
- 2:20 pm Songs at Eaton Plaza as the March ends
- 2:25 pm The Raging Grannies sing
- 2:40 pm Address by Dolores Huerta
- 2:55 pm Songs
- 3:00 pm Address by David Swanson
- 3:25 pm Songs
- 3:30 pm Address by Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (tentative)
- 4:00 pm Green Machine plays
- 5:00 pm Rally concludes

Imperial Justice and Punishment

Saddam Hussein's death is an imperial practice hidden under the covers of justice.

By Eduardo Stanley

While attending college in Europe at the end of the 70s, I met some Iraqi students. One of them, with whom I established a cordial friendship, explained to me that it was impossible for him to return to his home country to visit his family because he was a member of the Communist Party. "Leftist activists are constantly hung, and at the present time, the situation is getting even worse," he told me then. The responsible individual for this repression was someone named Saddam Hussein, who would later take complete control of the government.

I asked him why there were no international reactions or accusations about human rights abuses in his country. He explained to me that Hussein had U.S. support; therefore, protests were considered "communist propaganda." A couple of years later, my friend left the Communist Party due to political disagreements, but even so, he could not return to Iraq.

During the war with Iran (1980-1988), Saddam's consolidated regime received considerable support from the U.S. and from pro-American Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Within such context, there was little chance for the opposition voice to be heard regarding the internal repression in Iraq, especially the voice of ethnic minorities, like the Kurds. The so-called champion of democracy turned a deaf ear as usual, when it is inconvenient.

In 1989, George Bush ordered the invasion of Panama to arrest its ruler, Manuel Noriega, whom he accused of drug trafficking and laundering money. Noriega had been a collaborator of the CIA, and he was even congratulated by the DEA (U.S. anti-narcotics agency) for his support of America's "War on Drugs". The military action cost more than 2,000 Panamanian lives. Washington expressed little concern over the number of deaths, and the "free press" provided little coverage about the civilian casualties.

This seems to have established certain precedents, or family traditions, on how to resolve personal quarrels with former friends who disobey Washington.

In 2003, the son of that president Bush also decided to invade a country to come to terms with another former U.S. collaborator or accomplice, Saddam Hussein. Both Hussein and Noriega harshly criticized Washington, and this, coming from former "collaborators" was unacceptable to the empire.

After winning the 2000 elections with much controversy, the conservative rhetoric of George W. Bush brought militaristic winds. The attack on the Twin Towers in 2001, by a group of young Arabs, allowed Bush to expand and carry out his militaristic goals through ambitions of an invasion. Communism and the Cold War, and the War on Drugs, were replaced by the War on Terrorism.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, at the beginning of the 90s, left U.S. as the only world superpower. But it also left an important political hole, the excuse to maintain the formidable U.S. military and apparatus of espionage. Many analysts speculated about who would be the next "Bad Man", or what would be the next "threat" against the "Free World", where weapons would be aimed. It did not take long to find out.

The excuses for the invasion of Iraq went from the quest to find and retrieve "weapons of mass destruction" (Iraq did not have them), to "freeing" the Iraqis from Hussein's dictatorship (who asked for it?), to the most recent one of Iraq being a terrorists' nest (which happened after the arrival of American troops).

As expected, after being captured alive, Hussein was delivered to a court formed by those who despised him, and he had a very long list of enemies. Although Hussein's crimes are numerous, the application of justice by a court that responds to a government created by an invading country cannot be fair. Nevertheless, U.S. propaganda portrayed the trial as real justice.

Hussein was found guilty of barely 142 deaths. During his trial, nothing was brought forward about the murders of opponents, committed with the tacit blessing of the West, and of the U.S. support during the war with Iran, which meant access to technology used against opponents. As opposed to other dictators, like Augusto Pinochet in Chile, both Noriega and Hussein were at-



Donald Rumsfeld and Saddam Hussein shake hands back when the Regan administration considered him an ally in the region.

tacked by the empire not because of their human rights abuses and crimes against opponents (remember the case of Pinochet as well as the other bloody South American dictatorships during the 70s and 80s, all of them supported by the U.S.), but because they broke a code of political complicity with the empire, don't bite the hand that feeds you, or that helps you to get into power so you can exercise that power in the interest of the U.S.

Hussein was not delivered to an international court to be judged for his crimes. His trial was more an act of punishment, of revenge for breaking those codes. It remains to be seen if we will ever have a court, judge the abuses committed by governments that invade and destroy countries on behalf of corporate interests, dreams and ambitions mixed with religious beliefs, creating a sensation of a permanent Crusade.

This justice is in reality part of the western concept of punishment, a feeling and action of revenge against anyone who is opposed to western authority, against whom-ever betrays an agreement or alliance of interests. A paternalistic and Christian style of justice, two of the pillars of the so-called western culture. There is no doubt we face another bloody Crusade, or the continuation of it.

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Eduardo Stanley is the editor of the weekly Spanish El Sol, of Visalia, and can be reached at eduardostanley@comcast.net

No Child Left Behind - Is it patriotic?

By Scott Key

We are a proud nation. We lift up our Constitution and our Bill of Rights as models for the rest of the world. Freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition. Equal protection under the law. Due process. These are the principles that other nations should emulate.

Freedom and choice. The original colonies chose to form a new nation in order to free themselves from tyranny. The founders wanted more freedom and more choices. Today, Americans believe that they have freedom to make choices. It is this freedom that must be defended. President Bush has told us that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are, in part, necessary to defend our nation, our freedom, our way of life. While people differ on what it means to be a patriot, it is clear that a willingness to defend the Constitution and the nation is essential.

Since 1971 military service has been a matter of choice. We pride ourselves on our all-volunteer armed forces. Even though thousands of service personnel have died or been wounded, thousands of young women and men are choosing to enlist in the armed forces. Some enlist for the promise of money for college and job training. Others enlist because of patriotism and a sense of duty. Regardless of the reason, they all freely have chosen to serve in the military. Or have they?

As part of the Bush administration's preparations for war, the government deepened the connection between schools and the military through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Buried deep inside this centerpiece of the Bush administration's education policy, Section 9528 "Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruitment Information" requires school districts that receive federal funds to provide military recruiters with high school student contact information (i.e., name, address, and phone number) unless the student or parent *opt out* of releasing this information. NCLB also requires school districts to inform students and parents of their right to opt out. The most popular approach has been to create opt-out forms to be filled out and turned into districts. Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) has agreed to send op-out forms in the student information packets, distribute these forms to all high school students during the second week of classes, and place

OPT OUT

Below is the contact information for state representative. Please write, phone, or visit your representative and tell them to support putting *opt out* on emergency contact cards.

State Assembly:

District 25:
Michael Villines
6245 N. Fresno St.
Fresno, CA 93710
(559) 446-2029

District 31:
Juan Arambula
2550 Mariposa Mall, Suite 5031
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 445-5532

District 34:
Bill Maze
5959 S. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277
(559) 636-3440

State Senate: District 14:
Dave Cogdill
4974 E. Clinton, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93727
(559) 253-7122

District 16:
Dean Flores
2550 Mariposa Mall, Suite 2016
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 264-3070

Governor:
Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-2841

No Child continued from page 4

them on their website. However, many school districts in the Central Valley do not have a clear policy on the opt-out option, nor do they have an opt-out form available for students and parents. This means that thousands of high school students will have their contact information released to military recruiters without their permission.

Young people are faced with one of the most important and difficult decisions in their lives — whether or not to enlist in the armed forces. Our nation guarantees that this decision should be a free choice to *opt in* to military service. NCLB does not follow this tradition; instead, students and parents must *opt out*. Many school districts in California and around the nation have tried to change the *opt out* to an *opt in* without success. The federal government will not recognize the opt-in option. This is wrong. This is unpatriotic. Congress should amend NCLB and let students opt in to being contacted by military recruiters. Contact your U.S. Representative and your U.S. Senator to demand that Section 9528 of NCLB be amended from *opt out* to *opt in*.

While choice should be available at the start of the decision-making process and the federal government should make NCLB more patriotic, there is something that Californians can do to give more choice to all high school students. Prior to the November election, Assembly Bill 1778 (the Student and Family Protection Act of 2006) was passed and sent to the Governor for signature. This bill would have required high schools to place the opt-out option on the student emergency information card. Since this card is required by most high schools as part of the registration process, it would have allowed thousands of students and parents to choose whether or not to release their contact information. Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed the bill. Contact your State Assembly member and State Senator to pass this bill again, and tell Governor Schwarzenegger to sign it!

Choice is patriotic. Regardless of political affiliation or position on the war, we need to tell our elected representatives to be more patriotic by giving students and parents the choice to *opt out* and, ultimately, the choice to *opt in*.

Scott Key is a faculty member at Fresno Pacific University. He has a Ph.D. in Public Policy from the University of Illinois and teaches in the School of Education.

**Counter Recruitment:
Now more than ever**

By Scott Key

Troop surge! While President Bush called for 21,500 additional troops for Iraq, even more troubling was Defense Secretary Gates' call for 92,000 more soldiers and marines. The Pentagon must ratchet up its recruitment efforts to meet these new targets. Where will the government find recruits? High schools, shopping malls, community events, and wherever young people gather. How will the government get them to enlist? Slick ads and false promises. How serious is the government about recruitment? The combined budget for fiscal year 2006 was more than \$3 billion! While some money is spent on media advertising to pique interest, the real selling of the military is entrusted to thousands of military recruiters who entice students to enlist. Military recruiters focus on high school juniors and seniors, promising money for college and job training. Recruiters promise the world but do not have to deliver, because enlistment contracts are one-sided; the military can change an enlistee's job field, pay status, or educational benefits without notice.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 gives military recruiters unfettered access to contact information (i.e., name, address, and phone number) for millions of students. With this information, recruiters mail materials to students, call them at home, and even make home visits. Simply saying no is not enough. Students or parents need to *opt out* of releasing student contact information. Some districts have opt-out forms and others do not, but all districts must honor opt-out requests.

Students and parents are not alone. For more than 18 months, the Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition (CVCRC), a collection of civic and religious groups along with other concerned Valley residents, has been working to increase public awareness and change public policy. CVCRC representatives met with Fresno Unified School District senior administrators to work on new policies to comply with NCLB. Fresno Unified now provides opt-out forms to all high school students in five languages. This work, in part, led to an increase in the number of opt outs in the district from 2,459 to 3,242. The CVCRC continues to provide information on Fresno Unified high school campuses each month. In addition, CVCRC members and volunteers have handed out information to students at Fresno City College, organized

a march in downtown Fresno, spoken in high school classes, and made conference presentations.

There is still much work to be done. Many other school districts need to change their policies. Military recruiters use competitions and the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery), which most school districts give to high school students, to get student contact information. Students and parents need to be informed about their rights and options.

Counter recruitment is vital! Schools need to be places of learning. Schools need to encourage students to explore all options. Schools need to encourage students to serve others through activities that build up and strengthen others. The Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition is committed to being an alternative voice in Fresno and beyond. If you want more information or would like to work against military recruiting, please call (559) 487-2515. The Coalition's next meeting is on March 24, 10:00 am, at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence (1584 N. Van Ness).

Scott Key is a member of the Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition and Peace Fresno. He also is a faculty member at Fresno Pacific University.



**Scott Key, the author of this article, marches for peace and the demilitarization of our schools.
Photo by Dallas Blanchard**

**Fresno MoveOn.org
keeps congressmen
focused on November
mandates**

By Phil Erro

Fresno MoveOn.org volunteers Sara Sacksteder, Nancy Griesser, Guiseppa Getto, Diane Woody, and Phil Erro took photos and gathered signatures of nearly 200 voters at Fresno churches recently and delivered them to the staffs of Congressmen Radanovich, Nunes, and Costa. The four

issues that voters cared about most in November's congressional elections, according to a national poll by MoveOn.org, were: Out of Iraq, Health care for All, Save Democracy, and Clean Energy. Petitions urged these Representatives to carry out the will of the voters in this congressional session on these issues, and signers of the petitions were given a chance to have their pictures taken holding cards stating which issues they felt most strongly about.

Staffer Michel Lukens received 86 photos of Congressman Radanovich's constituents showing the issues they think are important and 125 signatures. He said that though Rep. Radanovich has consistently supported President Bush on his Iraq and Afghanistan war policies that he is aware that many voters in his district oppose the war in Iraq. He also acknowledged widespread support of universal health care. MoveOn.org volunteers reminded Mr. Lukens that Peace Fresno had been infiltrated by a Fresno County Sheriff operative, which he agreed was an overreaching police action, because of spying encouraged by the Patriot Act. He said he would keep the photos and petitions until the Congressman could see them. Apparently he has done that, because he had both the photos and petitions when Peace Fresno leaders Bill Simmons and Camille Russell saw Mr. Lukens recently.

Kevin Shakespeare (not

a kin of William), Congressman Nunes' Fresno representative, was impressed by the 30 photos and 40 signatures he received. He said Representative Nunes is reconsidering his position on the Iraq war and agreed health care is a major issue. Congressman Costa Fresno staffers Angie Vega and Ian Wieland pointed out that Jim Costa agrees with MoveOn.org on the four issues. In a follow up meeting with a higher ranking Costa staffer named Bob Sanders, Sara Sacksteder, Nancy Griesser and Guiseppa Getto asked Mr. Sanders what we voters can do to help Representative Costa support bills that can get us out of Iraq, deliver health care, protect Americans from spying and censorship, and promote clean energy. He suggested writing letters to members of Congress on key committees that draft legislation on these issues.

Besides letter writing campaigns, petition drives, and email letters to members of Congress, MoveOn.org provides motivational movies several times a year. To learn more, go to www.MoveOn.org.



MoveOn.org volunteers Phil Erro, Diane Woody, Sara Sacksteder, and Guiseppa Getto at Congressman Radanovich's office. Photo by Nancy Griesser.

Tell your congressional representative how you feel about the war/occupation in Iraq.

This is a list of local representatives and their key aides:

Rep. George Radanovich: Mr. Michael Lukens
449-2490
michael.lukens@mail.house.gov

Rep. Devin Nunes: Mr. Kevin Shakespeare
323-5235
kevin.shakespeare@mail.house.gov

Rep. Jim Costa: Ms. Angie Vega
495-1620
angie.vega@mail.house.gov

Bush's Iraq Strategy for 2007

A second civil war or genocide

By A.K. Gupta

After all the study groups and reports, an electoral repudiation of a failed war, months of deliberation, and hundreds of thousands dead, the Bush administration policy debate boils down to this: choosing between genocide against Sunni Arabs—a strategy known as the “80 percent solution”—or fomenting a second civil war, this one a Shia-on-Shia death match. Or perhaps both.

The new White House strategy begins with the “surge” option. To try to fend off defeat, the Bush administration has decided to send up to 30,000 more troops. The criticism of this, from the media to the military to politicians, is that Bush has not tied any military escalation to a broader political strategy (see the New York Times December 21 editorial, “Rudderless in Iraq”).

In the case of the media, they have ignored their own reporting. The Bush administration has a strategy that has been in the works for months, even if it is muddled and mad. The secret memo from National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, published by the New York Times in November, reveals that the White House is trying to isolate Muqtada al-Sadr, a pillar of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government. As Hadley explains, the Bush administration wants to reshuffle Maliki's coalition so he no longer needs the support of 30 assembly members loyal to Sadr. Afraid this might cause Iraqi security forces to fracture and lead “to major Shia disturbances in southern Iraq,” Hadley recommends that the United States “provide Maliki with additional forces of some kind,” the rationale for the surge.

Hadley wrote this memo on November 8 and the plan is now being put into play. On the one hand is the political component: Sadr's forces shut out in the National Assembly; on the other the U.S. military would try to wipe out Sadr's Mahdi Army militia. There is also talk of an economic component, a jobs program to give the legions of unemployed something to do other than attack Americans, but it smacks of too little, too late after the reconstruction debacle.

Joining in the political and military campaigns against the Sadrists would be a Shia party that has an alliance of convenience with the Bush administration, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and its militia, the Badr Brigade. This is where the prospect of a second civil war becomes very real. The Bush strategy is to foment an intra-Shia conflict to try to regain the upper hand. As both the Badr Brigade and Mahdi Army are enmeshed with various Iraqi police forces, the security forces would splinter, leading to Shia-on-Shia warfare throughout southern Iraq.

Because SCIRI has been scheming to form a Shia “super-region” in southern Iraq, the combination of political and military infighting among the Shia could deliver a death blow to the country. It would split into three warring ethnic regions, sparking a regional conflagration as neighboring states move in to stake their claims and exert influence.

Only a few observers have picked up on this possibility and the terrifying consequences. No shrinking violet, Reuel Marc Gerecht, an ex-CIA officer and resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, warned in a December 21 New York Times op-ed: “Any violent struggle between the Mahdi Army and Supreme Council could provoke anarchy throughout the entire Arab Shiite zone, including Iraq's holy cities and the oil-rich south. As bad as things seem now, such Shiite strife could impoverish all of Arab Iraq, dropping the non-Kurdish regions to an Afghan-like subsistence level. In such a situation, we would likely see the hyper-radicalization of the Shiites, who have already become more militant owing to the tenacity and barbarism of the Sunni insurgency. In addition, whatever fraternal and nationalist bonds remain among moderate Sunni and Shiite Arabs would probably disappear in a Shiite-versus-Shiite bloodbath.”

This fighting has already started. U.S. forces have stepped up their attacks on the Mahdi Army since the summer, while during the same period major clashes between Badr and Mahdi militias have taken place in at least three cities in southern Iraq. In a number of instances, U.S. forces have joined Badr units in battles

against the Sadrists. Formalizing these intertwined conflicts as White House policy would ensure that the skirmishes become all-out war.

Before discussing U.S. strategy and its relation to the growing warfare between the two Shia militias in greater detail, it's important to understand first the political dynamics of the surge option and why it is destined to fail.

Limited Options

The Bush administration settled on the surge option not to prevent defeat on the military battlefield of Iraq—the war has long been lost—but defeat on the political battlefield at home. Bush kicked the Iraq Study Group to the curb, but its report did have one effect: it made the status quo politically untenable. The White House can no longer “stay the course.” It must appear to be doing something different. Therefore, as the Los Angeles Times explains, “America must either increase the force—gambling that the military can impose a measure of security on Iraq—or else begin to withdraw its forces.”

The White House wants Americans to believe that it can still achieve victory in Iraq. At the same time, it is fixated on remaking the Middle East through war, so withdrawal is not an option. Of course, escalation is also a losing strategy, which is why the Pentagon opposed it fiercely. In turn, the Bush administration needed to defeat resistance in the Pentagon and Iraqi government as a precursor to the surge.

With no options remaining other than escalation or withdrawal, the Bush administration is not going to back down and admit defeat.

Knowing who holds all the big guns in Baghdad, Prime Minister Maliki rolled over the quickest, telling the new Defense Secretary Robert Gates “he would let U.S. generals decide whether there is a need for a ‘surge’ in U.S. troops.” So much for the sovereign government of Iraq.

While Bush has said that the generals in Iraq “will make the decisions as to how many troops we have there,” he is still “The Decider” and he's decided to escalate the war. Showing that the ISG report and losing control of Congress hasn't changed anything, Bush, Rice, Cheney, and their band of neo-cons alone will decide the fate of Iraq, the broader U.S. project, and the future of the Middle East.

Those generals who wouldn't sign on to a military escalation have been ditched. General John Abizaid, the top U.S. commander for the Middle East and a vocal opponent of the surge option, is being eased into retirement. So is General George Casey, Jr., the top commander in Baghdad. He slapped down administration plans the week before Christmas by noting, “Additional troops have to be for a purpose,” then reversed course and backed the escalation, “eliminating one of the last remaining hurdles to proposals being considered by President Bush for a troop increase” (LA Times, December 23, 2006). But it was too little to save his post. He's being pushed out of Iraq in February or March, as opposed to next summer as planned, because Bush “sees a chance to bring in a new commander as he announces a new strategy” (NYT, January 2, 2007).

The media are also playing their part, mostly ignoring the broader strategies and focusing on the modalities of the surge: how many more troops to deploy, what is their specific mission, how long can a surge be sustained. The extra troops could try to “blunt the Sunnified insurgency” or “confront radical Shiite cleric Muqtada Sadr, perhaps by moving forces into Sadr City” or step up training of Iraqi security forces to take over the fight. Or all three, as Senator John McCain wants.

One reason military commanders have opposed adding troops is because the military is at the breaking point. Some want to cut the combat force in Iraq by one-third, according to retired Army Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who told the Army Times in November, “The

Army, particularly the National Guard, is on the verge of breaking because the effort is vastly under-resourced and cannot be sustained for long.” Privately, military officials have derided the surge option. Commanders weren't even considering such a move in November. The Washington Post explained “that a boost of 20,000 infantry troops—five or six brigades—would do little to change the nature of the insurgency or the sectarian strife.”

The extra troops would all be combat troops. Even though there are 140,000 U.S. troops currently in Iraq, only 50,000 are combat troops, amounting to 15 brigades. There is a tacit acknowledgement that the Pentagon thinks 50,000 more combat troops are required. But that possibility “is virtually off the table...mainly for logistics reasons.” Finding itself short of troops, the Bush administration is considering “deploying 20,000 additional American troops or more, at least temporarily...as a leading option” (NYT, December 20, 2006). The fact that the numbers being discussed are far less than the military's estimated need indicates why the surge is a political strategy, not a military one.

Even 50,000 more troops would be too few, however. The historical rule of thumb is a ratio of 50 civilians to 1 soldier in occupations, which General Eric Shinkei, other officers, and many military analysts argued for prior to the war. Of course these numbers assumed a benign occupation as in post-war Japan or Kosovo. In the case of a counterinsurgency, leaving aside the civil war, then “the United States and its allies in Iraq would need at least 500,000 and perhaps more than 1 million troops, military experts say.”

Thus adding 20,000 troops would be a drop in Baghdad's bucket, the locus of any surge. The troops would complement the current force of 15,000 U.S. soldiers in Baghdad. Going by the historical yardstick, if the United States really wanted to secure the capital, a city of 6.5 million, it would probably require 200,000 to 300,000 troops—more than all U.S. and foreign troops already in Iraq.

Even going by the four-year-old Iraq War standards, the plan is severely inadequate. At the beginning of the occupation, in mid-May 2003, the U.S. had 25,000 troops in Baghdad, and Donald Rumsfeld had just dispatched an additional

“15,000 troops from the 1st Armored Division and hundreds of military police” to Baghdad because of the poor security situation (Washington Post, May 16 and 18, 2003).

Thus, if 20,000 troops are added in 2007 to a Baghdad rife with a sophisticated insurgency and teeming with sectarian death squads, the troop level will still be less than the U.S. military deployment in the capital before the insurgency even began. Never mind about Al Anbar where a secret Marine report concluded last summer that the “United States has lost in Anbar.” The situation is so grim that the Marines need an extra division—more than 15,000 troops—in spite of 30,000 U.S. soldiers, marines, and sailors already there (the ratio of Iraqis to U.S. troops in Anbar is already under 50 to 1).

As for why the White House is “latching on to the surge idea,” the Joint Chiefs think it's “because of limited alternatives.” They argue it will be counter-productive because “a modest surge could lead to more attacks by al-Qaeda, provide more targets for Sunni insurgents, and fuel the jihadist appeal for more foreign fighters to flock to Iraq.” As for Shia militias, they “may simply melt back into society during a U.S. surge and wait until the troops are withdrawn—then reemerge.”

The Pentagon is right to worry that an escalation will backfire. Since U.S. troops were deployed in August to the front lines in Baghdad, casualties have risen sharply to the highest level of the whole war. They've also failed to protect civilians, with massive ethnic cleansing reshaping Baghdad. Five or even ten more combat brigades won't change the situation.

So why pursue a doomed strategy? Because withdrawal is the only other option. While withdrawal is the only way to keep Iraq intact—stripped of U.S. protection the Shia parties would have to reach a political solution with Sunni insurgents—the Bush administration would have to abandon its project to remake the Middle East. It would no longer have a large central base to pursue interventions against Iran or Syria. Kuwait, which has turned over the northern part of its country to the U.S. Army, would be of no use in this regard.

Surge Plans

Thus, the next stage is escalation, which has been a constant of U.S. policy in Iraq. But it leaves the question, what will these extra troops do? Many plans have been put forth:

- Concentrate on fighting the Sunni-led insurgency. As mentioned, Anbar alone could swallow up all the extra troops with no evidence that they would have an effect. More than 40 percent of U.S. combat deaths take place in Anbar (see www.icasualties.org/oif), and more troops may just mean more targets. Even if pressured in Anbar, resistance groups could easily shift operations to Baghdad and at least four other provinces where insurgents have a strong base and wait out the surge.
- Deploy the troops in Baghdad neighborhoods to stop the ethnic cleansing. "American troops would take up new positions in 23 mixed Shiite and Sunni neighborhoods to better protect the population." One problem, as Kosovo shows, is that troops would have to remain for a generation or longer to allow for sectarian divides to be bridged. A bigger problem is that by the time troops are deployed, the communal cleansing may be completed. At least ten mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad have already been turned exclusively Shia at gunpoint.
- Step up training of Iraqi troops. This strategy has wide appeal, not because it will work, but because many Americans crave an honorable retreat. They believe that somehow sectarian, corrupt, ill-trained, poorly equipped Iraqi forces can defeat the insurgency and halt the civil war where the most powerful military ever has failed. Even if the Pentagon triples the advisors to 15,000, as the ISG recommends, it won't matter. Some trainers say "that all the U.S. military is doing is training and arming Iraqis to fight a looming civil war," such as in Diyala Province north of Baghdad. Others worry "that the training of the current Iraqi army—at U.S.-operated camps—is spreading skills that are turned against U.S. forces." The spread of sniper tactics among insurgents accounts for much of the increase in U.S. casualties. Even if trained, most Iraqi troops desert. By one account "75% of Iraqi soldiers don't show up for duty." The root problem is that capable security forces depend upon a functional state and Iraq's has no writ beyond the Green Zone.
- Crush the Mahdi Army. This is the likeliest option. While the Bush administration will probably try all the above, one of its policy constants is its desire to eliminate Sadr and his militia. Last spring, the White House blocked Ibrahim al-Jaafari from serving a second time as prime minister. Bush "doesn't want, doesn't support, doesn't accept" him as prime minister because he felt "Mr. Jaafari will do little to rein in Mr. Sadr" (NYT, March 29 and 30, 2006). Maliki was then pushed into the role because he was "independent" of the various factions, that is, seen as willing to do U.S. bidding. The move backfired because Maliki still needed Sadr's parliamentary bloc to rule.

This brings us back to the White House's strategy review. It could be the "80 percent solution" or it could be stoking a Shia-on-Shia conflict. (The 80 percent solution refers to the percentage of Iraqis who are either Shia Arabs or Kurds.) According to the Washington Post, which detailed the White House debate, the policy would entail the United States abandoning "reconciliation efforts with Sunni insurgents and instead give priority to Shiites and Kurds." Bringing an end to reconciliation efforts would mean "U.S. troops would be fighting the symptoms of Sunni insurgency without any prospect of getting at the causes behind it—notably the marginalization of the once-powerful minority."

In other words, the United States would back the sectarian war against Sunni Arabs, a prescription for mass murder approaching genocide. In three major Iraq cities—Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Mosul—the war involves the use of Kurdish and Shia-based security forces

against Sunni Arabs in general. The same is true for scores of smaller cities and towns in areas where the resistance is active. With U.S. troops bent on defeating a broad-based Sunni resistance, combined with massive ethnic cleansing by Kurdish and Shia forces and widespread death squad activity, the Sunni Arabs as an ethno-religious community in Iraq would be wiped out.

The only thing giving the White House pause is fear that other Sunni-majority states, particularly Jordan and Saudi Arabia, would weigh in on the side of their Iraqi brethren.

The other strategy is to complement a stepped-up military campaign against Sadr's forces with an attempt to isolate him politically. This would likely spark an inter-Shia civil war and the break-up of Iraq. This option is already in the works with the White House trying to break apart the ruling Shia coalition and form a new government (so much for elections). The key Iraqi players are not politicians but Shia clerics: Sadr, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).

Enemy Number One

SCIRI has emerged as a key U.S. ally in Iraq, which is ironic as it was set up by Iran in 1982 during the Iran-Iraq war. SCIRI was a member of the U.S.-sponsored

preacher."

The plan outlined in the secret Hadley memo can be seen taking shape in all these actions.

As for the military end, Bob Killebrew, a defense strategist, said that launching a second war would be a joint U.S.-Iraqi campaign: "Our conventional forces, not advisors, will have to team with the Iraqi army and neutralize the Mahdi army and the other militias."

Not all militias would be targeted, however. The military campaign would pit SCIRI's Badr Brigade against Sadr's Mahdi Army. In the Washington Post, reporter Sudarshan Raghavan wrote, "in the view of the Bush administration, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim is a moderate and Moqtada al-Sadr is an extremist" even though "they both lead militias that are widely alleged to run death squads." "Moderate," of course, is a term of approval reserved for collaborators, such as SCIRI or the Iraqi Islamic Party, while the Sadrists are "extremists" because they have used street protests, armed uprisings, and national politicking to try to oust the occupiers. In fact Sadr's allies have managed to get 131 Assembly members, almost half the body, to sign on to a petition "demanding a timetable for U.S. withdrawal."

It's no coincidence then that the Mahdi Army, which is active in Baghdad and in Shia areas to the south, is now enemy number one. Conveniently, U.S. estimates of its strength have grown dramatically. Whereas the Mahdi Army's strength was put at less than 10,000 in 2005, new reports put the number of fighters at 60,000 (AP, December 8, 2006).

Badr operates death squads under the banner of special police commandos. Beginning in 2004, U.S. forces organized, trained, and equipped the police commandos, drawing from former Hussein-era security forces to create a neo-Baathist militia and death squad that would hunt Sunni insurgents. Under the Iraq government that took power in April 2005, Bayan Jabr, a former high-ranking commander in the Badr Brigade, took control of the commandos as head of the Interior Ministry. Jabr ousted Sunni personnel in the commandos, putting in place up to 3,000 Badr militiamen and they quickly began a reign of terror against Sunnis in general. (For details see Tom Lasseter and the late Yasser Salihee of Knight Ridder, Solomon Moore of the LA Times, and Ken Silverstein's "The Minister of Civil War" in August 2006

Harper's Magazine.)

Since the outbreak of the all-out civil war last February, Badr has faded into the background. One AP report claims, "Unlike Iraq's other major Shiite militia, the rival Mahdi Army of anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, the Badr Brigade is known to be better organized, more disciplined and secretive. These qualities have largely spared Badr the unwanted media attention the Mahdi Army attracts, as well as the attention of U.S. officials who often cite the Mahdi Army when they talk about the need to disband militias in Iraq" (AP, December 2, 2006).

This is not entirely true, however. Prominent U.S. officials have helped cover up Badr's role in torture and execution. For instance, Steven Casteel, who as a veteran of America's dirty wars in Latin America brought his propaganda techniques to bear in Iraq, blamed the murders on "insurgents posing as police," claiming, "The small numbers that we've investigated we've found to be either rumor or innuendo" (Knight-Ridder, June 28, 2005). Then in February 2006, after months of detailed reports of Badr-run death squads and secret torture chambers, the U.S. general in charge of all police training dismissed these allegations out of hand. As the BBC put it, Major General Joseph Peterson "said he was convinced Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, a member of SCIRI, had no knowledge of or involvement in the death squads. 'Who are these guys? That's what the minister is trying to find out,' he said" (BBC, February 16, 2006).

In this light, the fighting between Badr and Mahdi is not just about clashes between opposing militias, but



Peace Corner at Shaw and Blackstone in Fresno - January 1, 2007. Anti-war/occupation protestors commemorate 3,000 American deaths in Iraq. Photo by Mike Rhodes

Iraqi Opposition Coordinating Committee formed prior to the March 2003 invasion. It served on the U.S.-selected Iraq Governing Council and has supported the occupation for the most part (and relies on it for protection).

In a nutshell, the Bush administration is trying to cobble together its satraps in Iraq—the Kurds, SCIRI, and a Sunni party (the Iraqi Islamic Party)—to create a majority that will back the U.S. in crushing Sadr.

The LA Times detailed the overall plan: "strong support has coalesced in the Pentagon behind a military plan to 'double down' in the country with a...major combat offensive against Muqtada Sadr...a possible renewed offensive in the Sunni stronghold of Al Anbar province, a large Iraqi jobs program and a proposal for a long-term increase in the size of the (U.S.) military." Such a strategy "would be a gamble," however, as first "U.S. Embassy officials would have to help usher into power a new coalition in Baghdad that was willing to confront the militias."

This was why Bush held high-profile meetings in Washington with two Iraqi politicians in early December. The Washington Post reported that Bush met with Hakim on December 4 to hedge his Administration's "gamble on the weak Maliki government. Bush also met with Iraq's Sunni vice president, Tariq al-Hashemi, leader of the Iraqi Islamic Party."

The strategy moved forward in mid-December when "A group of politicians made up of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds said...that it was seeking to form an alliance that could shift Iraq's balance of power." Locked out were representatives of Sadr, "a sign that the group may want to politically isolate the powerful Shiite

also about a U.S. strategy to back one side in the sectarian war. Starting in the summer of 2005, entire cities in southern Iraq have been wracked by days-long street battles between the two militias. Since August of 2006, similar battles in five cities have seen the two militias clash in fights that drew in their allied security forces. In the city of Diwaniyah, in Qadisiyah province, battles took place three separate times in a six-week period starting in late August. All three involved U.S. forces backing Badr-controlled security forces—including police commandos in at least two instances—against Mahdi fighters.

Analyst and historian Juan Cole described the first battles as “militia-on-militia violence” in which up to 81 people died. Cole explained that Badr “has infiltrated the police and security” in Qadisiyah province, “where the ruling party is the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq.” Meanwhile, “the Sadr movement has spread like wildfire in the south and is offering a challenge to the local political structures.”

According to AFP, U.S. forces intervened in the fighting, dropping a 500-pound bomb on an “enemy position.” On his website, Cole wrote, “My own guess is that it took local Badr Corps (infiltrated into Diwaniyah police and security forces), Badr Corps Special Police Commandos, Iraqi army soldiers, and a U.S. 500 pound bomb to produce an outcome where ragtag militiamen were fought to a standstill.” In a separate article on Salon, Cole added that by bombing a Mahdi Army position, the United States “was essentially also backing the local SCIRI government.”

Then in September in the same city, “a joint Iraqi and American patrol raided one of Mr. Sadr’s offices, leading to a three-hour exchange of gunfire between militia forces and Iraqi police commandos.” On October 8, “American and Iraqi troops fought a fierce battle on Sunday with [Mahdi] militants in the southern city of Diwaniya.”

Less than two weeks later, fierce battles erupted in the Amara, a city of 250,000 near the border with Iran. Almost 200 people were wounded or killed in gunfights between Mahdi and Badr. Some 2,300 Iraqi troops who were rushed to the city “were being helped by police commandos.” At the same time, clashes between the two militias took place in two other southern towns. Then in Samawa, in late December, more open warfare occurred between Mahdi forces and local police aligned with SCIRI. (For more on U.S.-backed militias see Z Magazine, December 2006 “Militias and Civil War.”)

The proliferation of these militia-on-militia battles is ominous because it shows how the loyalties of the Iraqi security units lie with political and ethnic sects, not the Iraqi state. By throwing its force behind Badr against the Mahdi Army, the United States is showing that it isn’t hesitant about stoking the sectarian warfare for its own ends.

The final aspect, a U.S. military campaign against the Mahdi Army, is also underway. Since the apparent abduction of a U.S. Army soldier in late October, U.S. forces and Iraqi units have conducted 57 operations, mostly in Shia neighborhoods controlled by the Mahdi Army. While the Pentagon claims to be looking for the missing soldier, “Nasir Saidi, a Sadr legislator, accused U.S. and Iraqi troops of using the search for the missing U.S. soldier as a pretext to strike his movement” (LA Times, December 8, 2006).

The raids are said to have the blessing of Prime Minister Maliki. Tensions between him and the Sadr loyalists have sharpened after Maliki met with Bush in Jordan on November 30. The bloc of Sadr loyalists in the Assembly along with five cabinet ministers withdrew from the government (Washington Post, November 30, 2006). The U.S. raids against the Mahdi Army likely played a role in the boycott. Speaking of the operations, “one high-ranking U.S. military commander” said, “We have carte blanche at this point” from the Iraqi government.

Interestingly, the LA Times reports that the Iraqis assisting in the Baghdad raids are said to be from a U.S.-controlled force known as the “Dirty Iraqi Division.” They are Iraqi special forces, which might be either an overwhelmingly Shia force known as the Iraqi Counterterrorism force, under the control of U.S. Special Forces, or another unit formerly called the 36th Commando Battalion, another U.S.-controlled unit, mainly comprised of fighters from Kurdish militias.

Double Down

Without getting into the tangled nature of Iraqi politics, the White House plan to reshape the coalition government is meeting resistance from Maliki—who fears being ousted—and Ayatollah Sistani, who is opposed to breaking up the Shia coalition (NYT, December 12, 2006). A little opposition has never stopped the Bush administration, however. Whatever happens on the political front, it appears committed to employing the surge of U.S. troops and sectarian Iraqi units in a systematic crackdown on the Mahdi Army.

“Such a confrontation,” Reuel Marc Gerecht argues in the Times, “beyond wrecking Iraq politically, would probably allow the worst elements in the Supreme Council—those who envision a religious dictatorship along the lines of Iran—to become more powerful within the party.”

With dual civil wars raging in Iraq, SCIRI might seek to form an independent “Shia-stan” in the south, which contains most of Iraq’s working oil fields. A break-up of Iraq would probably result in a broader war as neighboring states moved in to stake their claims. A regional Mideast war would quickly gather momentum, like the Congo war, Africa’s “World War,” where states fear that if they don’t enter the conflict they will lose out to rivals. The Bush administration is aware that its strategy might lead to Iraq’s dissolution and is even preparing for it. A “confidential briefing on possible ‘end states’ in Iraq was prepared by officials under the command of Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarielli.... It suggested the dark vision of a divided nation that haunts the administration” (NYT, January 2, 2007).

There is also possibility of a civil war followed by genocide, which Gerecht foresees. “A genocidal Shiite-versus-Sunni conflict in Iraq—a real possibility—would be much more likely after an intra-Shiite war that destroys the traditional social and religious hierarchy that has remained vastly stronger among the Shiites than among Sunni Arabs since the American invasion.”

The pieces are all falling into place. The ruling Iraqi coalition is increasingly fragile, and the Bush administration is trying to deliver the final blow. Pro-occupation Iraqi parties are maneuvering to put a new government in place. The main target would be the Sadrist, who would be isolated politically. Meanwhile, the Pentagon is stepping up attacks against the Mahdi Army while the U.S.-backed Badr Brigade is also engaged in battles against Mahdi militiamen.

While it seems crazy that the Bush administration would seek such a course, the wheels are already in motion. It should be remembered that the White House has escalated the war at every critical juncture: from the mass arrests and torture that fueled the initial insurgency in 2003 to the twin assaults on Falluja and Mahdi forces in 2004 to the use of death squads starting in 2005 to the surge coming down the pike.

With no options remaining other than escalation or withdrawal, the Bush administration is not going to back down and admit defeat even if it’s the only prudent course. For four years it’s gambled with the lives of Iraqis and American soldiers in pursuit of a failed policy. It’s even using gambling terminology to refer to the new strategy. One defense official said the escalation was a “double down” (LA Times, December 13, 2006).

In a last desperate bid to regain the upper hand, it’s upping the stakes, which means there is more to lose. It’s gambling that it can win a two-front war against both the Sunni and Shia resistance before Iraq implodes in a Middle Eastern World War. Given the White House’s track record, the odds for success don’t look good.

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Rehabilitation, Orange Crush, and Little Fallujah

By Sara Olson



Prison reform and implementation of rehabilitative programs in a violent, racist culture, beset by increasingly acceptable high levels of mass poverty, sound like a fairy tale. At Central California Women's Facility (CCWF), there are women who don't even want to be released.

There's nothing to go home to: certainly no home, no family that will take them in, no job and no hope of one, no medical care and no hope of any, no money and no hope for some. What there is, is the scarlet letter stamped on one's Homeland Security file, the big "F for felon" with all the fear, superstition, and hatred that label carries. The only forever-after in an ex-felon's life is that she'll be forever cursed by the antisocial history in her computerized personal saga. In short, except for a fortunate few who have families to help them when they get out, there's no hope.

A few reforms for women were enacted in 2005. Women prisoners can now wear our hair down all the time at CCWF. Prior to this, we could be sanctioned for one strand below our necks while at work or in education (sic). Women are no longer shackled to a bed during labor and childbirth. Most importantly, male guards can no longer pat search female prisoners.

Recently, staff members have begun to grouse and complain about how violent women inmates are or, at least, are becoming. They dissect their fears of imminent physical attacks from inmates. Even though Oleoresin Capsicum or "Orange Crush," as it's colloquially known, an oil-based pepper spray, dangles in canisters from staffs' utility belts, nestled next to collapsible Monadnock flexible metal batons that snap to full length at the flick of a wrist, guards still do not feel safe. They've taken to wearing stab-proof vests at \$500 a pop courtesy of the guards' union (Hey! I want one of

those!) over and under their uniforms or, in the case of non-uniformed staff, over their street clothes.

When guards first began wearing the vests, a woman in our housing unit asked one of the staff, "Why are you wearing that?" "Oh," he replied, "I'm wearing it in case there's a riot in a men's prison." She said she mumbled, somewhat ruefully, under her breath, "Then why doncha just leave it in your car?"

For females, life in prison is a daily tightrope walk. The ambient stress levels due to loss of family and loved ones, a pervasive sense of threat, a high incidence of mental illness, and total lack of privacy encompassed by gross overcrowding batter the fragile parameters of a prisoner's emotional and psychic supports. Inmates, when in violation of a rule, are cuffed and walked to the Program Office where they are put in individual cages. This can occur if one raises one's voice, or if one argues with a girlfriend, the latter one of the BIG THREE causes of fights: Chips, Chicks and Cigarettes. People argue over food, usually purchased from the monthly canteen (the inmate store), which is used to pay debts in the barter economy. The root cause of almost all fights is relationships between girlfriends, often exacerbated by homemade hooch. Although tobacco is now a contraband item in California prisons, there is still plenty to go around (How does it get in? Miraculous materializations? Hidden in vaginas?) and rolled cigarettes create bigger-than-ever debts. When a siren alarm goes off anywhere on one of the yards (creating a havoc of seizures in the epileptics as a byproduct) all women inmates, from 18 to 75, must crouch down. Anyone who doesn't risks a walk off the yard in cuffs even if she merely bobs up mistakenly before the all-clear is announced. She can be threatened with a 128 or a 115, a disciplinary write-up, which carries its own list of potential penalties. If one walks over an Out of Bounds red line, it could result in a 115. If hooch is discovered in a room (remember: eight women per room), all the women can get a write-up, maybe even the one who brewed it.

A while ago, there was a "riot" on the Main yard. Four hooched-up women, two couples, started fighting and the guards got excited and began spraying

everything in the immediate area with Orange Crush. As one woman later exited the main yard to her housing yard, she was pushing a wheelchair-bound prisoner. The officer who opened the yard gate snarled, "You want some of this?" as he tapped his canister of Orange Crush on the cement. She demurred, "No sir. I don't." "Well," he replied, "you won't be able to get away from it when we use the smokebombs!" Smokebombs?

Two of the women captured on the day of the riot had to be released from Ad Seg (Administrative Segregation: jail in prison) after a couple of days. They were arrested for running. Later, they explained that they ran to get away from the overwhelming burning pain of the Orange Crush sprayed around the yard.

The usage specs for Orange Crush state that it should be sprayed at a prisoner from the neck down and at a distance of no less than five feet. Often, guards go right for the head: eyes, ears, mouth, and nostrils are drenched. To add insult to injury, those sprayed are charged \$50.00 per can, which is automatically deducted from inmates' accounts.

People need hope to more than survive in prison.

I have seen women fight in ways I have never before seen women battle. I had no idea. The biggest melees are about, be-

sides some girlfriend, respect. In a 2006 issue of a Sunday *New York Times* I read that an increase in the U.S. in sudden, emotionally-based killings is due to that intangible quality — respect. It seems that when people have less and less to call their own, be it property, pride in a job, educational attainment, vocational training, or a stake in community, lives become unanchored and adrift. Widespread poverty and weak social environments lead to a tenuous stability. One social faux pas can lead to a massive overreaction, even in women. It's rare but it does occur, particularly in a prison pressure cooker.

Inmates are barked at constantly over the P.A. system. We are insulted, directed to stay off the grass until a certain hour, directed to walk between two lines painted on the asphalt, day in and day out. We are called stupid. Stupid. Television "news" in the Central Valley advertises an upcoming segment with the headline, "Another stupid criminal!" Stupid, stupid, stupid.

CCWF is populated by women with ruined lives. Many were on paths to destruction before they ever collided with the Criminal Justice (sic) System where they were plea-bargained, as are 95 percent of all U.S. felony cases, into a long sentence or life or life without possibility of parole (LWOP), far longer than their crimes merit. The once-proud California public school system failed these women who have ended up here. It's in shambles in poor communities, the most de facto segregated public school system in the country, which means everything to a convict population that is predominantly one of color; 65 percent of CCWF Women inmates have a minimum level of education. Many are just plain illiterate, asking a fellow prisoner how to multiply the sales tax on a vendor box order or please do it for her . . . please.

There are plenty of decent people who work for CCWF in custody, non-custody, and administrative jobs. But there's no tradition of rehabilitation. There are mistrust and paranoia between prisoners and staff. The prison culture is structured like any totalitarian society with one "side" having unlimited power over the other. The other side has only the individual hustles people employ to make day-to-day survival a bit easier. Throughout human history, people have survived in prisons, concentration and internment camps, and in penal colonies on the hustle. Many staff members understand this. As long as the hustles don't hurt anyone, they leave the hustlers alone. Sometimes they are fair, or beyond fair. Sometimes they tell individual prisoners, "You shouldn't be here," or, "You ought to go home," or ask, "Why are you still here?" with the caveat, "If you ever mention I said this, I'll deny it." They have to issue this disclaimer. They endanger their comfort level on the job, maybe even the job altogether, if they're too inmate-friendly. A totalitarian culture makes no allowance for compassion.

Besides, what's to be gained by compassion? What's to be gained by complying with new gender responsive strategy training? What will happen if some staff member doesn't comply? Nothing. If they don't comply, will staff be fired? No! So?

There are 2.2 million people in U.S. prisons and jails. The female population in prison in California and throughout the nation is growing faster than any other demographic, reaching a high of 7 percent of all prison-

The Assessment

A. In January 2006 the Criminal Justice Institute published a summary of an institutional culture assessment conducted at CCWF from June 6, 2005, through June 14, 2005. The assessment was conducted during a site visit by a six-person team . . . trained in the use of Institutional Culture Assessment Protocol (ICAP), a standardized process and instrumentation designed specifically for use in assessing a prison's culture.

B. The assessment described the culture at CCWF as "a tranquil yet restless culture." Because CCWF is a women's prison, "staff feel safe in their workplace." They don't "feel threatened by the inmates. They do not operate under the threat of violence that staff in many male institutions usually experience." (However, I found it interesting to read in a Boston Woodard article in Fresno's *Community Alliance*, December 2006, that the greatest number of threats against staff in California's men's prisons are of a verbal nature.) "Many staff commented that the 'women aren't as violent as the men,' expressing a great deal of appreciation for the more relaxed atmosphere that resulted from the low incidence of violence at the institution. Many referred to CCWF as 'the best kept secret in the state . . .'"

C. "The lack of . . . violent behavior . . . has resulted in staff becoming more accustomed to a "relaxed" correctional environment. Consequently, boredom and complacency have emerged. . . . Thus, staff have looked for something else upon which to focus their attention. Not being threatened or having to 'watch their backs' on a daily basis, results in staff from all levels making smaller issues into something larger."

This is important to highlight because a Gender Responsive Strategies Committee has recommended reforms for women prisoners within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). The reforms could allow for some genuine change within the women's system and a chance for lower recidivism rates and successful inmate reintegration with families and communities. As one of my roommates says, "The pendulum between punishment and reform is on the upswing in favor of inmates. We have about four years to gain some positive changes. Then it'll swing back even further toward punishment and we'll have to claw our way back to somewhere reasonable."

D. In practice, it's going to be difficult to enact the gender strategy. There is staff resistance in the prisons, which is hardly surprising. According to ICAP: "Line staff at CCWF do not have a clear understanding of what gender responsive correctional practices are . . . female inmates ARE different from male inmates — but staff lack the guidance and leadership necessary to help them understand HOW they are different and WHY things are done differently . . . WHAT the true mission of the facility is and HOW that mission applies to female offenders."

Guards can be overheard saying that the retraining programs will result in "no change." Even the inmates agree there'll be no change. In a bureaucratic system constructed to punish for more than a quarter century, the CDC can't simply add "R" for rehabilitation to a departmental title and expect it to mean anything. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore, once an instructor in UC Berkeley's former School of Criminology and an antiprison activist, writes in her book, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California*, "We've crammed 173,000 convicts into the nation's largest prison system, designed to house at least one-third less . . . California may lag behind many other states in high school graduation rates, welfare benefits and investment in public health, but when it comes to punishment, we rank at or near the top."



ers in 2006. Of the three major racial groups in the U.S., despite being the smallest size overall, black women are more than twice as likely as Latinas and three times as likely as white women to go to prison. The effect on the thousands of children left behind by all these incarcerated mothers is devastating.

Women go to prison for nonviolent drug offenses. Convictions are primarily for use, not for sale or transport. Nixon's Controlled Substances Act spawned the Reagan administration's War on Drugs. The "war" was spearheaded by Edwin Meese and his erstwhile subordinate, First Lady Nancy Reagan, who promoted the socially moronic Just Say No campaign. At the same time, the CIA was flooding poor communities of color with Contra cocaine. These policies have produced 20 million criminals since the 1970s.

Since the beginning of 2007, the only new policies we've seen at CCWF are the implementation of a 55 percent restitution increase and the new property matrix for women and men imposed by the CDCR. The restitution increase means any money earned by a prisoner or sent in from the outside will have 55 percent deducted from the total to pay restitution costs levied by the courts on most of the state's inmates. Tens of millions of dollars have gone into the Crime Victims' Restitution Fund to which victims apply for psychological services. The charge is 50 percent plus 5 percent

administrative costs. When restitution was 40 percent, administrative fees were 4 percent. At 30 percent they were 3 percent, and at 20 percent a plus 2 percent. The more the restitution, the higher the administrative costs for the same work. Go figure.

The property matrix delineates every item, such as the exact number of candy bars and bras and panties, an inmate can have in her personal property. It was put in place in the men's institutions too . . . without the bras and panties, I think. We can no longer have our personal towels that loved ones sent us more than three years ago, when boxes from home were banned. No sweaters. Not one blouse. No turtlenecks. No Gap slacks, no slacks, period. All disallowed items had to be sent home or donated. Except for a few allowable colors left over from old vendor boxes or from home, we can have only gray or white and precious little of that. We are allowed only two appliances. A small TV, a clip-on lamp, and a fan? No! Get rid of one!

The policies most likely to make a difference for women prisoners would apply to many of the men, too. They would be: a) de-schedule marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act; b) abolish parole; c) release more people; d) reform sentencing guidelines; and e) establish community supports for newly released prisoners that offer a possibility for successful reintegration into communities.

Within women's prisons, the Close Custody classification should be abolished. If Close Custody is used at all, it should be done for disciplinary reasons only and, even then, sparingly. Close Custody prevents Close As from attending any event after 6:00 p.m., sometimes for as long as five years. The five-year Close A status can apply to discipline problems and to those who are perfectly disciplined. Close As can't attend educational or vocational classes or any religious services that fall between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. or after 6:00 p.m. every day, due to institutional counts. Close B classification, the rank following at least one year at Close A, lasts from four years for some to up to seven years before a prisoner's first Parole Board appearance. One woman I know won't get off Close B until 2070. Rehabilitation, we hope, will unlock the prison doors to more people from the outside world. Close Custody classification, the sole purpose of which is punishment, interferes with access on evenings and on weekends to those who bring a bit of the free world into prison.

Close Custody classification elimination should be part of a larger program to reunite families. Overnight Family Visits, now prohibited for lifers, LWOPs, long-termers, and all Close Custody prisoners, should be restored. Close Custody guard positions could be transferred to Family Visiting that, with greater access by prisoners, could be scheduled seven days a week rather than the three days currently in effect.

People need hope to more than survive in prison. CDCR plans to put some form of gender responsive strategy in place. Part of that should encourage sensitivity to prisoner gender differences. It's crucial to address not only actions, but language as well. For instance, when the U.S. military assault on the Iraqi city of Fallujah occurred in November 2004, one of the housing cops labeled our unit "Little Fallujah." Not good. It desensitizes. When the National Guard was deployed in New Orleans after Katrina, the troops called the lower Ninth Ward "Little Somalia." Not good. It dehumanizes those who were rightly nothing but victims. To add insult to injury, when the housing cop referred to our unit as "Little Fallujah," a female officer perked up, swiveled her head and chirped, "Fallujah? Who's she? When did she move into the unit?" Huh.

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

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march 4th - 4:00 p.m.
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4144 N. Millbrook (between Ashlan & Dakota)

march 9th - 6:00 p.m.
@ the Big Red Church

march 10th - 6:00 p.m.
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sponsored by Teatro de la Tierra, the Unitarian Universalist Church, the Fresno Center for Non-Violence, funded in part by the Fresno Arts Council CEP, ACTA, University of Rhode Island Honors Colloquium Series, individual contributions, if you would like to volunteer, donate/contribute, call the number listed above - donations are tax deductible.

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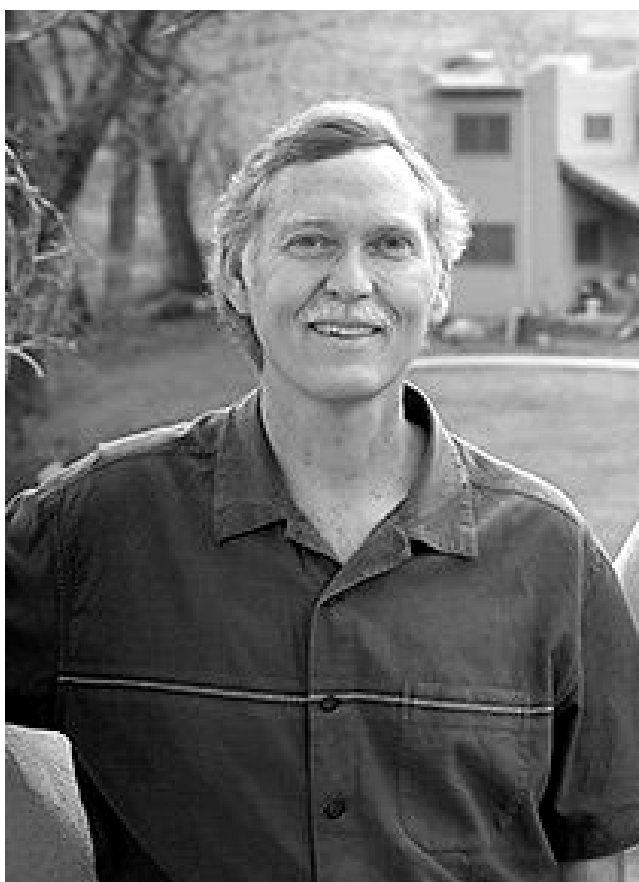
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Creating a Sustainable Lifestyle, a Free Community Event

by Lorenzo Bassman

On Sunday, March 18, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., *La Querencia*, Fresno's first Cohousing community, will present a free talk by "green" expert Dave Wann. The event will be held at Arte Americas, 1630 Van Ness, in the Cultural Arts District of upper downtown Fresno. Mr. Wann is author of nine books and producer of 25 videos and TV shows about sustainable design and living a more environmentally-conscious lifestyle, including the book and PBS-TV special *Affluenza: The All Consuming Epidemic*, and *Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods*. The presentation will include slides and video showing what individuals, neighborhood associations, and local government can do to create energy-efficient homes, more sustainable neighborhoods, community gardens, and cooperative activities. Wann will intermix his talk with witty and insightful theme-based songs. A wine and cheese reception will follow.

This event is sponsored by *La Querencia/Fresno Cohousing*, a group of families, couples, individuals, and elders creating a 28-household environmentally-sensitive community on a 2.8 acre site in North Fresno. Cohousing is a way to live in community — a small-scale inter-generational neighborhood developed by the residents themselves. Fully self-sufficient homes are clustered together around common areas and amenities such as a pool, gardens, outdoor gathering areas, workshop, exercise room, teen lounge, and a beautiful common house that has a gourmet kitchen and dining room for optional community meals a few nights a week.



The homes will be among the most energy efficient in the Valley. Energy Star appliances, low-water-use fixtures, ample natural light, and active/passive cooling/heating techniques will dramatically reduce monthly utility bills. Super-insulation, radiant barriers, and highly energy efficient windows keep the homes cool in the summer and warm in the winter. The homes will also feature bright, naturally daylit rooms and low-toxicity building materials, and the community will also offer shared organic gardens and edible landscaping, a bicycle storage facility, and proximity to schools, parks, shopping, restaurants, and bicycle paths.

The event's speaker, Dave Wann, has spent thirty years pondering a qualitatively better, more sustainable future. He has taught at the college level, worked as a policy analyst for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for more than a decade, and helped design and build the cohousing village in which he now lives. In his book, *Biologic: Designing with Nature*, Wann proposed an economy based on natural reality and human nature, rather than abstract, obsolete goals. The book's focus was the individual's role in making choices and driving sustainable design. In his book, *Deep Design*, Wann took a more comprehensive, systems approach to design. Writing in the book's forward, Paul Hawken said, "The concept of deep design provides us with a pathway to elegant, innovative systems changes that will change life on Earth for the better."

Wann comments, "My most exciting project to date is the book *Affluenza*. It offers an escape route to a new 'American dream' that will be much healthier and much more satisfying." Wann and his coauthors document how "the quantity and quality of stuff we use, and the technologies that produce all that stuff, are rapidly ripping apart the tapestry of life on Earth. We're liquidating real wealth in trade for trinkets — short-term, artificial wealth." Wann's documentary *Building Livable Communities* was produced in 1999 as a speaking tool for then Vice President Al Gore. "We're all in this together," he says, "and together, we can design our way out. Every crisis is fertile with opportunity."

To reserve a seat and for more information please contact Pat at (866) 246-7717, e-mail info@fresnocohousing.org, or visit www.fresnocohousing.org.

Lorenzo Bassman is a musician and a church music director. He can be contacted by email at lbassman@pacbell.net

Saving the Frogs, Saving Ourselves

By Judy Stege

Frogs are a sign of the generation gap between those of us born before 1980 and those younger than 30. The "Older generation" grew up enchanted by pollywogs that mysteriously appeared in puddles in our urban empty lots or in rural spring streams. We could take pollywogs home, keep them in a jar, and watch legs grow and tails disappear. Continuous entertainment, they became delightful little jumping frogs that we put out in the garden. Frogs sang to us with the crickets at night. How often do you see or hear frogs these days? Out of sight, out of mind. So, the majority of Californians today have little interest in frogs, even though frogs were created to eliminate flies, mosquitoes and plant-eating pests. How lucky is a gardener who has toads and frogs around.



There are 25 species of frogs in California. [For info and pictures, see www.nwf.org/frogwatchUSA/] One, the Red-legged frog which is disappearing from the San Joaquin River and tributaries, was the winner in a U.S. District Court last October 2006. The Center for Biological Diversity and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) agreed to protect this frog from 66 of the most toxic and persistent pesticides/herbicides registered for use in California. Those toxic chemicals, which we use in our businesses, our homes, our yards and on public streets, make their way in water runoff through the storm drains and into our ponding basins (source of our household water), canals, creeks, and the San Joaquin River.

One of the 66 most toxic and persistent chemicals used here in Fresno by unwitting homeowners is RoundUp.

The chemical is glyphosate. Most homeowners who care about weed free, or stump free, or perfectly manicured yards have a bottle of RoundUp in the garage or shed. It is guaranteed to get rid of any unwanted plants easily. It destroys plants, frogs and people, too.

Lymphoma is a form of cancer that afflicts the lymphatic system. There are basically two main kinds of lymphoma, i.e. Hodgkin's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL). The incidence of NHL has increased rapidly in most Western countries over the last few decades. According to the American Cancer Society, there has been an alarming 80% increase in incidences of NHL since the early 1970's.

In a study published in the March 15, 1999 Journal of American Cancer Society, the Swedish researchers maintained that exposure to glyphosate "yielded increased risks for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma", a form of cancer (NHL). They stressed that with the rapidly increasing use of glyphosate since the time the study was carried out, it would be wise to do further studies of people and their illnesses.

RoundUp is the world's most widely used herbicide. It is estimated that in 1998 alone, over 112,000 tons of glyphosate was used world-wide. Monsanto makes good money from this product. Homeowners used it in their yards. Soybean farmers used it in their fields. It will take a world-wide effort to stop using RoundUp. But we can start here in Fresno, and maybe the frogs will come back to our gardens. We can choose to use alternatives to this dangerous herbicide. We can talk to our families, our neighbors, and our gardening businesses and ask them to stop using RoundUP. (Be sure to dispose of any unwanted bottles safely at a Hazardous Waste Site.) What the EPA plans to do to rid the waters of the 66 named toxic chemicals is unknown. We must take action in our own homes and yards, because we contribute to that runoff. We just might save the Red-legged frog and ourselves.

So you decided not to use RoundUP or any product with glyphosate in your yard this spring. Hurray! Grassroots victory! But what can you do to keep the garden looking neat and tidy? Many ideas to cut down on pesticide/herbicide usage and prevent toxic runoff are found at the web sites www.ourwaterourworld.org or www.fresnofloodcontrol.org/clean_stormwater/

According to Annie Joseph of "Our Water Our World", when we stop using herbicides and pesticides, the beneficial bugs and birds come back into our yards. With a change in perspective, we can look at weeds differently, as plants just growing in the wrong place. We

can appreciate that some weeds help by bringing up minerals from the subsoil to the topsoil, and make soil more welcoming to less aggressive plants we want in our yard. Other weeds have flowers which feed beneficial insects.

However, if you want to get rid of weeds, cut or pull them before they flower. Another tactic is to spread a thick layer of mulch or use weed control fabric to deprive weeds and their seeds of light. Lawns that are cut high will be able to shade out most weeds. If you must use a herbicide, buy a product containing pelargonic acid, such as Quick Weed Killer® or soap, which kills the part of the weed above ground. Caution: When spraying any kind of herbicide, protect desired plants from any of the spray. Do not spray on windy days. Prevent people and pets from moving into the sprayed area until it is dry.

We can have happy gardens and homes and take the time to use alternatives to dangerous chemicals like RoundUp if we care about our health and our future, or just want to enjoy and share the delight of pollywogs and frogs again.

###

Judy Stege retired from teaching in San Jose and moved to Fresno, where she fell in with the awesome FresCAMP ladies who are gently teaching her to be an Activist. She can be contacted by email at judypaz@sbcglobal.net

FresCAMP (Fresno Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides) next meeting is Thursday, March 15. For more information e-mail ilsasso2003@yahoo.com or call (559) 227-6134



[“Credo” alternates with “Grassroots Profiles”. It is intended to bring attention to the perceptions and wisdom of progressive elders whose (semi-)retirement has dimmed their visibility.]

THE MAN BEHIND THE WELCH REPORT

For several years Dr. Jack Welch has authored the eponymous report that appears on the Center for Non-violence page in the Alliance. The Report was intended as a condensation of materials sent to the Center and selected by Jack according to his priorities and interests. As he has gained comfort with his role, his willingness to editorialize has become stronger, and his personal voice more evident.

For many of us, Jack is a remarkable figure: at ninety-one, despite difficult personal and family health issues, he is still passionately concerned about justice and decency, about upholding the ideals the U.S.A. ostensibly stands for. His central tenet as an agent of change was stated in his introduction as a fellow in the Central California Institute: “My belief in the practice of nonviolence has its basis in my religious faith, strengthened by combat experience in World War II as a battalion surgeon with a tank division in Europe.”

Jack remembers growing up in a mid-western idyll. “My father was the old-style General Practitioner (now fondly reminisced about) who did house calls and got up in the middle of the night for emergencies. My mother was his perfect complement, running the household and the medical office.” The family was active in the United Presbyterian Church, and from boyhood Jack imbibed a belief in a benevolent God and trusted elders. From these beginnings, and despite later shocks of life, Jack has maintained his primary values of “honesty, having and showing love, and upholding a strong work ethic.”

Events, circumstances and personal nature have, however, conspired to lead Jack from stereotypical mid-western conservatism, to what he calls “a more liberal

attitude.” One turning point was the dissolution of his first marriage and the suicide of his then 17-year old son. These almost unimaginable events led to a period of depression and introspection, and a realization that “right living” requires more than good intentions: it demands engagement with others in their differences. In his second marriage, he understood the need to give his family equal time to the medical practice (as an internist) he so loved.

Another telling experience was participating for 3 1/2 year in World II, serving as a battalion surgeon right at the front. He had been a pacifist before the war and was willing to serve only by providing a “civil service” (he refused to carry a gun). But seeing the true horrors of war—in his division there were 10,000 casualties out of 16,000 soldiers—he returned home more determined than ever to act on behalf of preventing future wars, and to fulfill a “debt to life” as he puts it, incurred simply by his survival and witness.

Jack considered becoming a medical missionary to China, but that didn’t work out. So, oddly, his inexplicable love for Russian music and architecture led him into his first “peace-activist” ventures. He wound up taking four separate trips to the Soviet Union in groups that were acting as goodwill ambassadors at the height of the Cold War, when such actions could cast doubt on one’s loyalty to America.

Another important influence was exposure to the teachings of Dr. Henry Hitt Crane, a Methodist minister Jack met while working in Detroit. “Dr. Crane had a downtown ministry, and he deepened my understanding that the Christian message is liberal and inclusive, and means caring about the actual conditions that people live in—their health and safety.”

Most of us know Jack in his retirement years, when he had the opportunity to become deeply engaged in the work of civic peace-mongering. Through involvement with his Church’s Peace and Justice Committee, he found himself as co-chair of Visions of Community, and

thence as a founding Board member of the Center for Nonviolence (where he served as President for several years.) As a member of Physicians for Social Responsibility, he was active in campaigns for nuclear disarmament and de-militarization of foreign policy.

Jack’s intent search for understanding and good will also made him a key figure in the Balck-White Dialogue Group the Center for Nonviolence established. It was his dismay at the discrepancy between “black” and “white” reactions to O.J. Simpson’s acquittal in the criminal trial that became the motive for creating the group. The ability of this “older white gentleman” (of a class and background so often closed-minded) to listen feelingly to the Black participants was, they said, the single biggest cause for hope that came from the three years of intense dialogue the group experienced. And it was Jack who suggested in its later stages that the group change its name to “Black-White Friends.”



Despite the encroachments of age, Jack has kept up his study of current history and politics. He says he gains strength and guidance from his associates in organiza-

tions like FCNV and WILPF who further the quest for understanding and social justice he so values. And he welcomes the opportunity, via the Welch Report, to have his experience and opinions given public attention. (He also still pursues his life-long love of music, especially classical and jazz; and along with his beloved wife Alice, he still enjoys movie-viewing.)

In looking for a few words that might reflect his abiding concerns, Jack remembered the following that he wrote in 2003: “Sir William Osler, M.D, famed Canadian internist, was a hero to me and many physicians of my generation. The way of life that Osler preached was ‘the practice of living for the day only, and for the day’s work: life in day-tight compartments...The master-word in medicine is work’—a habit of paramount importance.”

Poetry Corner

HOMELESS WARRIOR

by Barbara Valenzuela

Upon my travels, I came to the end of the road.
One morning, I woke up with no boots upon my feet.
I can hardly find a safe place to sleep.
I have traveled many miles over the months,
But last night I laid my head upon folded hands.
I got as comfortable as I could,
The cement was cold and hard, and chilled my soul to the bone.
My travels don’t give me much to settle in a home.

It is not like the culture of a hundred and fifty years ago,
When transient people were common and could sleep
on the wide-open range.
And traveling took months instead of a few days.
There, no one gave you a bad name.

I still have my stinky socks no matter how holey they might be.
But my boots are gone.
Stolen from me by greed!
All I wanted was a good night’s sleep.

I have become a prisoner in my own homeland,
I couldn’t believe the negative welcome I had received!
I am a native, and I saw my buddies die right before my eyes.
In my nightmares I can still hear the screams!
...This morning before I awakened
Someone stole my boots off my feet.
I feel as though I am still at war.
I cannot find a peaceful place to sleep!

People cannot understand what I did for my country!
They think of me as a useless old grungy bum.
They say that I have a choice.
But I hear the many voices roaring in the air,
And what choices would they make if they were in

my state of fear?
“Hear what?” they say.

...I woke up without my boots, my pride, and now my name!
I want to escape;
Please give me a break!

...One day, a little boy came to a gas station and saw a deformed man in a wheelchair. The little boy’s curiosity was overwhelming, so he questioned the man about the loss of his legs.
The mother felt alarm and furiously grabbed the boy saying, “Don’t talk to him!”
The boy cried
The man said in a soft tone, only for the boy to hear,
“I lost my legs when I saved a man’s life in a war.
My legs could not be saved.”

This was the beginning of the boy’s secret.
The boy had never known his dad, and the man in the chair became his hero.

The boy grew into an adult and went to fight a new war overseas.
Upon his return, he learned that his dad was a war hero and was still alive.
He set out to find his dad...who turned out to be the man at the gas station.

The secret became a memory that burned his heart.
He lost all identity, medical records, possessions.
He holds a secret in his heart and the pain that he bears is not in his imagination.

Now my boots are gone and my feet are sore from the winter’s cold.
I have come full circle from being that little boy who saw a man in a wheelchair.
I know my daddy’s name, they call him the “Homeless Warrior.”



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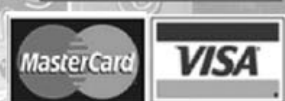


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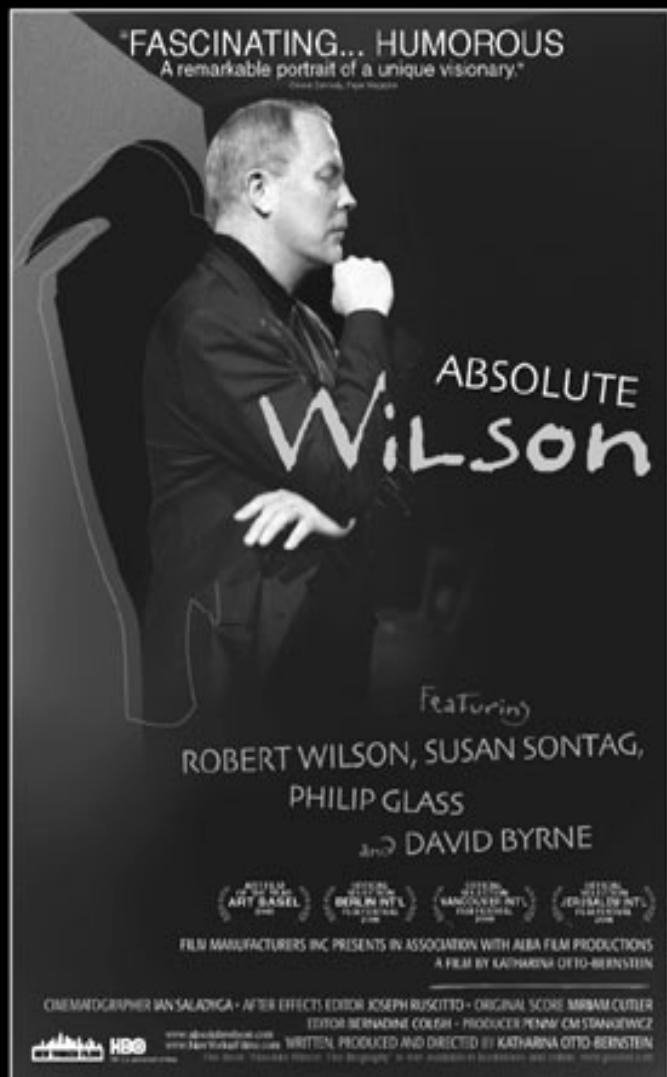
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www.filmworks.org

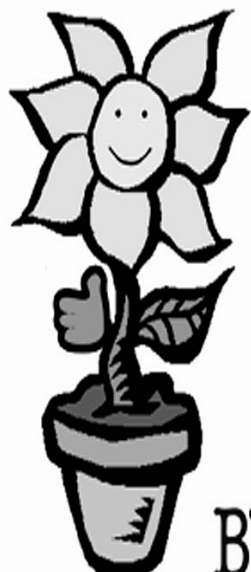
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The Rogue Performance Festival Fresno's Most Diverse Arts Event

By Jaguar Bennett

The Rogue Performance Festival, Fresno's annual freewheeling spectacle of independent art by independent artists, returns for its sixth season March 1-10, at 15 different Fresno locations.

The Rogue offers something for nearly any taste, whether you're looking for great entertainment, serious and challenging art, or fearless political commentary. The Rogue is community-based, low-cost, and it's giving Fresno a worldwide reputation as a city that supports the arts.

The 2007 Rogue will feature presentations from approximately 100 different artists, theater companies and musical groups. The Rogue encompasses nearly every kind of art, from theater to music, dance, film, visual art, spoken word, comedy, and performance art. This year, we even have a magician, plus,

The 2007 Rogue isn't just big for Fresno. the Rogue is now the biggest festival of its kind in the entire western United States, and one of the largest Fringe-style festivals in the country.

The Rogue is helping to build a new reputation for Fresno as a city where the arts flourish. National and international performers come to perform at the Rogue because they know that Fresno is the place to find audiences that are eager to see new art from new artists.

The Rogue is also the place to hear voices you don't often get to hear in this community. At the Rogue, you'll see a edgier content—both sexual and political—than you can see anywhere else.

The Rogue is a nonjuried and noncurated festival. Rogue organizers don't choose what goes in the festival. In fact, there is no selection process. Rogue artists enter the festival through an open application process where every application is processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Rogue philosophy is to make a direct connection between the artist and the audience. The artists know best what they want to say, and the audience, not some panel of experts, is the best judge of what is quality art.

Once a performer has a performance slot in the Rogue, the festival does nothing to censor or control what the artist presents.



The 2007 Rogue Performance Festival will take place over 8 days: March 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10 at 15 different locations, mostly within the Tower District and downtown Fresno.

Locations for the 2007 Rogue include Rogue Mainstages at the Starline and Dianna's School of Dance; Rogue Cafes at Veni Vidi Vici, Ashtree Studios and Spectrum Gallery; Rogue Galleries at Ashtree Studios, Salon 637 and Veni Vidi Vici; Rogue Film at Javawava; and Rogue Bring Your Own Venues at Arte Américas, Studio 65, First Congregational Church, La Tienda Thrift Store, Full Circle Brewing Co., SOHO Night Club and California Arts Academy.

The Rogue is designed to let you see as many shows as you want in a short time, at minimal expense. No Rogue show lasts longer than one hour or costs more than \$7.

All Rogue ticket sales go directly to the performers. The Rogue Festival is a nonprofit organization sustained entirely by contributions and the time donated by our wonderful volunteers.

Some Tips for Seeing the Rogue

1. Be on time. While some performers will allow latecomers up to 15 minutes after show begins, many do not. When the doors close, you're out of lock, with no exceptions, even if you're the performer's sainted mother.
2. Get your tickets early. Tickets are sold 30 minutes before the show, no exceptions.
3. Get a Rogue Ready Pass. Rogue audience members who want the most affordable Rogue experience should buy the very spiff Rogue Ready Pass for \$30. Each Rogue Ready Pass is good for admission to five Rogue Mainstage shows (worth \$35 if purchased individually) or 10 Rogue Café shows (worth \$40 if purchased individually).
4. Plan ahead. Get a Rogue Map or check out the Rogue Web site at www.roguefestival.com. Schedule what shows you want to see, and make sure to give yourself time to get from venue to venue.

(Jaguar Bennett is the Promotions Director of the Rogue Performance Festival)

Some Rogue Shows You Shouldn't Miss

If you want to know everything that's going on during the Rogue, you have to visit the Rogue Web site, www.roguefestival.com. There you'll find complete descriptions of all Rogue events plus a downloadable schedule. While I highly recommend you see every show, here's a randomly selected, entirely unrepresentative sample of what you can see at the 2007 Rogue.

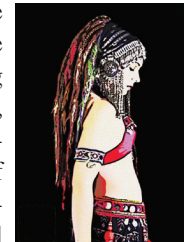
A Yellow Rose From Texas: Emma Tenayuca Teatro Inmigrante First Congregational Church



Labor organizer and civil rights leader Emma Tenayuca helped Mexicans achieve a sense of unparalleled confidence and group pride as racial minorities in the 1930's.

2001 Arabian Nights Tanjora Tribal Bellydance Dianna's North

Get into a global groove with belly dance for the 21st century! Presenting improvised, structured, and choreographed dances, Tanjora's blend of Modern Tribal and Traditional belly dance will leave you entranced.



Jesus in Montana Barry Smith Starline

A surreal journey into the depths of a bizarre religious cult. Barry Smith, then a disillusioned dishwasher in Aspen, believes his sophistication, wisdom and hallucinogenic drug use have helped him to overcome his Southern fundamentalist upbringing ... until he discovers Jesus has returned and is living in Montana!

Starr, Scott and Ed Veni Vidi Vici



Straight from LA ... "Starr, Scott and Ed" is HIGH ENERGY, Absurd, 3 person sketch comedy. Tackling tough issues like Scientology, EMTs and the Vagina Monologues "Starr Scott and Ed" is a romp through crazarious (crazy + hilarious).

Tribute to Mississippi John Hurt Vince Thomas Ashtree Studios



If you like Early, Finger Style Country Blues, please join me in paying tribute to this unique Songster. John was a favorite on the Blues Revival

circuit of the 1960's and inspired many modern guitarists. Proceeds will be donated to, MJH Blues Foundation.

Poet vs. Songwriter Victor Desroches and Tracy Fulton Spectrum Gallery

Which is the more legitimate art form, song or poem? Married practitioners of the two forms bring their finely honed skills of verbal combat and comedy to publicly argue the point through finely crafted examples. Is there really a difference? Can the question be settled in 45 minutes? With boxing gloves?



This Lily Was (Fontana) Mia Paschal Starline



An arm embroidered with scars. Seven suicide attempts. From Arkansas to Paris to Amsterdam, from Harvard to a Hungarian terrorist cell to a Milanese psych ward, in myths both holy and profane, Mia Paschal

explores the life of a cutter, discovering a deeper truth that will resonate with anyone who has ever wondered "Why?"

Five Films From Central Valley Storytellers and Mentors Center for Multicultural Cooperation Javawava

Five short films that trace how Valley people of diverse backgrounds have served and sacrificed, in World War II, the Secret War in Laos, San Joaquin Valley farm fields, in digital technology, and in the Iraq War. "Hmong Voices," "Stories of Service," "Latino Legacy," "Stories of the Fallen," and "Digitally Abled Producers Project."

Are Ya Dating? Steven Karwoski Dianna's South

Do women really want men to be in touch with their feelings? Can even the best date go on too long? What would possibly drive a man who is afraid of ghosts and goblins to spend a date in a cemetery? Come discover the answers to these questions as veteran solo performer Steven Karwoski chronicles his life in the trenches of the dating world.



Chart Toppers of 1349! Tim Ereneta Dianna's South

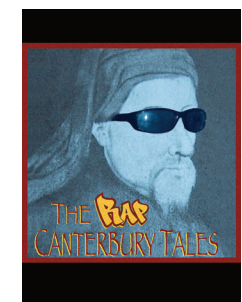


A collection of grim and gruesome fairy tales from the Dark Ages of Europe. Storyteller Tim Ereneta returns to the Rogue with a brand new show, counting down the hottest tales that blazed up the European charts seven centuries ago. Fourteenth century pop culture fans look no further! With the Black Plague outside our door, tonight we're going to party like it's 1349!

Tea with Anne Casey Ballard Starline

The story of Shakespeare is well known; his brilliance outgrew his hometown, so he left for the glory of London. But what of his wife? How could the wife of the most famous writer be so easily forgotten? Making its United States premiere, "Tea with Anne" explores the mentality of a woman dealing with the secrets and lies of abandonment; a woman who must ultimately chose between the painful truth and even harsher reality.

The Rap Canterbury Tales Baba Brinkman Starline



Since first appearing at the Edinburgh Festival in 2004, "The Rap Canterbury Tales" has been taking the world by storm. The show re-creates Chaucer's 14th century classic as an edgy rap battle, bringing the raunchy stories of lust and revenge to vivid new life.



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, PO Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

WILPF Calendar

Stir It Up on KFCF, 88.1, Free Speech Radio – Wednesday, March 28th ~ 3:00 to 3:30 PM

WOMEN in Black, www.womeninblack.org – 2 Vigils! In front of the courthouse downtown, noon to 1 PM, Wednesday, March 7th & in the Free Speech Area, Fresno State campus, Thursday, March 22nd – noon to 1 PM. Contact Meta Schettler for more info, 278-4593.

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day - Join the Women's Studies student organization P.O.W.E.R (People Organized for Women's Empowerment and Representation) and the Femicide Action Committee for a night of education, networking, and fundraising. \$15 suggested donation. March 8th at 7 PM, C.A.F.E. Infoshop ~ 935 "F" Street between Tulare and Kern

RUNWAY Peace Project – Anti-Militarism Fashion Show, April 14th in the evening, Satellite Student Union, Fresno State. Contact Jan Slagter for more info, 278-7140. See the Women of Color Resource Center's website also for more info <http://www.coloredgirls.org/publications/runwaypeace.htm>

WILPF yard sale:

May. Date to be determined. Now and until then you can get rid of your good junk by bringing it to Nancy Waittlow's house or calling her for pickup. Her phone # is 224-1738 & e-mail nancywaittlow@yahoo.com. Of course, you don't have to be a WILPF member to contribute or come and buy. Spring clean, declutter. Help out!

SPRING Cluster Meeting:

Scheduled for April 28th @ Margaret Hudson's Barn, 9

AM to 3 PM. At these meetings, members from different chapters discuss what they are working on with respect to WILPF projects. It's a wonderful opportunity to get to know women in other cities who are doing peace and social justice work on Iraq and Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine, Water Issues, and Building the Beloved Community.

For more info AND FOR SUGGESTIONS AND VOLUNTEERING please contact: Ellie Bluestein, Joan Poss, Carol Bequette, Jan Slagter, or Laura Fultz, lfultz@sbcglobal.net, 493-1034.

WILPF & WATER:

The WILPF Save the Water Campaign networked on a conference call Tuesday, February 6th. There were WILPFers from Ohio, Fresno, Davis, Pittsburgh and Iowa on line. In February, Iowa held a two part series on Water as a Women's Issue. Part I will feature the Global Importance of the UN. Nancy Price, the moderator of the conference call, announced that a book called *Thirst* is coming out, which goes beyond the content of the video documentary. There is a team doing a book tour wherever it is requested. The book covers privatization of water, dirty water, underground storage as well as a section on the background of water. Nancy also recommended a DVD about the Westlands, a documentary.

~Submitted by Lydia Flores

REPORT back from Nairobi:

After attending the World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya Jan. 20-25 I am convinced that women are the principal catalysts for positive change in the world today. In the rural area outside Thika I met a group of 12 widows, living close to each other and providing the kind of compassionate and physical support no outside agency could hope to do. In the heart of Korogochu, one of the two vast slum areas in Nairobi, I visited an

organization called the Miss Koch Project where young women meet with and help girls gain self-confidence and knowledge of how to keep safe, in the hope of someday being able to leave the slums and receive an education so they may return to help other girls. The Daughters of Mumbi is a large women's organization who works for women's rights, HIV education, and innovative farming practices. Theirs is a strong presence all over the country. At a Forum session entitled Women's Struggles, Women's Stories, women from all over the world told stories of what they had done and are now doing to change the world for the better, whether it was planting trees for the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, or cutting down GMO trees in Brazil, planted solely to satisfy the hunger of the US and Europe for paper. Another world is possible, and women are, indeed, leading the movement for change.

~Submitted by Jean Hays, president, WILPF Fresno

UPROOTING Racism Book Club update:

Members of the WILPF *Uprooting Racism* book club from last year recently led services at the Unitarian Universalist Church to share their experience, and they have also organized an adult education forum on the book to continue the dialogue and learning. Sessions will be Feb. 14th and Feb. 28th, March 14th and March 28th to be held at the UU Church, 4144 N. Millbrook Ave. Thirty-five people have already signed up for the adult forum. In addition, four of the women from the UU and the UR group presented their experience on Feb. 12th to students at the State Community College in Madera. Each woman shared her own experience with racism and what the Uprooting Racism book study meant to her, and they feel this is a great start for reaching out to the community with WILPF's anti-racist work.

Please contact Lydia Flores, 435-7360, to join the UU UR book study!

WILPF Raging Grannies Go to Washington D.C.

January 15th-19th local grannies, Nancy Marsh and Marilyn Byrne, left California to lobby Congress to stop the escalation of the war in Iraq. The Granny Peace Brigade from New York invited people from all over the United States. Some 100 grannies heeded the call and came. Kathleen Gehrke from Montana and Joan Smith from Nevada joined our group. We also attended many of our meetings jointly with women from Berkeley, San Francisco, and Oakland. Together we had appointments at Senators Boxer, Feinstein, Reid, & Tester's offices. Kathleen & Joan had special invitations from their senators to attend a morning breakfast. Wednesday the 17th Nancy and I went to see our representatives in the House, George P. Radanovich and Jim Costa. The morning of the 18th we had a press conference sponsored by Dennis Kucinich (D. Ohio) who spoke elegantly about his plan to get out of Iraq. Also joining us was Maryland's newly elected Congressman Albert Wynn who also spoke about the need to bring our troops home. Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California of California joined us briefly. It is interesting to note the stations filming our press conference were mostly from foreign countries. After the press conference, the Grannies began their appointments with the Senators. By the end of the day all 100 Senators were visited by our hard-hitting but tired Grannies.

~Submitted by Marilyn Byrne



Women in Black stand for peace - February 15, 2007 at CSUF-Fresno free speech area. Photo by Mike Rhodes

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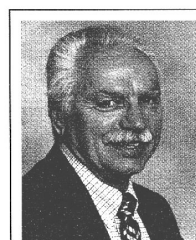


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FCNV Page Editor: Brandon Hill

THE WELCH REPORT

By Jack H. Welch, M.D.



Fewer Guns, More Talk

Five years ago the Bush administration launched its war on terror, which about 90% of Americans applauded. The administration has been ramping up fear to win elections ever since. However, it is clear "that decisive majorities of Americans have had enough of a militarized, unilateral foreign policy." One polling organization made clear before last fall's election that the new Congress, whatever its makeup, has a strong mandate to press for a major change in the way the U.S. relates to the rest of the world.

In 2000, the Gallup organization recorded a 65 percent majority among Republicans, Democrats, and independents combined who were satisfied with the U.S. position in the world. In May of 2003 when the Iraq mission was declared accomplished, that figure had risen to 67 percent. In 2006, however, that majority registered dissatisfaction at 68 percent - a remarkable about-face. Sixty percent believe that the current approach (before the fall election) has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks against the U.S.

What the Public Wants

A majority of voters said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate committed to pursuing a new approach to U.S. foreign policy. First, the majority would shift the emphasis from military force. Two thirds say the U.S. has been "too quick to get American military forces involved" in international conflicts; an even higher percentage wants the U.S. to put more emphasis on diplomatic and economic methods in combating terrorism (supportive of priorities promoted by the Center for Defense *information*).

A majority of respondents were most interested in having their legislators increase funding for reducing U.S. dependence on oil; increasing port security; international police and intelligence cooperation to go after terrorist networks, working through the UN to strengthen international laws against terrorism and to ensure the cooperation of UN members in enforcing them; fighting the global spread of HIV/AIDS; and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons by securing nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union. Supported at majority levels is increased spending on programs to promote dialogue and understanding between the U.S. and the Muslim world.

Overwhelming majorities endorse a cooperative and multilateral approach to foreign policy. Only 9 percent believe the U.S. should continue to be the preeminent world leader in solving international problems; 72 percent believe "The U.S. should do its share in efforts to solve international problems together with other countries." ; 61 percent believe the U.S. should be more willing to make the decisions within the UN, even if this means that the US will sometimes have to go along with a policy that is not its first choice."

Global Confirmation

The UN will likely adopt a resolution clearing the way for a landmark arms trade treaty, setting common international standards on the transfer of conventional arms. In September 2006 five central Asian countries signed the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Agreement. The essential link between peace and poverty alleviation has been demonstrated by the awarding of this year's Nobel Peace Prize to a Bangladeshi pioneer of micro-credit. Our Congress did vote this past summer to bar the US from establishing permanent bases in Iraq. By large margins, American voters prefer Congress to support a less militarized and more multilateral foreign policy - last fall's election brought the administration and Congress in touch with what Americans think. (Source: Miriam P. Pemberton, editor Foreign Policy in Focus, Tom Paine.commonsense 31 Oct. 2006)

Now meeting at the Center:
Third Wave Book Group
Discussing books with feminist themes.
For more info. Call 237-3223

STIR IT UP

with Angela Price as she interviews Maria Telesco and other prisoners' rights activists on prison issues.
Wednesday, March 14th, 3 pm 88.1 FM

Second Wednesday Film Series

Outside In

"Outside-In" tells the stories of seven individuals - friends, relatives and attorneys - who live with the terrible reality that a loved one has been sentenced to death. The film features two local women who tell how their lives have been changed by the harsh reality of knowing someone they love bears the label "condemned." Donna Larsen is the mother of a son who has been on death row at San Quentin for over ten years. Maria Telesco is the close friend of a former co-worker who is on the women's death row at Chowchilla for something that happened 22 years ago. This highly acclaimed film has received numerous awards, most recently at the Oakland Film Festival. (53 minutes)

Wednesday, March 14

Noon & 7 pm @ the FCNV

Potluck @ 6:30 / Discussion to follow evening showing

For more information call: 237-3223



Dave Raboy and Heather Bernikoff of "Plug In America" brought their Ford electric pick-up truck to show attendees at the film "Who Killed the Electric Car". Dr. John Dunning, the Center's guest, who led the discussion following the film, is pictured on the left. More than 70 people attended the showing at the downtown library on February 14.



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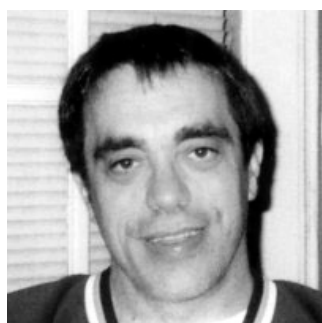
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QUEER EYE

Gay Latino Says Cops Sexually Assaulted Him

by Dan Waterhouse

A 30-something Fresno gay man has filed a lawsuit in federal court against Fresno police chief Jerry Dyer and four unidentified officers who allegedly handcuffed him, bent "him double" and then penetrated his anus with a foreign object—a thumb or finger.

According to the civil complaint, four Fresno police officers showed up at Cain Gonzalez's home in a Southeast Fresno gated community on November 7, 2005 where they detained and handcuffed him. The officers claimed he had drugs in his possession.

Gonzalez's attorney, Bruce Nickerson, says the accusation was false and no charges were ever filed against Gonzalez in the incident.

The complaint then alleges that one of the officers "perceived that" Gonzalez "was gay and said: 'I know where you faggots keep your shit.'" That officer "then and there" shoved a finger into Gonzalez's anus, searching for drugs. According to Nickerson, "the invasive act ruptured the lining of" Gonzalez's "rectum causing him excruciating pain."

When Gonzalez' mother Soila attempted to come to his aid, Nickerson says the officers ordered her into her house.

Nickerson says Gonzalez then began bleeding "profusely" from his rectum. He said officers later took Gonzalez to a local hospital for treatment.

Nickerson says that the officers made comments to Gonzalez that leads Nickerson to believe Fresno police "have a policy and practice of assaulting gay Hispanic men."

Nickerson is familiar with local police practices even though he's based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He currently represents several gay men arrested in the infamous 2002 Sheriff's Department undercover sex stings in Roeding Park. He was recently successful in having several cases overturned on appeal. The appellate judges concluded there had been no illegal behavior and that the arrests had been discriminatory.

In the Gonzalez case, Nickerson says Gonzalez missed a court appearance on an unrelated drug charge in Madera because he was being held in the Fresno County Jail. When he failed to appear, a Madera judge issued a bench warrant for his arrest on November 15th.

When Gonzalez was released without any charges from the Fresno County Jail during the third week in November, he was then arrested on the Madera County warrant and transferred to the Madera county jail where he was initially placed in protective custody because of his sexual orientation.

Nickerson alleges in the lawsuit that four days after arriving at the Madera jail, Gonzalez was moved into the "open prison population and was immediately assaulted by gang members, who slashed his ear and broke his eardrum." The lawsuit claims Gonzalez was placed in 'general population' in order to intimidate him so that he would not file a complaint against Fresno police. The suit names Madera County sheriff John Anderson and the County as defendants.

Gonzalez seeks unspecified damages, a judgment that the practices described in the suit violate the U.S. Constitution and an injunction stopping police from "targeting, harassing and/or arresting" Latinos "who are minding their own business."

According to Nickerson, Fresno police refuse to identify the four officers who allegedly assaulted and arrested Gonzalez. He said that Fresno police will not release any reports.

Francine Kanne, an assistant Fresno city attorney, told the Fresno Bee that normally the city does not comment on lawsuits before they have been served. "However," she added, "given the serious nature of Gonzalez's allegations, the city is compelled to respond." Kanne said Fresno police received a complaint from Cain Gonzalez that was "thoroughly investigated by the city." Following the investigation, she claimed there was no violation of Police Department policy or procedure found.

Peace is Good

By Jovita Harrah

"Learning to Live in a Non-Violent Way" is the focus of the St. Mary's Pax Christi Ministry Non-violence Workshop. It is a 10-session workshop offered every other Saturday, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. at the Serra Center in Visalia. This service is initially provided by Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service, which was started by the Franciscan monks many years ago. They teach people non-violent skills to creatively and effectively deal with conflict in their lives (families, workplaces, churches, communities, etc.). Pace e Bene also teaches how to live a lifestyle and spirituality of peace-making.

Pace e Bene is Italian for "Peace and Good." It is a greeting used by St. Francis of Assisi who was born in 1182 and died in 1226 at 44-years old. He is a champion for peace and justice, among other things, and is totally committed to non-violence. One story tells of his compassion for a wolf who killed people and animals in the village because he was hungry and St. Francis convinced the people to feed him instead of killing. After eating the food left for him the wolf left without hurting anyone.

Through his example, St. Francis reminds us that we are called to bring about justice and peace in our world, to end violence and war, poverty and oppression and to protect our fragile planet. Convinced that violence and war were wrong, St. Francis believed in peaceful dialogue with all our brothers and sisters. He calls us to be instruments of peace and healing by turning from weapons of violence to acts of love. "Happy those who endure in peace."

With the increased violence around us: crime, abuse, executions, torture, and the increased suicides, murder and abuse of people returning from the war in Iraq, it is more important to study this simple lifestyle to realign ourselves and come to recognize the sacred in each other and our status as brothers and sisters.

I invite you to come! Suggested Donation: \$10 Adults. \$5 Students (includes handouts and snacks). For adults, children, young, old, Catholic or Non-Catholic. For more information call 559/734-9522 or see www.stmarysvisalia.org

###

Jovita Harrah is the Coordinator of the St. Mary's Pax Christi Ministry, Visalia, CA., Fresno Diocese.

New ACLU chapter starting in the Greater Fresno area!

By Dan Yaseen

The American Civil Liberties Union works to preserve and guarantee the protections of the Constitution's Bill of Rights. We aim to extend these freedoms to segments of our population who have traditionally been denied their rights. A local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California is now being formed to encompass Fresno, Tulare, Madera, and Kings Counties, joining the other volunteer chapters throughout the state. Local ACLU chapter volunteers play a critical role in monitoring civil liberties issues in our communities and taking action to expand and defend our rights. Chapter activists also work with the Northern California affiliate to organize around statewide and national civil liberties campaigns. Chapters work in coalition with other civil and human rights groups on a variety of issues including, criminal justice; police accountability; student rights; racial justice; religious freedom; promoting free speech; protecting privacy; ensuring equality for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people; protecting the rights of immigrant; defending a woman's right to choose; and countering the government's abuses of power.

We invite you to participate in the Greater Fresno ACLU chapter kick-off and board elections on Thursday, March 22 from 7:00-9:00pm. This meeting will feature a program about "Surveillance in Society" For more details and to RSVP, contact Dan Yaseen at 559-251-3361, danyaseen@comcast.net or Scotti Maldonado at 559-801-6312, sparklesinc@gmail.com. You do not need to be an ACLU member to attend though only members can vote for the board.

Robin & Linda Williams to Perform at Bonner Auditorium

By Pat Wolk

Virginia based Robin and Linda Williams are known for their rich harmonies and original song writing rooted in the country/bluegrass/gospel tradition. They have gained widespread national prominence on Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion," as one half of The Hopeful Gospel Quartet as well as performing in their own right. Robin & Linda Williams & Their Fine Group combine beautiful vocal harmony, exquisite musicianship, and simply perfect song writing, earning their reputation as one of the top acoustic music acts in the country. Joining the Williams' as "Their Fine Group" is Jim Watson, formerly of The Red Clay Ramblers, on vocals and bass and Tom Corbett on mandolin and guitar.

Local Congressmen on Iraq War

By Dan Yaseen

An overwhelming majority of Iraqis have been opposed to the U.S. war on Iraq from day one. A Zogby/LeMoyné College poll released in February 2006 showed that 72% of U.S. troops want to end the war and come home. The November 2007 mid-term election was a massive repudiation of the U.S. led war against Iraq.

The people have spoken. The only question is when will the leaders listen, end the U.S. war on Iraq and bring our troops home.

On February 16, 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a non-binding resolution to oppose President Bush's decision to send more troops to Iraq. On February 17, 2007, the U.S. Senate voted to not even debate the same resolution.

The non-binding resolution debated in the U.S. House of Representatives from February 13 — February 16, 2007 was as follows:

Resolved by the House of Representatives, that — (1) Congress and the American people will continue to support and protect the members of the United States Armed Forces who are serving or have served bravely and honorably in Iraq; and (2) Congress disapproves of the decision of President George W. Bush announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq.

The 3 local congressmen made following statement during the debate on the nonbinding resolution.

Congressman George Radanovich's statement:

It is true, we were led into this war with poor intelligence; yet intelligence that every major fact-finding and data-gathering agency in the world believed to be true. Nevertheless, spreading freedom to the Muslim world is our best long-term strategy in the Global War on Terror.

Four years after the invasion of Iraq, our brave military men and women are still actively engaged in combat, and their actions have not gone without great achievement—the Iraqi people participated in their first true democratic election, they have established a representative government, elected a parliament and written an Iraqi constitution. These great accomplishments should not be brushed off as mere side notes, because to do so would diminish the achievements of the Iraqi people and the tremendous courage of our soldiers; some of whom have bravely given their lives for the chance an Iraqi citizen would be able to vote and live free from fear.

The establishment of a democracy in the Middle East is fundamental to winning the Global War on Terror.

We are fighting an enemy who does not believe in democracy, freedom, or the inherent value of human life. These radical Islamic terrorists see a democratic Iraqi government as a direct threat to the mayhem and havoc they seek to impose on the free world. To retreat from Iraq—to wave a white flag in submission to these terrorists, would only worsen the instability we now see in the region, and embolden terrorists around the world.

When the United States rid Iraq of Saddam Hussein, we committed ourselves to assisting the new Iraqi government become self-sustainable. The President has consulted his commanders in Iraq, who have heard from the soldiers on the ground. The result of these hours of consultation has led the President to ask for an increase in

The performance will take place on Friday, March 16 at 7:30 PM and will take place at Fresno Art Museum's Bonner Auditorium. Tickets: \$20 advance /\$25 at the door. Ticket locations: Patrick's Music, National Hardware; The Movies Video Store; Art Museum Gift Shoppe. Or online: www.fresnofolkconcerts.com Info: 431-3653



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troops so we may finish the job we set out to do.

Congressman Jim Costa's statement:

I rise this evening to welcome this much needed debate, on perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing our generation, our country, this war in Iraq. I intend to support this nonbinding resolution not because I believe it is perfect, rather in fact I feel it is probably imperfect.

But I am supporting it because I hope this will be the beginning of a rational, bipartisan dialogue for a new direction to be employed together with the House of Representatives, with the Congress working together with the President.

For after all, Mr. Speaker, we are the people's House. The choices that we have before us today are more than simply cut and run or stay the course. For after all, we know a long time ago that was nothing more than a sound bite, and the American public understood that it was nothing more than a political sound bite. We are a wonderful country. We have tremendous resources, ingenuity, and we have credibility notwithstanding our difficulties today throughout the world.

And therefore, as the world's greatest super power, we have resources and means in which we can offer alternative choices to bring together people, not only in the Middle East, but allies throughout the world that supported us in the past.

Everyone who has talked about this nonbinding resolution talks about the cost. We all talk about their support for our men and women in uniform, our support to continue to ensure that they are properly funded and to ensure that we always, remember the current costs that have been expended, over 3,000 lives, over 23,000 that have been injured, and a fiscal accountability that has gotten lost in the checks and balances of the Congress, a war that initially was advertised to cost us \$60 billion is now in excess of \$379 billion, \$8 billion a month, with a supplemental request for another \$235 billion.

Let us not forget, for almost 4 years our President and the course that he conducted and the case he has made has had a blank check, literally a blank check to conduct this effort as he saw fit.

Congressman Devin Nunes's statement:

I rise today in opposition to this intellectually dishonest resolution. I do so in order to challenge the majority party to put their legislating where their mouths have been. The endless criticism to the war in Iraq is clouded by political opportunism and has done little or nothing to improve our chances of victory.

We need an honest debate. We need answers from those who support this resolution. What is next? What is your plan? It should come as no surprise that the resolution we are debating today says very little. There are less than 100 words. And while the rhetoric has been flying during the debate, it seems to me that the new Democratic majority is hoping to avoid debate in which they might have to defend their plan in Iraq.

What we have here is nothing more than a political exercise, a nonbinding resolution, words with no meaning. Make no mistake, their opposition to the President's plan is political. There is no constructive criticism here. Read their resolution.

Iraq is the battleground, a key battleground against extremism, terrorism and the expansionist goals of our enemies.

Dan Yaseen is Vice President-Memberships of Peace Fresno and he is on the board of Fresno Center for Nonviolence. He can be contacted at 559-251-3361 or danyaseen@comcast.net

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 1 - 10

Rogue Performance Festival 2007. For more information see: <http://roguefestival.com/>. Also see pages 14 & 15 in this month's Community Alliance.

Friday March 2 • 9 AM - 3 PM

Native American Cultural History. Join Ron Goode, local tribal chair, for a day of information about Native American culture. You will look at the bounty of the River in a new way and gain a great deal of respect for those who have gone before us. Ages 14 and up are welcome. \$20.00. To register call 433-3190 ext. 3# or visit www.teachtheriver.org

Friday, March 2 • 5:15 PM

Peace x Peace
 dirs. Lisa Hepner and Patricia Smith Melton. 2003. Afghanistan, Burundi, the United States, Argentina, and Bosnia. 86 min. No rating.

In the past, soldiers constituted most of war casualties, but in today's conflicts, civilians comprise 90 percent of war casualties, the majority of whom are women and children. This documentary profiles women peace builders in places of conflict. For one year an all-women camera crew followed women in action in Afghanistan, Burundi, the United States, Argentina, and Bosnia. The film includes the devastating violence each country suffered, but it is surprisingly and effectively hopeful. Post-screening discussion: Jan Slagter (Professor, Women's Studies Program)

Cineculture continues to be a film series provided as a service to the Fresno State campus students, faculty, and staff at no charge. However, anyone interested in taking Cineculture for academic credit for the Fall semester, please sign up through Continuing and Global Education: tel. 278-0333. For further info, contact Dr. Denise Blum dblum@csufresno.edu. This film will be shown in McLane 121 on the CSUF campus.

Friday, March 2 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Speaker: Michael Hubbart. Topic: The West Bank — It Sure Looks Like Apartheid to Me . In October Mike did a brief training with International Solidarity Movement and then worked with internationals at Birzeit University, at nonviolent demonstrations against the building of the wall at Bil'in and with the Tel Rumeida Project in Hebron.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on 'L' street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen0@gmail.com

March 3 - 10

A Yellow Rose From Texas, a play written & directed by Agustín Lira, produced by Patricia Wells Solórzano. See page 10 for details.

Saturday, March 3 • 9 AM

The Kennedy Club will discuss jail overcrowding and the Sheriff's plan to address this issue. Kennedy Club meetings are held on the first Saturday of every month at Denny's on Abby & Divisadero. For more information contact Patsy Montgomery at (559) 360-4309.

Saturday March 3 • 9 AM - 4 PM

Gorge-ous Day of Hiking. Join Naturalist Shirley Spencer for a 14 mile hike downstream from the San Joaquin River Gorge to Sky Harbor. This will be a strenuous hike and is only suitable for those in good physical condition. You will be rewarded with spectacular views and a wealth of information about the riparian environment through the foothills. Ages 12 and up please. \$10.00. To register please call 433-3190 ext. 3# or visit www.teachtheriver.org

Saturday, March 3 • 10:30 AM

1st annual Social Justice March. African American Marching for Justice! This event will take place at the Justice Corner (Fresno & C Street) March will conclude at Free A.M.E. Church Located at: 803 Collins St. Fresno, CA 93706. Daylong program to follow:

Activities will include: Food, Poetry, Choir Performances, Community Speakers, Concession Booths, Launching of New Civil and Human Rights organization " National Network In Action " (NNIA)!

Program speech will address the following issues and More:

- Significance of Black History in today's struggles
- Ending The War in Iraq.
- Police Brutality.
- Environmental Racism.
- The Spread of AIDS.
- Decent Living Wage.
- Increasing Homelessness.

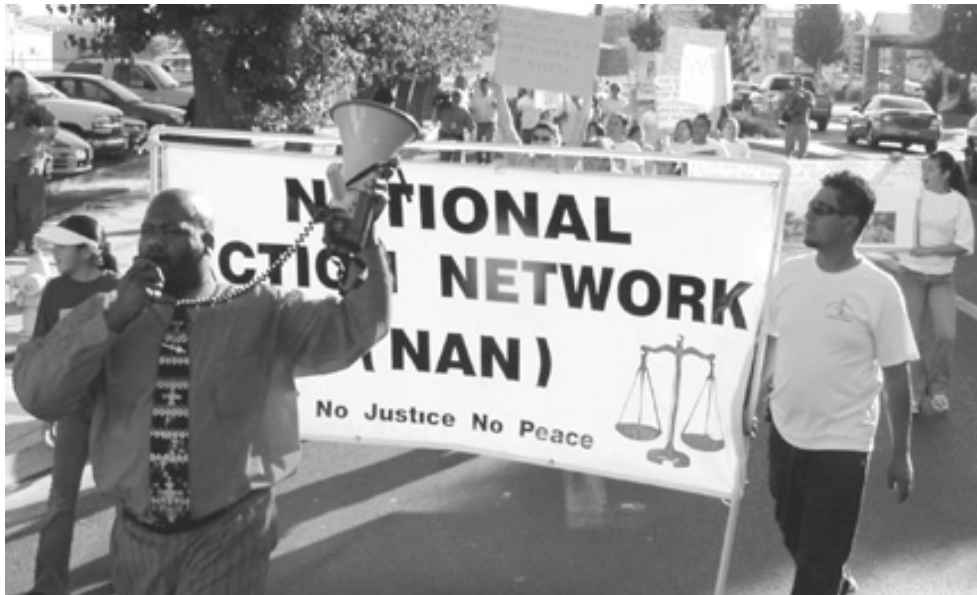
For More information Please contact Mary Washington 559 477 - 2796 or Rev. Floyd D. Harris Jr. 559 803 - 0286.

Saturday, March 3 • 9:30 PM

Aligned with the Rogue Festival, there will be a fundraiser for Solar Cookers, International at Studio 65 (2965 N Maroa south of Shields). The Steve Mitchell Jazz Quartet will be entertaining us and all proceeds will go to Solar Cookers, Int. Please join us for great music and wine, try some solar-cooked food, and donate to a great cause! Tickets are \$10 at the door. For more information contact Selena Mitchell Quan, MS, Lac at 559.225.5707 or 415.608.5656

Tuesday, March 6 • 6:30 PM

Organizing meeting for the 17th annual Fresno & the Central Valley GLBT Pride Parade and Festival. The theme is: Pride: Power, respect, integrity, dignity, equality. The event will be held on June 2. For more information see www.fresnorainbowpride.com or call (559) 486-3464. This meeting will be held at the GSA office at 928 N Van Ness in Fresno.



March for Social Justice - March 3 at 10:30 AM - See page 21

Wednesday, March 7 • Noon - 1 PM

WOMEN in Black, www.womeninblack.org in front of the courthouse downtown. Please call 278-4593 for more info.

Thursday, March 8 • All Day

International Women's Day. For more information see page 24.

Thursday, March 8 • 12:30 - 2 PM

Celebrate International Women's Day. The guest speaker will be Dr. Elahe Amani. She is going to talk about Women's Work at United Nation and in Today's Iran at University Student Union Room# 312 CSUF. This presentation will be in English.

There will also be an evening presentation at 7 PM at the Woodward Park Regional Public Library about the Women's movement in Iran (in Persian). These events are free and open to the public. Sponsored by : Iranian Culture and Art Club of Fresno (Kanoon) and Women's Studies of Fresno State University. For more information call (559) 709-3851 or email parvinmalek@yahoo.com

Thursday, March 8 • 5:30 PM

Empty Bowls began as a grassroots effort to raise money and awareness towards the fight against child hunger in the Central Valley. This year marks the 12th anniversary of the event that continues to support its original mission of feeding hungry children in the community. Today, Community Food Bank is sponsoring this event and has watched it blossom into one of the largest fundraisers fighting childhood hunger in the Central Valley. Participants will enjoy a wonderful meal served in ceramic bowls, hand-crafted by local students. The bowl is a gift to remind those who attend to never forget those children who are in-need everyday!

Join Community Food Bank in helping to create a hunger-free Central Valley. Help us Fill the Bowl!! For more information on Empty Bowls please contact Community Food Bank at (559) 237-3663 or visit www.communityfoodbank.net

Thursday, March 8 • 7 PM

International Women's Day event. Help Stop Femicide in Juarez, Mexico! Join the Women's Studies student organization P.O.W.E.R (People Organized for Women's Empowerment and Representation) and the Femicide Action Committee for a night of education, networking, and fundraising.

This International Women's Day event will give you an opportunity to help women working in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico where hundreds of women have been systematically murdered. The police have done nothing to stop the femicide there, but P.O.W.E.R. and F.A.C. are stepping up.

We are raising money to bring an advocate to Fresno State to receive a victim's services certificate from the Criminology Department. Beginning price is \$15 for entry into this event. No one will be turned away for lack of funds. Event to be held at the C.A.F.E. Infoshop 935 "F" st. Fresno, CA between Tulare and Kern.

Friday, March 9 • 5 PM and 8 PM

Fresno Filmworks presents "Absolute Wilson" at the Tower Theatre. The documentary presents the life and work of avant garde theater director Robert Wilson, featuring many of his famous collaborators—David Byrne, William Burroughs, Phillip Glass, Susan Sontag, and Tom Waits. Tickets can be purchased at the Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., WineStyles in Fig Garden Village, and at the door, for \$10; \$8, for students and seniors. For more information call the FFW info line, 221-0755, or go to www.fresnofilmworks.org

Friday, March 9 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents the movie *Lage Raho Munnabhai*. Hindi movie with English subtitles. Munnabhai is obsessed with the voice he listens to daily on his radio. He gets a chance to meet the lady behind the voice if he can answer ten questions related to Gandhi. Munnabhai impersonates a professor and takes up reading all about Gandhiji as he promises to deliver a lecture on the Mahatma. He then starts seeing visions of the Mahatma, and begins to follow the path Bapu (Gandhi) shows him, following the principles of Satya (truth) and Ahimsa (non-violence).

This comedy has been instrumental in re-introducing the way of Gandhi to contemporary Indian society. This movie will be introduced by Dr. Su Kapoor who will also lead a discussion at its conclusion.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on 'L' street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen0@gmail.com

Saturday, March 10th 3:30 PM

The General Meeting of the Central Valley Progressive PAC meets at the Center for Non Violence at 1584 North Van Ness at McKinley. This event is open to the public. After a brief business meeting, the group will be setting goals for the next few months. Margaret Mims has invited the CVPPAC to tour the jail and get acquainted with the logistics necessary to run such an infrastructure. She is also looking for volunteers to serve on the Sheriff's Citizen's Advisory Committee. [There is an invitation to attend the Citizens Academy.] For more information www.cvppac.org or Lydia Flores 435-7360

Wednesday, March 14 • 12 Noon and 7 PM

The Fresno Center for Nonviolence Monthly Video Series. March video will be "Outside In" (53 minutes) It tells the stories – the social and emotional impact on the lives of several individuals – family members, attorneys and clergy – who have a loved one on death row in California. Two Fresno women are featured: Donna Larsen, whose son is on death row; and Maria Telesco, whose close friend is on death row. The documentary has received numerous awards, most recently at the Oakland Film Festival. Both showings are at the Center, 1584 N Van Ness ave.. There will be a potluck at 6:30, prior to the evening showing, and a discussion afterward. All are invited. FREE. For info call 237-3223

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wednesday, March 14 • 6 PM for dinner and 7 PM for call to order

The Fresno Stonewall Democrats are reorganizing. New Location: Carrow's Restaurant 4280 N. Blackstone Avenue, Fresno (On the east side of Blackstone just north of Ashlan). Stonewall Democrats' focus is on social and political issues of interest to progressives in general and progressive and liberal Democrats in particular. Phone: Chuck Krugman for more information: (559) 266-9237 E-mail Chuck at: ckrugman@sbcglobal.net <http://www.mangen.com/stonewall/>

Wednesday, March 14 • 7 PM

St. Patrick's Day Celebration at the Woodward Park Regional Library, 433-3135. Irish music by "Pipe on the Hob" and Irish dancing by the "McTeggert Irish Dancers." Light refreshments will be offered.

Thursday, March 15

Deadline for articles and calendar items to the April, 2007 Community Alliance newspaper. Send information to AllianceEditor@Comcast.net

Thursday March 15 • 8 PM

Full Circle Brewing Co. Presents the Inner Ear Poetry Jam. \$5.-cover, 620 F St. Downtown Fresno 559-264-6323. www.fullcirclebrewing.com

Thursday, March 15 • 12 Noon - 1 PM

WOMEN IN BLACK. For Justice. Against War. Please join us for a silent vigil. Protesting all forms of militarism! CSUF Free Speech Area, Speakers' Platform. Wear black, bring a sign, women only. Co-sponsored by: Campus Peace & Civil Liberties Coalition, POWER & WILPF, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom. Please call 278-4593 for more information.

Friday, March 16 • 5:15 PM

From a Silk Cocoon produced by the Emmy-nominated Hesono O Productions team of Satsuki Ina, Stephen Holsapple, Emery Clay III, and Kim Ina. 2005. USA. 60 min. In English. No rating.

... From a Silk Cocoon stretches beyond the basic facts of the Japanese-American internment experience into the dark and thorny corners of a perceived "military necessity" that is just as frightening and relevant now as it was when it happened. It is a story of war panic, racial profiling and the manufacturing of militants (a side effect of persecution that should not be ignored in the chill of post-9/11 America). The film deals with acute peer pressure, the fine line between democracy and national security, forsaken protection and shattered allegiance. It delivers all these concepts with a focus on snowballing causes and effects, rather than sensationalism... - Sacramento News and Review,

Cineculture continues to be a film series provided as a service to the Fresno State campus students, faculty, and staff at no charge. However, anyone interested in taking Cineculture for academic credit for the Fall semester, please sign up through Continuing and Global Education: tel. 278-0333. For further info., contact Dr. Denise Blum dblum@csufresno.edu. This film will be shown in the Leon Peters Educational Auditorium in the Student Recreation Ctr. at the corner of Woodrow and Shaw Ave.

Friday, March 16 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents Speakers: Rusty DeRuiter and Carl Buxman speaking about their recent work in Kenya.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on 'L' street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen0@gmail.com

Friday, March 16 • 7:30 PM

ROBÍN & LINDA WILLIAMS & Their Fine Group. Regulars on The Prairie Home Companion Radio Show—you saw and heard them in the film. Now's your chance to see them for real.

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

Saturday March 17

Full Circle Brewing Co. Presents St. Patrick's Day with Pipe on the hob 5:00-7:00 \$5.-cover and Patrick Contreras "Violin on Fire" 8:00pm \$5.-cover, 620 F St., Downtown

Fresno, 559-264-6323 www.fullcirclebrewing.com

Sunday, March 18 • 1:30 - 4:30 PM

RALLY IN THE VALLEY. See pages 1 and 3 for more information.

Sunday, March 18 • 2 - 4 PM

La Querencia, Fresno's first Cohousing community, will present a free talk by "green" expert Dave Wann. The event will be held at Arte Americas, 1630 Van Ness, in the Cultural Arts District of upper downtown Fresno. Mr. Wann is author of nine books and producer of 25 videos and TV shows about sustainable design and living a more environmentally-conscious lifestyle, including the book and PBS-TV special *Affluenza: The All Consuming Epidemic*, and *Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods*. The presentation will include slides and video about what individuals, neighborhood associations and local government can do to create energy-efficient homes, more sustainable neighborhoods, community gardens, and cooperative activities. Wann will intermix his talk with witty and insightful theme-based songs. A wine and cheese reception will follow.

To reserve a seat and for more information please contact Pat at 866-246-7717, email info@fresnocohousing.org or visit www.fresnocohousing.org.

Wednesday, March 21 • 11 AM - 1 PM

Gender Violence on Campus panel discussion presented by The Women's Resource Center's Violence Prevention Project and P.O.W.E.R. in the University Student Union room 317. For more information contact Kaley Henry at khenry@csufresno.edu

Thursday, March 22 • Noon - 1 PM

WOMEN in Black, www.womeninblack.org in the Free Speech Area, Fresno State campus. Please call 278-4593 for more info.

Thursday, March 22

N*GGER W*TBACK CH*NK

As seen on over seventy campuses, this comedy with the controversial name tells the real-life stories of three young men from different ethnic backgrounds to deconstruct the notion of race in America. Drama, hip hop, slam poetry, and stand-up comedy are intermingled to communicate the show's overall message: "There's only one race: the human race." Along the way, N*W*C also addresses various themes and issues inherently tied to racism such as ethnic identity, racial slander, media representation, race, stereotyping, immigration, and inter-group conflict. www.nwclive.com (includes articles about the show and artists biographical information).

This event will be held at the CSUF Satellite Student Union.

Friday, March 23 • 5:15 PM

Letters from the Other Side Heather Courtney. 2005. Mexico/USA. Spanish w/English subtitles. 74 min. (coordinated with Cesar Chavez celebrations, Critical Literacy conference, and National Multi-ethnic Literature conference).

Heather Courtney is a filmmaker, cinematographer and photographer based in Austin, Texas. Her recently completed Letters from the Other Side, which uses cross-border video letters to tell the immigration story from the perspective of the women left behind in Mexico, premiered at the Slamdance Film Festival in January, screened at the South by Southwest International Film Festival (SXSW), and was funded by a Fulbright and grant from the Independent Television Service (ITVS). It is currently screening all over Austin, Texas at community-based venues with support from a grant from the City of Austin. Heather spent eight years writing and photographing for the United Nations and several refugee and immigrant rights organizations, including in the Rwandan refugee camps after the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

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Wednesday, March 28 • 6 PM

Cesar Chavez Birthday Celebration at the Sanger Branch Library, 875-2435. A free showing of documentary film, The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers' Struggle. Light refreshments will be provided.

Thursday, March 29 • 5:30 PM

Celebrate the Life and Times of Cesar Chavez at Roosevelt High School, 442-1770. Activities in celebration of the life of Cesar Chavez. For information, call the Cedar Clinton Branch Library at 442-1770.

Thursday, March 29 • 7 PM

The Cost of Nuclear Energy: What's Really at Stake? Open Panel Discussion. This event will be held at CSU-Fresno in the satellite student union. This is a free event.

Saturday, March 31

Cesar Chavez's birthday. There are always events organized in Fresno to honor the work of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers union. When the details of those events are available, they will be posted. For more information about Cesar Chavez, see: www.ufw.org or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cesar_Chavez

April 1 & 2

Soulforce Equality Riders at Fresno's Pacific University. To see why they are coming to FPU, go to: <http://www.soulforce.org/article/926>

In March 2007, fifty-six young activists will board two buses and begin a two month long journey that will take them to thirty-two colleges that have policies banning the enrollment of openly LGBT students. Through dialogue with administrators, faculty and students, the young activists of the 2007 Equality Ride will make clear the harmful effects of the false notion that homosexuality is a "sickness and a sin." To make public their case for equality, the young activists on the Equality Ride will hold vigils, Bible studies, class discussions, community forums, and press conferences.

For more information, see: <http://www.soulforce.org/index.php>

Sunday, April 1 • 7 PM

Soulforce Equality Riders presentation and get-together at College Community Congregational Church. Dessert will be served. All are welcome. For more information call 435-2690.

Friday, April 13

The Road to Freedom Bus Tour will be in Fresno. Discrimination against people with disabilities interferes with their freedom, access, and inclusion and limits job opportunities and self sufficiency. For more information contact Lisa Brown, Fresno Disability Rights Advocates, 559-485-5199. lab2000lab@aol.com

April 13, 14, & 15

Fresno Filmworks Presents the 3rd Annual Fresno Film Festival.

April 13-21

2nd Central California Valley Journey for Justice. The Journey for Justice demands:

QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR ALL, in particular for the uninsured estimated to be over 46 million Americans, 7 million in California alone.

STOP THE INSURANCE COMPANIES from setting policy as to who does and who does not received quality health care.

STOP BLAMING THE UNDOCUMENTED PEOPLE for the increase of health care,

SUPPORT THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH INSURANCE RELIABILITY ACT that would created a statewide universal health care that is publicly financed, provides, coverage for all medically necessary services and controls costs by eliminating insurance company overhead and using purchasing power to negotiate better prices,

SUPPORT PROPOSALS TO SET A STANDARD FOR HEALTH BENEFITS ON THE JOB, just like the minimum wage for pay

SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN FOR HEALTH HEALTHY KIDS

For more information:

Ed Castro 559-250-2733 eduardocastrojr@sbcglobal.net
Aurora Heredia 559-803-2020 centrobellasartes1@sbcglobal.net
Gloria Hernandez 559-268-2261 iwapgh@aol.com
Sandy Perry 408-691-6153 perrysandy@aol.com
Salvador Sandoval 209 631-6461 ssandovala@comcast.net

Word on the Street

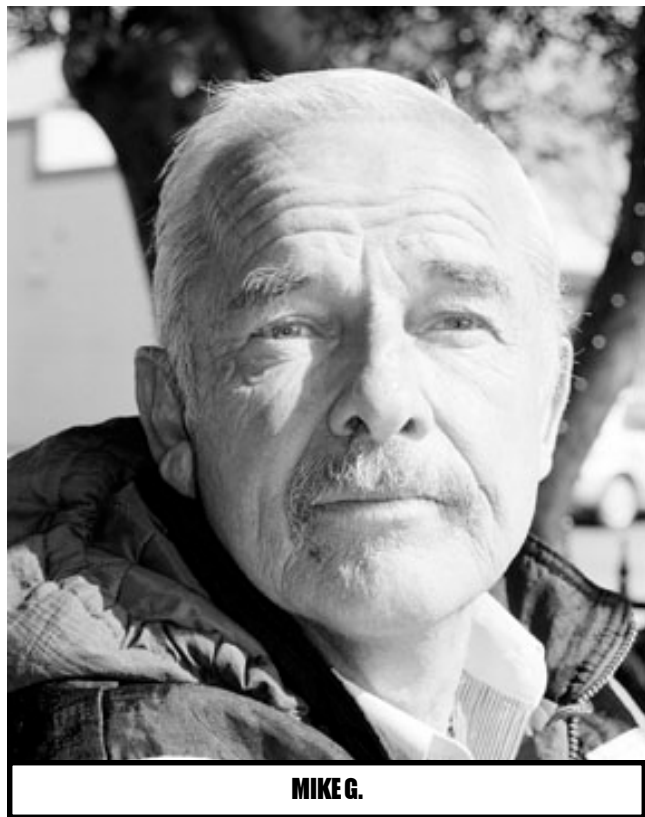
by Wendy Russell

At the editorial board meeting it was decided that since the March issue focuses on the war in Iraq that this will be our Question this month:

Have your views on the war in Iraq changed over the last couple of years? Are Veterans being well taken care of here at Fresno's Veterans Hospital?

So it's up to me to head out to the streets to get the word right from the ones that would know - our nation's heroes that are trained to fight for you and I, those veterans of our wars. It's hard for me to even fathom hunting down and killing people but even if I am against all wars I still honor those who - maybe after being convinced by older mentors they trust, and based on facts given them by peers they respect - battle an enemy, planning to fight even to the death for the high values of freedom and rights for all.

MIKE G. was a medic in Viet Nam. He is a 'Viet Nam era' vet. I asked him our Question;



MIKE G.

Have your views on the war in Iraq changed over the last couple of years? Are Veterans being well taken care of here at Fresno's Veterans Hospital?

"Yes, my views have changed. It's escalating over there. I wouldn't want to be in Baghdad right now. I don't like all the soldiers and civilians getting killed. The USA has its finger in too many countries, that's what I think!"

This little group of veterans, a few early-morning Tower people and myself sat in the sun, soaking it up. We were close friends already just from twenty minutes of our own individual war stories, started when one man answered my Question with, "No, I'm not a veteran of the Viet Nam war or the Iraqi war but I AM a victim of war on the streets!" Another man played the guitar, giving us a musical backdrop to our comments. I told them all my husband's theory that all 'deep,' interesting and passionate people are a result of a past tragedy or horrible events making them 'real' as compared to the shallow and dull portion of the populace that never had to reach down into their core self, look at their 'stuff' and find strength to survive - it was like that, out there in the sunshine.

MIKE G. did not hesitate with his answer to the second part of our Question.

"Yes, I am getting good care. In a few weeks I move into Assisted Care, paid for by the government. There will be physical therapy. I will have a clean quiet room. Most vets get good care, but some don't want to go get help. They don't want to get into those flashbacks." Then he switched to another subject; "But I don't like that Medicare Part D - it's new - and now we got to pay more money for our medications. But you know the American Way, it's all about money sometimes."

JIM - 'just Jim' - answered the Question next. He is a Viet Nam era veteran, and a lucky one - he went into service St. Patrick's Day (March 17) 1975 and the conflict was over in April 1975.

Have your views on the war in Iraq changed over the last couple of years? Are Veterans being well taken care of here at Fresno's Veterans Hospital?

He said, "Absolutely! At first I was willing to give the president the benefit of doubt ..."

Here murmurs went round the group; "Hell, I voted for him!" and "He's the Commander In Chief!" and "Not me - I didn't vote for him!" plus other comments whereupon it was decided by all present that I could not write down said comments - made in complete jest - lest someone take the words seriously - words that were said just for fun - and next thing the FBI shows up! I had already told them how my car had been impounded twice in the last six months - both times in the Tower District - so we were all a little paranoid anyway.



Jim

JIM continues,

"... but they never found the WMDs {weapons of mass destruction}. They used bad intelligence and they manipulated intelligence. I think the President should be impeached! Bush is just not intelligent enough to run the country. The President's own dad gave the reasons in his book why they did not continue into Iraq when they went into Kuwait. I didn't like his dad either - he was the ex head of the CIA too. I even have a bet with a FCC professor that a committee to impeach Bush will be announced by March first."

Jokes about the intelligence of President Bush went around the happy group.

JIM added, "There are many similarities between this war and Viet Nam. Both are conflicts between groups of warring factions so that it's actually a civil war."

I asked Jim about veterans' health care. He answered, "Yes, I do believe veterans are getting good care - I think it's something like 90% of wounded vets survive to go home now, compared to 50% in Viet Nam. We have excellent health care."

JIM picked up his guitar again and started singing that Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young song, "Find the cost of freedom / buried in the ground / mother earth will call on you / to lay your body down."

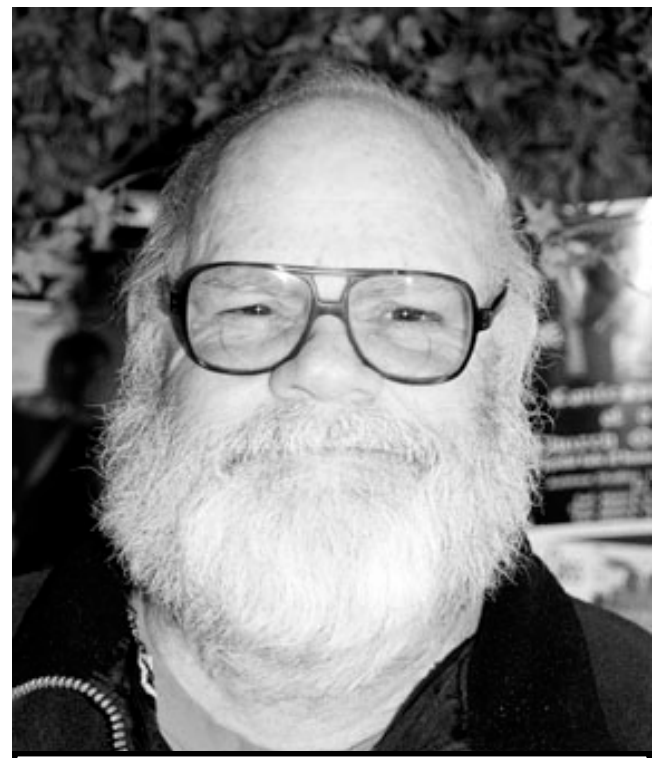
Our next soldier is THOM ROGERS. He is a Cold War Veteran - that period between when the Korean War ended in 1952 and 1964, when US involvement in Viet Nam began. He served in the Air Force and the National Guard. As a soldier in the National Guard patrolling beaches - I think he said it was 1963 - while protecting ammo dumps at Fort Ord, they saw two frogmen pull up to shore in an inflatable dingy. He called out, "Halt!" The men ran. He fired shots into the dingy, deflating it to prevent escape. Back-up arrived and the men were caught. Turned out a submarine was out there at the three-mile mark. He never heard what happened after that.

Have your views on the war in Iraq changed over the last couple of years? Are Veterans being well taken care of here at Fresno's Veterans Hospital?

THOM ROGERS answered, "No. I still don't think they have any business over there. Bush is trying to be dictator! I don't even call him the President."

And the second part of our Question?

THOM ROGERS said, "To some degree, yes. Years ago my stepfather worked in the Pentagon where he



Thom Rogers

checked a roster, a list - something like that - that rated the Fresno VA at the top. Back when I joined the military I was told I'd get free medical care, free dental, free hearing and free mental health care for life. But it's not happening like that. First Congress took away dental and hearing, then mental health care. Then a friend suggested Kaiser and now I get everything from Kaiser."

There were two wheel-chaired people in our group that morning. One a veteran, and another, a veteran's widow. SHANTI ('peace' in sanskrit) ADAMS, had on peace sign earrings, a t-shirt saying *Fascism Sucks!* and as the widow of a World War II veteran married 18 years with five beautiful children together, knows a thing or two about the VA system. I was eager to hear what she had to say in answer to our Question:

Have your views on the war in Iraq changed over the last couple of years? Are veterans being well taken care of at Fresno's Veterans Hospital?

"No! I hated it from the first moment of it! It's wrong to kill people and for that man {the President} to call himself a Christian..." Her voice trails off into disgust. "He has not only stripped our wonderful young people of their lives, but it's costing so much in higher taxes and in the programs that help the poor people, children, the elderly or that make it a little easier on the middle class. My Social Security payments went up \$32. a month but then my rent went up \$35. a month! That's typical of what's happening."

SHANTI's bold clear gaze shines with strong conviction. "I believe that everyone that voted for the war should pay for it and go fight in it! I feel so strongly against the war that I go out on the street and anyone I see about the right age, I stop them and talk to them, saying 'Don't go!' At Manchester Center I got one young man crying. He was thinking about signing up but I told him that his blood spilling on the ground would not help Iraq! I think I changed his mind and that made me feel good. I got so many grandkids getting up to that age..."

Her words made us quite emotional, and being both mothers and grandmothers we were silent a few mo-



Shanti Adams

ments as we cried together, but then she spoke up; "I wished I could be more than one person! That I was younger! Stronger! I want to get of my wheelchair and march but I can't! My doctor, an Iranian, said he would wrap a blanket around me and take me himself! I grew up in the most outstanding country in the world! And I had the best president in the world for four terms! You know Bush is destroying all that FDR did? It's all gone. Even though we were in a war then, it was an honorable one. And about the care the Veterans get? When did they ever get what's due?"

KENNY WAGNER is not a veteran. He was in Viet Nam during that war for five years, but as a civilian not as military. He says he has stayed in touch with all his Viet Nam friends so I knew he would have an educated opinion and asked him our Question:

Have your views on the war in Iraq changed over the last couple of years? Are Veterans being well taken care of at Fresno's Veterans Hospital?

"No, my views on the war have not changed. The problem is not with the Iraqi army (the Iraqi Defense Force or IDF), it's the nepotism and corruption of their police force. But I would rather talk about the VA (the hospital). Yes. Yes our veterans are well taken care of - if they ask for it! There's too many guys out there that are unwilling to admit they have any problem related to



Kenny Wagner

their time in Viet Nam that are playing the victim game. If they would just pull themselves out of the self-pity hole that they've dug - stop blaming society - and go seek help at the VA! There they get medical care and mental health care - but first they need to go in, open up, go to Group. Guys that just now get divorced find out it's still because of the war! I've seen guys blame all

their problems - years later - on Viet Nam. I know guys that were unemployable, blaming everyone else for their own drinking and drug problems - instead, they go get help and now get \$3,200. a month for doing nothing, just for going to Group, taking their meds and feeling better. I know another guy only spent one day in Nam and gets big bucks. I don't know how many millions and millions they've spent on PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). There's no excuse for Vets to not get help - it's there - they just have to go and get it. No one will come to them. Go to VA, listen to what they have to say and do the Program!"

Soldiers. Trained to kill and willing to die for their leaders, our country and human rights. Think how strong our homeland would be if those soldiers could be here, helping this country whenever and wherever we need the strong and the brave. Maybe sometime in our history war made sense, but now you have to question the mental competence of anyone who thinks a war can be fought without damaging the whole of humankind's existence. We must avoid the senseless collateral damage of needless wars, because those effects of war go on forever, as we have seen in the Middle East. Our country could become again the land of the free and the brave, so dearly fought and paid for. I walked away from the veterans feeling thankful for all they gave for their beliefs, but praying for an end of the need for such terrible gifts as that.

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CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day has been observed since in the early 1900's, a time of great expansion and turbulence in the industrialized world that saw booming population growth and the rise of radical ideologies.

1908
Great unrest and critical debate was occurring amongst women. Women's oppression and inequality was spurring women to become more vocal and active in campaigning for change. Then in 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights.

1909
In accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Woman's Day (NWD) was observed across the United States on 28 February. Women continued to celebrate NWD on the last Sunday of February until 1913.

1910
At a Socialist International meeting in Copenhagen, an International Women's Day of no fixed date was proposed to honour the women's rights movement and to assist in achieving universal suffrage for women. Over 100 women from 17 countries unanimously agreed the proposal. 3 of these women were later elected the first women to the Finnish parliament.
IWD global

1911
Following the decision agreed at Copenhagen in 1911, International Women's Day (IWD) was honoured the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on 19 March. More than one million women and men attended IWD rallies campaigning for women's rights to work, vote, be trained, to hold public office and end discrimination. However less than a week later on 25 March, the tragic 'Triangle Fire' in New York City took the lives of more than 140 working women, most of them Italian and Jewish immigrants. This disastrous event drew significant attention to working conditions and labour legislation in the United States that became

a focus of subsequent International Women's Day events. 1911 also saw women's 'Bread and Roses' campaign.

1913-1914
On the eve of World War I campaigning for peace, Russian women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February 1913. In 1914 further women across Europe held rallies to campaign against the war and to express women's solidarity.

1917
On the last Sunday of February, Russian women began a strike for "bread and peace" in response to the death over 2 million Russian soldiers in war. Opposed by political leaders the women continued to strike until four days later the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional Government granted women the right to vote. The date the women's strike commenced was Sunday 23 February on the Julian calendar then in use in Russia. This day on the Gregorian calendar in use elsewhere was 8 March.
UNIFEM



1918 - 1999
Since its birth in the socialist movement, International Women's Day has grown to become a global day of recognition and celebration across developed and developing countries alike. For decades, IWD has grown from strength to strength annually. For many years the United Nations has held an annual IWD conference to coordinate international efforts for women's rights and participation in social, political and economic processes. 1975 was designated as 'International Women's Year' by the United Nations. Women's organisations and governments around the world have also observed IWD annually on 8 March by holding large-scale events that honour women's advancement and while diligently reminding of the continued vigilance and action required to ensure that women's equality is gained and maintained in all aspects of life.

2000 - 2007
IWD is now an official holiday in Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. The tradition sees men honouring their mothers, wives, girlfriends, colleagues, etc with flowers and small gifts. In some countries IWD has the equivalent status of Mother's Day where children give small presents to their mothers and grandmothers.

The new millennium has witnessed a significant change and attitudinal shift in both women's and society's thoughts about women's equality and emancipation. Many from a younger generation feel that 'all the battles have been won for women' while many feminists from the 1970's know only too well the longevity and ingrained complexity of patriarchy. With more women in the boardroom, greater equality in legislative rights,

and an increased critical mass of women's visibility as impressive role models in every aspect of life, one could think that women have gained true equality. The unfortunate fact is that women are still not paid equally to that of their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers in business or politics, and globally women's education, health and the violence against them is worse than that of men.

However, great improvements have been made. We do have female astronauts and prime ministers, school girls are welcomed into university, women can work and have a family, women have real choices. And so the tone and nature of IWD has, for the past few years, moved from being a reminder about the negatives to a celebration of the positives.
Google

Annually on 8 March, thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women and celebrate their achievements. While there are many large-scale initiatives, a rich and diverse fabric of local activity connects women from all around the world ranging from political rallies, business conferences, government activities and networking events through to local women's craft markets, theatric performances, fashion parades and more.

Many global corporations have also started to more actively support IWD by running their own internal events and through supporting external ones. For example, on 8 March search engine and media giant Google even changes its logo on its global search pages. Corporations like HSBC host the UK's largest and longest running IWD event delivered by women's company Aurora. Last year Nortel sponsored IWD activities in over 20 countries and thousands of women participated. Nortel continues to connect its global workforce through a coordinated program of high-level IWD activity, as does Accenture both virtually and offline. Accenture supports more than 2,000 of its employees to participate in its International Women's Day activities that include leadership development sessions, career workshops and corporate citizenship events held across six continents - in eight cities in the United States and in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Spain, South Africa and the UK. Accenture also coordinated an IWD webcast featuring stories about Accenture women worldwide that ran uninterrupted for 30 hours across 11 time zones via Accenture's intranet. Year on year IWD is certainly increasing in status. The United States even designates the whole month of March as 'Women's History Month'.

So make a difference, think globally and act locally !! Make everyday International Women's Day. Do your bit to ensure that the future for girls is bright, equal, safe and rewarding.

###

The information above is from: <http://www.internationalwomensday.com/>

Women's History Month Events:

March 2nd 'Peace by Peace film, about women working for peace in situations of conflict McLane 121. Jan Slagter will lead a discussion after the film (see Peace and Social Justice Calendar for particulars about the film.

March 3 - 10th "A Yellow Rose from Texas" play by Agustin Lira and produced by Patricia Wells Solorzano on the life and work of Emma Tenayuca, labor and civil rights organizer (see Peace and Social Justice calendar for specific locations)

March 6th 11:00 Free speech platform at CSUF. speaker TBA

March 8th International Women's Day event at CAFÉ infoshop regarding the Femicides in Juarez. (see Peace and Social Justice calendar for details)

March 15th Black Student Union presents a lecture and information about HIV/AIDS and African American women. Free speech area noon - 3:00

March 19th lecture by Diane Blair on Women and the Presidency USU - 4:00-5:00

March 21st 11 - 1:00 Gender Violence on Campus panel discussion USU 317, sponsored by POWER and the Violence Prevention Project

March 23rd Women's Art Show Satellite Student Union, CSU-Fresno 7 - 10 PM. Contact Daisy Cordero, dcordero@csufresno.edu if you are interested in displaying your work this evening. All women artists, students, amateurs, professionals are invited to show their work. Refreshments will be served. Artists will be sketching in the foyer.

March 23rd "Letters from the Other Side" 5:15 PM Cineculture film McLane 121 - See P & SJ calendar for particulars.



Women's Voices - Women's Votes march and rally at the Fulton Mall in downtown Fresno, August 2006. Photo by Mike Rhodes

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HA, HA!

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Stepping Back from the Brink of Disaster

By Ruth Gadebusch

It continues to astound me, just how many — who are in positions of authority and who should know better — are so willing to put party before nation. I refer, of course, to those who vote the party line regarding this unnecessary war in the Middle East regardless of all the evidence to the contrary.



It seems to me that the election of last fall clearly indicated that the American people were fed up with this war and the daily news coming out of Iraq just as clearly shows that it isn't working in our favor. The Baker-Hamilton commission, comprised of cooler heads than apparently in the current administration, offered us a way out.

Failing to recognize that there is no victory in the traditional sense, the president is doing the opposite of what the nation has, in so many ways, expressed. Sending additional troops simply supplies additional targets.

Adding insult to injury, the Senate can't even pass a non-binding resolution saying it is time to end this fiasco. Protecting the party seems to take top billing with speculation that the Republicans will not be in charge following the next election. Not such good news is the expectation that the Democrats would be blamed for whatever follows. Never mind the additional damage done in these two years.

It is appalling that a president of this nation could possibly harbor such a thought, that the power of his party is more important than the welfare of this nation, but there is strong indication this is the case. This is politics of the worst sort. Here, I think George Mason's 1787 statement applies: "From the nature of man, we may be sure that those who have power in their hands...will always, when they can...increase it." I am not saying that the Democrats are pure, but right now it is the Republicans who have brought this practice to such a fine art.

It isn't just the horror of the deaths of our military and Iraqi citizens, nor the destruction of that nation, with which we need to be concerned. The way this war was begun and the way it has been implemented have done more damage to the image of this nation than any other event in our history. We have failed our principles.

Thumbing our nose at the Geneva Conventions, we mistreated prisoners in Abu Ghraib to say nothing of the "detainees" at Guantanamo. The latter sit uncharged and without recourse. When the Supreme Court proclaimed that the president had gone beyond the rule of

law in the treatment of so-called terrorists, Congress passed the Military Commissions Act, which, as one columnist wrote "granted President Bush royal powers he had been unilaterally arrogating." There have even been cases of citizens held without regard to habeas corpus, our bedrock constitutional protection. Just get declared a terrorist because you traveled to some distant place or attended some meeting that was retroactively declared off limits, and it matters not that you are a citizen. Terrorist has replaced the not so long ago charge of Communist.

In that bizarre scheme of September 11, 2001, Osama Bin Laden accomplished far more than he ever dreamed possible. Our response has turned our world upside down. Our government is out of control. The Patriot Act allows eavesdropping on our phone conversations, knowledge of what materials we are reading from our libraries, various travel restrictions and on and on and on. In order to board a plane, in one recent episode a "little ol' lady" hunched in her wheelchair was required to remove her shoes for inspection! Women have been forced to taste milk bottled for their babies and no one is allowed containers over 4 ounces, even if only one ounce is left. Secret searches of homes and businesses are done. The military-industrial complex that President Eisenhower warned us about has taken hold.

Under the guidance of a president who gained office without a majority in a questionable election, and was reelected in another questionable election, we have become the scourge of the planet. Now we are told that the only redress Congress has from an imperial Commander in Chief is to cut off funding for the troops. It is time. It may be drastic, but in no way expresses disloyalty to the troops. It is stopping a war that should not have been and bringing the troops home.

It is difficult to see how Iraq would be any worse off. Without doubt we would be better off. We have lost 3000 of our finest with the number daily climbing. The president's latest budget proposal cuts funding for the Veterans Administration and the health care it offers to the many wounded. We are neglecting home needs while piling up a debt of billions waging this unnecessary war. What a heritage for our children, our grandchildren, and perhaps even our great grandchildren, and that is assuming that we get this nation back on track. It only grows worse each day that this war continues.

Yes, it is time for the political parties to put aside their differences and come together for the sake of the nation. Our very future depends on it.

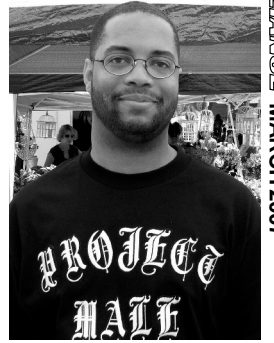
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Ruth Gadebusch was born and raised on a Georgia farm. In 1977 she was elected to the Board of Education of Fresno Unified School District and served for thirteen and a half years. She continues to be active in the community while serving as Vice-President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

Affected By AIDS

By Gary Dennis

February 14th is known by all as Valentine Day, a day of love, care, and romance. It's a time where people want to be close to that special someone and express their "feelings" with that person; even if it's just for one night. But what if your partner decides to open up to you and tell you that they have AIDS. How would you feel? Would you be able to handle the shock and truth of this reality?! Well let's say for argument sake, that you did stand behind your man and embrace him for all that he is. You would then fall into a category that we call in the HIV world known as "affected". It's not the same as someone who has the disease which is known as "infected" but the impact of this disease can have a life altering effect on you as well. Affected people aren't just lovers of infected persons but could also be friends, family, or co-workers. As PROJECT: MALE continues to do its AIDS Awareness work, more and more men are becoming knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS.



There is also an increased need to know one's HIV status. So as we encourage folks to go out and get tested and possibly more and more positives are found, this also means an increase in the number of people who will become affected by this disease. My concern, from being in this field, is that most of the services are geared toward those who are HIV positive but little to no resources are devoted to HIV negative or affected men; but thank goodness for PROJECT: MALE! This is one of the many voids that PROJECT: MALE is trying to fill in regards to the continuum of care for our community around HIV/AIDS. People with HIV/AIDS don't live on islands and they are not free standing persons but they do belong to someone. Whether that is to a family, friends or some social unit, we are all connected. These people are part of our society and have an impact on all of us.

If your family member or loved one has AIDS and you have to take care of him that can be a heavy burden. And for all those folks who have died of AIDS, they have left others behind who also need to be loved and cared for, especially children. So one can imagine how outraged I feel when people purposely allow themselves to become infected with HIV because they want to "bareback" because they don't like the way condoms feel. Well my response to them is this, ask someone who is affected by AIDS how its feels to take care of a lover with AIDS or worst yet, to lose someone to AIDS. Trust me, to hear the testimonies of affected people is just as touching and some times gut wrenching as that of the stories of those who have AIDS because they had to watch their loved ones go through it. If you are an affected person who is struggling with fact that your man has AIDS, gives us a call here at PROJECT: MALE at (559) 268-1969 and we'll be glad to help you through it.

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The Big Red Church

Poor People Gonna Rise Up!

By Mike Rhodes

Homeless people and their allies came together in Fresno on February 20 and held elected officials accountable for the recent attacks against unhoused people in this community. The Homelessness Marathon, a broadcast that goes to over 100 radio stations throughout the country, was the scene for this poor people's assembly in downtown Fresno. The 14 hour program included a panel with Fresno mayor Alan Autry, two city council members, and Board of Supervisors president Bob Waterston. The event resembled a town hall meeting with an open mike where anyone could ask questions of city and county elected officials.

There were those in the crowd who described recent city action against the homeless as a scorched earth policy. That policy has included bulldozing homeless encampments, passing draconian ordinances to prevent homeless people from moving their possessions in shopping carts, an outdoor drunk tank for homeless people, and the frequent violation of their civil rights by the police. It was so bad, that a federal judge had to order the City of Fresno to uphold the U.S. constitution. A lawsuit against the city is pending.

Rebeca Rangel, speaking on the open mike, demanded to know why the City of Fresno took Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money that was intended for the homeless and gave it to the Fresno Police Department (FPD). Rangel said the city has received \$8 million to address affordable housing issues and that most of that money has not reached the homeless or the poor in this community. Homeless advocates say that the CDBG money should have gone to help the



Speakers from the audience had an open mike and took the opportunity to ask elected officials anything that was on their mind.

homeless but was instead given to FPD's code enforcement division. In a bitter irony, it was an officer in code enforcement that developed the policy which resulted in the taking and immediate destruction of homeless peoples property. United States District Judge Oliver Wanger, citing the 4th, 5th, and 14th amendment to the constitution, issued a preliminary injunction against the city's attack on the homeless. Wanger said "people can not be punished because of their circumstances. They can't be deprived of their constitutional rights." The mayor and others on the panel defended their use of the money by saying that CDBG money can be used for many different things.

Over 100 homeless people and their al-



Rebeca Rangel held elected officials feet to the fire on the issue of Community Development Block Grant money. She wanted to know why this money was not helping the homeless.

lies attended this event, held on the lawn at the Mexican American Baptist Church in downtown Fresno. As people spoke, a video showing the destruction of homeless encampments by city workers, played continuously on a wall directly in front of the elected officials. Angry shouts from the crowd like "time to resign mayor" could be heard as the panel continued.

Jeremy Alderson, the director of the Homelessness Marathon, asked the mayor if he would put trash bins and portable toilets up at the homeless encampments. Autry did not address the question, so Alderson demanded a yes or no answer. Autry said he did not want to condone illegal behavior and therefore would not support placing these facilities near homeless encampments. Fresno City council member Cynthia Sterling, whose district includes many homeless encampments, said "I'm willing to look



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to find a solution, but . . . people do sleep inside the porta potties . . ." Sterling went on to say she was willing to consider the possibility of providing homeless people with basic services. Council member Jerry Duncan unambiguously said that he would support putting trash bins and portable toilets near encampments for the homeless people to use.

On the Friday before the Homelessness Marathon the City of Fresno did an about face on their policy of trash collection at homeless encampments. At the encampment located just South of Ventura on H street the City of Fresno came with a garbage truck, bulldozer, and crew of sanitation workers. Instead of bulldozing the tents in the encampment, city workers carefully cleaned up an area where trash had collected. City of Fresno Public Information Officer Rhonda Jorn said the city was working with the homeless to clean up the area. No homeless peoples property was destroyed in the sweep, proving that the city can clean up these areas without massive destruction of homeless people's property.

Before the broadcast I thanked the mayor for the changed policy and asked him about installing portable toilets and trash bins near the homeless encampments. Autry did not say no. In fact, he directed his Deputy Chief of Staff Kyle Loreto, to meet with me on this issue and work out the details.

The Homelessness Marathon was a great opportunity for the community to hold elected officials feet to the fire on this issue. With the threat of a lawsuit hanging over the City of Fresno, national exposure on the city's treatment of the homeless, and a change of policy in the way clean ups are conducted starting to take shape, now might be the time when poor and homeless people start to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Mike Rhodes is editor of the Community Alliance newspaper. He can be contacted by email at MikeRhodes@Comcast.net



The first panel on the Homelessness Marathon included Joanna Garcia and Pamela Kincaid. Jeremy Alderson was the host. The guests on this panel are a part of a lawsuit against the City of Fresno demanding that city workers stop taking and immediately destroying homeless peoples property.



Fresno's Homeless Talk Back to City Officials. On the panel, from left to right, Fresno County Board of Supervisors president Bob Waterston, Fresno City Council members Jerry Duncan & Cynthia Sterling, host Jeremy Alderson, and Fresno mayor Alan Autry. The Homelessness Marathon was hosted in Fresno by radio station KFCF 88.1 FM.



A panel of immigrant farm workers from California's San Joaquin Valley was featured in the third hour.



Panel on Tent Cities and other Homeless Communities. Guest hosts Robert Norse (right), Becky Johnson (center), and Jenny Marie Flores (left) hosted hour number 7 of the Homelessness Marathon. All photos on this page by Mike Rhodes.