

A COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

FREE!

The Voice of the Progressive Movement since 1996

Freedom Fantasy

In March, 2008 I was released from Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) in Chowchilla, California after over six years in prison. I won a writ, a portion of one anyway, in October, 2007 in Los Angeles that agreed with my attorneys that the Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) had violated my double jeopardy right by adding a year to a sentence that a real court had already addressed. I got half-time, so six months were deducted from my sentence and the BPH commanded staff at CCWF to release me March 17, as the court had ordered.

I called my attorney, David Nickerson. He asked me if I'd received any sentence calculations other than my facesheet that lists my charges and time assessed by courts. "No," I said. He told me that I had addressed my sentence with the proper authorities in prison and, obviously, they knew more than he or I know about how Case Records Specialists calculate sentences. Sometimes the ways of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) are simply mysterious. He asked me, "You don't think that CCWF would release you in order to bring you back for a big splash, do you?" I replied, "I have no idea."

There were comments, both inside and outside prison walls, that the circumstances of my case are unusual. That's not true. In fact, to varying degrees, they are common. Rectifying these mistakes costs money in transportation and salaries for escorts. The costs of incarcerating an individual are well-known. In terms of psychic and emotional costs to prisoners and their families, those costs are negligible. There are no penalties assessed if miscalculations are made on inmate sentences. They are mistakes, that's all.

When I was sent to prison, I initially landed at Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW), right across a county road from CCWF. Together, they encompass the largest complex of imprisoned women in the world.

I met a woman there who told me she'd been out of prison for over ten years since her last trip inside. She was, of course, off parole and living her life. One day, cops came and told her there was a problem with her parole discharge. She had not been discharged from parole in the proper manner, she was told, and thus, she was a violator. She was rearrested and sent back to custody. She had been fighting this ridiculous situation for months.

I thought, "Right. I'm sure." New to CDCR, I figured there was something she was not telling me. Why would this happen? What a colossal waste of state money to return a person, who was quietly living her life, to prison for something that could easily be handled by filling out bureaucratic forms in triplicate. Any additional punishment could be addressed, at worst, with a fine. But no! She was rearrested, transported under guard by three of the state's finest and plopped into costly custody. Her life on the outside went to hell. It seemed improbable, and I discounted her story and thought no more about it until . . .

By Sara Olson



Cindy Villa was on parole. She paroled December 10, 2007. She had been imprisoned in the Honor Dorm on C yard where she had managed to forge a life that accommodated her many medical needs. She paroled to Riverside, California, arriving there at 10:00 P.M. on the bus from CCWF after a long ride. She tried to find a motel room, but, like so many parolees, she had no I.D. CDCR does not furnish one at prison for departing parolees. She found someone who was able to get a room for her. The next day, she had little money left from the \$200 she got when she left CCWF. She had to pay for the bus ticket and the motel room: cost \$71.00. She had to check in to the parole office and she had to find a place to live that cost . . . well, nothing, because she was broke. She went from one post-prison drug facility to another looking for a place to stay. They were all full.

Finally, she caught a break. She found a sober-living home that could take her immediately. She called her brother in Washington state with her last bit of money. She asked him to pay her rent with a credit card and the facility took her in. Finally, she found herself out of prison with a place to rest her head so that she could do what she needed to do to recoup her life.

Cindy began working in the parole literacy lab, seeing her parole agent and her social worker regularly. She was working part-time to pay for her medications. She applied for general relief, food stamps, Medi-Cal, unemployment and Social Security disability. She filled out reams of paperwork. She reestablished contact with her children, some out of state. She was getting her life together.

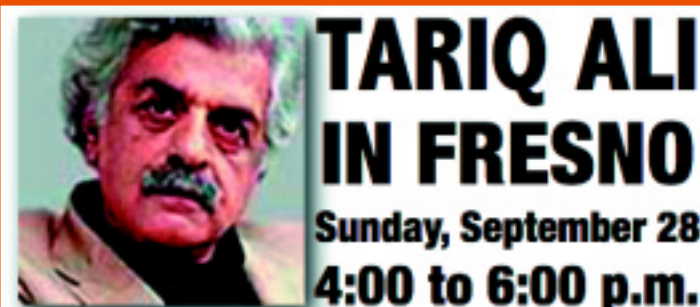
On February 19, 2008, her agent picked her up,

told her that her release date had been miscalculated at CCWF and that Cindy had to go back to prison. Now! None of this was "her" fault, she was assured.

When she was brought back, Cindy 602'd (appealed) Case Records. She found out that her sentence had been calculated from the day she first hit CCWF (03-15-06), not from the day of her arrest (10-13-05). The court had given her credit for time served in jail plus seventy-four extra days which the prison did not add to her calculations. Cindy Villa is doing time for possession of a controlled substance. Case Records also insists that she has two strikes when she had made a deal in court for one strike only. First, she had an out date of June 4, 2008. Then, Case Records recalculated and told Cindy she would parole 12-10-07. The prison put her out. Then they sent her parole agent to bring her back, drove her all the way north in one day, and told her that she made a deal for two strikes when she made a deal for one. Now, her release date is November 13, 2008. Oops!

When I was returned to prison, a woman got in touch with me. K. came to CCWF with eighteen months to serve. She wanted to go to firecamp at California Institute for Women (CIW) in southern California where she would have her sentence reduced to 35% and she could be near her mother and daughter who live in southern California. She needed to have at least fifteen months left on her sentence to qualify for firecamp

Continued on page 4



Tariq Ali is a historian, novelist, political campaigner, an editor of the *New Left Review*, and a frequent guest on *Democracy Now!*

His latest book and the title of his talk:
"The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power"

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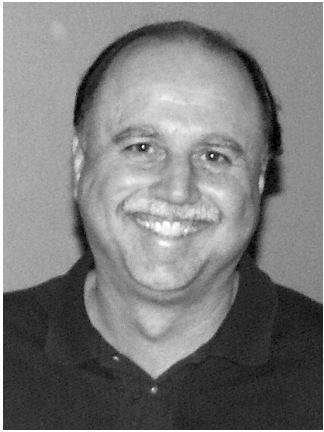
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The Community Alliance newspaper reserves the right to edit all articles for space and clarity.

FROM THE EDITOR



The fact that you are reading this right now is proof that there is hope for a better world. In this issue you will read about what people are doing, right here in Fresno County, to bring about social, economic, and environmental justice, support immigrant rights, and give us hope.

On our front page this month is political prisoner Sara Olson's story about

why she was released from State Prison (in Chowchilla) and re-arrested 4 days later. What was behind this bizarre incident which played out in the mainstream media? Some commentators speculated that it was behind the scenes maneuvering by right wing politicians that forced her re-arrest. Other analysts speculated that it was the incompetency of prison staff to properly calculate her release date. It was also suggested that this was a cruel hoax played on her by prison staff. The truth, as you will read, is something even more sinister. In her own words, Sara tells her story about what was behind her release and re-arrest. The front page article tells you the real reason why she and many other prisoners get released and re-arrested.

The Community Alliance is honored to have articles in this month's issue written by Ashley Swearengin and Henry T. Perea, Fresno's two mayoral candidates. Both Swearengin and Perea want to convince you to vote for them in November and they do so by arguing that they have positions more in line with the progressive community than their opponent. If the left is going to be effective and have power in local government, it is important to engage elected officials in dialog about the issues of importance in the progressive community - issues like police accountability, public transportation, air quality, or whether or not to build a nuclear power plant in Southwest Fresno. The Community Alliance is honored that Perea and Swearengin have chosen this newspaper to present their case for why you should vote for them. In October, we will compare their positions on a number of issues, some of which they did not write about on their own.

The coverage this newspaper has done on homelessness in Fresno over the last couple of years has changed public policy. The homeless have won a Class Action lawsuit and will soon get their share of the \$2.3 million settle-

ment. One of the outcomes of our coverage has been to force the City and County of Fresno into finding solutions to homelessness in this community.

A report is about to be released by the City/County Task Force on homelessness that will chart a course for establishing a Housing First program that they say will end homelessness in ten years. Community Alliance readers should be skeptical of this report. Here is why: The Task Force was hand picked by elected officials and primarily includes business people, social service providers, developers, and elected officials. There were three homeless people appointed to the Task Force. The only homeless person still attending meetings is Al Williams and he tells me the plan they have come up with will not work. Williams, who is on the Community Alliance editorial board, says the Task Force plan will funnel most of the money to "Poverty Pimps" and not provide the resources needed to help the homeless. Williams says the plan grossly underestimates the number of chronically homeless at less than 1,000. They intend to build 100 housing units a year and in 10 years, VIOLA!, homelessness will be ended. "Not likely," says Williams. We will have an in-depth story on this development next month.

You might think that getting these important stories into your hands each month would be easy. It's not. In addition to the usual difficulties, like raising money by getting enough people to donate or subscribe, we are faced with defending our very right to distribute this newspaper in Fresno. Last month we approached the Fresno Air Terminal and asked if we could put up a newsstand. They have The Bee, USA Today, & the SF Chronicle, but they refused to let us put up a newsstand because they said it would be a "litter" problem. Since when does littering trump our constitutional right to Free Speech? A few months ago, you might remember, our newsstand was burned down in front of the police department in downtown Fresno. The police, of course, didn't see a thing! Last, but not least, last month we were banned from two DMV facilities. The DMV cited "littering" as being their primary concern.

Our response has been to contact the ACLU to see if there is something they can do to "encourage" public facilities to allow equal access to alternative/independent media. What can you do to help? In addition to subscribing and sending in a donation, we can always use help distributing the paper. Give us a call at (559) 978-4502 and let us know what you would like to do to support Free Speech. Another World is Possible.

Letters to the Editor

{Editor's note: Council member Cynthia Sterling is responding, in the letter below, to an article by Rev. Floyd D. Harris in last month's Community Alliance. Since that article, which was critical of Sterling, a group of residents including Rev. Harris has begun the process to recall the District 3 council member}

As Councilmember for District 3, the most diverse district in the city, with long standing issues and problems unlike any other district in Fresno. I have tried to serve and will continue to serve my entire district with dedication, integrity, energy and thoughtfulness. The health and pathology of any community depends not only on the governmental leadership, but on all of us who reside in the community working together to find solutions to the communities problems.

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Although there has been and will continue to be expanded opportunities for constructive participation from members of our community, I am often disrupted by individuals with personal agendas that provide platforms for the community which are divisive in nature and do not provide real solutions to problems we face.

Recognizing the diversity in Fresno's District 3, I am attempting to address the unique needs of the entire district that I serve. It is important therefore, that I continue to communicate issues and concerns known to all the citizens of the District 3 so there can be universal informed decisions made about the issues we all care so much about.

During my tenure as Councilmember, I have made my staff and myself available to the community. I have held and sponsored *town hall meetings, issue forums and have attended hundreds of community events*, listening to the concerns of my constituents so I could adequately work with City staff to address the issues and concerns raised. I remain visible in the community along with my staff daily.

Do we still have major issues & concerns in our community that must be addressed? Absolutely! No one is more aware of those issues than I am.

My priorities are and have been:

Continue to increase access to parks, recreation and after school activities, throughout the district

Continue to encourage commercial development and retail that would bring more jobs to the district

Building a Middle School for Southwest Fresno to serve the 90% of Fresno Unified students from the area who are bused out of our community, creating a lost sense of community.

Building on the over \$4,006,000 million dollars of Neighborhood Infrastructure Projects (curbs, gutter sidewalks, repairs) provided to the district in just the last 3 years.

Taking back our neighborhoods from crime and drugs. I will continue to be active with HIV/ AIDS, similar to my efforts at the recent HIV / AIDS walk where I was the only elected official present, and one of only a handful of African Americans participating at the event.

I stood up to the Mayor when he cut direct funding to Social Services Agencies in the city and have continued to request that they be restored.

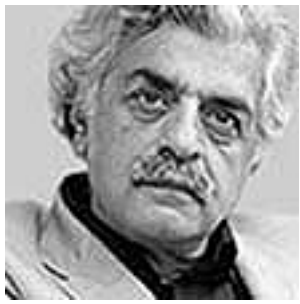
Long before the Homeless sued the Mayor, I proposed a package of Homeless Initiatives including proposed Housing for the Homeless (April 2007). I called for a Joint City and County effort to address the homeless crisis which has lead to the 10 Year Planning Process to End Chronic Homeless which will soon release a Plan of Action. In the meantime I have worked to ensure that the homeless are provided with basic dignity and respect by providing access to garbage pick-up, toilets, and water.

I remain a faithful servant of those that elected and re-elected me to be a voice and a vehicle to address the needs of our district in this city. I will continue to passionately and intelligently represent the entire District 3 and hope

Continued on page 3

NATO's Lost Cause

By Tariq Ali



In the latest clashes on the Pakistan-Afghan border, Nato troops have killed 11 Pakistani soldiers and injured many more, creating a serious crisis in the country and angering the Pakistan military high command, already split on the question.

US failure in Afghanistan is now evident and Nato desperation only too visible. Spreading the war to Pakistan would be a disaster for all sides. The Bush-Cheney era is drawing to a close, but it is unlikely that their replacements, despite the debacle in Iraq, will settle the American giant back to a digestive sleep.

The temporary cleavage that opened up between some EU states and Washington on Iraq was resolved after the occupation. They could all unite in Afghanistan and fight the good fight. This view has been strongly supported by every US presidential candidate in the run up to the 2008 elections, with Senator Barack Obama pressuring the White House to violate Pakistani sovereignty whenever necessary. He must be pleased.

That the "good war" has now turned bad is no longer disputed by a number of serious analysts in the US, even though there is no agreed prescription for dealing with the problems. Not least of which for some is the future of Nato, stranded far away from the Atlantic in a mountainous country, the majority of whose people, after offering a small window of opportunity to the occupiers, realised it was a mistake and became increasingly hostile.

The "neo-Taliban" control at least 20 districts in the Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan provinces where Nato troops replaced US soldiers. It is hardly a secret that many officials in these zones are closet supporters of the guerrilla fighters. As western intelligence agencies active in the country are fully aware, the situation is out of control. The model envisaged for the occupation was Panama. The then US secretary of State, Colin Powell, explained that: "The strategy has to be to take charge of the whole country by military force, police or other means". His knowledge of Afghanistan was limited.

Panama, populated by 3.5 million people, could not have been more different to Afghanistan, which has a population approaching 30 million and is geographically quite dissimilar. To even attempt a military occupation of the entire country would require a minimum of 200,000 troops.

A total of 8000 US troops were dispatched to seal the victory. The 4000 "peacekeepers" sent by other countries never left Kabul. The Germans concentrated on creating a police force that could run a police state and the Italians, without any

sense of irony, were busy "training an Afghan judiciary" to deal with the drugs mafia. The British were in Helmand amidst the poppy fields. As for the new satellite states involved – Czechs, Slovenes, Poles, Estonians, Slovaks and Romanians – it was useful training for the future.

Five years later, in September 2006, an attempted bombing of the US embassy came close to hitting its target. A CIA assessment that same month painted a sombre picture, depicting Karzai and his regime as hopelessly corrupt and incapable of defending Afghanistan against the Taliban. Ronald E Neumann, the US Ambassador in Kabul supported this view and told an interviewer that the US faced "stark choices" and defeat could only be avoided through "multiple billions" over "multiple years".

The repression, striking blindly, leaves people with no option but to back those trying to resist, especially in a part of the world where the culture of revenge is strong. When a whole community feels threatened it reinforces solidarity, regardless of the character or weakness of those who fight back.

Many Afghans who detest the Taliban are so angered by the failures of Nato and the behaviour of its troops that they are hostile to the occupation. Nato itself has stopped pretending that its occupation has anything to do with the needs of the Afghan people and acknowledge it as an open-ended American military thrust into the Middle East and Central Asia. As the Economist summarises, "Defeat would be a body blow not only to the Afghans, but" – and more importantly, of course – to the Nato alliance". As ever, geopolitics prevail over Afghan interests in the calculus of the big powers.

The basing agreement signed by Washington with its appointee in Kabul in May 2005 gives the Pentagon the right to maintain a massive military presence in Afghanistan in perpetuity. That Washington is not seeking permanent bases in this fraught and inhospitable terrain simply for the sake of "democratisation and good governance" was made clear by Nato's secretary general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at the Brookings Institution in February this year: the opportunity to site military facilities, and potentially nuclear missiles, in a country that borders China, Iran and Central Asia was too good to miss.

More strategically, Afghanistan has become a central theatre for uniting, and extending, the west's power-political grip on the world order. On the one hand, it is argued, it provides an opportunity for the US to shrug off its failures in imposing its will in Iraq and persuading its allies to play a broader role there. In contrast, as one report suggests, America and its allies "have greater unity of purpose in Afghanistan. The ultimate outcome of Nato's effort to stabilise Afghanistan and US leadership of that effort may well affect the cohesiveness of the alliance and Washington's ability to shape Nato's future."

There are at least two routes out of the Khyber impasse. The first and the worst would be to Balkanise the country. This

Tariq Ali will be in Fresno Sunday, September 28 4 - 6 PM

Tariq Ali, novelist, historian, political campaigner, and editor of "New Left Review" will speak at the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno, 2111 East Nees Ave. Pakistan is in the throes of a new crisis: daily battles on the Afghan border, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the farcical and grotesque succession ceremony. Tariq Ali has been visiting Pakistan regularly and writing for the London Review of Books. His latest book "The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power" is also the title of his talk at this event. For more information contact Dan Yaseen at (559) 251-3361 or danyaseen@comcast.net

appears to be the dominant pattern of imperial hegemony at the moment, but whereas the Kurds in Iraq and the Kosovans and others in the former Yugoslavia were willing client-nationalists, the likelihood of Tajiks or Hazaris playing this role effectively is more remote in Afghanistan.

The second alternative would require a withdrawal of all US/Nato forces, either preceded or followed by a regional pact to guarantee Afghan stability for the next ten years. Pakistan, Iran, India and Russia could guarantee and support a functioning national government, pledged to preserving the ethnic and religious diversity of Afghanistan and creating a space in which all its citizens can breathe, think and eat every day. It would need a serious social and economic plan to rebuild the country and provide the basic necessities for its people.

Nato's failure cannot be simply blamed on the Pakistani government. It is a traditional colonial ploy to blame "outsiders" for internal problems. If anything, the war in Afghanistan has created a critical situation in two Pakistani frontier provinces and the use of the Pakistan army by Centcom has resulted in suicide terrorism in Lahore with the federal intelligence agency and a naval training college targeted by supporters of the Afghan insurgents.

The Pashtun majority in Afghanistan has always had close links to its fellow Pashtuns in Pakistan. The present border was an imposition by the British empire, but it has always remained porous. It is virtually impossible to build a Texan fence or an Israeli wall across the mountainous and largely unmarked 2500km border that separates the two countries. The solution is political, not military. And it should be sought in the region not in Washington or Brussels.

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Make this line large, bold, and embedded somewhere in the above article:

The west's 'good war' in Afghanistan has turned bad. A local solution, rather than a neocolonial one, is what's needed.

Letters continued from page 2

that the majority of citizens will support the efforts we have begun and that we hope to move forward during my last 2 years as a member of the Fresno City Council. We thank the many who have extended their offer of support and look forward to continuing our efforts to improve the quality of life of those in our city and especially those that I represent in District 3.

If you should have any questions, need to place a request for services from the City of Fresno, please feel free to call my office at (559) 621-8000 or by fax (559) 621-7893, or by email at District3@fresno.gov

Cynthia Sterling,
Member of the Fresno City Council, District Three

###

I just finished reading the most remarkable book I have ever had the privilege to read. It is called: "The Great Turning, from Empire to Earth Community" by David C. Korten, Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc. For about the past 20 years I have been greatly concerned about Global Warming and all the ramifications that will come with it. This book is the first thing that has given me any hope. It is my feeling that if there is any chance whatsoever that humanity will survive the next 50 years, it is the ideas put forth in this book that will do it.

I encourage you to read this book. Borrow it from the library. If your library doesn't have it, request an inter-library loan. Buy it at your bookstore or online, and then after you read it, give it to someone else to read, then

someone else, then someone else, etc. etc.

I don't have any children or grandchildren. Most of you do. We all know children that we love and care about. There is no doubt in my mind that many of us will live through the ghastly effects that we have created for ourselves. We owe it to the children we know and to ourselves to do all we can to offer hope for the world we all will inherit. Will it be hell on earth or heaven? It is up to us.

Merrily Davies
Porterville

###

I am looking for volunteers interested in raising awareness about the importance of spaying/neutering companion animals.

Great public speaking skills are NOT a requirement.

Volunteers would go into libraries, schools, community centers, etc. to show compelling videos, read/distribute articles on the importance of sterilizing our animals, and hand out applications for free/low-cost spay/neuter services.

If interested in this noble endeavor, please contact:

Krishnapriya Mallela at
krishna.9000@yahoo.com
Fresno

###

I was very pleased to hear about the verdict in favor of the homeless people. You are a very compassionate man to assist those whom are disenfranchised by city Big Wigs. I have the upmost respect for you! You really demonstrated remarkable courage and integrity in not letting Ms. Kincaid's untimely and suspect demise go in vain. . . through both your paper and your personal efforts.

I'm sorry I am indigent (laugh!! It comes with being a writer I suppose) Never the less, I wanted to donate these two 1 dollar postage stamps to you; for whatever need you feel warranted.

Bernard Henderson
Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga

{Editors note: We are humbled and honored by Bernard's generosity. It reminds me of the homeless person who gave a \$1 donation because the Community Alliance newspaper gave him hope and encouraged him to continue the struggle for social and economic justice. There is a parable in the bible about the Widow's Mite (the Mite is a coin with little value). The story is about how a widow gave her last Mite to the church. Jesus was greatly impressed with her generosity because she had given everything she had. By contrast, the rich gave large donations which made them look generous, but those contributions represented only a small fraction of their wealth. The Community Alliance welcomes contributions of any amount, but we are humbled and honored by Bernard's generosity}

where prisoners are trained to fight the state's wild-fires. When she came to CCWF, K. was told she had figured her sentence incorrectly and that she had only eleven months left. "Well," she thought, "less time in prison." Four months before her release date, she went to another classification and was assured that all was fine. She signed her parole plans and waited for her out date.

She called her mother and told her that everything was on track for her release. Her daughter repainted her mom's bedroom. K secured a place in an aftercare program. The three women were excited.

Four days before her parole date, K. received a copy of a letter sent to her parole officer on the outside. It stated that her sentence had been recalculated and that she still had another year left to serve. K. received no personal notice of the change herself, only the letter sent to her parole officer on the outside. She went to her counselor and her yard captain and complained loudly. She pleaded to go to firecamp. She was told, "No". She had less than fifteen months to serve so she was not qualified while, when she first arrived at CCWF, she was. Oops!

Melissa was paroling on January 24. She sent her television home so she would have some entertainment when she got out and found a place to live. She kept the t.v. rather than donating it because, realistically, she figured she would not be rolling in dough. She'd need the t.v. A few days before her release date, she was told that her sentence had been miscalculated and she had to stay until late May. Oops!

A while ago, I was standing in the strip search line after weekend visiting. I was behind a woman whose husband came to see her all the time. She was anxious to get out and to go home. Her daughter had had a hard time while her mother was in prison and ended up in the hospital. I asked, "What are you still doing here? You should be gone by now!" "Well," she said, "A day before I was supposed to go, they told me I had another month." I asked, "are you sure? One month!" Good luck. Oops!

One morning recently a woman came up to me in the dayroom in my housing unit. She was nervous. She had received a parole ducat the night before that indicated she was to parole that morning! She told me, "I've got another year on my sentence and a parole hold!" I asked her if her counselor had told her anything about this or if she had signed any parole papers. "No!" she answered. We went to the "cop shop", the bubble in the middle of the day room. The C/O called R&R (Recovery and Release) and asked about her. "Oh yeah, that's a mistake. She's going out to court." Oops!

On Monday, March 17, 2008 I was released on parole. On March 22 at 12:20 P.M. I was picked up at my mother's house and driven to CIW in Corona, California in a security caravan that involved three Chevy Suburban-sized vehicles and several members of a pa-

role strike team. I was deposited at CIW for one hour. Then another Suburban, a sedan and three cops drove me from Corona to CCWF. By 9:00 P.M. I was back in prison.

After I won a writ of habeas corpus in July, 2004, I had a year deducted from my sentence that had been augmented by the BPH from the original five years, four months with half-time to fourteen years with half-time in 2002. After another BPH hearing and a post-BPH classification in 2004, I got a facesheet that indicated my release date as September 2008. I knew that was wrong. The true date was September, 2009. I called one of my attorneys. "What should I do?" I asked. "Tell them!" he replied. So, I did.

I went to my counselor, a CCI (CC-for Correctional Counselor). I told her that I owed CDCR one more year. She was sure I was wrong. Then I went to the CCI, the head yard counselor. She spent forty-five minutes assuring me I didn't know what I was talking about. At my next annual classification hearing, I told the yard captain about my dilemma—who smiled at me like I must be nuts. In 2005, I went before the Institutional Classification Committee (ICC) because I was seeking approval to apply at the state level for an interstate transfer to prison in Minnesota where my husband and children live and where I, before landing at CCWF, had lived for over a quarter of a century. Since CDCR moves with the bureaucratic pace of a glacial ice age, I wanted to make sure that it was understood how much time I had yet to serve. I didn't want Minnesota DOC to reject my transfer request because I did not have enough time left on my sentence. I stated to the entire ICC, headed by the Chief Deputy Warden, "Let me be perfectly clear. You forgot the bank robbery." The Chief Deputy Warden looked at me with benign amusement and replied, "Thank you very much, Ms. Olson." Oka-a-ay.

I thought that surely the error would be discovered. There was still time. Before one is released, there are recalculations, I thought. I could understand the lack of concern if the mistake was in CDCR's favor but not if it was in mine. After all, Case Records Specialists had reportedly miscalculated around 32,000 inmate sentences statewide in the past couple of years, all to the CDCR's advantages. Prisons want to keep everybody in custody forever, especially in California. The particular beauty of the California incarceration system, for the state, is that once a prisoner is caught up in it, it never lets you go. It is designed for release, revocation and re-incarceration over a lifetime; the famous "doing life on the installment plan" credo. The entire law enforcement industry is constructed to hold on to a body once it is captured in its clutches. There are regular parole sweeps on the outside when cops raid poor communities looking for parolees who are screwing up; in the wrong place at the wrong time, maybe smoking pot without a medical marijuana prescription, involved . . . you know . . . in this or that, and other major crime. The raids are reported on the t.v. news in Fresno. I remember when I first saw a story about a parole sweep. I wondered, "What the hell is a parole sweep?" I had never heard of such a thing.

When I got out for those few days in March I had to go to a parole orientation meeting or, I was warned, "You'll be revoked." I went. Out of the thirty or so gathered group of parolees, I was the lone woman. The m.c., the head of the local parole strike team or some such entity, introduced himself. He told us the local parole office had an 80% recidivism rate, assuring most of us that we would be back in prison in no time. He recited the rules for the surprise raids on our domiciles by the strike team that we could all look forward to undergoing. Yay! There were tables set up around the room with people offering services to help parolees reintegrate into the "free" world. These services and "God" were looking out for our interests. We had to visit the tables and get the signatures of a specified number of people at the tables—about ten signatures—or "you'll be revoked." I walked out of that meeting feeling I had momentarily escaped the inevitable trip back to prison. I was right.

There was no parole revocation hearing for me. My attorneys filed a writ over my rearrest. Of course, I lost the writ. I never expected to win. My attorneys say the judge cited the case, *Green vs. Christiansen*, for the proposition that officials have the power to recommit a mistakenly released inmate. That's all it says. There's no decision or analysis of any circumstances. *Green* relies on a 1958 case that does the same thing; merely states that officials can do whatever it is they do. The 1958 case cites an 1898 case in which the state re-incarcerated a cattle rustler. So that's it.. Cattle rustling.

All the publicity or whatever, the all-scandal-all-the-time-and-weather-and-sports crap which passes for news in contemporary U.S. media obscures what really is going on in the country and the world, that accompanied my re-incarceration, I can only explain as . . . "The War on Terror" People either buy it or they don't. It is propaganda and it is distracting. If one is distracted, then the propaganda worked. In my case, there was no "story." There was simply a short-lived family reunion.

A friend sent me a copy of a L.A. City Council resolution that implores the governor to force me to spend my one year of parole in California for, perhaps, a bit more punishment for me and for my husband and our girls. That is L.A., eternal vengeance. One of my co-defendants, now long released and off parole, had no problem paroling to his home out-of-state but his case was not from L.A.

My husband calls Los Angeles "the toxic center of your subjugation." I just call it "Chinatown".

###

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Chowchilla, CA 93610-1508

Protecting Our Civil Liberties

By Bill Simon

Until you list the number of issues we have dealt with, it's hard to believe that it has already been a year and a half since the new Greater Fresno Area Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union-Northern California (ACLU-NC) was inaugurated to serve the people of Fresno, Madera, Kings, and Tulare Counties; and it's already time for our second annual membership meeting.

The Fresno Area Chapter of the ACLU-NC will hold its Annual Membership Meeting on Monday, September 15, at 6:30 pm in the Staff Dining Room at Fresno City College, near Maroa and Weldon Avenues. There will be relaxed parking in lots K & L. Enter from Weldon.

At 6:30 we will begin with a business meeting for all ACLU members. We will report on our activities during the past year and also report on the Affiliate's recommendations for the Propositions in the November election. Then we will hold the election for members of the Board for the coming year. Any ACLU member can be nominated for the Board, and all ACLU members are invited to vote in the election.

At 7:30 ACLU members and all members of the public are invited to participate in a workshop put on by CURB and PMP about prison expansion and Proposition 6. The

workshop makes it clear that prison expansion always results in more imprisoned people and never alleviates overcrowding.

It has been a very busy year for the Fresno Area Chapter, even though we are still trying to do a better job reaching out to members in Madera, Kings, and Tulare Counties. We would be glad to hear from those members at simonaclu@sbcglobal.net both about the issues in those areas and about their ability to help us in our mission to serve the people of those counties.

Over the last year we have talked with Fresno City and County officials and with the City Council, often repeatedly, and participated in meetings about many issues including video surveillance, independent police oversight, the River Park Curfew, Fulton Mall Voter Registration, the Homeless situation, the Fresno Film Permit Ordinance, Police response to complaints, and use of the library for meetings. We have participated in two Forums about Fresno's need for an Independent Police Auditor, presented workshops at M.E.Ch.A events at Fresno State and at Orange Cove High School, lobbied Juan Arambula about RF id, learned about issues in the Native American Community, the Hmong Community, Fresno's West Side Community, in area prisons, and investigated complaints in Dinuba and Orosi. We have demonstrated to close Guantanamo and restore habeas corpus, sought justice for Lilly Mae Harmon, and even had a Social Meeting at the Landmark. There is no shortage of issues affecting our civil liberties so come to the meeting on September 15. You can also volunteer to help address the issues we'll face in the coming year.

###

Bill Simon is the chairperson of the Fresno Area Chapter ACLU-NC. He can be contacted by email at: simonaclu@sbcglobal.net

ACLU Annual Membership Meeting Monday, September 15 6:30 - 9 PM

The Greater Fresno Area Chapter of the ACLU-NC will hold its Annual Membership Meeting on Monday, September 15, from 6:30-9:00 pm at the Fresno City College Staff Dining Room, near Maroa and Weldon Streets. There will be relaxed parking in Lots K & L. Enter from Weldon. Non-members are also welcome to attend, especially for the prison workshop.

At 6:30 ACLU members will vote for board members for the coming year. We will also report on Chapter activities during the past year. At 7:30 we will have a workshop about prison expansion and Prop 6 put on by CURB (Californians United for a Responsible Budget) and their local affiliate, PMP (Prison Moratorium Project).

If you would like to be considered for election to the board for the coming year, contact simonaclu@sbcglobal.net.

Summer Enjoy, Fall Avoid, Always Act

By Scott Key

With heat suffocating the Valley, it is hard to believe that fall is upon us. Our signal is not cooler temperatures or leaves turning color. Rather, it is the ratcheting up of the military recruitment machine. Now is the time to avoid military traps. Students or parents need to opt out of releasing student contact information. Students should not participate in competitions or free drawings. Students should refuse to take the ASVAB and demand an alternative. Everyone is invited to join the efforts of the Central Valley Counter Recruitment Coalition. For more information, go to <http://www.fresno-war.com> or call Dan at (559) 251-3361.

Beyond countering military recruitment, everyone should continue to pressure their members of Congress to cut funding and end the occupation of Iraq. Congress needs to reject House Resolution 362 which gives the President permission to wage war on Iran. And members of Congress should be told to alter American foreign policy and respect other nations. You can help by calling your U.S. representatives and U.S. senators today.

Other opportunities to act in September:

1. Join Peace Fresno on the Peace Corner (SE corner of Blackstone and Shaw) on Friday, September 5 at 4:30-6:30 p.m.
2. Be energized by DR. BOB BOWMAN, called the best public speaker in the country by the LA Times, through his 2008 Patriot Tour. Bowman will challenge us to "Take Back America." This event will be held on Tuesday, September 9 at 7:00 p.m. at Mennonite Community Church, 5015 E. Olive Ave., Fresno.
3. Learn from TARIQ ALI as he explores "The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power". This talk and book signing will be held on Sunday, September 28 at 4:00 p.m. at the Islamic Cultural Center, 2111 E. Nees Ave., Fresno.

For more information about these events, visit <http://www.peacefresno.org> or call (559) 487-2515.

Peace Fresno invites you to always act for peace.



Dr. Bob Bowman

"The Best Public Speaker in the Country"
-Los Angeles Times

Is bringing his
2008 Patriot Tour TO FRESNO!

Dr. Bowman challenges us to **"Take Back America"** for the people. He explains why we need a government that:

**(1) Follows the Constitution
(2) Honors the Truth, and
(3) Serves the People**

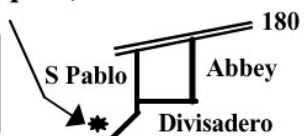
**Tuesday September 9, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.
Mennonite Community Church
5015 E. Olive Ave Fresno, CA 93727**

The event is Co-sponsored by: Fresno Center for Nonviolence
Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno Social Justice Committee
Outreach Ministry of First Congregational Church of Fresno
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Peace Fresno www.peacefresno.org (559) 487-2515

QUAKERS

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Silent Worship Sunday 10-11 AM
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ALL WELCOME

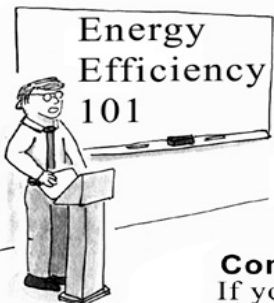


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Free Workshop
Have you had a Spiritual Experience?
Sunday, November 2nd, 1-3 p.m.
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6730 N. Blackstone Avenue
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Fresno, CA 93727
mrsvfdavis@gmail.com

Serving Our Community



Home Energy Audits
Duct Testing
Infrared Imaging
NSHP Compliance Management

Energy Efficiency Tips

Compact Fluorescent Lights
If you haven't yet replaced your incandescent lights (also known as heaters) with CFLs, what are you waiting for! Modern CFLs have similar characteristics as the old bulbs we're used to and converting to CFLs is a simple way to knock 15% or more off your electric bill.

Low-E Film

East and west facing windows get battered by the summer sun and that heat is transferred to the living space. The best thing to do is plant a tree to provide shade. But trees take a long time to mature so, in the meantime, consider using low-e film. It's an easy project that costs a lot less than new windows and low-e film greatly reduces the heat radiating into your home and this translates to reduced energy consumption and increased comfort.

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Journey for Justice: Needing a Revolution in Our Values

Summary of the 3rd annual J4J, "Addressing the Crime of Poverty"

On a sweltering June 28, 2008, a room full of community activists and leaders met at the Chowchilla Senior Center for a day of powerful panel discussions at the third annual California Central Valley Journey for Justice. The carefully chosen theme this year was "Addressing the Crime of Poverty", especially apt considering the Central Valley region has the second highest poverty rate in the United States. Only the state of Mississippi rates higher. The day's tone was set when the first panel speaker, Nikki Lee Diamond, compellingly and deliberately declared, "It is our responsibility to fight on behalf of those trapped inside the confines of mental illness, homelessness and poverty within this so called 'free world'." Nikki came as part of Life after "Life", made up of women who were sentenced to life in prison but managed to get out and are now doing everything they can to help those confined on both the inside and outside of prison.

Nikki was a part of the day's first panel, "Incarceration/Prisons/Police on the Rise- A Need for Community Solutions." The other Journey for Justice panels were "Housing Crisis/Homelessness on the Rise/Foreclosures", "Health Care- A Human Right, Not a Political Issue", "Economic Crisis- Budget Cuts", and a concluding discussion panel. Each panel integrated several community leaders from a wide array of organizations and always included at least one member from the afflicted constituency being discussed. From moment to moment, the day was filled with one testimony about poverty after another, leaving people feeling a spectrum of emotions from horror stricken to hopeful. When looked at collectively, the day's discussions offered several recurring and very telling themes. The following is a short summary of these different themes, offering essential insight into both the problems and solutions surrounding the crime of poverty.

Poverty: A Business

One of the main thematic threads, heard in every panel throughout the day, was the idea that poverty is a business, one in which it pays to keep a large and growing segment of the population in poverty while a smaller segment continues to prosper grossly. Again and again, speakers would use the words "system", "industry" and "business" in reference to poverty. Al Williams, a homeless Fresno resident, summed up his discussion with a difficult truth: "It is hard to get rid of homelessness because it is a business." Reverend Ashiya Odeye, from the Justice Reform Coalition, and Debbie Reyes, from the CA Prison Moratorium Project, had a similar point to make about prisons. They explained how prisons are an industry that costs taxpayers billions of dollars- money that could be spent on rehabilitating people and raising the standard of living for everyone. Instead, we continue

to openly support a violent, monetarily motivated system that does not work, but rather perpetuates and increases poverty and violence. The end result is that we have created an injustice system in place of a justice system. Mario Galvan, from the Zapatista Solidarity Coalition, put this matter into a broader perspective: "We live in a system that creates poverty....Our laws are being written by corporations. This is a class problem, a global problem. The inequality gap is big everywhere."

The theme of poverty as a business was also discussed at great length in terms of real life consequences. Many mentioned how a genuine lack of jobs, from the homeless to recent college graduates, has been one of the worst economic outcomes. For Dr. Jean Kennedy, the growing inequality gap has meant that she, a professor who teaches at four different institutions, is forced to travel to Jamaica for her health care because she cannot afford health insurance here in the US. Gang interventionist specialist, Sam Rangel, helped the audience realize that part of the reason young kids turn to gangs and away from school is because school tends to be future-oriented. For a lot of kids growing up in poverty- and a staggering 21% of California's children do so- the "future" means nothing to them when they need the "now" addressed. They are too consumed with getting enough food, having a place to sleep, attaining a good job, and other factors that come to dominate their life when they live in poverty. Mother Teresa Robinson, the mother of an incarcerated son, elaborated on how



Ethel Long-Scott said, "We represent the best in America and need unity toward a greater vision. We need to kick the politicians who support poverty enabling structures out. We need a different vision from the agenda of the rich and elite."

relegated to second-class citizenship. This lack of dignity was why Muliaga Togotogo, from the Community Homeless Alliance Ministry (CHAM), did not mince words when it came to the solution he was asking for. "Don't feel sorry for me. Don't feel pity for me. Just give me my rights as a citizen of this country."

Education: The First Step

One of the most prevalent themes of the day was education. Almost every panelist cried out for better education, beginning with Nikki when she concluded her comments with "There is so much education out there that needs to be done." Most were calling for education to correct the massive amounts of miseducation around poverty and inequality. Sometimes, this means letting people know that these issues are structural in nature. Nick Robinson, from the Stop WalMart Action Team, talked about how the problems of poverty are often hard to see clearly, such as "the disenfranchisement of certain people, the structural racism" and this is why "it is a process of learning." Mario boldly laid bare the often hidden and twisted truth, when he explained, "If a corporation is in trouble, we come up with

the money to save it, but if the poor need it, we do not have it." Polo Chavez commented on how even our language dictates the way we understand and handle situations. He explained how, when our society faces a "crisis", we always respond the same: with war. "War against gangs, war against ignorance, war against terrorism, war against illegal immigrants, war against lack of food, war against water security, war into infinity..." Polo then challenged everyone in the room to get serious about their activism because we cannot continue to blindly follow the status quo by solving our problems with war. That is why Muliaga Togotogo commented, "We need to educate folks. We do not say that word [educate] enough." It is also why he made empowerment through education first on his list of ways to build toward real solutions.

Unification: The Second Step

Second on Muliaga Togotogo's list, and another major theme of the day, was to unify and collaborate together. Muliaga spent most of his presentation demonstrating how the unity his church community provided allowed him to achieve victory in his own economic human rights struggle. He exclaimed, "On the day of my [housing] trial, we shut the courts down that day because I had a whole community present in the courtroom, backing me up." Mike Rhodes also shared a success story that revealed the power of unity. Recently, the Fresno homeless were awarded a \$2.3 million dollar settlement and have stopped the city from seizing and im-



Debbie Reyes speaks in front of the women's prison. The journey caravanned out to the Women's prison — the largest concentration of imprisoned women in the world.

poverty comes to control every aspect of your life, when she simply, but effectively, explained, "The prison system: I eat it. I wear it. I sleep it."

A Lack of Dignity

Another major theme of the day, and one intricately tied to the crime of poverty, was dignity. Mike Rhodes, from Community Alliance, described how the homeless in Fresno experienced flagrant violations to their rights when their encampments were being bulldozed down. He explained, "In these situations, people are losing their identification, their personal belongings. There is absolutely no dignity." Homeless Fresno residents Cynthia Green and Al Williams further expressed the lack of dignity that the poor face when they are refused to be seen medically, when barred from using public restrooms, and when friends are "disappeared" for good. Pat Caetano from Life after "Life" shared how prisoners are seen as "nothing" and blanketed as "liars". Pat experienced this first hand when a doctor punctured her lung in prison but no one would believe her. Pat further explained that when you become an object of money, then you cease to be a human being, leading her to reveal, "I think I would have died [in prison] if I had not got out." She then clarified, though, "I would have rather died standing up in prison than not standing up out here." Polo Chavez, from Comite Pro Uno, and Ethel Long-Scott, from the Women's Economic Agenda Project, analyzed this issue even deeper when they explained that in our current society, receiving dignity depends on *who* you are. If you are not poor, you have dignity, but if you are poor, then you are



Gloria Sandoval from Merced helped organize this year's Journey for Justice



Polo Chavez, second from right, from Comite Pro Uno, said when we face a "crisis" we always respond the same: with war. "War against gangs, war against ignorance, war against terrorism, war against illegal immigrants, war against lack of food, war against water security, war into infinity."

erty, we need to "talk about revolution and not war. What we need to change is the basis of society, in what runs the society, and what keeps the present society." Ethel Long-Scott then built upon Polo's thoughts, trumpeting, "We need actions, but not just any. We need to educate for a new vision. We need a revolution in our values." What Polo and Ethel finally articulated for all to mull over was the idea that we cannot solve poverty's children- prisons, homelessness, health care insecurity, etc.- unless we change our values as a society. More specifically, they meant how we view and treat each other. Ethel and Polo were asking for a system that is based upon values that make sure every single person receives the dignity that they deserve. In plain terms, we can't change the system unless we change the values that it is built upon.

ness, lack of dignity, need for education, unity, and for a revolution in values had threaded and been built upon throughout the day, the final concluding panel helped put the day in perspective.

Gloria Hernandez, from Comite No Nos Vamos, talked about the lessons she had learned all day long: how she admired Cynthia Green for fighting for her rights as a homeless resident, how she learned from Muliaga what can happen when you stand up together to fight for your rights, and how she learned commitment from



Gloria Hernandez, from Comite No Nos Vamos, talked of her admiration of Cynthia Green for fighting for her rights as a homeless resident. "We have to build a coalition, empowered by education"

Journey for Justice continued from page 6

mediately destroying homeless people's property. This particular class action lawsuit was able to change public policy, while also sending a message to other cities who violate homeless people's rights. In this case, victory was won because many homeless, community organizations, and lawyers all came together for several years and refused to back down despite the many difficult obstacles they faced (for more information, read Mike Rhodes in-depth article at <http://www.weap.org/> on this important victory). Many others also called for unity, especially the need for greater unity among activists of all kinds and across different organizations. Polo Chavez strongly advocated for more new faces in the movement instead of allowing current divisions to continue. In a similar vein, Ethel Long-Scott passionately declared, "We represent the best in America and need unity toward a greater vision." She went on to explain how we need to kick the politicians who support poverty enabling structures out, but that "we can't do it alone; we need to work together." And as Dr. Jean so eloquently pointed out, "There is room for everyone in the social justice movement."

Ethel deepened this analysis when she continued, "We need to fight for human dignity, fight against the reality of second class citizens, against being laid off, against two Americas" and thus "The people must forge a new social contract for what we need. We need a new vision, one that does not make us exploited and expendable....We need a different vision from the agenda of the rich and elite." Mario Galvan summed up this train of thought when he asked and then answered, "What is the vision that is going to unite us? Not an army. It is going to instead take the US as a society putting the value of human beings over money." In other words, the people in the room and all those afflicted by poverty must put forth their own

values, ones not beholden to racist, sexist, class biased, and corporate structures. If we revolutionize our values so that they allow 'freedom from poverty' to prosper, then we will be empowered to revolutionize the current system keeping us all down. More importantly, we will be creating a new system that will secure our economic human rights. And that is exactly why we must build a mass social movement together: so that ALL can possess the economic means to experience dignity as a reality.

the women in prison who have gone back to help those still locked in. Gloria then emphasized, "We have to build a coalition, empower by education. We need to go door to door...You just have to go, you have to care, you have to have a heart. It hurts too much not to."

Similarly, Ethel Long-Scott reminded everyone why they were gathered in the room that day- because "it is total insanity that anyone in this country is dying from poverty." And, in the spirit of continuing the Journey for Justice beyond the walls of the Chowchilla Senior Center, Ethel also declared, "We in this room are not the change, but we are the seeds of change." People may have left that day feeling exhausted, overwhelmed with the problems caused by poverty, but they also left with a great hope and desire to nurture the seeds of change into a real, full-grown change. They also left knowing that they had to continue the journey by building a mass social movement to end poverty. Most importantly, they left knowing they must revolutionize our country's values into a new social contract encompassing all. Otherwise, in echo of Gloria's words, it will hurt too much not to.



Jean Kennedy from Fresno is working on a project that will provide drinkable water to homeless people on H street (south of Ventura).

Conclusions: We Are the Seeds of Change

Early in the day, facilitator Sandy Perry from CHAM, who co-facilitated with Journey for Justice volunteer Gloria Sandoval, clarified, "The Journey for Justice is about resisting not just economic oppression but all forms of money, power, and corruption." After four panels, all of these different forms of oppressions had been talked about, analyzed, and picked to pieces. While the themes of poverty as a busi-

A Revolution in Our Values

The most exciting theme of the event formed and grew throughout the day, as each panel added another layer to 'addressing the crime of poverty'. Polo Chavez probably used the word 'revolution' first when he claimed that in order to really solve the deep problems of pov-

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The Community Alliance newspaper thanks The Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP) for this article, which first appeared on their website - www.weap.org



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Fresno Mayoral Candidates Want Your Vote

[Editor's note: The Community Alliance newspaper asked mayoral candidates Henry T. Perea and Ashley Swearingin why the progressive community should vote for them. Here, in their own words, is what they wrote.]



Henry T. Perea is a candidate for mayor in the City of Fresno. The election will take place on Tuesday, November 4.

Henry T. Perea

With every generation, there are rare moments of opportunity when diverse coalitions of people join together to effect change. For Fresno, that moment is now. This election is about choices. Do we continue to do business as usual by conducting studies and issuing reports as my opponent suggests, or do we bring a community coalition together to replace studies with action? I believe it's time for action.

Over the last six years, I have been a strong voice for progressive change that has led to measurable results. I championed Fresno's major solar projects at the airport and the municipal service center; created more affordable housing; lead the first of many downtown housing projects, "The Vagabond"; authored a \$45 million investment in inner-city neighborhoods; expanded after-school programs; and invested in the arts and culture of our community. In addition, I have fought for better living conditions for the homeless, increased investments to reduce poverty, and have worked with community organizations to expand job training opportunities. While I am very proud of my record, there is more work to be done.

I am in this race because Fresno needs leadership that can bring diverse constituencies together to solve our pressing issues. I believe it's time we turn this air quality crisis into a moment of opportunity for innovation, job creation and entrepreneurship. I will lead our city to become the greenest city in America. I will do this by expanding our use of renewable energy and alternative fuels. I will enhance our green building codes and invest more in public transit. I will change our land-use policies to encourage more transit-oriented development and mixed-use projects.

I will make job creation the centerpiece of my administration. I believe we must help our small businesses grow, invest more into job training and reverse our city's brain-drain by funding the arts, rebuilding our downtown and embracing all ways of life as part of our community.

I believe it is time for Fresno to declare our own war on poverty. Unemployment is rising, foreclosures are up and many communities have little or no access to grocery stores, banking institutions and other essential services. We must be the generation that ends homelessness by embarking on a comprehensive approach to provide housing and services that give hope and opportunity.

This election is about leadership. The kind of leadership that will put an end to those who have framed this election as the North against the South, business against labor, blue neighborhoods against red neighborhoods. This is the kind of politics that has kept our community from turning the corner and reaching our full potential. During the primary election, my opponent and her supporters used the conservative Lincoln Club to perpetuate this divide by attacking working families and a grassroots organization conducting voter registration in the Latino community. The major funders of this hit piece were Congressman George Radanovich (\$7,600), Assemblyman Mike Villines (\$7,200), and local Nuclear power plant developer Bob Smittcamp (\$9,000 in addition to \$13,000 he and his family have given my opponent.) These, along with many of my opponent's supporters would like to keep things just the way they are. I say the time has come when distractions will not overshadow meaningful debate on the issues. We are in this together and we sink or swim together.

Every corner of this city deserves a Mayor who will reach out and usher in a new era of politics. It is only when we are willing to come together that we will end poverty, clean our air, free our neighborhoods of gangs and drugs, and build an economy where both

small business owners and working families rise together.

What drives this campaign is the simple truth that better days are ahead and the promise that everyone has the same opportunity to fulfill their God-given potential.

I am proposing a new energy future: all new city building must meet LEED Silver designations, ensuring that by 2015, 20% of the city's energy consumption is from renewable energy and provide assistance to people who want to use solar energy on their homes and businesses. I will create a "Green Corps" that will train high school students to become a part of the green economy and hire a "green" czar who will implement our new "green" initiatives. On transportation, I will lead a regional clean fleet program for the city, school districts, and Fresno County and make major investments into public transit. Last, but not least, I will make transit-oriented development and mixed-use projects a priority. Fresno will meet Federal attainment clean air standards.

On poverty, I am proposing an all hands on deck approach and issue a city-wide goal: to end poverty within this generation. I will do this by working with the private sector to create more jobs. But not just any job; jobs that pay a living wage and includes healthcare and retirement. I will build more affordable housing by fully funding our Housing Trust Fund and hold slum lords accountable for dilapidated housing. I will expand access to bank accounts and institute Individual Development Accounts to bring more people into the financial mainstream and allow them to start businesses, own a home or continue their education. I will also work with our school districts to strengthen after-school programs and end the digital-divide. I also believe we must strengthen our families by reducing teen pregnancy and promoting family literacy.

I am honored to have been endorsed in the primary by the Central Valley Progressive PAC, Central Labor Council, and community leaders like Coke Hallowell, Patience Milrod, Rezza Assemi, Mary Curry, Mary Stanley, Howard Watkins, State Senator Dean Florez and former Assemblywoman Sarah Reyes.

What makes my candidacy different is that I will bring a fresh approach to problem solving and the experience needed to execute a new vision. To learn more about our new vision for Fresno, please visit www.perea2008.com.

If you will be my voice on November 4, I will be yours for the next four years.

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Ashley Swarengin

I want to thank the Community Alliance for this opportunity to share some ideas about our campaign and why we want to earn your readers' support in November. I believe I am the best candidate in this race to move Fresno forward and to do so without compromising principles, returning to the days where 'inside politics' ruled the day, or forgetting that the residents of this city deserve to be heard at every turn.

First, I'd like to tell you a little about my background and then I will share my positions on some vital issues.

Like many Fresnoans, I am a transplant from somewhere else. In my case, I was born in Texas and raised in Arkansas. In the 1980s, my dad took a job in Fresno and moved my family here. I subsequently graduated from high school and met my husband, Paul, while a student at Fresno State. We have been married for 14 years. We have two wonderful kids. Along the way I finished a bachelor's degree and master's degree in business at Fresno State and worked in both the private and public sectors. In 2003, I helped to found the Regional Jobs Initiative. In 2006, my office was hired to run Governor Schwarzenegger's California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. In 2007, the Governor appointed me to the California Commission for Economic Development.

The question we've been asked to address here is, "Which candidate for mayor deserves the support of Fresno's progressives?" While we may not see eye-to-eye on every issue, there are several important things on which we do agree.

First, what would be the most thoughtful position on the City of Fresno having an Independent Police Auditor (IPA)? In five years on the City Council, my opponent has never supported an IPA. Never. Why, you might ask? Several groups who have supported him financially and otherwise have been opposed to the IPA. He has, as well.

During the primary this spring, only Tom Boyajian, Ignacio Garibay and I spoke in support of an IPA while our opponents remained opposed or silent on the issue. Mr. Perea has not supported what is truly best for the city, and he has been indifferent to those calling for an IPA - Mayor Autry, Chief Jerry Dyer, and the Fresno County Grand Jury. We all want Fresno to join the

other largest cities in California who have independent oversight. What model should Fresno choose for the auditor? My administration will explore all of the options, look to models that are working in other cities of like-size, and make sure the key players on this issue have a seat at the table as the decision is made. I support an IPA. My opponent does not.

Second, what about growth and urban sprawl? My opponent's position on these issues leaves a lot to be desired. Just look at his financial contribution reports from the spring primary. An objective analysis done the weekend before the June primary published in the *Fresno Bee* showed that 38% of his contributions received, nearly four out of every ten dollars, came from the development community.

This included individuals and companies who have had numerous projects before the council. Some developers contributed the maximum amount of money they could give Mr. Perea directly (local contribution limits are \$3,600 each) and then joined others to fund a West Hollywood-based "independent expenditure" for him that you may have heard about in the last few days of the race. One developer personally put an additional \$20,000 into that independent expenditure.

By contrast, the *Bee* report showed that only 19%, less than one out of five dollars, of our campaign was funded by the building industry, which included support from architects and engineers, not just land developers. We have had the most diverse financial support in this campaign thus far and the most number of individual contributors. The progressive position is to move the city forward, not backwards, when it comes to land use policies that protect and improve current neighborhoods and plan well for the future. I will do those things as Mayor. I cannot say the same thing about my opponent.

Lastly, what is the most proactive position on solving the poverty crisis in this city? For years now my passion has been working on regional solutions to these problems. In my administration poverty issues will be a top priority. We are only as rich as our poorest neighborhoods. We are only as clean as our dirtiest streets, and we are only as full as our hungriest neighbor. My opponent has been on the city council for six years. Where has he been on these issues?

I will continue to work with the non-profit sector, faith-based organizations, the private sector and govern-

ment agencies to deal with food insecurity, homelessness and poverty problems. For decades the progressive community has been at the forefront on these issues. I recognize the contributions you've made and will expect City Hall to work closely with grassroots and community leaders across the political spectrum to develop solutions to these long-standing issues.

The bottom line is this: I know we may not agree on every issue. There will be some healthy differences of opinion in the future, but you have my commitment that representatives from throughout our diverse community will have a seat at the table in my administration. Also, as you've read here, I believe that my positions on several important issues stack up well against my opponent.

This race is about a broad range of issues. I hope you will visit my website (www.ashley4mayor.com) and check out my stance in other areas that may be important to you. On the site you will see links to position papers on public safety, economic development and a link to my supporters to give you an idea of the diverse individuals now on board our campaign. I hope you will join us. Please feel free to write me anytime (Ashley@ashley4mayor.com) or call me directly at 559-892-1824.



Ashley Swarengin is a candidate for mayor in the City of Fresno. The election will take place on Tuesday, November 4.

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Fresno Needle Exchange Saves Lives

By Dallas Blanchard

It's been a while since a story about the Fresno Needle Exchange Program (NEP) has been reported here. There's a lot going on around the issue of needle exchange currently. But first here's a little background on the program.

The Fresno Needle Exchange program has been in operation since September of 1994. As the name implies, we exchange new syringes for used ones with injection drug users. We do this as a public health service to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C. The program began as a home delivery service. As our client base expanded, a weekly street site became the avenue through which we reach our clientele. With two core volunteers and three on-call volunteers, our program is a part of a wider effort to provide services for Fresno County's injection drug users.

Our weekly street site serves alongside several other organizations. Beginning at one o'clock each Saturday, Dr. Marc Lasher of the Fresno Free Medical Clinic provides free medical treatment including overdose prevention (Naloxone), wound care, and other basic services. An employee of the local chapter of WestCare provides alcohol wipes, cottons, cookers, condoms, and referrals to their rehabilitation programs. The Fresno County Health Department comes out to our site once a month to provide HIV and hepatitis C testing. We have volunteers present with literature about wound care, vein maintenance, and safer drug use practices. Each of the service providers also offers clients referrals into drug treatment programs. In addition to exchanging needles, we have begun providing take home biohazard sharps containers. On average, the Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) sees 150-200 clients each week and exchanges about 6000 syringes. This number is consistently growing.

Fresno has the highest rates of injection drug use in the nation. Studies have found that we have 173 injection drug users for every 10,000 people, compared to a na-

tional average of 60 per 10,000 (Friedman, et al). In our last fiscal year the Fresno NEP exchanged 290,000 syringes. That's 290,000 fewer dirty needles on the streets of Fresno. Unfortunately the Fresno NEP is growing beyond its current funding sources. This year we will easily surpass 300,000 syringes exchanged. We are doing this with a budget of \$34,000 and a staff of all volunteers. We would like to expand and improve our services.

To do this we've begun aggressively searching out additional grant opportunities. We recently received a small grant from the Tides Foundation. We've also been attending workshops and trainings on program evaluation, grant writing and capacity building. One thing

state and local jurisdictions for syringe exchange. Follow this link for a sample letter to send and for more information:

http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizations/HRC/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=25278

On June 28, 2007, Jim Costa voted to end a ban on needle exchange funding for Washington, D.C. But since May of this year he has refused to cosponsor a similar bill to lift the federal ban. George Radanovich and Devin Nunes have consistently voted to continue the funding ban.

All three of the Fresno area congress members can be reached through this web link;

www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizations/HRC/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=25278

Or you may contact them directly at:

Jim Costa's website and e-mail link is:

www.costa.house.gov/

His mailing address is:

Congress Member Jim Costa
1314 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3341

George Radanovich's website and e-mail link is:

www.radanovich.house.gov/

His mailing address is:

Congress Member George Radanovich
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-4540

Devin Nunes' website and e-mail link is:

<http://nunes.house.gov/>

His mailing address is:

Congress member Devin Nunes
1013 Longworth HOB



Providing a safe way to dispose of dirty needles helps to reduce AIDS and hepatitis, making Fresno a healthier community.

we could use now, though, would be more volunteers. So, if you're interested in helping out please contact us.

Another way people could help out would be to write their Congress member in support of syringe exchange. For the past 20 years there has been a ban on using federal money for needle exchange. For the first time in 20 years there is legislation before Congress to lift this ban. The legislation is HR 6680, The Community AIDS and Hepatitis Prevention (CAHP) Act of 2008, introduced by Representative Jose Serrano on July 30, with 25 original cosponsors. This bill would eliminate all laws that prevent federal funding from being used by

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Dallas Blanchard has been a volunteer with the Fresno Needle Exchange Program for the last 13 years. He's also been an activist for social justice in Fresno for over 25 years. To contact Dallas and/or the Fresno NEP, e-mail fresnofnb@yahoo.com or call 412-6226.

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Power Hungry

by Vic Bedoian

There was an atmosphere of excitement and neighborly camaraderie laced with subtle anxiety at the Bear Valley branch of the county library on a warm July evening in the foothill community of Squaw Valley. In front of the building there were tables displaying a variety of handouts on colorful paper. The tables were surrounded by a knot of people, some clad in "Save the Foothills" T-Shirts and others consuming information or chatting about the topic at hand. That topic, a sore one for many of these foothill residents, is the statewide plan to bring "Green" electrical power to the Central Valley from Southern California. The sore point is that the transmission line of high voltage towers bringing this electric power could slice right through the rural homesteads of many Sierra foothill residents, bringing with it a swath of ecological damage, financial loss and potential health impacts. After people had finally settled down in the crowded meeting room, a Pacific Gas & Electric representative called the meeting to order.

The project is called the Central California Clean Energy Transmission Line Project, known by its very 21st Century acronym C3ETP, its origins far from this rural community on Highway 180. The stated purpose according to PG&E is to "better transport clean, renewable energy and enhance reliability of the transmission system" to our region. The plan is to bring power generated by wind, solar and geothermal projects in the Tehachapi Mountains and the Mojave Desert to the Central Valley. The entire enterprise is being managed by the California Independent System Operator, and implemented by the California Public Utilities Commission. They hope the project will be operational by the year 2013.

Why do we need more power? The usual answer is population growth. Planning officials at all levels of government in the Golden State, along with private sector planners and real estate developers, seem to have a consensus that the population in the Central Valley will double by 2040. Accordingly, they make all their decisions conform to that projection; building roads, building houses, shopping centers, schools...and power grids. Planning ahead is, indeed, wise policy and good practice. But are these projections correct? Is there any way to really know? In a sense, these are moot questions, since plans are already being made based on those numbers. Plans made at that pay-grade usually take on a life of their own.

The other power demand cited by PG&E is the State mandate that providers obtain 20 percent of their energy from renewable sources by 2010, and the power companies are under a lot of pressure to comply. That is the major incentive behind C3ETP. Having dragged their collective feet in meeting our 21st Century energy needs, the State's utilities are now far behind the curve in developing and distributing renewable energy sources. This is all the more exacerbated by skyrocketing oil prices, and the fact that most of California's energy is still made by burning natural gas. So PG&E, as well as all the other providers, are now scrambling to the right thing. In the case of C3ETP the question is - are they doing it the right way.

About a year ago, foothill people began receiving letters from PG&E notifying them of the C3ETP proposal. Power lines are already a rural reality, but these were something else again. Picture a column of towers 200 feet high and almost as wide, with as many as five hundred of them marching through Sierra oak and grassland, range land and canyon for over one hundred miles. Imagine the convergence of those power lines into a 40 acre substation bristling with humming transformers and buzzing equipment, all carved out of a pastoral mountain landscape. Foothill dwellers were understandably upset and worried. The towers and lines would have an immense impact on this land, most of which is wild or only lightly lived upon open space. They would ruin peoples' cherished views and privacy. Property could be condemned through eminent domain or devalued. And what about harmful effects from Electro-Magnetic Field (EMF) radiation? The pervasive feeling of inevitability, a vagueness of detail, and lack of candor seemed to accompany the interactions that many residents had when they followed up with PG&E after those fateful notices.

Such was the atmosphere on that sultry July night. It was straightforward enough. A team of representatives from PG&E gave a Powerpoint overview of the project, briefly answering some questions along the way, and followed by taking twenty minutes of questions from the floor. Most people were already quite well informed, asking pointed questions about the reasons for the project, the process, how it would effect them and their neighbors, and repeatedly about the health impacts of EMF radiation. PG&E tried to assuage concerns about EMF by citing tests that showed no measurable negative impacts from the high power lines. People were not measurably convinced.

While the jury is still out concerning the health effects of high voltage lines, there is increasing concern by government and health agencies about possible links to cancer. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently concluded a review of the potential health implications of extremely low frequency EMF. Their conclusions and recommendations were presented in June 2007. The WHO report con-

cluded that evidence for a link between Extremely Low Frequency magnetic fields and childhood leukemia "is not strong enough to be considered causal but sufficiently strong to remain a concern." While not establishing a causal link, the WHO has rated EMF as a class 2B possible carcinogen and some foreign countries have gone so far as to consider EMF as a probable carcinogen. Sweden, Britain and Switzerland all have policies regulating Electro-Magnetic Radiation as a hazardous substance. Meanwhile scientists around the world are stepping up research on EMF as a health risk, while closer to home the California Department of Health Services scientists believe that EMF can cause some degree of increased risk for childhood leukemia, adult brain cancer and other serious diseases. The conundrum is this; scientists have not proven that EMF is harmful, but they also have not concluded that it is safe.

Foothill folks are not just fretting about getting zapped or having their landscape industrialized. Many of them are wondering why this project is being built through their back yards in the first place. Here is the scheme. The energy produced in Southern California will flow to a substation in Kern County. From there it can follow either of two possible routes identified by PG&E. One route follows the I-5 corridor along the West Hills and then heads North to an existing substation in Madera County, extending finally to one of three possible locations in the foothills Northeast of Fresno. The other possible route would go East from a substation near Bakersfield then North through the Sierra foothills of Kern, Tulare and Fresno Counties through the Yokohol Valley, then Squaw Valley, continuing through scenic Watts Valley and down to a new substation on one of the three proposed foothill sites. There is another wrinkle. As part of the project, PG&E and Southern California Edison want to use the green power from the South to augment the operation and output of the Helms hydroelectric power plant at Wishon Lake in the mountains east of Fresno. This seems to be the major reason to build a new substation in the foothills. Helms is owned by SCE and they sell the electricity generated there to customers in the Southland.

Ever since the project notices were received, an active group has formed to fight the foothill transmission route. Calling themselves the Save The Foothills Coalition, these local residents have been educating themselves and the public about the negative impacts C3ETP could have on their lives. People who live this rural life have a close bond with the natural landscape that nurtures and sustains them, and are quick to act when their neighborhood is at risk. It's not a done deal. The C3ET Project is still in the early stages. Over the next year PG&E is doing studies on engineering, biological, cultural resources and environmental dimensions of the project, after which the California Public Utilities Commission will conduct public hearings with a decision projected for the Spring of 2011.



Watts Valley E2 Substation Alternate Location. Photo from <http://www.savethefoothills.org/>

C3ETP

Central California's Clean Energy Transmission Project



Help keep our Foothills free from the energy corridor now being proposed by PG&E and Southern California Edison. KEEP the 40 acre substation and the 200 Foot towers out of the Foothills!

For more information, visit www.SaveTheFoothills.org



Progressive Religion ... Is Not An Oxymoron

By David E. Roy



Last month, I outlined the "pastor problem" for Barack Obama (Rev. Jeremiah Wright) and this month, as promised, I will pursue the same for John McCain (Rev. John Hagee).

McCain's Revelation

For a time, John McCain claimed that his endorsement by Rev. John Hagee was something he was glad to have. However, after some media scrutiny that lifted out Hagee's inflammatory statements about Catholicism and his highly questionable biblical interpretations that require a nuclear first strike on Iran, McCain decided to disavow the pastor and his rapt devotion to a gruesome end-times scenario.

Another of the comments made by Hagee that caught the media's attention was the grotesque idea that the Jewish Holocaust was the will of God. The reason that Hagee and others would entertain and promote this notion is that it led directly to the establishment of the modern state of Israel. This in turn is one of the necessary steps for the fulfillment of the storyline they have constructed from their selective reading of the Book of Revelation in the Christian New Testament as well as the Book of Daniel in the Jewish bible and a few other texts scattered about in the New Testament.

For McCain to court and accept an endorsement from a religious figure such as John Hagee suggests how out of touch his campaign must be with most Christians. The views that Hagee promotes are widely denounced across the board by the vast majority of evangelical Christians as well as progressives, main-line protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians.

The Big Problem: Hagee's Political Influence

The problem with Hagee and others who adhere to this unique set of beliefs is that they have a receptive audience with some of our current conservative political leaders as well as some of the conservative political leaders in Israel. As such, they have influence and are attempting to drive events in the direction they believe will result in the promised return of Jesus.

Bill Moyers, on his PBS show *Bill Moyers Journal*, has devoted at least two extensive reports that reveal the

extent of Hagee's influence on the political front through his Christians United for Israel (CUFI).

(These reports aired on 10/5/07 and 3/7/08. For transcripts of these shows, see <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/10052007/transcript5.html> and <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/03072008/transcript4.html>. See also, http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/blog/2008/02/update_cufi.html.)

While Hagee boasts that there are 50 million members in CUFI, Dr. Timothy Weber, an evangelical critic of the end-times theology, estimates the number of dedicated end-times believers to be closer to 20 million. Though less than half of Hagee's claim, that is still a huge number.

According to Weber, their influence is further amplified because other evangelicals who may not be familiar with the details of these end-times scenarios tend to defer to the die-hard believers as the experts on the topic. In addition, there is an even larger secular audience that tends to be drawn into the end-times' stories when the world is in crisis.

The members of CUFI are not quiet, reserved people. They are politically active where it counts. Moyers has clips of them in Washington, D.C., corraling and pointedly reminding several highly conservative members of congress that no mercy will be shown to anyone who would stand in the way of complete restoration of a "biblical" Israel. In this view, the Palestinians are part of the problem to be overcome. Also in this view, the idea that the Muslims have a sacred claim to the same territory is not even considered.

As a result, that region becomes the focus of at least three absolutist positions: The Christian Right, the Jewish Right and the Islamic Right. Clearly, three rights can make a very huge wrong for the rest of the world. As Weber said, "Religion enflames politics and politics enflames religion." (*Moyers Journal*, 10/5/07).

Hagee and the Bible: The Unbiblical Rapture

The theological problem with the end-times tale is that it is not genuinely biblical. It is a story-line that has been imposed upon the biblical tradition, a story-line that runs contrary to the intent of the supposed biblical source for this scenario. Probably the best book for detailing how unbiblical the end-times chronicle is can be found in Dr. Barbara Rossing's recently published, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (Basic Books, 2004). Rossing is a professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She spoke in February at Fresno's Interfaith Scholar Weekend. For Rossing, the Book of Revelation, which is used extensively by the end-times adherents to predict a gory end for non-believers, is actually a book that supports the traditional Christian view of

hope and love for the lives of people here on earth.

The point of connection between the end-times adherents (also called the dispensationalists¹) and the Book of Revelation is that both are rooted in a genuine and deep human yearning that rises up among oppressed people for liberation, redemption and, most powerfully, for a great and glorious end to the pain and dramatic reversal of the misfortune.

But the Book of Revelation comes at the story in virtually the opposite way from the end-times adherents. Instead of speaking to the oppressed with a voice of hope for the future in the manner of Revelation (including the establishment of God's peaceful and loving reign on earth), the dispensationalists envision a future where the faithful few slaughter the Anti-Christ along with a great many non-believers, sending them to a fiery eternity, then abandoning earth to utter destruction while setting up shop on a whole new planet.

The End-Times Story-Line: A Summary

To better understand how divergent the prevalent end-times story is from the biblical material, from the mainstream Christian tradition that has developed over the past 2000 years and from common sense, it will be helpful to expand a bit on the story line:

Jesus is not to return the one final time of tradition, but twice. The first time, he will come in secret and rapture up to heaven those few true Christians whose beliefs and purity make them worthy of jumping to the head of the line. Those who are raptured up simply disappear from earth. If they happen to be piloting a plane or driving a bus, it is tough luck for the passengers. There are no notes, no explanation, nothing. They are just gone.

After the Rapture is concluded, then those who are "left behind" will face seven years of unbelievable tribulations. The tribulations cannot be avoided, but they can function to "scare straight" the remaining people and motivate them to become righteous Christians, accepting Jesus as their savior, lord and master. If they do, then when Jesus returns for the second and final time, they, too, eventually will be rewarded with everlasting life in heaven. If not, then it is never-ending fire and brimstone.

When Jesus returns the second time, Armageddon will commence. Victory for Jesus and his troops over the Anti-Christ and his troops is a forgone conclusion, but the battle must be fought anyway. The victory gives way to a millennium of Jesus' reign on earth and concludes with the days of his Final Judgment. At this point, the faithful believers will be magically transported to a whole new planet while Earth and all the rest of its life forms are simply destroyed.

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Conflict in the Middle East is Essential

An important key to all of this involves how the whole scenario is supposed to begin. According to these believers, it will start with cataclysmic trouble in the Middle East, trouble that is centered on Israel. In fact, the whole scenario has been on hold for a few millennia, waiting for the rebirth of the State of Israel as well as other signal events such as the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the resumption of animal sacrifices.

Now that Israel exists, Hagee and some others are actually demanding that the US conduct a pre-emptive nuclear strike on Iran in order to fulfill the end-times scenario. It is hard to square the call to annihilate millions of people with Jesus' biblical call to love your enemy and with the understanding that Jesus has traditionally been called the Prince of Peace. It is at this point that the end-times movement crosses the line from interesting heresy to something much more dangerous.

One Underlying Motivation: The Spirit of Adventure

What are some of the motivations that would propel people to champion these ideas? Two stand out. One, that seems healthy, is the spirit of rugged adventure, the pioneer spirit. This spirit dwells in many human beings and probably has biological roots. For thousands of years, it would have been important that at least some members of a tribe or clan wanted to explore the unknown beyond the edges of the known. While risky, it also would open the door to new sources of food and other resources.

This desire to explore the new, this passion to go into the wilderness also may be similar to what Carl Jung called an archetype, a psychic form that is powerfully alluring on both a conscious and unconscious level.

This theme is apparent in the Rapture-Left Behind culture. "We get to go out and start a whole new world from scratch and, this time, we will do it right! What an adventure this will be!" It is less dramatic and less exciting to work to make the existing world better. That requires the maturity to enjoy progress in subtle, small steps instead of seeking the explosively dramatic moment of cataclysmic change.

A Second Underlying Motivation: Grandiose Narcissism

Another appeal to the Rapture-Left Behind movement is quite dark. This is the appeal to the narcissistic core that exists in all human beings. Most people struggle to grow past needing to be the most important person in our world by making others, in our mind at least, less important.

Unfortunately, the Left-Behind-Rapture movement seems designed to subvert this growth by its intense appeal to specialness. That is, an enormous amount of the charm in this movement is being more special than most others. What could be more special than believing one knows the truth about this life or death struggle that is going to be imposed upon the world by the Supreme Being, of being able to decode this mystery locked away for millennia and of being one of the few chosen ones who will be raptured up by Jesus to Heaven?

This motivation fuels drama. Moreover, it has the effect of making everyone caught up in it, from leaders to followers, feel they are incredibly important. This is a powerful addiction that is very difficult to overcome, the addiction to power and grandiose glory.

The Source of the Rapture: A Scottish Teenager & a Preacher

So, if virtually none of what the Rapture-Left Behind movement believes is true, how did these distortions come to be imported into our Christian tradition and what is the real intent of the Book of Revelation? Rossing's book covers this in detail. According to her research, the idea of Jesus coming back twice originated with a 15-year-old Scottish young lady named Margaret MacDonald who, in 1830, had a vision during a healing service. Her story was taken up by John Nelson Darby, a British evangelical preacher who proceeded to spread this story in Great Britain and in the United States.

Over the past 175 years, many authors and preachers have built upon Darby's ideas and created an elaborate scheme that involves, among other things, the belief that God had intended this end to happen millennia ago, but when Jesus was crucified and was not recognized by the Jews as the Messiah, as well as when the

temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD and Israel was taken over by the Roman Empire, God supposedly hit the pause button in this sequence of events.

For the drama to resume, Israel and the temple in Jerusalem need to be restored, among a number of other events. Since Israel was established last century, many of the end-times adherents believe that things are on the verge of starting up again.

A Theological Tragedy and a Real World Danger

The theological tragedy is that the traditional Christian message of God's unconditional love is completely lost. The emphasis instead is on conflict and war. This in turn only helps to increase the real world danger of a nuclear war because there are end-times advocates in the US and on the ground in the Middle East who are working for more war, not for more peace.

While political leaders need to be supported by a patchwork of groups with sometimes highly divergent views and demands, it seems unnecessarily dangerous to seek the endorsement of people like Hagee who clearly are thirsty for dramatic conflict on a global scale in a time when it is increasingly obvious to a great many people that war for any cause, no matter how "righteous," will inevitably be a Pyrrhic victory for the entire planet.

¹ They are called dispensationalists because they believe that God has divided time into seven intervals or ages. Each age is managed (dispensed) by God in different ways. The last one, according to them, is the end-times that includes the Rapture, Armageddon and the Final Judgment. For Hagee, LaHaye, Jenkins and others, that time is now.

Ordained in the United Church of Christ, David Roy is a pastoral counselor and a California licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who directs the Center for Creative Transformation. He has a Ph.D. in theology and personality from the Claremont (California) School of Theology. Send comments to him at admin@cctnet.com or 5475 N. Fresno St., Ste. 109, Fresno, CA 93711.

Book Review

By Pam Whalen

Creatures of the World Unite!!!!

Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World

By Paul Hawken
Penguin Books

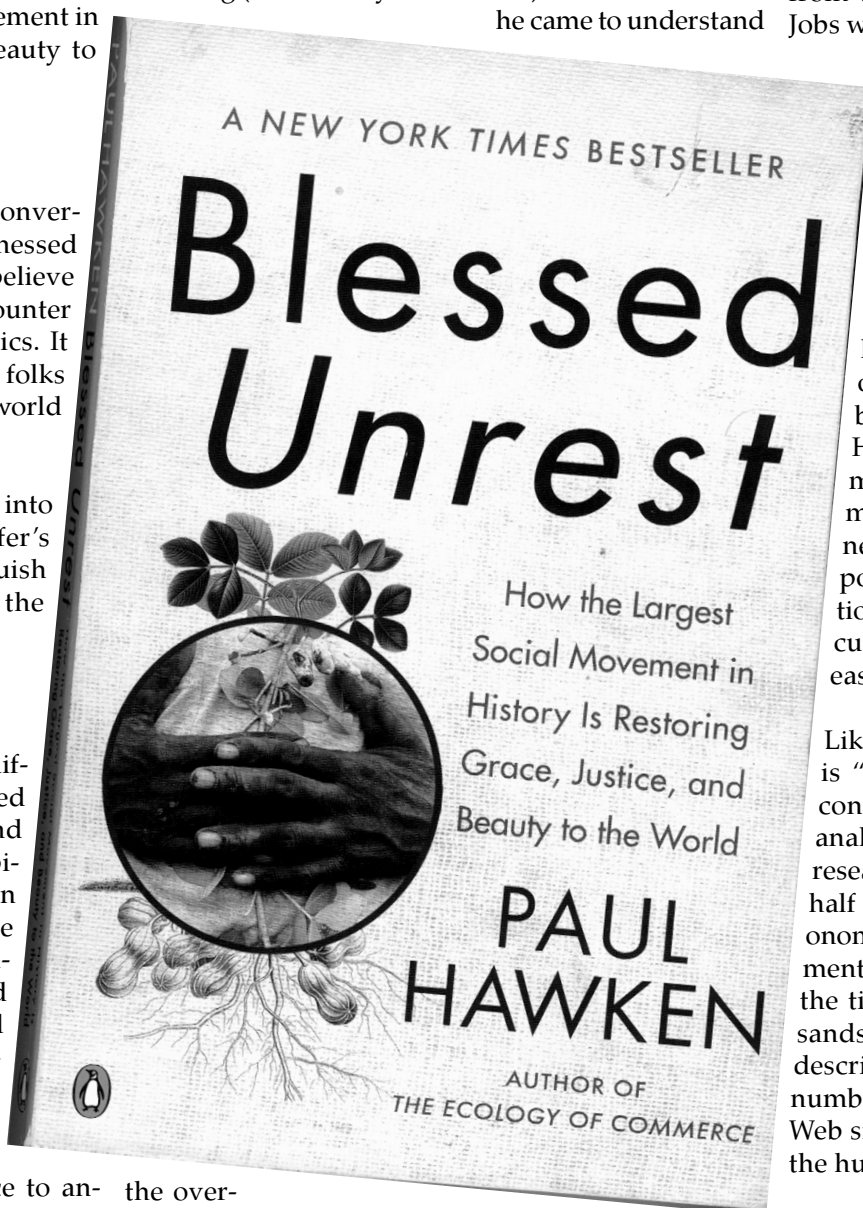
At least a couple of times a week I have this conversation. It goes like this. The world is really messed up, people are stupid and greedy and they believe everything they hear on Fox News. I try to counter this with good news, anecdotes, and statistics. It usually doesn't work all that well. Lots of folks cling to the "no se puede" doom and gloom world view.

For over a hundred years people could tap into the upbeat tale of workers riding the surfer's dream of a wave of history that would vanquish ugly greed-head capitalism and establish the workers' paradise.

That hasn't been a big box office hit lately.

And now, along comes Paul Hawken with a different but equally upbeat story to tell. Based more on Darwin than Marx, he describes and analyses a global response to unfettered capitalism that he likens to the immune system in a living organism. He traces the history of the dawning of ecological awareness and the concept of principled resistance to immoral and destructive policies through Thoreau, Rachel Carlson, John Muir, and Gandhi. The overwhelming theme of the book is encapsulated in Thoreau's epiphany "we are nature". Hawken describes the current struggles' several sub-currents—indigenous resistance to annihilation, the anti-globalization movement, the environmental and the social justice movements. His most interesting insight is that social justice is environmentalism for the human species.

But his big message is one of hope. While decidedly not a Marxist (there is some ideological sniping peppered through the book.) he sees the resistance to capitalism as broad, deep, and organically self generating (dare we say dialectical?). He describes how he came to understand



the overlooked and largely invisible phenomenon while he was conducting speaking tours, (he was mobbed and business carded even in the smallest and most remote communities) and began to re-

search grassroots environmental and social justice groups. He found tens of thousands of groups across the globe, just for starters. Their victories are legion and legendary. Think Steven Biko and Chico Mendez, but also Amazonian Indians marching in Sao Paulo—from the Hudson River Fisherman's Association to Jobs with Justice and United Students Against Sweatshops.

As to why all this is happening, he looks to biology for analogies, metaphors and even explanations. He places his faith in life's commitment to life, but only because he sees it everywhere he looks. Hawken's big concept is that of immunity—Lovelock's idea of Gaia and many philosopher's from Spinoza to Gandhi have observed the tendency "of the great mass of human minds around the earth to seem to behave like a coherent living system" (Thomas). Hawken compares the functioning of the human immune system to the anti-globalization movement in aspects like its diversity and connectivity. He likens globalization with its "exponential assault on resources and the production of waste, coupled with the expiration of the cultures and exploitation of the workers, is a disease as surely as hepatitis or cancer"

Like an immune system the movement's purpose is "to identify what is not life affirming and to contain, neutralize and eliminate it". From this analyses and Hawken's extensive experience and research comes a strong message of hope. Almost half of the book consists of an appendix of a taxonomy of grassroots organizations that he has documented on his data base, which he confesses is just the tip of the iceberg. Still he found tens of thousands. He doesn't even try to list them; rather he describes the categories and gives a number for the number of groups in each category. A check on the Web site for the Fresno area found only a handful of the hundreds of groups in Fresno.

In conclusion, if you care about there being a future, you will enjoy this book for its fresh insights and its soundly optimistic outlook. No whining, no gloom and doom. Lots of thought, information and hope.

Fresno Center for Nonviolence

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SEPTEMBER IS LOADED, BUT WE'RE NOT!

by Richard Gomez.

Here at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence we realized that watching the Demo/Republican convention could only rot your mind. So, look at what we have gotten ourselves into for the month of September. Well, we had to find some way to keep our sanity. So please join us in keeping our minds screwed on right.

Stir it Up Sept 10th
KFCF 88.1 FM

Dan Yaseen will interview historian, political analyst Tariq Ali on Pakistan.

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WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, PO Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

All content paid for by WILPF

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

Fresno WILPF held its annual Retreat, originally scheduled for Aug. 16, on Saturday, Aug. 30 at the home of its in-coming Chairperson, Dr. Elizabeth Swearingen. Other officers for the coming year are Dr. Janet Slagter and Dr. Jean Kennedy, Associate-Chairs; Dr. Nora DeWitt, Membership; Dr. Meta Schettler, Treasurer; Members at Large, Ellie Bluestein, Jean Hays, and Ingrid Carmean. The secretary is TBA. Committees will be headed by Earlene Fiori, Legislative; Jean Hays, Water; Dr. Jean Kennedy, Building Beloved Community; Marilyn Byrne, Publicity; Polly Victor, Correspondence, Joan Poss, Intern Supervisor, An exciting new addition for the coming year will be the formation of a Middle East Study Group. For details, contact Dr. Elizabeth Swearingen in the Women's Studies Dept. at CSUF.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Each year residents of Fresno are warned, door-to-door, about the alleged dangers of an insect called the glassy-winged sharpshooter, whose eating habits include grape leaves and also those of certain other fruit trees. If one is found on residential properties, a truck from the Fresno County Agriculture Dept. is ready to come and spray with chemicals unless the homeowner says "no". WILPFer Joan Poss noticed four County trucks in her neighborhood, ready to spray. After alerting the neighbors that they could "just say, no", they did just that and the trucks left the area. Can one person make a difference? You bet!

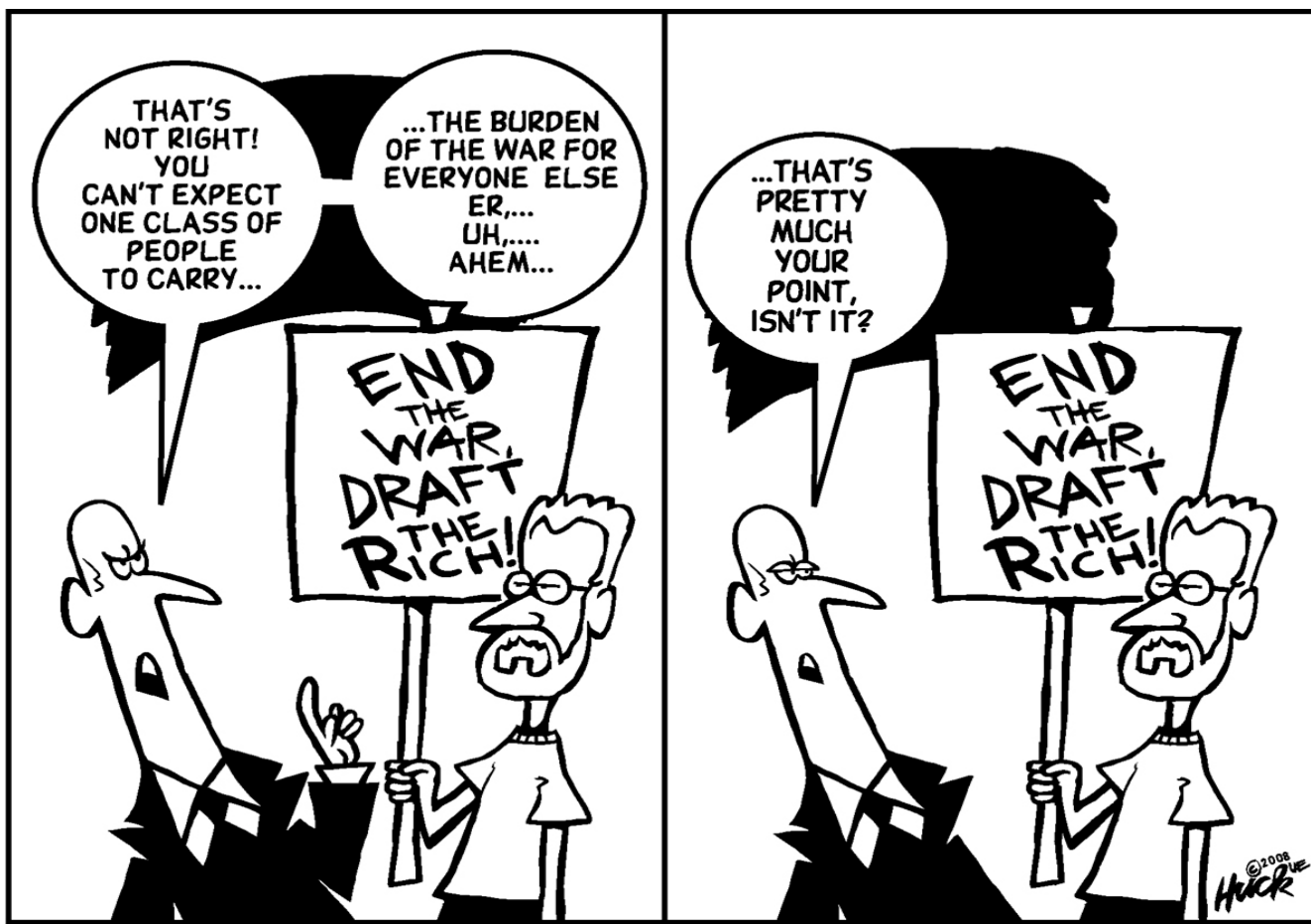


WATER NEWS

October is WILPF's Blue October month, concentrating on all manner of issues having to do with water. Water is a human right. The access to clean, affordable drinking water is a human right. Bottled water makes money for large corporations, often at the expense of the communities out of which the spring water is taken. Ever thought about the real cost of a bottle of water, both monetarily and environmentally?

The pumped-up price of water
Filters by the numbers
Pittsburgh Press Pittsburgh Pa:
Priced per gallon, it's way higher than gasoline
Sunday, May 07, 2006
By Mackenzie Carpenter, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

If you think you're getting gouged at the gas pump, wait until you reach into your refrigerator for a bottle of water. That 9-ounce bottle of Evian spring water at \$1.49? That'll cost you about \$21 a gallon, thank you very much. That 16-ounce Dasani or Aquafina — filtered tap water brought to you by Coke or Pepsi, respectively — that will be \$1.50 at your nearest vending machine. Of course, lots of things cost more than gasoline these days. Diet Snapple goes for \$10.32 per gallon. Heck, Pepto-Bismol is \$123.20 a gallon.



Poetry Corner

By Richard Stone

Linda Corrales was a participant in the "Adventure Dialogue Project" organized by the Center for Non-violence a couple of years ago. She asked to be paired with an older person, and her partner was Valta Pointer. Valta, of course, gave her a large dose of opinions along with a bigger serving of affection. They became good friends.

Linda was unable to attend the memorial service we had for Valta at the Center earlier this year. But the other day she came in with the following poem.

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

In loving memory of Valta Pointer

They say that pennies come from heaven.
When you find a penny on the floor,
It has been put there for you by a dead loved one.
The beloved put it in your path
To let you know
You are being thought of.
I found four today,
I did not see them when I exited my car,
But when I returned, there they were
Lined up horizontally right in front of the car door.
Just yesterday I thought of my
Dear friend Valta,
And I said to myself, "Well now she is in heaven."
So up there I have my beloved grandma
My dad and maybe my mom
And now Valta.
And today, four shiny coppers
Right by my door.
"Yup," I said, "they are up there
Thinking of me."

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Cuba Caravan Slays the US Customs Dragon Once Again

by Gerry Bill



Here is what happened with the 32 detained computers eleven days later. US Customs returned our computers to us when we re-entered the country on July 14th. Lucius Walker (front of the line) and other volunteers from the caravan picked up the returned computers and walked them across the bridge to our supporters in Mexico, who had agreed to send them on to Cuba for us. The people carrying the computers were risking arrest, but no one was arrested. (photo by Janine Bandcroft)

"If there is a law against loving your neighbor, I want to break it" (Pastors for Peace slogan).

Is it legal or illegal for US citizens to take humanitarian aid to our neighbors in Cuba? That is the question Pastors for Peace puts to our government every year as it openly, some would say blatantly, defies the nearly fifty-year old blockade of Cuba.

In accordance with the best principles of civil disobedience, Pastors for Peace makes no secret of its intention to break through the virtual wall that the US has tried to construct around the island nation. Pastors considers the blockade to be both illegal under international law and immoral under the law of common human decency.

This summer was my second time to experience a Pastors for Peace caravan to Cuba. Once again it was made abundantly clear to me that I would be breaking the law, and that I would be participating in collective civil disobedience. I don't break many laws, but this is just the sort of law I want to break.

Every year Pastors for Peace successfully challenges the blockade, and in the process they expose the hypocrisy, futility, and outright silliness of the whole thing. This year was no exception.

To get to Cuba we go through Mexico. US exit customs knows we are coming—the date of the crossing, after all, is listed on the caravan website months in advance. The customs agents even have the cell phone numbers of the Pastors for Peace leadership, and they check in frequently in the days before the crossing to see how things are going. Pastors does not in any way try to hide what it is doing from the officials.

When we arrive at the border we have "Cuba" plastered all over our trucks and buses in very large letters. We want them to see us coming.

They are waiting for us, and they have special equipment and extra customs officers on hand to deal with the situation. This year the routine was the same as last year. They diverted us into a customs yard, x-rayed all of our vehicles with a portable machine mounted on a truck, and then went through the vehicles looking for contraband.

Sometimes it is a little hard to figure out just what constitutes contraband. After all, our government says we can't take anything to Cuba, so maybe all 100 tons of the aid could be considered contraband.

One year, oddly enough, the designation contraband was applied to several boxes of breast pumps. Go figure. Do breast pumps have some secret military use about which we have been told nothing? If anyone out there knows the answer to that one, please let me know.

This year the focus seemed to be on computers. The computers were destined for hospitals and medical clinics in Cuba, but that makes no difference to customs officials. We had about 130 computers scattered amongst

the twelve vehicles in the caravan. The customs agents spotted these on the x-rays and confiscated 32 of them.

Why they stopped at 32 is anybody's guess. Maybe they just got tired of searching. We refused to unload the aid for them, so they had to do all the hard physical labor themselves. It was starting to get pretty hot, so maybe they just decided enough was enough. This is a little dance we do with the customs people every year.

Meanwhile, there was something else going on at an entirely different level. People in 125 other cities across the country were busily calling the media and their members of Congress to protest the computer confiscation. My thanks go out to all of you in the Fresno area who participated in that effort. We call it the emergency response network, and it is very effective. Members of Congress, or their staff people, contact the Department of Commerce to find out what this is all about, and pretty soon the Commerce Department is on the phone to the customs people at the McAllen/Reynosa border crossing. The media start making inquiries as well. All of this

lets the customs officials know that Washington and the media are watching them. In that situation the customs officials usually back off, because otherwise it will turn into a public relations battle that US Customs cannot win.

For whatever reason, after several hours in the customs yard the officials let us go across the border with all the rest of our aid sans the 32 computers.

End of story, you might think. Wrong.

The drivers did take the vehicles on into Mexico, but some of the caravanistas decided the confiscation of the computers was an outrage. They stayed behind in the customs yard and organized a spontaneous demonstration right there at the border crossing, blocking some of the lanes of traffic. The customs officials noticed, but did nothing.

The demonstration lasted about 20 minutes, after which the protesting caravanistas went across the border also.

But even that does not end the saga of the 32 computers.

Fast forward about two weeks as the caravan is crossing the border back into the US. We call this the reverse challenge. Once again, we do a little dance with the US officials.

This year the dance had a new twist, and it involved the 32 computers. Thanks to the emergency response network (and all of you) a lot of pressure had been generated in Washington D.C. The word came down from

somewhere to let the 32 computers go. So after we had cleared immigration with our passports and cleared US entry customs with our personal luggage, the officials returned the computers to us.

According to the customs officials the computers were not really confiscated; they were just "detained."

The computers were returned to us on US soil, and that was where customs thought they should stay. But Lucius Walker, the head of Pastors for Peace, had other ideas. He had received word in advance that the computers would likely be returned to us. He got several of us to volunteer for special duty that he warned could lead to us being arrested. What we were to do was take the 32 computers, one at a time, into our arms, and then walk them right across the bridge to Mexico. This was to be done in full view of the customs officials.

The strategy worked quite well. The customs officials, who really did not want a confrontation, conveniently looked the other way as we walked across the bridge under their noses. No one was arrested. Waiting on the Mexican side of the bridge were some of our supporters in Reynosa. They took over from there and sent the computers on their way to Cuba. The Mexicans, of course, are not breaking any Mexican law when they take things like that to Cuba.

So what did US Customs accomplish by all of their antics? They delayed by about two weeks the delivery of a handful of computers to Cuba. This is how it turns out every year. This was the 19th Pastors for Peace caravan to Cuba, and Pastors has always gotten its aid through, one way or another. The best US Customs has ever been able to do is create some delays.

What did Pastors for Peace accomplish? They delivered 100 tons of aid to Cuba, including the 32 "detained" computers. They got the attention of the media and of some officials in Washington. They made the blockade

look silly, anachronistic, and unenforceable. They educated people in 125 cities across the US and Canada about Cuba, about the Cuban Five, and about the folly of the blockade. And everyone on the caravan had a blast doing it.

Next year will be the 20th Cuba caravan organized by Pastors for Peace. It will also be the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Coincidentally, it is also the 40th anniversary of the Venceremos Brigade, which coordinates certain

activities with Pastors for Peace. Therefore, next year is being dubbed 20/40/50, and an extra effort will be made to double the size of the caravan.

These caravans are not for everyone. You have to be willing to engage in some civil disobedience. But if that doesn't scare you off, I highly recommend the caravan experience. The dates for the 2009 caravan have not been set, but it will be in the summer, probably in July, perhaps involving the tail end of June. The cost this year was \$1600, and that covered virtually everything.

If you are interested, please contact me: gerry.bill@gmail.com.

Part II of my report back will be in next month's Alliance and will be about what I learned in Cuba.

Gerry Bill will have a report back event dealing with his Cuba trip on Monday, September 15. There will be a potluck meal at 6 p.m. followed by a program at 7 p.m. The event will be held at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave.



Gerry Bill filled his carry-on luggage with about \$3,000 worth of medicine for the flight from Tampico to Havana. The medicines had to be kept at or near room temperature, so they could not go in the cargo hold, nor could they be sent by sea. Leni Reeves of Meadow Lakes donated the medicine to the caravan the day it passed through Fresno. The photo was taken in the Tampico airport on July 5th just prior to departure. (photo by Janine Bandcroft)

Credo

By Richard Stone

Jim Grant is probably best known to our readers as the host and producer of TV programming for KNXT (ch. 49), the station of the Diocese of Fresno. Jim has created thoughtful shows on many of the issues the Alliance covers, and he has invited many of our contributors and allies to have a place on his interview programs. He has filmed many events held in our community for airing on KNXT. He has also been an advocate for the station's experiment in broadcasting *Democracy Now!* nightly at 6 p.m.

So I thought it was time to bring this behind-the-scenes guy into the spotlight, and Jim kindly consented to being the interviewee for a change.

For this "Credo" series, featuring senior members of our community, the aim is to inquire about the guiding ideas that underlie a life of activism and to look at the formative process of these ideas. For Jim, the basis of belief since childhood has been the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. But even a glance at the body of his work makes it clear that Jim is not a man of easy adherence to fixed dogma. The enigma here is Jim's apparent ease in living and working in a hierarchical environment while maintaining an open, inquisitive mind. He offers an explanation: "My motto is Micah 68: 'Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.' But even as a young man I understood that how to put this directive into practice was subject to differing interpretations.

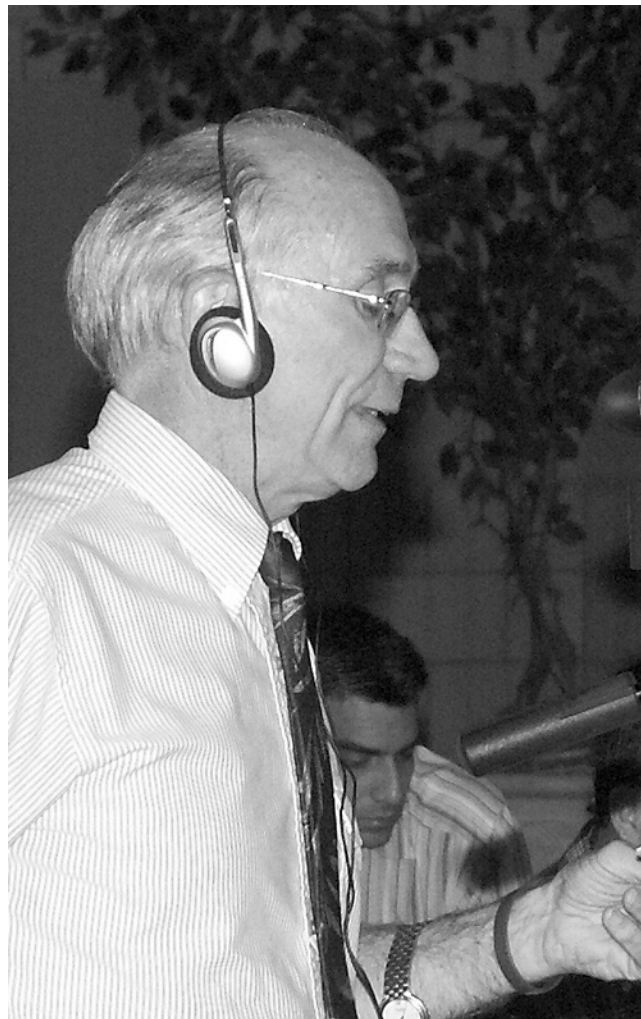
"When I was attending the Josephinum Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, I came under the instruction of Father Otto Ipoly. It was Father Otto who led me to an approach to studying text and doctrine that has allowed me to feel at peace as a member of the Church for all these years."

What Father Otto provided was a way to look at Church teachings in depth, in historical and sociological context, and with awareness of nonliteral and transcendent meanings imbedded in "facts." And young Jim also embraced the new (for him) concept of "sensus fidelium" — the sense of the faithful. As Jim puts it, "I call this 'the communion of the saints,' a search for what the great Church philosophers and humanitarians throughout our history have thought; for what the contemporary context calls on us to reconsider; and for where I, with my own intelligence and conscience, come to rest after deep thought and consideration."

For Jim, "consensus of the saints" means that no one person, nor any one age, can claim to express the Truth; and that the on-going search for truth leads not to ambiguity and confusion (as is often warned) but to a richness of meaning and possibility. Jim's faith would seem to be not so much in enunciated doctrine as in the history of expanded

understanding and eventual reconciliation that Roman Catholicism has manifested over the millennia.

The amplitude of Jim's creed was deeply impacted by two out-of-country experiences. In the early 1970s he continued his seminary training in Santo Domingo, at the height of the "liberation theology"



Jim Grant is progressive and works at Catholic TV station KNXT channel 49. Grant helped to get Democracy Now! on Ch 49 (Monday - Friday at 6 PM).

movement in Latin America, which emphasized the social justice aspects of Jesus' teachings. Although the Vatican has sometimes been critical of this movement, Jim was impressed by the teachings and practices emanating from the Medellin Conference. These principles reflected the stirring example of pastors like Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was assassinated during his ministry to the poor of El Salvador. Jim has embraced the long view, taking what might by some be called a rift in the Church — the conservatism of Papal pronouncements standing against the impelling call for social change in the name of Jesus — as "a divergence of understandings" that time and good will can resolve.

Jim says he was equally affected by time spent in Jerusalem, exposed to different elements of Christian understanding as well as to the wealth of insights and perspectives offered by other world re-

ligions. He says, "I resonate with the part of the Unitarian creed that speaks of 'the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part.' This is the teaching that all creation is one family... that my 'communion of saints' can include more than Roman Catholics."

When it comes to putting his beliefs into practice in his work, Jim says he was very influenced by two of his teachers at Boston College: Tom Groome, who stimulated thought about how to reinterpret and present traditional doctrine in the current age; and Mary Boyd, who elaborated on both the continuity of Jewish values in Christianity and the epochal "good news" that Jesus' life and ministry incarnated.

Jim has used these perspectives in what he calls his TV ministry by creating programming for a broad audience that combines "an appreciation for our faith with the fact that 6/7ths of the world enters a relationship with the divine in a different way."

Jim highly values opportunities to have his habits and habitual thinking challenged. "I seek out inter-faith and cross-cultural dialogue and the chance to see other cultures as they are lived — through informal visits, books and films, and even through the casual but intimate interactions possible with family. Even today, I rely on my children and my brother to expose me to sensibilities and interests far outside my own range of experience. I love it when one of them calls and says, 'You must read *The Life of Pi*,' or 'Check out this Dali exhibit.'"

But Jim says the most powerful inspirations still come from the Church, starting with Jesus Himself: "He is more present in my life today, as teacher and example, than ever before." Pope John XXIII — whose brief papacy included the council that issued Vatican II — has, in Jim's understanding, changed the possibilities of what the Church can be and affirmed the Catholicism that Jim identifies with. "I think of him as 'My Pope,' his picture remains on my wall."

Asked about art that might give others insight into his way of engaging the world, Jim made these recommendations: "*The Kite Runner*, a book set mostly in Afghanistan, provoked strong feelings about human weakness and endurance; the TV series *The Wire* portrays both the dark side of life and the possibilities of redemptive responses to misery and injustice; and a CD by Susan Werner called *The Gospel Truth* offers a liberating approach to faith."

As for a few words that give voice to the impulses aroused by his credo, Jim cites Martin Luther King, Jr.: "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people." Thank you, Jim Grant, for your thoughts and your work.



QUEER EYE

Notes From the Marriage War

by Dan Waterhouse

No one should ever accuse Yes on Proposition 8 proponents of intellectual honesty. First, knowing that voters probably would be loath to ban same-sex marriage once ceremonies actually began, they tried to convince the state Supreme Court to put their decision "on hold." The high court said "no."

Then, in June they tried to convince a Superior Court judge in Sacramento that the Supreme Court did not have the power to change the law, and because all references to marriage in the Family Code and other state statutes hadn't been changed by the Legislature, same-sex weddings should be delayed. That judge said "no."

Proponents are trying to spin Proposition 8 as "simply" defining marriage as that only between a man and a woman, to sell the initiative to voters. However,

California Attorney General Jerry Brown saw through their deceptive wordsmithing and rewrote the official title and summary to say what the measure would really do: eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry.

Screaming like wounded eagles, proponents headed back to Sacramento Superior Court, claiming that the attorney general's revisions would bias voters against the measure. At the end of the day, the judge asked the two \$64K questions: did the Supreme Court say same-sex couples have the fundamental right to marry, and would Proposition 8 eliminate that right? The answer to both questions was "yes." Case over. The judge decided that the revision by the attorney general stands.

Incensed by the judge's ruling, the Prop 8 committee rushed off to appellate court, shrieking, "Since the Superior Court would not exercise its authority to protect voters against misleading language, we will ask the appellate court to do so." However, the committee's attorney admitted in Superior Court that the Supreme Court had legalized same-sex marriage and the effect of the proposition would be to take that right away. Thus, the judge said, "the attorney general did not abuse his discretion in concluding that the chief purpose and effect of the initiative is to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry."

In their efforts to sell their proposition to the voters as something it isn't, proponents are being forced to distance themselves from the likes of Randy Thomasson, head of the anti-queer Campaign for California Families. Thomasson has been trying for years to undo domestic partnership rights. Right after the Supreme Court decision, Thomasson ran around the state urging county boards of supervisors to ignore the law. He and his followers are now described by the pro-Prop. 8 folks (many of whom supported CCF over the years) as a "fringe group."

On the local front, the No on Prop. 8 campaign is looking for volunteers to table every weekend until the election in November. If interested in volunteering or getting more information on the campaign, please call 559-862-4559.

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, September 1

The Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings CLC, Bldg Trades, and COOL, again will be co-sponsoring this year's Labor Day Breakfast. The event will be held on Labor Day Monday, Sept. 1, 2008 in the Industry-Commerce Bldg at the Fresno Fair Grounds. Tickets for breakfast (pancakes, eggs, sausages, & drinks) will be \$10.00, children under 12 are free. There will be live music, a raffle, and of course our political friends will be visiting. I have posters and tickets available. Please secure your commits from your organizations for raffle items and ticket purchases. Any questions?, Call the CLC at 275-1151.

Tuesday, September 2 • 7 PM

Vegan potluck and film screening of "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" at C.A.F.E. Infoshop 935 F street between tulare and kern. requested \$1-\$20 donation. hedwig and the angry inch— a transexual punk rock girl from east berlin tours the U.S. with her rock band as she tells her life story and follows an ex-boyfriend/bandmate who stole her songs.

Tuesday, September 2 • 7:30 PM

Paddy Keenan Returns to Fresno and will perform at The Public House, 4020 N. Cedar Ave., Fresno (Between Ashlan and Dakota). If you're an Irish music lover, you'll need no convincing. You already know that you'll be at the upcoming Paddy Keenan concert in Fresno. If you're open to loving Irish music, you will never hear a better Irish musician. Keenan will sweep you off your feet. Seating is limited to 80 people. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Come early and buy a pint to bring into the concert. Come even earlier and enjoy a great Irish dinner.

Friday, September 5 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents speaker Dr. Sasan Fayazmanesh Topic: The United States and Iran Sanctions, Wars and the Policy of Dual Containment. When and why did the United States policy of containment of Iran come about? How did it evolve? Where is it going?

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, September 6 • 9 AM

The Kennedy Club of the San Joaquin Valley will hold a meeting at Denny's restaurant at 141 N Abby. Speaking will be Fresno City Councilman and mayoral candidate Henry T. Perea on his positions on issues confronting the city and its future. There will be a Q & A time provided. For more information contact Ray Ensher at (559) 439-8140.

Sunday, September 7

"The Heretics Barbecue" - First Sunday of September (Sept. 7th) at Letterman Park in Clovis, more details at www.CVAAS.org and/or 892-0102.

Sunday, September 7 • 3 PM

"Sing Out for Peace" is a concert to benefit the work of the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. It features the lyrical and inspiring music of ALMA (award-winning composer-performer Augustin Lira, Patricia Wells Solorzano and Ravi Knypstra); and songs of war and peace sung by Avigdar Adams, Rogue Festival soloist. It will be held on Sunday, Sept. 7 at 3 p.m. at the Tower branch of the California Arts Academy, 1401 N. Wishon, across from St. Therese Church. Tickets are: \$15 for bistro seating (front tables, including complimentary beverages), \$10 for grandstand seating. Reservations for tables of four, and advanced tickets are available at the FCNV, 1584 N. Van Ness M-F, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.; or by calling Richard Stone at 266-2559.

Tuesday, September 9 • 7 PM

Bob Bowman is bringing his 2008 Patriot Tour to Fresno. Dr. Bowman Challenges us to "Take Back America" for the people. He explains why we need a government that 1) Follows the Constitution 2) Honors the Truth, and 3) Serves the People. Dr. Bowman will speak at the Mennonite Community Church in Fresno, 5015 E Olive Ave. This event is co-sponsored by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno Social Justice Committee, Outreach Ministry of First Congregational Church of Fresno,



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Peace Fresno. For more information call 487-2515 or go to www.peacefresno.org

Wednesday, September 10 • 12 Noon & 7 PM (Potluck at 6:30)

Video Presentation: "The Ballad of Ezequiel Hernandez, Jr." at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness. In 1997, U. S. Marines patrolling the Texas-Mexico border as part of the "war on drugs" shot and killed Ezequiel Hernandez, Jr., a U. S. citizen. Mistaken for a drug runner, the 18-year-old was in fact tending his family's goats with a .22 rifle. FREE. For info: 237-3223. (Note: NOONTIME SHOWINGS HAVE NOW RESUMED)

Wednesday, September 10 • 2 - 3 PM

Women in Black - For Justice. Against War. Please join us for a silent vigil protesting all forms of militarism! This event will be held in the Free Speech Area at CSU-Fresno (Speakers Platform). Please wear black, bring a sign, women only. Co-sponsored by: POWER, Campus Peace & Women's International League for Peace & Freedom. Please call 278-4593 or see www.womeninblack.org for more information about Women in Black worldwide.

Thursday, September 11 • 5 - 8 PM

Mayoral forum on poverty will feature a debate between Fresno's two mayoral run-off candidates. The candidates will be questioned on what they see as an inclusive realistic platform to address the issues surrounding chronic poverty and health disparities in the City of Fresno. This event will be held at the Convention Center's Exhibit Hall, second floor, rooms 2015 - 2018. Light refreshments will be served from 5 - 5:45 PM. The forum will start at 6 PM.

Friday, September 12 • 5:30 and 8:15 PM

Fresno Filmworks presents "The Edge of Heaven" at the Tower Theatre, directed by Faith Akin. The multinational drama tells the story of six people whose fragile lives connect them in Germany and Turkey. In German, Turkish, and English, with English subtitles. Tickets cost \$10 general and \$8 for students and seniors, and can be purchased by check or cash at the Tower Theatre box office, 815 E. Olive Ave., and at JA Photography, 2003 N. Van Ness. Tickets via PayPal at www.FresnoFilmworks.org. For details, visit www.FresnoFilmworks.org or call (559) 221-0755.

Friday, September 12 • 6:30 - 9:30 PM

Obama for America Fundraiser. A casual and entertaining evening of Art Wine & Cheese featuring music by Dave Calvert at Fresno's Perfect Balance Yoga Studio, 5091 N Fresno St Suite 133 in Fresno. A \$25 donation is suggested. For more information, contact Mary Hubl at (559) 269-6297.

Saturday, September 13 • 3:30 PM

The next meeting of the Central Valley Progressive PAC will be at the Fresno Center for Non-Violence (1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno). For details, see page 23.

Monday, September 15

Deadline for articles and calendar items to the October 2008 Community Alliance newspaper. Send information to AllianceEditor@Comcast.net

Monday, September 15 • 6:30 - 9 PM

ACLU Annual Membership Meeting. The Greater Fresno Area Chapter of the ACLU-NC will hold its Annual Membership Meeting at the Fresno City College Staff Dining Room, near Maroa and Weldon Streets. For details, see page 4.

Monday, September 15 • 7 PM

Gerry Bill will have a report back event dealing with his Cuba trip. There will be a potluck meal at 6 p.m. followed by a program at 7 p.m. The event will be held at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. See his article on page 19,

Thursday, September 18 • 6:30 - 9 PM

Progressive Thursday presents "Washington You're Fired." This film is a powerful expose of what every American should know be-

fore going to the polls. Bills like the Patriot Act, Military Commissions Act, and the John Warner Defense Act have crippled the US constitution and weakened Americans' liberties. The loss of Habeas Corpus and Posse Comitatus along with the Bush administration's definition of "torture" will put every American at risk. HR 1955 will create "thought crime" if enacted. Not scared? Get scared! This event will be held at Round Table Pizza, 5763 N First Street in Fresno (SW corner of 1st and Bullard). This event is hosted by the Fresno County Green Party and is free, wheelchair accessible, and open to anyone interested in discussing progressive topics. For more information, contact Larry Mullen at (559) 227-0293.

Saturday, September 20 • 5 - 9 PM

Join us at Bentley's Bistro for the third annual Pink Show — a celebration to raise money for local breast cancer causes. The evening includes a moving photo exhibit of breast cancer survivors, original artwork by local artists and an art auction, appetizers and music. Guest speakers include Sheriff Margaret Mims, Stefani Booroojian and Fresno Bee reporter Tracy Correa. The event grows bigger each year, so come early. For more details call, 709-2263. For more information about this show, see: <http://www.gayfresno.com/content/view/538/1/>

Sunday, September 21 • 9 AM

The First Unitarian Universalist Fall Town Hall: "Obama or McCain? Implications for the next four years from a historical perspective" by Gary Walker. 20th Century Presidents such as Carter, Eisenhower, Roosevelt, Reagan, Truman and Nixon will be examined as they compare to the two candidates. Gary is a native of Los Angeles and 1963 graduate of Occidental College, with a major in political science and a minor in religion. A semi-retired insurance agent, Gary writes and conducts seminars which focus on bringing a historical perspective to current events.

Wednesday, September 24 • 7 PM

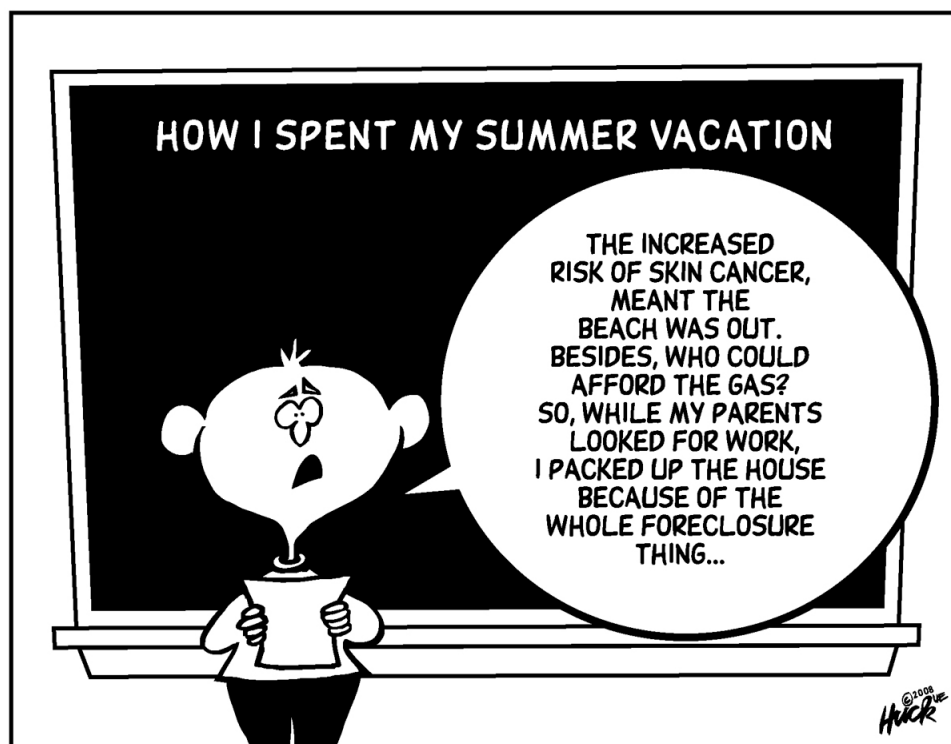
Solidarity event for political prisoner Eric McDavid featuring speakers, literature tables, and more at C.A.F.E. Infoshop 935 F street between Tulare and Kern. Requested donation of \$5 or more. According to C.A.F.E., "Eric McDavid was arrested as a part of the green scare for a crime that was never committed. After a trial riddled with lies and blunders on the part of the government, Eric is now facing 20 years in prison."

Sunday, September 28 • 4 - 6 PM

Tariq Ali, novelist, historian, political campaigner, and editor of "New Left Review" will speak at the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno, 2111 East Nees Ave. Pakistan is in the throes of a new crisis: daily battles on the Afghan border, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the farcical and grotesque succession ceremony. Tariq Ali has been visiting Pakistan regularly and writing for the London Review of Books. His latest book "The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power" is also the title of his talk at this event. For more information contact Dan Yaseen at (559) 251-3361 or danyaseen@comcast.net

Wednesday, October 1 • 7 - 9 PM

Stop the Hate, Stop the Violence - building a culture of peace tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 139th birthday. Holistic Medicine: From wellness to wholeness, Dr. Prashant Kakode director of the Center for Integral Health in Cambridge, U.K. will speak at Wesley United Methodist Church, 1343 E Barstow Ave in Fresno. For more information call Dr. Kapoor at 435-2212



OPINION & ANALYSIS FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Another Tranquill Tantrum Just who is an American anyhow?

By Will Tranquilli



Buried in the back pages of your local newspaper is a story of an American whose family was starving – there was no work where he lived. The plant where he and neighbors had worked closed months ago. Cheaper labor elsewhere could turn corn into snacks. With the price of corn increasing, it just made sense to move.

The chickens that thrived on the grain leakage from the supply trucks couldn't live on this parched land. Those he couldn't catch to feed his family starved.

There's lots of work in a forbidden region near where he lives. He'd heard frightening tales of many who entered this area. Still, he knew for a fact a few families in his town managed to buy enough food to live on with money sent from this dangerous land. So, some who took the risk found work.

That was good enough for our desperate American. No pain in the forbidden area could compare to the daily agony of hearing his children plead for food.

Borders patrolled by armed guards he'll risk to keep his family from starvation. Like any self-respecting American, he'll bend a few rules for his wife and children.

This American is a family man. A family man will first protect his family. In the forbidden zone, this makes him a criminal. The zone employs many armed men, aided by citizen volunteers. Their job? Seek our American out and send him home. To watch his family starve.

He is José Fernández, born and raised in Mexico. Crossing the border into the United States made him an illegal alien, a criminal – no better than rapists, murderers or corporate executive board members.

But this man is an American. Hmmm, how can this be? Is the man a Mexican or is he an American? The globe has the answer.

Find Mexico. It is the southern part of the North American continent. Anyone living there must be an American. It's North America.

Half a brain should make that connection. Regrettably, if you are a citizen of the country occupying the middle of the North American continent, the United States of America, you consider yourself an American and rest of the world as not-American. How is that for arrogance?

Southward we get to an isthmus labeled Central America. Aren't residents of this strip of land also Americans?

Continuing south is another very large continent, South America. Listening, we hear a noisy but very popular prime minister by the name of Hugo Chavez. This man, born in Venezuela, nationalized Venezuela's energy companies because the country was being bled of its wealth by foreigners – some of the richest men in the United States. According to the last election, more than

70 percent agreed with him. The energy moguls hate and defame him; surely he's not an American? But he lives on the South American continent, so he is an American.

The United States shows the world an image of overwhelming arrogance by usurping for our own the name of an entire hemisphere, America. Not just sea to shining sea but poll to shrinking poll, half the planet, and yet declare no one's an American unless born within U.S.A.'s borders. So what do all the others born on this hemisphere call themselves? Non-American Westerners? New Worldiends?

Chinese, Koreans and Japanese call themselves Asians. Nobody minds. Germans, Frenchmen, Estonians call themselves Europeans. And that's OK.

Kenyans, South Africans and Algerians claim to be Africans. No one complains.

But as far as the world press is concerned, only U.S. citizens dare call themselves Americans.

Are citizens of the U.S. claiming ownership of the hemisphere but granting citizenship status and privilege only to those born mid-North America? How arrogant is that? Audacity like this does not endear us to the world, particularly this hemisphere.

And Señor Fernandez? We need not trouble ourselves about him. He managed to scrape together enough to pay a smuggler to get him into that bountiful land where there was work. After three days in the hot sun in a barely ventilated truck, he and 21 other work seekers were released in the desert. That night they were pointed in the direction of the area they sought and told to move quietly.

After hours of travel on the still warm sand, the sun began to lighten the eastern sky. They heard a vehicle coming toward them without lights. They scattered, seeking cover under sparse vegetation.

José, heading for a rock, felt someone's hands on the gunnysack containing his precious tools and food scraps. The bag was yanked from his grip as he heard a shout from the vehicle.

"There's some over there," cried a voice. A white light bathed the landscape. He was looking away from the light, so José, not blinded, could see the thief running with his precious bag. Every ounce of energy he could gather propelled José toward the thief.

"They're getting away, bring 'em down!"

A .32 caliber slug from a Minuteman vigilante's rifle spared José the agony of his children's cries. Forever.

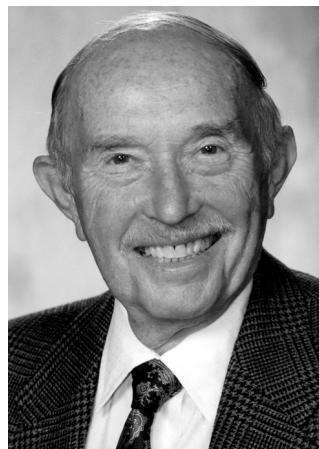
What American would not risk everything to provide for his family?

From The Greenhouse

By Franz Weinschenk

Hang on now! A Utah based company called Energy Solutions is planning on importing 20,000 tons of radioactive nuclear waste from Italy, process most of it in Tennessee and bury the worst of it, 1,600 tons, in Tooele County Utah, about 80 miles from Salt Lake City.

At first, Utah Governor, Republican Jon Huntsman Jr., took the position that the importation of foreign nuclear waste was a matter for the feds to decide, but because just about everybody told him they don't want Utah turned into a radioactive waste dump, he's changed his mind and has asked Utah's representative to the Northwest Interstate Compact on Low-level Radioactive Waste to vote against the deal. They did. Undaunted, the company is now asking a US district court for a declaratory judgment stating that the Northwest Interstate Waste Compact doesn't have the author-



ity to intervene in deals like these. The company claims the waste material in question won't be hazardous to health or safety.

Not everybody agrees. Both Louisiana's Republican Senator, David Vitter, and Arjun Makhijani, the president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, express deep concern that potentially volatile radioactive waste will be coming in through the port of New Orleans and then on US waterways creating a serious hazard. Both have raised strong objections with the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)—asking it to deny giving Energy Solutions an import license. As of right now, the NRC states that they are looking into the matter, but won't make a decision until September.

In a case like this, it's essential to realize that there is a huge difference between regular "waste," like, say, the stuff you put down your garbage disposal and "nuclear waste," which is radioactive and can devastate life of any kind nearly forever. Here is what the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission says, "Since the only way radioactive waste finally becomes harmless is through decay, which for high-level wastes can take hundreds of thousands of years. . . it must be stored in a way that provides adequate protection of the public for a very long time." Of course there is also "low level waste" like the waste from hospitals and industry. According to the NRC, its radioactivity can range from just above background levels found in nature to "very high radioactivity in such cases as parts from inside the reactor vessels of nuclear power plants." The stuff they want to import from Italy comes from "first generation Italian nuclear power plants," which would probably include used reactor vessels. Again according to the NRC, low level waste is typically stored on site till it decays or, if the radioactivity is large enough, to special waste disposal sites.

Now if the stuff coming from Italy is really "low level," why would they go to the expense of shipping it clear across the Atlantic when they could easily let it "decay" over there? What it sounds like is that they want to process most of it in Tennessee and bury the really hot stuff (those last 1,600 tons) in Utah.

What's so ironic is that nowadays so many politicians and commentators are constantly telling us that we need to build new nuclear plants; that they're not dangerous any more; that the Europeans (especially the French) have solved all the problems of recycling and storing radioactive waste etc., and that today's nuclear industry is now all of a sudden clean and safe. Question: If all of Europe's problems have been solved, why do they need to ship their waste over here?

As for France, they've made their own deal with the devil. When you ask them why they've built so many nuclear plants, they'll tell you "no oil, no gas, no coal, no choice." Yes, through re-cycling, they have reduced the amount of waste, but in no way have they eliminated it or made it less radioactive. What's helped them is semantics. You see, they don't ever talk about "burying nuclear waste in a radioactive graveyard." People would, and actually have rioted when they hear that kind of talk. Nowadays they simply say "We stock containers of waste in 'stocking centers'" so that maybe in a 100 years scientists will be able to reduce or eliminate its toxicity.

The truth is that no serious scientist anywhere can or is saying that we have solved the problems of recycling or storing radioactive nuclear waste. As of today, that technology is neither fully developed nor proven.

So, here's the bottom line: Come September, we need to hope that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will deny Energy Solutions' license, but if they don't—you can expect just about half the world to start dumping its radioactive waste into the good old US of A.

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Franz Weinschenk has been a teacher and school administrator in Fresno for over fifty years. He can be contacted by e-mail at franzie@SCCCD.org

Where Do We Go from Here?

By Ruth Gadebusch

While no one has ever accused me of being a Pollyanna, never have I been as pessimistic as now. I am frightened — frightened for our community, frightened for our nation, and even the planet.



Both here and nationwide we continue to see firms cutting back, eliminating jobs. Our community has the dubious distinction of having one of the highest foreclosure rates on houses. The handwriting has been on the wall a long time, a very long time, that we would face a water shortage. We were also told many years ago about the potential for our bad air surpassing that of the notorious Los Angeles. We simply sat back letting all the dire predictions come true.

What really set me off was looking at the voting patterns of Fresno's mayoral election in June. We are a city divided and that is never good for any city. With few exceptions the North voted for Swearingen and the South for Perea. Any time the voting pattern is that graphic, it portends trouble. The things mentioned above can be fixed when we make up our minds to do so, albeit requiring great effort. The attitude reflected in the voting pattern is much more of a challenge. It is an 'us and them' situation, which we can ill afford. In many ways it is the haves and have-nots.

It goes beyond the economy, beyond ethnicity, beyond

culture, beyond education. It is a lack of knowledge of each other, a lack of appreciation of the needs of various groups, it is a misconception of the people themselves. It is an emphasis on our differences instead of our commonality. The reality is that we are all here and we must find a way to work together. It cannot be left to the two mayoral candidates, although they bear a great burden to figure out just what it is about their campaigns and our community that produced such a clear cut pattern of division. Failure to do so will be a pyrrhic victory for the eventual mayor.

We have had a modicum of desegregation in the city schools for approximately three decades now. It was never expected to solve all the problems. But, to have such a definite voting pattern shows just how ingrained the situation is and therefore just how hard we must work to change it.

Fresno is the home of "Three Strikes" which is a dubious honor at best. It is obvious that our prison population does not reflect the general population, which in itself should send a message. The opposition of the Fresno City Council to an Independent Police Auditor most assuredly indicates a lack of comprehension of the distance between the police force and the population it serves.

There is a strong anti-immigrant feeling in our valley despite the necessity of the labor of many of these immigrants to sustain the glowing economy of the north side that accounts for so much of the disparity in our area. The simple matter of driving licenses for non-citizens, which should be a given, is controversial for so many. Never mind how they are supposed to get to the jobs in areas of little or no public transportation. As a matter of fact, there continues to be a strong voice for freeways over public transportation.

Our public parks are no longer free and in some cases are charging more for visitors from other areas. This seems shortsighted at best for an area begging for tourists and overwhelmed with youth with little to occupy them. What are we thinking?

To be sure there are groups working long and hard to alleviate these conditions. Elsewhere in this paper there is a calendar for some of them that could certainly use more help. We fail to do so at our own peril — if not for compassion, then for pure self preservation. We cannot continue as a divided city. It is later than we think.

This is our city. We share it. Another consideration is all these county islands in the midst of the city boundaries. We are affected by the city and need to be in a position to participate politically. We need to be part of the solution, instead of part of the problem. With most of those islands in the northern part of the city, I fear their vote would not be much different from the current northern voters but one can always hope for enlightenment. In any event, despite the political boundaries, we cannot escape belonging. For better, or for worse, we need to join as one to seek a better future.

All this, and I haven't even touched on the broader picture of the nation's political predicament, the national debt, the unending war in the Middle-East, and on and on. Alas, it appears to be only a reflection of our local area. It may be overwhelming but this is where we start, right here at home.

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

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**Central Valley
Progressive
Political Action Committee**

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

The Valley's Voice for Progressives

**Endorsement Meeting For
November 4th Election
Saturday, September 13th 3:30-5:00 PM
at FCNV Office (1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno)**

We will consider endorsements for the following:

**Mayor of Fresno;
FUSD Board of Trustees in Areas #2 (Roosevelt),
#5 (Fresno), and #6 (Hoover);
Local Fresno/County Ballot Measures;
State Ballot Measures;
Superior Court Judge #10**

**For members only. For membership & meeting details,
go to www.cvppac.org or call 559-435-7360**

PEACEfresno

www.peacefresno.org (559) 487-2515
P.O. Box 5115 Fresno, CA 93755

JOIN US!

Action for social justice and alternatives to war

**Of the People
By the People
FOR THE PEOPLE**



Every Tuesday 7:00 PM at the
FRESNO CENTER FOR NONVIOLENCE
1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno CA 93728

Every First Friday 4:30 - 6:30 PM
MONTHLY PEACE VIGIL @ Blackstone and Shaw

The Fourth Gene Bluestein Memorial Concert
Peggy Seeger



She doesn't call herself a folksinger but rather a singer of traditional and contemporary songs. She has one foot in the past and another in the present and is always walking towards the future. You may disagree with some of the politics but you won't be bored. An average concert contains both traditional and contemporary materials, the latter encompassing both male and female politics.

Saturday, October 4, 2008

Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno

Tickets: fresnofolkconcerts.com & Patrick's Music

THIS MODERN WORLD

by **TOM TOMORROW**

THE RISE AND (RELATIVE) FALL OF STUPIDITY IN AMERICA

AFTER 9/11, STUPIDITY BECAME PATRIOTIC. BAD THING HAPPEN! US GO KILL PEOPLE NOW!

US SHOW WORLD WHO AM BOSS!

IT AM ONLY THING TO DO!

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, ANYONE WHO QUESTIONED STUPIDITY WAS INSULTED AND MALIGNED (THOUGH NOT VERY CLEVERLY, OF COURSE)...

YOU DO REALIZE THAT IRAQ HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH 9/11--?

YOU AM AMERICA-HATING TRAITOR WHO AM PROBABLY HOMOSEXUAL!

WHY YOU HATE BRAVE TROOPS?!

EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, PEOPLE BEGAN TO NOTICE THAT STUPIDITY WASN'T WORKING OUT VERY WELL. THE ECONOMY'S GONE TO HELL, THE CONSTITUTION'S BEEN SHREDED, AND WE'RE APPARENTLY NEVER GETTING OUT OF IRAQ.

MAYBE LETTING STUPID PEOPLE RUN EVERYTHING WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA.

AND NOW, AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF RELENTLESS STUPIDITY, NON-STUPID PEOPLE ARE FINALLY BEGINNING TO ASSERT THEIR NON-STUPIDITY--WITHIN REASONABLE LIMITS, OBVIOUSLY...

SHOULDN'T A PRESIDENT WHO AUTHORIZED TORTURE AND ILLEGAL WIRETAPPING BE SUBJECT TO--AH--

--MILD EXPRESSIONS OF DISAPPROVAL? ABSOLUTELY!

OH--RIGHT! WE DON'T WANT TO GET CARRIED AWAY!

BUT SOONER OR LATER, STUPIDITY WILL STAGE A COMEBACK. NEW BAD THING HAPPEN! US GO KILL MORE PEOPLE NOW!

AND US FURTHER DISREGARD BASIC PRINCIPLES WHICH ALLEGEDLY DEFINE US AS A PEOPLE!

IT AM ONLY THING TO DO!