

Berkeley Gray Panther Newsletter

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June 2007



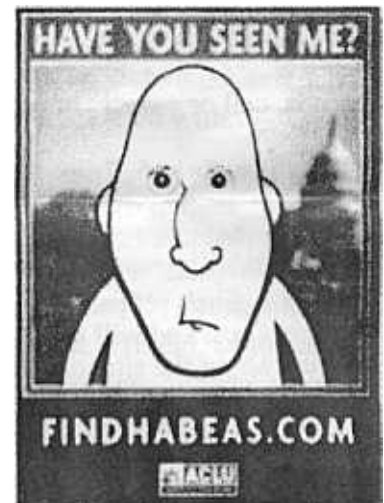
Membership Meeting



Wednesday, June 27, 1:30 p.m.

North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst Avenue

The Threat to American Civil Rights & Habeas Corpus Speakers to Be Announced



ACLU Campaign Logo

Gray Panther Committee Meetings

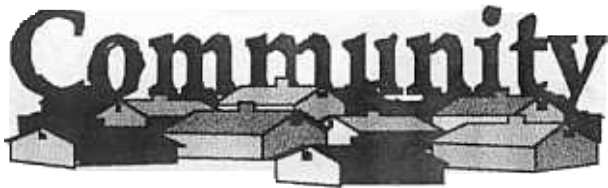
Social Action Committee:
Wednesday, June 13, 2 p.m.

Panthers at Night,
Wednesday, June 20, 7 p.m.

Board Meeting
Wed., June 20, 2 p.m.

See You All July 4 at the Berkeley Marina

Community



Monday, June 4, 1:30pm - The San Francisco Bay Area Darfur Coalition (SFBAYDC) will host guest speaker Shlomi Ravid for a discussion on what is being done to assist the survivors of the genocide in Darfur seeking refuge in Israel. The SFBADC meeting begins at 1 p.m., with presentation at 1:30. At the Holocaust Center of Northern California, 121 Steuart Street, SF. RSVP: Jewish Community Relations Council, 121 Steuart St. #301, San Francisco, CA 94105 415-957-1551. www.darfursf.org.

Tuesday, June 5, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM - United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) Bay Area General Meeting, 65 Ninth St., San Francisco, American Friends Service Committee Office. (2 blocks from Civic Center BART/Muni between Market and Mission)
Contact: Jim Haber, Email ufpj-bayarea@riseup.net, Phone: 415-828-2506
See website for agenda details. To place items on the agenda, call or e-mail. <http://ufpj-bayarea.org>

Thursday, July 5, 7pm Dr. Mona El-Farra, a physician, human rights activist, broadcaster and MECA's (Middle East Children's Alliance) Director of Gaza Projects, will be coming to the US for the first time. She's preparing a slide show of her life and work in Gaza and will speak to audiences across the country about the situation for women and children in the occupied Gaza Strip. **Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, 1606 Bonita Avenue**

Thursday, June 7, 7 p.m.-9 p.m. Oakland - What Peace Could Look Like: Beyond "One State, Two States" for Israel and Palestine. At Kehilla Synagogue with Bay Area Women in Black, 1300 Grand Avenue in Piedmont, corner of Fairview. Contact: Rochelle (415) 241-6680

Saturday, June 9, noon-6 p.m. 4th annual Temescal Street Fair, Telegraph Avenue between 48th and 51st Streets, Oakland. 8 blocks from MacArthur BART. Main Stage, Music, including Venezuelan Music Project. Kids' Stage, Abby and the Pipsqueaks and Jeremy the Juggler. Arts and crafts. Martial arts demonstrations, fashion show. Delicious food and drinks. Valet bike parking by East Bay Bike Coalition. Information: 510-654-6346X2. www.temescalmerchants.com.

Tuesday, June 12, 9:15 a.m. to 10 a.m. Rally for the Oakland Green Jobs Corps, Oakland City Hall, Frank Ogawa Plaza. At the rally, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights will release a report on "Community Jobs in the Green Economy," co-published by Urban Habitat and the national Apollo Alliance. Following the rally, the City Council will discuss funding the Oakland Green Jobs Corps. Come show the Oakland City Council the strength -- and size -- of the movement for eco-equity and green-collar jobs! RSVP: <http://www.democracyinaction.org> EBC@mail.democracyinaction.org

Saturday, June 16, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM - Bay Area Birddogging Workshop / sponsored by Peace Action West. At Temescal Branch Library, 5205 Telegraph Ave, Oakland. Presidential candidates will come to California. How do we get them to listen to our concerns? Simple--we ask our questions everywhere they go! Peace Action West is training activists to ask questions of the candidates when they come to town. Sign up to attend training on how to ask questions, or "birddog", the candidates. By birddogging we hope to get candidates to endorse the message of foreign policy based on peace and security and make it their top issue in 2008. Breakfast and coffee provided. To RSVP please contact: (213)-388-0525 Ext. 107 or awoolfolk@peaceactionwest.org.

Saturday, June 16, 2007, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. - Party to Raise Funds for the G.I. Rights Hotline and Counter Recruitment Work. 2510 Tassajara Avenue, El Cerrito. At the home of Linda Novick and Seth Clark, come hear Pablo Paredes, who is now at the San Francisco office of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), advising volunteers for the G.I. Rights Hotline and handling counter recruitment calls. This party is to help fund Pablo's fellowship. Refreshments. Short videos, including "Before You Enlist." RSVP to Dorothy Callison, dorothyandpaul@phch.org or 925-681-2676. If you plan to bring children, please let us know their ages so we can arrange child care. PLEASE BRING YOUR CHECKBOOK Write checks to Veterans for Peace/Chapter 69, with "AMIE, Pablo" on the memo line. Donations are tax deductible. Checks can be mailed to Dorothy Callison, 2244 Lisa Lane, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523. If you plan to ride BART, let us know and someone can pick you up. 510-234-9443. * Directions: To El Cerrito. From 80 East, exit at San Pablo Ave. Left at first light onto Barrett Ave. Drive up hill 0.9 miles. Right on Tassajara Ave. (directly after the tennis courts and playground). 2510 Tassajarais on the left across from Alva Ave.



Vacancy on Berkeley Public Library's Board of Trustees

The Trustee position offers a wonderful opportunity for a Berkeley resident to learn more about the library's programs and services while giving the library support and guidance. If interested please attend a reception at West Branch to find out more about the position. (see below)

Application and questionnaire available at the City of Berkeley's City Clerk website at <http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/commissions/library>
Or call City Clerk's Office at (510)981-6900. Recruitment will close on July 1, 2007, with interviews later in July.

RECEPTION: Tuesday, June 19, 6:30 p.m. at West Branch of the Berkeley Public Library, 1125 University Avenue (near San Pablo).

Peace

The 6th annual Japanese Peace Lantern Ceremony in Berkeley will be on Sun. Aug 5th in Aquatic Park in Berkeley @ the foot of Addison St .Starts @ 6:30 PM.

This is to commemorate the event 62 years ago of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; it's an important teaching tool for youngsters-you'd be surprised at how many are not aware of it. It is also a beautiful, movng, AND fun experience.

We need volunteers so please call Steve Freedkin @ (510)595-4626 or myself @ 510-845-6156 .Thanx
Leeza Vinogradov



Senator Gloria Romero
State Capitolm Room 13
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: (916) 445-0485

I am writing on behalf of the ACLU of Northern California to urge your support for SB 1019 (Romero). SB 1019 would overturn the State Supreme Court decision in *Copley Press v. Superior Court*, which has had the devastating effect of completely closing down public access to information about police complaints in jurisdictions throughout the state.

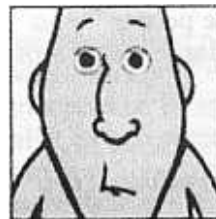


MOVIE NIGHT WOWSER !!!

June 20th, 7:00 p.m. at the Panther office at 1403 Addison street in Berkeley, behind Andronico's market. Come view the extraordinary documentary, "CHE Guevara. Che led a life cloaked in mystery and obscured by legend. His powerful charisma and dedication to worldwide revolution terrified some of the world's most influential men and left armies scrambling to destroy him. Immediately upon entering the international spotlight, Guevera was as passionately loved by some as he was reviled by others. His life is intimately revealed through interviews with his family, supporters and enemies. From his days as a struggling medical student, to eventually becoming an international icon, Che was an enigmatic force to be reckoned with.

In thinking about my own country, i was reminded of a quote by Edward Zehr: "I wouldn't call it fascism, but a political system nominally controlled by an irresponsible, dumbed-down electorate who are manipulated by dishonest, cynical, controlled mass media that dispense the propoganda of a corrupt establishment can hardly be described as democracy either."

Snacks and a lite meal will be served. because times are getting tuffer and tuffer, we are now requesting a small donation to cover rising costs; we hope you will understand, and no one will be turned away for lack of funds. . . For more info, call the office at 548-9696. Hope to see you soon, and to all, be well. . . j scott



Habeas Corpus (left) is the symbol of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) program to restore Habeas corpus and other American traditional rights and values that have suffered under the current administration. For more, attend the Gray Panthers general meeting on June 27 at 1:30.

Protect our rights!



Iraqis Give Their Opinion on American Occupation and Our Vice President. This is sweets and flowers?

Book Club June 2, 2 p.m.

This month participants will report on their own reading. Next Month, July, they are to read *The Lemon Tree*, a non-fiction book on the relationship between a European Jewish refugee and a displaced Palestinian.

**For information call:
527-0659**



Elder Abuse

Financial abuse of elders has been called the “crime of the 21st century”. Scam artists today are especially targeting Senior Citizens, abusing trust and friendship to steal thousands of dollars from a senior’s savings. The older word for *scam artist* is “confidence man”.

A series of workshops in California is being conducted to alert seniors about scam schemes and how to be protected against them sponsored by the office of **Assembly Member Loni Hancock**, in collaboration with the **Elder Financial Protection Network** (a nonprofit based in Marin) and the **Seniors Against Investment Fraud Program**. This last group sends out about 120 knowledgeable senior citizens to speak at gatherings of other seniors all over the State. Another sponsor was the **Contra Costa Credit Union**.

This is a report written by Gray Panther member Steve Geller, who attended the workshop presented at the West Berkeley Senior Center, on Wednesday morning, May 8, 2007.

About 50 seniors were seated at tables in the dining area. A Hancock staffer greeted us; she noted that Loni Hancock’s district office in El Cerrito Plaza is open to deal with problems. She said an “Elder” is anyone 65 or older. “Elder abuse” usually means physical or psychological harm, but elder abuse by scam criminals is all financial: scam artists are “nice people” who convince trusting seniors to pay out large parts of their savings.

We saw a video, which began with testimony from seniors who had been fooled by scam artists. Their remarks included “I never thought we’d be taken like that” and “he was such a nice person.” These friendly predators are slick and smooth and very good at winning your confidence.

We were warned to be suspicious of anyone who seems too friendly, especially if they are offering a deal which sounds too good to be true.

One very common scam is the “**instant winner**”. You are told that you’ve won a big prize, but in order to claim the money, you have to send the scammer some money first. Sometimes the scammer says you need to prepay the income taxes on your winnings. Never accept this kind of deal. Tell the scammer to take the taxes out of your winnings and send you the rest. If they still keep giving you reasons for up-front payment, stop talking to them. In situations like this, be rude. If you think the deal may really be legitimate, check it out -- get other people involved, like one of your children, an old friend or a lawyer. Don’t depend on yourself alone; scammers can be very convincing liars.

Of course, when you’re told you’ve won any prize, you should first make sure you actually entered the contest, or otherwise made yourself an eligible winner. Money does not fall from heaven.

Another scam is “**home improvement**”. The scammer tells you that your air conditioner or furnace is failing, your driveway should be repaved or you need new windows, aluminum siding or solar collectors on your roof. The deal becomes a scam if you really don’t need the home-improvement. If you sign up and pay out money, the work is never performed and you never see the scammer again.

A senior can’t always trust close friends and family. Some children will convince their widowed parent to sign over the family home and accept reduced living space upstairs or in the back, while they take over the house. Sometimes a care-giver or even a helpful friend will get the idea that they are entitled to a portion of your possessions. One example given was a friend who took \$300 a day from the senior’s ATM account, until *continued . . .*

Scams continued

the account was depleted. All it takes is the PIN, which can be obtained while doing a friendly errand while the senior was sick.

We were warned that once lost, getting money back from a scammer is nearly impossible. One speaker likened it to trying to put toothpaste back into the tube.

When considering any financial deal, you should keep asking questions. Don't be shy about getting other people involved, also asking questions. Many scam losses are never reported, because the senior is ashamed of having been so unwise, so foolishly trusting. One speaker said that people who lived in the WWII time are called the "handshake generation", because financial deals back then were often done with just a handshake. The world has changed.

Seniors are often lonely. The arrival of mail, or a telephone call, can be the high point of their day. Lonely seniors are good targets for the smooth-talking, friendly-seeming scammer. Seniors tend to trust anything that looks like it's associated with their church, their alma mater, or a military or fraternal organization. Some scammers claim to be collecting money for police or fire fighters.

If you get mail with any account information printed on it, be sure you destroy it after dealing with it. Seniors should own a shredder, which can be bought at any office supply store. The best kind of shredder is one which cuts strips in two directions. If your shredder just cuts strips in one direction, patient criminals have been known to piece-together the long strips in your trash and thus retrieve your account numbers.

Many seniors today have a computer and make use of email. This opens up the "**phishing**" scam. You get an email message asking you to "verify" your account information (bank, loan, credit card). A convenient button is provided. Click on this and you see a page which asks for your account number, PIN, mailing address or any other identity information. The message can be very convincing, even showing the familiar logo of the bank, and sometimes warning that your account might be disabled if you don't do the verification. All such "phishing" emails are fishing for your ID; they should all be ignored, or better, reported to the legitimate financial institution which supposedly sent the message. No legitimate bank or credit card company will ever ask for such "verification" -- most of them now show the last 4 digits of your account number at the top of any email they send.

You should be wary of anything in-coming which you did not actually send for. It's like unsolicited phone calls from a tele-marketer.

Another major scam targeting seniors is the "**investment deal**", which can involve annuities or insurance. Some of these schemes are rather obvious --

such as selling an annuity maturing in 10 years, to somebody who is 85 years old. This isn't illegal; plenty of insurance companies make money this way. But it's kind of a scam when so many seniors fall for such a deal.

A lady in the audience said she received a call from an insurance company, offering to take all her savings into an annuity account which will generate a guaranteed lifetime income. We were told to report such solicitations to the California Insurance Commissioner -- 800-927-HELP (4357).

A stolen wallet or purse gives thieves all your identity numbers. Seniors should never carry Social Security or Medicare cards on their person. You really never need these card, once you've started drawing social security and medicare. If you need a reminder of these numbers, make a photo-copy of the card, cut it to the same size, then ink out the last 4 digits. Institutions that require your social security number can fill in the missing numbers if they know your name and address. Legislation in the works may stop health-care companies from using the social security number as an ID number. Some have complied, many still have not.

Seniors complain about having to remember so many passwords and PINs. "*I forget where I hid my PIN.*" We were advised to keep a small file box at home, for application forms and registration/acceptance forms. You write your PIN on the appropriate form and file the form in the box.

If you must carry the PIN on your person, encode the PIN somehow, like reversing all the digits: "2367" might be written down as "7632" or maybe "3276". Another suggestion: write the PIN on a wallet-sized photograph, and make it look like a date -- example: "2367" becomes "02/03/67". The thief won't know what the number means.

Seniors are advised to have their social security payment on *direct-deposit*, along with all other regular income.

Always report anything that looks wrong, or even just suspicious. Legitimate institutions want to know about scam attempts. If you don't get new bank checks in the mail, report this to your bank. In fact, it's better to pick up your new checks right at the bank.

Men are advised not to carry their wallet in a back pocket. Pickpockets generally don't go for the side pants pocket. In any case, it's a good idea to wrap the wallet in two crossed rubber bands. The extra friction from the rubber makes it hard for a pickpocket to ease-out the wallet -- they think it's caught on something, and give up.

At the end of the talk, raffle tickets were drawn. The grand prize, won by one of the seniors present, was a shredder. --*Steve Geller*