

connections

PRICELESS

Volume XXVI, Number 6

Published by the Peace & Justice Network since 1986

July 2008

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Community leaders

Standing up for workers—Lucio Reyes

John Morearty

All his adult life, Lucio Reyes has been defending the rights of ordinary working people. He came from Mexico in 1966 at age fourteen, finished high school, and soon was organizing with Cesar Chavez in the United Farm Workers Union (UFW). A newspaper photo (August 1989) hangs in his office: Lucio with Cesar, "the Master," at a tomato boycott and strike in San Joaquin County

In 1973 he got a job at the Diamond Walnut plant in Stockton. A hands-on mechanic from boyhood and by training, he took the eight hour practical test for promotion to maintenance, but failed; took it again and "failed" again under suspicious circumstances. There were no minorities in maintenance. He organized other minorities in the plant, and sixteen of them filed a lawsuit against unfair labor practices. A sympathetic judge awarded them all back pay. The judge also required that Lucio and three other minorities be trained as shop stewards in the plant, and encouraged Lucio to run for union office.

"In those days it was terrible, you couldn't run for office without being threatened, I went through a lot of stuff running for office." But in 1987 he was elected secretary-treasurer of Teamsters

Local 601 in Stockton, the Cannery Workers Union, a position he has been re-elected to ever since.

A jurisdictional dispute raged in those days between the UFW and the Teamsters. Lucio felt that "there's so much fish in the sea, there's room for everybody," and as a union officer he helped negotiate a pact; "we broke bread for the first time." The partnership endures.

In the early 1990s Diamond Walnut fell on hard times, and the workers agreed to a pay cut. Business got better, but management broke their promise of a raise; lied to and betrayed, the union went out on strike. The strike lasted fourteen years, and many observers thought it would never end. The union bought billboards in south Stockton, "Can Walnuts, not Workers"; Lucio [everyone calls him that] and a busload of workers carried a boycott of Diamond across the U.S. and Canada, and to Europe. Finally, in 2005, the company settled the strike and re-hired the union workers.

These days, Local 601 has 7-8,000 members. Lucio is also



secretary-treasurer of the Cannery Council of the state of California, with some 23,000 members, and an active member of the Central Labor Council of San Joaquin/Calaveras Counties.

"We worked for the last month very hard, phone banking to elect Ann Johnston mayor of Stockton, and also Steve Bestolarides to the board of supervisors. Republicans or Democrats, we don't care, I've got their voting records right here [he points to his file cabinet]; there are some Democrats like Cathleen Galgiani, if they don't care about working people in this area....

"Ann Johnston said to me, 'When I am mayor, we will hire only union workers on city contracts. We want to pay to have the job done once and done right, not pay to have it done over again.' "

Lucio said he applauded the work of "Citizens for Government Accountability," who put out fact pieces against Gary Giovanetti and Clem Lee in the June primary. "I'm not part of that group, I haven't talked with them, but this is a key thing that's happening in this country: for

the first time, people are taking time to do some research, and put the voting records of the officeholders out there for the voters. This is really great. I'm glad that Giovanetti is not in the runoff. And look at Lee: when he's running for office, he's had so much money, he thought he had it in the bag, and he came in way behind Ann Johnston. As a matter of fact, he's one of the ones on the city council who voted to give this Parragary's restaurant free lease till 2012. And guess what: how can we be doing that to a city

(continued page 7)

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We will have our chance

Bruce Giudici

So. We now have Obama. For the city, Ann Johnston. Kathy Miller of Mike Merriweather. Chris Eley or Diana Lowery. Dale Fritchen or Mark Stebbins. At the county, its Carlos Villapudua or Bev Foster. So, how will it be? What will we get?

In five months, we could have a new direction for Stockton. While the market for new homes languishes, naturally slowing sprawl, the Stockton General Plan will be guided by this new council: Stockton's future is at a crossroads. As the election approaches, we will be asking where each stands

on future development. As always, your vote will be crucial.

Likewise, we will have a new national direction. Obama will bring change—in the economy, the wars, the environment, trade, housing, inequality, human and civil rights. Still, it is hard to imagine that, after the most backward 8 years of any president since President McKinley, the media believes that McCain has a remote chance of becoming number 44. In five months, however, the distinctions will become clear—and change will come.

It remains for us to organize, to ensure that the new president

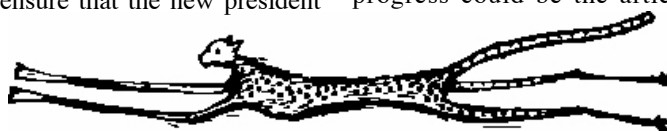
understands the priorities of today's America. Shifting the tax burden to the rich will benefit everyone. Backing out of Iraq and Afghanistan quickly will make us safer. Selflessly providing food and medical aid to the disadvantaged both here and abroad will make moral sense. Helping those made destitute by the housing crisis will make the economy stronger. And closing Guantanamo is a no-brainer.

Of course, we still have seven months of Mr. 25% approval rating—mischief lurks with nothing left to lose. Slowing his progress could be the articles

Bruce Giudici, editor



of impeachment (on page 10) that play like a new millennium worst-of album. As we hold those accountable for the current state of affairs, we must begin to clean up the mess—let's listen to the more progressive voices in Congress and support them (note the trade article on page 8). This summer, begin to imagine what we can do. Because, come January 2009, we will have our chance.



Feedback

Time to get these voices off the Record?

Editor,

In Charles Krauthammer's column of June 2 (Stockton Record), he proclaims himself to be "an agnostic in the Church of Global Warming." Like fellow cell-mates George Will, Bill O'Reilly and Thomas Sowell, locked in a myopic prison, they all have fed at the trough of corporate avarice so long that they have lost any perspective they may have once had. The relentless chant of these men - and those who think like them - is that left-wing reformers, intellectuals, progressives, and of course, liberals, are working non-stop to impose regulations that would impede business and stifle Western civilization's insatiable, cupider desire for membership in another Church; that of Individualism.

"Egalitarianism, altruism ... balderdash!" they say. They look down long, thin, probing noses, scoffing at the overwhelming majority of the world's scientists who declare human-generated carbon-induced global warming to be a reality. To acknowledge such would be sacrilegious, since it would result in a loss of capital for the fat cat CEOs who are polluting our environment and making 400-500 times what their average employees make. Of course, if Krauthammer and company had lived a century or more ago, they

would have argued that Southern states were being deprived of their rights and dealt an unfair blow to their economies with the abolition of slavery. All except Sowell, perhaps, who would not enjoy the journalistic audience he has today.

In chorus they would categorically state that business was impeded by the implementation of the Pure Food and Drug Act; that laws restricting child labor denied business a valuable source of cheap labor; that workplace safety regulations were an unfair burden to employers; and that labor unions should be abolished because they deny freedom to both employer and employee. They would have marched to the pounding of the drum as America swept to its Manifest Destiny, slaughtering and lying to Native Americans, robbing Hispanics of their land, embracing and then rejecting the Chinese coolies for the sole purpose of labor extraction. The maintenance of the "status quo" must be preserved at all costs.

They surely would have danced and dined at the Vanderbilt home, cascaded with a million dollars worth of ostrich feathers - while mere blocks away, children died choking on carbon monoxide or from disease, starvation and pestilence in slum tenements, unable to afford better conditions on Vanderbilt wages. And no doubt, they have all sat in deep contemplation or vigorous discussion at a swank country

club or conservative think tank and seethed at the slow encroachment upon their constitutionally sacrosanct world by minorities and women intent on proving that the words of the Founding Fathers really meant something.

As for global warming, Mr. Krauthammer's beliefs clearly place him in the minority. I wonder how it feels.

Dave Waldon

A required opportunity to succeed

Editor,

More than a few people feel that solving the problem of youth crime in our community is in giving the responsibility to law enforcement the responsibility of solving youth problems; educating and raising them are ours.

The responsibility of solving our youth problems should not be giving to law enforcement, because the solution results in expanded prison facilities or death, both of which cost us.

Our children and youth are our problems, parents, and communities alike. We cannot expect to develop character, excellence, high expectations, and fortitude in our youth if we do not encourage these qualities in ourselves.

We are losing our youth to drugs, gang violence, alcohol, sexually transmitted diseases, suicide, poverty and homelessness.

Our educational institutions are failing our children, because we have failed as parents, in giving support to their instructors, and our institutions that we cherish.

Our only hope in saving and protecting our youth and our communities is to develop a network of parents, community organizations, educators: ie schools, business leaders, churches and law enforcement.

A consortium of members of law enforcement can educate youth about the consequences of anti-social behavior; educators and the school community can develop leadership qualities; parents can nurture, build self-esteem and respect in their children; business leaders can become centers of influence in the everyday world of employment; and church leaders can lay the foundation of spiritual and moral values.

Public forums must address the best solutions for youth in peril. Education rather than incarceration must be the public growth area of the next decade, and policies must improve the conditions and state of classroom teachers.

Additional funding must be provided to schools to promote male accountability and responsibility in minority youth for fatherhood in raising their offspring, as called for by presidential nominee Barack Obama. In the words of Larry Lizotte "what we have here is a required opportunity to succeed."

Jennet Stebbins

Connections

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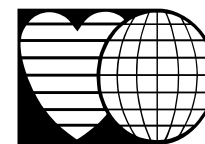
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Community Calendar: vacant

Deadline: 7th of each month (except Aug & Dec)

Circulation: 8,000

CONNECTIONS is a monthly publication of the Peace & Justice Network of San Joaquin County. The views expressed in CONNECTIONS are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Network. News, articles, letters and calendar items should be sent to the Peace & Justice Network, P.O. Box 4123, Stockton, CA 95204. The editor reserves the right of final decision on copy. Call (209) 467-4455 for more information. PJN is on the internet: <http://www.pjnsjc.org>



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"The Peace and Justice Network is a nonprofit educational organization committed to the vision of a world in which the equality of all persons is achieved, basic needs are met, conflict is resolved nonviolently, and the earth's resources are shared responsibly for the well-being of all her inhabitants and all future generations."

What About Afghanistan?

Robert Naiman

What about Afghanistan? A majority of the U.S. population and the Congress—like the majority of Iraqis and Iraqi parliamentarians—want the U.S. to withdraw from Iraq by a date certain. Senator Obama, the Democratic nominee, is expected by his supporters to get the U.S. out of Iraq if he is elected President. But about our other war, the war in Afghanistan, there is little public debate. Why not?

We know how Afghanistan and Iraq were different. Unlike Iraq, Afghanistan did appear to have some relationship to the September 11 attacks. Unlike Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the Taliban did have a relationship with Al Qaeda.

Legitimate questions can be raised about the justifications and international legality of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. But suppose we put those arguments to one side. Even if the original U.S. invasion were justified, would that mean we must acquiesce to an open-ended U.S. military occupation of Afghanistan?

Nearly seven years after U.S. forces invaded and occupied Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban government, perhaps we could consider what Afghanistan and Iraq have in common.

• U.S. soldiers are still being killed and wounded there. While fewer U.S. soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan than in Iraq (517 vs. 4094, according to Iraq Coalition Casualty Count,) if you compare deaths to forces deployed a different picture emerges. There have been 189 U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq in 2008 vs. 42 in Afghanistan, while there are about 150,000 U.S. soldiers in Iraq and about 30,000 U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan. So from the point of view of an individual soldier being deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, your chance of being killed is about the same.

• As in Iraq, in Afghanistan, civilians are regularly killed by U.S. forces in military operations that have not been authorized by the supposedly sovereign government.

• As in Iraq, in Afghanistan, citizens are detained indefinitely by U.S. forces, without the protection of internationally-recognized human rights.

• As in Iraq, U.S. military operations are justified as part of a "war on terror," but are entangled in internal political conflicts that have an ethnic and sectarian character, contributing to the belief that the objective of the U.S. is not simply to establish security in the country, but to ensure the dominance of one group or political faction over another.

• As in Iraq, current U.S. policy includes no plan or efforts for a political resolution that includes all major factions and all neighbors.

• As in Iraq, there is an open-ended commitment, no exit strategy and no plan for the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

What is especially worrisome is the sense that the Democratic leadership in Congress has decreed, for domestic political purposes, that the war in Afghanistan is "the good war," regardless of how long the war goes on, and regardless of what is actually happening on the ground. In this view, it's convenient for Democrats to "triangulate," to protect themselves against the argument that they are "weak on defense" because they want to get out of Iraq by having another war they can point to which they can say they support.

That may be useful in terms of domestic politics, but it's not good policy, either from the point of view of people

in Afghanistan or of military families and taxpayers in the United States.

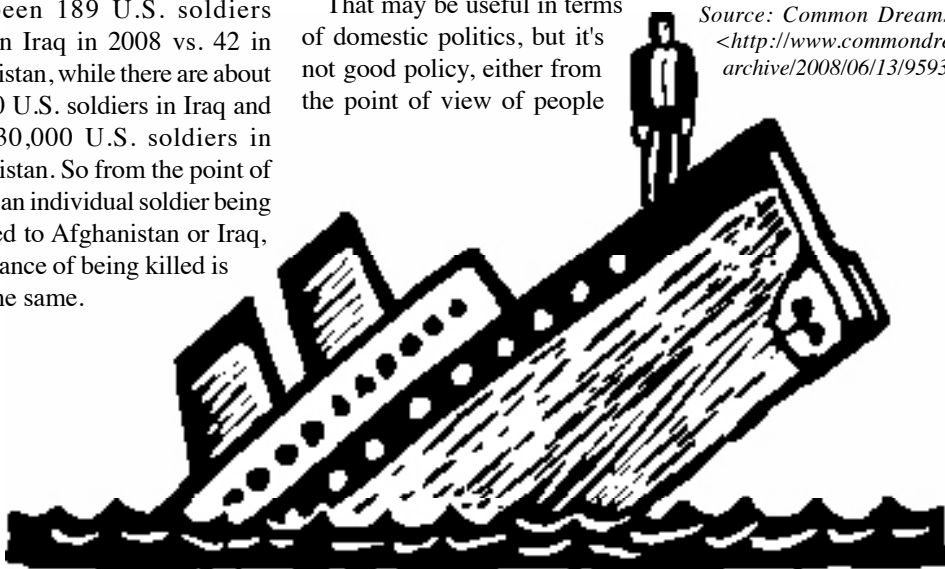
Moreover, the continuous reinforcement of the idea that it's the "Democratic position" that the war in Afghanistan is "the good war" and beyond question stifles debate necessary to reform U.S. policies. In 2006, when Republican Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist reasonably suggested that the war against Taliban guerillas couldn't be won militarily and that "people who call themselves Taliban" should be brought into the Afghan government, he was attacked by Democrats for trying to "cut and run." And that was the end of that discussion. Almost two years later, are we any closer to "victory" in Afghanistan, whatever that is? This week Peter Beaumont noted in the Guardian that claims that foreign forces were "routing" the Taliban "would surprise Afghans."

What is needed now, at least, is to begin public debate. And Members of Congress, if they want, know how to begin debate on such a topic. It was in a similar environment, when Members of Congress wanted to introduce into discussion a dose of politically controversial reality that wasn't being acknowledged or addressed by policy, that they formed the bipartisan Iraq Study Group.

How about an Afghanistan Study Group? It would be a start. Perhaps it could issue its report just after the November election, when there will be less temptation to spin its findings.

Robert Naiman is Senior Policy Analyst at Just Foreign Policy.

Source: Common Dreams 6/13/08
<<http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2008/06/13/9593/>>



MSM = truth? Check out the alternatives & decide for yourself

If you tap in to some of the alternative media, you will get a very different perspective on events. Especially now, when the mainstream media often acts as a cheerleader for whatever the administration does, it's necessary to go a little further to get your news. An internet connection is helpful.

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We're on the web too!

The Peace & Justice Network of San Joaquin County (pjnsjc) website has information, calendar, media links, and more. Under construction and growing. Share your ideas on how the website should evolve.

<http://www.pjnsjc.org>

McCain's health care plan for Americans: don't get sick

While Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has revealed little about his health care plan, the broad outlines of his proposal represent a "radical" departure from the current employer-based system, providing less coverage and imposing higher costs. McCain envisions a system under which most Americans shop for health insurance on their own in a highly deregulated market, which would charge higher deductibles and co-payments and provide less coverage.

Ultimately, McCain's vision places the 158 million Americans who receive their health care through their jobs in danger of losing coverage. McCain replaces the current tax breaks for employer-sponsored health insurance with a one-size-fits-all tax credit of \$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families, equalizing the tax treatment of employer and individual plans and enticing

healthy workers to buy cheaper but less substantive insurance in the individual marketplace. But the departure of healthy workers from employer insurance pools would drive up average health costs, forcing more workers to opt out entirely. The entire employer health insurance system could unravel, "ending this as an option for Americans who prefer it," as the Center for American Progress Action Fund has noted. Among those who would lose their health care are 56 million Americans with pre-existing chronic health conditions. Thus, McCain, a cancer survivor, would be unlikely to get coverage under his own plan if he did not have government-provided insurance. The McCain plan offers a simple prescription for Americans: Don't get sick.

Less Coverage

Plans in the individual insurance market cost less but also cover

less, and furthermore, provide inadequate safeguards against insurers who refuse to cover patients with pre-existing illnesses, deny coverage outright, or engage in other discriminatory practices. As Elizabeth Edwards points out, "Nine out of every ten people seeking individual coverage on the private insurance market never got it. Insurers will disqualify you for just taking certain medicines because of the possibility of future costs ... and insurers make it a practice to deny coverage to individuals in high-risk occupations, such as firefighting, lumber work, telecom installation and pretty much anything more risky than working in an office." Georgetown University professor Karen Pollitz noted "It's true that the advertised prices for many individual policies in many states are eye-poppingly low. The policies often cover very little: \$5,000 deductibles,

four doctor visits a year, no drugs." In addition, individual plans have lower premium costs because state laws offer much

weaker protections in the individual market than they do in the group market and therefore can avoid covering sick people. Moreover, as healthy patients develop medical conditions over time, their costs increase dramatically. In what is known as the death spiral, insurance companies in the individual market "stop accepting new customers in a plan" and increase costs for customers. "Healthier members find cheaper plans, but sicker ones are effectively forced out because they can't afford coverage," according to Consumer Reports.

Increased Costs

While McCain's individual tax credit may assist a limited number of families who currently lack any kind of health insurance, workers who receive a

higher tax subsidy through employer-based plans would experience a tax increase. The individual consumer would also have to stretch McCain's tax credit to cover the ever-growing costs of medical premiums. McCain indexes the growth of his initial tax credit to inflation, not premiums. Since premiums grow at a higher rate than inflation, McCain's proposal could impose an estimated \$3.6 trillion tax increase on workers. At the same time, administrative costs would increase dramatically.

Individual plans would require greater "marketing and processing" and waste premium dollars on the medical review and legal costs of underwriting. According to a new study released by the Center for American Progress Action Fund, McCain's plan could generate as much as \$20 billion in new administrative costs—representing an increase of more than 20 percent in 2007 dollars. Since McCain's plan would allow insurance companies to ignore in-state consumer protections, companies would offer cheaper



plans to healthier Americans, charging higher premiums—or not offering any coverage—to the sickest Americans.

Millions Left Uninsured

In April, Edwards astutely noted that McCain's plan offered nothing for the sickest Americans. In response to her criticism, McCain offered to subsidize state-sponsored high-risk pools to the tune of \$7 billion to \$10 billion. But experts suggest that McCain's proposed funding boost is "nowhere near enough (to cover the uninsured), particularly given the large number of people with pre-existing conditions who would need this help if employers send their workers out to the open market." In fact, historically, high-risk pools have led to inadequate coverage or high costs. "Only 200,000 Americans are covered by state high-risk pools, with health expenditures of \$1.6 billion. This means that a similar national program funded at \$7 billion per year would cover only 875,000 people—a fraction of the 56 million Americans with employer coverage who have chronic illnesses.

Even if participants had to pay half of their own premiums, as is generally the case today in state high-risk pools, less than 2 million Americans would be covered," noted reporters Laura Meckler and Anna Wilde Mathews. Most high-risk pools impose pre-existing condition exclusions on potential enrollees and have higher premiums, deductibles and co-payments—preventing chronically sick patients from receiving the health care they need.

Source: *Alternet Health and Wellness* 6/10/08 <http://www.alternet.org/healthwellness/>

The strains and drains of long-term care

Before the end of their lives, nearly 7 in 10 of today's 65-year-olds will need help with basic personal care—bathing, dressing, and eating—and with household responsibilities essential for independent living, like shopping and preparing hot meals. The financial, emotional, and physical costs of providing long-term care often overwhelm families; unpaid family members supply most of it, struggling to balance these duties with work and other responsibilities. The most common alternative to home care is a nursing home, but a year's stay averaged about \$78,000 in 2007, and public assistance is not generally available until the residents have exhausted all of their financial resources. As the nation grows older, it's time to find a better way to care for those who need help as they age.

In 2004 Americans spent \$135 billion on long-term care for older adults. Medicaid, the largest

single payer, currently finances 35 percent of the institutional care and home health services for eligible adults who cannot pay the full cost themselves. Although Medicaid also offers home- and community-based services and a variety of nonmedical and social supports designed to keep people with disabilities in the community, most of the program's spending on the aged and disabled is for institutional care.

Medicaid provides a fairly comprehensive package of services, but individuals must meet strict income and asset tests to qualify for coverage. Eligibility rules are complex and vary by state, but nursing home residents must generally surrender all of their assets, except for about \$2,000, and all of their income, except for a small personal needs allowance that may not exceed \$90 per month. Participants in special Medicaid programs may protect more of their income to

cover community living expenses, but some states do not allow them to keep more than \$637 per month, barely enough to live on. Medicaid beneficiaries with community-dwelling spouses are able to shield additional income. By requiring beneficiaries to turn nearly all of their savings over to the state, Medicaid discourages people from putting aside money to cover future long-term care costs.

Medicare is the other major federal program that finances long-term care, but it does so only under certain conditions. Medicare covers the first 100 days in a certified skilled nursing facility after hospitalizations and provides limited home health benefits, including medically necessary skilled nursing care, physical therapy, speech language services, and occupational therapy for homebound beneficiaries.

Source: *Urban Institute release* 6/9/08 <http://www.urban.org>

Cost of insurance outpaces income

Americans who get health insurance for their families through their jobs have seen their premiums increase 10 times faster than their income in recent years, according to a new analysis of government data. The study, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, shows that a growing share of workers' earnings is being absorbed by the increasing cost of health insurance.

Nationwide, the amount employees pay for family coverage increased 30 percent from 2001 to 2005, while family policyholders' income increased just 3 percent over the same period.

The analysis was conducted by researchers at the University of Minnesota. It shows that the proportion of insurance premiums that workers pay for family coverage has remained constant over the years, but the dollar amount that workers contribute has substantially increased.

Nationally, the average cost of family coverage increased nearly \$2,500 - from \$8,281 in 2001 to \$10,728 in 2005. The percentage of family premiums that employees pay held steady at about 24 percent. The amount that workers pay for family premiums, on average, increased \$664, from \$1,921 in 2001 to \$2,585 in 2005. Meanwhile, the median income of people who hold family health insurance policies increased just \$1,250 during the same period, from \$40,818 in 2001 to \$42,068 in 2005. The average cost that employers pay for their share of family coverage increased from \$6,360 to \$8,143, or 28 percent, during the period.

"This study makes plain what every working parent knows - that providing insurance coverage takes a bigger bite from the family budget every year," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "There is a clear connection between the rising cost of health care and the increasing number of uninsured Americans. As costs continue to go up, fewer people can pay their portion of the premium,



and fewer employers are able to offer insurance benefits. This research shows that an ever-increasing number of people will join America's uninsured unless our nation's leaders act to reform our health care system."

The findings show:

- Fewer employees are working in private-sector jobs that offer insurance. Nationally, 4.1 million fewer people worked in private-sector jobs that offered health insurance in 2005 than in 2001.
- Fewer private-sector businesses offer coverage. The number of private-sector employers nationwide who offered health insurance benefits to their employees fell by 30,000 from 2001 to 2005.
- Fewer people have private health insurance coverage. Americans with private health insurance fell nearly 2.4 million, or 6%, from 2001 to 2005.
- More people are uninsured. According to the latest Census figures, 47 million Americans do not have any health insurance.

The analysis was compiled by researchers at the State Health Access Data Assistance Center, located at the University of Minnesota. It uses the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (two-year averages for 2001-2002 and 2006-2007) and

Information about medical costs is hard to obtain

Despite all the talk among policy-makers about making the cost of medical care more transparent, so consumers are able to make better, more cost-effective choices, gaining accurate information about the price of hospital services is extremely difficult, the Philadelphia Inquirer reports.

In an experiment to see whether information about the price of a colonoscopy or a vaginal birth could be obtained, a reporter for the Inquirer called eight hospitals in the Philadelphia area. Half of the hospitals dodged the question or refused to respond. The four that did respond "shed the most light on how absurdly complicated unearthing cost figures is and how challenging it will be to bring true price competition to health care," according to the article.

Prices for a colonoscopy ranged from \$900 to \$8,000, a discrepancy that the Inquirer attributes to the fact that all patients pay different amounts depending on what their insurance company negotiated with the hospital, and insurers insist on keeping these rates secret for competitive reasons. In addition, "the prices insurers pay are typically much lower than charges, which hospitals insist virtually no one pays." These charges are what consumers are given if they ask about the price of a service, even though they do not accurately represent the cost of the service.

the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, conducted by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (2000, 2001, 2005).

"Public opinion polls show that health care reform is a top concern among Americans, and policy-makers are responding with ideas," said Lavizzo-Mourey. "As these discussions continue, our leaders need to pledge to work together to find common ground policies to provide coverage to all Americans. This will require



The article notes that the uninsured are those most likely to need to compare prices and are getting quoted prices that are far higher than what insurers have to pay. While some hospitals do give uninsured patients heavy discounts on their care, many ask them to pay the full charges, which often leads to personal bankruptcies. "Most uninsured people are not sophisticated enough to know they can negotiate prices, and they're not in much of a position to argue anyway," reports the Inquirer.

Uninsured people who are able to obtain data on what Medicare typically pays for a procedure are in a better position to negotiate. For example, an Amish leader in Iowa was charged \$1.2 million for the treatment of a premature baby, but was able to get the bill down to

\$250,000 when he showed what Medicare would have paid.

While making cost information more available can be helpful to consumers, it can have other, more profound effects on the health care system. "I don't think giving patients price information, even quality information, is going to drive the markets very much in terms of patients changing behavior," said Karen Davis, president of the Commonwealth Fund. "I think it's really important to do these things because it will change the hospitals' behavior." (Burling, Philadelphia Inquirer <<http://www.philly.com/philly/business/19637479.html>>, 6/8/08)

Source: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation release 4/29/08, RWJF, Route 1 and College Road East, P.O. Box 2316, Princeton, NJ 08543



every interest being willing to give a little to find a solution that everyone can support. Real action involves tough choices, trade-offs and compromise—but we need action."

"Throughout this week, working moms and dads who are struggling to make ends meet will add their voices to demand solutions for our health care system," said Lavizzo-Mourey. "With our economy sputtering, more than 47 million people already uninsured and

millions more worried about losing their coverage, the plight of the uninsured cannot continue to be ignored. These are Americans who are worried about their future. When millions of Americans lack stable, affordable coverage, it affects all of us. We all need a solution."

Source: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation release 4/29/08, RWJF, Route 1 and College Road East, P.O. Box 2316, Princeton, NJ 08543



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Bush's deadly "diplomacy"

Norman Solomon

President Bush walks through a cemetery during his trip to Paris yesterday. Bolstered by mainstream media, Bush has made a habit of framing murderous policies as "diplomacy." With 219 days left in his presidency, George W. Bush laid more flagstones along a path to war on Iran. There was the usual declaration that "all options are on the table" - and, just as ominously, much talk of diplomacy.

Three times on Wednesday, The Associated Press reports, Bush "called a diplomatic solution 'my first choice,' implying there are others. He said 'we'll give diplomacy a chance to work,' meaning it might not." That's how Bush talks when he's grooving along in his Orwellian comfort zone, eager to order a military attack.

"We seek peace," Bush said in the State of the Union address on January 28, 2003. "We strive for peace."

In that speech, less than two months before the invasion of Iraq began, Bush foreshadowed the climax of his administration's diplomatic pantomime. "The United States will ask the UN Security Council to convene on February the 5th to consider the facts of Iraq's ongoing defiance of the world," the president said. "Secretary of State Powell will present information and intelligence about Iraq's legal - Iraq's illegal weapons programs, its attempt to hide those weapons from inspectors, and its links to terrorist groups."

A week after that drum roll, Colin Powell made his now-infamous presentation to the UN Security Council. At the time, it served as ideal "diplomacy" for war—filled with authoritative charges and riddled with deceptions.

We should never forget the raptures of media praise for Powell's crucial mendacity. A key bellwether was *The New York Times*.

The front page of *The Times* had been plying administration lies about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction for a long time. Now the newspaper's editorial stance,



ostensibly antiwar, swooned into line—rejoicing that "Mr. Powell's presentation was all the more convincing because he dispensed with apocalyptic invocations of a struggle of good and evil and focused on shaping a sober, factual case against Mr. Hussein's regime."

The *Times* editorialized that Powell "presented the United Nations and a global television audience yesterday with the most powerful case to date that Saddam Hussein stands in defiance of Security Council resolutions and has no intention of revealing or surrendering whatever unconventional weapons he may have." By sending Powell to address the Security Council, *The Times* claimed, President Bush "showed a wise concern for international opinion."

Bush had implemented the kind of "diplomacy" advocated by a wide range of war enthusiasts. For instance, Fareed Zakaria, a former managing editor of the elite-flavored journal *Foreign Affairs*, had recommended PR prudence in the quest for a confrontation that could facilitate an invasion of Iraq. "Even if the inspections do not produce the perfect crisis," Zakaria wrote the previous summer, "Washington will still be better off for having tried because it would be seen to have made every effort to avoid war."

A few months later, on November 13, 2002, *Times* columnist Thomas Friedman wrote that "in the world of a single, dominant superpower, the UN Security Council becomes even more important, not less." And he was pleased with the progress of groundwork for war, writing enthusiastically: "The Bush team discovered that the best way to legitimize its overwhelming might—in a war of choice—was not by simply imposing it, but by channeling it through the UN."

Its highly influential reporting, combined with an editorial position that wavered under

pressure, made *The New York Times* extremely useful to the Bush administration's propaganda strategy for launching war on Iraq. The paper played along with the diplomatic ruse in much the same way that it promoted lies about weapons of mass destruction.

But to read the present-day revisionist history from *The New York Times*, the problem with the run-up to the Iraq invasion was simply misconduct by the Bush administration (ignobly assisted by pliable cable news networks).

Recently, when *The Times* came out with an editorial headlined "The Truth About the War" on June 6, the newspaper assessed the implications of a new report by the Senate Intelligence Committee. "The report shows clearly that President Bush should have known that important claims he made about Iraq did not conform with intelligence reports," *The Times* editorialized. "In other cases, he could have learned the truth if he had asked better questions or encouraged more honest answers."

Unfortunately, changing just a few words - substituting "The New York Times" for "President Bush" —renders an equally accurate assessment of what a factual report would clearly show: "The New York Times should have known that important claims it made about Iraq did not conform with intelligence reports. In other cases, *The Times* could have learned the truth if it had asked better questions or encouraged more honest answers."

Now, as agenda-setting for an air attack on Iran moves into higher gear, the mainline US news media—with *The New York Times* playing its influential part—are engaged in coverage that does little more than provide stenographic services for the Bush administration.

Source: *truthout! Perspective* 6/15/08 www.truthout.com Norman Solomon is a columnist and author. His web site is www.normansolomon.com <<http://www.normansolomon.com>>.

Landmark Court ruling: Gitmo detainees have rights

The US Supreme Court ruling recognizing the right of Guantanamo detainees to challenge their detention in civilian courts deals a stunning blow to the Bush administration's detention policies, Human Rights Watch said mid June. The lead plaintiffs in the case are Bosnian Lakhdar Boumediene and Kuwaiti Fawzi al-Odah, who are both being held at Guantanamo without charge.

The right of prisoners to challenge the legal basis of their detention, the centuries-old right known as habeas corpus, provides a basic check against the abuses inherent in unfettered executive power. The June 12, 2008, ruling in *Boumediene v. Bush* undermines the Bush administration's practice of holding terrorism suspects at Guantanamo Bay in indefinite detention.

"The Supreme Court decision has stripped Guantanamo of its reason for being: a law-free zone where prisoners can't challenge their detention," said Kenneth Roth, executive director at Human Rights Watch. "The ruling is not only a landmark victory for justice, it's a big step toward establishing a smarter, more effective counterterrorism policy."

The Supreme Court's 5-4 decision, written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, rejects the Bush administration's argument that prisoners can be held for years without a fair process for assessing the evidence against them. It means that the federal courts "which are equipped with the procedures necessary to protect sensitive national security information" will now be able to examine the basis for detainees' claims that they are wrongly held.

In reaching its decision, the court rejected the administration's assertion that the procedures established in the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 and the Military Commissions Act of 2006 were an adequate substitute for habeas. The Boumediene ruling is based on the US Constitution, unlike the court's 2004 decision in *Rasul v. Bush*, which would make it more difficult to overrule by legislation.



The Supreme Court's ruling firmly rejects the Bush administration's view of Guantanamo as a "law-free zone," which provided the original impetus for transferring hundreds of men for detention there.

It also represents an important step toward ending the administration's use of military commissions, set up to try foreign terrorism suspects at Guantanamo. As Human Rights Watch has long argued, these commissions are vulnerable to illegitimate political influence, permit the use of coerced evidence and hearsay, and place undue restrictions on the ability of military and civilian defense counsel to present an effective defense. The ruling, by raising questions about the determination of enemy combatant status, further shows that the process underlying the military commissions does

not meet international fair trial standards.

"The Boumediene decision so undermines Guantanamo's distorted system that it should sound the camp's death knell," Roth said. "It sends a clear signal to the Bush administration that they should close Guantanamo and stop holding people in indefinite detention without charge."

Human Rights Watch believes that detainees who are implicated in terrorist crimes should be transferred to the federal court system for trial. In recent years, the federal courts have proven that they have capacity and expertise to handle complex terrorism prosecutions involving evidence obtained overseas. Their rulings will have the credibility necessary to command respect worldwide.

Source: Human Rights Watch release 6/12/08, HRW, 350 Fifth Ave, 34th Floor, NY, NY 10118

Lucio Reyes *(continued from page 1)*

that is needing funding? We're in trouble."

I asked Lucio about Free Trade. "Bush is pushing for Free Trade with Colombia, and that's a country that's killing hundreds of labor organizers, growing cocaine and shipping it through Mexico to this country."

How about the war in Iraq?

"We sat down with Dennis Cardoza, and now he is against funding the occupation in Iraq. Jerry McNerney has always been very strong that way."

"I have a really hard core issue, that bugs me when I go to bed at night. From the beginning, when Bush went to war with Iraq, I had this vision that this was going to happen. This country's going to be bankrupt, people waiting in line

for food; it's happening in Kansas now. I see every day on TV, the Iraqi people with their mothers, their fathers, their grandparents; how many people have we killed today? 300,000, 600,000, close to a million? The pain and the suffering for even one person is damage. I've got kids; if I should lose one, nobody could ever repay that."

"I have two kids who served in the armed forces, and one has now chosen to work for the union. I see people in this union local, their kids die in Iraq. And it angers me, because it wasn't necessary. I would have rather had the international community take care of Saddam Hussein, with a united front."

"Every minute we're fighting the war in Iraq, three million dollars

U.S. uses Iraq to seek war in Iran

Faiz Shakir

The ongoing negotiations between Iraqi leaders and the Bush administration over the future role of the military occupation have turned into an increasingly acrimonious public debate. The Bush administration's demand for 58 permanent bases in Iraq—a near doubling of the current 30 bases—are causing Iraqis to warn that the status of forces agreement would be more abominable than the occupation. The administration is reportedly holding hostage some \$50bn of Iraq's money in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to pressure the Iraqi government into signing an agreement.

The reason the White House is so hell-bent on signing a long-term agreement may have less to do with Iraq and more to do with Iran. According to press reports of the ongoing negotiations, the Bush administration is seeking the power to determine if a hostile act from another country is aggression against Iraq. Ali al Adeb, a leading member of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Dawa party, confirmed: "The Americans insist so far that it is they who define what is an aggression on Iraq and what is democracy inside Iraq—if we come under aggression we should

define it and ask for help."

The administration's request would seemingly allow the U.S. to brand Iran as an enemy of Iraq and attack Iran in the name of defending Iraq pursuant a legal obligation under the status of forces agreement.

Other details from press accounts confirm that the Bush administration has one eye on Iran in the course of its negotiations with Iraqis. The Washington Post explains that the administration is seeking the prerogative for U.S. forces to conduct operations without approval from the Iraqi government.

Moreover, the U.S. wants control over Iraq's airspace: The American negotiators also called for continued control over Iraqi airspace and the right to refuel planes in the air, according to [Sami al-Askari, a leading Shiite politician], positions he said added to concerns that the United States was preparing to use Iraq as a base to attack Iran.

Since the administration is unlikely to get an Iran war authorized through Congress, it's instead trying to sneak it through the Iraqi parliament.

Source: Think Progress 6/11/08 <http://www.thinkprogress.org/>

is going down the toilet. You talk twenty-four hours a day, add it up."

I asked, "If Barack Obama is elected next January, and you got a chance to sit down with him, what would you tell him?" Lucio answered:

"I will sit down with him, and I won't wait till January. I would ask him, the first day he comes into office, to open a full investigation against George Bush. If they find George Bush guilty of treason—because in this case he betrayed us, he lied to us—if they find him guilty of all the stuff that has been going on even today, I want him to be prosecuted, and I want him to be punished, and I want him to be stricken from every right he had as president. Because we cannot allow this human disaster

and abuse of government to be done down the line with anyone in this country or any country in the world.

"What is the punishment for a hundred thousand people? I would say personally, put him in jail for the rest of his life. Period. That's what he deserves. I want that guy to remember for the rest of his life what he did to this country."

I asked him, isn't he afraid to say these things in public?

"Since I came from Mexico, I believed that you have to teach your kids and your friends that you cannot remain silent. Because once you speak out, others who were afraid will begin to speak out, and it will become like a wildfire. And once the truth is out, things will change."

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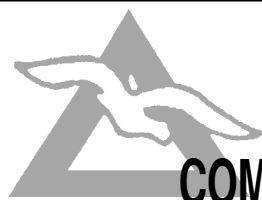
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A trade bill even Teamsters can support

James Hoffa, Jr.

Congress is looking at a new trade proposal: the TRADE Act. Even the Teamsters like it—and that's saying a mouthful, because we've been fierce critics of every trade proposal since NAFTA. Deals like NAFTA, CAFTA and China PNTR aren't really "free trade agreements." They're deals to lure corporations away from America by promising access to cheap labor.

The TRADE Act would rewrite the rules on global trade. It would prevent agreements with countries that offer up their workers and their environment in exchange for investment deals that benefit a few of their richest citizens.

The TRADE Act also calls for a review of existing agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA—which, as the Teamsters say, give workers the SHAFTA. Give credit to the TRADE Act's Democratic sponsors: Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Rep. Mike Michaud of Maine. They know the TRADE Act won't pass this year—despite its 52 House cosponsors. There just isn't time this late in the session. But Brown and Michaud also know the debate about trade needs to be changed before trade rules can be changed. For the past 15 years, anyone who opposed a so-called "free trade agreement" was labeled a protectionist. And that was the end of the story.

Now, the TRADE Act allows us to present an alternative to trade rules that destroy good jobs, harm the environment and lower safety standards. It allows us to make our case that trade can spread benefits

to workers as well as to Wall Street. We know change is coming. The American people are demanding it. In less than five months, we'll have a new president. And we'll have a new course on trade. The TRADE Act sets that course—for trade that creates good jobs and raises living standards for workers here and overseas.

Other comments

Change to Win:

This legislation will finally bring an end to the disastrous trade deals that have sent millions of jobs overseas and lowered safety standards. It will set new rules for global trade that create good American jobs, improve working conditions everywhere, and make sure that the benefits of trade are shared with workers, not just corporate CEOs. The TRADE Act lays the foundation for creating fair trade agreements that will help working families achieve the American Dream in the 21st century economy.

National Farmers Union:

Current trade agreements have consistently failed to live up to their promised benefits, encouraging a race to see who can produce the cheapest food and fiber regardless of production standards. The TRADE Act defines a plan for a fair trade policy that will allow American agriculture to compete on a level playing field.

Friends of the Earth:

Friends of the Earth supports well-crafted trade policies that protect



the environment and workers, enhance public health and safety, foster strong democratic institutions and improve the quality of life worldwide. Unfortunately, our world's precious natural resources face serious threats from the current free trade model. Past trade pacts, based upon the failed NAFTA/CAFTA model have not worked, and actually encourage industry to relocate in pursuit of the least stringent environmental and social standards. Trade agreements should support, rather than undermine, environmental protection. The TRADE Act encourages responsible behavior, providing a blueprint for a far better and more balanced way to conduct international trade.

Machinists:

The IAM believes that an entirely new model of trade and the global economy is critical if we are to regain our economic strength in the World. The first step is to throw out the old, failed model. The second step is to begin to craft a new model that is based on fairness and that will result in helping, not devastating, workers here at home... The TRADE Act represents a fresh new start to replacing the failed trade model that continues to destroy jobs, lives and communities.

Sources: Hoffa in the Huffington Post 6/10/08 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>; Eyes on Trade <http://citizen.typepad.com/eyesontrade/>

AlterNet 6/10/08 <<http://www.alternet.org>>.

**"The TRADE Act represents
a fresh new start to replacing
the failed trade model that
continues to destroy jobs, lives
and communities."**

"After years of disclosures...
there is no longer any doubt
as to whether the current
administration has committed
war crimes."

US general accuses Bush administration of war crimes

Matt Renner/Maya Schenwar

Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba (now retired) served as the deputy commanding general for support for the Third Army for ten months in Kuwait during the early days of the Iraq occupation. In a statement released today, he bluntly accuses the Bush administration of war crimes and lays down a challenge for prosecution.

In 2004, Taguba released a classified report detailing abuses committed at Abu Ghraib Prison.

The "Taguba Report" (executive summary) urged Pentagon officials to follow up on its findings by enforcing adherence to the Geneva Conventions in interrogations.

Taguba retired in January 2007, later alleging that Pentagon officials had ordered him to retire for being "overzealous" in his criticisms of the military.

In light of ongoing Congressional investigations into so-called harsh interrogation techniques, and

on the heels of Congressman Dennis Kucinich recently issuing articles of impeachment accusing President Bush of, among other offenses, authorizing torture, we present Taguba's latest statement for your consideration.

The full Physicians for Human Rights report outlining the medical evidence of torture perpetrated by the United States can be read at their website.

Source: *Truthout Report 6/18/08*. www.truthout.org

Preface to *Broken Laws, Broken Lives*

*Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba,
USA (Retired)*

Maj. Gen. Taguba led the US Army's official investigation into the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal and testified before Congress on his findings in May 2004. This report tells the largely untold human story of what happened to detainees in our custody when the Commander-in-Chief and those under him authorized a systematic regime of torture. This story is not only written in words: It is scrawled for the rest of these individuals' lives on their bodies and minds. Our national honor is stained by the indignity and inhumane treatment these men received from their captors.

The profiles of these eleven former detainees, none of whom were ever charged with a crime or told why they were detained, are tragic and brutal rebuttals to those who claim that torture

is ever justified. Through the experiences of these men in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, we can see the full scope of the damage this illegal and unsound policy has inflicted - both on America's institutions and our nation's founding values, which the military, intelligence services, and our justice system are duty-bound to defend.

In order for these individuals to suffer the wanton cruelty to which they were subjected, a government policy was promulgated to the field whereby the Geneva Conventions and the Uniform Code of Military Justice were disregarded. The UN Convention Against Torture was indiscriminately ignored. And the healing professions, including physicians and psychologists, became complicit in the willful infliction of harm against those the Hippocratic Oath demands they protect.

After years of disclosures by

government investigations, media accounts, and reports from human rights organizations, there is no longer any doubt as to whether the current administration has committed war crimes. The only question that remains to be answered is whether those who ordered the use of torture will be held to account.

The former detainees in this report—each of whom is fighting a lonely and difficult battle to rebuild his life - require reparations for what they endured, comprehensive psycho-social and medical assistance, and even an official apology from our government.

But most of all, these men deserve justice as required under the tenets of international law and the United States Constitution.

And so do the American people.

Source: <http://brokenlives.info> 6/19/08



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Articles of Impeachment v. Bush... more than a stained dress

Congressman Dennis Kucinich introduced 35 Articles of Impeachment against President Bush on June 9 as follows:

Article I

Creating a Secret Propaganda Campaign to Manufacture a False Case for War Against Iraq

Article II

Falsely, Systematically, and with Criminal Intent Conflating the Attacks of September 11, 2001, With Misrepresentation of Iraq as a Security Threat as Part of Fraudulent Justification for a War of Aggression

Article III

Misleading the American People and Members of Congress to Believe Iraq Possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction, to Manufacture a False Case for War

Article IV

Misleading the American People and Members of Congress to Believe Iraq Posed an Imminent Threat to the United States

Article V

Illegally Misspending Funds to Secretly Begin a War of Aggression

Article VI

Invading Iraq in Violation of the Requirements of HJRes114

Article VII

Invading Iraq Absent a Declaration of War.

Article VIII

Invading Iraq, A Sovereign Nation, in Violation of the UN Charter

Article IX

Failing to Provide Troops With Body Armor and Vehicle Armor

Article X

Falsifying Accounts of US Troop Deaths and Injuries for Political Purposes

Article XI

Establishment of Permanent U.S. Military Bases in Iraq

Article XII

Initiating a War Against Iraq for Control of That Nation's Natural Resources

Article XIII

Creating a Secret Task Force to Develop Energy and Military Policies With Respect to Iraq and Other Countries

Article XIV

Misprision of a Felony, Misuse and Exposure of Classified Information And Obstruction of Justice in the Matter of Valerie Plame Wilson, Clandestine Agent of the Central Intelligence Agency

Article XV

Providing Immunity from Prosecution for Criminal Contractors in Iraq

Article XVI

Reckless Misspending and Waste of U.S. Tax Dollars in Connection With Iraq and US Contractors

Article XVII

Illegal Detention: Detaining Indefinitely And Without Charge Persons Both U.S. Citizens and Foreign Captives

Article XVIII

Torture: Secretly Authorizing, and Encouraging the Use of Torture Against Captives in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Other Places, as a Matter of Official Policy

Article XIX

Rendition: Kidnapping People and Taking Them Against Their Will to "Black Sites" Located in Other Nations, Including Nations Known to Practice Torture

Article XX

Imprisoning Children

Article XXI

Misleading Congress and the American People About Threats from Iran, and Supporting Terrorist Organizations Within Iran, With the Goal of Overthrowing the Iranian Government

Article XXII

Creating Secret Laws

Article XXIII

Violation of the Posse Comitatus Act

Article XXIV

Spying on American Citizens, Without a Court-Ordered Warrant, in Violation of the Law and the Fourth Amendment

Article XXV

Directing Telecommunications Companies to Create an Illegal and Unconstitutional Database of the Private Telephone Numbers and Emails of American Citizens

Article XXVI

Announcing the Intent to Violate Laws with Signing Statements

Article XXVII

Failing to Comply with Congressional Subpoenas and Instructing Former Employees Not to Comply

Article XXVIII

Tampering with Free and Fair Elections, Corruption of the Administration of Justice

Article XXIX

Conspiracy to Violate the Voting Rights Act of 1965

Article XXX

Misleading Congress and the American People in an Attempt to Destroy Medicare

Article XXXI

Katrina: Failure to Plan for the Predicted Disaster of Hurricane Katrina, Failure to Respond to a Civil Emergency

Article XXXII

Misleading Congress and the American People, Systematically Undermining Efforts to Address Global Climate Change

Article XXXIII

Repeatedly Ignored and Failed to Respond to High Level Intelligence Warnings of Planned Terrorist Attacks in the US, Prior to 911.

Article XXXIV

Obstruction of the Investigation into the Attacks of September 11, 2001

Article XXXV

Endangering the Health of 911 First Responders

The full text of the articles is available at:

<http://chun.afterdowningstreet.org/amomentoftruth.pdf>

Extensive documentation to accompany each article are posted at the following websites:

<http://kucinich.us>

<http://democrats.com>

<http://afterdowningstreet.org>

What you can do:

ACTION: 1) Email your Representatives to support Kucinich's Articles of Impeachment; 2) Call your Representative at 202-224-3121; 3) Call your favorite talk shows and tell everyone who supports impeachment to sign the petition at [Democrats.com](http://www.democrats.com)
<http://www.democrats.com/35-articles-of-impeachment>

Source: Democratic Party Activists release 6/10/08 <http://www.democrats.com>

Mission Accomplished

Masquerading as a man of peace
He declared unnecessary, preemptive war.

Proclaiming to be a man of faith
He forgot "thou shalt not kill."

Impersonating a man of compassion

He ignored the pleas of Katrina victims

as they got sucked down the drain.

Arriving at the ball, a self-anointed man of the people,

He filled out his dance card to waltz with the elite.

Feigning (with typical contemptuous alacrity)

A love of nature

He sanctioned the manipulation of science,

The raping of our environment.

And now, this charlatan -

This Crawford chameleon -

This faux facilitator -

This trickster who speaks of the sanctity of life

Whilst hidden by the perfidious camouflage

Of a Pax-Americana-inspired War on Terror -

Will soon depart ...

A treacherous, self indulgent, fraudulent,

Bumbling, forked-tongued snake oil salesman

Spinning on an Axis of Evil

With each corporate, corrupted breath he takes,

Having wound his oily, bloody path

Across the nation and the world

Leaving death, destruction, fear, uncertainty

And economic ruin in his wake.

Soon, yet not soon enough,

This cruel prank played on an undeserving world

Will take his rightful and well-deserved place

Alongside the pantheon of false prophets,

The betrayers of humanity

Who dare call themselves men.

—Dave Waldon

On the economy debate, differences are clear

Robert Borosage

The choice before the voters on the economy became more clear this week: a "bottom-up prosperity" that puts people first or more of a worn conservative dogma that emphasizes tax breaks for the wealthy and a retreat from public investment in rebuilding the country. We haven't witnessed this clear an ideological division since the 1964 Johnson-Goldwater face-off.

Monday in Raleigh, North Carolina, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama opened the general election fight, taking the gloves off against the "tired and misguided [economic] philosophy that has dominated Washington for too long," and offering a clear challenge to the Bush-McCain economic misrule. In Washington before the National Federation of Independent Business, McCain counterpunched, suggesting the choice was between low taxes and "the largest tax increase since World War II."

This argument will be the big kahuna in this election. Despite ritual boosterism, soothing rhetoric and quiet prayers by Wall Street pundits, the economy is foul and likely to get much worse. We've lost jobs for five months in a row. Gas, food, health care costs are soaring. For workers, the mess is worse than the stagflation of the 1970s. Then, growth was stagnant while prices and wages were spiraling up. Now we've got stagflation squared; growth and wages are stagnant and prices on basics are soaring, while the value of homes, the largest investment Americans have, is plummeting.

Many aren't making it. Home foreclosures are the highest since the great depression. One in six homes in America is worth less than the mortgage. With prices down 14 percent from last year, Americans have seen \$2.5 trillion in wealth erased. No wonder credit card debt has soared, and workers are rifling retirement accounts.

President Bush and John McCain say the "fundamentals are strong," so the downturn is a "rough patch." As the president

left for Europe, he once more celebrated our "open and flexible" economy, with "some of the deepest and most liquid capital markets" [he's apparently been AWOL the last months], arguing that the "long-term health and strong foundation of our economy will shine through and be reflected in currency values."

Bush and Republicans in Congress have been resisting any new stimulus measures, arguing that the \$600 rebate checks going out in the stimulus package are just kicking in, and that things will get better.

Not likely. Gas prices will chew up the rebates—while racking up rising trade deficits. And beginning in July, states and localities will be laying off teachers and police, deferring construction projects as they struggle with rising deficits. And the banks staggered by the collapse of the financial bubble are now about to face the rising credit card, auto loan and mortgage defaults that come with an economic downturn.

Why are we in this mess? Obama put the blame for this directly on the Bush-McCain economic strategy. The current crisis, he argued, wasn't simply "some accident of history," or "an inevitable part of a business cycle." It was the "logical conclusion" of a "worn dogma" that has failed this country.

Obama called for a second, short-term \$50 billion stimulus; for aiding homeowners facing foreclosure through no fault of their own; and for extending unemployment benefits for those workers caught in the economic ebb tide. Bush and Congressional Republicans have resisted these measures.

But he also began to contrast his longer-range strategy for rebuilding America to the failed trickle-down, market fundamentalism and fiscal irresponsibility of the past years: "For eight long years, our president sacrificed investments in health care, and education, and energy, and infrastructure on the altar of tax breaks for big corporations and wealthy CEOs—trillions of dollars in giveaways

that proved neither compassionate nor conservative."

And with McCain pledging to sustain that same course—top end tax cuts and cuts in domestic spending—Obama draws the contrast: "John McCain and I have a fundamentally different vision of where to take the country. Because for all his talk of independence, the centerpiece of his economic plan amounts to a full-throated endorsement of George Bush's policies. He says we've made great progress in our economy these past eight years. He calls himself a fiscal conservative, and on the campaign trail he's a passionate critic of government spending, and yet he has no problem spending hundreds of billions of

dollars on tax breaks for big corporations and a permanent occupation of Iraq—policies that have left our children with a mountain of debt."

In contrast, Obama calls for a "bottom-up prosperity," based upon his version of putting people first. He wants to invest in education and training. He'd generate millions of new jobs in a concerted drive for energy independence. He'll create a national investment bank to rebuild and modernize our aging infrastructure, and put people to work. He'll help make college more affordable. He'll offer middle-class families (generously defined as making under \$150,000) a tax break, while raising taxes on the wealthy, shutting corporate tax loopholes, imposing an excess profits tax on the oil and gas companies, and using money saved from ending the Iraq war to invest here at home.

McCain scorns this as the old "tax and spend" policies that Americans can't afford, arguing that "Sen. Obama says I'm running for Bush's third term, seems to me he's running for Jimmy Carter's second." (Great line, except the stagflation is already here.) In his speech before the conservative National Federation of Independent Business, he called for not only sustaining the Bush tax cuts which he once opposed, but also adding new cuts (an



estimated \$300 billion a year) for corporations and the wealthy. He bizarrely emphasized "the estate tax," as "one of the most unfair taxes on the books," presumably because it applies primarily to the wealthiest 2 percent of America's fortunes.

McCain paints himself as the change largely by posing as the sheriff policing wasteful pork-barrel spending, in contrast to the wastrel ways of the Republican Congress and the Bush administration.

His plans earned Obama's scorn: McCain, he said, "is now calling for a new round of tax giveaways that are twice as expensive as the original Bush plan and nearly twice as regressive. His policy will spend nearly \$2 trillion on tax breaks for corporations, including \$1.2 billion for Exxon alone, a company that just recorded the highest profits in history. ... At a time when we're fighting two wars, when millions of Americans can't afford their medical bills or their tuition bills, when we're paying more than \$4 a gallon for gas, the man who rails against government spending wants to spend \$1.2 billion on a tax break for Exxon Mobil. That isn't just irresponsible. It's outrageous.

"I have a different vision for the future. Instead of spending \$12 billion a month to rebuild Iraq, I

think it's time we invested in our roads and schools and bridges and started to rebuild America. Instead of handing out giveaways to corporations that don't need them and didn't ask for them, it's time we started giving a hand up to families who are trying pay their medical bills and send their children to college. We can't afford four more years of skewed priorities that give us nothing but record debt—we need change that works for the American people."

In this exchange, McCain is in trouble. Here, as on Iraq, he is arguing for carrying the Bush agenda forward, while three-quarters of Americans think we're on the wrong course. As Obama puts it, "We have tried it their way for eight long years and it has failed. It is time to try something new. It is time for a change."

We haven't witnessed this clear an ideological division since the 1964 Johnson-Goldwater face-off. For those who feared Obama couldn't throw a punch, he showed both a good jab and a decent left hook in pounding McCain on the economy. That's why the Republican posse is likely to scorn sparring about policy and turn this election into an alley fight, taking out the knives around patriotism, pastors and race.

Source: Campaign for America's Future 6/11/08 www.truthout.com

Protect public transit

California's legislative leaders are working this month to send a state budget proposal to Governor Schwarzenegger. California continues to face a multi-billion dollar budget shortfall—a situation that has plagued the state for years and led to deep cuts in services that rely on state funds.

Local transit agencies receive a share of their budgets from the state but have suffered over the past few years as state leaders have sought ways to close budget gaps. When California legislators passed and the governor signed last year's budget they promised to protect a portion of the funds reserved for public transportation from being usurped into the state's "general fund." But now Governor Schwarzenegger's revised budget ignores that promise and recommends that public transportation agencies give up an additional 70 percent of their funds.

Providing transportation choices is one of the best ways to fight global warming. California needs an efficient, widely available public transportation system to get people out of their cars and reduce pollution and traffic congestion. Raiding public transportation funds would mean fare hikes, service cuts and maintenance delays for buses, trains and ferries throughout the state. Legislative budget committees are acting on the governor's proposed budget this month and are required to pass a budget by June 15 (although that deadline is frequently missed).

ACTION: Send a message urging legislative leaders and the governor to protect funding for public transportation in the state budget.

Source: NRDC's Earth Action 6/12/08
Natural Resources Defense Council,
40 West 20th St, NY, NY 10011 <http://www.nrdc.org>

Global warming bill not fixed—now ditched

Friends of the Earth has been on the forefront of the battle to fix the Lieberman-Warner global warming bill. Republicans shut down debate on the bill and it was not fixed, so it was ditched by the Democratic leadership. While the bill fell short of what scientists say we must do to reduce global warming pollution, it is still abhorrent that Republican senators were unwilling to even allow debate on amendments that could have significantly strengthened the bill.

The climate crisis threatens our health, economy and way of life, and bold legislative action is urgently needed. Looking forward to 2009, the Democratic leadership in both the House and Senate must advance strong bills that inspire environmentalists

and progressives across the country to take action and that can ultimately earn the support of all Americans.

Fails to solve global warming

Scientists say that in order to avoid catastrophic climate change, the United States must launch an immediate effort to cut its global warming

pollution and that this effort must reduce emissions to at least 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. Such a cut is the bare minimum that a political solution must achieve, as scientific knowledge continues to develop and recent studies show climate change is occurring more quickly than almost anyone had anticipated.

Unfortunately, even if the Lieberman-Warner bill achieves its goals by 2050, emissions would only be reduced by 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, according to the EPA. Additionally, new provisions in the bill which include international offsets suggest that domestic emissions reductions could be put off entirely until as late as 2020. This is a wholly inadequate response that doesn't solve the problem.

Giveaways to corporate polluters

The Lieberman-Warner bill gives hundreds of billions of dollars to corporate polluters over 38 years. The giveaways come in two forms. First, pollution permits (worth up to \$489 billion) will be handed to the fossil fuel industry for free. Instead of this approach, polluters should be required to pay for all emissions through a 100 percent auction of pollution permits. Second, the revenues raised by the bill's auctions should be invested wisely; instead, much revenue is directed to polluters through billions of dollars of subsidies to coal and potentially to nuclear power (worth up to \$105 billion).

Specifically, the nuclear power

industry could benefit up to \$92 billion dollars of the auction revenue. Already, nuclear receives more subsidies than any other electricity generating technology, excluding hydropower; between 1943 and 1999, nuclear power received 96 percent of electricity generating technology subsidies.

Fails to invest revenues fairly and wisely

Revenues generated by the bill's auctions must be spent fairly and wisely. Instead of giving money to polluters, the bill should use revenues to fund:

* Energy efficiency and clean energy: Using energy more efficiently and promoting clean and safe sources of energy, such as wind, solar and geothermal.

* Economic growth and assistance: The bill must guarantee that it assists low and middle income US Americans as they cope with increased energy costs.

* Adaptation funding for developing countries: Vulnerable communities around the world need funding to prepare for the impacts of climate change, such as droughts, floods, and fires.

* Clean transportation: Funds from this bill can provide US Americans with other options besides driving, which will significantly reduce our dependence on oil.

* Clean technology for developing countries: The bill should fund truly clean energy technologies to help countries leapfrog to climate friendly energy systems. Such technologies do not include oil, gas for export, any type of coal technology, hydropower above ten megawatts, or nuclear power.

* Funding for reducing tropical deforestation: The bill should fund assistance to countries for reducing tropical deforestation, which is critical to reducing global warming pollution, in a way that protects the environment and peoples' rights.

Source: Friends of the Earth release 6/15/08 <http://action.foe.org>

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China leaps ahead of U.S. in gas emissions

China has now clearly overtaken the United States as the world's leading emitter of climate-warming gases, a new study has found. The increasing emissions from China—up 8 percent in the past year—accounted for two-thirds of the growth in global greenhouse gas emissions in 2007, the study found.

The report, released Friday by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, is an annual study. Last year, for the first time, the researchers found that China had edged ahead of the United States as the world's leading emitter.

But the results were not so clear-cut as those released Friday, and many experts were skeptical of last year's finding. The International Energy Agency continued to say only that China was projected to overtake the United States by the end of 2007. "The difference had grown to a 14 percent difference, and that's indeed quite large," said Jos Olivier, a senior scientist at the Dutch agency. "It's now so large that it's quite a robust conclusion."

Worse, China's emissions are likely to continue growing substantially for years to come because they are tied to the country's strong economic growth and its particular mix of industry and power sources, the researchers said.

China, like the United States, is heavily dependent on coal for its energy, and it has seen its most rapid growth in some of the world's most polluting industrial sectors, like cement, aluminum and plate glass.

Twenty percent of China's emissions come from its cement kilns, which are essential for the country's construction boom and likely to be working overtime this year as the country prepares for the Olympics and rebuilds after a devastating earthquake.

That being said, the United States has clearly maintained its lead in carbon dioxide emissions per person. The average American is responsible for 19.4 tons, followed by Russia

at 11.8 tons, Western Europe at 8.6 tons, China at 5.1 tons and India at 1.8 tons.

Experts said the new data underscored the importance of getting China to sign on to any new global climate agreement. Neither China nor the United States participated in the current treaty to limit emissions, the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. It will be replaced by a new agreement to be signed in Copenhagen at the end of 2009.

In Bonn on Friday, 2,000 world leaders concluded two weeks of negotiations on what kind of agreement should replace Kyoto. They claimed modest progress but reached no conclusions, according to The Associated Press, which quoted participants as saying not enough ideas were put on the table.

United Nations leaders told them to "pick up the pace."

"With a little more than a year to go to Copenhagen, the challenge to come to that agreement remains daunting," said Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Late last year, a UN panel of scientific experts warned that the world had only a few years to reverse a growing emissions trend if it is to avoid severe consequences of global warming, which range from rising sea levels to the death of entire species.

"Everyone recognizes that we're only going to get to an answer by addressing issues in all countries, including China," de Boer said by phone. Still he added that China has been "acting progressively on environmental policy" in the past year, developing plans to shut down highly polluting small and midsize industries and for more alternative energy, for example.

Orville Schell, director of the Center on U.S.-China Relations at the nonprofit Asia Society in New York said, "This Dutch study, which was the first one to put China ahead of the U.S. in the carbon emissions sweepstakes, is something of a harbinger of things to come, namely, of China's

uncontested pre-eminence in this world of rapidly growing greenhouse gas emissions."

The center has recently started a bilateral climate change initiative that includes such private groups as the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, as well as politicians in both countries, including Al Gore, the Nobel laureate and former U.S. vice president.

"There cannot be a solution to the global climate change questions without China being integrally involved," Schell said. But he added that Chinese leaders would not become more engaged on climate change unless the United States also made new commitments. "This will be one of the new challenges of the new U.S. president," he said.

The Dutch researchers cautioned that there were some signs that China's emissions trajectory would be somewhat blunted this year, although growth would still be rapid. Its emissions rose 8 percent in 2007, compared to more than 11 percent annually for the previous two years. In comparison, emissions in the 15 pre-2004 European Union member states dropped 2 percent in 2007, though Olivier said that this drop was at least partly attributable to a warm winter that reduced the need for heating.

But with high oil and natural gas prices this year, other forces favor emissions growth in the future. High oil prices have created a resurgence in interest in coal-fired power plants for industry, which are far more polluting than other variants.

About 80 percent of the world's coal demand comes from China, according to the International Energy Agency. But the United States is also a major user of coal to power its industry.

"It is crucial for countries like China and the United States to explore technologies to deal with that," de Boer said, referring specifically to projects that would pump emissions underground instead of into the atmosphere.

Source: *The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) release 6/16/08* <http://www.wbcd.org/>



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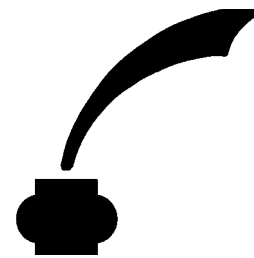
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Why the right loves a disaster

Naomi Klein

Moody's, the credit-rating agency, claims the key to solving the United States' economic woes is slashing spending on Social Security. The National Association of Manufacturers says the fix is for the federal government to adopt the organization's wish-list of new tax cuts. For Investor's Business Daily, it is oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, "perhaps the most important stimulus of all."

But of all the cynical scrambles to package pro-business cash grabs as "economic stimulus," the prize has to go to Lawrence B. Lindsey, formerly President Bush's assistant for economic policy and his advisor during the 2001 recession. Lindsey's plan is to solve a crisis set off by bad lending by extending lots more questionable credit. "One of the easiest things to do would be to allow manufacturers and retailers"—notably Wal-Mart—"to open their own financial institutions, through which they could borrow and lend money," he wrote recently in the Wall Street Journal.

Never mind that an increasing number of Americans are defaulting on their credit card payments, raiding their 401(k) accounts and losing their homes. If Lindsey had his way, Wal-Mart, rather than lose sales, could just loan out money to keep its customers shopping, effectively turning the big-box chain into an old-style company store to which Americans can owe their souls.

If this kind of crisis opportunism feels familiar, it's because it is. Over the last four years, I have been researching a little-explored area of economic history: the way that crises have paved the way for the march of the right-wing economic revolution across the globe. A crisis hits, panic spreads and the ideologues fill the breach, rapidly reengineering societies in the interests of large corporate players. It's a maneuver I call "disaster capitalism."

Sometimes the enabling national disasters have been physical blows to countries: wars, terrorist attacks, natural disasters. More often they have been economic crises: debt

spirals, hyperinflation, currency shocks, recessions.

More than a decade ago, economist Dani Rodrik, then at Columbia University, studied the circumstances in which governments adopted free-trade policies. His findings were striking: "No significant case of trade reform in a developing country in the 1980s took place outside the context of a serious economic crisis." The 1990s proved him right in dramatic fashion. In Russia, an economic meltdown set the stage for fire-sale privatizations. Next, the Asian crisis in 1997-98 cracked open the "Asian tigers" to a frenzy of foreign takeovers, a process the New York Times dubbed "the world's biggest going-out-of-business sale."

To be sure, desperate countries will generally do what it takes to get a bailout. An atmosphere of panic also frees the hands of politicians to quickly push through radical changes that would otherwise be too unpopular, such as privatization of essential services, weakening of worker protections and free-trade deals. In a crisis, debate and democratic process can be handily dismissed as unaffordable luxuries.

Do the free-market policies packaged as emergency cures actually fix the crises at hand? For the ideologues involved, that has mattered little. What matters is that, as a political tactic, disaster capitalism works. It was the late free-market economist Milton Friedman, writing in the preface to the 1982 reissue of his manifesto, "Capitalism and Freedom," who articulated the strategy most succinctly. "Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable."

A decade later, John Williamson, a key advisor to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (and who coined the phrase "the Washington consensus"), went even further. He asked a conference of top-level policymakers "whether

it could conceivably make sense to think of deliberately provoking a crisis so as to remove the political logjam to reform."

Again and again, the Bush administration has seized on crises to break logjams blocking the more radical pieces of its economic agenda. First, a recession provided the excuse for sweeping tax cuts. Next, the "war on terror" ushered in an era of unprecedented military and homeland security privatization. After Hurricane Katrina, the administration handed out tax holidays, rolled back labor standards, closed public housing projects and helped turn New Orleans into a laboratory for charter schools—all in the name of disaster "reconstruction."

Given this track record, Washington lobbyists had every reason to believe that the current recession fears would provoke a new round of corporate gift-giving. Yet it seems that the public is getting wise to the tactics of disaster capitalism. Sure, the proposed \$150-billion economic stimulus package is little more than a dressed-up tax cut, including a new batch of "incentives" to business. But the Democrats nixed the more ambitious GOP attempt to leverage the crisis to lock in the Bush tax cuts and go after Social Security. For the time being, it seems that a crisis created by a dogged refusal to regulate markets will not be "fixed" by giving Wall Street more public money with which to gamble.

Yet while managing (barely) to hold the line, the House Democrats appear to have given up on extending unemployment benefits and increasing funding for food stamps and Medicaid as part of the stimulus package. More important, they are failing utterly to use the crisis to propose alternative solutions to a status quo marked by serial crises, whether environmental, social or economic.

The problem is not a lack of ideas "alive and available"—to borrow Friedman's phrase. There are plenty available, from single-payer healthcare to legislating a living wage. Hundreds of thousands of jobs can be created by rebuilding the ailing public infrastructure and making it more friendly to public

transit and renewable energy. Need start-up funds? Close the loophole that lets billionaire hedge fund managers pay 15% capital gains instead of 35% income tax, and adopt a long-proposed tax on international currency trading. The bonus? A less volatile, crisis-prone market.

The way we respond to crises is always highly political, a lesson progressives appear to have forgotten. There's a historical irony to that: Crises have ushered in some of America's great progressive policies. Most notably, after the dramatic market failure of 1929, the left was ready and waiting with its ideas—full employment, huge public works, mass union drives. The Social Security system that Moody's is so eager to dismantle was a direct response to the Depression.

Every crisis is an opportunity;

someone will exploit it. The question we face is this: Will the current turmoil become an excuse to transfer yet more public wealth into private hands, to wipe out the last vestiges of the welfare state, all in the name of economic growth? Or will this latest failure of unfettered markets be the catalyst that is needed to revive a spirit of public interest, to get serious about the pressing crises of our time, from gaping inequality to global warming to failing infrastructure?

The disaster capitalists have held the reins for three decades. The time has come, once again, for disaster populism.

Source: NaomiKlein.org, Jan. DAY, 2008 via Rachel's Democracy & Health News #963, 6/12/08 Environmental Research Foundation, PO Box 160, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903. www.rachel.org

Sanchez coming back

Michael Farmer

No matter what office they hold, a public servant should, as the name implies, serve the public.

In order to serve the public, a candidate must be in tune with the people and the issues impacting their lives. Motecuzoma Sanchez seems to have that connection.

Sanchez, 32, was one of the many candidates in the Stockton mayoral race and one of the most overlooked.

Depending on what you read or watched, you could've learned that he was a long shot to win, he works in a warehouse, served in the Marine Corps, and he is an Iraq war veteran. What you probably didn't hear were his beliefs or his stance on anything.

Now, does this mean Sanchez was running without any idea of the issues—or were the local media outlets were so engrossed with the three candidates that spent the most, that they forgot to mention that someone else could actually know what they were



talking about?

Sanchez likes to think he is just an average person born and raised in the area who is looking out for other average Stocktonians.

This being said, he's not the warehouse worker off the street he was made out to be. Sanchez has been involved in grass-roots campaigns in the area for the past 16 years.

Sanchez is now out of the race, but he looks at this as a learning experience. He believes he has learned more about how elections work and the importance of campaign funds.

He said that for this being his rookie endeavor, it went well. He thinks of the 500 votes he received as "500 voices of encouragement."

Sanchez will be staying around the Stockton political picture for the foreseeable future. In his words, "The city is deteriorating

the race may be over but the issues are always going to be there."

Cuba supports press freedom

Peter Phillips

"You cannot kill truth by murdering journalists," said Tubal Páez, president of the Journalist Union of Cuba. One hundred and fifty Cuban and South American journalists, ambassadors, politicians, and foreign guests gathered at the Jose Marti International Journalist Institute to honor the 50th anniversary of the death of Carlos Bastidas Arguello, the last journalist killed in Cuba. Carlos Bastidas was only 23 years of age when he was assassinated by Fulgencia Batista's secret police after having visited Fidel Castro's forces in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. Edmundo Bastidas, Carlos' brother, told about how a river of change flowed from the Maestra (teacher) mountains, symbolized by his brother's efforts to help secure a new future for Cuba.

The celebration in Havana was held in honor of World Press Freedom Day, which is observed every year in May. World Press Freedom day was proclaimed by the UN in 1993 to honor journalists who have lost their lives reporting the news, and to defend media freedom worldwide.

During my five days in Havana, I met with dozens of journalists, communication studies faculty and students, union representatives and politicians. The underlying theme of my visit was to determine the state of media freedom in Cuba and to build a better understanding between media democracy activists in the US and those in Cuba.

I toured the two main radio stations in Havana, Radio Rebelde

and Radio Havana. Both have Internet access to multiple global news sources including CNN, Reuters, Associated Press and BBC with several newscasters pulling stories for public broadcast. Over 90 municipalities in Cuba have their own locally run radio stations, and journalists report local news from every province.

During the course of several hours in each station I was interviewed on the air about media consolidation and censorship in the US and was able to ask journalists about censorship in Cuba as well. Of the dozens I interviewed all said that they have complete freedom to write or broadcast any stories they choose. This was a far cry from the Stalinist media system so often depicted by US interests.

Nonetheless it did become clear that Cuban journalists share a common sense of a continuing counter-revolutionary threat by US financed Cuban-Americans living in Miami. This is not an entirely unwarranted feeling in that many hundreds of terrorist actions against Cuba have occurred with US backing over the past fifty years. In addition to the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, these attacks include the blowing up of a Cuban airlines plane in 1976 resulting in the deaths of seventy-three people, the starting in 1981 of an epidemic of dengue fever that killed 158 people and several hotel bombings in the 1990s one of which resulted in the death of an Italian tourist.

In the context of this external threat, Cuban journalists quietly acknowledge that some self-

censorship will undoubtedly occur regarding news stories that could be used by the "enemy" against the Cuban people. Nonetheless, Cuban journalists strongly value freedom of the press and there was no evidence of overt restriction or government control.


Cuban journalists complain that the US corporate media is biased and refuses to cover the positive aspects of socialism in Cuba. Unknown to most Americans are the facts that Cuba is the number one organic country in the world, has an impressive health care system with a lower infant mortality rate than the US, trains doctors from all over the world, and has enjoyed a 43% increase in GDP over the past three years.

Ricardo Alarcon, President of the National Assembly, discussed bias in the US media, "how often do you see Gore Vidal interviewed on the US media?" he asked. Vidal has recently said that the US is in its 'worst phase in history.' "Perhaps Cuba uses corporate news to excess," he said, "Cuban journalists need to link more to independent news sources in the US." Alarcon went on to say that Cuba allows CNN, AP and Chicago Tribune to maintain offices in Cuba, but that the US refuses to allow Cuban journalists to work in the United States.

As the Cuban socialist system improves, the US does everything it can to artificially force cold-war conditions by funding terrorist attacks, maintaining an economic boycott, launching a new anti-terrorism Caribbean naval fleet, and increasingly limiting US citizen travel to Cuba. It is time to reverse this cold-war isolationist position, honor the Cuban peoples choice of a socialist system and build a positive working relationship between journalists in support of media democracy in both our countries.

Peter Phillips is a professor of Sociology and Sonoma State University and director of Project Censored a media research organization. He traveled to Cuba as an invited guest of the Journalist Union of Cuba May 10 to 15, 2008.

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A Long View of Dallas—JFK's Turn Toward Peace

John Morearty

We in the Valley know those winter mornings of deep fog, when we barely see across the street. But day comes on, fog thins and breaks, we're in sunshine. After forty-five years I just read a book like that. With 400 pages of historical evidence (and 100 pages of footnotes), much of it from Soviet and U.S. archives declassified only in the nineties, and with interviews from witnesses (or their families) finally daring to speak out, JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died & Why It Matters illumines a monstrous tapestry, woven of blood, lies and courage. The pattern of that complex tapestry is clear:

The CIA and their Cold War allies killed President John Kennedy, because—especially towards the end—he was making peace with America's adversaries.

In 1963 the country was high with hope-going to the moon, Camelot, the Peace Corps,

Alliance for Progress, atmospheric test ban treaty; we'd survived the Cuban missile crisis a year before. Then suddenly, Black Friday in Dallas.

A deluge of (dis?)information descended: Warren Commission report, lone assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, ex-Marine, Russian wife, Fair Play for Cuba, one bullet or many, grassy knoll, autopsies and x-rays, conspiracy theories, CIA, FBI, Mafia, Castro, the Russians, Cuban exiles.... Who could keep track? I became an assassination agnostic: "maybe before I die we'll know the truth."

One clue did make sense: supposedly, at the end Kennedy was beginning to pull some of the 25,000 U.S. military "advisors" out of Vietnam. But reliable sources said "No, he sometimes talked about it, but he also said in public that it couldn't be done." Again I resigned myself to confusion.

No more. After a week carefully reading Jim Douglass' thick book, I'm convinced by the story he tells, backed up by his research

and what he's sifted from many others. The publisher is Orbis, a respected Catholic press; the editor is Robert Ellsberg, son of Daniel (who released the Pentagon Papers). Douglass himself is an honored Catholic theologian of nonviolence and a student of Thomas Merton. In the early 1980s he organized and led the White Train Network, which tracked the shipment of H-bomb warheads from Pantex in Amarillo, Texas to Trident nuclear submarine bases in Georgia and Puget Sound. Hundreds of people sat on the tracks, resisting those hell machines with their bodies. At that time, I drove to Seattle to visit Douglass' Groundzero Center for Nonviolence, next to the fence of the Trident sub base; we talked in a quiet garden near a large bronze Buddha, donated by the people of Hiroshima. The man was focused, visionary, thoughtful.

I hadn't seen him since, but a few weeks ago Ria and I drove to Berkeley, to hear him present his new book. His talk cut through the shimmering fogs of Camelot and Marilyn Monroe, and offered a clear perspective on the basic pattern of John Kennedy's presidency:

From the beginning, though by fits and starts and with much Cold War rhetoric, JFK was turning away from the Cold War. In so doing, he enraged the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

It began with the Bay of Pigs in early 1961. Under Eisenhower, CIA chief Allen Dulles had organized and trained a ragtag band of Cuban exiles to invade Castro's Cuba, backed up by U.S. air and ground support. Kennedy said no planes, no troops, but Dulles went ahead anyway, convinced that the insecure new president would ultimately send in the Marines. Kennedy refused to be mouse-trapped, and earned the undying hatred of many Cuban exiles. He fired Allen Dulles and said, according to the NY Times, he wanted "to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."

On September 29, 1961, Nikita

Khrushchev wrote a secret letter to Kennedy, comparing their common concern with peace in the nuclear age "with Noah's Ark, where both the 'clean' and the 'unclean' found sanctuary." On October 16 JFK sent a secret reply, saying that "whatever our differences...we must keep the ark afloat." The circle of letters became three-way, including Pope John XXIII.

In the crisis of October 1962, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted Kennedy to bomb the Soviet missiles in Cuba, because they were not yet armed with nuclear warheads. (In fact, it turned out they were.) Kennedy refused, even after an American U-2 spy plane over Cuba was shot down; instead, he blockaded Soviet ships from approaching Cuba. General Curtis LeMay, head of the Strategic Air Command, said (on tape) to Kennedy's face, "This is almost as bad as the appeasement [of Hitler] at Munich [by the British in 1938]."

JFK sent his brother Robert to the Soviet ambassador with a message to Khrushchev, pledging no invasion of Cuba, but saying many U.S. generals were pushing for war, and the president might lose control; Khrushchev pulled the missiles out of Cuba. The Joint Chiefs were outraged.

In the next thirteen months, Kennedy consciously pursued peaceful dialogue with the nation's adversaries.

On June 10, 1963, in a commencement address at American University, he honored Soviet suffering in World War Two; "they lost the equivalent of the United States east of Chicago." He said, "our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's futures. And we are all mortal." And he surprised the world by announcing a unilateral U.S. halt to nuclear testing; "we will not be the first to resume."

Six weeks later, he personally negotiated (through almost daily phone calls to Moscow) the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviets, stopping

poisonous fallout. A massive publicity campaign secured Senate ratification, 80-19.

In September 1963, he began exploring through various channels a personal meeting with Fidel Castro, who was suspicious until Khrushchev told Castro, "this man is worth talking to."

On October 11, 1963, Kennedy secretly issued National Security Action Memorandum 263, making it official government policy to withdraw from Vietnam "1000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963," and "by the end of 1965...the bulk of U.S. personnel."

But the order was not carried out. On November 24, 1963, two days after JFK was assassinated in Dallas, President Lyndon Johnson told U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge, "I am not going to lose Vietnam. I am not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went."

There is no space here even to outline Douglass' elaborate presentation of evidence about the assassination itself. Two items struck me:

In fatal Dealey Plaza, the Secret Service were not riding on the back of the presidential limousine as usual, but in the car behind. City and county police and motorcycle police were ordered withdrawn.

Finally, to quote Douglass, "Twenty-one out of twenty-two witnesses at Parkland Hospital—most of them doctors and nurses, trained medical observers—agreed in their earliest statements that JFK's massive head wound was located in the right rear of his skull, demonstrating a fatal head shot from the front." Lee Harvey Oswald's window was behind Kennedy's car. The witnesses later changed their stories.

JFK and the Unspeakable is praised by a host of assassination scholars, theologians and peace activists. For me, it's a clarification of thought. John Kennedy's life at the end was, in the title of his own book, a Profile in Courage—and an example for us now. Don't believe me. Read the evidence.

Lawn signs, mugs, T-shirts

"War is NOT the answer" lawn signs come from the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). We are requesting a \$5 donation to cover costs (sorry, we can't ship lawn signs). We also have elegant pins made of pewter in the shape of the peace symbol for \$10. Also, handsome PJN T-shirts in many colors, and more. Come by the P&J Center to see these items, plus buttons and bumperstickers galore, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton CA 95204. Call 467-4455.



Homeless victory in Fresno has implications for Stockton

Mike Rhodes

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



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

The lawsuit began two years ago, after the City of Fresno repeatedly used bulldozers to plow through homeless encampments in the downtown area. The city's policy, designed by a low ranking police officer in the code enforcement division, was to provide residents of the encampments with written notice that a "clean up" was about to take place. Many homeless people say they never received a copy of the notice and it is not clear, from the courts decision, if it would have made any difference if they did receive the notice. According to the city's policy and testimony in

court, the city would then deploy the sanitation department, backed up by police officers, who would then clear the area of anything that the homeless did not remove. The city claimed that everything left was rubbish. The problem with the policy, according to the court, was that it treated poor peoples property differently than anyone else. For example, if you loose your bike and the police find it, they do not call in a bulldozer, crush the bike, and put it in a garbage truck. The likely policy would be to take the bike into possession and try to find the owner.

Homeless people in Fresno, during the sweeps conducted between 2004 - 2006 lost bicycles, tents, clothing, their ID, and everything of value they had in the world. One person lost an urn that contained her granddaughters ashes. Al Williams, who is homeless, suffered the effects of the raids on three occasions. In addition to losing clothes and food, his wife's wheelchair was destroyed and her medicines confiscated by Fresno police officers. "I felt like everything

was taken away from me, but this settlement gives me hope for the future for myself and all the other people who suffered," said Williams.

In addition to the lawsuit, homeless people and their allies held a sleep in at City Hall, the Homelessness Marathon radio show was broadcast from Fresno putting a national spotlight on this city's illegal practices, and intense pressure was brought upon city government to end their attacks on the homeless. The efforts have had an effect and mayor Autry has declared the city's previous policy a failure. The stated goal of the new policy is to provide affordable and decent housing for all of Fresno's chronically homeless residents.

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

Source: Community Alliance newspaper, P.O. Box 5077, Fresno Ca 93755 <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/home/>

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Clan Dyken Retrospective now out

David Kupfer

The Clan Dyken have an incredible passion for peace and justice and planetary salvation as represented by their lyrics, their peace marches, runs, and direct action involvements. This is music from the vernacular of community, rallies, and demonstrations. There is no ignoring the fact that there is barely a progressive cause they've not done a benefit for or green action and festival they've not performed at. They've always been willing to lend a hand, tune, and sound equipment to a worthy campaign. From protests against the Nevada Test Site and the Livermore Nuclear Labs, Big Mountain benefits to raise funds for Revive the Beauty Way tour and Thanksgiving food and supply run to support the Diné (Navajo) People resisting forced relocation from their homelands in northeastern Arizona, at rallies against nuclear power and forest clear-cutting and for organic farming in rural California, against road building in Britain, for solar and against geothermal power in Hawai'i, for civil liberties and peace, against the arms race and fascism. They have distinguished themselves by their activism and their music that celebrates the changes they've experienced and hope for a better future. And getting arrested for peace was for a time a frequent habit of certain band members, nonviolent disobedience being a central tenant of their personal philosophies.

While they rarely take themselves too seriously, it is their work responsibilities, their cultural work, that they do take very seriously. The Clan Dyken's embracing topical causes is not an effort to be on top of the issue of the month, rather is key to their own ongoing contribution to their community. In terms of being people that lead lives of meaning, they've truly walked their talk. They produced solar powered concerts long before



any other bands, and frequently end their performances with a meaningful, sacred drumming ritual that brings to fore their lifelong appreciation of Native American culture and spirituality. The quality of their sound appeals to their audiences as much as the non-compromising nature of their individual characters. Their friends have known them as artists and activists, informing audiences about current issues; inspiring a new generation of activists; and fostering community.

The Clan Dyken have refined the tribal-funk-eco-folk-rock music they've made over the past 20 years, and taken us on an incredible trip to the heart of how we can all collectively contribute positively to society's positive evolution through collective and personal action. After repeated requests, they have finally pulled together this greatest hits CD for their family of friends and fans to reminisce and reflect upon. As the great green century unfolds, much of what they've sung about has proven to be prophetic. Partly because of the politics, their stubborn ways, and their audience, they've largely performed on the fringe of the cultural tableau. But while fame and fortune may have eluded the band, they are rich in community and being correct

about our species proper place in the world.

A note from Mark Dyken:

Dear Friends,

It's been more than 20 years in the making and only covers a fraction of our recorded music from the past two decades, but it's here and since we are still working on the revamped web site and store, we're going to start bringing it directly to you. Retrospective, a three disc collection in an eco-panel package, with 39 digitally remastered songs, is now available. If you want to check it out, send an email with your mailing address to mdyken@comcast.net. I'll send a copy of Retrospective. Listen to it and if you like it send us a check, cash, money order or whatever you'd like to trade for it; if you don't like it, pass it on to someone who you think might enjoy it.

Some of you have been with us since the beginning and some barely know us, but you will all find something new on these discs. It may be a song you haven't heard or a sound in a song you've heard many times that is just now coming through due to improved mastering. The response so far has been very positive. Thanks for listening; we'll keep in touch.

Valley Springs vision moves forward

GVSAG continues its work on the Community Plan update and now has revised Topic Visions and new alternatives for "Valley Springs Town Center" and "Greater Valley Springs Planning Area" maps posted on their web site, www.gvsag.org. The seven vision topics covered are: Community Boundaries, Economic Development, Housing, Circulation, Safety, Conservation and Open Space, and Land Use. Comments and suggestions regarding the updated vision statements, and preferences for new boundary Alternatives, may be submitted online or turned

in at the next meeting. These will be submitted to the County in August.

The next meeting will be Thurs, June 26, 7 p.m., at Community United Methodist Church, 135 Laurel St, Valley Springs.

The GVSAG is looking for input from citizens, business owners, property owners, fire and police, utility operators and agricultural interests in and around Valley Springs. For more information, please contact GVSAG by email at info@gvsag.org or write GVSAG, PO Box 1071, Valley Springs, 95252.

One Laptop Per Child connects the world

Dale Steele

The One Laptop Per Child program continues to grow and engage an expanding community of educators, students, parents, politicians and others as it provides a new model for global education and much more.

Here's a link to the May Countries Workshop that gives an idea of the scale and breadth of this effort: http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Country_workshops/May_2008.

One thing that strikes me about this program is how much thinking and doing is underway and how much energy that seems to be coming from the program. The volume of information coming from the countries that are involved, the educators, designers, students, and others is amazing.

Places to keep an eye on are the Wiki, Talk, Community News, and One Laptop per Child. There are also lots of stories coming



out of countries like Peru where the program has been in place for nearly a year.

If possible, find a local educator or group that can give a demo of the XO. It's like nothing you've ever seen and even though it's not meant to compete or replace what you are using now, in the hands of a child and especially one that would not otherwise have a tool with such creative and networking abilities it offers amazing opportunities. Share with others and support this exciting program!

Go to <http://laptop.org/> to learn more about this exciting program.

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July Calendar

Editor's note: if your event isn't listed, let us know. Send all copy to: bgiudici@caliel.com by the 7th of every month.

June 18—July 13

The Full Monty, Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 8 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rose Marie Lane, Stockton \$12—\$22. 473-2424.

June 20—29

The Underpants play presented by the Stockton Theatre Project. Delta College Studio Theatre, 5151 Pacific Ave. Fri/Sat 8 pm, Sun 2 pm. \$15 adult, \$12 student/senior. 954-5110. 954-5110.

July 8—Aug 2

Pottery by the SJ Potters' Guild. M-F 10-5, Sat 11-3 Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. Reception July 11, 5-8 pm. 463-4033

July 8—Aug 1

Summer Art Workshops at the Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing, Stockton. Tue-Fri, 10:30—12 noon (ages 5-7), 2—4 pm (ages 8-11). \$40 member, \$50 non-member. 940-6315.

July 9—13

All the World's A Stage/An Experiment? play presented by the Stockton Theatre Project. SJ Delta College Studio Theatre, 5151 Pacific Ave. Wed-Sat 8 pm, Sun 2 pm. \$15 adult, \$12 student/senior. 954-5110. 954-5110.

July 13—Aug 24

Carl V Miller: A Retrospective. Watercolors at the Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing, Stockton. Wed-Sun, 1:30—5 pm. \$5 adult; \$2.50 youth 10-17 and seniors. 940-6300.

Mon, June 23

Delta-Sierra Club meeting, 7 pm, Central United Methodist Church, Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton, 7 pm program with social time following. All Welcome.

Tue, June 24

Candlelight prayer vigil for peace, Annunciation Cathedral, Lincoln/Rose in Stockton. We pray to become people of peace, so wars will end. All are welcome. 7 PM sharp. Info: Ria deGroot, 462-3340.

Family movie night at the Chavez Library, 605 N El Dorado, Stockton. Stewart Hazelton Room. Free. 937-5725.

Wed, June 25

Concert in the Park features Stone Cold Corral, Victory Park, Pershing & Argonne, Stockton. 6-8 pm. Free admission. 937-8099

Thur, June 26

Nature nights at Oak Grove Nature Center, Oak Grove Regional Park, 8 Mile Rd & I-5. 7 pm. Butterflies, presented by Dr. Kathy Schick. Free, with \$3 parking fee. 953-8814.

Sat, June 28

Lincoln Center-Go Green, Pacific Ave and Ben Holt, Stockton. 10 am-2 pm. Tips on composting, recycling, water conservation and more. Free. 477-4868.

Sun, June 29

Big Air Summer Jam, Weber Pt. Event Center, 221 N Center St, Stockton. Bands: Finger Eleven, Boys Like Girls, 10 Years, Louix XIV and Gillmor, with BMX, FMX, skateboarding and more. 12 noon to 5 pm. Ticket info 479-4156.

Wed, July 2

Concert in the Park features the Valley Concert Band, Victory Park, Pershing & Argonne, Stockton. 6-8 pm. Free admission. 937-8099

Wed, July 3

Concert in the Park features Jazz City, Victory Park, Pershing & Argonne, Stockton. 6-8 pm. Free admission. 937-8099

Thu, July 10

Peace and Justice Network monthly meeting, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6 pm Board, 7 pm program. All welcome.

Sat, July 12

Artist reception—The Tuesday Group, Elsie May Goodwin Gallery, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 4-7 pm. Free. 466-6604.

Thu, July 10

Artist demonstration—George Allen Durkee, Stockton Art League, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 7-9 pm. Free. 466-6604.

Wed, July 16

Concert in the Park features Tropical Nights, Victory Park, Pershing & Argonne, Stockton. 6-8 pm. Free admission. 937-8099

Fri, July 18

Live! at Lincoln Center, Pacific and Ben Holt. 6-9 pm. Jazz singer Hale Baskin, the Revetones, and The Butterflies. Free. All proceeds to benefit SJ Hospice. 477-4868.

Sun, July 20—27

Stockton Buddhist Temple Obon & Cultural Bazaar, 2820 Shimizu Dr, Stockton. Free. 329-0661 (page 20)

Wed, July 23

Concert in the Park features The Swingaires, Victory Park, Pershing & Argonne, Stockton. 6-8 pm. Free admission. 937-8099

Sat, July 26

Ragtime at Ola's Exotic Coffee at the Chavez Library, 605 N El Dorado, Stockton. Porcupine Ragtime Ensemble including Robin Truitt Drivon (tuba) and Steve Drivon (trombone). 2 pm. Free. 931-8221.

Wednesdays

Miracle Mile farmers market, SUSD Adult School/Bank of America parking lot, Pacific Ave, Stockton. 4—7 pm.

Thursdays:

Peace demonstrations continue to grow: 5 till 6:30 PM, grassy edge of Delta campus along Pacific Avenue, north of light and bus stop at Yokuts, across from Sherwood. Free mall parking. Signs provided, or bring your own. John Morearty, 464-3326.

Fridays

Downtown farmers market, Hunter Square & E Main, Stockton. 9 am-2 pm. 464-5246

First Sundays

Vegan potluck, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 5:30 pm \$2 donation bringing food, \$9 without. Info: sjvegans@hotmail.com.

First Thursdays

Experimental & improv music, 8 pm Blackwater Cafe, 914 N Yosemite, Stockton. \$3. 943-6938.

Third Thursdays

Hispanics for Political Action—HPA meets 6 pm at Cancun restaurant, downtown Stockton. Info, call Louis Gonzales 464-9205

Fourth Saturdays

Greater Lodi Area Democrats (GLAD) meets 8:30 a.m., Dee Dee's Restaurant, 1170 S. Cherokee Ln, Lodi. All welcome, including recovering Republicans. 339-1599.

Only Light

Thich Nhat Hanh

The root of terrorism is misunderstanding, hatred and violence. This root cannot be located by the military. Bombs and missiles cannot reach it, let alone destroy it. Only with the practice of calming and looking deeply can our insight reveal and identify this root. Only with the practice of deep listening and compassion can it be transformed and removed. Darkness cannot be dissipated with more darkness. More darkness will only make darkness thicker. Only light can dissipate darkness.... Those of us who carry the light should show the light and share it so that the world will not sink into total darkness. Everyone has the seed of awakening and insight within his or her heart.

Source: "Strike Against Terror," Shanghai, Oct. 19, 2001



Contact Your Reps

Pres. George W. Bush, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington DC 20500. 202-456-1414

Sen. Barbara Boxer, 1700 Montgomery St, Ste 240, San Francisco, CA 94111. 415-403-0100; 112 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510. 202-224-3553, senator@boxer.senate.gov

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, One Post Street, Ste 2450, San Francisco, CA 94104. 415-249-0707; 331 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510. 202-224-3841, senator@feinstein.senate.gov

Rep. Jerry McNerney, 11th District, 2222 Grand Canal Blvd #7, Stockton, CA 95207. 209-476-8552. Fax 209-476-8587. 312 Cannon House Office Bldg., Washington DC 20515; info@jerrymcnerney.org, 925-833-0643, http://www.JerryMcNerney.org

Rep. Dennis Cardoza (R-District 18) 137 E. Weber Ave, Stockton, CA 95203. 209-946-0361, 503 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515, 202-225-6131.

Rep. John Doolittle (R-District 4), 2130 Professional Dr, Ste 190, Roseville, CA 95661. 916-786-5560; 1524 Longworth Bldg, Washington, CA 20515. 202-225-2511

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, 2201 C St, NW Washington, DC 20520

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-445-2841

State Sen. Michael Machado (District 5), 31 E Channel St, Room 440, Stockton, CA 95202. 209-948-7930; State Capitol, Rm 4035, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-445-2407

Assemblyperson Kathleen Galgiani (District 17), 31 E. Channel St., Rm. 306, Stockton CA 95202, 209-948-7479

Talking It Through

Talking It Through is now two half-hour shows.

The Real Show hosted by Margee Ensign is on Monday at 6pm

Talking It Through is hosted by Adrian Nichols and Sammy Nunez every Monday evening at 6:30pm

SJTV: Stockton, Lodi and Manteca cable channel 26

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Peace is Happening

July 20-27

Bon Odori and Cultural Bazaar

The Stockton Buddhist Temple will present its annual Bon Odori and Cultural Bazaar beginning on July 20, with the traditional Bon Odori dance, followed by the cultural arts and food bazaar on July 26th and 27th at the temple grounds located on 2820 Shimizu Drive in Stockton California. The Public is invited to participate in this traditional event with the Bon Odori Festival dance beginning at 7:00 PM on Sunday July 20th.

The Bon Odori Festival better known as Obon is an annual Buddhist event commemorating or paying tribute to one's ancestors. It is believed that each year during Obon, the ancestors' spirits return to this world in order to visit their relatives. This Buddhist festival has evolved into a family reunion holiday during which people from outside cities return to their hometowns and visit and give remembrance to those departed.

The tradition has existed in Japan for more than 500 years where traditionally people clean their houses and offer a variety of food such as vegetables and fruits to the spirits of ancestors in front of butsudan (Buddhist families altar). Butsudan is decorated with flower and chouchin (paper

lanterns). The lanterns are lit inside houses during this time, and people go to their family's graves to call their ancestors' spirits back home. It's called mukaebon. In some regions, fires called mukaebi are lit at the entrances to homes to guide the ancestor's spirits.

During obon, bon odori dances (folk dances) are held all over Japan. The kind of dance varies from area to area. People wearing yukata (summer kimono) go to the neighborhood bon odori and dance around a yagura stage. Anyone can participate in bon odori. Join the circle and imitate what others are doing. Usually, taiko drums are played with the music.

In America, Japanese Americans continue this custom as they dance in traditional Japanese dress, including kimonos, yukata (cotton kimonos), and happi coats (short coats styled like a kimono top). The dances may include the use of fans, castanets, as well as the song of the taiko drums continue the tradition as a celebratory remembrance of ancestors and family who have passed. For Stockton, the tradition will be displayed on July 20th starting at 7 pm with the annual Bon Odori festival.

The second part of the event is the traditional Cultural festival that will be on July 28 and 29th starting at 11:00 AM and ending at 9:00 PM each day. This will feature performances throughout the day by community performance groups including Japanese Performance Drumming featuring the Stockton Bukkyo Taiko group as well as traditional dance and martial arts demonstrations. This takes place in our Social Hall along with a variety of Japanese crafts, displays. Food items will include

traditional type sushi, hot udon noodles and other food items.

Outside will feature other "tastes of Japan" featuring traditional teriyaki chicken and kushiyaki. Also featured are a variety of games for both adults and children in the carnival area and there will be guided tours of the Temple. Our

farmer's market and plant sale will be on hand as well as a raffle for prizes. The Public is encouraged come out and celebrate with us.

For more information, please contact the Stockton Buddhist Temple office at: 209-466-6701. Proceeds will benefit the Temple community events.



THE MIRACLE MILE FARMERS' MARKET

Every Wednesday
4 PM – 7 PM
Opening June 4, 2008

**Pacific Avenue at Bank of America
Stockton Adult School Parking Lot**

The inviting outdoor market takes place each Wednesday, June 4 – October 29, 2008, from 4 pm – 7 pm right off Pacific Avenue on the charming Miracle Mile. Enjoy shopping with ease through a colorful array of vegetables, fruits, baked goods, and fresh flowers.

the delicious life

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THE MIRACLE MILE
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