



PLANNING FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE



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Peace & Justice Network of San Joaquin County invites you to our Annual Meeting at the John Morearty Peace Center, 231 Bedford Rd. in Stockton. Of course, it's a potluck - so bring something to share and your own plate and fork if you can, to start the year eco friendly. This is a chance to meet with old friends, become acquainted with new ones and to plan for the new year. Our agenda is:

4:00 — 4:30 Review the year
and share introductions

4:30 DINNER!

5:00 — 6:30 What can we do
for peace and justice?

6:30 — 7:00 Election of officers

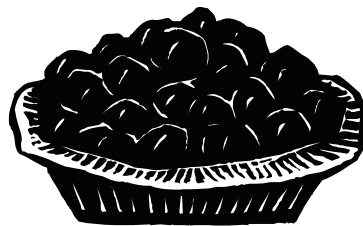
WHAT CAN WE DO?

We can do a lot in the coming year. As you know, in San Joaquin county, we are surrounded by individuals and organizations that are making a difference. We have a diverse and young population that is coming to understand the challenges we all face. And the opportunities to make meaningful change exist.

For its part, the Peace and Justice Network can offer resources to support our collective efforts: we have the bi-monthly newspaper Connections, use of the Peace Center, our internet radio station Stone Soup Radio, the Talking It Through cable talk show, various events and an informed membership that can get things done. For the coming year, the Board is considering the sponsorship of a series of forums on policing, education and inequalities.

Now, for this afternoon, we invite those who are working for peace and justice throughout the year to come, eat and strategize on how we can use all our resources more efficiently and effectively. Our paths cross often in and around the county - and we need to work together, to educate and enact change.

On all levels, we can see that doing the same things and expecting different outcomes is madness. As we enter 2015, we have local, national and international issues that deserve and require a different approach. Please help us to help each other. We look forward to seeing you at the potluck. For more information call 467-4455 or email bgiudici@caltel.com.



Why the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement is a pending disaster



ROBERT REICH

Republicans who now run Congress say they want to cooperate with President Obama, and point to the administration's Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, as the model. The only problem is the TPP would be a disaster.

If you haven't heard much about the TPP, that's part of the problem right there. It would be the largest trade deal in history - involving countries stretching from Chile to Japan, representing 792 million people and accounting for 40 percent of the world economy - yet it's been devised in secret.

Lobbyists from America's biggest corporations and Wall Street's biggest banks have been involved but not the American public. That's a recipe for fatter profits and bigger paychecks at the top, but not a good deal for most of us, or even for most of the rest of the world.

First some background. We used to think about trade policy as a choice between "free trade" and "protectionism." Free trade meant opening our borders to products made elsewhere. Protectionism meant putting up tariffs and quotas to keep them out.

In the decades after World War II, America chose free trade. The idea was that each country would specialize in goods it produced best and at least cost. That way, living standards would rise here and abroad. New jobs would be created to take the place of jobs that were lost. And communism would be contained.

For three decades, free trade worked. It was a win-win-win. But in more recent decades the choice has become far more complicated and the payoff from trade agreements

...At a time when corporate profits are at record highs and the real median wage is lower than it's been in four decades...

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SAVE THE DATES

FEB 8 PEACE AND JUSTICE POTLUCK
APRIL 26 EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

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Editors Letter

BRUCE GIUDICI

Entering a new year, we see repeated all the issues we have experienced over the past two decades. If we have been watching, then, perhaps we won't be fooled again.

Internationally, the United States continues its fight with the self-created enemy "global terrorism." This time, the military-industrial complex has created a gold mine because, as most know, terrorism is a tactic, not an enemy - and as such, can be affixed to any situation of which our government needs us to be afraid. And fear is one thing a compliant media can profit from: it's a win-win, profit-

wise. Syria, ISIS, Paris, Palestine, Nigeria - the exotic unknown currently provides a \$550 billion "defense" budget - as a baseline! To go into combat, well - that'll cost you billions more (\$51 billion in the coming year alone - see page 7). Meanwhile, when it comes to making community college costless to serious students, we are told how we cannot afford the \$60 billion over 10 years (that's \$6 billion a year). Media and politicians must find that issue a hard sell - somehow.

Nationally, we have a political system that empowers money in a way not seen since the late 1800's. The result of such a system has the Senate with a 54-46

We can't be fooled again

Republican majority, despite that majority being seated having received 20 million fewer votes than did their Democratic opponents (p 15). Senators in small market states are easily bought. So, Connections will cover coming political kick-back money issues throughout the year (Keystone, net neutrality, trade and social security here), as well as the social causes that require an attention to fairness and justice. Regrettably, the seeming tedium and nastiness of politics has produced the desired effect of alienating the voting populace which is the only power feared by the powerful monied interests. With enough money, it is thought, voters can be

convinced that night is day, war is peace, and bad is good. In some cases, that has proven true - look at recent initiative issues of GMO labelling, health insurance reform, and gay marriage. All lost initially to huge spending campaigns.

Yet, hope is kept alive by the constant reminder of the injustice of our daily lives. We can be told repeatedly that our health care system is the best in the world, until we actually have to use it. Virtually every person in this country has a health care horror story of a family member or friend harmed by excessive cost, delay, or error. And that was before everyone was forced to pay into the corrupt private

health insurance system. So, now that the opposition party is putting the private health insurance on stage for ridicule as "Obamacare," it is up to us to double down on our efforts to sell the more affordable Medicare for All. With no profit to be siphoned off, the media and most politicians will not be supporters at first. Yet, as inevitable as will be a carbon-free energy system, we will have our non-profit health care system, simply because we can afford nothing less.

For now, keep educating those around you - and some day, you may find the world has changed and you had a small part in making that happen. Like gay marriage... go figure. Happy winter!!

Trans-Pacific Partnership

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

more skewed to those at the top. Tariffs are already low. Negotiations now involve such things as intellectual property, financial regulations, labor laws, and rules for health, safety, and the environment.

It's no longer free trade versus protectionism. Big corporations and Wall Street want some of both. They want more international protection when it comes to their intellectual property and other assets. So they've been seeking trade rules that secure and extend their patents, trademarks, and copyrights abroad, and protect their global franchise agreements, securities, and loans.

But they want less protection of consumers, workers, small investors, and the environment, because these interfere with their profits. So they've been seeking trade rules that allow them to override these protections.

Not surprisingly for a deal that's been drafted mostly by corporate and Wall Street lobbyists, the TPP provides exactly this mix.

What's been leaked about it so far reveals, for example, that the pharmaceutical industry gets stronger patent protections, delaying cheaper generic versions of drugs. That will be a good deal for Big Pharma but not necessarily for the inhabitants of

developing nations who won't get certain life-saving drugs at a cost they can afford.

The TPP also gives global corporations an international tribunal of private attorneys, outside any nation's legal system, who can order compensation for any "unjust expropriation" of foreign assets.

Even better for global companies, the tribunal can order compensation for any lost profits found to result from a nation's regulations. Philip Morris is using a similar provision against Uruguay (the provision appears in a bilateral trade treaty between Uruguay and Switzerland), claiming that Uruguay's strong anti-smoking regulations unfairly diminish the company's profits.

Anyone believing the TPP is good for Americans take note: The foreign subsidiaries of U.S.-based corporations could just as easily challenge any U.S. government regulation they claim unfairly diminishes their profits - say, a regulation protecting American consumers from unsafe products or unhealthy foods, investors from fraudulent securities or predatory lending, workers from unsafe working conditions, taxpayers from another bailout of Wall Street, or the environment from toxic emissions.

The administration says the trade deal will boost U.S. exports in the fast-growing Pacific basin where the United States faces

growing economic competition from China. The TPP is part of Obama's strategy to contain China's economic and strategic prowess. Fine. But the deal will also allow American corporations to outsource even more jobs abroad.

In other words, the TPP is a Trojan horse in a global race to the bottom, giving big corporations and Wall Street banks a way to eliminate any and all laws and regulations that get in the way of their profits.

At a time when corporate profits are at record highs and the real median wage is lower than it's been in four decades, most Americans need protection - not from international trade but from the political power of large corporations and Wall Street.

The Trans Pacific Partnership is the wrong remedy to the wrong problem. Any way you look at it, it's just plain wrong.

ROBERT REICH, ONE OF THE NATION'S LEADING EXPERTS ON WORK AND THE ECONOMY, IS CHANCELLOR'S PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC POLICY AT THE GOLDMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY. HE HAS SERVED IN THREE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS, MOST RECENTLY AS SECRETARY OF LABOR UNDER PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON.

Source: RobertReich.org 1/7/15 <http://robertreich.org>

27th annual Earth Day Fest date change

The Stockton Earth Day Festival is moving to a later weekend next year and will be held Sunday, April 26, 2015 at Victory Park. The change to a later weekend is temporary. Committee members organizing the festival expect the celebration to move back to the third Sunday of April in 2016. Planning for next year's Earth Day Festival will begin soon. If you are interested in volunteering, becoming a sponsor, sharing an environmental activity or for more information, call (209) 483-5199, email stocktonearthday@gmail.com or visit our website at www.livegreensanjoaquin.org.



CONNECTIONS

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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."

Bi-monthly Connections distributor(s) needed!

Help us get Connections out to the greater Stockton area! We have a small, easy route that covers Country Club Blvd. and parts of Delaware Ave. This area offers us an opportunity to expand, as there are several independent merchants who would welcome Connections in their stores. The other route is only 7 locations, but covers parts of downtown and "the edges," so it is more spread out.

If you could do one (or both) of these routes, please contact Deane or Marcia Savage, 209-242-2254, or savage1599@gmail.com



Finally, change we can believe in?



SCOTT GALINDEZ

Free college for everyone? Did I hear that right? In the United States, a nonprofit higher education? I must have just woken up from a dream. No, it's true, the president has proposed free community college for everyone. Oh, but wait—John Boehner called it a talking point. Many Americans won't take it seriously, according to Boehner. How will we pay for it, they will ask.

Well, how about the same way many Europeans get a free four-year education at top universities. If you live in Sweden, you can even go to a university in Norway and not pay a dime in tuition. They even give students welfare to live on while they are in school. The result is that upon graduation they are not burdened with debt. In a fact sheet released by the White House Thursday night, the plan was summarized like this:

"Today the President is unveiling the America's College Promise proposal to make two years of community college free for responsible students, letting students earn the first half of a bachelor's degree and earn skills needed in the workforce at no cost. This proposal will require everyone to do their part: community colleges must strengthen their programs and increase the number of students who graduate, states must invest more in higher education and training, and students must take responsibility for their education, earn good grades, and stay on track to graduate. The program would be

undertaken in partnership with states and is inspired by new

programs in Tennessee and Chicago. If all states participate, an estimated 9 million students could benefit. A full-time community college student could save an average of \$3,800 in tuition per year.

"In addition, today the President will propose a new American Technical Training Fund to expand innovative, high-quality technical training programs similar to Tennessee Tech Centers that meet employer needs and help prepare more Americans for better paying jobs. These proposals build on a number of historic investments the President has made in college affordability and quality since taking office, including a \$1,000 increase in the maximum Pell Grant award to help working and middle class families, the creation of the \$2,500 American Opportunity Tax Credit, reforming student loans to eliminate subsidies to banks to invest in making college more affordable and keeping student debt manageable, and making available over \$2 billion in grants to connect community colleges with employers to develop programs that are designed to get hard-working students good jobs."

In a video also released on Thursday night, the president announced the proposal: "If this were to be implemented, it would be a nice first step. Our young people start out shackled by debt. While a free education

from pre-school to college would need to be paid for by taxes, imagine the savings for parents with more than one child who needs to go to college."

AND BEYOND...

It is the same with health care: Medicare for All would mean higher taxes, but the lack of out-of-pocket spending for health care would more than make up for the additional taxes. It is time

to invest in young people. Every election, we hear about candidates' commitment to education. Well, I haven't noticed many major changes in my lifetime. If anything, a college education is further from reality for many young people than it was in the early eighties. One of the reasons I believe Elizabeth Warren is the best candidate the Democrats have is her commitment to addressing student loan debt. While Obama's proposal is not likely to make much progress in this Congress, he deserves credit for starting the ball rolling. We never expected legal same-sex marriages or legal marijuana 20 years ago. Maybe in 20 years our kids can have a free education, giving us a chance at a better future.

SCOTT GALINDEZ WAS FORMERLY THE CO-FOUNDER OF TRUTHOUT.

Source: Reader Supported News 1/12/15
<http://www.readersupportednews.org>

Become a PEACE PAL!

Please consider giving to PJN month by month. It will give us stable, predictable funding to continue providing our services. It's easy for you and cost—effective for us. Our website online donation is recommended for ease and convenience. Your monthly donation can be automatically withdrawn from your bank account.

Monthly Giving Enrollment Form

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Yes, I accept your invitation to become a charter member of Peace Pals.

Here is my monthly pledge contribution of:

☐ \$10 ☐ \$15 ☐ \$20 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$(Other) _____

I prefer to donate by one of the following methods:

☐ U.S. mail; please send me envelopes

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☐ Automatic Bank Transfer

☐ I've enclosed a check for my first contribution. Arrangements will be made by me with my bank for future pledges.

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The Peace and Justice Network is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational corporation.
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Mainstream Media = Truth? Check out the Alternatives and Find out 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.

Firedoglake <http://firedoglake.com>

Emptywheel
<http://emptywheel.firedoglake.com/>

Calitics <http://www.calitics.com/>

Eschaton <http://www.eschatonblog.com/>

Huffington Post
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

Hullabaloo <http://digbysblog.blogspot.com>

Daily Kos <http://www.dailykos.com>

Talking Points Memo
<http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com>

TPM Muckraker
<http://www.tpmuckraker.com/>

FiveThirtyEight.com
<http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/>

Congress Matters
<http://www.congressmatters.com>

Think Progress <http://thinkprogress.com>

Down With Tyranny
<http://downwithtyranny.blogspot.com/>

Crooks and Liars
<http://www.crooksandliars.com>

Media Matters <http://mediamatters.org/>

Common Dreams
<http://www.commondreams.org/>

Truth Out <http://www.truthout.org/>

Raw Story <http://www.rawstory.com>

Open Left <http://www.openleft.com/>

AlterNet <http://www.alternet.org/>

Independent Media Center
<http://www.indymedia.org>

The Nation <http://www.thenation.com/>

Hightower News
<http://www.webactive.com/hightower/>

Mother Jones <http://www.motherjones.com/>

In These Times <http://inthesetimes.com/>

The Guardian
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/>

Corporate Watch
<http://www.corpwatch.org/home/PHH.jsp>

KPFA (94.1 FM) provides excellent coverage on many issues. You can listen on the internet at <http://www.kpfa.org>

Democracy Now! on KPFA, 94.1 FM and KVMR, 89.5 FM or on the web at: <http://www.democracynow.org>

People's World <http://www.peoplesworld.org>



Bill Moyers's journalism legacy

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

After more than 40 years on the air, Bill Moyers has turned off his microphone. While the longtime face of public broadcasting had threatened to retire in the past, this time he has assured us that we have heard his final farewell. His voice and regular presence will be deeply missed, but his legacy, and his impact on public life will surely live on.

During his storied career, the former White House press secretary and newspaper publisher produced groundbreaking reports on subjects ranging from the Iran-Contra scandal and the Iraq war to economic inequality and the corrosive influence of money in politics. His relentless commitment to the truth made Moyers the target of vicious attacks from Republicans, who for decades have sought to dismantle the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, but he never backed down. Always

fearlessly independent, Moyers provided an invaluable counterpoint to Washington's conventional wisdom. Yet his true legacy is far greater than the stories he covered or the politics he espoused. Indeed, Moyers constantly reminded us of journalism's indispensable role in our democracy.

Moyers distinguished himself as a journalist by refusing to be a stenographer for the powerful. Instead of providing yet another venue for the predictable preening of establishment leaders, Moyers gave a platform to dissenting voices from both the left and the right. Instead of covering the news from the narrow perspective of the political and corporate elite, Moyers gave voice to the powerless and the issues that affect them. "We journalists are of course obliged to cover the news," he once said at an event hosted by The Nation Institute in Washington, D.C. "But our deeper mission is to uncover the news that

powerful people would prefer to keep hidden."

As politics became a spectator sport, Moyers, guided by his abiding belief in journalists as truth-tellers, refused to play along. "These 'rules of the game' permit Washington officials to set the agenda for journalism, leaving the press all too often simply to recount what officials say instead of subjecting their words and deeds to critical scrutiny," he explained in 2005. "Instead of acting as filters for readers and viewers, sifting the truth from the propaganda, reporters and anchors attentively transcribe both sides of the spin, invariably failing to provide context, background or any sense of which claims hold up and which are misleading."

And when the media failed to report the truth – most notably as the Bush administration built the case for the war in Iraq – Moyers demanded to know what had gone wrong. In 2007,

Moyers produced "Buying the War," an extraordinary documentary that explored the role of the press in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq and featured tough interviews with prominent media figures, including Tim Russert and Dan Rather, about the mistakes they made. "How mainstream journalists suspended skepticism and scrutiny remains an issue of significance that the media has not satisfactorily explored," he said at the time. "How the administration marketed the war to the American people has been well covered, but critical questions remain: How and why did the press buy it, and what does it say about the role of journalists in helping the public sort out fact from propaganda?"

Moyers understood that one of the most pernicious threats to journalism, and indeed democracy, is a media dominated by corporations that prioritize profits over the public interest. He was a longtime

modern-day Tom Paine, warning against the perils of media consolidation – in print, on radio and television, and online – which he said "can take the oxygen out of democracy." And he inspired and encouraged a movement of media reformers to fight for a free and independent press, including those of us at The Nation, where he was a regular contributor.

Above all else, Moyers treated his audience, in the words of The Nation columnist Eric Alterman, "as adult citizens of a republic, who bear collective responsibility for the society we share" – a reflection of his deep and humane thinking about the roles of media and government. "I don't harbor any idealized notion of politics and democracy. Remember, I worked for Lyndon Johnson. Nor do I romanticize 'the people,'" he said. "But there is nothing idealized or romantic about the difference between a society whose arrangements

roughly serve all its citizens (something otherwise known as social justice) and one whose institutions have been converted into a stupendous fraud."

Upon receiving the Freedom of Speech award from the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute in 2007, Moyers recalled FDR's influence on his childhood. "I don't know quite how to explain it, except that my father knew who was on his side and who wasn't, and for 12 years he had no doubt where FDR stood," Moyers said. "The first time I remember him with tears in his eyes was when Roosevelt died. He had lost his friend." For anyone who tuned in to his programs over the past four decades, there was no doubt where Bill Moyers stood. We knew he was on our side. He was our friend.

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL IS EDITOR OF THE NATION.

Source: The Washington Post 1/13/15
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

Most Americans are one paycheck away from the street

QUENTIN FOTTRELL



Americans are feeling better about their job security and the economy, but most are theoretically only one paycheck away from the street.

Approximately 62% of Americans have no emergency savings for things such as a \$1,000 emergency room visit or a \$500 car repair, according to a new survey of 1,000 adults

by personal finance website Bankrate.com. Faced with an emergency, they say they would raise the money by reducing spending elsewhere (26%), borrowing from family and/or friends (16%) or using credit cards (12%).

"Emergency savings are not just critical for weathering an emergency, they're also important for successful homeownership and retirement saving," says Signe-Mary McKernan, senior fellow and economist at the Urban Institute, a nonprofit organization that focuses on social and economic policy.

The findings are strikingly similar to a U.S. Federal Reserve survey of more than 4,000 adults released last year. "Savings are depleted for many households after the

But while the jobs market is improving...the Great Recession does appear to have taken its toll on Americans' finances; in fact, they're 40% poorer today than they were in 2007.

recession," it found. Among those who had savings prior to 2008, 57% said they'd used up some or all of their savings in the Great Recession and its aftermath. What's more, only 39% of respondents reported having a "rainy day" fund adequate to cover three months of expenses and only 48% of respondents said that they would completely cover a hypothetical emergency expense costing \$400 without selling something or borrowing money.

Why aren't people saving? "A lot of people are in debt," says Andrew Meadows, a San Francisco-based producer of "Broken Eggs," a documentary about retirement. "Probably the most common types of debt are student loans and costs related to medical issues." He spent seven weeks traveling around the U.S. and interviewed over 100 people about why they haven't saved enough money. "People are still feeling the heat from the Great Recession." Some 44% of senior citizens have enough savings to cover unexpected expenses versus 33% of millennials, Bankrate.com found.

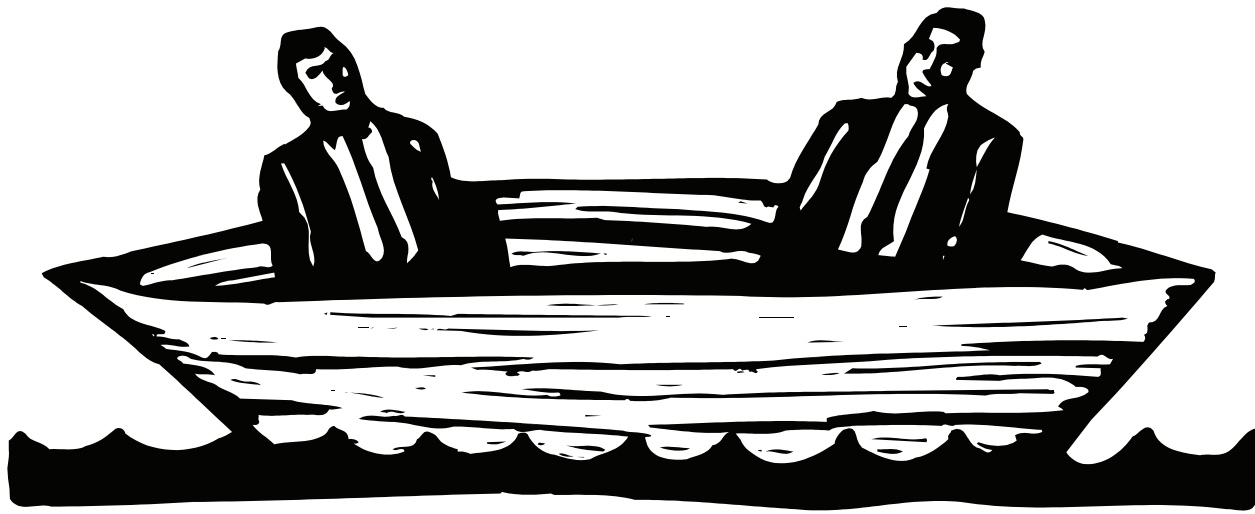
On the upside, the Bankrate survey found that 82% of Americans keep a household budget, up from 60% in 2012. Even in the age of the smartphone, most people keep a budget the old-fashioned way, either with a pen and paper (36%) or in their heads (18%). Just 26% of those surveyed say they use a computer program or smartphone app. "A solid majority of Americans say they have a household budget, which is a good thing. But too few have the ability to cover expenses outside their budget without going into debt or turning to family and friends for help," said Claes Bell, a banking analyst at Bankrate.com.

But while the jobs market is improving and the Affordable Care Act has given an estimated 15 million people access to medical care, the Great Recession does appear to have taken its toll on Americans' finances; in fact, they're 40% poorer today than they were in 2007. The net worth of American families – that is, the difference between the values of their assets, including homes and investments, and liabilities – fell to \$81,400 in 2013, down slightly from \$82,300 in 2010, but a long way off the \$135,700 in 2007, according to a report released last month by the nonprofit think tank Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C.

Source: MarketWatch 1/10/15 www.marketwatch.com



Social Security Disability Insurance: a primer



REBECCA VALLAS

Well, that was fast. Congress hasn't been back even two weeks, and the conservative attacks on Social Security are already in full swing. As ThinkProgress reported last week, House conservatives kicked off the 114th Congress—literally on Day One—with a midnight rule change that prohibits a routine rebalancing of the Social Security trust funds, effectively manufacturing a crisis and putting millions of Social Security beneficiaries at risk of needless benefit cuts.

The plot thickened further yesterday when Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) took aim at beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance with a series of incredibly offensive remarks at a private meeting with legislative leaders in Manchester, NH. In a situation resembling Mitt Romney's famous remarks about the "47 percent," Senator Paul's comments were caught on tape by American Bridge, a left-leaning PAC that conducts opposition research to aid progressive candidates: "If you look like me and you hop out of your truck, you shouldn't be getting a disability check. Over half the people on disability are either anxious or their back hurts. Join the club. Who doesn't get up a little anxious for work every day and their back hurts? Everyone over 40 has a back pain."

Senator Paul is just the latest conservative member of Congress to mock disabled workers for whom Social Security is a vital lifeline. But particularly coming on the heels of the dangerous rule change, the Senator's remarks serve as a worrisome harbinger of what we can expect from conservatives in Congress in the coming weeks and months. So let's get a few things straight. As Shawn Fremstad and I have written for the Center for American Progress, and in numerous outlets such as ThinkProgress, *National Journal*, and others:

THE SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY STANDARD IS AMONG THE STRICTEST IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD—AND MOST APPLICATIONS ARE DENIED.

According to the OECD, the U.S. disability benefit system is the most restrictive and least generous of all

member countries, except for Korea. Fewer than four in ten applicants are approved, even after all stages of appeal. Beneficiaries have severe impairments and illnesses like cancers, congestive heart failure, kidney failure, multiple sclerosis, emphysema, and severe mental illness. Many have multiple impairments. Medical evidence is the cornerstone of the disability determination process, and in most cases, medical evidence from multiple medical professionals is required to establish eligibility.

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE IS COVERAGE THAT WORKERS EARN.

To be insured for benefits, an individual must have worked and paid into the system. Both workers and employers pay for Social Security through payroll tax contributions. Workers currently pay 6.2 percent of the first \$118,500 of their earnings each year, and employers pay the same amount up to the same cap. Of that 6.2 percent, 5.3 percent currently goes to the Old Age and Survivors Insurance, or OASI, trust fund, and 0.9 percent to the Disability Insurance trust fund.

FEW BENEFICIARIES ARE ABLE TO WORK.

According to data from just before the onset of the recent economic downturn, some 16.9 percent of disability beneficiaries worked at some point during the year. Of those who worked, fewer than 3 percent earned more than \$10,000 during the year—hardly enough to live on. This comes as no surprise given that many beneficiaries are very sick, or even terminally ill—one in five male and one in six female Disability Insurance beneficiaries die within five years of receiving benefits, and beneficiaries are three to five times more likely to die than other people their age. Further underscoring the strictness of the Social Security disability standard, even workers who have been denied Disability Insurance fare extremely poorly in the labor market. A recent study found that among people whose Disability Insurance applications were denied, the vast majority—70 percent to 80 percent—went on to earn less than \$1,000 per month. But for those who are able or want to try to return to work, Social

Security's disability programs are designed to encourage work.

DISABILITY BENEFITS ARE INCREDIBLY MODEST, BUT VITAL.

Disability Insurance benefits average \$1,140 a month, just over the austere federal poverty level for a single person, or about \$35 per day. Disability Insurance typically replaces less than half of an individual's previous earnings. While the program's benefits are modest, it keeps more than four million people with disabilities out of poverty each year. For 80 percent of beneficiaries, Disability Insurance is their main source of income. For one-third it is their only source of income.

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE PROVIDES PROTECTION MOST OF US COULD NEVER AFFORD ON THE PRIVATE MARKET.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, just one in three private sector workers have access to employer-provided long-term disability insurance, and plans are often less adequate than Social Security. Access is especially limited for low-wage workers—only 7 percent of workers making under \$12 an hour have employer-provided plans. In contrast, Social Security Disability Insurance protects more than 9 out of 10 American workers and their families in the event of a life-changing disability or illness that prevents substantial work. A young worker starting a career today has a one-in-three chance of either dying or needing to turn to Disability Insurance before reaching his or her full Social Security retirement age of 67.

As progressives, we don't let people get away with denying the facts about climate change. It's long past time to send a message to conservatives that this kind of offensive, fact-free rhetoric about Social Security disability won't fly either.

REBECCA VALLAS IS THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE POVERTY TO PROSPERITY PROGRAM AT THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS.

Source: *TalkPoverty.org* 1/15/15 <http://talkpoverty.org>

Amid time of soaring inequality, rich say: the poor have it easy

ANDREA GERMANOS,
STAFF WRITER

According to the nation's richest people, the poor have it easy. Fifty-four percent of survey respondents categorized as the most financially secure said "poor people today have it easy because they can get

government benefits without doing anything in return," newly released findings by the Pew Research Center show. Of the next most financially secure group, 57 percent agreed with that sentiment, while just 29 percent of those categorized as the least financially secure did. Sixty percent of those at the bottom

economic rung also said that the "government should do more to help the needy."

Forty-six percent of those most financially secure said that corporations were raking in too much profit, compared to 65 percent of those least financially secure who thought so. But inequality—which has reached levels not

seen since the 1820s—remains a top concern globally, and citizens see governments as key in addressing the issue, a separate poll found. GlobeScan and Oxfam International polled 24,000 citizens across two dozen countries, and found that poverty and homelessness continue to be seen as major

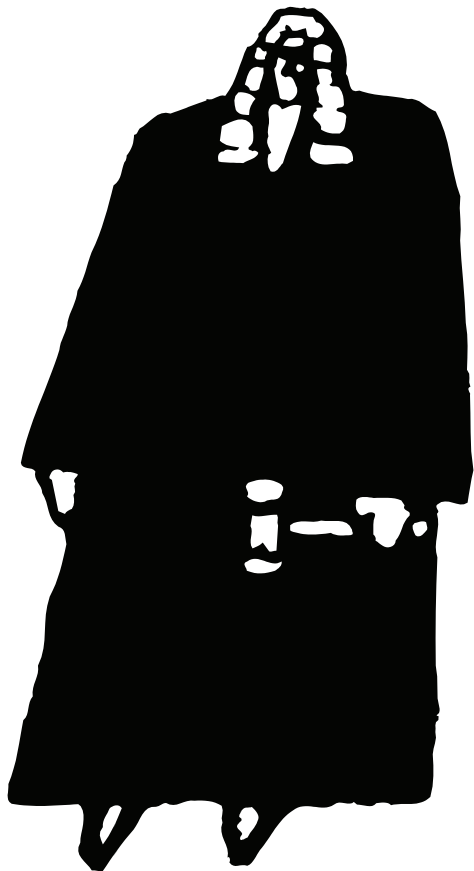
concerns. The poll also found that an average of 80 percent rated economic inequality as at least somewhat serious, with 59 percent saying that the government should be at the helm of addressing the issue. "This poll is powerful evidence that, all over the world, the public clamor to tackle inequality

and poverty is growing and hardening by the day," stated Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director, Oxfam International. "Our political and business leaders will ignore this at their peril."

Source: *Common Dreams* 1/9/15
<http://www.commondreams.org>



US/Israel punishes Palestinian application to Int'l Crime Court Authority



SARAH LAZARE

The Palestinian Authority's formal application to join the International Criminal Court has been met with a flood of retaliation and threats from Israel and the United States, illustrating, critics say, the unjust policies of these powerful countries.

The PA formally submitted the application to the global court on early January, signaling the intention to "seek justice

for all the victims that have been killed by Israel," including during the latest 50-day military assault on Gaza, which killed at least 2,194 Palestinians, over 75 percent of them civilians and more than 500 of them children.

Just one day after the application was submitted, Israel announced that it will freeze approximately \$127.6 million in Palestinian Authority tax revenue in retaliation. Excluding international aid, this revenue comprises two-thirds of the PA's annual budget, according to Al Jazeera America. Furthermore, the Israeli government will urge U.S. Congress to cease aid payments to the PA, a top Israeli official declared on Sunday.

The halting of PA revenue is just the beginning, Foreign Ministry Director-General Nissim Ben Sheetrit threatened on Sunday. "Israel is about to switch from defense to attack mode," he said, according to *Haaretz*. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu echoed this sentiment. "The Palestinian Authority has chosen confrontation with Israel and we will not sit idly by," he declared.

U.S. officials also jumped into the fray. On Friday, State Department spokesperson Jeff Rathke slammed the application to the ICC: "Today's action is entirely counterproductive and does nothing to further the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a sovereign and independent state. It badly damages the atmosphere with the very people with whom they ultimately need to make peace."

In an interview with *Democracy Now!* on Monday, Ali Abunimah, co-founder of *The Electronic Intifada* and author of *The Battle for Justice in Palestine*, responded, "I'll tell you what didn't help the atmosphere, was when, during the summer massacre in Gaza, when dozens of people were being killed every day by Israeli bombs, when entire neighborhoods were being destroyed and carpet-bombed by Israeli shelling, when, during that time, the Obama administration, President Obama, decided to resupply the Israeli military with bombs so it could continue to murder people in Gaza."

However, while Abunimah insisted that Palestinians "deserve to bring the perpetrators" of war crimes to justice, he warned, "I don't trust this Palestinian Authority leadership,"

who he described as "unelected, Israeli-backed, [and] U.S.-financed."

In an op-ed published in the *Independent* on Monday, journalist Robert Fisk argued that the uproar over PA's bid to join this body of international law highlights the absurdity of Israeli and U.S. policy. "When will Palestinians learn?" he sarcastically wrote. "Turning to International Law isn't the answer—just ask America and Israel."

Both the U.S. and Israel are non-participants in the international court. The application to the ICC immediately followed the defeat in the United Nations Security Council of a resolution, backed by Jordan, for the establishment of a Palestinian state and the replacement of Israeli security forces with a third-party presence. The resolution fell under criticism for failing to call for real end to the occupation, in an apparent bid to win approval from the United States.

Speaking with *Democracy Now!* on Monday, Phyllis Bennis, fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, argued that "the fact that the Palestinians are joining an international institution is important both for the substance and because this U.N. initiative, overall—including, frankly, the Security Council resolution, as far as it went—are major attacks on the legitimacy of the so-called diplomacy, under U.S. control, that has failed for the last 24 years."

According to Abunimah, "I think what people should take away from this soap opera at the United Nations is that Palestinians are not going to get justice from Obama, they're not going to get justice from Hillary Clinton or Elizabeth Warren or whoever next might be coming down the line, they're not going to get it from the UN, and they're not going to get it from the European Union, which continues to arm Israel to commit massacres against Palestinians."

"They're going to get it from resistance, legitimate resistance, which includes a global solidarity movement, a critical global solidarity movement, whose major and most effective expression at this moment in history is boycott, divestment and sanctions," Abunimah continued.

Source: Common Dreams 1/5/15 <http://www.commondreams.org>

Senate Republicans seize upon Paris attacks to thwart Gitmo closure

DEIRDRE FULTON

On the heels of protests pressing for the closure of the offshore military-run prison, key Senate Republicans on Tuesday called for a "time out" on releasing detainees from Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, citing last week's attacks in Paris. If passed, the "Detaining Terrorists to Protect America Act of 2015" would severely curtail President Barack Obama's ability to make good on his campaign promise to close the controversial facility.

Legislation introduced by Sens. Kelly Ayotte (N.H.), John McCain (Ariz.), Richard Burr (N.C.), and Lindsey Graham (S.C.) would prohibit for two years the transfer to the United States of detainees designated

medium- or high-risk. It would also ban transfers to Yemen, where dozens of the 127 remaining Guantánamo detainees are from. On Wednesday, Yemen's al Qaeda branch claimed responsibility for last week's massacre at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

The */Associated Press/* reports that the GOP bill "would repeal current law that has allowed the administration to transfer prisoners to foreign countries and reduce the population at Guantánamo to 127. The bill would prohibit transfers of terror suspects to foreign countries if there has been a confirmed case where an individual was transferred from Guantánamo and engaged in any terrorist activity."

"It's clear that we need a timeout so that we do not reconfront the terrorists that we had captured and are currently in Guantánamo," said Ayotte, of New Hampshire.

"It's one thing to make a campaign promise," she said at a news conference on Tuesday. "But if you look at the security situation that we're facing around the world right now, now is not the time to be emptying Guantánamo with no plan for how and where these individuals are going to go, no assurances of security of those who have been released."

According to */Politico/*: "Not all of the Republicans at Tuesday's news conference have the same views on Guantánamo—and McCain, the new chairman of the

Armed Services Committee, who has backed closing the prison, is seen as Obama's best potential Republican ally on the issue. Still, the Arizona senator slammed the administration for failing to present a plan to close Guantánamo and move the detainees who are too dangerous to be released, throwing his support behind the bill that would tie Obama's hands on Guantánamo. "This administration never presented to the Congress of the United States a concrete or coherent plan" on how to handle the detainee issue, McCain said."

Twenty-one detainees have been transferred to other countries since mid-November. On Tuesday, White House press secretary Josh Earnest said it would

be "very, very difficult" for Obama to fulfill his campaign promise of closing Gitmo without help from Congress.

Source: Common Dreams 1/14/15
<http://www.commondreams.org>

A Bag of Words

"We tortured some folks"

—Barak Obama, August 1, 2014

Like flying birds

We snapped as twigs

Covering our own heads

With a bag of words

BURL WHITMAN



White House: 'We look forward' to working with GOP on limitless war authorization

JON QUEALLY

The first meeting of the year between President Obama and top lawmakers, including the Republican leadership who now control both chambers of Congress, was used to discuss plans for passing a war authorization bill that would give congressional blessing to the U.S. war in Iraq and Syria that began in the summer of 2014. According to lawmakers who left the meeting, language for an 'authorization for use of military force' (or AUMF) against Islamic State (or ISIL) militants who operate and control territory on both sides of the Iraq/Syria

border could be sent to Congress within weeks. As / Politico/ notes, the topic of "authorizing the continuing air war against ISIL emerged as a rare area of cooperation in a year that has so far featured several veto threats." Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), who now chairs the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, indicated progress and said language from the administration could come soon. "I'm hopeful [the White House will] send something over in the next few weeks," Corker said. "Hopeful."

After the meeting, a White House statement said President Obama is

"committed to working with members of both parties on text for an AUMF that Congress can pass to show the world America stands united against ISIL." An administration official told reporters, "we look forward to sharing a draft with Congress that reflects their bipartisan input." Critics of Obama's war in the region have repeatedly rejected claims by the administration that AUMF's left over from the Bush-era are still valid for the current military operations.

As the /Huffington Post/ reports: "It's been five months since the U.S began bombing Islamic State militants in Iraq

and Syria. In that time, the U.S. has spent more than \$1 billion, participated in more than 1,700 air strikes, authorized roughly 3,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and lost three U.S. soldiers. All of this has gone on without new war authorization. Obama maintains he doesn't need new authority to bomb the Islamic State, citing a sweeping AUMF from 2001 as his legal justification, but has said he welcomes it anyway. Lawmakers in both parties disagree he has that authority. Some in Congress have grown tired of waiting for the White House to send draft language and have pushed for Congress to move

its own AUMF, but others are wary of advancing a war bill without sign-off from the White House. Typically, the White House begins the war authorization process."

It remains to be seen what the White House's language will include, but the best indication of their position came from testimony by Secretary of State John Kerry during a Senate committee hearing in December.

In those remarks, Kerry said the White House wanted an expansive, essentially limitless, authorization—one without geographic or time constraints. In addition, Kerry indicated the Pentagon

did not want restrictions placed on its ability to send additional ground forces, including "combat troops," if they felt such forces were needed. Commenting at *Antiwar.com*, Jason Ditz remarked on the likely warm reception the White House AUMF would receive in both the House and Senate. "With hawks dominated most of the committees in the new Senate," he wrote, "it seems like the passage of any authorization vote should be fairly easy, so long as the wording is vague enough to leave open the prospect for escalation."

Source: Common Dreams 1/14/15
<http://www.commondreams.org>

Pentagon to request \$51 billion in war funding



TONY CAPACCIO

The Pentagon will request about \$51 billion in war funding for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1, a 20 percent reduction from the \$64 billion Congress approved this year and the least since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, officials and congressional aides said.

The Overseas Contingency Operations funding, as it's known, will be sent to Congress in addition to basic defense spending of about \$534 billion when President Barack Obama offers his proposed fiscal 2016 federal budget on Feb. 2, according to the officials and aides, who asked not to be identified before the details are made public.

While the decline in war funding largely reflects the continued withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan -- from the 10,600 now there to half that planned by year-end -- it

remains enough to draw questions about why the Defense Department shouldn't pay to fight wars as part of its basic mission.

"The continuing drawdown in Afghanistan is not having a proportionate effect on" the war budget because it's "being used for a lot of things other than Afghanistan," said Todd Harrison, a defense budget analyst with the nonpartisan Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington. "It's a budgetary shell game for getting around" the caps imposed by the automatic spending cuts known as sequestration, Harrison said in an e-mail.

DEFENSE STOCKS

News of the planned decrease in war spending damped today's gains for defense stocks. After rising as much as 3.2 percent, Lockheed Martin Corp. (LMT) pared its advance to 2.3 percent, at \$195.15 at 2:14 p.m. in New York. Northrop Grumman Corp. climbed 2 percent to \$151.63, retreating from a jump of as much as 3 percent earlier.

The shares have proved resilient in the face of Defense Department spending cutbacks. A Bloomberg Intelligence gauge of the four largest Pentagon contractors -- excluding Boeing Co., whose civilian airplanes business is larger than its military unit -- surged 30 percent in 2014, outstripping the 11 percent increase for the Standard & Poor's 500 Index.

EXCEEDING CAP

Sequestration cuts are scheduled to resume again in fiscal 2016, after a two-year break, unless Congress overturns them. Obama's base defense budget for the coming year assumes about \$34 billion more than the cap would permit.

Money requested for Overseas Contingency Operations is exempt from sequestration.

The \$51 billion request would be for military operations and doesn't include money from the fund that goes to the State Department and Department of Veterans Affairs. The previous low was \$17 billion in fiscal 2002, the second year of war funding.

Over the years, the Pentagon and Congress have added items less directly related to waging war, even as each chastises the other over the practice.

"The use of war funding expanded to cover issues with only tenuous links to combat operations," Emil Maine and Diem Salmon wrote in an essay on the website of the Heritage Foundation, a Washington-based policy group. They said the fund shouldn't be used as "a safety valve to cover defense

spending shortfalls" and should be phased out.

2008 PEAK

The most war spending was in fiscal 2008 when Congress approved \$187 billion, largely to fund the Bush administration's Iraq surge that swelled troops to a peak of 165,000 in November 2007. They fell to 148,000 in July 2008. Navy Commander William Urban, a Defense Department budget spokesman, declined to comment directly on the upcoming request. Future requests "will be based on actual contingency operations" so it's "impossible to predict" whether the current downward trend in war spending will continue, he said. This year's war-spending request initially was \$58.6 billion. It grew to about \$64 billion with the addition of \$5 billion requested in late November.

Those funds will be used to retrain and equip the Iraqi army to attack Islamic State extremists and to provide a counterterrorism fund for allies as well as the European Reassurance Initiative after Russia annexed Crimea and supported Ukrainian separatists with military forces. The 2016 request is likely to include additional funds to pay for flying hours and munitions dropped in anti-Islamic State airstrikes.

Source: Bloomberg 1/9/15 <http://www.bloomberg.com>

Poem for Syria

We hung shrapnel in the trees
and rang it like sour bells.

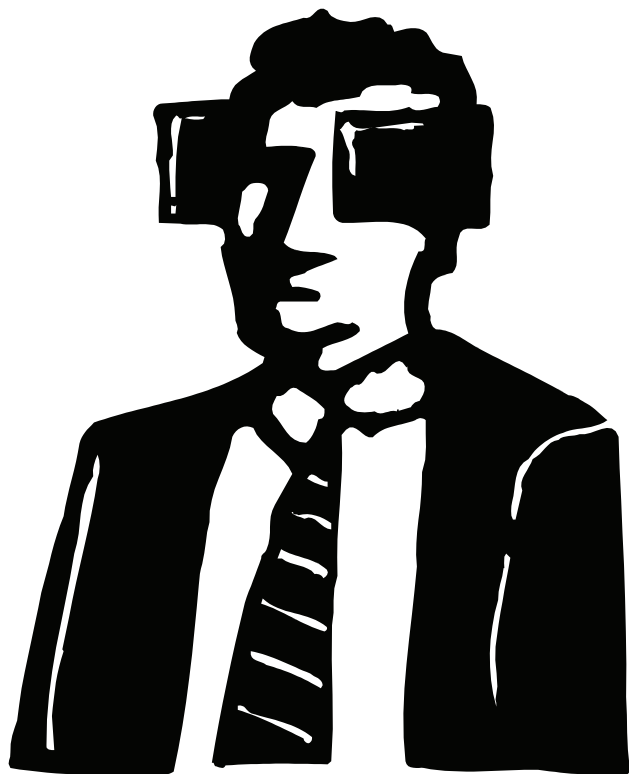
What sharp longing! What idiotic hope!

They kill journalists now like prize stags.
Wide skies of oxygen, men of footnotes.

BURL WHITMAN



Mourning the Parisian "humorists" yet challenging the hypocrisy of Western media



RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

As the editor of a progressive Jewish and interfaith magazine that has often articulated views that have prompted condemnation from both Right and Left, I had good reason to be scared by the murders of fellow journalists in Paris. Having won the 2014 "Magazine of the Year" Award from the Religion Newswriters Association, and having been critical of Hamas'

attempts to bomb Israeli cities this past summer (even while being equally critical of Israel's rampage against civilians in Gaza), I have good reason to worry if this prominence raises the chances of being a target for Islamic extremists.

But then again, I had to wonder about the way the massacre in Paris is being depicted and framed by the Western media as a horrendous threat to Western civilization, freedom of speech and freedom of the press, I wondered about the over-heated nature of this description. It didn't take me long to understand how problematic that framing really is.

When right-wing "pro-Israel" fanatics frequently sent me death threats, physically attacked my house and painted on the gates statements about me being "a Nazi" or "a self-hating Jew," and called in bomb threats to Tikkun, the magazine I edit, there was no attention given to this by the media, no cries of "our civilization depends on freedom of the press" or demands to hunt down those involved (the FBI and police received our complaints, but never reported back to us about what they were doing to protect us or find the assailants).

Nor was the mainstream or Jewish media particularly concerned about Western civilization being destroyed or freedom of thought and association undermined when various universities denied tenure to professors who had made statements critical of Israel, or when the Hillel association, which operates a chain of student-oriented "Hillel Houses" on college campuses, decided to ban from their premises any Jews who were part of Jewish Voices for Peace. Nor was the media much interested in a bomb that went off outside the NAACP's Colorado Springs headquarters the same day as they were highlighting the attack in Paris. Colorado Springs is home to some of the most extreme right-wing activists. It was a balding white man who was seen setting the bomb, some reports claim, and so the media described it as an act of a troubled "lone individual," rather than as a white right wing Christian fundamentalist terrorist. Few Americans have even heard of this incident.

And when the horrific assassinations of 12 media people and the wounding of another 12 media workers resulted in justifiable outrage around the world, did you ever wonder why there wasn't an equal outrage at the tens of thousands of innocent civilians killed by the American intervention in Iraq or the over a million civilians killed by the U.S. in Vietnam, or why President Obama refused to bring to justice the CIA torturers of mostly Muslim prisoners, thereby de facto giving future torturers the message that they need not even be sorry for their deeds (indeed, former Vice President Cheney boldly asserted he would order that kind of torture again without thinking twice)?

So don't be surprised if people around the world, while condemning the despicable acts of the murderers in Paris and grieving for their families and friends, remain a bit cynical about the media-circus surrounding this particular outrage while the Western media quickly forgets the equally despicable acts of systematic murder and torture that Western countries have been involved in. Or perhaps a bit less convinced that Western societies are really the best hope for civilization when they condone this kind of hypocrisy, rather than responding equally forcefully to all such actions repressing free speech or freedom of assembly. I could easily imagine (and regret) how some Islamist fundamentalists will already be making these points about the ethical inconsistencies of Western societies with their pomposity about human rights that never seem to constrain the self-described "enlightened democracies" from violating those rights when it is they who perceive themselves as under attack.

MISSING EMPATHY

Yet there is a deeper level in which the discourse seems so misguided. As Tikkun editor-at-large Peter Gabel has pointed out, there is no recognition in the media of the dehumanizing way that so much of the media deals with whoever is the perceived threatening "other" of the day. That media was outraged at the attempt by some North Korean allied group

to scare people away from watching a movie ridiculing and then planning to assassinate the current (immoral) ruler of Korea, never wondering how we'd respond if a similar movie had been made ridiculing and planning the assassination of an American president. Similarly, the media has refused to even consider what it would mean to a French Muslim, living among Muslims who are economically marginalized and portrayed as nothing but terrorists, their religious garb banned in public, their religion demeaned, to encounter a humor magazine that ridiculed the one thing that gives them some sense of community and higher purpose, namely Mohammed and the religion he founded.

To even raise this kind of question is to open oneself up to charges of not caring about the murdered or making excuses for the murderers. But neither charge is accurate. I fear those fundamentalist extremists just as much as I fear the Jewish extremists who have threatened my life and the Christian extremists who are now exercising power over the U.S. Congress. Every form of violence outrages and sickens me.

Yet the violence is an inevitable consequence of a world which systematically dehumanizes so many people who are made to feel powerless and despairing and deeply depressed about the possibility of finding the milk of human kindness anywhere. The representation of evil dominates the media, and becomes the justification for our own evil acts. And that evil is made possible because so many among us avert our eyes and shut our ears to the cries of the oppressed.

The U.N. estimates that some 10,000 children will die of starvation or diseases related to malnutrition today and every other day in 2015. 2.5 million live on less than \$2 a day, 1.5 million on less than \$1 a day. Every day thousands of young women are sold into prostitution or "voluntarily" join it in order to raise enough money to help feed their families. Tens of millions of others work in horrendous "sweat shop" conditions. When some of them and some who know about them and feel outraged turn to various forms of nationalist or religious fundamentalist extremism, their violent actions rightfully get condemned. But the silence at the violence that is structural and a pervasive consequence of the globalization of capital is rarely brought to anyone's attention.

WHAT WE ABSORB

All of us absorb this global reality into our unconscious, just as we absorb the violence, hatred, and demeaning of others. We tolerate the kind of endless put-downs that the "humor" magazines and even supposedly liberal comedians like Bill Maher perpetrate, not realizing how much damage all of this does to our souls. The spiritual consequences are all around us: people despairing of ever being understood by others, growing distrustful of others, and feeling that no one really can be trusted. A collective and global emotional depression makes so many people withdraw into themselves, sometimes in relatively harmless ways, but often in ways that undermine the possibility of any human community emerging that would be capable of dealing with the social and environmental problems that face the human race, thereby giving freedom for the global corporations and their hired guns in the media and politics to continue to run the world for their own narrow interests and without regard to the wellbeing of other people or the environment.

"But they ridicule everyone's religion, not just the Muslim's," we are reassured. But the reassurance isn't reassuring. That they ridicule everyone is exactly the problem—the general cheapening and demeaning of others is destructive to everyone. But of course not equally destructive, because people who are already economically and socially marginalized are in far greater danger of having this demeaning sting rather than feel funny.

"And shouldn't free speech and individual human liberties be our highest value? This value that is put into danger if you

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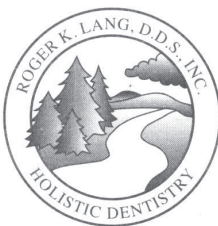
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CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Congress introduces a National Abortion Ban on its very first day back

TARA CULP-RESSLER

Republicans in Congress are wasting no time following through on the anti-abortion agenda the GOP laid out after winning significant gains in the 2014 midterm elections. On Tuesday, the very first day of the 114th Congress, two lawmakers introduced a measure to ban abortions after 20 weeks, in direct violation of the protections afforded under *Roe v. Wade*. Reps. Trent Franks (R-AZ) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) reintroduced the Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, the same legislation that successfully passed the House last year.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) – who introduced a companion 20-week abortion ban in the Senate last year that was stalled by Democratic leadership – has already indicated that he plans to reintroduce his own measure in the next few weeks, too. Now that the Senate is GOP-controlled, Republicans are anticipating that they'll have enough support to pass the ban in both chambers this year, helping the anti-choice community gain momentum for this particular tactic to

limit reproductive rights.

"In a Republican Senate, under my leadership, we would have the kind of real debate on the issues that the American people want," Mitch McConnell (R-KY) told the audience at the National Right to Life Conference in the fall. "For six years, the president has been isolated from this growing movement. He will be forced to listen to the cause that's brought us all here this morning."

These type of abortion bans are often called "fetal pain" measures because they're based on the notion that fetuses are sentient after 20 weeks of pregnancy, assuming that an abortion procedure after that point would be painful for them. In a statement released on Tuesday, Franks referred to 20-week fetuses as "innocent and defenseless children who can not only feel pain, but who can survive outside of the womb in most cases, and who are torturously killed without even basic anesthesia."

In fact, doctors agree that fetuses cannot survive outside the womb until about 24 to 28 weeks of pregnancy, which is considered to be the

legal point of viability. At less than 21 weeks, no delivered baby has ever survived. Plus, scientific research has repeatedly confirmed that fetuses cannot feel pain until after they are viable; indeed, even the researchers who are trying to learn more about fetal pain don't want their findings to be used to justify abortion bans.

Nonetheless, 20-week abortion bans have become increasingly popular on the state level. According to the Guttmacher Institute, which tracks reproductive rights policies, nine states currently cut off legal abortion access at 20 weeks based on the assumption that fetuses can feel pain at that point.

Abortion opponents believe that focusing on later abortions is a winning strategy because these restrictions can be construed as moderate. The right-wing Susan B. Anthony List, one of the biggest proponents of the proposed national 20-week abortion ban, calls it a "common sense" measure that is popular among the American people.

"As the 114th Congress is sworn in today, we are encouraged to see our pro-

life allies wasting no time in the fight to protect the lives of the most vulnerable," Susan B. Anthony List's president, Marjorie Dannenfelser, said in a statement on Tuesday.

But reproductive rights groups say that "fetal pain" measures represent a politically popular way of defining a policy that can force women to carry doomed pregnancies to term. Typically, later abortions – which are very rare – occur only in very desperate situations. Sometimes, women discover serious fetal health issues that weren't evident earlier in their pregnancy, and choose to prevent their unborn child from suffering and dying outside the womb. Other times, low-income women are forced to delay abortion until that point because it takes them that long to save up the money for it. A 2013 poll commissioned by Planned Parenthood found that when voters learn more about those reasons why a woman may need a later procedure, they oppose 20-week abortion bans.

Source: *ThinkProgress* 1/7/15
<http://thinkprogress.org>

Mourning the Parisian "humorists" yet challenging the hypocrisy of Western media

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ask for some kind of responsibility from comedians." Two responses: 1. No, individual human liberties is not our highest value. Our highest value is treating human beings with love, kindness, generosity, respect and see them as embodiments of the holy, and treating the earth as sacred. Individual liberty is a strategy to promote this highest value, but when that liberty gets abused (as for example in demeaning women, African Americans, gays in public discourse) we often insist that the articulators of racism, sexism and homophobia be publicly humiliated (not shut down, but using our free speech to vigorously challenge theirs). 2. Free speech is not defeated when we use it to try to marginalize hateful or demeaning speech. So let's call demeaning speech, including demeaning humor, what it really is—an assault on the dignity of human beings.

None of this is reason to stop mourning the horrific murders in Paris or to excuse it in any way. But it is reason to

wonder why the media can never tell a more nuanced story of what is happening our world.

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER IS EDITOR OF TIKKUN MAGAZINE WWW.TIKKUN.ORG, CHAIR OF THE INTERFAITH AND SECULAR-HUMANIST-WELCOMING NETWORK OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVES WWW.SPIRITUALPROGRESSIVES.ORG, RABBI OF BEYT TIKKUN SYNAGOGUE WWW.BEYTTIKKUN.ORG, AND AUTHOR OF 11 BOOKS INCLUDING 2 NATIONAL BEST SELLERS: *THE LEFT HAND OF GOD: TAKING BACK OUR COUNTRY FROM THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT AND JEWISH RENEWAL*; *A PATH TO HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION*. HE WELCOMES YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN BUILDING A LOVE AND JUSTICE MOVEMENT IN WESTERN SOCIETIES. RABBILERNER.TIKKUN@GMAIL.COM

Source: *Huffington Post* 1/9/15 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/TikkunMagazine>, 2342 Shattuck Avenue, #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704
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Risky fracked oil: explosive, pollutive, unneeded



THOMAS S. BLOCK

There's a bit of concern about what happens around wellheads in North Dakota oil fields before the oil is shipped to distant refineries. Stabilizing the crude before shipment, as in the Texas oil fields, is not procedural in North Dakota or, at the least, not common. According to Myron Goforth of Dew Point Control LLC., "It's a little like the wild west up in the Bakken, where everybody gets to do what they want to do." "Fluffing" or intentionally leaving gases such as propane in the extracted crude is "a distinct possibility." Harry Giles, retired from the Department of Energy, continues, "In the Bakken, you've got two choices. You burn it, or you put it into the crude in the railcar." There is insufficient infrastructure in North Dakota. Operators "can flare or vent the volatile gases into the North Dakota sky, although they risk being penalized for violating emission limits. Or they can leave some of the gases . . . as liquid in the crude oil they send to refineries, where gas-processing facilities already exist." It is the gases such as propane, methane, butane, ethane, and pentane that causes the flammability and explosiveness in crude oil. The increase in crude oil pipelines directly connecting wellheads to depots eliminates processing steps in the stabilization process such as heating and condensing. In the Eagle Ford shale in Texas, for instance, stabilizers dot the oil fields. Mike Spears of San Antonio-based Howard Energy Partners considers Texas fortunate: "It makes sense to build stabilizers in the fields where we produce."

In May of 2014, oil production in the Bakken formation yielded 1,040,469 barrels of oil. In June, production was 1,092,617 barrels. Yet, flaring was unchanged. The gases went somewhere. Surely, the North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources doesn't know. Back in February 2014, the Department of Transportation ordered Bakken operators to begin testing their rail shipments "with sufficient frequency and quality." But, only two days later, The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) administrator, at a congressional hearing, in essence, relented by giving oil companies the discretion of what constituted "sufficient frequency and quality." "For some reason this entire rail oil industry, they just fill these rail cars and send them without really knowing what's in them," says Scott Smith, one of the first persons to investigate the crude involved in the Lac Megantic conflagration. "And it's the only industry I'm aware of that gets away with that."

Compound this cowardice of the PHMSA with the 2009 Cherry Valley derailment and fire. A lady trying to exit her

car was burnt and killed and three others were injured. This resulted in a 2009 "urging" by the National Transportation Safety Board for the rail industry to retrofit their DOT-111 tank cars. As of this year, approximately 92,000 DOT-111s are still not retrofitted but are still carrying flammable liquids. In 2002, the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railroad had "certain safety processes in place and had developed a safety management system." The company "did not begin implementing [the program] until 2010." In 2013, the brakes on an MMA train failed practically destroying Lac Megantic. In 1969, two trains collided head-on killing four and injuring many others. The NTSB "recommended" that Positive Train Controls be installed. On August 17 of this year, two Union Pacific trains carrying toxic chemicals collided head-on, killing two in Hoxie, Arkansas.

Who's responsible for this breach of trust? Who's responsible for the lives lost in the intervening years? Investigation after investigation consistently point to lax governmental oversight and poor rail company safety practices. The courts consistently uphold common carrier obligations and the commerce clause in the US constitution which mandates federal regulation above regional regulations. These corporate come-lately weapons have evolved to suck the safety out of our commerce by negating state and local safety regulations. When will the general population recognize governmental and corporate nepotism? The Herald Press has criticized the Department of Transportation: "To have this knowledge and still fail to act on it is to take a cynical view of the well-being of the people whom the agency is supposed to protect." And the Department of Transportation (DOT) does have the authorization to act. DOT Secretary Foxx can "issue an order against a railroad requiring it to eliminate any unsafe condition or practice which creates an emergency involving a hazard of death or injury." Until the general population recognizes the corporate terrorism and takes steps to ensure their right against corporate and governmental sucking-up to each other, individuals like Andrew Armstrong will remain frustrated and angry: "When groups like the American Association of Railroads and the Federal Railroad Administration let safety improvements like Positive Train Control, that can prevent head on and overspeed accidents, be delayed or systems like electronic . . . brake systems that can shorten a train's stopping distance by half over conventional air only systems get brushed under the rug, there will never be any sense of "safety" on American railroads . . ."

This liaison between industry and government is not unique to the United States. The Council of Canadians,

Canada's leading social and environmental justice organization, has tracked the increasingly devolving responsibility of Transport Canada (the agency that develops and enforces safety regulations and standards) to, primarily, the Canadian National Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway over the past twenty-five years. Rather than impose an immediate moratorium, the federal government "would rather gamble with the safety of communities, towns, and farmland than inconvenience their friends in rapidly expanding the tar sands and fracked Bakken oil plays." Thus, a "reasonable" or "doable" timetable, as the Harper government has pronounced, has been a euphemism for shippers "to address the market-access logistics to get oil to refiners rather than . . . remove a known threat to public safety." While the Canadian government has banned "the most decrepit DOT-111s," Michael Butler, of the Council of Canadians posted the following rejoinder: "Let's also remember both Liberal and Conservative governments have known for over 20 years that these tankers were unsafe, both made a conscious choice not to act until tragedy struck (and still could again)."

The Port of Stockton views the 33 acre Targa terminal and storage facility, scheduled to start operations in 2016, as a done deal. Its 70,000 barrels per day trans-shipping capacity would add increased particulate matter and other contaminants such as the "fluffed" propane, methane, ethane, butane, pentane, etc. gases mentioned above to further pollute an already high-risk Stockton community. Furthermore, could the port transship crude to the refurbished Bakersfield terminal down the road, sending additional 50 or 100 unit trains through Stockton, gambling that the city will not become another Lac Megantic? Life is so cheap, here, in Stockton.

Source: Thomas S. Block presentation before Stockton, CA City Council concerning the rail industry, 9/9/14



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Sen. Barbara Boxer, 70 Washington Street, Suite 203, Oakland, CA 94607, 510-286-8537, fax 202-224-0454; 112 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510. 202-224-3553, senator@boxer.senate.gov; Twitter: @senatorboxer

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Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-9th District) 2222 Grand Canal Blvd #7, Stockton, CA 95207. 209-476-8552. Fax 209-476-8587. 1210 Longworth HOB, Washington DC 20515; info@jerrymcnerney.org, 202-225-1947, <http://www.JerryMcNerney.org>; Twitter: @RepMcNerney

Rep. Tom McClintock (R-District 4), 8700 Auburn-Folsom Road, Suite 100, Granite Bay, CA 95746, 916-786-5560, fax 916-786-6364; 434 Cannon HOB, Washington, DC, 20515, Fax 202-225-5444, Fax 202-225-544; Twitter @RepMcClintock

Rep. Jeff Denham (R-District 10), 4701 Sisk Road, Suite 202, Modesto, CA 95356, 209-579-5458, Fax 209-579-5028. 1730 Longworth HOB, Washington, DC 20515, 202-225-4540. Twitter @RepJeffDunham

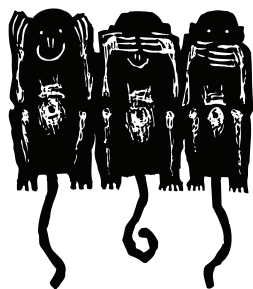
Gov. Jerry Brown, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-445-2841

State Sen. Cathleen Galgiani (District 5), 31 E Channel St, Room 440, Stockton, CA 95202. 209-948-7930; State Capitol, Rm 4082, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-651-4005

Assemblyperson Susan Talamantes Eggman (District 5), 31 E. Channel St., Rm. 306, Stockton CA 95202, 209-948-7479



'Failure of conscience': groups urge Congress to fund social well-being, not fossil fuel industry



NADIA PRUPIS

A coalition of environmental and social justice groups has come together to declare collective disgust with the spending of billions of taxpayer dollars on unnecessary subsidies for the oil and gas industries when that same money could be used to improve the lives of millions if spent on social services, renewable energy investments, healthcare, and education.

The coalition includes Friends of the Earth, Public Citizen, People for the American Way, and Oxfam America, among others. As part of its effort, the coalition has launched a Fossil Fuel Subsidies Tradeoff Calculator, a tool which breaks down both the government's giveaways to the oil industry into smaller brackets, such as tax credits for manufacturers and fossil energy research programs, and the social programs that could benefit from those subsidies instead, like school lunches and veteran healthcare.

"Leaving the social safety net in tatters and keeping Big Oil on the dole is not just a failure to prioritize. It is a failure of conscience," said Lukas Ross, climate and energy campaigner at Friends of the Earth, one of the organizations in the coalition. "In the face of record inequality, crumbling infrastructure, and looming climate disruption, it is time for Congress to think hard about the government spending we

need and the corporate welfare we don't."

CHOICES MADE

Among the programs set to receive funding through the so-called "Cromnibus" spending bill that passed the Senate in December is one that will give the oil and gas industry \$571 million a year for research and development. Applying that same amount of money to a swath of different social assistance programs, Congress could fund maximum Pell grants for nearly 100,000 students or the median salaries of more than 18,000 national park rangers, the coalition found.

"It's an abomination that while Americans are working every day for a transition to a more sustainable, more equal and more democratic economy, members of Congress are willingly trading off our future for the short-term profits of fossil fuel executives," said Janet Redman, director of the climate policy program at the Institute for Policy Studies, another coalition member.

The tradeoff calculator also analyzes the expense of the "intangible drilling cost deduction," an accounting tactic often employed by big oil companies to write off much of the price of building new wells in the U.S., as much as \$1.67 billion a year. As the Joint Committee on Taxation explains: "Under

normal income tax rules, a company that pays expenses in order to make future profits would need to deduct the expenses over the same time period as profits. The costs for drilling exploratory and developmental wells would need to be deducted as resources are extracted from the well. The break for intangible drilling costs (IDCs) is an exception to the general rule. Independent producers can choose to immediately deduct all of their intangible drilling costs."

That \$1.67 billion in write-offs could be applied instead to funding 768,202,765 school lunches a year, healthcare for 563,176 veterans, or food stamps for 13,117,721 people. Altogether, the cost of government subsidies for the oil and gas industry totals \$6.45 billion, according to the coalition. For that amount of funding, 5,469,579 children could receive free or low-cost health insurance up to age 19.

"Congress has stripped food assistance for kids and seniors, but they continue to give billions in handouts to the wealthiest and most polluting companies in the world," said Green for All executive director Jeremy Hays. "Our scarce public resources should protect the health and safety of our communities."

In addition to environmental groups, the coalition included voices from faith-based organizations. "Let's be blunt, the propping up of oil companies while denying climate change is pure corruption," said Ani Zonneveld, president of Muslims for Progressive Values. Stephen Kretzmann, executive director of Oil Change International, also stated, "There are two words that perfectly describe the ongoing use of public funds to support the fossil fuel industry: climate denial."

"Ending fossil fuel subsidies should be the first step in fighting climate change," Kretzmann said.

Source: Common Dreams 1/13/15 <http://www.commondreams.org>

"Let's be blunt, the propping up of oil companies while denying climate change is pure corruption..."

Climate activists rally country-wide to fight Keystone XL

NADIA PRUPIS

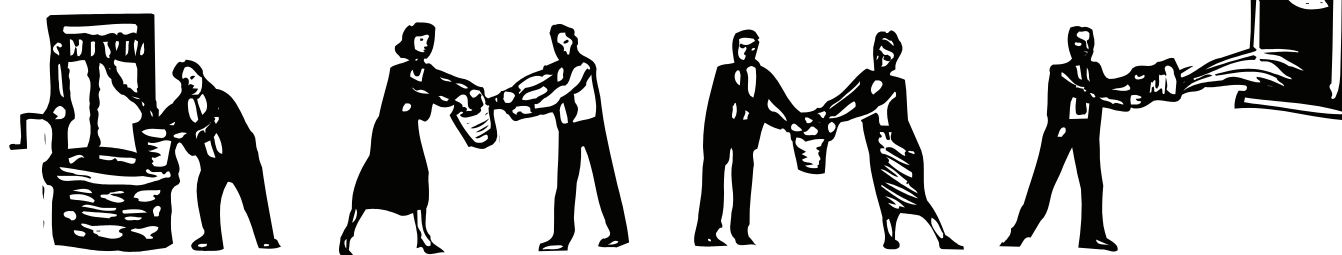
Environmental activists rallied in all 50 states on Tuesday to protest the Keystone XL pipeline after the bill moved forward in Congress earlier this week. Over 150 events were organized in less than 72 hours, according to 350.org. Activists at a Washington D.C. rally delivered a 500,000-name petition to stop the pipeline to the White House, while many in other states gathered in the freezing cold outside of statehouses and federal buildings, waving signs and banners that read, "Climate Justice Now" and "Draw the Line on Keystone XL."

The rallies came together after a series of crucial developments over the past week. On Friday, the Nebraska Supreme Court paved the way for construction of a key portion of the tar sands pipeline in the state, and the bill to approve the project advanced on Monday after a 63-32 cloture vote in the Senate, with a final vote expected soon. Monday's total count fell short of the 67 votes necessary to allow Congress the power to override President Barack Obama's promised veto, leaving the option open for him to put an end to the contentious project. On Tuesday, activists did not let him forget that.

"Obama has been saying for months,

'I'm going to wait for the Nebraska decision to come down to make my decision,' so we've just been waiting for that," 350 organizer Deirdre Shelly, who participated in the D.C. protest, told /ThinkProgress/ on Tuesday. "Now, with that decision out of the way, he finally has all the room he needs to veto." The message was carried across the country. Protesters in San Francisco, California chanted, "Hey Obama, stop the pipeline drama!" And during a rally in Portland, Oregon demonstrators hoisted a banner emblazoned with the president's own words, quoting a speech he made in 2007 as a senator: "We cannot afford more of the same timid politics when the future of our planet is at stake."

Source: Common Dreams 1/14/15 <http://www.commondreams.org>



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Eight ways it's been a great year for renewable energy

JOHN ROGERS, SENIOR ENERGY ANALYST, CLEAN ENERGY

As 2014 comes to a close, it's helpful to look back and take stock of successes in the clean energy space. Here are 8 ways that it's been a great year for clean energy (and just a few areas for improvement).

1. THE CLEAN POWER PLAN EMERGES

The EPA's proposed rule on power plant carbon emissions, released in June, means that we're finally going to tackle the largest single source of U.S. CO₂ head on. If we do it right—including making full use of the renewable energy and energy efficiency resources that states have in abundance—it'll be a solid boost for clean energy.

2. LARGE-SCALE SOLAR SHINES

Solar, both photovoltaics (PV) and concentrating solar (CSP), smashed records in 2014. February saw the start-up of the largest CSP facility in the world. And just last month the world's largest PV project got finished.

3. ROOFTOP PV DAZZLES

One of the many beautiful things about solar is its ability to play ball at the large scale and the small, and rooftop PV has had its own amazing year. By the end of the year, some 600,000 homes will have been solarized, 20 times the amount in 2006.

4. RENEWABLE ENERGY COSTS CONTINUE TO DROP

Part of the growing success of renewables is their increasingly attractive economics. Wind power costs continue to impress, and rooftop PV is becoming competitive with the electricity grid in more and more places around the country.

5. RENEWABLE INTEGRATION IS NO PROBLEM, EXPERTS SAY

As they had before, important electricity grid experts looking at the impact of large-scale adoption of renewable energy came to some very positive conclusions: that it's doable, with little extra effort. Consider PJM's assessment of

a 30% renewables future, for example.

6. LEDS SCORE A NOBEL PRIZE

The Nobel committee recognized the folks who made white LEDs possible, which seemed like a fine choice, given how much electricity lighting uses and the potential to make terrific gains there.

7. COMPANIES ABANDON ALEC

The American Legislative Exchange Council, a leading pusher of anti-clean energy and anti-climate legislation, took big hits as some powerful and high-profile members kissed 'em goodbye. Obfuscation and misinformation lead to poor choice (as Indiana Jones saw). Less ALEC likely means better decision making for advancing clean energy.

8. LEADERS ARE LEADING

We had lots of examples in 2014 of clean energy leadership, from states and utilities to Fortune 500 companies and high-level elected officials, and many others, showing us how to get where we need to go on renewables and efficiency.

Source: Union of Concerned Scientists *The Equation* 12/19/14 <http://www.ucsusa.org>

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Francis: the climate change pope

In 2014, the Pope became an outspoken advocate about the urgent need to address climate change. He wrote a letter to Tony Abbott, who headed the G20 summit in November about the "constant assaults on the natural environment," which he said was the "result of unbridled consumerism." He called learning how to respect creation "one of the greatest challenges of our time" and told university students that the "destruction of South America's rain forests" is a "sin." The pope also convened a five-day summit with scientists and experts on the environment. And he has come out against fracking.

The pope is not making any plans to quiet down in 2015—just the opposite. He is expected to publish an encyclical—the highest form of papal writing, which is sent out to the world's 1.2 billion Catholics—in the next couple months that will be on the "ecology of mankind." According to Dan Misleh, director of the Catholic Climate Convent, he will likely advocate action on climate change based on economics and

science rather than morality, and he will warn his followers that "acting on climate change is 'essential to the faith.'"

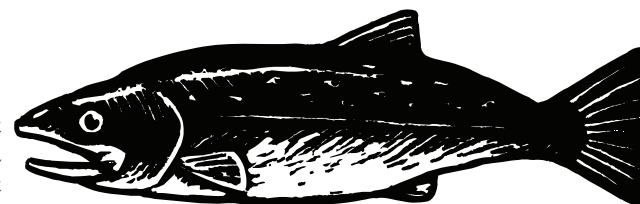
The pontificate is hoping his encyclical will guide world leaders, who will convene at the end of the year at the U.N. Climate Summit in Paris, to finally take the necessary actions on climate change to avoid the most catastrophic outcomes. And his followers are hoping his divine intervention will work, too. "We look to Pope Francis to break the political impasse preventing real action on climate change. Twenty years of climate negotiations have left the world at the mercy of political and economic circles looking to protect their vested interests at the expense of mankind and the planet," said Yeb Saño, Philippine Climate Change Commissioner. The pope is also scheduled to speak at the U.N. General Assembly in September when world leaders convene to announce new anti-poverty and environmental goals.

Source: EcoWatch 1/12/15 <http://ecowatch.com/>

California drought hard on Chinook salmon

ALASTAIR BLAND

Gushing downpours finally arrived in California last month, when December rains brought some relief to a landscape parched after three years of severe drought. But the rain came too late for thousands of Chinook salmon that spawned this summer and fall in the northern Central Valley. The Sacramento River, running lower than usual under the scorching sun, warmed into the low 60s—a temperature range that can be lethal to fertilized Chinook, the largest species of Pacific salmon, need cool waters to reproduce. Chinook eggs. Millions were destroyed, and almost an entire year-class of both fall-run Chinook, the core of the state's salmon fishing industry, and winter-run Chinook, an endangered species whose eggs incubate in the summer, was lost. The disaster comes on the heels of a similar event the previous autumn. It is also reminiscent of ongoing troubles on northern California's Klamath River, where diversion of water for agriculture has



at times left thousands of adult Chinook—the largest species of Pacific salmon—struggling to survive in water too shallow and warm to spawn in.

Now, scientists—who are observing increasing human demand for water, genetic decline of hatchery-reared salmon, and climate change models predicting intensified droughts—are concerned that the Chinook salmon will be unable to tolerate future river conditions and will all but vanish from California's landscape.

SOURCE: YALE ENVIRONMENT360 [HTTP://E360.YALE.EDU](http://E360.YALE.EDU) 1/5/15

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Keystone XL: it's up to you, Obama, to stand up for climate

ANDREA GERMANOS

A ruling by the Nebraska Supreme Court on Friday removes an obstacle for approval of the Keystone XL pipeline—a decision, environmental groups say, that means President Obama can and must exercise his authority to fully reject the pipeline.

Nebraska landowners had challenged the constitutionality of a state law, LB 1161, which allowed Gov. Dave Heineman to approve TransCanada's tar sands pipeline route. The victory a

lower court dealt the pipeline opponents in February was reversed with Friday's high court decision. Though four of the seven justices sided with landowners, a fifth was needed by state law when constitutional issues are raised.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said Tuesday that Obama would veto legislation that forced the approval of Keystone XL, and said that the Nebraska legal battle was "impeding a final conclusion about this pipeline." He added, "Once that is resolved, that should

speed the completion of the evaluation of that project."

Environmental groups charge that the final conclusion should be clear to Obama: the pipeline must be rejected.

"No matter the route, as long as the pipeline is carrying tar sands oil it is a global warming disaster and fails the President's climate test," stated 350.org Executive Director May Boeve.

Echoing Boeve, Steve Kretzmann, Executive Director of Oil Change International, stated: "While

the route for Keystone XL may have been approved on a technicality, passing the climate test is a much higher bar. Even the State Department's own report was clear that in the event of low oil prices, Keystone would spur significant upstream production and thus significant additional carbon pollution."

Jane Kleeb of grassroots organization Bold Nebraska said that, despite the court ruling, her group was not about to give up. "When you take a punch, you stand up and keep on fighting.

We continue to stand with President Obama in his skepticism of the export pipeline and encourage him to reject Keystone XL now. The only decision that will bring peace of mind to landowners is watching the President use the power of the pen to stop this risky pipeline once and for all," she said.

Hours after the Nebraska court ruling, the House voted 266-153 to approve the pipeline. Twenty-eight Democrats joined Republicans to pass the measure, but it still failed

to get enough votes to be veto-proof. A debate on the pipeline heads to the Senate next week. Ahead of the vote, Boeve called it "a reminder that oily politicians are going to keep pushing Keystone XL as long as the fossil fuel industry is paying the bills and the pipeline is still on the table."

"It's time for President Obama to build on his veto threat and reject Keystone XL outright," she continued.

Source: Common Dreams 1/9/14
<http://www.commondreams.org>

2015: Tough Times Ahead for Big Oil

Things don't seem to be getting any easier for Big Oil and here's guessing that 2015 is going to be their toughest year yet. Here are a few of the hurdles that are only going to grow for the industry over the coming year:

THE SCIENCE:

You can ignore the science, resist the science, or support politics that doesn't believe in science, but you can't change the science. 2014 captured the title of hottest year on record, marking the 38th consecutive year that global temperatures have been above average. California is still grappling with the impacts of the biggest drought in memory, and "once in a century" storms, floods, fires, and droughts have become a joke as they hit with increasing frequency. Big Oil can't change the fact that their product is driving dangerous climate change, nor the fact that if the world is going to avoid the worst of it, the majority of fossil fuels that we know exist are going to have to stay underground. The science is definitive and decision makers are running out of ways to avoid taking it seriously.

THE PEOPLE:

People get it. 400,000 of them came to the biggest climate march in history in New York in September with tens of thousands more joining marches in hundreds of cities around the world. Across North America, people are stopping tar sands pipelines. There is not a single major tar sands pipeline that is not threatened by public opposition on the continent, and these delays are making a dent in pollution and are a material risk to fossil fuel expansion. Driving and inspiring much of this opposition is resistance from people on the front lines of climate change and fossil fuel extraction: First Nations in Alberta standing up to the tar sands, landowners in Nebraska saying no to the inevitable risks of Keystone XL, and vulnerable and impacted communities globally refusing to let climate impacts go unnoticed. This movement is growing by the minute.

THE ECONOMICS

Even before the precipitous fall of oil prices in late 2014, fossil fuel projects were being cancelled in places like the tar sands and the Arctic Ocean. It is quite simply not great economics to bet the farm on high cost, high risk, and high carbon projects. Even with oil prices over 100\$ per barrel in early 2014, three major tar sands projects were mothballed due to uncertain economics (driven in large part by public concern and transportation constraints).

Now, with oil prices a shadow of what they were kicking off 2014, analysts say at least \$59 billion dollars of capital is

on the brink of deferral in the tar sands over the coming 3 years, with the potential of knocking off 650,000 barrels of oil per day. Bad news for big oil, great news for the climate. Countries and regions that made the high risk bet to balance their budgets based on high oil prices are scrambling, and everyone is absorbing the harsh reminder that oil prices are unstable, unpredictable, and uncertain.

The concepts of stranded assets and unburnable carbon gained even more traction over the past year, with the Governor of the Bank of England saying in no uncertain terms that the majority of fossil fuel reserves are unburnable. This messages from the likes of the International Energy Agency and the World Bank – not exactly environmental activists. The mainstream economic chatter is changing. On top of this are the people-powered movements calling for divestment from fossil fuels. These campaigns are moving billions; not enough to topple the industry, but enough to command attention and prove that this conversation has the moral magnitude of other historic successful divestment campaigns.

THE POLITICS

Admittedly, this is the slow moving beast. The perpetual challenge is getting politics and politicians to look beyond terms and think about the well being of anything more than 4 or 8 years down the road. Especially when this means turning their backs on the fossil fuel lobby, which has been pouring money into keeping friendly politicians in power for decades.

That said – all hope is not lost. President Obama has made some inspiring and ambitious remarks on climate, and with a final Keystone decision sitting on his desk, recent statements suggest he is poised to make the right call, change the status quo, and reject the pipeline. The climate deal between China and the U.S. is also promising and shifted the global political discussions in a meaningful way. Across the continent, politicians are feeling the heat on their inaction on climate change. In Canada, heading into an election year, poll-leading opposition leaders are starting to backtrack on previous support for major tar sands infrastructure.

The message is starting to penetrate: A failure to act on climate change will have political costs.

THE COMPETITION

Renewables are putting a squeeze on fossil fuels. Solar energy had some spectacular breakthroughs in 2014 and the growth in solar capacity in the first three quarters of last year represented 36% of new electricity capacity in the U.S. (compared to 9.6 % in 2012). In Germany, solar generated half of the country's electricity on one day in June, setting both records and precedent for what we can expect from the

rapidly improving and increasingly affordable technology. Other leaps have been made in the sector, with wind and electrification of transport. Low oil prices are an obvious risk to renewables, especially in a world where fossil fuels continue to receive unnecessary subsidies and renewables are forced to play on an uneven playing field (it is high time to Stop Funding Fossils by the way). However, Bloomberg has done some number crunching that suggests that we should not assume that demand for oil would soar with the price drop and analysts are saying that energy markets today are markedly evolved and renewables will hold their own.

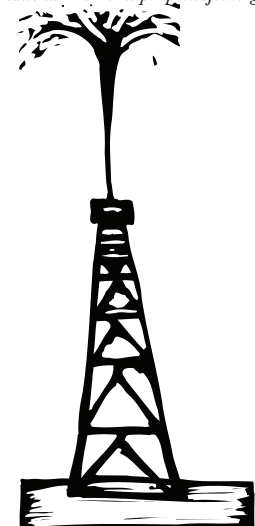
PARIS

In late 2015, Paris will host the climate talks, the meeting where global leaders are supposed to hammer out the next big deal. While we are not holding our breath for leaders to rise to the occasion in any spectacular way, one thing we are certain about is that they are going to feel the heat.

Let's make 2015 the year that puts an end once and for all to the myth that fossil fuels are an inevitable centerpiece of our future. The real inevitability is an era where Big Oil is no longer the status quo, and where we build our communities, economies, and lives around energy that that is safe, reliable, and clean.

HANNAH MCKINNON A CLIMATE ACTIVIST AND CONTRIBUTING WRITER FOR OIL CHANGE INTERNATIONAL <[HTTP://PRICEOFOIL.ORG](http://PRICEOFOIL.ORG)>. FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER: @MCKINNON_HANNAH <[HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/MCKINNON_HANNAH](https://twitter.com/mckinnon_hannah)>

Source: Oil Change International 1/5/15 <http://priceofoil.org/>





With one small tax, the United States could insure the next generation a brighter future



RONALD M. GLASSMAN
AND GERALD E. SCORSE

Nothing is more central to the American dream than equality of opportunity. In today's world, that usually means a college education – and, for most families, the challenge of paying for it. Congress could help meet that challenge. It could pass a financial transaction tax and dedicate the proceeds to providing equal opportunity for college.

The midterm elections showed a country in a sour mood. They also showed a country hungry for a sense of purpose. In 1961, heralding

a New Frontier, President Kennedy committed the nation to sending a man to the moon. In 2015, President Obama could revive that same ideal and commit the nation to sending the sons and daughters of working- and middle-class families to college, and doing it without leaving them deeply in debt. A financial transaction tax would provide the rocket fuel propelling America toward that goal.

Financial transaction taxes are small fees levied on sales of stocks, bonds and other commonly traded instruments. They raise

revenue and discourage Wall Street speculation. Currently, 23 nations levy such a tax, and 11 members of the European Union are close to having a version. The US is the only major financial center without one.

The makings of a bipartisan education tax are there. Higher education enjoys appeal across party lines, and both parties claim they're in the corner of Main Street Americans. Instead of just talk, legislators could pass a financial transaction tax that would send more kids to college.

Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet L. Yellen has emphasized the link between equal opportunity and a college education – and the strains on that link. In October, speaking at a conference on inequality, she put it plainly: "It is no secret that the past few decades of widening inequality can be summed up as significant income and wealth gains for those at the very top and stagnant living standards for the majority. I think it is appropriate to ask whether this trend is compatible

with values rooted in our nation's history, among them the high value Americans have traditionally placed on equality of opportunity."

Studies have confirmed the payoff from a college diploma. Yellen cited a 2014 Urban Institute paper showing a 79% premium in median annual earnings for full-time workers with a bachelor's degree. A working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that earnings of the average college graduate in 2008 roughly doubled those of the average high school graduate. According to a Georgetown University study in 2011, even college graduates in lesser jobs, open to non-degree candidates, "earn between 50 and 65% more than those with only a high school diploma."

The guidelines for sharing revenue from a financial transaction tax should focus on fairness. First in line should be the community colleges; they currently enroll 45% of the nation's undergraduates, largely from the working class. Then come public

colleges and universities, long a middle-class haven. Hit with funding cuts during the recession, their tuition and fees have skyrocketed. The University of California system recently approved a controversial 27.6% increase over five years – raising the in-state charge to \$15,560 in 2019-20, excluding room and board.

Opponents of a higher-education transaction tax will probably argue that Congress has done enough to give the children of working- and middle-class families an equal shot at college: Pell grants, tax deductions, Obama's American Opportunity Tax Credit. They all help, but they're no match for the escalation of college costs. Millions are left behind. Millions are left mired in debt.

Yellen noted in her speech that student loan debt quadrupled from \$260 billion in 2004 to \$1.1 trillion in 2014. The debt burden, always relatively higher for families with lower net worth, has more than doubled, and, she said, "from 1995 to 2013, outstanding education debt

grew from 26% of yearly income for the lower half of households to 58%."

Congress has nothing to lose in the trying and might even do itself proud. Wall Street showered itself with gold in the run-up to the financial crisis. The Street again struck gold – this time from taxpayers – with the bailout from the crisis. It was a neat trick to profit so richly both ways; it should easily be able to manage a financial transaction tax. Even the tiniest rates that have been floated (0.117% on stocks and options, 0.002% on bonds, 0.005% on futures, swaps and other derivatives) could raise \$50 billion a year. Higher rates, still tiny, could bring in at least \$175 billion annually.

GERALD E. SCORSE HELPED PASS A BILL REQUIRING BASIS REPORTING FOR STOCK MARKET CAPITAL GAINS. HE WRITES ARTICLES ON TAXES. RONALD M. GLASSMAN HAS WRITTEN SEVERAL BOOKS ON DEMOCRACY.

Source: Los Angeles Times 1/7/15
<http://www.latimes.com>

Richest 1% will own more than all the rest by 2016

WINNIE BYANYIMA

The combined wealth of the richest 1 percent will overtake that of the other 99 percent of people next year unless the current trend of rising inequality is checked, Oxfam warned today ahead of the annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos.

The international agency, whose executive director Winnie Byanyima will co-chair the Davos event, warned that the explosion in inequality is holding back the fight against global poverty at a time when 1 in 9 people do not have enough to eat and more than a billion people still live on less than \$1.25-a-day. Byanyima will use her position at Davos to call for urgent action to stem this rising tide of inequality, starting with a crackdown on tax dodging by corporations, and to push for progress towards a global deal on climate change.

"Wealth: Having It All and Wanting More," a research paper published today by Oxfam, shows that the richest 1 percent have seen their share of global wealth increase from 44 percent in 2009 to 48 percent in 2014 and at this rate will be more than 50 percent in 2016. Members of this global elite had an average wealth of \$2.7 million per adult in 2014. Of the remaining 52 percent of global wealth, almost all (46 percent) is owned by the rest of the richest fifth of the

world's population. The other 80 percent share just 5.5 percent and had an average wealth of \$3,851 per adult – that's 1/700th of the average wealth of the 1 percent.

STAGGERING INEQUALITY

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International, said: "Do we really want to live in a world where the one percent own more than the rest of us combined? The scale of global inequality is quite simply staggering and despite the issues shooting up the global agenda, the gap between the richest and the rest is widening fast. In the past 12 months we have seen world leaders from President Obama to Christine Lagarde talk more about tackling extreme inequality but we are still waiting for many of them to walk the talk. It is time our leaders took on the powerful vested interests that stand in the way of a fairer and more prosperous world. Business as usual for the elite isn't a cost free option – failure to tackle inequality will set the fight against poverty back decades. The poor are hurt twice by rising inequality – they get a smaller share of the economic pie and because extreme inequality hurts growth, there is less pie to be shared around."

Oxfam made headlines at Davos last year with the revelation that the 85 richest people on the planet have the same wealth as the poorest 50 percent (3.5 billion people).

That figure is now 80 – a dramatic fall from 388 people in 2010. The wealth of the richest 80 doubled in cash terms between 2009-14. The international agency is calling on government to adopt a seven point plan to tackle inequality:

1. Clamp down on tax dodging by corporations and rich individuals
2. Invest in universal, free public services such as health and education
3. Share the tax burden fairly, shifting taxation from labour and consumption towards capital and wealth
4. Introduce minimum wages and move towards a living wage for all workers
5. Introduce equal pay legislation and promote economic policies to give women a fair deal
6. Ensure adequate safety-nets for the poorest, including a minimum income guarantee
7. Agree a global goal to tackle inequality.

Today's research paper, which follows the October launch of Oxfam's global Even It Up campaign, shines a light on the way extreme wealth is passed down the generations and how elite groups mobilise their vast resources

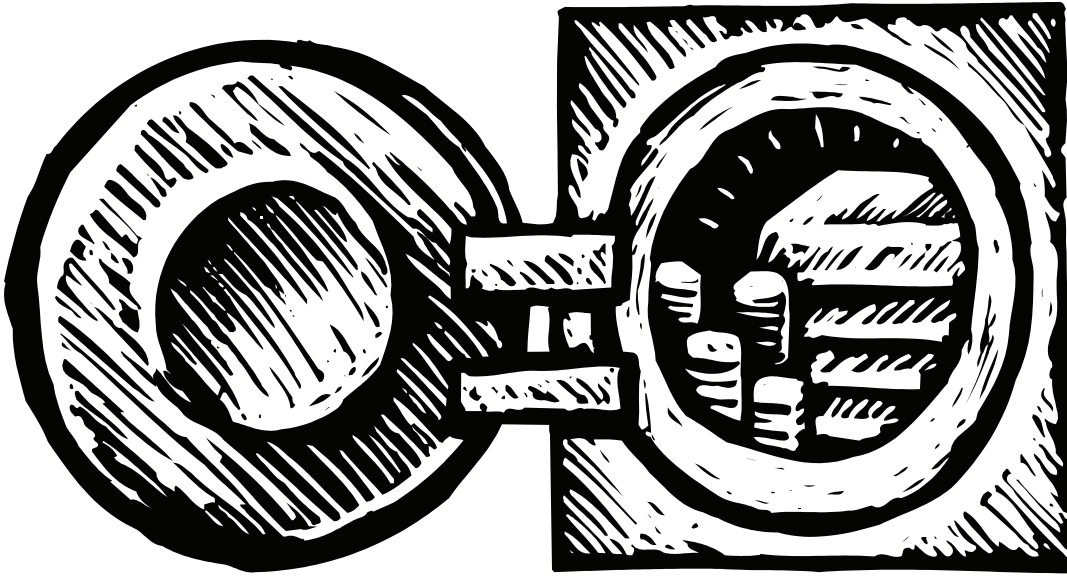
to ensure global rules are favourable towards their interests. More than a third of the 1645 billionaires listed by Forbes inherited some or all of their riches. Twenty percent of billionaires have interests in the financial and insurance sectors, a group which saw their cash wealth increase by 11 percent in the 12 months to March 2014. These sectors spent \$550 million lobbying policy makers in Washington and Brussels during 2013. During the 2012 US election cycle alone, the financial sector provided \$571 million in campaign contributions. Billionaires listed as having interests in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors saw their collective net worth increase by 47 percent. During 2013, they spent more than \$500 million lobbying policy makers in Washington and Brussels.

Oxfam is concerned that the lobbying power of these sectors is a major barrier in the way of reforming the global tax system and of ensuring intellectual property rules do not lead to the world's poorest being denied life saving medicines. There is increasing evidence from the International Monetary Fund, among others, that extreme inequality is not just bad news for those at the bottom but also damages economic growth.

Source: Oxfam International 1/19/15 <http://www.oxfam.org>



When wages are falling, how can the economy improve?



MARK KARLIN, EDITOR OF BUZZFLASH AT TRUTHOUT

If there has been one constant over the coup d'état of the economy by the top 1%, it's been the lowering or stagnation of wages (adjusted for inflation) for most workers in the United States. One doesn't even have to footnote this trend because it is a fact, not even disputed by the cheerleaders for the Milton Friedman school of economics.

This has resulted in - again, a statistical fact - the largest income and asset gap in US history. Indeed, U.S. News and World Report posted a commentary in 2013 that declared in its headline, "Suffering Under the Weight of Inequality: Research shows that income inequality in the U.S. has hit a record high and will stifle economic growth." Written by David Bowden, cofounder of the American Sustainable Business Council, it concludes:

"Inequality in the U.S. shows no sign of abating, even as the economy recovers. The decline of unions, the pace of

globalization, the abundance of workers in many industries and changes in health care and taxes have combined to staunch the earning power of working Americans, even as the economy grows and productivity increases. There are few options, and none that are consistent with the political climate of the time. But the trend is reaching the point that endangers growth itself, and that should concern everyone, regardless of the size of your paycheck."

Of course, BuzzFlash would contend that there are several options for change, including a restructuring of the economic system to spread out the wealth of the nation more equitably, thus ending the economic caste of exorbitant privilege.

This brings us to the debunking of the myth of an improving economy when, on average, wages are falling or flat for US workers. The Guardian, for instance, has an article today (January 9) headlined, "US unemployment rate drops to 5.6%, but wages fall." Yes, more people are employed.

But since the oligarchical economic revolution of the Reagan administration, the economy has been restructured to pump more of the nation's income and assets upwards to an extremely small group of plutocrats. Part of this strategy involved increasing profits by lowering wages. This occurred due to a variety of forces, but make no mistake about it: the consolidation of wealth into the hands of a few was and is the goal.

In fact, the argument has been made by many, including Truthout commentator Richard D. Wolff, that the lowering of wages enriches the already wealthy by increasing the debt load on those with lesser means. The financial class, in particular, then makes additional profits on the interest charged to those with decreased wages who need to borrow money at usurious rates. They do not need to go into debt in order to buy luxury items; they need to be lent funds in order to care for their families and survive.

Although there have been occasional monthly reports of wage increases due to the tightening of the job market in the US, overall, the Grand Canyon of wage gaps between most workers in the US and the super-rich continues to widen, not narrow.

If you look at the way in which global corporations are gobbling up small businesses into warehouse wholesalers - think office supplies, drug stores, hardware stores, electronic shops, etc. - you find that decent-paying (often family-owned) businesses have been decimated. The replacement for these community stores are companies that pay minimum wage and provide few benefits. In the case of Walmart, for example, its massive profits are derived, in part, by the way the government in many states provides support such as Medicaid and food stamps to its employees.

Given this long-term economic trajectory, the mass corporate media should pay more attention to who is financially benefitting from job growth as an economic indicator, instead of reporting on the unemployment rate as a threshold marker in and of itself.

Source: Buzzflash at Truthout 1/9/15 <http://www.truth-out.org/buzzflash>

The Republicans didn't really win the Senate

THOM HARTMANN

This year, Republicans will officially take control of the Senate for the first time since 2006. Once Vice President Biden finishes swearing in the Senate class of 2015, they will have a 54 to 46 majority over Democrats. It's not a filibuster- or veto-proof majority, but it's still a big deal for conservatives. They've been saying for years now that voters were angry about President Obama and his policies, and the fact that Republicans will now control the Senate and the House is about as good a sign as you can get that the US public wanted a change. At least what Republicans want you to think.

The good people over at FairVote crunched some numbers and it turns out that the GOP's takeover of Congress isn't as much of a victory as the media says it was - far from it, actually. If you take the states out of the equation and just look at the nationwide totals, Democratic Senators actually got more votes than Republican Senators, and it's not even close.

According to FairVote, the 44 Democratic Senators and their two independent allies received 67.8 million votes over the course of the 2010, 2012 and 2014 elections. The 54 Republican Senators, on the other hand,

received only 47.1 million votes during that same time period. That's a difference of more than 20 million votes!

If you think this is insane that the party that got the fewest votes - by more than 20 million - now controls the Senate, well, then, you're right. As it's put together right now, the Senate is incredibly anti-(small "d") democratic. Because every state gets two Senators regardless of its population, the 580,000 people who live in Wyoming, for example, have just as much influence with their two senators as the 38 million people who live in California do with their two senators.

That's not to say that the people of Wyoming don't deserve representation - they do - but they already get that in the House Representatives. All the Senate does is make it a lot harder for the citizens of big states like New York and California to have a say in our political system. This is by design, too. The Senate was never meant to reflect the interests of the majority and was created by the founders as a compromise between "big" states and "small" states. And I'm not talking just about "small states" like Rhode Island.

The white, and thus census and voting-eligible population of slave states like Georgia

was, in 1787, very small compared to New York or Pennsylvania, and these slave states wanted to make sure they had as much representation in Congress as did the more-white-populous non-slave states to the north.

But what might have made sense 200-plus years ago to people trying to forge a new country and juggle the politics of slavery doesn't make much sense now, and it has serious consequences for our democracy. Come tomorrow, the new Republican-controlled Senate will have free reign to gut regulations and screw everyday working people in whatever ways it wants, even though it wasn't elected by the majority of the US public. There are a couple of ways to fix this now that we no longer have to dance around the issue of slavery.

The first and most obvious is to amend the Constitution to abolish the Senate in favor of a more representative and democratic body based on proportional representation - something that most other advanced democracies have already done. But amending the Constitution is really, really hard, and would likely fail given Republican opposition to anything that resembles, you know, actual democracy. So, instead, we should consider something just as radical but

probably more feasible.

We could break up big states into multiple smaller states and keep the same basic plan of two Senators per state. Turn California, for example, into three or four states; make New York City its own state; separate South Florida from the rest of the state; split Texas in two; and separate northern from southern Illinois. This would give people currently living in what are now big states a greater say in the Senate, but would avoid a messy and probably doomed amendment campaign.

It would also attract a lot of conservatives in big liberal states like California who are fed up with their current state governments and want to run things their own way - there are already conservative movements in Texas, California and Colorado to split up their states.

One thing needs to be clear, though: whether it's through amending the Constitution or breaking up the states, a change needs to happen. The status quo doesn't work, is biased towards rural Republicans, and is fundamentally at odds with democracy.

Source: The Thom Hartmann Program 1/5/15 <http://truth-out.org>



The Trans-Pacific Trade (TPP) Agreement must be defeated



"The TPP ... like NAFTA, CAFTA and the Permanent Normalized Trade Agreement with China (PNTR). These treaties have forced American workers to compete against desperate and low-wage labor around the world."

BERNIE SANDERS

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is a disastrous trade agreement designed to protect the interests of the largest multi-national corporations at the expense of workers, consumers, the environment and the foundations of American democracy. It will also negatively impact some of the poorest people in the world. The TPP is a treaty that has been written behind closed doors by the corporate world. Incredibly, while Wall Street, the pharmaceutical industry and major media companies have full knowledge as to what is in this treaty, the American people and members of Congress do not. They have been locked out of the process. Further, all Americans, regardless of political ideology, should be opposed to the "fast track" process which would deny Congress the right to amend the treaty and represent their constituents' interests.

The TPP follows in the footsteps of other unfettered free trade agreements like NAFTA, CAFTA and the Permanent Normalized Trade Agreement with China (PNTR). These treaties have forced American workers to compete against desperate and low-wage labor around the world. The result has been massive job losses in the United States and the shutting down of tens of thousands of factories. These corporately backed trade agreements have significantly contributed to the race to the bottom, the collapse of the American middle class and increased wealth and income inequality. The TPP is more of the same, but even worse. During my 23 years in Congress, I helped lead the fight against NAFTA and PNTR with China. During the coming session of Congress, I will be working with organized labor, environmentalists, religious organizations, Democrats, and Republicans against the secretive TPP trade deal.

Let's be clear: the TPP is much more than a "free trade" agreement. It is part of a global race to the bottom to boost the profits of large corporations and Wall Street by outsourcing jobs; undercutting worker rights; dismantling labor, environmental, health, food safety and financial laws; and allowing corporations to challenge our laws in international

tribunals rather than our own court system. If TPP was such a good deal for America, the administration should have the courage to show the American people exactly what is in this deal, instead of keeping the content of the TPP a secret.

10 ways that TPP would hurt working families

1. TPP WILL ALLOW CORPORATIONS TO OUTSOURCE EVEN MORE JOBS OVERSEAS.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, if the TPP is agreed to, the U.S. will lose more than 130,000 jobs to Vietnam and Japan alone. But that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Service Sector Jobs will be lost. At a time when corporations have already outsourced over 3 million service sector jobs in the U.S., TPP includes rules that will make it even easier for corporate America to outsource call centers; computer programming; engineering; accounting; and medical diagnostic jobs.

Manufacturing jobs will be lost. As a result of NAFTA, the U.S. lost nearly 700,000 jobs. As a result of Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China, the U.S. lost over 2.7 million jobs. As a result of the Korea Free Trade Agreement, the U.S. has lost 70,000 jobs. The TPP would make matters worse by providing special benefits to firms that offshore jobs and by reducing the risks associated with operating in low-wage countries.

2. U.S. SOVEREIGNTY WILL BE UNDERMINED BY GIVING CORPORATIONS THE RIGHT TO CHALLENGE OUR LAWS BEFORE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS.

The TPP creates a special dispute resolution process that allows corporations to challenge any domestic laws that could adversely impact their "expected future profits." These challenges would be heard before UN and World Bank tribunals which could require taxpayer compensation to corporations. This process undermines our sovereignty and subverts democratically passed laws including those dealing with labor, health, and the environment.

3. WAGES, BENEFITS, AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WILL BE THREATENED.

NAFTA, CAFTA, PNTR with China, and other free trade agreements have helped drive down the wages and benefits of American workers and have eroded collective bargaining rights. The TPP will make the race to the bottom worse because it forces American workers to compete with desperate workers in Vietnam where the minimum wage is just 56 cents an hour.

4. OUR ABILITY TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT WILL BE UNDERMINED.

The TPP will allow corporations to challenge any law that would adversely impact their future profits. Pending claims worth over \$14 billion have been filed based on similar language in other trade agreements. Most of these claims deal with challenges to environmental laws in a number of countries. The TPP will make matters even worse by giving

corporations the right to sue any of the nations that sign onto the TPP. These lawsuits would be heard in international tribunals bypassing domestic courts.

5. FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS WILL BE THREATENED.

The TPP would make it easier for countries like Vietnam to export contaminated fish and seafood into the U.S. The FDA has already prevented hundreds of seafood imports from TPP countries because of salmonella, e-coli, methyl-mercury and drug residues. But the FDA only inspects 1-2 percent of food imports and will be overwhelmed by the vast expansion of these imports if the TPP is agreed to.

6. BUY AMERICA LAWS COULD COME TO AN END.

The U.S. has several laws on the books that require the federal government to buy goods and services that are made in America or mostly made in this country. Under TPP, foreign corporations must be given equal access to compete for these government contracts with companies that make products in America. Under TPP, the U.S. could not even prevent companies that have horrible human rights records from receiving government contracts paid by U.S. taxpayers.

7. PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICES WILL INCREASE, ACCESS TO LIFE SAVING DRUGS WILL DECREASE, AND THE PROFITS OF DRUG COMPANIES WILL GO UP.

Big pharmaceutical companies are working hard to ensure that the TPP extends the monopolies they have for prescription drugs by extending their patents (which currently can last 20 years or more). This would expand the profits of big drug companies, keep drug prices artificially high, and leave millions of people around the world without access to life saving drugs. Doctors without Borders stated that "the TPP agreement is on track to become the most harmful trade pact ever for access to medicines in developing countries."

8. WALL STREET WOULD BENEFIT AT THE EXPENSE OF EVERYONE ELSE.

Under TPP, governments would be barred from imposing "capital controls" that have been successfully used to avoid financial crises. These controls range from establishing a financial speculation tax to limiting the massive flows of speculative capital flowing into and out of countries responsible for the Asian financial crisis in the 1990s. In other words, the TPP would expand the rights and power of the same Wall Street firms that nearly destroyed the world economy just five years ago and would create the conditions for more financial instability in the future. Last year, I co-sponsored a bill with Sen. Harkin to create a Wall Street speculation tax of just 0.03 percent on trades of derivatives, credit default swaps, and large amounts of stock. If TPP were enacted, such a financial speculation tax may be in violation of this trade agreement.

9. THE TPP WOULD REWARD AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES LIKE VIETNAM THAT SYSTEMATICALLY VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS.

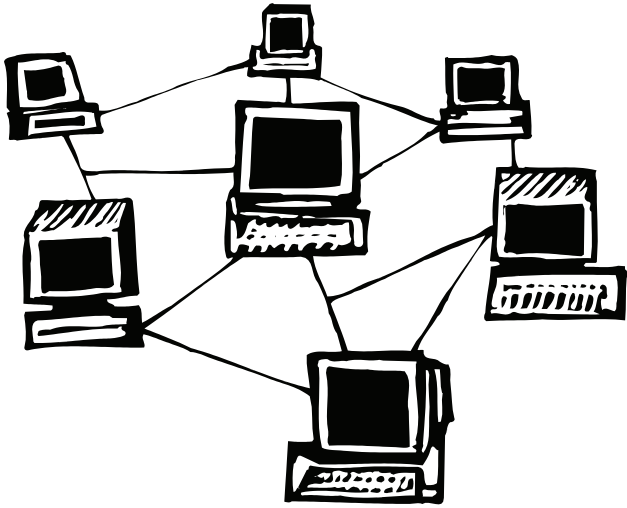
The State Department, the U.S. Department of Labor, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have all documented Vietnam's widespread violations of basic international standards for human rights. Yet, the TPP would reward Vietnam's bad behavior by giving it duty free access to the U.S. market.

10. THE TPP HAS NO EXPIRATION DATE, MAKING IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO REPEAL.

Once TPP is agreed to, it has no sunset date and could only be altered by a consensus of all of the countries that agreed to it. Other countries, like China, could be allowed to join in the future. For example, Canada and Mexico joined TPP negotiations in 2012 and Japan joined last year.



FCC Chairman Wheeler moves toward strong net neutrality rules



"At one point, the sheer number of comments overloaded and shut down the agency's server."

MIKE LUDWIG

After facing mounting pressure from consumer groups, grassroots activists and even President Obama, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) top regulator has suggested that he would support a regulatory framework that advocates say is the strongest proposal for protecting net neutrality - the idea that all internet content should be treated equally. Speaking before a packed house at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas on Wednesday, FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler hinted that he would support reclassifying the internet as a "common carrier" under Title II of the Communications Act, allowing the internet to be regulated as an essential public utility like landline telephone service.

Consumer groups and internet freedom activists have fiercely advocated for Title II reclassification, which they claim is the only way to ensure that internet service providers don't strike so-called "paid prioritization" deals that would create "fast lanes" for content providers that can afford to pay extra fees and "slow lanes" for the rest.

The debate over the FCC's latest proposals to protect net neutrality has raged for nearly a year. Net neutrality activists have regularly held loud protests at FCC meetings and flooded the FCC's public comment inbox with millions of letters and comments. At one point, the sheer number of comments overloaded and shut down the agency's server.

Wheeler's position on net neutrality regulation has taken some twists and turns. He was originally skeptical of Title II reclassification and proposed classifying the internet under a different section of federal law while using the FCC's regulatory authority to intervene if broadband providers struck "paid prioritization" deals that are not "commercially reasonable." After significant public outcry, Wheeler agreed to keep the Title II proposal on the table.

Broadband companies generally supported Wheeler's original approach, but now Wheeler has suggested that he is moving away from the proposal because the "commercially reasonable" standard could be interpreted as what is reasonable for internet service providers, not what is reasonable for consumers and innovators, according to reports. Instead, the "just and reasonable" standard under Title II would be better.

"We're going to propose rules that say that no blocking, no throttling, [no] paid prioritization, all that list of issues, and that there is a yardstick against which behavior should be measured. And that yardstick is 'just and reasonable,'" said Wheeler, who was quoted in the Los Angeles Times. While Wheeler did not endorse reclassification outright and suggested that internet providers may be exempt from some Title II requirements originally drawn up for telephone companies, net neutrality advocates are cautiously celebrating the news.

"Chairman Wheeler appears to have heard the demands of the millions of internet users who have called for real

net neutrality protections," said Craig Aaron, CEO of the nonpartisan, pro-net neutrality group Free Press. "Wheeler now realizes that it's best to simply follow the law Congress wrote and ignore the bogus claims of the biggest phone and cable companies and their well-financed front groups."

Wheeler came under further pressure in November, when President Obama publicly announced his support for Title II reclassification. Obama appointed Wheeler last year, but the FCC is an independent federal agency. The broadband industry, fearing cumbersome regulations that it claims would stifle investment and innovation, has pushed back against the Title II proposal with its own media campaign and lobbying efforts.

"The president's call for public utility regulation of the internet, a shift that will redefine the internet, insert the government deeply into its management and invite other countries to do the same, is contrary to the best interests of the nation and America's technology future," said USTelecom President Walter McCormick, in response to Obama's announcement in November. USTelecom is a trade group representing broadband providers.

CONGRESS ACTION?

Broadband companies are reportedly working with their allies in the Republican-controlled Congress to write bipartisan legislation that would preempt an FCC effort to regulate the internet under Title II. The FCC is also expected to face legal challenges from the broadband industry if it takes the Title II route. Federal courts blocked the FCC's previous attempts at implementing net neutrality rules after internet providers filed lawsuits, but net neutrality advocates have long argued that Title II reclassification would give the FCC the legal authority it needs to win in court. "Of course the devil will be in the details, and we await publication of the agency's final decision," Aaron said. "But it's refreshing to see the chairman firmly reject the industry's lies and scare tactics." Wheeler is expected to circulate a final net neutrality proposal among his fellow commissioners in early February, and the FCC is scheduled to vote on the rules on February 26.

Source: Truthout 1/8/15 <http://truth-out.org>

Republican net neutrality bill would gut FCC's authority over broadband

JON BRODKIN

Net neutrality legislation unveiled by Republicans today would gut the ability of the Federal Communications Commission to regulate the broadband industry. As expected, the bill forbids the FCC from reclassifying broadband as a common carrier service, preventing the commission from using authority it has under Title II of the Communications Act of 1934. This is the statute the FCC uses to regulate landline telephone providers.

The bill also targets a portion of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Section 706 of the Act instructs the FCC to accelerate deployment of broadband to all Americans "by removing barriers to infrastructure investment and by promoting competition in the telecommunications market."

The FCC is considering using this authority to preempt state laws that limit the rights of cities and towns to build broadband networks.

That will be off the table if Republicans get their way. The bill text amends communications law "to prohibit the Commission or a State commission from relying on section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 as a grant of authority." It also defines broadband as an "information service," preventing the FCC from treating broadband providers as common carriers. Obama could veto the bill even if it passes through Congress. The FCC is expected to vote on reclassifying broadband providers and enforcing net neutrality rules on February 26.

The bill released today does include the major net neutrality principles supported by President Obama and the FCC. It would

prohibit paid prioritization, throttling, and blocking of "lawful content and non-harmful devices," while requiring transparency of network management practices. The bill defines paid prioritization as "the speeding up or slowing down of some Internet traffic in relation to other Internet traffic over the consumer's broadband Internet access service by prioritizing or deprioritizing packets based on compensation or lack thereof by the sender to the broadband Internet access service provider."

There are some exceptions, though. The bill allows broadband providers to offer "specialized services... other than broadband Internet access service that are offered over the same network as, and that may share network capacity with, broadband Internet access service." Specialized services

will be legal unless they are "offered or provided in ways that threaten the meaningful availability of broadband Internet access service or that have been devised or promoted in a manner designed to evade the purposes of this section."

One ambiguous line could be interpreted to allow "user-directed prioritization," in which paid prioritization of certain Internet services is allowed in cases when consumers have specifically approved it. "Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit consumers' choice of service plans or consumers' control over their chosen broadband Internet access service," the bill says. AT&T has supported user-directed prioritization.

Republicans also want to make sure ISPs can seek out and prevent copyright infringement. "Nothing in

this section... prohibits reasonable efforts by a provider of broadband Internet access service to address copyright infringement or other unlawful activity," the bill says.

The House and Senate Commerce Committees have set up hearings on the bill for Wednesday next week. In a press release, House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI) said, "This thoughtful path forward ensures that consumers remain number one and in control of their online experience. By clearly outlining the appropriate rules of the road and leaving twentieth century utility regulation behind, we can be sure that innovators continue full throttle in bringing remarkable new technologies to all Americans."

Source: Ars Technica 1/17/15 <http://arstechnica.com>



A winter blessing

REBECCA PARKER

In the shadowed quiet of winter's light
earth speaks softly
of her longing.
Because the wild places are in tears.

Come, she cries to us.
Kneel down here
on the frosty grass,
and feel the prayer buried in the ground.

Bend your ear to my heart
and listen hard.

Love this world, she whispers.
Distill peace from the snow
and water the cities
with mercy.

Weave wonder from the forest
and clothe grief
with beauty.

Rest in the rhythm of the turning year,
Trace the bending arc
Rounding the curve toward justice.
And vow anew to do no harm.

The winter trees stand watch
haloed in the last gleams of the slanting sun.
Glory sings here.
Heaven echoes the call:
Repeat the sounding joy.

Make your life an answer:
Bow.
Praise.
Rise.

REV. REBECCA PARKER, PRESIDENT OF THE
STARR KING SCHOOL FOR THE UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST MINISTRY IN BERKELEY, CA

February 26 - March 27

Opening Reception: February 26th 5-7pm

Women In Art ~ Herstories

Gallery hours: T 11am-4pm, W-Th 11am-6:30pm F 11am-6pm and Sat., Feb. 28th 11am-3pm Art by Judy Baca, "Farewell to Rosie the Riveter"

In celebration of Women's History Month, the LH Horton Jr Gallery will present seven women artists whose work illustrates recognizable themes from women's history, socio-culture perspectives, and female identity.

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

Judy Baca is a world-renowned painter and muralist, community arts pioneer, scholar and educator who has been teaching art in the UC system for over 28 years.

Kesha Bruce is an international artist and curator. Her work is included in the permanent collections of The Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture, The Amistad Center for Art and Culture, The University of Iowa Women's Center, The En Foco Photography Collection, and The Museum of Modern Art/Franklin Furnace Artist Book Collection.

Shenny Phillips Cruces received her MFA in Ceramics from San Francisco State University. Selected exhibits include the 2013 NCECA Biennial, A Gilded Age at the Northern Clay Center, and the Community Heirloom Project at the Palo Alto Art Center. Her work has received numerous awards including a Murphy Cadogan Fellowship, and a Kiln God Award Residency at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Maine.

Ijeoma D. Iheancho received her BFA from Cornell University's College

of Architecture, Art, and Planning. She has exhibited nationally and throughout New York City in spaces like Art for Change Gallery, Local Project, the Bronx River Arts Center, Bronx Art Space, and La Vuelta. She is currently producing her largest installation to date, the "reImagining", which was awarded fiscal sponsorship by the New York Foundation for the Arts, and presents two images on view for the Women In Art exhibition.

Leslie Nichols will exhibit four of her works created on manual typewriters which are featured in "Typewriter Art: A Modern Anthology" published by Laurence King, and will be included in Thames & Hudson's "The Art of Typewriting" in 2015.

Pavalli Sharma was born and raised in India and immigrated to U.S. in 1997. She received her BFA and MFA from the Faculty of Fine Arts Baroda, India and received her Ph.D. in Art History from the National Museum Institute of History of Art and Conservation, New Delhi, India. Pallavi's work has been exhibited widely at venues including the Queens Museum of Art, Exit Art, Art Asia Pacific, and Bishop Museum.

Linda Stein is an artist-activist, lecturer, performer, video-artist, with an MFA from Pratt Institute. Her work is traveling nationally to more than 24 museums and universities through Have Art: Will Travel! Inc., a non-profit with a mission of diversity and anti-bullying.



Stein is represented by Flomenhaft Gallery in Chelsea, Manhattan and her archives are at Smith College.

Joyce Zipperer is a sculptor whose work is focused on the design and construction women's undergarments, shoes and adornments through metal and stone materials, underscoring an uncomfortable fit of an alluring or humorous style. She is concerned with how women throughout history have been influenced by trends in fashion, often discounting comfort. Her work has been in national and international exhibitions, including the Washington D.C. Botanic Gardens, Brooklyn Museum, New York; Vasteras Museum of Art, Vasteras, Sweden. In 2003, Joyce was inducted into the National Association of Women in the Arts, for sculpture, in New York City. Her work is featured in the book "100 Artists of the Mid Atlantic", by E. Ashley Rooney.

Gallery hours: T 11am-4pm, W-Th 11am-6:30pm F 11am-6pm and Sat., Feb. 28th 11am-3pm. Free & open to the public

January 18 - March 15

California Woman Suffrage exhibit

"California Woman Suffrage" will be a featured exhibition at the San Joaquin County Historical Museum in Micke Grove Regional Park. The exhibition chronicles the struggle of California women to gain the right to vote. The first state-wide vote for women's suffrage in California was in 1896, when Susan B. Anthony organized the campaign. That amendment failed. But in 1911, California suffragists convinced Progressive Republicans to again place suffrage on the ballot. Determined suffragists drove from town to town across the state campaigning for California constitutional amendment number 8.

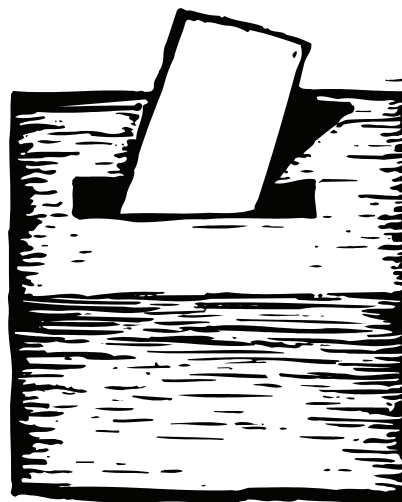
On Election Day, October 10, 1911, they handed out more than three million brochures and stood watch at polling places to insure all votes were counted. Knowing of strong opposition by saloon and business interests, the suffragists focused their campaign on rural districts. The early returns were discouraging. The amendment was

soundly defeated in San Francisco and newspapers declared that the effort had apparently failed. When the voting returns from the rural counties came in several days later, the amendment narrowly passed.

California became the sixth state to give women the vote, joining Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Washington. With the passage in California, the number of women with full suffrage in the U.S. doubled. The exhibition was originally developed by the International Museum of Women and the California History Center Foundation. It is toured by Exhibit Envoy, which provides traveling exhibitions and professional services to museums throughout California (see www.exhibitenvoy.org). The San Joaquin County Historical Society operates the 18-acre Museum at 11793 N. Micke Grove Rd. and provides education programs for school groups, including "Valley Days" and "Pioneer School Day" (in the 1866 Calaveras

School). The Museum is fully accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

The special exhibition can be viewed Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., from January 18, 2015, through March 15, 2015. Tickets go from \$2 - \$5. For more information see www.SanJoaquinHistory.org or call



Chamber music features Pacifica Quartet

Now in its 59th year of bringing world class Chamber Music to Stockton, the Friends of Chamber Music offer another outstanding season. These are the same artists who thrill audiences in major urban cities around the world. In cooperation with the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music, they are appearing at Faye Spanos Hall, an ideal venue for this type of musical experience.

On February 8, the Friends of Chamber Music is privileged to host the Pacifica Quartet. Their performance style reveals a virtuosity, exuberance and often-daring repertory choices that for the past two decades have led this outstanding quartet to win the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, the Avery Fisher career grant and in 2009 they were the named the Ensemble of the Year by Musical America. Do not miss their outstanding performance.

SAVE THE DATE

On April 12 the New York Woodwind Quintet and Piano is our joy to host. Unique among all woodwind quintet's touring today, the New York Woodwind Quintet and Piano is comprised of artists dedicated to chamber music, yet who are individually known as soloists with far-ranging careers. The performers are internationally recognized musicians and teachers, clearly bringing the long history of outstanding performance from the Juilliard School of Music.

All concerts are on Sundays at 2:30 p.m. in the Faye Spanos Concert Hall, Pacific Avenue at Dave Brubeck Way, and followed with meet-the-artists receptions in the rehearsal building behind the concert hall.

Info: www.chambermusicfriends.org 209-467-0224



FEB/MAR CALENDAR

Editor's note: if your event isn't listed, let us know. Send all copy to: bgiudici@caltel.com by the 10th of every month.

FRI - SUN

JAN 14-31

Red Velvet Cake War. Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 7:30 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton. In this riotously funny Southern-fried comedy, the three Verdeen cousins-Gaynelle, Peaches and Jimmie Wyvette- could not have picked a worse time to throw their family reunion, as a "perfect storm" of outrageous antics has befallen the trio. As this fast-paced romp barrels toward its uproarious climax, you'll wish your own family reunions were this much fun! \$15 - \$25. 473-2424. www.sctlivetheatre.com

JAN 18 - MAR 15

"California Woman Suffrage" Exhibition, Wed - Sun 11 am - 4 pm. The exhibition chronicles the struggle of California women to gain the right to vote (see page 18). San Joaquin County Historical Museum, 11793 N. Micke Grove Rd, Lodi. \$2 - \$5. 209-953-3460.

JAN 22 - FEB 12

Delta College Alumni Show, featuring Bill Abright ~ Ceramic Sculpture and Drawings; John Yoyogi Fortes ~ Painting; Michael Lucero ~ Ceramic Sculpture; Carlos Pérez ~ Graphic Art and Painting; David Phelps ~ Bronze Sculpture; Tracey Snelling ~ Photography, Video and Sculpture Installations. T 11am-4pm, W-Th 11am-6:30pm, F 11am-1pm. "The purpose of this Alumni Show is to present high profile artists working in a variety of disciplines to inspire and mentor today's Delta College students." Free and open to the public. 209-954-5507.

MON, JAN 26

Delta Sierra Group General Membership Meeting presenting and discussing the movie Gasland: Can you light your water on fire? 7 pm. Always seeking cheaper ways to produce fossil fuels that we can voraciously consume, the oil and gas industry developed a way to get the gas out of the ground—a hydraulic drilling process called "fracking"—and suddenly America finds itself on the precipice of becoming an energy superpower. This movie is a compelling narrative on the largest domestic drilling campaign in modern history and an understanding of why drilling can never be made safe. Public welcome. Central United Methodist Church, Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton
Brian Kendrick Big Band at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm.

Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

TUES, JAN 27

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

WED, JAN 28

Delta College Alumni Show Reception, 5 - 7 pm. Exhibiting artist Carlos Pérez, illustrator of the Apple logo, will present an arts lecture on his career since his time at Delta College from 1970-72. LH Horton Jr Gallery, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton

THURS, JAN 29

Simon Rowe Latin Project at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

MON, FEB 2

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm. Family Resource & Referral Center, 509 W. Weber Ave., Stockton.

THURS, FEB 5

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm. All welcome. 467-4455

Live Music at the Haggin with the Pacific Avenue Clarinets, with UOP musicians Patricia Shands, Jerry Criswell, Jeff Kumagai, Amanda Martin, Christina Severin, and Chris Steffanic. 7 pm. Featuring sounds from Coltrane to Paganini, the Pacific Avenue Clarinets play original works and transcriptions for clarinet. Working together they create a unique "sound picture" for every piece. Haggin Museum, Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton, CA. \$8 adult, \$7 senior over 64, \$5 youth 10-17. Under 10 free with adult. (209) 940-6300

Joe Mazzaferro Quintet with Hacam Manricks at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 6:30 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

FEB 5 - MAR 29

84th annual Robert T. McKee Student Art Contest and Exhibition. The Haggin Museum is proud to feature the work of student artists from kindergarten through grade 12. All schools in San Joaquin County—public, private, charter and homeschoools—receive invitations to submit their

work. Every year we receive on average 1,000 pieces of art chosen by teachers as the best of their class. Celebrate the arts in education with us during the McKee Student Art Exhibit, the longest running student art exhibition in the country! Sat-Sun 12-5 p.m, Wed-Fri 1:30-5 p.m, 1st & 3rd Thur, 1:30-9 p.m. Haggin Museum, Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton, CA (209) 940-6300

SAT, FEB 7

Central Valley Youth Symphony Winter Concert, "A Night at the Opera" 3 pm. Make it a relaxing afternoon and be entertained by attending a performance of the valley's finest young musicians. Hutchins Street Square, 125 S. Hutchins St, Lodi. Adult \$14, under 18 free. 209-333-5550

SUN, FEB 8

Peace & Justice Network annual meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 4 - 7 pm. Come help decide what we do next year, with good fellowship and the best potluck of the year. All welcome. 467-4455

Saxsational, 2:30 pm. Lodi Community Concert Association Presents: Rob Verdi, virtuoso saxophonist, playing his rare and unusual instrument collection of saxophones. Accompanied by the Lodi Community Band with Arthur J. Holton Jr. as director. Hutchins Street Square, 125 S. Hutchins St, Lodi. \$29. 209-333-5550

Friends of Chamber Music presents the Pacifica String Quartet, 2:30 pm. Faye Spanos Concert Hall 3511 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$25 general, \$15 UOP faculty & staff, FT students free with ID.

MON, FEB 9

Simon Rowe Latin Project at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

TUES, FEB 10

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

WED, FEB 11

UOP Concert Band, 7:30 pm. Performances include music from light classics to show tunes. Faye Spanos Concert Hall 3511 Pacific Ave, Stockton \$8 general, \$5 UOP faculty & staff, FT students free with ID.

THURS, FEB 12

Langham/Fryer Pyramid Quartet at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

WED, FEB 18

Pacific Jazz Ensemble concert with guest vibraphonist Stefon Harris. 7:30 pm. Three-time Grammy nominee, vibraphonist-composer Stefon Harris is heralded as one of the most important young artists in Jazz (The Los Angeles Times). He tours worldwide with his band Blackout and the San Francisco Jazz Collective. \$8 general, \$5 UOP faculty & staff, FT students free with ID.

THURS, FEB 19

Live Music at the Haggin with Wendi Maxwell & the Trés Hot Jazz Band. 7 pm. Haggin favorites Wendi Maxwell and Trés Hot Jazz bring the group's signature "swinging bluesy jazz" to new material and audience favorites. Wendi and the band are riding the crest of a banner year with their second nomination for a Modesto Area Music Award. More info at www.wendimaxwell.com. Haggin Museum, Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton, CA. \$8 adult, \$7 senior over 64, \$5 youth 10-17. Under 10 free with adult. (209) 940-6300

Brubeck Institute presents famed vibraphonist Stefon Harris at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street, Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

SAT-SUN

FEB 21-22

Stockton Symphony PopsIII: Hot! Hot! Hot! An Evening of Latin Music, Dance & Romance! featuring guest conductor Victor Vanacore. Sat 6 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. This show sizzles with salsa, merengue, mambo, cha-cha, tango, and samba. Featured dancers are husband-and-wife team Andrzej and Jennifer Przblyl, champion competitive dancers. \$25-\$63

MON, FEB 23

Delta Sierra Group general membership meeting: Fire and Water. Public welcome. Central United Methodist Church, Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton

Brian Kendrick Big Band at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

TUES, FEB 24

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

THURS, FEB 26

Simon Rowe Latin Project with Joe Mazzaferro at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

FEB 26 - MAR 27

Women in Art - Herstories, featuring Judi Baca, Ijeoma D. Iheancho, Leslie Nichols, Pavilli Sharma, Linda Stein and Joyce Zipperer. (see p 18) T 11am-4pm, W-Th 11am-6:30pm, F 11am-1pm. Reception Feb 26, 5 - 7 pm. Free and open to the public. 209-954-5507.

SUN, MAR 1

Pacific Choral Ensembles concert, 2:30 pm. Morris Chapel 620 Chapel Ln, Stockton. \$8 general, \$5 UOP faculty & staff, FT students free with ID.

MON, MAR 2

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm. Family Resource & Referral Center, 509 W. Weber Ave., Stockton.

WED, MAR 4

Delta College Spring Festival of Bands. 7 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5100 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adult \$8, student/senior \$5.

THUR, MAR 5

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm. All welcome. 467-4455

Brubeck Institute presents bassist Christian McBride, 6:30 pm at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

MON, MAR 9

Simon Rowe Latin Project with Joe Mazzaferro at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

TUES, MAR 10

Community Band Concert, 7 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, Stockton. \$8 adult; \$5 student/senior over 61. 209-954-5209

THUR-SUN MAR 13-22

Delta Drama presents "Death of a Salesman," by Arthur Miller, directed by Harvey Jordan. 8 pm, Sun 2 pm. Alred H. Muller Studio Theater, SJDC, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$10/\$12.

SAT, MAR 14

Stockton Symphony Classics IV concert: Symphony in Space... Not your typical classics concert, the Stockton Symphony will transport you to other worlds and galaxies far, far away with music made popular by the film "2001: A Space Odyssey", favorites from Holst's "The Planets", and an

opulent array by film score composer John Williams from the famed Star Wars movies. 6 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton.\$25-63

MON, MAR 16

SJDC Jazz Concert, 7:30 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, Stockton. \$8 adult; \$5 student/senior over 61, children 12 & under free with admission ticket. 209-954-5209

MAR 19 - 22

The Pacific Opera Theatre will be presenting Mozart's The Goose of Cairo on Th,F,Sat 8 pm, Sun 2pm. This is an obscure unfinished work by Mozart that was completed by Virgilio Mortari to a new libretto by Giovanni Cavicchioli in 1936. Directed by James Haffner with musical coach Burr Phillips. Music provided by the University Symphony Orchestra conducted by Nicolas Waldvogel. Faye Spanos Concert Hall 3511 Pacific Ave, Stockton. General \$19, Senior/UOP faculty and students \$10.

FIRST MONDAY

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm, Towers Building, 509 W Weber Ave, Stockton. cgmemb@gmail.com

FOURTH MONDAYS

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.

SECOND TUESDAYS

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7 - 9 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

THIRD TUESDAYS

CA Disclose group - getting the money out of politics. 6:30 - 8:30 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

FOURTH TUESDAYS

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7 - 9 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

SECOND THURSDAYS

Single Payer San Joaquin meeting, 6:30 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. bailey_hcasj@sbcglobal.net

Stockton Astronomical Society, 7:30 pm. Olson Hall, Room 120, UOP, Stockton.

THIRD THURSDAYS

Central Valley Wellstone Progressives, Meeting info: Rose Roach, 209-474-8496

SECOND SATURDAYS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Working Locally for a Better World

Ten good things about the year 2014



MEDEA BENJAMIN

It's been a year of fervent activism on police accountability, living wages, climate change, personal freedoms, immigrant rights, an open internet and diplomacy over war. The electoral beating the Democrats received has prompted both the Administration and some spineless congresspeople to realize that support for progressive issues could reinvigorate their base—a realization that has already led to Obama's executive action on immigration and the opening to Cuba.

So here are some of the 2014 highlights.

1. UPRISING FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY.

The movement for police accountability has swept the nation, spawning brilliant new leaders from communities most affected, giving a voice to the families who have lost loved ones and opening people's eyes to the militarization of our police forces. It is an organic, grassroots movement destined to have a transformative impact on the struggle for racial equality. Keep an eye out in 2015 for CODEPINK's campaign to demilitarize the police, Communities Organize to Demilitarize Enforcement.

2. HISTORIC OPENING WITH CUBA.

President Obama's announcement that the US would work to restore full diplomatic relations with Cuba for the first time in over 50 years. It including a prisoner swap that led to the release of the final three members of the "Cuban 5"—a group unjustly imprisoned for trying to stop terrorist acts against Cuba. And it marks the end of Cuban policy being dominated by a small cabal of right-wing Cuban Americans. (CODEPINK is taking a delegation to Cuba for Valentine's Day, learn more about it at codepink.org/cuba.)

3. PROGRESS IN TALKS WITH IRAN.

Iran and the six world powers announced they would extend an interim nuclear deal seven more months, and gave themselves four more months to reach a political agreement for a comprehensive nuclear accord. Despite intense opposition from the Israel lobby group AIPAC, as well as Republican and Democratic hawks, the U.S. and Iran are closer than ever to securing a historic agreement. It is a rare and commendable example of the Obama administration engaging in Middle East diplomacy instead of militarism.

4. TRIUMPH OF THE FRACTIVISTS.

Out of a year of environmental progress ranging from the People's Climate March to the US-China bilateral agreement on climate change, one of the most monumental victories has been in the anti-fracking movement. The New York State ban on fracking imposed by Governor Cuomo followed a long campaign waged by tireless grassroots activists. But that wasn't the only victory. Voters in eight locales from Mendocino County, California to Athens, Ohio to Denton, Texas, won fracking bans on the ballot in the 2014 election. So did Canadian citizens in Quebec and New Brunswick. These victories have spawned a national conversation on fracking, with public support for the practice plummeting.

5. NEW GAINS FOR LEGALIZING MARIJUANA.

With the majority of the country now supporting legalization, and Colorado and Washington proving that it actually works, new gains were achieved at the ballot box in Oregon, Alaska and Washington D.C. World leaders like former UN head Kofi Annan and presidents from Latin America called for an end to the drug war and for legally regulating drugs. U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder continued to speak out against racist mandatory minimum drug laws and mass incarceration, while President Obama made national news declaring that marijuana is not more harmful than alcohol.

6. MASSIVE WINS FOR GAY MARRIAGE.

In decision after decision, courts in 18 states struck down gay marriage bans. It is now legal for gay couples to marry in 35 of the 50 states. A year ago, only about a third of Americans lived in states that permitted same-sex marriage. Today, nearly 65 percent of Americans do, making 2014 perhaps the biggest turning point in the history of same-sex marriage in the United States.

7. RAISES FOR MINIMUM WAGE WORKERS.

From ballot initiatives and grassroots organizing to major legislative efforts, campaigns to raise the minimum wage gained momentum across the country. Voters, cities and statehouses passed minimum wage increases. The states included Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska, New Jersey and South Dakota; cities included San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Louisville and Portland, OR. And the calls for raises came from workers themselves: Black Friday saw the largest strikes ever against Walmart, with pickets and strikes at 1,600 stores in 49 states. And on December 5, fast-food workers went on strike in 190 cities. Congress might not be able to push through national legislation, but workers and local communities are not waiting!

8. REFORM OF IMMIGRATION POLICY.

In November, President Obama signed an executive order stopping five million people from being deported and allowing many to work legally. While it does not offer a pathway to citizenship, it does provide relief for millions of immigrants. And it was only possible because of the sophisticated organizing and sacrifices made by so many activists in the immigrant community.

9. RELEASE OF THE TORTURE REPORT.

For years, human rights advocates have been pushing for the release of the 6,000-page torture report compiled by the Senate Intelligence Committee—against vehement opposition from the CIA. The full report remains classified, and the 600-page executive summary was redacted by the CIA itself. The public deserves to see the entire report, but the fact that any of it was released is also a tribute to Senator Dianne Feinstein and her colleagues. It marks the beginning of our nation coming to grips with this sordid page of our history. The next chapter should include accountability—bringing to justice all those who authorized and participated in these shameful acts.

10. PALESTINE SOLIDARITY BECOMES MAINSTREAM.

2014 was horrific for Palestinians, with the Israeli war against the Gaza killing nearly 2,200, mostly civilians. But the invasion spawned unprecedented international solidarity with Palestine and huge steps forward for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. BDS won the support of Christian congregations including the Presbyterian Church USA and academic groups like the American Studies Association. Activists shut down ports in California to stop the unloading of Israeli ships; they forced SodaStream to close its settlement-based factory, and the online shopping site GILT dropped AHAVA cosmetics, made in an illegal Israeli settlement in Palestine. In Europe, the movement has been hugely successful with country after country voting to recognize Palestine as a state and the European court ruling to remove Hamas from its list of terrorist organizations. Keep an eye out in 2015 for CODEPINK's new campaign, No Open House on Stolen Land, targeting RE/MAX real estate

company for selling illegal Israeli settlement homes.

The 2014 low electoral turnout and the Democratic defeat revealed how unenthused the public is about national politics. But it also revealed the popularity of progressive ballot measures. And the campaign pushing Senators Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders to run for President is putting populist economic issues into the national limelight and already influencing the positions of likely presidential contender Hillary Clinton. With this framework and the new energy infused into social justice and environmental activism, the progressive movement is poised to make significant gains in 2015.

Medea Benjamin, cofounder of Global Exchange and CODEPINK: Women for Peace, is the author of *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control*. Her previous books include *Don't Be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart*, and (with Jodie Evans) *Stop the Next War Now* (Inner Ocean Action Guide).

Source: Common Dreams 12/30/14 <http://www.commondreams.org>

FEB/MAR CALENDAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

Live Music, Emerson Coffee-house, temporarily on vacation

FOURTH SATURDAYS

Greater Lodi Area Democrats (GLAD) Breakfast 8:15am, meeting 8:45am, Richmaid Restaurant, 100 N. Cherokee Lane, Lodi, info 209-747-8339 or Cindy.harris.ca@gmail.com

MONDAYS

Student jam sessions hosted by the Pacific Jazz Combos, 7-9 pm, Valley Brew, 157 Adams St, Stockton. Free.

THURSDAYS

Peace demonstration, 4-5 pm, edge of Delta campus on

Pacific, across from Macy's. Free parking at mall. Weekly since 2003. We have signs, or bring your own. We get LOTS of honks! Info 464-3326. Take Five Jazz club, 7 - 9 pm, Valley Brew

SATURDAYS

Crosstown Freeway Farmers Market, under the freeway between El Dorado & San Joaquin, Stockton. 7 - 11, or when sold out. 943-1830

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