



NOW THE WORK OF MOVEMENTS BEGINS



AMY GOODMAN

The election is over, and President Barack Obama will continue as the 44th president of the United States. There will be much attention paid by the pundit class to the mechanics of the campaigns, to the techniques of microtargeting potential voters, and the effectiveness of get-out-the-vote efforts. The media analysts will fill the hours on the cable news networks, proffering post-election chestnuts about the accuracy of polls, or about either candidate's success with one demographic or another. Missed by the mainstream media, but churning at the heart of our democracy, are social movements, movements without which President Obama would not have been re-elected.

President Obama is a former community organizer himself. What happens when the community organizer in chief becomes the commander in chief? Who does the community organizing then? Interestingly, he

offered a suggestion when speaking at a small New Jersey campaign event when he was first running for president. Someone asked him what he would do about the Middle East. He answered with a story about the legendary 20th-century organizer A. Philip Randolph meeting with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Randolph described to FDR the condition of black people in America, and the condition of working people. Reportedly, FDR listened intently, then replied: "I agree with everything you have said. Now, make me do it." That was the message Obama repeated.

There you have it. Make him do it. You've got an invitation from the president himself.

For years during the Bush administration, people felt they were hitting their heads against a brick wall. With the first election of President Obama, the wall had become a door, but it was only open a crack. The question was, would it be kicked open or slammed shut? That is not up to that one person in the White House, no matter how powerful. That is the work of movements.

Ben Jealous is a serious organizer with a long list of accomplishments, and a longer list of things to get done, as the president and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "2013", he notes, "is a year of significant anniversaries, among them the 150th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on

Dec 7 – 8

Peaceful Holiday Faire

It's that time of year again. The Peace and Justice Network is putting on our Peaceful Holiday Faire on Friday December 7 and Saturday December 8 at the Central United Methodist Church in Stockton. For those who plan to attend, mark your calendars for this warm gathering of friends, food and conflict-free gifts. With festive music on both Friday eve and Saturday afternoon, this is a great way to start your holiday season. Come see what's new and different, with your friends and family. Of course, admission is always free.



Washington, as well as the 50th anniversaries of the assassination of Medgar Evers and the Birmingham, Ala., church bombing that killed four young African-American girls. President Obama's 2013 Inauguration will occur on Martin Luther King Jr. Day." Jealous told me on election night, as Mitt Romney was about to give his concession speech, "We have to stay in movement mode."

Young immigrants are doing just that. Undocumented students, getting arrested in sit-ins in politicians' offices, are the modern-day civil-rights movement. There are other vibrant movements as well, like Occupy Wall Street and the fight for marriage equality, which won four out of four statewide initiatives on Election Day. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, and despite the enormous resources expended by the fossil-fuel industry to cloud the issue, climate change and what to do about it is now a topic that President Obama hints he will address, saying, in his victory address in election night, "Democracy in a nation

of 300 million can be noisy and messy and complicated. ... We want our children to live in an America that isn't burdened by debt, that isn't weakened by inequality, that isn't threatened by the destructive power of a warming planet."

It was pressure from grass-roots activists protesting in front of the White House that pushed Obama to delay a decision on the controversial Keystone XL pipeline, proposed to run from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. More than 1,200 people were arrested at a series of protests at the White House one year ago. Now a group is blocking the construction of the southern leg of that pipeline, risking arrest and even injury, with direct-action blockades in tree-sits and tripods in Winnsboro, Texas, two hours east of Dallas.

When those who are used to having the president's ear whisper their demands to him in the Oval Office, if he can't point out the window and say, "If I do as you ask, they will storm the Bastille," if there is no one out there,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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DEC 1: DOWNTOWN STOCKTON BOAT PARADE (P19)
DEC 7-8: PEACEFUL HOLIDAY FAIR (P1)
DEC 13: THE HEALTHCARE (P18)
JAN 4-8: SJ FILM FESTIVAL (P18)

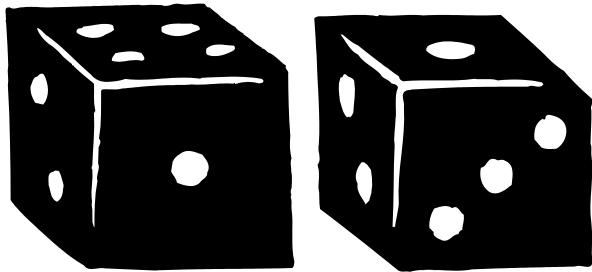
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We now have a chance



BRUCE GIUDICI

After this past election, we may have given ourselves a chance - because, beyond the individuals elected and initiatives approved, people voted in a way that betrayed an understanding of the Grand Manipulation. It helped that Mitt Romney kept reminding us what a vote for him truly meant - for the "job creators" and against the hopelessly dependent 47 percent. Also useful were the hundreds of distasteful political ads furnished by an out-of-control campaign finance system. However it happened, it appears that

the issues we care about are getting new consideration - that maybe the fear campaign begun on 9/11/01 has been exhausted.

The story since 9/11 has been one of unrestrained fear-incitement. From the PATRIOT Act on, we have been reminded of whatever evil could possibly happen. This has justified some very restrictive - and profitable - laws and regulations, benefiting those at the top. The spell now appears to have been broken. And so we can begin to look forward again - if we keep our movements going.

As our cover story points

out, elections are a function of our politics in action - but only one function. To effect a more perfect union, we have to use every means at our disposal to educate those around us: our wonderful planet is filled with goodness and hope that we need to amplify and enhance.

With this election, more tools have been placed on the table. There are more progressive (and fewer regressive) voices at all levels of elected office. Voters have spoken in favor of increased taxation, same-sex marriage and marijuana legalization, and against the increased influence of money in politics. The tide, for the moment, has turned. And, as analyses of the election pour out, it appears that women and minorities made the electoral difference. This trend is likewise positive. And so, what do we do?

First, stay on top of the issues. Climate change, health care reform, war de-escalation, and budgetary decisions should be at the

top of the list. Check out our alternative media sources and become an expert.

Second, find - or form - a group around an issue you are passionate about. Connections newspaper was created to help publicize and foster such groups. Get your information and we'll use it.

Third, tell a friend. Give them an issue of this paper, refer them to a progressive news source, discuss politics as if it were important.

A recent article on disaster capitalism by Naomi Klein underscores the need to be opportunistic. In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, voices to weaken labor and environmental rules in the rebuilding effort were being seriously considered, largely due to budgetary constraints (the "we can't afford to do this normally" argument). It is a story repeated every time there is a disaster - in an emergency, normal rules are discarded.

At the same time in Washington, we face a deep



"fiscal cliff" - spending cuts and tax increases that will supposedly plunge the US and the world into the economic abyss. In this time of change, we can nudge our economy in a way to support productive investments in a more progressive way. By allowing the Bush tax cuts to lapse and by re-directing wasteful military spending to help rebuild the East Coast, we can strengthen our economy by using existing resources to employ people by replacing destroyed infrastructure. This is but one proposal that will come from new progressive voices in Congress. Let's support them. We have much to look forward to in this coming year - for the first time in more than a decade. Have a marvelous new year!

Concerns from the page of a child

SUBMITTED BY AN ANONYMOUS TEACHER

This letter was a part of an assignment to write letters to a troop member, an uplifting, supportive letter. Sometimes it is hard to be uplifting when you are worried about what 'might' happen.

November 6 2012

Dear Soldiers,

do you no the mid rod ny is a horrible man he is going to send everybody that are not American back to where we are like if your Asian they will send you back to Asia. So if you think he is a horrible man then don't vote for him or just don't do anything that involves Mitt Romney. So, I'm Cambodian. (if you are) Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Vietnamese, Filipino and that is so. If that does happen like if Mitt Romney will send you back to whatever region you are from.

Sincerely,
Elementary aged student

Translation:
November 5, 2012
Dear Soldiers,

Do you know that Mitt Romney is a horrible man? He is going to send everybody who is not American back to where we are from. Like if you're Asian they will send you back to Asia. So if you think he is a horrible man, then don't vote for him or just don't do anything that involves Mitt Romney, ok? So, I'm Cambodian. (if you are) Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Vietnamese, Filipino and that is so. If that does happen like if Mitt Romney will send you back to whatever region you are from.

Sincerely,
(a very concerned) Elementary Student

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Both shows are produced by Peace & Justice volunteer Vince Kotecki on SJTV: Stockton, Lodi and Manteca cable channel 26.

For up to the minute listings of current shows, see our website www.pjnsjc.org, click on Talking it Through.

THE WORK BEGINS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

then he is in big trouble. That's when he agrees with you. What about when he doesn't?

The president of the United States is the most powerful person on Earth. But there is a force more powerful: People organized around this country, fighting for a more just, sustainable world. Now the real work begins.

Amy Goodman is the host of "Democracy Now!," a daily international TV/radio news hour airing on 1,100 stations in North America. She was awarded the 2008 Right Livelihood Award, dubbed the "Alternative Nobel" prize, and received the award in the Swedish Parliament in December.

Source: [TruthDig.com](http://www.truthdig.com) 11/8/12
<http://www.truthdig.com/>

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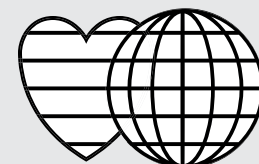
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"The Peace and Justice Network is a nonprofit educational organization committed to the vision of a world in which the equality of all persons is achieved, basic needs are met, conflict is resolved nonviolently, and the earth's resources are shared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

How to build a grassroots power base

HARVEY WASSERMAN

A mass grassroots election protection movement has been born. It's finally forced the issues of mass disenfranchisement and hackable electronic voting machines into the mainstream. And it's emerged from this election with a must-do list of things that need to be accomplished—soon—if we are to retain any shreds of American democracy. Meanwhile the flaws in our system allowed the theft of the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004, and threatened to do it again this year. They've allowed the theft of countless other races for Congress, governorships, state offices, judgeships, referenda and more. This cuts to the core of our democracy process. But as we've seen so many times before, we can change all this.

- **Money out of politics:** Corporations are not people, money is not speech. We cannot afford a system of "one dollar, one vote." Citizens United must be overturned and workable limits placed on campaign spending. This will require a Constitutional amendment. Move to Amend (www.movetoamend.org) is working on it, and needs our support.

- **The Electoral College:** This useless anachronism was meant to empower slaveowners through the 3/5 bonus granted for their slaves. It has allowed the theft of elections in 1800, 1824, 1876, 1888 and 2000. It's time the candidate who gets the most votes actually wins. It will require a Constitutional amendment. But the Electoral College has repeatedly flunked the test of time, and must be abolished.

- **A guaranteed right to vote:** Nowhere in the Constitution does it say all American citizens are guaranteed the right to vote. It must.

- **Universal automatic voter registration:** All US citizens should be automatically registered at the age of 18. Forms should be sent in the mail and made readily available at schools, motor vehicle bureaus and elsewhere. Only a signature should be necessary to then get a ballot and vote. This will have to be won on a state-by-state basis.

- **Universal hand-counted paper ballots:** Germany, Japan, Canada, Switzerland and Sweden stage their elections entirely on hand-counted paper ballots. Electronic voting machines are perfectly designed to steal elections. Ireland has just thrown out its voting machines and moved to paper ballots. We must do the same. This will also have to be won on a state-by-state basis.

- **A four-day weekend for voting:** The first Saturday-Sunday-Monday-Tuesday in November should constitute a national holiday for voting. High school and college students should be given credit for working the polls and counting the ballots. Early voting in general should be expanded, as long as it's done in person and not over the internet or by smartphone.

- **Washington DC wants to become a state.** It's long overdue. DC has more people than Wyoming and Vermont. It deserves full representation in Congress and the rest of our government. This will have to be done over the vehement opposition of the Republican Party. The option should also be available to Puerto Rico if it wants.

Winning all this will require the usual blood, sweat and tears of a long, hard national grassroots campaign. Since Florida 2000 and Ohio 2004, we have made great strides in exposing the corrupt nature of an all-too-vulnerable electoral system. But the hard work has just begun. If we are to live in a democracy, we have no choice but to win. So let's do it!

HARVEY WASSERMAN AND BOB FITRAKIS ARE CO-AUTHORS OF "WILL THE GOP STEAL AMERICA'S 2012 ELECTION."

Source: *Truthout* 11/13/12 www.truthout.org

Five things to watch for in Obama's second term



FRAN KORTEN

Okay, folks. Elections are exciting, but now the really hard work begins. We need to turn victories won into something real that works for people and the planet. With a divided Congress, we're unlikely to see big legislative leaps. Rather, we will see complicated bills. And we'll see lots of new rules in the executive branch. For both, the devil is in the details. And the angels, too.

It may be boring, but as citizens it's our job to pay attention to the details. It's our job to apply pressure where it will move us toward shared prosperity, ecological balance, and deep democracy. Here are five things I'll be watching for.

TAX CODE REFORM.

Did you catch it? In Obama's acceptance speech he laid out three agenda items. Tax code reform was the first. Our tax code is the DNA of our economy. It determines where the money goes: who gets rich and who gets shafted. We'll need trusted organizations like Citizens for Tax Justice (<http://ctj.org>) and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (<http://www.cbpp.org>) that can follow the complicated details. Then we need to pay attention to where we need to rally.

OBAMACARE IMPLEMENTATION.

Repeal of Obamacare is now off the table, which moves implementation to center stage. Watch for the development of "health insurance exchanges", one-stop shops for health insurance that are supposed to increase transparency and competition. The law says that by 2014 every state must have these in place. Some states have said they'll defy the law, while others like Washington are moving forward rapidly. We need to make sure these exchanges are done and done right.

FOSSIL FUELS.

In his *Rolling Stone* article, Bill McKibben did the math. The oil in the soil and the coal in the hole (and tar and gas too) are worth trillions. That's trillions betting on burning up the planet. We won't get big laws to change this "terrifying

math." But lots of small ones can tip the balance, things like raising fuel efficiency standards, removing fossil fuel subsidies, implementing pollution regulations, investing in renewables, retrofitting, and stopping the pipelines, coal trains, fracking in our communities. We're in the fight of our lives on this one. We have a president who dared to mention in his acceptance speech that we have a "warming planet." There is much that we can do locally and that we can press for nationally and globally. This epic struggle takes a people's movement that just won't quit.

CLEAN ELECTIONS.

The flood of money that soaked this election was obscene. Many of the candidates and issues backed by the biggest money actually lost, but the indebtedness of our system to big funders remains. Look for ways to bring on tough campaign finance rules (momentum is building for a constitutional amendment to reverse Citizens United), stop the suppression of the votes of the poor and minorities, and end having secretaries of state who are partisan. Who would trust a referee committed to making sure one team wins? Move to Amend, Public Citizen, Common Cause, Color of Change, and Free Speech for People are trusted sources on these issues.

WALL STREET.

Yeah, it's really complicated. But here's a simple guideline. For anything that touches Wall Street, pay attention to what the new Senator from Massachusetts, Elizabeth Warren, says. Whether it's mortgages, or taxes, or the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or derivatives regulation, Warren understands the system and is a truth teller.

Our job is to make the change we want. We've got lots to do in the days and years ahead.

FRAN KORTEN IS PUBLISHER OF YES! MAGAZINE.

Source: *YES! Magazine* 11/8/12 <http://www.yesmagazine.org/>



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Rolling Jubilee debt relief plan has
re-energized the Occupy movement.



A new initiative is re-energizing the Occupy movement. Called the Rolling Jubilee <http://rollingjubilee.org/>, it is a plan to use money from donations to buy distressed consumer debt from lenders at a marked down price, just as debt collection agencies normally would. But instead of hounding debtors for payments, it will simply cancel the debts. The hope is that the liberated debtors will themselves contribute to the fund, "rolling" the jubilee forward.

The Rolling Jubilee is a genius move for several reasons. First, debt relief is a bipartisan message that eludes conventional political categorisation. As such, it returns Occupy to its origins as an advocate for the wellbeing of ordinary people, neither leftwing nor rightwing. The Rolling Jubilee says, non-threateningly, "We just want to help people in this unfair system."

But despite its non-threatening appearance, the Rolling Jubilee has significant transformative potential. Two pillars uphold the present debt regime: the moral legitimacy of debt in society's eyes, ie, the idea that a person "should" pay back what he owes; and the coercive mechanisms that enforce repayment, such as harassment, seizure of assets, garnishment of wages, denial of employment or housing, and even imprisonment. The Rolling Jubilee erodes both. It destigmatises debt by saying, "we're all in this together, we believe your situation is unfair, not shameful, so we're going to help you out". And it lessens the severity of the consequences of default. If defaulting means you might get bailed out, why keep paying?

For this reason, we might expect lenders to balk at cooperating with the Rolling Jubilee, perhaps by refusing to sell loans to anyone who doesn't agree to seek collection. So here is a third reason why the idea is so brilliant: if the lenders block debt cancellation even when it comes at no cost to themselves (as they would have sold it at the same price to a collection agency), they appear as a bunch of greedy, vindictive Scrooges. Given their current vulnerability, banks might not want to incite hostility by preventing people from helping each other out.

Accordingly, it is important that the Jubilee organizers continue to frame it in precisely that way: people helping each other out of hardship. Yes, they might understand that its political significance runs deeper, but if they portray it as a political ploy then it will be met as such by the banks or other authorities. Public opinion might also not be as sympathetic.

This also goes for the way the organisers portray it to

themselves. In a political system that is lost in a maelstrom of hype, spin and messaging, we crave authenticity in others and in ourselves. Let the Rolling Jubilee stay grounded in the simple goal of freeing people from debt. The political effect will be greater, not less, when it comes from a place of sincerity.

The Rolling Jubilee could influence economic policy as a model for a very different kind of bailout in response to the next financial crisis. The problem of unpayable debts bedevils every corner of our financial system – public, corporate, and personal. So far, the response of the monetary and fiscal authorities to nearly every financial crisis has been to bail out the creditors but not the debtors. Governments and central banks purchase all kinds of shoddy loans from the private sector, but rather than reduce interest or principal on those loans, they merely become the new creditor. The underwater homeowner, the indebted university graduate, the laid-off worker juggling credit cards ... they get no relief at all.

The Rolling Jubilee brings a different kind of solution into the public consciousness. The next time a systemic crisis breaks, central banks can rescue the banking system by once again buying the delinquent loans – and then cancel them or reduce the amount borrowers owe. Central banks, with their unlimited capacity to print money, have the power to do this at no cost to the taxpayer. The result would be a release of pent-up consumer purchasing power that had been stuck in debt service. Rising demand would fuel employment, wages, and a broad-based economic expansion.

Would this solution be inflationary? Yes. But a little inflation isn't necessarily a bad thing, as long as wages rise as fast as prices. Then it is an equalizer of wealth, as the relative value of hoarded wealth shrinks.

Debt cancellation, whether a "people's bailout" or government policy, is only part of the solution to our economic woes. Deep systemic reforms are necessary, especially given the reality that we are operating a growth-dependent system on a finite planet. But right now, debt is the issue staring us in the face. As always, the most innovative solutions rise from the margins. The Rolling Jubilee may be showing us a glimpse of what is to come.

Source: *The Guardian* 11/12/12 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

Homeowner rights advocates stand in solidarity with homeowner to resist eviction



On Thursday, October 11, Pastor Martin Ureña's family (comprised of himself, his wife, three children, and two grandchildren, ages two and four) were evicted from their home, despite ongoing litigation regarding the legality of his foreclosure. He had since been allowed back into the home during daytime hours to collect his belongings. On October 25th, the realtor (Prudential Realty) stated that it was Pastor Martin's last day and come the following morning, the pastor and his family were to be removed from the property once and for all. In response, the family posted a copy of their court documents at the residence and contacted the sheriff to notify them that this was an illegal foreclosure and their intent to hold protest against it.

How did it get to this point, some may ask. The city of Stockton suffers record high numbers of foreclosures, ranking

top in the nation in foreclosure rating, both during the initial burst of the housing-market bubble in 2007 and at various times in 2011 and 2012. Pastor Martin's initial loan value was stated at nearly three times the current value of his home.

As many homeowners in similar positions have done, Pastor Martin entered into a loan modification two years ago, in which he and the bank agreed upon a \$1,600 monthly payment, but instead, Pastor Martin received a payment demand in the amount of \$2,400 a month. He was confused, but paid the higher sum while he tried to work the issue out with the bank. After months of confusion and little accomplished between the homeowner and the bank to resolve the payment dispute, Pastor Martin had run through his savings and could no longer make such unreasonably high payments, and so went into default.

Pastor Martin then reached out to a local foreclosure workshop, in hopes of saving his home. He worked with the program and informed Wells Fargo of his actions. The bank told Pastor Martin that he was taking all the appropriate actions and assured him that his home was safe as long as he kept with the program. In the meantime, Wells put his home up for sale...using the notorious "dual tracking" practice that will become illegal in California under the Home Owners Bill of Rights in January.

On Friday, October 26th local homeowner rights advocates and fellow foreclosure victims stood unified with Pastor Martin to resist removal from his home and by the end of the day, he had assurances from the agent at Prudential that the stay of procedure would be honored and there would be no further action until a court ruling was issued. However, on October 31st, a call was made to the Stockton Police Dept. by the Prudential agent stating that there were trespassers on the property - an attempt to remove Pastor Martin during a holiday when community support was most difficult to obtain. Acting on the call, Stockton PD did their duty to investigate. Upon finding the stay of procedure notice posted on the property and doing a thorough search of the property, causing Pastor Martin's wife more fright than anyone should suffer on Halloween, the officer discovered that the "trespassers" were in fact the legal property owners. The officer then attempted, without success, to contact the agent from Prudential who placed the original call. After the failed attempt the officer stated that this was a civil matter and that Stockton PD would not be taking future action unless asked to do so by a judge.

Pastor Martin has since filed suit in federal court against the bank on the grounds of fraud, unsound and unsafe business practices, and illegal foreclosure, as he attempts to set a precedent for future cases where homeowner rights are being violated.

This is the second time Occupy Stockton, in concert with fellow activists, have helped a local family hold on to their home in the face of an eviction of questionable legality. The local activists have since been contacted by two other families seeking support and are organizing upcoming demonstrations to call further attention to the growing foreclosure epidemic blighting our community.

For more information on illegal dual tracking practices, visit: <http://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/california-homeowner-bill-rights-signed-law>

Homeowner struggles continue as Wall Street profits soar



In their most recent quarterly earnings report, Wall Street giant JP Morgan Chase announced it smashed previous records by posting \$5.3 billion in profits for the third quarter, up 36 percent from the same period last year. Talking about the enormous profit-surge, Chief Executive Jamie Dimon said the housing market 'had turned the corner' and seemed to downplay recent investigations into fraud surrounding trading practices at the bank.

But, as Firedoglake's David Dayen points out, the idea that the mortgage

crisis has ended for millions of American homeowners depends on one's perspective: "So yes, for BANKS, housing has turned the corner. The refinance boom has inflated profits, and all of the artificial constructs on housing have stabilized prices - the 14 million vacant homes, many of them off the market; the scooping up of foreclosed properties by institutional investors paying cash, which is setting a market floor; the preferences on short sales over foreclosures, and the facilitation of those short sales into the hands of investors. The foreclosure rate decline

is an artifact of short sales, where the borrower still loses their home, and the lack of due process in non-judicial states, with the euphemism of "working through the backlog" used in place of 'allowing illegal actions to continue.'"

In short, writes Dayen, "Banks have gotten well; the homeowner has not."

To date, no Wall Street bank or high level executives have been held to account for the wreckless practices that cause the financial crisis in 2008. Still, speaking at a Council on Foreign Relations event in

Washington this week, Dimon derided the US government's recent (and to many observers mild) pursuit of Wall Street crimes and malpractice. (In early October, the New York state attorney general filed a lawsuit against Bear Stearns & Co, now under the umbrella of JP Morgan Chase for defrauding investors who bought sour mortgage-backed securities leading up to the mortgage crisis.)

Dimon later added, "Only when I come to Washington do people act like making a mistake should never happen," referring

to criticisms following the bank's \$5 billion dollar loss in the more recent London Whale debacle. "I'm a big boy. I'll survive," he said. "But I think the government should think twice before they punish business every single time things go wrong," Dimon said referring to the suit.

In a seemingly related side note, a new analysis released from the New York State Comptroller, pay for Wall Street bankers has recently returned to record levels.

Source: Common Dreams 10/12/12
<http://www.commondreams.org>



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Bradley Manning deserves Americans' support



DESMOND TUTU, MAIREAD CORRIGAN-MAGUIRE, ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL

Last week, PFC Bradley Manning offered to accept responsibility for releasing classified documents as an act of conscience – not as charged by the US military. As people who have worked for decades against the increased militarization of societies and for international cooperation to end war, we have been deeply dismayed by his treatment. The military under the Obama administration has displayed a desire to over-prosecute whistleblowing with life-in-prison charges including espionage and “aiding the enemy,” a disturbing decision which is no doubt intended to set an example.

We have dedicated our lives to working for peace because we have seen many faces of armed conflict and violence, and we understand that no matter the cause of war, civilians always bear the brunt of the cost.

With today's advanced military technology and the continued ability of business and political elites to filter what information is made public, there exists a great barrier to many citizens being fully aware of the realities and consequences of conflicts in which their country is engaged.

Responsible governance requires fully informed citizens who can question their leadership. For those citizens worldwide who do not have direct, intimate knowledge of war, yet are still affected by rising international tensions and failing economies, WikiLeaks releases attributed to Bradley Manning have provided unparalleled access to important facts.

Revealing covert crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and corporations' pervasive influence in governance, this window into the realities of modern international relations has changed the world for the better.

While some of these documents may demonstrate how much work lies ahead in terms of securing international peace and justice, they also highlight the potential of the internet as a forum for citizens to participate more directly in civic discussion and creative government accountability projects.

Questioning authority, as a soldier, is not easy. But

it can, at times, be honorable. Words attributed to Bradley Manning reveal that he went through a profound moral struggle between the time he enlisted and when he became a whistleblower. Through his experience in Iraq, witnessing suffering of innocent civilians and soldiers alike, he became disturbed by top-level policy that undervalued human life. Like other courageous whistleblowers, he was driven foremost by a desire to reveal the truth.

PFC Bradley Manning said in chat logs attributed to him that he hoped the releases would bring “debates, discussions and reform”, and condemned the ways in which the “first world exploits the third.” Much of the world regards PFC Manning as a hero for these efforts toward peace and transparency, and he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize as a result. Much as when high-ranking officials in the United States and Britain misled the public in 2003 by saying there was an imminent need to invade Iraq to stop them from using weapons of mass destruction, however, the world's most powerful elites have again insulted international opinion and the intelligence of many citizens by withholding facts regarding Bradley Manning and WikiLeaks.

We Nobel Peace Prize laureates condemn the persecution Bradley Manning has suffered, including imprisonment in conditions declared “cruel, inhuman and degrading” by the United Nations, and call upon US citizens to stand up in support of this whistleblower who defended their democratic rights.

The military prosecution has not presented evidence that, by releasing secret documents, PFC Manning injured anyone, and they have asserted in court that the charge of “aiding the enemy through indirect means” does not require them to. Nor have they denied that his motivations were conscientious; they have simply argued they are irrelevant. In ignoring this context, and recommending a much more severe punishment for Bradley Manning than is given to US soldiers guilty of murdering civilians, military leadership is sending a chilling warning to other soldiers who would feel compelled by conscience to reveal misdeeds. It is our belief that leaders who use fear to govern, rather than sharing wisdom born from facts, cannot be just.

We Nobel Peace Prize laureates condemn the persecution Bradley Manning has suffered, including imprisonment in conditions declared “cruel, inhuman and degrading” by the United Nations, and call upon US

citizens to stand up in support of this whistleblower who defended their democratic rights. In the conflict in Iraq alone, more than 110,000 people have died since 2003, millions have been displaced, and nearly 4,500 American soldiers have been killed. If someone needs to be held accountable for endangering Americans and civilians, let's first take the time to examine the evidence regarding high-level crimes already committed, and what lessons can be learned.

If Bradley Manning released the documents attributed to him, we should express to him our gratitude for his efforts toward accountability in government, informed democracy and peace.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, VISIT THE BRADLEY MANNING SUPPORT NETWORK <[HTTP://WWW.BRADLEYMANNING.ORG/](http://WWW.BRADLEYMANNING.ORG/)>

Source: Guardian UK 11/18/12 <http://www.guardian.co.uk>



Pushing Obama's arc towards peace



MEDEA BENJAMIN

Foreign policy played a minor role in a presidential election that focused on jobs, jobs, jobs. But like it or not, the United States is part of a global community in turmoil, and U.S. policies often help fuel that turmoil. The peace movement, decimated during the first Obama term because so many people were unwilling to be critical of President Obama, has a challenge today to re-activate itself, and to increase its effectiveness by forming coalitions with other sectors of the progressive movement. Over the next four years, this movement must grapple with key issues such as the Afghan war, killer drone attacks, maintaining peace with Iran, US policy vis-a-vis Israel and Palestine, and the bloated Pentagon budget.

Despite President Obama's talk about getting out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, the U.S. military still has some 68,000 troops and almost 100,000 private contractors there, at a cost of \$2 billion a week. And Obama is talking about a presence of U.S. troops, training missions, special forces operations, and bases for another decade. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of Americans think this war is not worth fighting, a sentiment echoed in a recent New York Times editorial "Time to Pack Up." It is, indeed, time to pack up. The peace movement must push for withdrawal starting now, and definitely no long-term presence!

Veteran's Day should be a time to take a hard look at the impact of war on soldiers, particularly the epidemic of soldier suicide. We must also look at the devastating impact of war on Afghan women and children, particularly as winter sets in. Despite the billions of dollars our government has poured into development projects, Afghan children are literally freezing to death.

American drone attacks are out of control, killing thousands in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, many of them civilians. Drones are sowing widespread anti-American sentiment and setting a dangerous precedent that will come back to haunt us. Anti-drones protests have sprung up all over the United States at air forces bases where the drones are piloted, at the headquarters of drone manufacturers, at the CIA and in Congressional offices. Our job now is to coordinate those efforts, to launch a massive public education campaign to reverse pro-drone public opinion, pass city resolutions against drone use, and to call on our elected officials to start respecting the rule of law. If we strengthen our ties with people in the nations most affected, as we have begun to do on our recent CODEPINK delegation to Pakistan, and join in with those at the UN bodies who are horrified by drone proliferation, we can make progress in setting some global standards for the use of lethal drones.

Also looming ominously is a possible Israeli attack on Iran that would draw the US into a devastating regional war. Almost 60 percent of Americans oppose joining Israel in a war with Iran. We must make sure

Obama and Congress hear that voice above the din of AIPAC lobbyists gunning for war, and steer clear of dragging the US into yet another Middle Eastern conflict. Public opinion campaigns such as the "Iranians We Love You" posters on busses in Tel Aviv, and cross-cultural exchanges in Iran and the US bring humanity to a tenuous political situation. We also must renew efforts to oppose the crippling sanctions that are impacting everyday citizens in Iran, and rippling out to spike food prices elsewhere, including Afghanistan.

Perhaps hardest of all will be to get some traction on changing US policy towards Israel/Palestine. The grassroots movement to stop unconditional financial and political support for Israel is booming, with groups like Students for Justice in Palestine and the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation building networks across the country. Campaigns to boycott and divest from companies profiting from the Israeli occupation continue to win victories and attract global support. We're unlikely to see the Obama administration and Congress condemning settlements, human rights abuses, or the ongoing siege of Gaza, much less cutting off the \$3 billion a year that helps underwrite these abuses. But we can continue to shift public opinion and gain more allies in Congress, with an openness to reaching out to libertarians and fiscal conservatives calling for cuts in foreign aid. In the aftermath of the election, Jewish Voice for Peace and interfaith allies have pledged to continue efforts to call for US aid to Israel to be conditioned on compliance with international law.

And then there's the bloated Pentagon budget. At a time when the nation is looking at how best to allocate scarce resources, all eyes should be on the billions of dollars wasted on Pentagon policies and weapons that don't make us safer. From the over 800 bases overseas to outdated Cold War weapons to monies given to repressive regimes, we need a rational look at the Pentagon budget that could free up billions for critical social and environmental programs.

Key to building a vibrant peace movement in the next four years is coalition-building, reaching out to a broad array of social justice groups to make the connections between their work and the billions drained from our economy for war. Environmentalists, women's rights advocates, labor unions, civil rights, there are so many connections that have to be rekindled from the Bush years or started anew.

Finally, we have to provide alternatives to the worn narrative that the military interventions around the world are making us more secure. It's time to demand alternatives like negotiations, creative diplomacy and a foreign policy gearing toward solving global problems, not perpetuating endless war. The UN declared November 10th "Malala Day" in honor of Pakistan's 15-year-old Malala Yousefzai, who was shot in the head by the Taliban for supporting education for girls. This tragedy awoke international commitments to ensuring girls can get to school, a relatively inexpensive goal with major returns for the advancement of women's rights, health, prosperity, and security. Wouldn't it be nice to see our government prioritizing funds for school over drone warfare and endless weapons stockpiling?

"The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice," said Martin Luther King. If we can connect these foreign policy issues with domestic needs and climate change, if we can follow the powerful examples of mass direct action movements from Chile to Egypt, and if enough people practice democracy daily rather than waiting until the next presidential election, then maybe—just maybe, we'll be able to push the arc of Obama's second term in the direction of peace and justice.

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 11/13/12 <http://www.commondreams.org>



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.tpmmuckraker.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>
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- 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>



Liberals and progressives happy but not elated about Obama's re-election



RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

The moderate beat the reactionary. Two cheers! Americans stood up for their values. Three cheers!

Many Americans sighed with relief the day after the 2012 election that they had beaten back a powerful right-wing assault. There was little enthusiasm about what we had achieved in retaining Obama, but much joy that for the moment the most reactionary forces in American life were held at bay. Liberals and progressives are happy, but not elated, at the outcome.

Obama voters are now trying to get themselves ready for the variety of ways that Obama will once again disappoint us. Our re-elected president is poised to embrace some variant of an austerity program (sometimes called Simpson/Bowles) with large-scale cutbacks to social programs for the poor and middle classes and a narrowing of who can receive Social Security benefits and at what age, all done in the name of an invented fiscal emergency or debt crisis which are only real to the extent that one's highest priority is paying off the bankers and large investors.

Obama will do nothing to provide mortgage relief for those still suffering from the irresponsible behavior of banks and loan companies.

He will talk cap and trade for an environment that can only be effectively protected by a serious tax on carbon emissions and by aggressive restraints on the oil, gas and coal companies that are at the forefront of environmental destruction. He will continue his assault on whistleblowers, allow his Justice Department to harass medical marijuana providers even in states where the voters legalized it, continue his drone attacks with their murderous impact on civilians, and allow Monsanto and other large corporations to shape his agricultural policies. And he is unlikely to seriously restrain Netanyahu's desire for a war with Iran that might eventually drag in our troops, and he almost certainly will not publicly demand that Israel end the occupation of the West Bank. He will compromise before fighting for liberal or progressive programs and will avoid challenging the dominant worship of the marketplace that has become the mantra of all Republicans and the right wing of the Democratic Party. His conception of educational reform as measured by test score outcomes will continue to frustrate teachers and students alike, and it will be justified in terms of Obama's goal for the United States to continue to dominate the global economy (rather than calling for global cooperation in which our success is linked

to the well-being of everyone on the planet and on the well-being of the planet itself, rather than just on making the United States number one in its economic, political, military and media powers over others).

Because the expectation level is low, this time his supporters will not be disillusioned, but neither will they be mobilized. Despite the rhetoric of "democratic involvement" that he preaches during election seasons, there is little reason to believe he will actually set up mechanisms to get serious feedback from those who stretched themselves to ensure his re-election.

Yet liberals and progressives do have something to celebrate. The vast majority of Americans still yearn for a world based on generosity, caring for each other, caring for the environment, respecting difference (racial, gender, sexual orientation) and eliminating poverty and war. Though the Democratic Party and the re-elected president will provide few avenues to advance this kind of an agenda, Americans used the only available mechanism they had for publicly reaffirming this commitment.

And don't count out the ongoing impact of big money on our politics and election outcomes.

The task for a genuine liberals and progressives is

to affirm this yearning for a better world and to not let it get co-opted into narrowly focused struggles between Congressional Democrats and Republicans, when what Americans want is a much more visionary voice that can affirm their own highest values. Aside from affirming identity politics and respect for difference, that voice will not come from President Obama or Congressional Dems.

Liberals and progressives must recognize that their constituencies have essentially been frozen out of the policymaking institutions controlled by Obama moderates, and that they will not be heard or taken seriously until they articulate a coherent and unified alternative vision, what we at the Network of Spiritual Progressives call our basic value: seeking to create The Caring Society - "caring for each other and caring for the earth." The most important contribution the left could make to American society in the next four years is to popularize that idea and unite around it, showing how every specific program idea we have is a manifestation of this larger vision. It is this shared vision which would make an otherwise fractured left appear to be a coherent force, and it might prepare us to mount a significant campaign both inside and outside the Democratic Party in 2016 - a campaign to challenge the globalization of selfishness and materialism that is the real content of what the Obama Democrats and their ideological allies in the Republican Party are likely to deliver in the next four years.

We have one overwhelming advantage: most people want a society based on love, caring, generosity and solidarity, if only they thought it possible. Our task is to use concrete struggles as a foundation for articulating that vision. Here are some first steps:

MONEY OUT OF POLITICS

Go way beyond overturning Citizens United and back the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment (ESRA) to

the US Constitution, which would require public funding of state and federal elections and bar money from any other (private or corporate) source, require free and equal media time for all major candidates, and require large corporations every five years to prove to a jury of ordinary citizens that they have been pursuing environmentally and socially responsible policies or else risk losing their corporate charter and permission to function.

This would be a very popular position, because even though the huge amounts of money spent by the Republicans didn't guarantee them electoral victory, it was only because of equally large amounts of money spent by the Democrats, and the sources for some of that money are the corporate and financial interests who will expect (and receive) real consideration from policy shapers to protect their interests. It is the power of that money and its shaping of the media discourse that helps marginalize spiritual progressive ideas like building a world based on love, generosity, social justice, peace and environmental sanity. The absence of that money for progressive voices is a major part of why more decent and principled people don't enter into politics in the first place. So, don't let anyone tell you that the 2012 election proved that money wasn't important - it was often central to shaping the choices we'd have when we voted.

Similarly, though the media is telling us that the Republicans now need to rethink their racist and sexist attitudes, and I hope they do, don't believe for a moment that the Republicans are in crisis about their loss. The amazing thing about big money is that it has enabled a tiny minority of wealthy people to get access, through media, to anywhere between 40 and 50 percent of the voting population and sell them a distorted picture of the world in which the real alienation most people in this society feel gets blamed upon the poor, the powerless, the immigrants, the homosexuals, the feminists,

the liberals or progressives, or even the Democrats. It's an amazing accomplishment for the 1% to still be able to get 40-50 percent of the American voting public to vote for policies that are contrary to the needs of the majority of Republicans, but instead serve the needs and interests of the 1%. And simultaneously, that money helps to push spiritually progressive ideas and secular progressive ideas totally out of the realm of what is considered respectable discourse. Getting money out of politics is a first priority - and the ESRA is the only effective way to do it. Check it out online <<http://www.tikkun.org/ESRA>>.

HOMELAND SECURITY THROUGH GENEROSITY

...not through military, economic, or media domination of the world. Concretely: a domestic and global Marshall Plan to once and for all eliminate domestic and global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education and inadequate health care both in the United States and around the world.

A NEW NEW DEAL

...to protect the middle class, provide a living wage for all, extend Medicare for all and aggressively protect the environment.

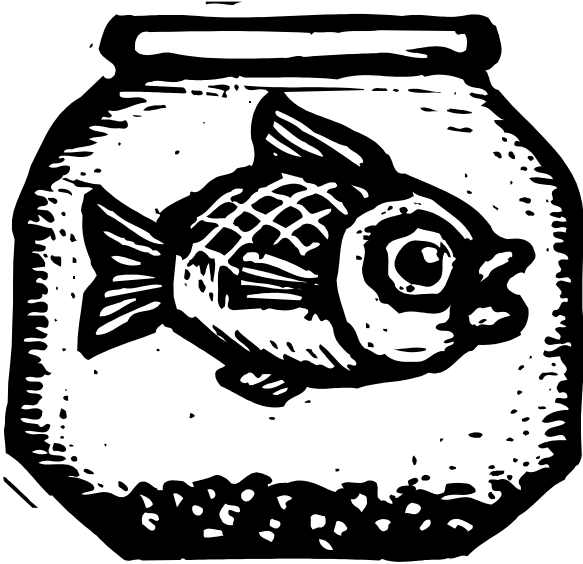
Taken together, those three foci give teeth to what The Caring Society would be like. Obama and his cheerleaders are as likely to be obstacles as they are allies in taking the steps needed in that direction. Yet we can still be happy that we don't have to spend the next four years arguing against those who would have used a Romney victory as proof that Americans care only about themselves and little about the well-being of others on this planet! Let's build on the goodness and decency of the American public that came into fuller view this past Tuesday at the polls.

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER IS EDITOR OF TIKKUN [WWW.TIKKUN.ORG]

Source: *Truthout Op-Ed* 11/11/12 <http://truth-out.org>



Voters didn't ask for bi-partisanship, they demanded good policies



RICHARD ESKOW

President Obama was reportedly planning to reach out to House Majority Leader John Boehner today to begin negotiating a deal to avoid the so-called “fiscal cliff,” a series of spending cuts and tax hikes scheduled take effect unless Congress rescinds the law that created it. Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH) says that his colleagues are ready to compromise on the so-called “fiscal cliff” so long as Republican economic ideology is not part of the deal.

That overture is both appropriate and statesmanlike. The public expects its leaders to work together on important issues.

The question is, what kind of deal? Boehner's been acting as intransigent as ever, telling Reuters that Congressional Republicans will have “a mandate to not raise taxes.”

Now Boehner's saying he's willing to raise “tax revenue,” as long as tax rates are lowered even more. That's a coded way of saying he wants even more tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, and that Democrats should expect to get that “revenue” by eliminating tax deductions for struggling middle-class Americans. That's likely to mean losing deductions for dependent children and mortgages, and tax changes that will lead to even less health coverage for working Americans. He says he'll also demand cuts to Social Security and Medicare as part of any deal.

But Boehner isn't holding the cards in this situation. The president is. All the numbers say so – in the election results, the polling data, and even in the stock market, if you read it correctly.

THE NEW MATH

As the Democrats were fond of saying this year: It's not politics, it's math. Here's some math that Congressional Republicans – and austerity-minded Democrats – are going to have to deal with:

A headline in the *New York Times* read, “Question for the Victor: How Far Do You Push?” The answer: As far as the voters have asked you to push.

2 to 1: Voters have given Democrats two of three branches of elected government. Two out of three ain't bad. In fact, it's a mandate to govern. Memo to John Boehner from the voters: When you've only got one out of three branches, you may be a partner in the political process – but you're the junior partner.

12,744,844: Democratic Senatorial candidates got

The absence of disagreement and ferocity has sometimes robbed the public of the opportunity to make informed choices in the voting booth.

12,744,844 more votes than Republicans this year. According to my rough calculations, Democratic candidates got 57.44 percent of the popular vote. Republicans only got 41.57 percent. Harry Reid's been saying all along that he doesn't want to cut Social Security. The voters agree with him. Deal with it, Republicans.

Zero: That's the approximate number of candidates whose embrace for the “Simpson Bowles” austerity plan was a pathway to victory. That plan would cut Social Security and Medicare benefits, and sharply cut into all forms of government spending, while lowering taxes even more for millionaires and corporations. It would almost certainly raise taxes sharply, however, for the middle class. As Zaid Jilani notes, three highly-visible candidates who openly endorsed the Simpson Bowles plan – or who were endorsed by one or both gentlemen themselves – unanimously went down to defeat this week. On the other hand, Virginia Senate candidate Tim Kaine of Virginia openly rejected the Simpson Bowles plan. He pulled off an upset victory.

332: That's the number of electoral votes President Obama received. He won a decisive victory around the country – and he won the popular vote, too. You lost, Republicans, fair and square. And about that whole “fair and square” thing: As the *New York Times* noted today, the reelection of House Republicans had a lot more to do with gerrymandering, incumbency and big-money corporate campaign financing than it did with any mandate not to cut

taxes.

A headline in the *New York Times* read, “Question for the Victor: How Far Do You Push?” The answer: As far as the voters have asked you to push.

INSIDE JOB

But that process seems to disturb a lot of pundits, press and political insiders. They'd rather things worked out behind closed doors – “just send your man around to see my man,” as J. P. Morgan suggested to Teddy Roosevelt. The president's going to be under a lot of pressure to preemptively surrender on his stated principles. The voters have asked President Obama and his fellow Democrats not to “shirk a fight” over economic issues.

Americans for Tax Fairness compiled polling data which showed that 60 percent of voters wanted the Bush tax cuts ended for incomes of \$250,000 and above. Voters said they wanted to see their Social Security and Medicare benefits protected, and the deficit addressed by increasing taxes to the rich instead, and they did so by the overwhelming margin of 64 percent to 17 percent. And 62 percent of those polled said that “the message [they] were trying to send to the next president and Congress with [their] votes this year” was: “We should make sure the wealthy start paying their fair share of taxes.”

And yet election-night commentary was filled with talk about the president's need to find “common ground,” something we never heard about George W. Bush's two victories – one of which came without either a popular-vote majority or an unequivocal electoral college win. Expect a lot more of this talk from insiders in the days and weeks to come.

These insiders don't seem to know or care that voters elected the president and his fellow Democrats because of those principles.

STEPPING UP

At times during his first term, the president appeared to show disdain for ideology, for advocacy for the conflicts that are part of the political process. He sometimes spoke of emulating the compromises reached between Ronald Reagan and House Majority Leader Tip O'Neill, but without offering the fierce advocacy each of those leaders first gave for his own viewpoint.

But it was a newly energized president who addressed supporters on election night, saying “We will disagree, sometimes fiercely, about how to get there.”

“I'm not talking about blind optimism,” President Obama told the cheering Chicago crowd. “I'm not talking about the wishful idealism that allows us to just sit on the sidelines or shirk from a fight.”

That's the process the public needs to see – the disagreement, the debate, and the conflict, as well as the compromise and the forging of consensus. Voters need to know why they're getting the policies that affect them, and which politicians are pulling for (or against) them.

That's a promising sign. The absence of disagreement and ferocity has sometimes robbed the public of the opportunity to make informed choices in the voting booth. Would voters have given the reins of power back to Boehner and Congressional Republicans if they'd been able to see just how extreme their positions have been for the last two years?

The voters have asked President Obama and his fellow Democrats not to “shirk a fight” over economic issues. We look forward to seeing the democratic process unfold over the coming weeks, months and years, as a much-needed fight against economic injustice is played out in the public arena.

That's not partisanship. It's math.

RICHARD (RJ) ESKOW IS A WELL-KNOWN BLOGGER AND WRITER, A FORMER WALL STREET EXECUTIVE, AN EXPERIENCED CONSULTANT, AND A FORMER MUSICIAN.

Source: Campaign for America's Future 11/8/12 <http://www.ourfuture.org>



Why bankers rule the world

By 2010, 1 percent of the population owned 42 percent of financial wealth, while 80 percent of the population owned only 5 percent of financial wealth.

ELLEN BROWN

Interest charges are a strongly regressive tax that the poor pay to the rich. A public banking system could realize savings up to 40 percent - allowing taxes to be cut, services increased and market stability created - with banks feeding the economy rather than feeding off it.

In the 2012 edition of *Occupy Money* released last week, Professor Margrit Kennedy writes that a stunning 35 percent to 40 percent of everything we buy goes to interest. This interest goes to bankers, financiers, and bondholders, who take a 35 percent to 40 percent cut of our GDP. That helps explain how wealth is systematically transferred from Main Street to Wall Street. The rich get progressively richer at the expense of the poor, not just because of "Wall Street greed," but because of the inexorable mathematics of our private banking system.

This hidden tribute to the banks will come as a surprise to most people, who think that if they pay their credit card bills on time and don't take out loans, they aren't paying interest. This, says Dr. Kennedy, is not true.

Tradesmen, suppliers, wholesalers and retailers all along the chain of production rely on credit to pay their bills. They must pay for labor and materials before they have a product to sell, and before the end-buyer pays for the product 90 days later. Each supplier in the chain adds interest to its production costs, which are passed on to the ultimate consumer. Dr. Kennedy cites interest charges ranging from 12 percent for garbage collection, to 38 percent for drinking water, to 77 percent for rent in public housing in her native Germany.

Her figures are drawn from the research of economist Helmut Creutz, writing in German and interpreting Bundesbank publications. They apply to the expenditures of German households for everyday goods and services in 2006; but similar figures are seen in financial sector profits in the United States, where they composed a whopping 40 percent of US business profits in 2006. That's more than five times the 7 percent made by the banking sector in 1980. Bank assets, financial profits, interest and debt have all been growing exponentially.

By 2010, 1 percent of the population owned 42 percent of financial wealth, while 80 percent of the population owned only 5 percent of financial wealth. Dr. Kennedy observes that the bottom 80 percent pay the hidden interest charges that the top 10 percent collect, making interest a strongly regressive tax that the poor pay to the rich.

People generally assume that if they pay their bills on time, they aren't paying compound interest; but again, this isn't true. Compound interest is baked into the formula for most mortgages, which comprises 80 percent of US loans.

If credit cards aren't paid within the one-month grace period, interest charges are compounded daily; and even if you pay within the grace period, you are paying 2 percent to 3 percent for the use of the card, since merchants pass their merchant fees on to the consumer. Debit cards, which are the equivalent of writing checks, also involve fees. Visa-MasterCard and the banks at both ends of these interchange transactions charge an average fee of 44 cents per transaction - though the cost to them is about 4 cents.

Even if you pay cash, you are liable to be paying an additional 2 percent to 3 percent, since, until recently, merchants were not allowed to give discounts for cash



payments. A July 2012 settlement with Visa and MasterCard, however, allowed merchants in the settlement to add a surcharge for credit card use.

HOW TO RECAPTURE THE INTEREST: OWN THE BANK

The implications of all this are stunning. If we had a financial system that returned the interest collected from the public directly to the public, 35 percent could be lopped off the price of everything we buy. That means we could buy three items for the current price of two, and that our paychecks could go 50 percent farther than they go today.

Direct reimbursement to the people is a hard system to work out, but there is a way we could collectively recover the interest paid to banks. We could do it by turning the banks into public utilities and their profits into public assets. Profits would return to the public, either reducing taxes or increasing the availability of public services and infrastructure.

By borrowing from their own publicly-owned banks, governments could eliminate their interest burden altogether. This has been demonstrated elsewhere with stellar results, including in Canada, Australia, and Argentina, among other countries.

In 2011, the US federal government paid \$454 billion in interest on the federal debt - nearly one-third the total \$1.1 trillion (\$1,100 billion) paid in personal income taxes that year. If the government had been borrowing directly from the Federal Reserve - which has the power to create credit on its books and now rebates its profits directly to the government - personal income taxes could have been cut by a third.

Borrowing from its own central bank interest-free might allow a government to eliminate its national debt altogether. In *Money and Sustainability: The Missing Link*, Bernard Lietaer and Christian Asperger, et al., cite the example of France. The treasury borrowed interest-free from the nationalized Banque de France from 1946 to 1973. The law then changed to forbid this practice, requiring the treasury to borrow instead from the private sector. The authors include a chart showing what would have happened if the French government had continued to borrow interest-free, versus what did happen. Rather than dropping from 21 percent to 8.6 percent of GDP, the debt shot up from 21 percent to 78 percent of GDP.

"No 'spendthrift government' can be blamed in this case," write the authors. "Compound interest explains it all!"

MORE THAN JUST A FEDERAL SOLUTION

It is not just federal governments that could eliminate their interest charges in this way. State and local governments could do it too. Consider California. At the end of 2010, it had general obligation and revenue bond debt of \$158 billion. Of this, \$70 billion, or 44 percent, was owed for interest. If the state had incurred that debt to its own bank - which then returned the profits to the state - California could be \$70 billion richer today. Instead of slashing services, selling off public assets, and laying off employees, it could be adding services and repairing its decaying infrastructure.

The only US state to own its own depository bank today is North Dakota. North Dakota is also the only state to have escaped the 2008 banking crisis, sporting a sizable budget surplus every year since then. It has the lowest unemployment rate in the country, the lowest foreclosure rate, and the lowest default rate on credit card debt.

Globally, 40 percent of banks are publicly owned, and they are concentrated in countries that also escaped the 2008 banking crisis. These are the BRIC countries - Brazil, Russia, India, and China - which are home to 40 percent of the global population. The BRICs grew economically by 92 percent in the last decade, while Western economies were floundering.

Cities and counties could also set up their own banks; but in the US, this model has yet to be developed. In North Dakota, meanwhile, the Bank of North Dakota underwrites the bond issues of municipal governments, saving them from the vagaries of the "bond vigilantes" and speculators, as well as from the high fees of Wall Street underwriters and the risk of coming out on the wrong side of interest rate swaps required by the underwriters as "insurance."

One of many cities crushed by this Wall Street "insurance" scheme is Philadelphia, which has lost \$500 million on interest swaps alone. The complicated way in which the swaps work was explained in an earlier article here. Last week, the Philadelphia City Council held hearings on what to do about these lost revenues, which have gone directly into the coffers of Wall Street banks. In an October 30 article titled "Can Public Banks End Wall Street Hegemony?" Willie Osterweil discussed a solution presented at the hearings in a fiery speech by Mike Krauss, a director of the Public Banking Institute.

Krauss' solution was to do as Iceland did: Just walk away. He proposed "a strategic default until the bank negotiates at better terms." Osterweil called it "radical," since the city would lose its favorable credit rating. But Krauss had a solution to that problem: the city could form its own bank, and use it to generate credit from public revenues just as Wall Street banks do now.

"The crux of Krauss' argument, and most radical of all, is for the creation of a public bank," wrote Osterweil, which "will keep the taxes and other financial assets of the people ... circulating in the city, by leveraging them to provide the sustainable and affordable credit required in a modern economy to power locally directed economic development and jobs creation." It is a radical solution whose time has come.

Public banking may be a radical solution, but it is also an obvious one. This is not rocket science. By developing a public banking system, governments can keep the interest and reinvest it locally. According to Kennedy and Creutz, that means public savings of 35 percent to 40 percent. Costs can be reduced across the board; taxes can be cut or services can be increased; and market stability can be created for governments, borrowers and consumers. Banking and credit can become public utilities, feeding the economy rather than feeding off it.

ELLEN IS AN ATTORNEY AND THE AUTHOR OF ELEVEN BOOKS, INCLUDING WEB OF DEBT: THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT OUR MONEY SYSTEM AND HOW WE CAN BREAK FREE. HER WEBSITES ARE WEBOFDEBT.COM <[HTTP://WEBOFDEBT.COM/](http://webofdebt.com/)> AND ELLENBROWN.COM <[HTTP://ELLENBROWN.COM/](http://ellenbrown.com/)>. SHE IS ALSO CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC BANKING INSTITUTE.

Source: Truthout | News Analysis 11/8/12 <http://truth-out.org>



Beyond recycling: on the road to zero waste



Zero waste is both a goal and a plan of action. The goal is to protect and recover scarce natural resources by ending waste disposal in incinerators, dumps, and landfills. The plan encompasses waste reduction, composting, recycling and reuse, changes in consumption habits, and industrial redesign. The premise is that if a product cannot be reused, composted, or recycled, it should not be produced in the first place.

Just as importantly, zero waste is a revolution in the relationship between waste and people. It is a new way of thinking about safeguarding the health and improving the lives of everyone who produces, handles, works with, or is affected by waste, in other words, all of us.

Zero waste strategies help societies to produce and consume goods while respecting ecological limits and the rights of communities. The strategies ensure that all discarded materials are safely and sustainably returned to nature or to manufacturing in place of raw materials. In a zero waste approach, waste management is not left only to politicians and technical experts; rather, everyone impacted, from residents of wealthy neighborhoods to the public, private, and informal sector workers who handle waste, has a voice.

Practicing zero waste means moving toward a world in which all materials are used to their utmost potential, in a system that simultaneously prioritizes the needs of workers, communities, and the environment. It is much like establishing zero defect goals for manufacturing, or zero injury goals in the workplace.

Zero waste is ambitious, but it is not impossible. Nor is it part of some far-off future. Today, in small towns and big cities, in areas rich and poor, in the global North and South, innovative communities are making real progress toward the goal of zero waste. Every community is different, so no two zero waste programs are identical, but the various approaches are together creating something bigger than the sum of their parts: protection of the earth and the natural riches which lie under, on, and over it. Here are a few examples of what is working:

- Through incentives and extensive public outreach, San Francisco has reduced its waste to landfill by 77 percent, the highest diversion rate in the United States, and is on track to reach 90 percent by 2020;

- A door-to-door collection service operated by a cooperative of almost 2,000 grassroots recyclers in Pune, India, now part of the city's waste management system, diverts enough waste to avoid 640,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually;

- Aggressive standards and incentives for both individuals and businesses in the Flanders region of Belgium have achieved 73 percent diversion of residential waste, the highest regional rate in Europe;

- In Taiwan, community opposition to incineration pushed the government to adopt goals and programs for waste prevention and recycling. The programs were so successful that the quantity of waste decreased significantly, even as the population increased and the economy grew;

- An anti-incinerator movement in the Spanish province of Gipuzkoa led to the adoption of door-to-door waste collection services in several small cities, which have since reduced the amount of waste going to landfills by 80 percent;

- In the Philippines, a participatory, bottom-up approach has proven that communities have the ability to solve their own waste management problems;

- A focus on organics in Mumbai, India and La Pintana, Chile has produced real value from the cities' largest and most problematic portion of municipal waste;

- In Buenos Aires, Argentina, grassroots recyclers focused on cooperatives and took collective political action. As a result, the city began separating waste at the source, an essential step toward its goal of 75 percent diversion by 2017.

FOUR CORE STRATEGIES

While few locations are bringing together all the elements of a comprehensive zero waste plan, many have in common a philosophy driven by four core strategies:

1. Moving away from waste disposal: Zero waste moves societies away from waste disposal by setting goals and target dates to reduce waste going to landfills, abolishing waste incineration, establishing or raising landfill fees, shifting subsidies away from waste disposal, banning disposable products, and other actions. Government policies which promote these interventions are strongest when they incentivize community participation and incorporate the interests of waste workers.

2. Supporting comprehensive reuse, recycling, and organics treatment programs: Zero waste is about creating a closed cycle for all the materials we use, paper, glass, metals, plastic, and food among them.

Such a system operates through separating waste at its source in order to reuse, repair, and recycle inorganic materials, and compost or digest organic materials. Separate organics collection ensures a stream of clean, high-quality material which in turn enables the creation of useful products (compost and biogas) from the largest portion of municipal waste.

3. Engaging communities: Zero waste relies on democracy and strong community action in shaping waste management. A lengthy initial consultation process can pay off with better design and higher participation rates. Residents must actively participate in the programs by consuming sustainably, minimizing waste, separating discards, and composting at home.

A successful zero waste program must also be an inclusive one. Inclusive zero waste systems make sure that resource recovery programs include and respect all those involved in resource conservation, especially informal recyclers whose livelihoods depend on discarded materials. The workers who handle waste should be fully integrated into the design, implementation, and monitoring processes, as they ultimately make the system function. In some communities, where waste workers come from historically excluded populations, this may require ending long-standing discriminatory practices.


4. Designing for the future: Zero waste emphasizes efficient use of resources; safe manufacturing and recycling processes to protect workers; product durability; and design for disassembly, repair, and recycling. Once communities begin to put zero waste practices in place, the residual fraction, that which is left over because it is either too toxic to be safely recycled or is made out of non-recyclable materials, becomes evident, and industrial design mistakes and inefficiencies can be studied and corrected.

Reducing or substituting toxic materials, reducing packaging, and environmentally preferable purchasing are some important strategies.

Each of the communities discussed in these case studies is enjoying significant environmental, climatic, social, economic, and sanitation benefits as a result of its moves to zero waste. Together, the successes offer models we can all build from, regardless of context. Let us all learn what is environmentally possible, and begin turning the possibilities into reality.


Source: *Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives 10/28/12*
<http://www.otherworldsarepossible.org>

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Lies, dirty tricks and \$45 million kill GMO labeling in California

This campaign
was still an
important step
forward in the
larger political
fight against
Big Food...

MICHELE SIMON

California's Proposition 37, which would have required labeling of GMO foods, died a painful death Tuesday night. Despite polling in mid-September showing an overwhelming lead, the measure lost by 53 to 47 percent, which is relatively close considering the "No" side's tactics. The opposition has waged a deceptive and ugly campaign, fueled by more than \$45 million, mostly from the leading biotech, pesticide, and junk



food companies. Meanwhile, the "Yes" side raised almost \$9 million, which is not bad, but being outspent by a factor of five is tough to overcome.

Indeed, the California experience may seem like déjà vu all over again to

Oregonians who recall the ballot initiative there to label GMO foods in 2002. It lost miserably (70 percent voted no) and guess what the winning argument was then? And that measure also enjoyed an overwhelming lead in early polling, but a multi-million dollar ad blitz in the final weeks claiming higher food costs turned that right around.

While a lot has changed in 10 years for the food movement, the same industry tactics still work. (At least we came a lot closer here in California.) Advocates have also tried in 19 states to go through the legislature and failed there too, thanks to industry lobbying.

It's a shame because we really need a win at the state level to boost the federal Just Label It campaign, which aims to get the FDA to require labeling. This campaign was still an important step forward in the

larger political fight against Big Food, one that raised a lot of awareness about GMOs, food production, and corporate tactics, both in California and nationally. As Twilight Greenaway noted at Grist, win or lose, the effort to pass Proposition 37 in California demonstrates a "bona fide movement gathering steam."

Now we have to keep gathering more and smarter steam. It was never enough to just be right, or even to have the people on our side. Not when the food industry gets to lie, cheat, and steal its way to victory.

MICHELE SIMON IS A PUBLIC HEALTH LAWYER SPECIALIZING IN INDUSTRY MARKETING AND LOBBYING TACTICS. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF APPETITE FOR PROFIT: HOW THE FOOD INDUSTRY UNDERMINES OUR HEALTH AND HOW TO FIGHT BACK.

Source: Huffington Post 11/8/12
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/>

Prop 37

The many wins behind the loss



Prop 37 was narrowly defeated - 53% - 47% - on Nov. 6. But that's a mere footnote to the real story. The real story is this. The campaign to label genetically modified ingredients in California shone a blinding spotlight on GMOs, and on their potential threat to human health and the environment. It changed the national conversation around food safety and security, and brought transparency in labeling to the forefront of that conversation.

Prop 37 exposed the dark side of Big Ag and Big Food, and their desperation

to keep consumers from having what citizens in 60 other countries have had for decades: the right to know what's in their food.

Prop 37 underscored how money pollutes our democratic process.

Perhaps most important of all, Prop 37 amplified the conversation about the need - and opportunity - for real alternatives to a corporate-controlled-food system polluted by GMOs and pesticides, and corrupted by greed and ill-begotten profits.

THANK YOU PROP 37 VOL- UNTEERS

One of the great success

stories to come out of the Prop 37 campaign was the energy, passion, and dedication of more than 10,000 volunteers who worked tirelessly, some for months, to educate the public about genetically modified organisms and counter the daily barrage of lies about Prop 37.

Thank you to the thousands of you who signed up to distribute flyers in California and beyond, and to make thousands of phone calls to California voters to urge them to vote Yes on 37.

You're now part of a movement that will only grow stronger, as we - with your help - continue to keep the

GMO issue in the public eye, and regroup to take the issue on in other states, starting with Washington State and Vermont, and eventually all the way to Capitol Hill.

Thank you for rolling up your sleeves and digging in. We may have narrowly lost this one battle, but you, our warriors, are energized and ready to take on Monsanto and Big Food again. It's only a matter of time before we, the millions of Davids, slay Goliath. Thank you!

Source: Organic Bytes 11/9/12, a publication of Organic Consumers Association, 6771 South Silver Hill Drive - Finland, MN 55603



Climate change's 'terrifying math' coming to a city near you



For the climate activists at 350.org, it didn't necessarily matter who won the election on Tuesday. Their post-election plan, long in the works, was to take direct aim at the fossil fuel industry. The group says quite frankly that to build the movement they believe is necessary, a very different kind of campaign is needed; one that takes its cues from science and, in a very specific sense, mathematics.

"We're up against the most powerful industry in the history of the world," said co-founder Bill McKibben from Seattle ahead of the kick-off show, "But we're playing to win."

The fact of the math, according to the group and best expressed in McKibben's recent Rolling Stone article called 'Global Warming's Terrifying New Math,' is that there's more fossil fuels (nearly 2,230 gigatons more) that corporations want consumers to buy and burn than climate scientists says is safe to do if people want to live on a planet whose climate resembles the one we live on now.

Even the most conservative governments in the world have agreed that global warming should be limited to no more than 2°C. Scientists say to meet that target we can only emit an additional 565 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. But the fossil fuel industry has 2795 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide in their reserves, nearly five times too much, and everyday they spend millions of dollars looking for more.

"What this math shows is that the fossil fuel industry is a rogue industry," said McKibben. "You can have a healthy

fossil-fuel balance sheet, or a relatively healthy planet – but now that we know the numbers, it looks like you can't have both."

Because neither presidential candidate nor the major political parties have shown the sufficient sense of urgency demanded by the dangers of climate change, the environmental group decided to take its message directly to cities across the country in a 22 city US tour called 'Do The Math', which kicked off officially in Seattle on Wednesday night.

Part TED-talk, part old-time revival meeting, the tour has already sold out its first four west coast stops and many on the east coast as well. With a focus on student involvement as part of a newly launched divestment campaign, the tour will also be making stops in big college towns like Madison, Wisconsin; Durham, North Carolina; and Boulder, Colorado.

In a video he recorded for the Do The Math tour, South Africa's Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the anti-apartheid movement, explained the rationale for turning to divestment as a key strategy to fight climate change.

"The divestment movement played a key role in helping liberate South Africa. The corporations understood the logics of money even when they weren't swayed by the dictates of morality," says Tutu. "Climate change is a deeply moral issue too, of course. Here in Africa we see the dreadful suffering of people from worsening drought, from rising food prices, from floods, even though they've done nothing to cause the situation. Once again, we can join together as a world and put pressure where it counts."

Calling it "a rogue industry," McKibben says the world's biggest oil, coal, and gas companies poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the recent election and says the only way to counter-act their influence (and affluence) is for those who care about the current and future health of the planet "to get more creative, braver, and bolder than ever before."

Beginning the day after the election is intentional explained McKibben, "Congress has essentially turned into a customer service arm for the fossil fuel industry, putting environmentalists on hold for 20 years with the beltway equivalent of cheesy Muzak. It's time to talk directly to

management."

Author and activist Naomi Klein, a board director of 350.org who will also appear in person or via video at each tour stop, writing in the direct aftermath of the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy, said that stepping up direct pressure on the corporations that are making climate change worse is an absolute necessity. "These companies have shown that they are willing to burn five times as much carbon as the most conservative estimates say is compatible with a livable planet. We've done the math, and we simply can't let them."

"We find ourselves in a race against time," Klein continued. "Either this crisis will become an opportunity for an evolutionary leap, a holistic readjustment of our relationship with the natural world, or it will become an opportunity for the biggest disaster free-for-all in human history, leaving the world even more brutally cleaved between winners and losers."

Founded in 2008, 350.org has organized international days of action urging world leaders to take serious the threat of global warming. And in 2011, 350.org helped lead a successful campaign to push President Obama to deny the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline, getting 1,253 people arrested at the White House in August and then circling the property with 15,000 people in November.

"Over the last three years, we've learned a lot about how to use the internet to coordinate a distributed grassroots network," said 350.org co-founder and executive director, May Boeve. "This year, we'll be going at the fossil fuel industry from all angles: campus divestment, mass mobilization, and online campaigns."

Speaking to the Seattle Times, McKibben described how the collapse two years ago of climate-change legislation revealed the deep and sinister influence of the fossil-fuel lobby over elected officials in Washington.

"It turns out Obama couldn't do it on his own," McKibben said. "The forces of the status quo were too strong. It demonstrates the tremendous power of these guys. It was going on behind the scenes. That's part of the reason we're doing this, to try to open up some space."

Source: Common Dreams 11/8/12 <http://www.commondreams.org>

Speak up for the San Joaquin River



The San Joaquin River is California's second largest river, running 350 miles from its headwaters in the southern Sierra Nevada to its meeting with the Sacramento River in the San Francisco Bay-Delta. It is a river with a glorious past and a great future. It is an incredible California resource that deserves our support. California's agricultural economy

has largely been built on the strength of the San Joaquin River. But the river also provides the foundation for the communities of the southern Central Valley, and vital habitat for wildlife. In many ways, the fates of California and the river are tied. This is why we support the San Joaquin River Restoration Project, because it will provide water for farms and a healthy river for our communities to enjoy, and for wildlife to thrive. Legislation authorizing Federal agencies to fund and implement the Project was passed by Congress in 2009, but our leaders need to hear your voice to move this important work forward.

Action: Let your representatives (Sen. Barbara Boxer, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Rep. Dan E. Lungren) know that you're for the River - and that you support the San Joaquin River Restoration Project.

THE MOST IMPORTANT LETTER - YOURS I'M FOR THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER

Dear representative,

As a California resident, I am writing to express my support for the San Joaquin River Restoration Project. Legislation authorizing Federal agencies to fund and implement the Project was passed by Congress in 2009, but will continue to need your support to fully

realize the project's vision of a great future for this river.

I'm for the river, and that is why I support the restoration project. California's agricultural economy has largely been built on the strength of the San Joaquin River. But the river also provides the foundation for the communities of the southern Central Valley, and vital habitat for wildlife. In many ways, the fates of California and the river are tied.

A healthy San Joaquin gives California so much. It provides water for agriculture, and supports thousands of jobs. It provides us with boundless opportunities for recreation such as swimming, fishing, boating, hiking, birdwatching, and kayaking. And it creates important habitat for wildlife birds, fish and mammals. The River feeds the groundwater that supplies our cities' drinking water, and offers flood protection.

The San Joaquin River Restoration Project is a balanced approach to preserving an important California resource. I support the San Joaquin River Restoration Project, and I ask that you do the same.

Sincerely,

Your name

Source: National Audubon Society release <http://ca.audubon.org/>



Top ten wish list progressives should press on President Obama



Progressives will have to push Obama to the left if we are to get what we want.

JUAN COLE

President Obama's reelection should mean more to progressives than simply dodging the bullet of a Romney presidency indebted to the Tea Party. Democratic politics has to be more than relief, while playing Russian Roulette, that this time we got the empty chamber. Progressives are a significant wing of the Democratic Party, and if we continue to be ignored, the party will ultimately falter.

Clearly, Obama does not have progressive instincts, and prefers to rule from the center. This impulse is wrong-headed, since the center didn't man his campaign offices or make phone calls for him. Ruling from the center means taking his base for granted while reaching out to relatively conservative constituencies. This tactic is why we don't have a single-payer health insurance plan. It is why Wall Street reform has consisted of half-measures. It is why we are imposing a financial blockade on Iran that could easily spiral into a war. When it comes to the arch-conservatives, for the

most part, Obama has never learned to just say 'no.'

It does not help that Obama will face virtually the same, obstructionist Tea Party House of Representatives that stymied him for the past two years. Instead of going to them and asking how he could make them happy, he has to threaten to make an all-out push to turn them out of office in 2014 if they continue to say 'no' to everything.

Progressives will have to push Obama to the left if we are to get what we want. This situation is nothing new—FDR's New Deal would not have amounted to much if workers hadn't engaged in widespread wildcat strikes and if people had not resorted to civil disobedience. As for positive accomplishments, here are a few we should pressure him and Congress on:

WIND ENERGY

We need the tax break for wind energy to be continued. Uncertainty here is deadly to the industry. And it is facing competition from cheap fracked natural gas (which is itself an environmental disaster every which way from Sunday). Wind energy

could easily provide a quarter of all the electricity the US produces annually, and it is a way of slowing the rapidly rising average temperature of earth's surface. Obama should deploy Republicans from high-wind states such as Iowa and Colorado to help make his case. It is to Obama's credit that green energy doubled in the US from 3% to 6% during his first term. But 6% is almost nothing, with Portugal, Germany, Scotland and others being far more ambitious. Scotland wants to be 100% green by 2020. Obama should emulate John F. Kennedy, Jr., and give a major address committing the nation to try to go green in 8 years, just as Kennedy pledged to put us on the moon.

CAMPAIGN MONEY

The Citizens United and other such rulings of the Supreme Court that allow dark money to dominate our elections needs to be undone by legislation. Corporations are not people, and Superpacs shouldn't be buying our elections. Obama should start the work on a constitutional amendment that would permit actual campaign finance reform so that our elections look more like those of Western Europe and less like those of Pakistan.

BANK REGS

Banking regulation still needs to be strengthened. There is nothing really in place that would prevent a repeat of the 2008 meltdown. Moreover, relief for homeowners under threat of losing their mortgages unfairly or arbitrarily needs to be pushed for again.

UNIONS

Obama needs to show leadership in pushing back against Koch Brother attempts to destroy public sector unions. Moreover, he needs to create a legal framework for the protection of the right to unionize in the private sector, a right that has been gutted by corporations such as Walmart. It was the unions that gave Mr. Obama Ohio, and if they are undermined during the next four years, they won't

be there to deliver the state again.

VOTING RIGHTS

He needs to have the Department of Justice look into the Koch Brother-backed legislation in two dozen states restricting the franchise by requiring a paid-for state i.d., which is a kind of poll tax. In many states, this legislation violates the 1965 Voting Rights act. We can't let a couple of sour billionaires undo the achievements of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., achievements for which he gave his life.

POT USE

That use of the Department of Justice would perhaps make its workers and its head, Eric Holder, too busy to go around kicking down the doors of medical marijuana clinics and confiscating their computers, records and cash, in states where the state has legalized marijuana. Obama was elected the first time by the youth, and had promised to cease Federal harassment of pot clinics, but reneged and proved much worse than Bush on this issue. Holder should stop denying the clear medical uses and benefits of pot. In Colorado and Washington states, the same people who voted for him have legalized recreational marijuana. Moreover, the RAND Corp. concludes that legalization would defund the Mexican cartels. If the Democratic Party continues on this Draconian path, it should not be surprised when it begins losing elections because a substantial younger constituency deserts it for the Green Party.

PATRIOT ACT

Obama put off further consideration of the PATRIOT Act until 2014. Several of its remaining provisions have been tagged by Senators Wyden and Udall as unconstitutional and pernicious because of the way law enforcement is interpreting them "secretly." These unconstitutional provisions must be repealed altogether. Moreover, Obama needs to come clean about the extent of Federal violations of fourth amendment rights,

Amnesty International

No more broken promises

This is the moment that will define the future of the United States' commitment on human rights. President Obama's second term will determine whether the post 9/11 stains on the United States' human rights record are an anomaly or the "new normal." President Obama promised to support and advance human rights. When he was first elected in 2008, President Obama promised a new dawn of American leadership. As a new president, he acknowledged that the protection of human rights cannot rest on exhortation alone. He offered the promise of an administration that would respect human rights – closing the Guantánamo prison, bringing detention practices in line with international law, repudiating secrecy and ensuring that human rights weren't traded away in the name of national security.

It really isn't a choice for the President to make. Under international law, the U.S. government is obligated to respect, protect and fulfill human rights, and ensure accountability for violations of those rights. The prison at Guantánamo, indefinite detention, unfair trials, unlawful killings with drones and other human rights violations committed by the U.S. government undermine the rule of law in the U.S. and around the world. These abuses also create a climate in which other countries can point to a double-standard to justify their own human rights abuses with the refrain, "if the U.S. government does that, why shouldn't we?"

By taking bold steps to restore respect for human rights President Obama can help ensure justice, security and accountability here in the U.S. and around the world.

Action: Ask President Obama to: Close the prison at Guantánamo; stop unlawful killing with drones and ensure the UN adopts a strong Arms Trade Treaty.

Source: Human Rights Action - Amnesty International USA 11/9/12
Amnesty International USA | 5 Penn Plaza, NY, NY 10001

warrantless surveillance of citizens, and the data mining of our emails and possibly their storage by the National Security Agency. As a victim of illegal White House/CIA surveillance myself, I am furious that Obama has continued Bush-era abuses, and moreover that the Democratic Party has not so much as bothered to launch an investigation of my case.

TAXES

The Bush tax cuts for the wealthy have to be allowed to lapse.

TARGETED ASSASSINATION

Obama must give up the fiction that a Department of Justice review of assassination targets is the same thing as a

court trial that ends in an execution. The separation of powers is there in the constitution because King George III used to use the executive to declare people "outlaws" and have them killed on a whim, too. Maybe Obama and the national security state think they have invented something new. They haven't. Targeted assassination by executive fiat has been around for a long time, and the Founding Fathers wanted it prohibited.

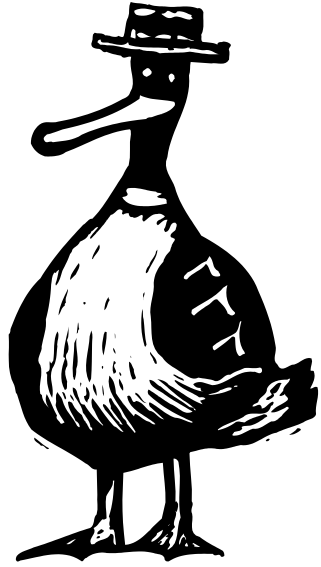
SINGLE PAYER

Obamacare has to be tweaked in the direction of a single payer system.

Source: Informed Comment 11/7/12
<http://www.juancole.com>



Lame duck Congress: risks & opportunities



RICK CLAYPOOL

Taken literally, the term “lame duck” refers to an injured duck that is unable to keep up with its flock. On Tuesday, November 13, the month-long “lame duck” session of the 112th Congress will begin – and we’ll get a hint of whether the next session will be as plagued as the current session with

partisan obstructionism. If you have members of Congress who were voted out on Election Day or are retiring, the next few weeks is their last chance to make their mark. These lawmakers are the lame ducks. In Congress, lame ducks will indeed be left to fend for themselves as their “flock” of reelected peers prepares to join the newly

elected (or “freshman”) members in January, when the 113th Congress is sworn in. Lame duck lawmakers are notoriously unpredictable. They no longer need to worry about raising money for reelection, so they are more free to stand up to corporate lobbyists and other moneyed interests. However, because they’re not seeking reelection, they’re also less accountable to their constituents. Worse, they’re vulnerable to offers of cushy jobs at lobbying firms, where former lawmakers all-too-often receive six-figure salaries in exchange for doing Corporate America’s bidding and perpetuate Washington’s “revolving door” problem. The upcoming lame duck session (scheduled to last from November 13 until December 14) is fraught with opportunities and threats:

In these few short weeks, here’s some of the progress Public Citizen will be fighting for:

- Final passage of the Whistleblower Protection

Enhancement Act (H.R. 3289, S. 743), which we expect Congress to quickly send to President Obama’s desk for signing.

- Against a backdrop of many politicians who favor resolving the federal budget dispute by imposing crippling austerity measures, we’ll be fighting for a tiny (0.03 percent) tax on Wall Street’s risky, high-speed speculation. The Wall Street Trading and Speculators Tax Act (H.R. 3313, S. 1787), which has growing support in both the House and Senate, would help stabilize the financial system and raise more than \$350 billion over 10 years. We’ll also be calling for an end to taxpayer subsidies for fossil fuel corporations.

- And Public Citizen will lay the groundwork for a big push in the next Congress for reforms to fight the corporate money inundating our election.. Top priorities include restoring accountability and transparency with the DISCLOSE Act and

Shareholder Protection Act, an executive order requiring government contractors to disclose their political spending, and continuing to grow support for a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*.

There are also a number of threats we’ll be fending off:

- Any attempt to cut or weaken Medicare. This popular, successful program provides universal healthcare for seniors. If anything, the qualifying age for Medicare should be lowered so that everyone can benefit from this single-payer system, not raised.

- The Independent Regulatory Agency Analysis Act (S. 3468), which would give Wall Street-friendly members of any White House administration the power to impede independent regulators like the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures

Trading Commission.

- Bills that would deregulate parts of the derivatives market. H.R. 1838 would explicitly allow bailouts for bad swap deals, while H.R. 3283 would remove U.S. regulations for U.S. swaps conducted abroad.

- An attempt to give banks legal immunity, even when they push predatory loans they know that consumers won’t be able to pay back.

- An attempt to undermine patients’ rights by letting the medical industry go virtually unpunished when patients are harmed or killed by the industry’s negligence or recklessness.

Make sure you hear about all the critical issues that are moving in Congress. Sign up to receive emails from Public Citizen today.

Source: *CitizenVox 11/9/12*
<http://www.citizenvox.org>

Climate change, not the national debt, is the legacy we should care about

DEAN BAKER

The political leadership, including the Washington press corps and punditry, were already intently ignoring the economic downturn that is still wreaking havoc on the lives of tens of millions of people across the country. Now, in the wake of the destruction from Hurricane Sandy, they will intensify their efforts to ignore global warming. After all, they want the country to focus on the debt – an issue that no one other than the elites views as a problem. Erskine Bowles, with former Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson, co-chaired the White House’s bipartisan deficit commission in 2010. The two since helped found the Campaign to Fix the Debt.

The reality, of course, is straightforward. The large deficits of recent years are due to the economic downturn caused by the collapse of the housing bubble. If the economy were back near its pre-recession

level of unemployment, then the deficits would be close to 1% of GDP, a level that could be sustained indefinitely.

But the deficit scare-mongers are not interested in numbers and economics; they want to gut key government programs – most importantly, social security and Medicare. That is why they are pushing the fear stories about the debt and deficit. This is the rationale for the Campaign to “Fix” the Debt, a collection of 80 CEOs ostensibly focused on getting the budget in order.

What is perhaps most infuriating about this crew is the claim that their efforts are somehow designed to benefit our children and grandchildren. This is bizarre for a number of reasons. First, while they do want to cut social security and Medicare for current retirees and those expecting to benefit from these programs in the near future, the biggest cuts in their plans will hit today’s young.

In effect, they are

promising to “save” these programs for young workers by destroying them. Under most of the proposals designed to “fix” these programs, social security will provide a sharply-reduced benefit for retirees in 40 to 50 years’ time, compared to the currently scheduled level. And Medicare will by no means ensure most seniors’ access to decent healthcare.

However, what’s even more bizarre regarding their generational equity logic is the idea that, somehow, the well-being of future generations can be measured in any way by the size of the government debt. This point should have been pounded home to even the thickest deficit hawk by Hurricane Sandy. What we do or don’t do in the next decade will have a huge impact on the climate conditions that our children and grandchildren experience. Imagine that we listen to our Campaign to Fix the Debt friends and find a way to pay down the debt while neglecting any steps to

curb global warming.

We’ll be able to tell our children and grandchildren that they don’t have to pay interest on government bonds (they also won’t be receiving interest on government bonds, but let’s not complicate matters with logic), even as they evacuate their homes ahead of flood waters. Undoubtedly, they will be very thankful for this great benefit that we will have bestowed on them, courtesy of the public-minded CEOs of the Campaign to Fix the Debt.

In reality, the campaigners are spewing utter nonsense when they imply that the well-being of future generations will be in any way determined by the size of the government debt that we pass on to them. We hand down to future generations a whole society and a planet that will be damaged to varying degrees, depending on our current actions. Neglecting the steps necessary to fix the planet out of a desire to reduce

the deficit is incredibly irresponsible if we care about future generations.

Of course, global warming is far from the only non-budgetary cost that we are imposing on future generations. When we fill our jails with young people, many of whom will spend much of their lives in the criminal justice system, we are imposing large costs on future generations. We just are not honest enough to enter them in the budget books. The same is true when we make enemies internationally with aggressive military actions that could lead to enduring hostility.

There are also even simpler cases of dishonest accounting: if the government imposed a \$250bn annual tax on prescription drugs (roughly \$3tn over the ten-year budgetary horizon), everyone would understand this as a large burden on consumers. However, when the government grants patent monopolies on prescription drugs that allow

drug companies to charge \$250bn more than the free-market price, no one enters this additional cost on the ledgers.

The Campaign to Fix the Debt types like to pretend such costs don’t exist. They just want us to shut up and gut social security and Medicare. But the public is not likely to be as stupid as they want us to be.

DEAN BAKER IS THE CO-DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND POLICY RESEARCH <HTTP://WWW.CEPR.NET/> (CEPR). HE IS THE AUTHOR OF THE CONSERVATIVE NANNY STATE: HOW THE WEALTHY USE THE GOVERNMENT TO STAY RICH AND GET RICHER AND THE MORE RECENTLY PUBLISHED PLUNDER AND BLUNDER: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE BUBBLE ECONOMY.

Source: *The Guardian 11/8/12*
<http://www.guardian.co.uk>



The T is not silent

You lied to me



ELENA KELLY

I joined OK Cupid in 2010. For those who don't know, OK Cupid is a free dating website that allows people to have email conversations with the hope of finding a good match and getting into a romantic relationship. I had tried a couple of other dating websites, even paid for a monthly subscription for one, but they didn't have much to offer. OK Cupid actually had a lot of LGBT people, my kind of people!

When I set up my account, among hundreds of other questions, I was asked to choose my gender. There were two choices; male or female. It did not ask what chromosomes I have. Nor did it ask what genitals I was born with. It asked for my gender. Since my gender has always been female, I selected that option. To me, it was a "no-brainer."

The website automatically emails you with suggested "matches" weekly. Most of the ones suggested for me were in the bay area or Sacramento. Having been in a long-distance relationship before, I knew the chances of that working out were slim to none. So I waited until I found matches closer to Stockton. After a while it became obvious that there weren't many people in the Stockton area that were signing up on OK Cupid, so I expanded my search area to the Pleasanton-Concord corridor. Within a week, Ana (not her real name) contacted me.

Ana identified as a lesbian activist. She helped found a PFLAG chapter in her city and works as a volunteer for Marriage Equality USA, among other organizations. We shared information about ourselves via email for weeks, and the relationship seemed to be coming along quite nicely. She

seemed to be what I was looking for in a romantic partner. We exchanged phone numbers and began to text each other daily. We met for lunch at a cafe that was close by to both of us.

At one point during lunch, Ana leaned forward and almost in a whisper, she said, "Can I ask you a personal question?" I already had a hunch about what she was going to ask, and I knew this would be that "make or break" point in our relationship. "Are you transgendered?" Never mind that there is no such thing as "transgendered," any more than there is such a thing as "gayed" or "lesbianed," but I was being asked if I was a "real" woman. She quickly added, "Not that it really matters. I'm fine with it if you are," and even though I felt a small amount of relief at her added comment, I wished in that moment that I could just be accepted for the person who sat before her, the person she liked and trusted enough to meet in person. I told her that yes; I had transitioned a couple of years before. She had a few more questions about my transition which I answered. Then we resumed our previous conversation and finished our lunch.

I didn't hear from her for two days after that lunch date. I imagined that she was processing the information I shared with her over lunch. But since we had been texting each other multiple times each day prior to our lunch date, on the second day I decided to text her. I wrote "I miss hearing from you. Is everything OK?" She wrote back these exact words. "You lied to me. You said you were a woman." That was the last communication we ever had.

John Irving, in his novel *The World According to Garp* wrote, "All men are liars, said Roberta Muldoon, who knew this was true because she had once been a man." Those words, and Ana's text, cut me to the bone. I was devastated at Ana's comment because I didn't think of myself as anything other than a woman. I had a lifetime of knowing I was female, and the time finally came when I could make a small modification to my body that completed what I had always known. Now, once again, my self-image was marred and I had to consider that I was something less than a woman, something that

doesn't have a name. I began to think of myself as "not a man" instead of a woman. I had no vocabulary to describe an adult person who is not a man, and not quite a woman. And still, I felt like I was a woman.

I knew what John Irving was writing about because for most of my life I lived a lie. I worked very hard all those years to make sure that everyone in my life believed I was a man. I imitated what men do, how they speak, walk, drink, and how many of them exaggerate their own abilities. Manliness is a full time job when you aren't really one of them! But when I finally refused to stay in the closet any longer, I learned what it means to live free. The prison bars of my self-confinement dropped away and I experienced for the first time what it feels like to live authentically. It was a freedom that brought tremendous joy that I had never known before.

Since founding the Stockton Transgender Alliance I have had the opportunity to see that same joy on the faces of so many transgender people who have shed their fears and surrendered to the truth of who they are. I have had the honor of showing many in Stockton how to have that joy for themselves. But I have also found that just because we are authentic doesn't mean we are accepted, even within the LGBT community. The decision to transition often results in loved ones turning their backs. Marriages fail. Jobs end. Friends go away. Finding a loving relationship is often incredibly difficult, if not impossible.

The words that Ana texted to me two years ago are often the last words a transgender woman hears before her attacker takes her life. "You lied to me. You told me you were a woman."

No, actually we are telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is society that lies to us.

REV. SR. ELENA KELLY, OSH IS A WOMAN AND A MINISTER TO THE PEOPLE OF STOCKTON AND THE CENTRAL VALLEY, AND SHE IS THE TREASURER AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR AT SAN JOAQUIN PRIDE CENTER. SHE CAN BE CONTACTED AT ELENA.J.KELLY@GMAIL.NET.

'Grand Bargain' Charade to Protect Corporate Welfare



RALPH NADER

Congress is still talking about a "Grand Bargain" that "balances" far more spending cuts than tax increases. That is another way of saying that you – the consumer of Medicare and Medicaid services, the recipient of Social Security, and the average taxpayer will take the brunt of the spending cuts, while the wealthy get their income taxes restored, not raised, to their pre-Bush modest levels. Don't buy it!

There are two ways to cut Medicare and Medicaid. The right wingers want to cut benefits. Consumers want to cut vendor fraud, the overcharging and the immense over-diagnosis, over-treatment and erroneous or unnecessary procedures and prescriptions documented so often by, among others, the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the Harvard School of Public Health.

Don't think this is small stuff. The waste and fraud amount to hundreds of billions of dollars a year! Americans

pay the highest prices for drugs in the world even though most of them were developed in the U.S. significantly based on government research, development and with tax credit subsidies for Big Pharma. Even Mr. Obama's 2013 budget recognizes savings from excessive drug industry pricing.

The nation's leading expert, Harvard's Malcolm Sparrow, has estimated that computerized billing fraud and abuse is anywhere from 10 to 25 percent of the nation's health bill. This adds up to \$270 billion to \$650 billion a year. A big slice of that fraud is taken out of Medicare and Medicaid.

A single-payer, full Medicare for all system – formerly supported by President Obama, Hillary Clinton and many members of Congress, before Mr. Obama took it off the table in 2009 – would cut present administrative costs in half. Canada's system, which allows patients to freely choose their doctor and hospital, covers everyone for half of the \$9,000 per capita that Americans will pay this year. Our system leaves 50 million people uncovered of whom 45,000 will die this year alone due to lack of coverage, according to a peer-reviewed study by Harvard Medical School researchers.

Longer range savings come from reducing medical malpractice, hospital-induced infections and plain errors that annually cost 200,000 lives, and more injuries and sicknesses. Some hospitals are proving these savings can come quickly with common sense solutions: better sanitation, checklists and stronger internal peer reviews.

The trilogy of health care fraud, waste and abuse requires public discussion, along with the vastly greater returns from better funded policing of the healthcare system. Yet pundits and columnists ignore reaping savings from the bloated healthcare industry and assume the cuts must overwhelmingly

come out of people's hides – namely benefits.

As economist Dean Baker has written, we don't need to cut Social Security benefits (already solid for the next 25 years) whether in money or later age eligibility. Congress could also simply raise the social security tax on incomes above \$115,000, increase the minimum wage, inflation adjusted, to that of 1968! And adopt other long-overdue improvements such as disability enforcement efficiencies. The initiatives will move the trust fund to sustainability for the next 75 years.

The deep bias of public dialogue here, whether in such reborn deficit-reduction commissions as Simpson-Bowles or in the general media is revealed in the use of the word "entitlements." It is only used to apply to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, which involve recycling peoples' tax dollars. It is not used to describe the massive corporate entitlements shoveled out daily to business welfarists in the form of subsidies, bailouts, giveaways, tax loopholes, debt revocations, loan guarantees, discounted insurance and other aid to dependent corporations. Why? Power produces privileges.

When 30 large companies, such as Verizon and General Electric, make a total of \$160 billion in U.S. profits from 2008-2010 according to the Citizens for Tax Justice and pay NO federal income taxes there is a substantial loss of revenue to the U.S. Treasury. Two thirds of corporations pay no income tax on their profits under the Swiss cheese tax code.

Moreover, the corporate welfare they receive in various modes, including free research, development, and inflated government contracts (a disguised subsidy) is hardly a recycling of their taxes.

Just taxing corporations at the rate paid in the prosperous



Five misconceptions about our tattered safety net

PAUL BUCHHEIT

Mitt Romney said he wasn't concerned about the very poor, because they have a safety net. This is typical of the widespread ignorance about inequality in our country. Struggling Americans want jobs, not handouts, and for the most part they've paid for their "safety net." The real problem is at the other end of the wealth gap.

How many people know that out of 150 countries, we have the 4th-highest wealth disparity? Only Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Switzerland are worse.

It's not just economic inequality that's plaguing our country. It's lack of opportunity. It's a dismissal of poor people as lazy, or as threats to society. More than any other issue over the next four years, we need to address the growing divide in our nation, to tone down our winner-take-all philosophy, to provide job opportunities for people who want to contribute to society.

Here are some of the common misconceptions:

1. AMERICANS BELIEVE THAT THE POOREST 40 PERCENT OWN ABOUT 10% OF THE WEALTH.

Most people greatly underestimate the level of inequality in our country, guessing that the poorest 40 percent own about 10% of the wealth, when in reality they own much less than 1% of the wealth. Out of every dollar, they own a third of a penny.

Factor in race, and it gets worse. Much of minority wealth exists in home values. But housing crashed, while the financial wealth owned almost entirely (93% of it) by the richest quintile of Americans has rebounded to lofty pre-recession levels.

As a result, for every dollar of NON-HOME wealth owned by white families, people of color have only one cent. Median wealth for a single white woman is over \$40,000. For black and Hispanic women it is a little over \$100.

2. ENTITLEMENTS ARE THE PROBLEM

No, they're not. The evidence is overwhelming. Social Security is a popular and well-run program. As summarized by Bernie Sanders, "Social Security, which is funded by the payroll tax, has not contributed one nickel to the deficit and, according to its trustees, can pay 100 percent of all benefits owed to every eligible American for the next 21 years." Dean Baker calls it "perhaps the greatest success story of any program in US history."

Medicare, which is largely without the profit motive and the competing sources of billing, is efficiently run, for all eligible Americans. According to the Council for Affordable Health Insurance, medical administrative costs as a percentage of claims are about three times higher for private insurance than for Medicare. And it's just as popular as Social Security.

3. Welfare benefits are a drag on the economy

Critics bemoan the amounts of aid being lavished on lower-income Americans, making dubious claims about

thousands of dollars going to every poor family.

But despite an ever-growing need for jobs and basic living necessities, federal spending on poverty programs is a small part of the budget, and it's been that way for almost 50 years, increasing from 0.8 percent of GDP in 1962 to 1.2 percent of GDP in 2007.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) has dropped significantly over the past 15 years, leaving benefit levels far below the poverty line for most families. Ninety percent of the available benefits go to the elderly, the disabled, or working households.

For each family, current federal budgets pay about \$400 per month for food, housing, and traditional 'welfare' programs. Food stamp recipients get \$4.30 a day.

4. THE AMERICAN DREAM IS STILL ALIVE - IF YOU JUST WORK HARD

The Horatio Alger tale has been a popular one for conservatives, but the OECD, the Economic Policy Institute, and the National Journal all came to the same conclusion: the future earnings of a child in the U.S. is closely correlated to the earnings of his or her parents. This lack of mobility is more prevalent in the U.S. than in almost all other OECD countries.

Only 4 percent of those raised in the bottom quintile make it to the top quintile as adults. Only about 20 percent even make it to the top half.

A big part of the problem is the severe degree of poverty for our nation's children. According to UNICEF, among industrialized countries only Romania has a higher child poverty rate than the United States.

Just in the last ten years the number of impoverished American children increased by 30 percent.

Not unexpectedly, it's much worse for minorities. While 12 percent of white children live in poverty, 35 percent of Hispanic children and 39% of black children start their lives in conditions that make simple survival more important than the American Dream. 80 percent of black children who started in or near the top half of U.S. income levels experienced downward mobility later in life.

5. PRISON PUTS AWAY THE BAD GUYS

Despite a falling violent crime rate in the U.S., there are now, as noted by Adam Gopnik, "more people under 'correctional supervision' in America - more than six million - than were in the Gulag Archipelago under Stalin at its height."

Incredibly, almost half of the inmates in federal prisons were jailed for drug offenses. Between 1980 and 2003, the number of drug offenders in prison or jail increased by 1100% from 41,100 in 1980 to 493,800 in 2003.

Outrageously, African Americans constituted 53.5 percent of all persons who entered prison because of a drug conviction. In the nation's largest cities, drug arrests for African Americans rose at three times the rate for whites from 1980 to 2003.

'Grand Bargain' Charade

nineteen sixties would bring in hundreds of billions of dollars yearly. Another great revenue producer is a tiny Wall St. speculation sales tax, a far tinier rate than what you pay in sales taxes.

What about taxing capital gains and dividends the same as ordinary income? That was the case under Ronald Reagan. Then there is the bloated military budget, so full of redundancies, waste, boondoggle weapons programs such as the F-22, endless weapons cost over-runs, contracting fraud and boomeranging Empire expenditures as to boggle the minds. Even retired high military officers condemn giving the Pentagon such blank checks.

Anyone who has been in the armed services has seen the runaway expenditures, especially those that hugely outsourced contracts inflict on American taxpayers.

It is hard to remember when the last thorough Congressional investigation of the Pentagon budget

occurred. Why, Congress can't even get the Department of Defense to provide accountings so as to be auditable by the Congressional Government Accountability Office (GAO). The Defense budget is half of the entire U.S. government's operating expenditures and it is not even auditable!

So enough already of the twisted, evasive talk of the Grand Bargain on your backs. The Grand Bargain should be both Parties paying close attention to corporate welfare, corporate tax escapes, and corporate crime, fraud and abuse before unraveling the most meager social safety net in the western world.

RALPH NADER <[HTTP://WWW.NADER.ORG/](http://WWW.NADER.ORG/)> IS A CONSUMER ADVOCATE, LAWYER, AND AUTHOR. HIS LATEST BOOK IS *THE SEVENTEEN SOLUTIONS: BOLD IDEAS FOR OUR AMERICAN FUTURE*.

Source *Common Dreams* 11/15/12 <http://www.commondreams.org>

In Washington, D.C., it is estimated that three out of four young black men will serve time in prison. In New York, with 50,000 marijuana arrests per year, 90% are black or Latino. In Seattle, the 8% black population accounts for 60 percent of the arrests. Over the last ten years Colorado police have arrested Latinos at 1.5 times the rate of whites, and blacks at over 3 times the rate of whites. Newly passed marijuana laws reflect the beginnings of a backlash.

Perversely, this is all happening as studies by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration find that both black and Hispanic adolescents use drugs LESS than the general population, and as a study by the National Institute of Health shows that the prevalence of marijuana use in colleges and universities was highest for white students.

THE GREATEST MISCONCEPTION: THE RICH ARE BEING "SOAKED"

Redistribution has not spread the wealth, it has concentrated the wealth. Conservative estimates say the richest 1% have doubled their share of America's income in 30 years. It's worse. From 1980 to 2006, the richest 1% actually TRIPLED their share of after-tax income.

The real problem is tax avoidance: lost revenue from tax expenditures (deferrals and deductions), corporate tax avoidance, and tax haven losses could pay off the entire deficit. But the very rich refuse to pay. They have their own safety net in the House of Representatives.

PAUL BUCHHEIT IS THE FOUNDER AND DEVELOPER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATIONAL WEBSITES (USAGAINSTGREED.ORG, PAYUPNOW.ORG, RAPPINGHISTORY.ORG), AND THE EDITOR AND MAIN AUTHOR OF "AMERICAN WARS: ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES" (CLARITY PRESS).

Source: *Truthout* 11/12/12 www.truthout.org



Contact Your Reps

Pres. Barack H. Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington DC 20500. 202—456—1414; www.whitehouse.gov

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

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

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

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

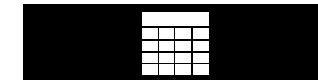
Rep. Dan Lungren (R—District 3), 2262 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515. 202—225—5716. Local office: 2334 Gold Meadow Way, Ste 220, Gold River, CA 95670. 916—859—9906.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, 2201 C St, NW Washington, DC 20520

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

State Sen. Lois Wolk (District 5), 31 E Channel St, Room 440, Stockton, CA 95202. 209—948—7930; State Capitol, Rm 4032, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916—651—4005

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



Dec 6

El Concilio's Annual Tamale Dinner

"Navidad En El Valle" Fundraiser
Traditional Mexican
Christmas Tamale Dinner
Stockton Civic Auditorium
Thursday, Dec. 6, 2012

Lunch Drive-Thru
Only - 11am to 2pm
Dinner Drive-Thru and Dine-
in Festivities - 5pm to 8pm

Please invite your family, friends, co-workers and others to El Concilio's very popular annual "Navidad en El Valle" (Christmas in the

Valley) fundraiser! Enjoy delicious holiday tamale dinners with friends and family!

Pork, Chicken or Cheese
(Cheese & Jalapeños).
ONLINE ORDERING
NOW AVAILABLE!

You can enjoy a delicious meal, which is 2 tamales, beans and rice. The tamales are made fresh and delicious! For more info, visit: El Concilio Tamale Dinner www.elconcilio.org

Dec 17, 6 pm

Sierra Club holiday party

Please join members and guests Monday December 17, 6:00 pm to about 8:30 pm, for our annual event featuring good food, music and holiday fun. Homemade soups will be provided by the Executive Committee. We will be in the Fireside Room at Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, where we normally meet. Bring your favorite

dish to share as well as your place setting which should include a plate, soup bowl, cup and silverware. This worked well last year, so to avoid too many salads or pies, we ask that if your last name starts with N through Z, bring a main dish or salad. If your last name starts with A through M, please bring a main dish, or dessert. Also, the church does not permit

Live Entertainment and Music
Photos with Santa Mariachi and other live music
Raffle
Ballet folklorico dancers
Beverages and desserts available to purchase

All funds go to help provide food baskets to the needy and help support local El Concilio community programs.

alcoholic beverages, which includes wine, and we respect their request. Attendees will be entertained by the Seaport Woodwind Quintet playing Holiday music. Also don't forget this will be your last chance to purchase Sierra Club gifts, like our colorful calendars and T-shirts.

Source: Delta Sierra Peatduster Oct-Dec 2012, <http://www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/deltaSierra/>

Nov 30, Dec 1

Stockton Chorale Holiday Concerts: Make a Joyful Noise



The Stockton Chorale will a "Make a Joyful Noise" for the Holidays on November 30 and December 1 with performances under the direction of our artistic director/conductor Magen Salomon. The wonderfully varied program includes excerpts from the "Messiah" and carols, lullabies and popular holiday tunes. Welcome the holiday season with a celebration bursting with seasonal favorites and new discoveries. The concert will include works performed by the Stockton Chorale, Master Chorale, Youth Chorale, and the Stockton Singers.

We are also privileged to be joined in concert by the Tuba Express, local musicians with a unique instrumentation that delivers a rich sound that

simply needs to be enjoyed in person to appreciate. The quartet features local low brass specialists Chris Anderson-euphonium, Molly Hazelwood-euphonium, Brian Schlegel-tuba, and Rob Barnes-tuba.

Each year the Stockton Chorale Holiday Concerts are enjoyed by large audiences who hear both the familiar and the sublime. The audience is also invited to sing along when the Chorale performs such familiar tunes as "Joy to the World" and "Angels We Have Heard on High". With the Tuba Express both accompanying the Chorales and performing their own signature pieces, the audience will enjoy this concert as a highlight of the holiday season.

The Stockton Chorale,

founded in 1951, is an over 100 member community chorus of singers from the Central Valley, Contra Costa County and the Sierra Foothills. Dr. Magen Salomon conducts the Stockton Chorale and Master Chorale, Joan Calónico conducts the Youth Chorale and Ric Campero conducts the Stockton Singers. This double performance will be held at 7:30 PM on Friday November 30, 2012 at the Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton and at 3:00 PM on Saturday December 1, 2012 at St John's Episcopal Church, 1055 S. Lower Sacramento Road, Lodi.

Single concert tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door for adults and \$5 for students. Tickets are general admission and may be purchased at the door, on our website, www.stocktonchorale.org, through Chorale members or by calling the Chorale office. For more information, call the Stockton Chorale office at (209) 951-6494 or visit our website at www.stocktonchorale.org.

Jan 4 - 8

6th annual San Joaquin International Film Festival coming

The San Joaquin Film Society is proud to announce the principal line-up of the 6th San Joaquin International Film Festival, comprising of noteworthy international and independent American dramatic features and feature-length documentaries. The festival will run January 4-8, 2013 at the Janet Leigh Theatre, located on the campus of University of the Pacific (3601 Pacific Avenue in Stockton, California).

The 2013 selections include some of the best of recent World and independent American films making their first screenings in California's Central Valley in Stockton: official entries from Germany (Barbara), Italy (Caesar Must Die) and Switzerland (Sister) vying for the 2013 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film consideration; highly-acclaimed winners from leading festivals of the world; first feature-length works from both up-and-coming and seasoned directors; groundbreaking surveys of contemporary societies and current issues. In addition, the festival is showcasing the newly-restored, complete Director's Cut of Volker Schlöndorff's 1979 masterpiece, *The Tin Drum*. The thematic strand of the 2013 festival is "Life on the Edge." All films are California Central Valley premieres, except for "Detropia."

Prices: Regular screenings - \$10; Opening or closing night film - \$13
Discounts: Seniors 65 years or older/students 26 years old or younger: \$1 off
Groups of 10 people or more: \$2 off (email sjfilmfest@gmail.com to arrange group sales)
Festival Pass (admits one to all 14 film screenings of the festival): General - \$120; Seniors 65+ - \$110; Students (aged 25 or under, with ID) - \$50.00 (email sjfilmfest@gmail.com to register)

Festival passes can be picked up beginning at 6:00pm on Opening Night (January 4th) directly at the entrance of the Janet Leigh Theatre.

During the festival, tickets can be purchased directly at the Janet Leigh Theatre

for all films 30 minutes before the screening of each film and 30 minutes following. Before the festival, please purchase all tickets online. Tickets are not available anywhere else.

Festival Schedule

Fri, Jan 4, 6:30 pm

Caesar Must Die (Cesare deve morire)
Dir. Paolo & Vittorio Taviani, Italy, 76min.
Winner of Golden Bear and David di Donatello Awards: "Inmates at a high-security prison in Rome prepare for a public performance of Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar.'" Italy's 2013 Oscar entry.

Fri, Jan 4, 8:45 pm

Mariachi Gringo
Dir. Tom Gustafson, Mexico/USA, 105min.
Audience favorite: "A stifled, small-town man stuck in a dead end life, runs away to Mexico to be a mariachi singer." Starring Shawn Ashmore.

Sat, Jan 5, 11 am

Shorts program 2013 - details coming

Sat, Jan 5, 1 pm
Chasing Ice
Dir. Jeff Orlowski, USA, 76min. Sundance favorite: "National Geographic photographer James Balog crosses the Arctic depolying time-lapse cameras to capture a multi-year record of the world's changing glaciers."

Sat, Jan 5, 3 pm

Shun Li and the Poet (Io sono Li)
Dir. Andrea Segre, Italy, 100min. "A friendship between a Chinese woman and a fisherman who came to Italy from Yugoslavia many years ago, who live in a small city-island in the Veneto lagoon."

Sat, Jan 5, 5:30 pm

The Missing Piece: The Truth about the Man who Stole the Mona Lisa
Dir. Joe Medeiros, USA/Italy, 85min. "The story of the man who stole the Mona Lisa from the Louvre in 1911, and his 84-year-old daughter who thought he did it for patriotic reasons." Director

& Producer in Person

Sat, Jan 5, 8 pm

Barbara
Dir. Christian Petzold, Germany, 105min. Silver Bear Best Director: "East Germany, 1980. A talented young doctor who applied for an exit visa from the GDR is banished to a small pediatric hospital in the country." Starring Nina Hoss. Germany's 2013 Oscar entry.

Sun, Jan 6, 10 am

Filmmakers brunch, details coming

Sun, Jan 6, 1 pm

The Tin Drum -director's cut (Die Blechtrommel)
Dir. Volker Schlöndorff, Germany, 164min.
Newly-restored complete Director's Cut: "Danzig, 1924. Oskar is wise beyond his age. Witnessing the hypocrisy of adulthood and society, he rejects both, and, on his third birthday, refuses to grow older." 1980 Oscar Best Foreign Language Film.

Sun, Jan 6, 5 pm

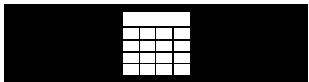
Golden Slumbers (Le sommeil d'or)
Dir. Davy Chou, Cambodia/France, 85min. "Of 400 films produced during the Golden Age of Cambodian cinema, only 30 remain now. Golden Slumbers resurrects the myths and legends of this lost cinema through survivors' stories and the search for their remnants in modern Phnom Penh."

Sun, Jan 6, 7:30 pm

North Sea Texas (Nordzee, Texas)
Dir. Bavo, Defurne, Belgium, 94min. "Pim, an introverted teenage boy living in a small town on the Belgian coast with a feckless mother, falls in love with his male best friend, Gino."

Mon, Jan 7, 6:30 pm

Detropia
Dir. Heidi Ewing, Rachel Grady, USA, 85min. "A dreamlike and devastating documentary on the city of Detroit and its woes, which are emblematic of the collapse of the U.S. manufacturing base."



DECEMBER CALENDAR

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

THUR - SUN

NOV 14 - DEC 9
White Christmas. Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 7:30 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton \$15 - \$25. 473-2424. www.sctlivetheatre.com

NOV 15 - DEC 14

Street Photography. Tues 11am - 4pm, W-Th 11am - 6:30pm, F 11am - 1pm. SJ Delta College, LH Horton Jr Gallery, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 954-5507.

SAT, DEC 1

Stockton Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony and 33rd Annual Lighted Board Parade, 5:30 pm. Weber Point Event Center, 221 N Center St, Stockton. Parade arrives downtown at 6 pm, proceeding down the channel and turning at McLeod Lake. 937-8119.

Delta Jazz Festival: the Bob Mintzer Big Band. Mintzer, member of the Yellowjackets and leader of this Grammy winning big band, brings it to Stockton. 8 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$25 - \$30. 954-5110.

SAT-SUN, DEC 1-2

21st annual Festival of Trees, with over 60 uniquely decorated trees, kids activities, entertainment and more. 10 am

- 4 pm. SJ County Historical Museum, 11793 N Micke Grove Rd, Lodi. \$8 general, \$1 kids 2 - 10, under 2 free. All funds raised benefit youth education. 331-2055. www.sanjoaquinhistory.org

SUN, DEC 2

An American Celebration band concert, with the Stockton Concert Band, guest ensemble Lathrop High School Symphonic Band and guest soloist Manuel Costa. 2 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5100 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adult \$8, student/senior \$5.

MON, DEC 3

SJ Delta College String, Guitar and Percussion Ensembles concert. 7:30 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5100 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adult \$8, student/senior \$5.

TUES, DEC 4

SJ Delta College Holiday Band concert. 7 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5100 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adult \$8, student/senior \$5.

TUES, DEC 5

Delta Choirs present "Songs of the Season." concert. 7:30 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5100 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adult \$8, student/senior \$5.

THU-SUN

DEC 6-9

The Man Who Came to Dinner, a warm-hearted screwball comedy. 8 pm, Sun 2 pm. Tillie Lewis Theater, SJ Delta College, 5100 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$10 - \$12.

THU, DEC 6

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm social, 7:00 Board. All welcome. 467-4455

El Concilio's Annual Tamale Dinner, 5 - 8 pm, Stockton Civic Auditorium, 525 N Center St, Stockton. Live entertainment, music, Santa, raffle, beverages and dessert. All proceeds go towards El Concilio's community programs. \$10 a plate. Take out available 11 am - 2 pm. To order go to <http://www.estockton.com/elconcilio-tamales/> 209-644-2627.

FRI, DEC 7

26th annual Peaceful Holiday Gift Fair, featuring peace gifts (see p 1). 4 - 9 pm. Entertainment, refreshments and a good cause. Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free admission. 462-3489.

Pacific Chorale Ensembles, 7:30 pm. Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$8.

SAT, DEC 8

26th annual Peaceful Holiday Gift Fair, featuring peace gifts (see p 1). 10am-2pm. Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free admission. 462-3489.

Light Your World - a concert by Sacramento Gay Men's Chorus. 4 pm. Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. General \$15, children 12 and under free. 466-5046.

The Nutcracker performed by the Capitol Ballet Company with guest dancers from the Stockton Ballet School. 2 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$18 - \$22 adult; \$12 - \$16 for kids, seniors, students. 954-5110. www.capitolballet.com 954-5110.

Holiday Printmaking at the Haggin. Make your own holiday cards and gift tags. 1:30 - 3 pm. Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. \$8 adult 18 & older, \$7 seniors, student age 10-17 \$5. Under 10 free. education@hagginmuseum.org. 940-6315

SUN, DEC 9

"A Little Christmas" presented by the Stockton School of the Performing Arts. 5:30 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5151 N Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$16.

TUES, DEC 11

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

THURS, DEC 13

Lincoln High School Orchestra & Choirs, 6 pm & 8 pm. Tillie Lewis Theater, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$8.

SUN, DEC 16

Stockton Holiday Mini-Con, vendor and artist focused event benefits St Mary's Dining Hall and United Way. 10 am - 5 pm. \$2.

Holiday Pops with the Stockton Symphony, with Broadway stars Nat Chandler and Teri Hansen, the Stockton Chorale, Stockton Youth Chorale and Santa! 2:30 and 7:30 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$22 - \$60.

THUR, DEC 20

Stockton Seaport Woodwind Quintet. plays holiday music. 7 pm. Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. \$8 adult 18 & older, \$7 seniors, student age 10-17 \$5. Under 10 free. education@hagginmuseum.org. 940-6315

TUES, JAN 8

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

THUR - SUN

JAN 9 - 27
White Christmas. Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 7:30 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton \$15 - \$25. 473-2424. www.sctlivetheatre.com

FIRST MONDAYS

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

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 Progressive Democratic Club. Info: Rose Roach, 209-474-8496

MONDAYS

Mindfulness Meditation Group Practice meeting 6:30 - 8:30 pm. Meditation is led by Lori Wong and held at the Unity Center. 2025 W. March Lane, Suite #5, Stockton, CA 95207. Lori Wong is associated with the Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Sati Center for Buddhist Studies, Buddhist Insight Network and Buddhist Pathways Prison Project. 209-466-5569, www.unityofstockton.com.

TUESDAYS

Student jam sessions hosted by the Brubeck Institute Jazz Quintet 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

ONGOING

California Native Plant Society Stockton Sub-chapter. Come join us on lovely hikes; listen to educational lectures; volunteer to work in the interesting habit garden; and other nature related events. Dates vary. E-mail Vinh Pham gardenlane@netzero.net

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO DISTRIBUTE CONNECTIONS TO WELL-ESTABLISHED ROUTES. ABOUT TWO HOURS PER MONTH. EASY AND FUN! AND A BIG THANKS TO OUR LONG-SERVING DISTRIBUTORS!! CALL DEAN OR MARCIA SAVAGE, 209-242-2254.

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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.

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Yes, I accept your invitation to become a charter member of Peace Pals. Here is my monthly pledge contribution of:

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- \$(Other) _____

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- Online donation through PJN website: www.pjnsjc.org (click on donation button)
- Automatic Bank Transfer
- I've enclosed a check for my first contribution. Arrangements will be made by me with my bank for future pledges.

Mail checks to: Peace and Justice Network, P.O. Box 4123, Stockton CA 95204

The Peace and Justice Network is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational corporation. Contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Dec 8

Delta Harmony Xpress concert

Delta Harmony To Remember". Featuring Xpress, San Joaquin's newly chartered chapter of Sweet Adelines International, announces its upcoming holiday show, "A December

Zion Lutheran Church, 808 Porter Avenue, in Stockton. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door, with general seating. For more information, call 476-1140.

Dec 13

Single payer potluck & movie

Single Payer San Joaquin invites you to join them for a Potluck dinner and a showing of "The Healthcare

Movie," which deals with the Canadian Single Payer system and its development, Peace and Justice Center,

231 Bedford St., Stockton, Thursday, December 13, 6:30 pm. Information, 467-0522.

Voting? Done. Democracy? Just begun.

ERIN NIEMELA

Election night is finally over. Television can resume its originally broadcast programs and Facebook can return to cat memes and photos of our dinner. We can go back to talking about our personal lives at work and our work lives at home. Relatives can begin to pick up the pieces of their divided relationships, while children can find some relief from the incessant blaring of talk radio on the drive to school. The people have spoken, they are tired, and they want at least a couple of years to nap, politically.

We may think our work here is done, at least for another two-four years, yet civic duty does not cease the moment you turn in your ballot. Voting every couple of years in the mass-distributed reality TV show we call "the election" neither constitutes a democracy nor mandates genuine change. Direct action by an engaged citizenry creates and sustains democracy, and such direct democracy must be performed year-round. While our elected officials seem keen on exporting democracy around the world, we should be developing democracy at home, as well.

On Election Day, the editorial board of the *Minnesota Daily* published an opinion piece, "Fulfill Your Civic Duty," encouraging Minnesotan youth to vote. "We understand that students are busy," the editorial remarks read, "but on one day of the year it's important that you put your civic life above all else." Oklahoma's *Tulsa World* editorial staff wrote a similar piece on Tuesday titled, "Vote Today; It's the Most Important Civic Duty." The editorial chastised non-voters as unthankful for the ultimate price paid by American service men and women: "These people showed up when it counted. Please return the favor Tuesday and vote." Election Day sure gets a lot of civic duty-oriented attention, but what about the other 1,459 days of the four-year cycle?

Voting once every two or four years is not exercising civic duty, it is imaginative play that supports a particularly hollow concept of democracy embraced in America. As author and philosopher Howard Zinn movingly stated in a 2008 opinion-editorial for *The Progressive*, "Voting is easy and marginally useful, but it is a poor substitute for democracy, which requires direct action by concerned citizens."

Placing increased importance on the four-year voting cycle serves to accomplish two tasks. First, such importance serves to over-emphasize the power of representatives in government. When so much emphasis is placed on the selection of worthy leaders, those elected are given license to exercise whichever decisions they feel are best, without ongoing accountability. The people no longer need to engage with politics or keep track of the important issues, they have

elected others to do that additional civic duty for them. We must be mindful, now more than ever, that accountability is the difference between another 10 years in Afghanistan or a complete withdrawal in 2014, as promised. Accountability is also the difference between another billion dollars spent on the 2016 presidential campaigns and serious campaign finance reform.

Second, calling voting our only and most important civic duty serves to undermine other legitimate forms of civic duty. Gene Sharp, American political icon and author of the 1973 manual *The Methods of Nonviolent Action*, offers a colossal list of direct actions that constitute a more genuine and holistic civic duty. Every citizen who is unsatisfied with the political, cultural, and societal landscape should memorize this list, or. Among the 200 or so different types of directly democratic actions, here are 10 starter suggestions:

1. Letters of opposition or support to politicians, officials, editors.
2. Group of mass petitions.
3. Skywriting.
4. Picketing and/or pamphleting.
5. Delivering symbolic objects.
6. Vigils.
7. Humorous skits and pranks.
8. Political mourning.
9. Teach-ins (or independent public hearings).
10. Walk-outs (or sick-outs, or slow-downs).

For voters who feel unsatisfied with the local, state and national results, or voters who would like to simply hold our representatives accountable in office, let us expose ourselves to the wide range of

possible ways to communicate our interests to our elected officials. We vote with our nonviolent actions, not just our pens.

We needn't subscribe to her politics to recognize a semblance of validity in famed-anarchist Emma Goldman's quote: "If voting changed anything, it'd be illegal." While voting creates some change in certain

settings, it is not our only and most important civic duty. Direct democracy is the work of enlightened, engaged citizens. Without the direct and intentional participation of an informed citizenry, American democracy is but a hollow shell filled with television advertisements and witty political memes. Let's pledge to make the next four years as important to democracy as yesterday's election. Let's pledge to create a dynamic American democratic process that doesn't simply evaporate after Election Day.

ERIN NIEMELA IS A GRADUATE STUDENT IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM AT PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY AND A PEACEVOICE SYNDICATED JOURNALIST.

Source: *Common Dreams* 11/8/12 <http://www.commondreams.org>

Stockton City Council District 5 vacancy: apply!

The Stockton City Council voted (7-0) to begin the process of selecting and appointing a Councilmember for Council District 5. In December, 2012, Councilmember Susan Talamantes Eggman will take an oath of office and begin serving as California State Assemblymember, District 13. The City Council will be responsible for filling the Council seat left vacant in accordance with Stockton City Charter, Article VI, Section 601(f). The appointed Councilmember will serve the remainder of Councilmember Eggman's term, through December 31, 2014.

The filing period for Council candidate applications will open, Wednesday, November 14, 2012, and close on, Thursday, December 13, 2012, 5:30p. A Special Information/Orientation Candidates' Workshop will be held for those interested in applying on, Wednesday, December 5, 2012, at 5:30 p.m. in City Council Chambers, 425 N. El Dorado Street, 2nd floor. A Special City Council Meeting will be scheduled to interview and appoint a candidate on January 8 or 9, 2013.

All applicants must meet the criteria for candidacy and complete the application process by 5:30 p.m. on December 13, 2012. Applicants must be registered to vote; meet residency criteria; complete and submit an Application for Candidacy, which will include supplemental information in the areas of Public Service and/or Community Involvement; submit a Nomination paper signed by ten (10) registered voters of Council District 5 who support the candidacy; and, submit a Statement of Economic Interest (Form 700) for full public disclosure of economic interest as required by Government Code 87200.

Applications will be strengthened by the submission of a cover letter providing a detailed explanation of reasons for submitting a request for appointment. Applicants will be asked to submit a Public Information Resume to be posted on the City of Stockton's web site, which provides candidate information and contact information for the candidate; the submission of a Public Information Resume is optional.

Applications, documents, and forms, both required and optional, are available from the Office of the City Clerk, 425 N. El Dorado Street, 1st floor. All interested candidates are encouraged to attend the Workshop and schedule a separate meeting with the City Clerk's Office, prior to December 13, 2012, to ensure that all required documents have been filed and are complete.

For additional information, please contact the Office of the City Clerk, (209) 937-8458.

ALL PRESS RELEASES CAN BE FOUND ON THE CITY OF STOCKTON WEBSITE. WWW.STOCKTONGOV.COM/NEWS

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Peace & Justice Network does not sell or donate our mailing list. Connections is supported by donations and advertisers.

Jan 4 - 8

6th annual San Joaquin International Film Festival coming

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

Mon, Jan 7, 8:45 pm
Policeman (Ha-shoter)
Dir. Nadav Lapid, Israel, 112min. "Policeman Yaron is part of the elite Israeli Anti Terrorist unit. An encounter with young radicals confronts him with the Israeli class war as well as with the war within his own

soul." Starring Yiftach Klein.

Tues, Jan 8, 4:30 pm
Shorts program 2013, details coming

Tues, Jan 8, 6:30 pm
Sister (L'enfant d'en haut)
Dir. Ursula Meier, Switzerland, 97min. "Simon lives with his sister in a housing complex below a luxury ski resort, and

provides for the two of them by stealing equipment from rich tourists to resell to the local kids." Switzerland's 2013 Oscar entry.

Tues, Jan 8, 8:30 pm
Closing night party, venue to be announced

ALL SHOWS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. ALL FILMS ARE IN ENGLISH OR HAVE ENGLISH

SUBTITLES.

FOR MORE UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION, CHECK OUT [HTTP://WWW.SJIFF.ORG](http://WWW.SJIFF.ORG).

