

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

NOVEMBER
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PEACE FRESNO DEFENDS

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The *Community Alliance* is an independent voice for workers and progressive groups in the Central San Joaquin Valley. The goal of this monthly magazine is to build a powerful progressive movement that will support social, environmental, & economic justice, immigrant rights, and a living wage for all working people. We seek to expose social and political injustices, and to link the diverse network of activists working in our community.

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**Photos on page 1, 4 & 8 by Mike Rhodes
Photos on page 2 & 3 by Pam Whalen**

FROM THE EDITOR

By Mike Rhodes

Activity affecting the progressive movement in Fresno has made national news several times recently. Last month, it was revealed that an undercover sheriff's officer had attended numerous Peace Fresno meetings (see the story on page 8). Before that, we made national headlines when Fresno City Council member Jerry Duncan made

what many observers believed was a terrorist threat against the progressive community. Duncan had written in an email, "If I had one dirty bomb...I could eliminate all the liberals in Fresno at once."

Another incident involving the Free Republic (which is a right wing group with national headquarters in Fresno) and the Human Relations Commission (HRC) has led to a million dollar lawsuit against the HRC and the City of Fresno. The essence of that case is that an HRC press release advised the community to avoid a Free Republic rally and named the Free Republic as a "hate group." The mayor and several City Council members are using this incident to disband, unfund, or otherwise destroy the HRC.

Well folks, I think we have got the attention of Conservatives in this area. The progressive movement is on their radar screen and they are fighting back. How will we (the left) respond? In the case of the Free Republic suit, the obvious defense is the truth. There is ample evidence on the Free Republic website to clarify whether they are a hate group or not. Their website is moderated and anything from a progressive perspective is immediately removed. Therefore, what remains has the tacit approval of the organization. There is an amazing array of postings attacking gays/lesbians, Arab Americans, Muslims, and many other groups. I don't think the courts will have a hard time determining whether or not the Free Republic is a hate group or not.

The more troubling aspect of this is Mayor Autry's ability to use the incident to attack the HRC. Debbie Reyes, the HRC chairperson, has been attacked repeatedly over this incident. We have even had an HRC member call for her removal. The mayor and the press have manipulated the information and the incident to divide the HRC, the City Council, and the community.

Conservative forces would like nothing more than to weaken the HRC so that it is no longer able to play a proactive role in addressing the root causes of poverty and injustice in this community. The HRC, by honoring the memory of Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez, inspires activists in the community to keep hope alive. If the mayor can limit the HRC's mission to applying a band-aid to problems in the community and prevent them from advocating for fundamental and structural changes in an unjust system, we will have lost an important ally in our struggle. It is up to those of us in the progressive community that understand the historic role of the HRC to stand by them at this crucial time.

Peace Fresno has done a great job in exposing and publicizing the infiltration of their organization by a deputy sheriff. This infiltration was most likely a part of the new Joint Terrorism Task Force that has been established in this area. It is, in fact, one of the first concrete examples in the nation of how our civil liberties are being eroded by the Patriot Act. Following the revelation of this infiltration, California Attorney General Bill Lockyer released a new legal handbook with guidelines for law enforcement. The handbook, according to an article in *The Fresno Bee* (Saturday, October 18, 2003) says that "police officers in California—even those serving on FBI joint task forces—are not allowed to attend political, religious, social or educational meetings unless there is reason to believe a crime is planned or has happened." I am confident that a combination of legal and political action will protect our civil liberties and force law enforcement to obey the law. Congratulations to Peace Fresno in the dignified and professional manner in which they handled this crisis.

Finally, we would like to announce an important development at the *Community Alliance* magazine. We are pleased to announce that the *Community Alliance* is the recipient of a capacity building grant from the Vanguard Foundation. This will give us the ability to work on long range planning and capacity building. The *Community Alliance* appreciates the support and trust that Vanguard has shown in giving us this grant. The result of the grant will be a stronger *Community Alliance* that has more stability and a political vision to make us a more effective advocate for media democracy in this area.

Help Wanted:

The Community Alliance would like someone to volunteer to deliver issues in the CSUF area. We need to deliver 135 issues to five college professors and 35 issues at two locations close by.

If you are interested in taking on this volunteer job please contact our circulation director, Vickie Fouts at vmfout1@sti.net or (559) 658-8260.

DRAMATIC UPHEAVAL OR BUSINESS AS USUAL?

THE RECALL ELECTION: One Man's Analysis

by Gerry Bill

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Much has been written about how the recall election was a watershed, a turning point in California's political history. I take a different point of view.

To me, this recent election is not that different from what we have been experiencing for the last 30 or 40 years. The media have a way of blowing things way out of proportion and making events seem more dramatic than they really are. That sells papers, hooks viewers, brings in advertising. But the forces that drive media coverage are not necessarily forces that drive good analysis.

Let us look at the results in a more detached way. First, to provide a little historical perspective, let us remember that just last November, Gray Davis was elected Governor with 47% of the vote; Bill Simon got 42%. The media played that as a very narrow victory, although I can remember other elections where a five percent spread was considered a comfortable margin. To me, the bigger story was that we elected a Governor with less than 50% of the vote, which would seem to make a good argument for instant runoff elections. The media ignored that angle.

Less than a year later, in the recall vote, Davis got 45% of the vote, or 2% less than he got in 2002. That is hardly a dramatic sea change. He was not terribly popular in 2002 nor in 2003, in both cases struggling to get close to the 50% mark. Schwarzenegger has now been elected Governor with 49% of the vote, or 2% more than Davis got in 2002. Once again, we have elected someone to the highest office in the state with less than 50% of the vote. Once again, no media attention is being paid to the need for an instant runoff election.

To be honest, in this case at least, the instant runoff probably would not have changed much. If McClintock's votes had been distributed in an instant runoff, it is likely that enough of them would have gone to Schwarzenegger to put him over the top. Still, if this election had been played differently in the media it could have become the poster child for instant runoffs. No such luck. Instead, the media call the 49% victory a Schwarzenegger landslide, and that's the image that will stick in people's minds. The media have an inordinate amount of power in shaping our perceptions—but only if we let them.

The campaign financing story is another way in which this election was not much of an exception to the rule. Once again, the winner was the one who spent the most money, outspending Bustamante, who came in second, by nearly two-to-one. Once again, money is buying influence. For a brief time it looked like this election might be at least a little different. Schwarzenegger had pledged not to accept money from any special interests who might stand to gain from decisions made by the state. After all, he said, he had enough money to finance his own campaign. His promise lasted about a week. When the offers of money started coming in, the temptation was too great, and he took in \$11.9 million, over half of his war chest, from outside sources. The majority of that money came from industries with business before the state—real estate, developers, construction, financial services, transportation equipment, communications, agriculture, etc.

This is business as usual for our state. Whether it be a Republican or a Democrat in the Governor's office, that person owes favors to a myriad of special interests. We are not going to have a Governor who answers to we, the people, until we the people pay to put him or her there. So this election, just like countless elections before it, helps make the case for public financing of campaigns. If he who pays the piper calls the tune, isn't it time that we, the people, start paying the piper's way into office?

What else can we learn from all of this? How about learning to ignore the media hype and do more thinking for ourselves. Look at how the media played issues like the women's vote, the union vote, the Latino/Latina vote. The media convinced much of the public that Schwarzenegger did well among women, and that there was no gender gap. Actually, the women's vote for the accused groper was about 6% below the men's vote. That is not a huge gap, but it is large enough to be significant. The way the media played it, however, had many of my students believing that Schwarzenegger got a majority of the women's vote. Somehow, his doing somewhat better than had been expected among women was transformed, in people's minds, into a majority of the women's vote.

Something similar happened with the union vote. He did somewhat better than expected among union members. Again, I had students tell me he got a majority of union households to vote for him. The actual figure was 39%. One might wish that the union vote for Schwarzenegger had been even lower, but still, a solid majority of union voters (61%) voted against Schwarzenegger. The media often label a 61% to 39% spread a landslide—but not in this case.

The media also said that Schwarzenegger did surprisingly well among Latinos and Latinas. I guess it is a surprise if the outcome is different than your expectations. But perhaps the expectations were wrong. Latinos voted 54% against the recall, 52% for Bustamante, and only 31% for Schwarzenegger. If Latinos dominated California politics, Schwarzenegger would not be governor elect. But to hear the media tell the story, Latinos were a major part of the Republican's victory. I guess the media expected Schwarzenegger to get only 10 to 20% of the Latino vote, which is more in line with how African Americans voted (17% for Schwarzenegger). But the Latino vote has never been as monolithic as the African American vote, and it is probably unrealistic to expect it to be.

Here are the conclusions I draw from all of this. The media, as usual, distort things to make a more dramatic and interesting story. Meanwhile, we still have a system where money rules, and where we elect people to office with less than 50% of the vote. That was a problem we had before the recall election, and it is a problem we still have today. I believe that the best thing for us to do in the present situation is to focus on long-term structural changes such as instant runoff voting and public financing of campaigns, and just let the Schwarzenegger thing play itself out however it will. Meanwhile, don't give more power to the media by buying into their distortions about this election having been a big departure from business as usual. By buying into the myth, you help it to grow, and maybe even help it to come true.

HOME CARE WORKERS MARCH FOR A LIVING WAGE

By Mike Rhodes • October 17, 2003

Hundreds of home care workers and their allies marched in downtown Fresno on October 17 for a living wage. There are over 10,000 home care workers in Fresno County who voted overwhelmingly to join Service Employee International Union (SEIU) local 250. They have been bargaining with the County so workers here will have what home care workers have throughout the state—a living wage with health benefits.

- Yolo County homecare workers just achieved a raise to \$9.60 an hour with health and dental insurance and training pay, with Sacramento County paying \$9.60 with health insurance.
- Last July, San Joaquin homecare workers won a first contract with a pay raise and health and dental insurance.
- Most California contracts provide for a \$9.50 wage with health, dental, and vision insurance and other benefits.

Fresno County has unilaterally implemented \$7.50 an hour with no benefits and is currently refusing to bargain with the workers union. To make matters worse, the County of Fresno has taken money that could have been used for home care workers and given it to the District Attorney's office to investigate "fraud." Immediately following the County's "last and final" offer of \$7.50 an hour, home care workers began having their hours cut. Many think this is in retaliation for the workers voting to be represented by a union that is vigorously struggling to increase wages and benefits.

SEIU has filed charges with the state's Public Employment Relations Board charging that the County is bargaining in bad faith. While the County refuses to negotiate the workers suffer. "For years now, I've needed a mammogram and the other routine medical examinations that a middle-aged woman such as myself requires," said Fresno County home care worker Florine Furlow. "I spend my days making sure my clients are getting to their medical appointments on time and taking the proper doses of their medications, but yet I can't afford my own blood pressure pills. I'm scared to death about my health—my doctor told me I'm a prime candidate for a stroke, but with no living wage or health care coverage, I can't get the medication I need to do something about it."

Former City Council member Les Kimber asked the crowd of about 300 outside the Fresno County Hall of Records why there is always enough money for wars and more prisons but somehow the Board of Supervisors can't find the resources to pay a living wage for home care workers. After his speech Mr. Kimber added that he is outraged by the Sheriff's department infiltration of Peace Fresno (see story on page 8). How can they have all the money they want when violating our civil liberties but say they have no money when it comes to paying a living wage? It is a matter of priorities.

To find out more about the home care workers struggle for a living wage in Fresno contact SEIU local 250 at <http://www.seiu250.org/>

INTERVIEW WITH CYNTHIA STERLING

By Richard Stone

[This is the second in a series of interviews with members of the City Council. Ms. Sterling graciously helped me meet the deadline after four calls to Brad Castillo's office finally resulted in his declining to be interviewed. I will contact him further into the project, meanwhile readers who live in his district may want to communicate to him a desire to see his views in print.]

I met with Cynthia Sterling at City Hall. She herself came out to greet me and got me a drink of water on the way to her inner office.

Councilmember Sterling's recurring theme as we talked was her desire to have the City use its resources to create a better living environment for the less well-off. She specifically mentioned joblessness, hunger, and homelessness as ills to be addressed, and she looks to arrangements with new developments like Running Horse and Copper River as sources of both employment for residents and of City income.

Representing a district with a disproportionate share of poverty and powerlessness has led Sterling to focus on achieving basic needs for constituents: better school facilities, availability of affordable housing, food, and health care. She tries to leverage the discretionary funds available to District 3 to acquire renewed infrastructure and services (street and alley repair, sanitation services, attention to boarded-up houses, etc.) and to stimulate economic and charitable activity within the district. She is especially proud of finding district support for providing a graduation skating party for over 700 6th and 7th graders and she's working on a project to obtain 6000 turkeys for holiday distribution to district families.

Recognizing the realities of City-wide issues and the power of monied interests with little concern for the south-of-whatever parts of Fresno, she casts herself in

the role of negotiator to try at least to have her constituents considered. It is this perspective which led her, for example, to oppose having the same company manage both CSU Fresno's new arena and the Convention Center, fearing attention to the glitzy newcomer will short-change the downtown venue. Similarly she tries to strike a balance between bottom-line-inspired calls to limit the budget for City personnel, and her understanding of income needs for workers.

Although having strong religious and moral convictions, Sterling feels unconflicted about listening to other interpretations of "the good," and feels she can act conscientiously by treating people fairly and respectfully—not having to insist on having a corner on "what's right."

Sterling says she relies on the qualities of discipline, patience, and prayerfulness that she brought with her to office; but when asked what she has needed to learn to be effective she says, "more patience, more discipline, stronger prayer." The greatest surprises to her on the job have been the amount of work needed to get up to speed on the multitude of issues the City Council deals with, and the lack of good faith in the world of city politics, "too many people don't keep their word."

Sterling is proud of Fresno's diversity and the great efforts made by so many institutions and individuals to create a body of citizens familiar with and appreciative of each other's history and culture. She wonders, though, why so few multi-cultural events take place outside of downtown.

To people thinking about running for Council, she would advise that they live in the heart of their district for a year and really learn what their constituents need. "If you still have a passion to represent them after that, then go for it...but you have to do it without ego."

As for her own political future, Councilmember Sterling says it's too early to know if she'll run again. "If after four years I'm not able to start getting done what I know needs to be done, I'm better off getting out." But as public servant or private citizen, she intends to keep working on the issues that matter to her most.

POSITIONS ON....

water meters—must be done

treatment of homeless—"appalling," social service funds need to be used more effectively

downtown renewal—a major priority, need to develop mixed use projects (business and residences) involving small local developers

independent police review —a good idea if truly neutral people can be involved

city living wage ordinance—something to be worked toward

use of CDBG funds—need to be dedicated to blighted areas to stimulate neighborhood pride and grassroots activity

privatization of City services—only with extreme caution in choosing contractors, notdisplacing workers; organized labor needs to be involved in decision-making

City relationship to state and federal policies—City has responsibility to respond. Now done mostly through the Mayor's office, but broader representation might be appropriate.

race relations—festivals and multi-cultural festivals are helpful starts

alternative transportation—need to improve the bus system and develop mass transit options

MEDIATION TOWARD RENEWAL OF FRESNO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION MEASURE

by Carol Bequette

On October 3, a group of county leaders met to foster cooperation and achieve consensus on approaches to a new transportation measure. The theme of the discussion was effective/efficient transportation. Richard Cartier served as mediator.

Conspicuously absent that day were representatives from Council of Governments (COG) which is, on its own, working on proposals for a new measure. Mr. Cartier pointed out that sooner or later two groups working toward the same goal will get together because neither side wants to be left out of the process. Take the best from both sides. Therefore just proceed and not worry about parallel efforts.

There was some concern about facilitating involvement in this process. Suggestions offered were letting media know about the process and having meetings at readily accessible places and convenient times.

Some of the noted problems of the 2002 proposal were: no money allocated for a Major Infrastructure Study, and air quality and public transit were not central issues. There needs to be a balance between "people wants" e.g. big cars, big lots, and what the community needs in a broad sense: personal, physical, and community health. Also the 2002 proposal did not provide enough for rural areas.

A participant declared that job creation is a main interest. A response to that was that freeways, once built, create very few jobs. Public transit requires skilled, well paid workers for operation and maintenance. It is important that service workers be represented, many of whom depend on public transit, as do many of their clients.

With a new measure, main factors to consider include how to split up the dollars available, how to integrate transportation dollars from various sources, and general mistrust of Fresno County Transportation Authority (FCTA) on how it has used funds.

Mr. Cartier summed up major items of discussion: meet with *Fresno Bee*; ask Barbara Goodwin, COG Executive Director, to address funding stream issues; build trust among groups; health issues and economic issues.

The next session will be December 12, 2003. For more information contact the Chair of Coalition for Livable Fresno County Communities, Werner Lipton at (559) 229-8486 or frsnlip@comcast.net.

PASTORS FOR PEACE WILL BE IN FRESNO

On Saturday, November 15, a Pastors for Peace caravan headed for Chiapas and Central America will be passing through Fresno. You will have a chance to meet and talk to the caravanistas at an event to be held at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 985 N. Van Ness Ave. There will be a potluck meal at 6 p.m., music by Rondalla at 7 p.m., and a program at 7:30 p.m.

In a new twist for Pastors for Peace caravans, the speakers will be focusing on issues of globalization, and in particular the pending Central America Free Trade Agreement. The theme of the caravan is "Free Education, Not Free Trade." The caravan will bring its message to more than 60 communities throughout the US. Their message is that so-called free trade agreements are more about eliminating barriers to corporate profit than about eliminating barriers to trade. At the same time, these agreements force poor countries to cut their budgets and privatize essential social services such as public education and health care. Such policies would have a devastating effect on Central American countries, just as NAFTA has done to Mexico.

The destinations for this caravan are Chiapas, Honduras and Nicaragua. The caravan will be collecting material aid such as school and university supplies, medical supplies, tools, bicycles and bicycle supplies. The event is free and open to the public, but there will be a free will offering to cover the costs of the caravan.

For more information about the caravan event or about making a donation contact Gerry Bill, 227-2133.

Human Rights

Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute is preparing a book called, *Challenging U.S. Human Rights Violations Since 9/11*. We have hundreds of examples of killings, torture, deportations, detentions, searches and seizures, arrests, etc. We need your help in making this as complete as possible.

The book will be submitted as a Report to the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. and the U.S. State Department in Washington and to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva in 2004.

We are hereby announcing a \$50 REWARD for the clearest and most accurate description of a violation of human rights on U.S. land since 9/11.

State: WHO did WHAT to WHOM on what DATE and WHERE, and what was the OUTCOME. Give facts about the Victim(s) and the Violator(s): Name, age, national origin, citizenship status, religion, occupation, etc. Be sure to give the SOURCE of the information: your personal knowledge, an email or web page or newspaper, etc.

One award of \$50 will be given for the clearest and most accurate description of a violation of human rights on U.S. land since 9/11. The verifiable information from all entries will be included in the book, *Challenging U.S. Human Rights Violations Since 9/11* that will be published and distributed in late 2003 by Meiklejohn Institute, a center for human rights and peace law in Berkeley, CA since 1965. See <http://mcli.org>.

Deadline: November 15, 2003. All entries should be sent to: award@mcli.org or FAX (510) 848-6008 or Box 673, Berkeley, CA 94701-0673.

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK COMES TO FRESNO

By Juliana Harris

TICKETS:
Warnors Theatre box office
(559) 264-2848
or visit <http://tickets.warnors.com>

the Same Me" (Rounder Records) was nominated for a Grammy and received the Silver Award from the National Association of Parenting Publications.

Reagon started Sweet Honey in the Rock after performing with The Freedom Singers, an African-American vocal group formed during the height of the 1960s civil rights struggles. The Freedom Singers were one aspect of the nationwide campus organization, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The Freedom Singers crisscrossed the nation, singing such 'Movement' anthems as "We Shall Not Be Moved," as well as songs handed down from black churches, many of which featured themes of freedom and justice.

Currently, Sweet Honey in the Rock features the voices of Reagon, Ysaye Maria Barnwell, Nitanju Bolade Casel, Aisha Kahill, and Carol Lynn Millard. Shirley Childress Saxton is the group's ASL interpreter.

The Gene Bluestein Memorial Fund was established in honor of the late CSUF Professor of American Literature and Folklore, to present lecture and concert events in the field of folk music and American studies. "Gene would have loved this," says his son, Evo Bluestein, "Sweet Honey in the Rock typifies the sort of multi-cultural music our father brought to this community during his many years at the University."

Photo by Dwight Carter

The internationally acclaimed African-American female vocal ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock comes to Fresno's historic Warnors Theatre, 1400 Fulton St., on Friday, December 12, at 8 p.m. For tickets, call Warnors Theatre box office (559) 264-2848 or visit <http://tickets.warnors.com>.

Acknowledged as one of the world's premier a capella vocal ensembles, Sweet Honey in the Rock presents an eclectic blend of hymns, spirituals, blues, jazz, reggae, dance, and hand percussion instruments.

This Grammy Award-winning group features five singers and an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. Together, these six women unite their powerful voices and gestures creating a rhythmic fusion of lyrical movement, song and narrative. Dressed in colorful costumes adorned with African symbols, Sweet Honey in the Rock offers audiences a vivid and memorable experience.

The December concert will be Sweet Honey in the Rock's first Central Valley appearance in 15 years, and also one of their final appearances featuring their founder, Bernice Johnson Reagon, who will retire from performing in February 2004. Reagon has led the group through three decades of touring and 17 recordings.

The daughter of a southwest Georgia Baptist minister, Reagon formed the legendary vocal group in 1973. The ensemble took its name from the spiritual "Sweet Honey in the Rock." After teaching the group this song, Reagon asked her father about its significance. He told her it was a parable describing a land so rich that when rocks were cracked open, honey flowed from them.

Reagon thought it was a suitable metaphor for African-American women: strong as a rock, sweet as honey.

When Reagon formed Sweet Honey, there was no way to foresee the success that would come in the years that followed. The group's latest recording, "Still

THE GENE BLUESTEIN MEMORIAL FUND

By Ellie Bluestein

A memorial fund was established in Gene's honor so that we might continue to bring to Fresno some of the special musical and folklore events that Gene promoted during his 30 year tenure at CSU Fresno. He believed that the creations of the "folk" are a crucial element in people's lives and that all cultural and ethnic groups have an important contribution to make. He received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts enabling him to bring artists from many traditions to the university and to the community at large, from Appalachian tradition, the Georgia Sea Islands, traditional Mexican styles, Cajun, Armenian, and many more. Twenty years ago, when Gene was on the Concerts and Lecture Committee at CSUF he urged them to bring Sweet Honey in the Rock, then not a well known group, to Fresno. It was such a memorable, stunning event, people who attended still talk about it and of course are delighted that they are coming back. When we heard that Bernice Reagon, founder and leader of the group, and an acquaintance of Gene's, would be leaving the group in January we definitely wanted to bring them here again, while she was still with them. The group typifies all that was important to Gene-incredible musical ability, presentation of important traditions-gospel, hymns, jazz, African music, and lots of freedom songs, the traditional and the recent. Many of you have heard their music on KPFA or on CDs and tapes. But I guarantee you, seeing them in person is another experience. You will be swept away. All seats are reserved, so get them soon if you want good seats.

LOCAL PEACE GROUP INFILTRATED BY GOVERNMENT AGENT

By Mike Rhodes

Peace Fresno was infiltrated by an agent working for the Fresno Sheriff's Department. Aaron Kilner, known by Peace Fresno activists as Aaron Stokes, attended several Peace Fresno meetings. Peace Fresno activist Nicholas DeGraff remembers him taking voluminous notes and several members say they saw him at peace vigils held at Shaw and Blackstone. He was also on the bus that local anti-globalization activists took to attend the WTO ministerial-level conference on Agricultural Science and Technology demonstration in Sacramento in June 2003.

Aaron Kilner died in a motorcycle accident on August 30, 2003. In his obituary in the Fresno *Bee* he was identified as a member of the Fresno County Sheriff's department. The obituary went on to say that he was "assigned to the anti-terrorist team." Local activists believe that this "anti-terrorist team" is, in fact, the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) that has recently been formed in the area. When members of Peace Fresno saw the picture and read of Kilner's association with law enforcement they began piecing the story together.

The infiltration by law enforcement of progressive community groups in Fresno, and throughout the country has long been used to disrupt legitimate political work. This disruption occurs by sowing seeds of mistrust among members, agents often promote discord within the group, and sometimes encourage illegal or violent actions. Agent provocateurs have been known to instigate violence at demonstrations, giving the police an excuse to attack protesters.

During the 1980s the Latin American Support Committee (LASC) in Fresno, who worked to end U.S. intervention in Central America, was repeatedly harassed by government agents. Undercover agents attempted to disrupt meetings by polarizing members about the use of violence and encouraging the group to raise money for weapons which were needed by Central American revolutionaries. Agents approached individual members and asked them to engage in illegal and violent activities. The local police and the FBI spent years investigating and harassing LASC without uncovering any illegal activities.

A few years ago, the Fresno Police Department and the CSUF police conspired to violate anti-sweatshop activists' rights by infiltrating United Students Against Sweatshops. A police agent attended the group's meetings and monitored email messages of anti-sweatshop activists. The distorted information that this agent passed on to her superiors to justify her job greatly exaggerated the extent of a planned demonstration at a local mall. This mis-information resulted in the police using riot clad officers, a police helicopter, and over 100 officers to arrest 19 peaceful protesters at the Fashion Fair mall. The presence of the informant was discovered during

the course of criminal proceedings of the Gap 19. All charges against the anti-sweatshop activists were later dismissed. For more information about the case see: <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/home/GAP.htm>

Ken Hudson, a long time activist with Peace Fresno, said that Kilner played a very quiet role in the group. Other Peace Fresno activists also remembered him as being quiet and added that he did not actively engage in political, tactical, or other discussions while attending the meetings.

According to the California Constitution, law enforcement does not have the right to investigate and infiltrate groups unless they have a reasonable suspicion of criminal activity. If local law enforcement and the JTTF was using Kilner to investigate Peace Fresno, one has to ask—what else are they up to? Do they have agents imbedded in other community groups? Are they watching what people say at Churches and Mosques? Because of the Patriot Act, does law enforcement now believe they have the right to monitor what you do and say in your home? In your bedroom?

There have been several meetings between law enforcement and groups concerned about civil liberties in the wake of September 11, 2001. One such meeting was held with Lt. Pat Farmer of the Fresno Police Department. Lt. Farmer told this group of community activists that there is nothing to prevent the police or JTTF members from investigating and interrogating community members. He suggested that the person being investigated might not even know he was talking to a police officer. "If the person doesn't want to talk with us, they don't have to," Farmer said. At an earlier meeting, immediately after 9/11, an FBI agent told a group of mostly immigrant rights activists that anyone helping a group identified as a "terrorist group" by the United States government would be investigated as a potential terrorist. That was interpreted to mean that if you are working, for example, to support the Zapatistas in Chiapas, you might be investigated as a supporter of international terrorism. This FBI agent said that every agent in this area was now focusing on stopping the terrorist threat.

Another justification on the local war against terrorism comes from Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer. He told community members that Fresno is a hotbed of terrorist activity and that is why the JTTF has been established in this area. He told this

Continued on page 9

Peace Fresno press conference in front of the Sheriff's Department on October 5, 2003.

Continued from page 8

group that Fresno could have “sleeper cells,” that they are connected with illegal methamphetamine production to fund terrorist activities, and all of this is somehow related to radical Muslim extremists. While this story may seem far fetched for those of us who live in this area it was good enough to bring in millions of dollars in Federal anti-terrorism funds.

The *Fresno Bee* printed a story about the infiltration of Peace Fresno by law enforcement in their Friday, October 3 issue (see: <http://www.fresnobee.com/local/story/7537174p-8449347c.html>). They printed a statement from Sheriff Pierce that said:

.....

Detective Aaron Kilner was a member of the FCSO Anti-Terrorism unit. This unit collects, evaluates, collates, analyzes, and disseminates information on individuals, groups, and organizations suspected of criminal or terrorist activities. This information meets the stringent federal and state guidelines for intelligence gathering and civil rights protections in order to prevent crime and protect the health and safety of residents of Fresno County and the State of California.

For the purpose of detecting or preventing terrorist activities, the Fresno County Sheriff's Department may visit any place and attend any event that is open to the public, on the same terms and conditions as members of the public generally. No information obtained from such visits shall be retained unless it relates to potential criminal or terrorist activities.

Peace Fresno was not and is not the subject of any investigation by the FCSO. The FCSO does not have any reports, files, rosters, or notes on Peace Fresno or its meetings.

The FCSO is dedicated to protecting the citizens of Fresno County. The department will continue to utilize legal methods for collecting, evaluating, collating, analyzing, and disseminating criminal intelligence of terrorist and organized crime organizations to accomplish its mission, while respecting the constitutional rights of all persons.

Sincerely,

RP, Sheriff

.....

The revelation that the Sheriff's department placed an agent in Peace Fresno begs the question of what other groups are being investigated, what has happened to our civil liberties since 9/11, and how will the community respond to this attack against our civil liberties. Some activists and legal experts are claiming that State Attorney General Bill Lockyer's directive to California law enforcement, telling them not to collect intelligence on religious or political groups without evidence of criminal activity, should be the law of the land. But, does state law override the Patriot Act?

A united community defending their Constitutional Rights to civil liberties will be the best defense against future attacks. The goal is to not only stop these current intrusions against peaceful and nonviolent groups engaged in civic participation but return the rights that were taken away with the passage of the Patriot Act.

On Sunday, October 5, 2003 Peace Fresno held a press conference about this infiltration. You can read the Peace Fresno statement in the side bar on this page.

Military Recruiters, Veterans for Peace, Bring Home the Troops, and Spies

By Ken Hudson

Attention high school students and parents!

Watch your mail for a form from Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) allowing you to “opt out” of having your child's directory information released to military recruiters. There will be a deadline (not set as of press time) by which the form must be completed by the parent and mailed back to the district. Under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, school districts must release student directory information to military recruiters UNLESS parents inform the school district of their objection. Peace Fresno has met with representatives of FUSD and made a presentation to the school board on this issue. Other school districts may not be mailing an “opt-out” form, so students and parents outside of FUSD wishing to maintain their privacy from military recruiters may need to take it upon themselves to inform their district of their decision. School districts in San Francisco and Santa Cruz have taken the courageous stand against the NCLB Act and have reversed the process, only releasing information to recruiters if parents have given written consent to do so, in a policy called “Opt-In.”

Calling all Veterans for Peace!

Veterans interested in presenting a message of peace in Fresno's Veteran's Day Parade, Tuesday morning, Nov. 11, may contact Vince at (559) 455-0821. Peace Fresno has also signed on as a co-sponsor of the Veteran's Day presentation: Hope Rises From the Ashes of My Lai, Vietnam. The program will be held at Fresno State USU building, Room 312, Nov. 11 at 2:00 p.m. Please see the WILPF page of this issue for more details (page 10).

Bring the Troops Home Now!

This will again be the theme of Peace Fresno's demonstration at Shaw & Blackstone, Friday, Nov. 7, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. We are now at the peace corner the first Friday of each month. The response from motorists in October was very positive as we called for the return of the troops. Bush says of the Iraqi resistance, “Bring ‘em on!” We say of the troops, “Bring them home!”

In response to the Fresno County Sheriff Department's infiltration of Peace Fresno (see pages 8 & 9), we are making ourselves available to speak with other groups about dealing with government infiltration. Coverage of the story in alternative media outlets has generated several contacts from groups and individuals outside the area, giving their support. People learned of the issue on KPFA-Berkeley and KPFK-Los Angeles evening news broadcasts and Indy Media Center websites. The story also went national on Democracy Now! with Amy Goodman interviewing Peace Fresno's Nicholas DeGraff and attorney Catherine Campbell.

The Bush protest of October 15 drew quite a crowd directly outside George W. Bush's campaign fund-raiser appearance in Fresno, visible to participants as they entered and exited the fund-raiser. I'm sure the constant drumming was heard inside, as well. Peace Fresno was proud to work with a coalition of several groups to help coordinate the event. Peace Fresno's theme of “Lies!” was presented by sign-bearing demonstrators wearing Pinocchio noses. People came from San Francisco, Calaveras County, Modesto, Visalia, Porterville, and we even met the good folks of Peace Bakersfield (does that mean we are franchising now?).

Peace Fresno meets every Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., at the Fresno Center for Non-violence, 985 N. Van Ness (south of Olive). Contact us at (559) 487-2515 or www.peacefresno.org.

Sheriff Department informant - Aaron Kilner

WILPF DATES:

Wednesday, November 5, Noon: Women In Black, Fresno County Courthouse breezeway.

Monday, November 10, 7 PM: WILPF Board Meeting. 985 N Van Ness Ave. All are welcome to attend.

Tuesday, November 11, 2PM: Alternative Veteran's Day Program. "Hope Rises from the Ashes of My Lai, Vietnam." Slide presentation and discussion of peace and reconciliation projects in Vietnam, CSUF USU Building Room 312. This event is FREE. Public is invited to attend. For more information call Vickie 658-8260 or see www.mylaipeacepark.org.

Friday, November 28, 8AM to 2PM: No War Toys. Help pass out No War Toys flyers at a local Toys R US. To volunteer contact Zay Guffy-Bill 227-2133.

Wednesday, December 3, Noon: Women In Black, Fresno County Courthouse breezeway.

Saturday, December 6th, 10 AM to 4 PM: The WILPF Peace Community Craft Faire, First Congregational Church, 2131 N Van Ness Blvd. WILPF Fresno invites everyone to attend. Contact Desi Cortez at 907-2200 or desicortez@cvip.net for questions.

WILPF and Peoples Day Festival

The first annual San Joaquin Valley Peoples Day Festival was a huge success and guess what...WILPF was a part of it! Hundreds came out Saturday afternoon for a fun filled cultural extravaganza in the Uptown Cultural Arts District of Downtown Fresno. On top of all the excitement of Indian dancers, African dancers, story telling, magic shows, workshops and much, much more, Council member Cynthia Sterling announced on behalf of The City of Fresno, October 11th would be officially recognized as Peoples Day!! Ricardo Huerta from Adopt-A-Watershed, who organized the event, accepted the official certificate.

It was truly a heartwarming day to see the effects of grassroots organizing. WILPF interns Ruth Obel-Jorgensen and Catherine Garoupa were part of the committee planning team for the Peoples Day Festival representing WILPF and FCNV in a variety of ways throughout the afternoon. They brought to stage folk musician Gail Abbott, hosted a video showing of "A Quiet Revolution" by The Earth Council & Soka Gokkai International, held peace camp games with Marilyn Shelton, and created a booth representing empowered women of culture and the history of WILPF. Ruth and Catherine, with the guidance of WILPF President Vickie Fouts, are proud to have had the opportunity to represent WILPF & Fresno Center for Nonviolence in an event that will empower cultures of the San Joaquin Valley to celebrate diversity for years to come right here in the city of Fresno!

— Submitted by WILPF intern, Ruth Obel-Jorgensen.

WILPF Program

On October 4th, WILPF president Vickie Fouts with interns Ruth Obel-Jorgensen and Catherine Garoupa, hosted a dialogue on the truths behind Prop 54. The program was sponsored by WILPF, FCNV, Peace Fresno, and Campus Peace

& Civil Liberties Coalition. Thankfully Prop 54 did not pass and we are proud to have taken part in the actions against it. We would like to extend a big THANK YOU to our speakers Rey Leon, senior policy analyst from the Latino Issues Forum; Gerry Bill, sociology instructor at FCC and FCNV board member; and the representatives from Californians for Justice. They made this dialogue possible and we appreciate their time, expertise, and dedication in creating a change in our community!

Craft Faire Volunteers Needed:

7:00-9:00: Early morning setup, 6 people

8:30-10:00: Kitchen and Service setup, 3 people

9:00-10:00: Setup WILPF tables, 3 people

4:00-5:30: Teardown tables and cleanup, 6 people

4:00-5:00: Kitchen cleanup, 4 people

Shifts need to be filled from 10:00 to 4:00 all day for 1-1½ hours each. Work includes filling slots for food service, information table, and sales at the White Elephant table and helping out on the floor. We'll need about 12 people helping at all times through the day. We also need items donated for the White Elephant sale and the silent auction, soups, breads, and desserts. We could also use new vendors. Please contact Desi Cortez at (559) 907-2200 or desicortez@cvip.net if you can help in any of these areas.

WILPF Member News

Mazel Tov to Barbara Price on her new baby girl.

Mary Maughelli show Recurring Themes, November 2-30. Reception Sunday, November 2, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Fig Tree Gallery

Cuba: Bush is threatening to come down heavily on travel to Cuba. Not being successful in bringing "democracy" to Afghanistan and Iraq, and with his approval rating falling, he is looking for distractions closer to home. This is at a time when many legislators were leaning in the direction of eliminating travel restrictions and opening up trade. Call Bush at once to ask for easing of travel restrictions to Cuba, and of course, call your Senators and Congressmen as well.

National WILPF

National WILPF is asking all WILPF members to take part in or support two national events in November.

Stop the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)! Nov 19-21, Miami, FL. For more information, see www.stopftaa.org.

Shut Down the School of the Americas! November 22 -23, Fort Benning, GA. For more information, see www.SOAW.org.

A VISION

At recent meetings the idea has been raised of creating an expanded Center including office space and common ground for an array of progressive organizations. This might be accomplished by leasing the whole building we're in now, or finding another suitable location. This would be a major undertaking. We want to know if other groups share this vision and/or if any individuals would be interested in helping explore possibilities. Any thoughts? If so, call Angela at 435-6383.

MAKING OUR WORLD GO ROUND

Thanks to all who made our book sale a success to the tune of \$1900. Special gratitude to Steve Lipari for use of the parking lot, and Wesley United Methodist Church for their tables. The next phase of our fund drive will be the annual phon-a-thon. This is how we get operating expenses for the first half of '04. Show us that you care.

DOES WHITE PRIVILEGE EXIST?

The discussion group on white privilege and racism is still open to a few more people. Meetings are on the third Wednesday each month at Fresno City College, SO 110 in the Social Science Bldg., from 7-9 p.m.. For information and a parking permit, call Gerry Bill at 227-2133

ARCHIVES

Vickie Fouts has arranged for the Center's "archives" to be stored at the CSUF library. At the moment this is a mythical entity—but on Sat. Nov. 8th (after our business meeting) we will be having a noon potluck followed by an archive-building party. If you have any photos, clippings or Center-related artifacts we'd welcome your additions. Join us if you can as we reconstruct our past, and remember our accomplishments and follies or just get your stuff to us before the 8th.

DEAR SHERIFF PIERCE

From your decision to send a spy to Peace Fresno, it is obvious you don't understand what nonviolence means. Yes, nonviolent protesters may challenge government policies and break the law—but it is done with advance notice to the authorities and the public, and with the expectation of being arrested without resistance. Don't waste county money infiltrating our organizations—we'll tell you all you need to know to do your duty. And we don't put others in harm's way, only ourselves.

Fresno Center for Nonviolence
985 N. Van Ness • Fresno, CA 93728
Ph. (559) 237-3223 • fcnv2@juno.com
<http://www.fresnoalliance.com/centerfornonviolence>

THE WELCH REPORT

October 13, 2003
Jack H. Welch, M.D.

A LETTER FROM FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION (FOR)

"Last month I read a magazine article about the decade of sanctions imposed upon Iraq. It basically raised the question, 'Are any strategic or diplomatic purposes worth the deaths of 500,000 children?'"

As I mulled this over, a flurry of frantic activity caught my eye: a moth was beating its wings, trying desperately to push its way through glass to the daylight outside. It was following an instinct to go blindly in one direction straight through the glass, and not through an opened door nearby. "I stared at the creature, but I saw the nations of the world." It is so basic, so instinctual to expend energy desperately to meet evil with greater evil, and when evil then multiplies, double the efforts.

In the last century we've seen that kind of movement: from militarism to the horrors of trench warfare in WWI; from the trenches to saturation bombing in WWII; from saturation bombing to Hiroshima at the end of WWII; from there to the madness of a thermonuclear arms race; and from there to a present US Administration approach to non-proliferation, based upon making war if anyone else is claimed to be making weapons of mass destruction; and in places all over the world a certainty by opposing armed factions that the atrocities of others show we must be more violent—our atrocities will make them behave! (e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict). But there is another way of being—peaceful being.

MUCH GOOD IS HAPPENING

In the US we struggle to keep up with the demand for nonviolence training—unheard of for most of FOR history; while many Americans called loudly for more blood to be shed after 9/11, a few who had lost loved ones on that day marched and spoke with FOR to demand no more slaughter of the innocents; and millions jammed the streets for peace not only in countless cities and towns in the US, but in over 600 cities around the world.

Forty years ago FOR member Martin Luther King, Jr. stirred consciences around the world when he said, "I have a dream." As we commemorated that event in

August, we realized that much of his "dream" is now reality: e.g., segregation in the US is largely wiped out. Change is possible; growth is possible.

Things belonging on the trash heap, however, include: years of the poorest among us becoming worse off while some others prosper greatly; people being put in jail without trial, charges, or access to a lawyer; children going without health care if their parents' employers choose not to provide insurance.

A globalization process that seems to have a goal of making the world safe for exploitation; fair elections that mean delivering fair value for campaign contributions; a nation with almost as many handguns as people with the assumption then that the answer is more prisons; an administration that digs in its heels to oppose banning land mines, oppose the International Criminal Court, and the Global Warming Treaty.

THE POWER OF NONVIOLENCE

"We have a treasure to bring the world in the power of nonviolence." More than thirty despotic regimes have been substantially changed, or brought down, through nonviolence without leaving a heritage of further hate and bitterness. Out of a wide variety of faiths and many experiences we've found our way together to be The Fellowship of Reconciliation, and dare to realize we have this treasure, the practice of nonviolence, to bring to individuals and to the nations.

The above is an edited letter from FOR to Peace Fresno, dated autumn 2003, and signed Lili Baxter, chair of FOR National Council (daughter of Holocaust survivors).

Action of the Month

My Lai Peace Park Project was undertaken by the Quakers in Madison, Wisconsin at the request of the Women's Union of Quang Ngai Province and the Quang Ngai Province People's Committee. The peace park is "a place for children to entertain and a place where people can meditate over the past with its suffering and losses and also to hope for a better future." The project also involves loans for poor women, improving My Lai's infrastructure and an Art-Pen-Pals project.

Project chair, Mike Boehm, will be in Fresno on Veteran's Day, November 11th. For more information and to become involved see www.mylaipeacepark.org.

Sunday, November 2 • 2 PM

The Fresno Folklore Society presents the Waybacks. The concert will be at the Fresno Art Museum.

Self-described purveyors of "acoustic mayhem," the Waybacks—violinist and mandolinist Chojo Jacques, guitarists James Nash and Stevie Coyle, bassist Joe Kyle, and drummer Chuck Hamilton—range freely from Charlie Parker jazz tunes, chicken-pickin' country, Irish reels, and Parisian swing to agnostic gospel, cowboy tunes, eccentric originals, beat poetry, and cliché-free folk.

"...The group's air-tight arrangements swing with fervor and intensity, spotlighting spine tingling vocal harmonies and some of the hottest instrumental playing you are likely to hear on either side of the rockies."

—The Freight & Salvage, Berkeley

Sunday, November 2 and Tuesday, November 4 • 7:30 PM

Fresno Filmworks will present Stanley Kubrick's classic black comedy *Dr. Strangelove* at the Starline. Tickets are \$5.00.

Tuesday, November 4 • 5:30 PM

National Women's Political Caucus will be holding a Political Action Fundraiser to support its endorsed candidates. The featured speaker will be Jackie Speier, California State Senator. The event will be held at the Ramada Inn, 324 E. Shaw at 5:30 for no host cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and dinner at 6:30 p.m. Cost is \$35 per person. Call Mary Stanley at (559) 268-5756 for reservations.

Wednesday, November 5 • 7 PM

THE SILENT-LOUD MOVEMENT - Free open mic poetry reading at CSUF. Guest Artist for November will be Tim Hernandez! Come celebrate the spoken word at Fresno State, Graves Residence Hall. Poetry, prizes, performance & plenitude! For more information call (559) 278-4435

Tuesday, November 11 • 2 PM

Veterans' Day Program: "Hope Rises from the Ashes of My Lai, Vietnam." Slide presentation and discussion of peace and reconciliation projects in Vietnam. Fresno State USU Building, Room 312. This event is FREE - Public is invited to attend. This event is being organized by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence and Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Call Vickie (559) 658-8260 for information.

Friday, November 14 • 5 PM or 8 PM

Fresno Filmworks presents CHI-HWA-SEON: PAINTED FIRE which will be shown at the Tower Theatre. Tickets are on sale now in the Tower District at The Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., and at The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., and in Fig Garden Village at The Fig Garden Bookstore, 5094 N. Palm Ave. Tickets are \$9.00; \$7.00 for students and seniors. For more information about this film or Fresno Filmworks go to: <http://www.fresnofilmworks.org/>

Saturday, November 15

Deadline for articles and calendar items to the December 2003 Community Alliance magazine. Send information to AllianceEditor@Comcast.net

Saturday, November 15 • 6 PM Potluck & 7:30 PM Program

On Saturday, November 15, a Pastors for Peace caravan headed for Chiapas and Central America will be passing through Fresno. For more information see page 6.

Saturday, November 15 • 8 PM

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL NIGHT at the Tower Theatre. The program is a unique event that celebrates and shares cultures from around the world through music, song, dance, and demonstrations. This year's event includes representations from China, Denmark, Armenia, Japan, United States, Sri Lanka, Africa, Mexico, India, Middle East, Polynesian Islands and Latin America. The concept for International Festival Night 2003 originated from the acclaimed International Culture Night held annually at California State University, Fresno. More than 15 different countries and regions have showcased their talent (annually) during this event and it has been deemed the largest and most diverse event in Central California, with more than 250 performers on stage.

The event is open to the public; ticket prices are \$12 for students and \$20 for general admission. For TICKETS call the Tower Theatre Box Office at (559) 485-9050.

Further information and POSTERS please call Isidro Fierro at: (559) 360-8446 or www.InternationalFestivalNight.com. information@internationalfestivalnight.com

Saturday, November 15 • 8 PM

Ahh Yeah Poetry Jam - Farewell show at the Starline 831 Fern Ave. Spoken Word and Music provided by Cloud 99 with Beat Dynasty Sound and DON D.

Sunday, November 16 • 12 Noon - 9 PM +

"Rising Up Filmfest" - Visions of Hope and Inspiration Sun Mt. Docu-Poems by George Elfie Ballis. For more information see page 15.

November 18 - 21

San Joaquin Valley residents will have two opportunities to hear Rigoberta Menchu Tum speak in Fresno. Ms. Menchu, the 1992 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, will speak on the CSU Fresno campus November 18th at 7:30 in the Satellite Student Union, and at a gala dinner in her honor at the Radisson on November 21st. For further information call the Centro Binacional office: (559) 499-1178, or email: cbdoinc@sbcglobal.net.

Wednesday, November 19 • 6 PM

Central California Criminal Justice Committee at the Sarah McCardle Room (downtown library) They will be asking the Human Relations Commission to bring the proposal for an Independent Police Auditor to the City Council, since the mayor has failed to act on this. Be prepared to speak on behalf of the proposal when it comes before the City Council.

Wednesday, November 19 • 7 PM

"Whites Looking at White Privilege," second in a series of discussions in which whites will be challenged to examine the benefits received from centuries of racism. Subsequent meetings the third Wednesday of each month, 7 PM, Fresno City College.

This meeting will be held at Fresno City College, Room SO-110. Contact Richard Stone to enroll: (559) 266-2559. Contact Gerry Bill at (559) 227-2133 or (559) 442-4600 ext. 8348 for Parking Permit.

Thursday, November 20 • 6 PM

The Multi-Cultural Center of Reedley Social Services, Inc. will be the site of the monthly meeting of the Coalition for Immigrant's Rights of the San Joaquin Valley. Members of the Coalition include "Nos Vamos" committee, Ex-Bracero Unions, Mennonite Central Committee, The Bi-Nationala Indigenous Oaxacan Front, MAPA del Valle, PAN Valley Institute, American Friends Services of Visalia (Proyecto Campesino), Reedley Social Services, Carpenter's Union, Local 701, Catholic Church of Fowler, Fine Arts Center, Barrio Art, and other organizations which are fast joining the Coalition.

The main topic of the meeting will be how to assure that SB70, Driver Licenses for all survives the recent recall election. All are invited to attend (except government undercover agents) this 20th of November, Day of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, at 1133 G Street, Reedley, CA.

Friday, November 21 • 5:30 - 9 PM

A Gala Dinner Honoring "Outstanding Indigenous Women. El Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indigena Oaxaqueno brings Nobel Peace Prize award winner Rigoberta Menchu Tum to Fresno! This event will be held at the Sequoia Room at Radisson hotel, 2233 Ventura Street. For tickets (\$60 each) or more information call (559) 499-1178, email ebdoinc@sbcglobal.net or visit their web site at <http://www.laneta.apc.org/fiob/currentevent.html>

Sunday, November 23 • 3 PM

Annual Fresno Metro Ministry Thanksgiving Concert at Hope Lutheran Church. All Faith Choir Concert (no charge, free will donation to Metro).

Friday, November 28

National Buy Nothing Day. For more information go to: <http://adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd>

For up-to-the-minute information about what is happening in Fresno's progressive community, join the Community Alliance email alert network. We send out an updated calendar of events once a week and alert you when there is an emergency rally or demonstration. This is a free service. You can join by sending your email address to: <AllianceEditor@comcast.net> and say you would like to subscribe to this service.

The New Freedom Riders

"We have no fear! We will not hide!" were Maria Elena Durazo's words at the closing celebration of the 12-day campaign to expose the immigrant workers situation in the US. Durazo, the national coordinator of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, added: "Repeat with me: "This is our country! We are the Americans!" and the thousands of people reunited at Flushing Meadows Corona Park in New York repeated the words without hesitation, some even with tears in their eyes. Los Angeles riders knew exactly what that meant; after all, they had faced the border patrol only a week before. Durazo continued, "Our community has to fight, to organize, to march on the streets and to vote...for them to listen to us."

Coming out of the shadows was precisely one of the new ideas of this campaign for "legalization." Millions of immigrants, ten million if you look at government figures, live on the hide. The ride organizers knew it and with the idea of the original Freedom Riders decided to show the country the faces of immigrant workers and the conditions they work and live under.

In the 60s segregation had been outlawed but the reality did not change until the Freedom Riders decided to put it on the face of the nation. In 2003, the situation is very similar; we have labor laws, civil rights, and human rights that often don't apply to "undocumented immigrants." The 900 riders on 18 buses traveling around the country for 12 days and stopping at more than 100 towns and cities had the purpose of exhibiting those injustices to the nation. The hope now is the same that the African Americans had 40 years ago, to create social and political pressure.

"In all the 100 plus towns and cities that we have visited, we have made it to the front page or to the first page of the Metro section of the main papers," evaluated Maria Elena Durazo at the Capitol when I asked of the impact on the legislature. "Everybody knows we are not going to pass a law today. Our challenge is to cause impact and keep at it."

On September 23, while sitting on bus #2 from Los Angeles, I noticed that the riders were from very diverse backgrounds. I expected to see Latinos and Asians, but to my surprise, the ride included African Americans, Jews, white Americans and Muslims, African and Hawaiian workers. Granted, all these groups are part of the Angelino society but very rarely do you see them together other than at some workplaces and schools. A similar formula was unveiled to me on Oct 1 when we arrived at Washington to join the other 800 riders coming from nine different points of the country. The message was in place.

It has many different voices:

- Palm Springs, CA — Graciela Ramirez, a casino worker: *"I ask you today to stay together in the fight for dignity and respect...because we are all human beings."*
- Phoenix, AZ — Rev. Frank Pierson: *"We need to create leadership schools like they did in the 60s."*
- Nogales, AZ — We were asked to carry the crosses of the dead who lost their lives crossing the border to Washington.
- Chapparal, NM — Sonia: *"The bosses pay us low wages but we keep silent because if we speak they will not hire us the next day."*
- Sierra Blanca, TX — The Border Patrol boarded the buses, but everyone was instructed to remain silent. They told us to get out of town.

- Morristown, TN — Carlos, a worker at a paper mill: *"They will not pay taxes and refuse to help us with health insurance."*
- Nashville, TN — Rev James Lawson: *"Get close to each other, create communities, it won't be easy..."*

We are encouraged that our voices were heard in Washington but we are prepared to continue the struggle until we are heard. How many years have the African Americans struggled? We have no illusions. We are encouraged by all the support we felt throughout the country and here at home. Thank you to all those who made this trip possible.

HOPE RISES FROM THE ASHES OF MY LAI, VIETNAM

A slide presentation and discussion of current peace and reconciliation projects in Vietnam will be held at Fresno State USU building, Room 312 on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2003 at 2pm. Presentation is by Mike Boehm of Madison Quakers, Inc. The event is free and the public is invited.

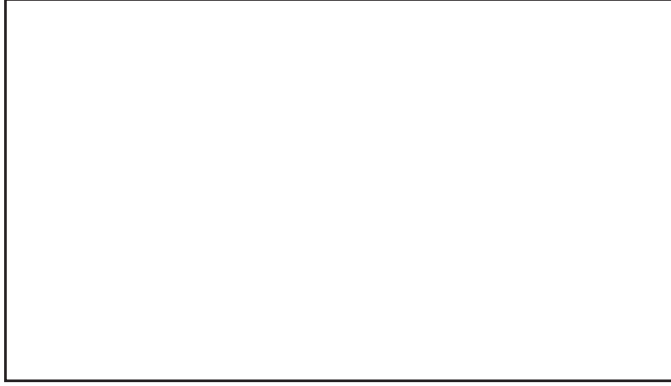
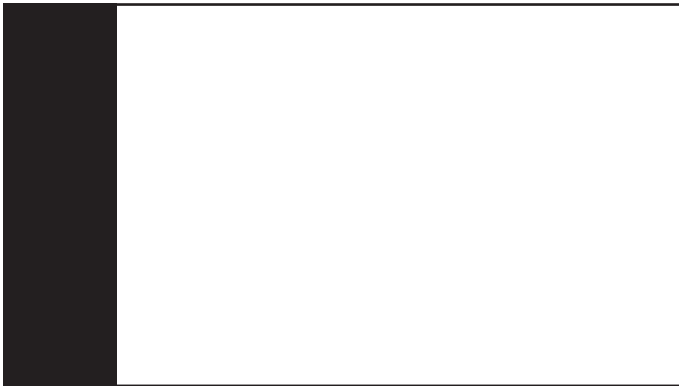
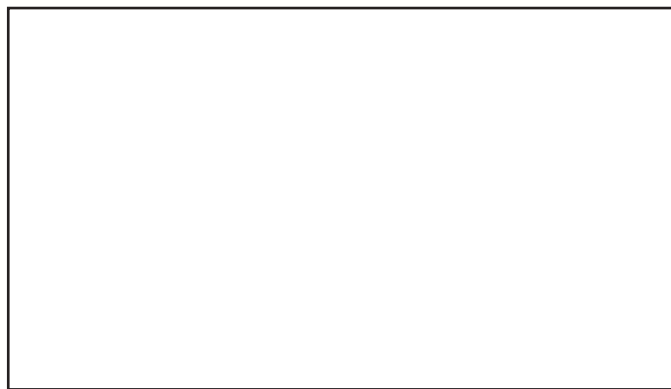
Vietnam veteran, Mike Boehm has worked in My Lai and elsewhere in Vietnam since 1992. He has traveled to Vietnam 12 times to facilitate these reconciliation projects. A veteran who served in Cu Chi, Vietnam, working in intelligence from 1968 to 1969, Boehm first returned to Vietnam to help build a medical clinic. While there he began to come to terms with his own experiences there and to understand the tremendous capacity of people-to-people projects for building peace and reconciliation between our two societies.

Boehm's work in Vietnam has included providing loans to nearly 2,000 women in 13 different communities including My Lai, building on the Grameen Bank model of micro credit. In addition he has helped facilitate art exchanges between the children of My Lai and Madison, Wisconsin; Peace Parks in Bac Giang and most recently My Lai, site of the infamous 1968 massacre. He is currently working to help facilitate an exchange between women's organizations in Vietnam and El Salvador.

The presentation is sponsored by Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, Fresno Center for Nonviolence, Fresno Friends, and Campus Peace & Civil Liberties Coalition.

Madison Quakers, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation created to support this work in Vietnam. In the last nine years, Madison Quakers has raised more than \$350,000 to further this work. Projects funded by the Madison Quakers include the My Lai Peace Park, My Lai Loan Fund, new primary schools for My Lai, ethnic minority community development projects, and most recently the Sisters Meeting Sisters Project.

For information, contact Vickie Fouts, (559) 658-8260, or at vmfout1@sti.net or Mike Boehm at vapp@igc.org, 2312 E. Johnson St, Madison, WI 53704.



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559-237-4878



November Take Action Report

Security and Freedom Ensured (SAFE) Act of 2003 (S 1709): This legislation would represent a significant first step toward rolling back some of the PATRIOT Act's worse excesses. The SAFE Act would make sure that intelligence agents cannot search library records unless there is suspicion that an individual is involved with a foreign power. It would also limit the use of sneak and peek searches by government agents. Furthermore, it would limit the government's ability to conduct widespread searches of your personal information without probable cause or individualized suspicion. **Email your Senators at www.aclu.org**

CLEAR Act -HR 2671: This would require state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce federal immigration laws even though they are not provided with additional resources or training to undertake this new role. Numerous police departments and many conservative organizations have spoken out against this act, saying that it would hinder local law enforcement and create additional burdens on already overburdened enforcement agencies. **Email your Representative at www.aclu.org**

Congress Needs to Demand a Special Prosecutor: There's a long history in Washington of retaliating against people who hold different views, but recent events have taken this to a new level. To intimidate an expert who disagreed with President Bush's Iraq policy, a senior Bush administration official leaked the name of the expert's wife—an undercover CIA expert on Weapons of Mass Destruction whose life is now in danger because of the leak. Outing an intelligence operative is not just irresponsible, it's a criminal offense. The White House is leaving this criminal investigation to John Ashcroft's Justice Department. But it's not reasonable to expect Ashcroft, a Bush appointee, to thoroughly investigate criminal wrongdoing by Bush's own staff. American citizens deserve a credible investigation. Demand a special

prosecutor on the Bush Administration's illegal leaks to the news media. **Email Congress at www.truemajority.org/actionregister/**

Nov. 8: National Day of Action at Ford Dealerships: Declare Oil Independence - Call on Ford Motor Company to Break Our Addiction to Oil! Learn more about taking local action or sending an email to Ford Motors at www.globalexchange.org.

- 11/02 "Listening to the Laureates" - Rev. Bryan Jessup
- 11/09 "Remembering Michael Servetus" - Rev. Grace Simons (UU Modesto)
- 11/16 "The Church of the Divine Ambiguity" - Rev. Bryan Jessup
- 11/23 "Humility and Awe" - UU Youth
- 11/30 "Golf as a Metaphor for Life" - Sam Zutler

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President Bush is greeted in Fresno by the local Uproot Bush Committee

Photos by Nicholas DeGraff

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