
JOHN GEORGE DEMOCRATIC CLUB NEWSLETTER

July 2009

Vote by July 18!

**Oakland Special
Election**

**JGDC Steering Committee
Recommendations:**

Measure C: Yes

To bring hotel tax in line with
other major cities

Measure D: Yes

Provides more flexibility for
the "Kids First"

Measure F: Yes

Tax on "cannabis business"
gross receipts

Measure H: Yes

Applies real estate transfer
tax to corporate transactions

This is a vote by mail election.
Ballots are due by July 21 so be
sure to mail in your ballot by July
18. For more details, see article on
page 2

Save the Date:

October 22, 2009

6:00 – 8:00 PM

*John George Social Justice
Awards*

Washington Inn Hotel

495 – 10th Street

Oakland

*This is our bi-annual reception to honor local
progressive activists and policy makers. Please
plan to join us for music, food, and awards
presentations. (Recipients to be announced soon)*

Oakland Ballot Measures

From the League of Women Voters:

Yes on Measure C: Oakland's proposed Hotel Tax
rate will be no higher than other major cities like San
Francisco. Increasing the tax rate by 3% will
generate approximately \$3 million of revenue each
year; this money will be dedicated to funding for the

Oakland Museum of California, the Chabot Space & Science Center, the Oakland Zoo, cultural and arts programs and festivals, and the Oakland Convention and Visitors Bureau that all benefit both Oakland residents as well as visitors.

Yes on Measure D: This measure would partially repeal the Kids First 2 measure that Oakland voters approved last November. It provides a substantial savings for the City, and provides more flexibility by having the Kids First funding calculated on the General Purpose Fund rather than the total budget. Additionally it adds back the review clause to allow the voters to look at the program and determine whether it should continue to receive funding on a periodic basis.

Yes on Measure F: Measure F creates a new business tax rate for cannabis businesses. The businesses and the police both support this measure. This acknowledges the extra cost that these businesses incur to the City.

Yes on Measure H: Currently residential homeowners and small businesses pay the transfer tax when they buy, sell or transfer property. This measure clarifies the Real Property Transfer Tax so that when corporations transfer property because of mergers or acquisitions, they have to pay this same tax. It is not a new tax or higher tax.



President Obama—The first 60 days and the first 6 months.

By Jack Lucero Fleck

JGDC sponsored a lively panel discussion titled, “The Obama Administration: The First 60 Days” on March 19 with panelists offering perspectives on labor, civil liberties, health care, and the media.



JGDC panelists, from left: Joe Tuman--CBS5 TV News commentator, Steven Pitts—Economist, UCB Labor Center, Ramona Tascoe—MD, National Medical Association, Wilma Chan—Children Now, Panel Moderator, Steve Bingham—Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute (plus Club co-chair Alona Clifton, standing)

We are now nearly six months into the new administration. The euphoria from Obama’s election is still with us, but we are also facing the reality that achieving real change will require organizing and building the progressive movement. While it is great that we have a president who speaks eloquently about the need for peace in the Middle East, the threat of global warming, the rights of gays and lesbians, the need to end torture, etc., none of this will happen without strong political pressure. The war continues in Iraq and is even worse in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the bailout has been totally dominated by Wall Street, single payer health care is not even on the table, and on and on.

On June 21 in the *SF Chronicle* Willie Brown wrote, “Like a growing number of people, gays are starting to realize that the president is a little more conservative than they thought. Much of the

disappointment, however is based on who they projected Obama would be, rather than who he really is. Right now, Obama is the most popular figure on the planet. [possibly next to Michelle—jlf] He represents inspiration and hope to people all over the world, even people who have no idea what he really stands for.”

So the ball is in our court—unlike the horrible days under Bush, we can now push for universal health care, equal rights for same-sex partners, alternative energy, an end to the war, progressive taxation, and all agenda items that John George as a person, and we as a Club have worked for. With the breath of fresh air that Obama offers, we need to act on all fronts before this opportunity fades.

Cuba Embargo—When Will It End?

by Jack Lucero Fleck

The U.S. has never forgiven Cuba for its audacity for establishing an independent socialist nation. The U.S. instituted an embargo in 1962 (besides launching the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961).

The U.S. continues to prohibit trade, or even travel, to Cuba by U.S. citizens. Agricultural trade is allowed, but most products, including medicines, are still restricted.

This spring the Obama administration made a positive gesture by increasing permission for Cuban-Americans to travel to Cuba and to send money to their relatives, but there is no sign that the U.S. is prepared to end the embargo.

The travel ban, however, may be weakening. The Orbitz Travel Company is taking up a petition to end travel restrictions in Cuba. Everyone who signs the petition will get a \$100 gift certificate they can apply towards a trip to Cuba if unrestricted travel becomes available and travel is booked through Orbitz. To

sign the petition visit: www.opencuba.org.

Barbara Lee met with Fidel and Raul Castro in April of this year. She said that 68% of the people in the U.S. want normal relations. “The President is doing a phenomenal job reshaping America’s role and image in the world,” so now is the time to change a “50 year old policy that did not work,” she said on CNN.

HR 874 and S.428 are the two bills in Congress that would lift the travel ban. These bills have 159 co-sponsors in the House and 29 co-sponsors in the Senate—encouraging numbers, but still not enough given the intransigence of the Cuban-American congressmembers. Senators Feinstein and Boxer, and, of course, Congresswoman Lee are co-sponsors.

President Obama, could readily make substantial improvements in the way the travel ban is currently imposed by allowing more cultural, sports, and humanitarian exchanges. Hopefully the California congressional delegation can work with the Obama administration to make further openings to Cuba, and go on to lead to an end to the travel ban and the embargo.

The Best Government Money Can Buy

The Consumer Education Foundation reports that U.S. financial, insurance, and real-estate firms paid about \$5 billion combined lobbying and campaign contributions over the last decade. The payback: nearly \$2 trillion in taxpayer bailouts—a return of 400 to 1— i.e.40,000% interest!



John George Student Essay/Art Contest Winners

This year High School and Middle School students were asked to write an essay on the topic: “Community Service for Social Change during the Obama Administration—What Will You Do?” Elementary students were asked to draw a picture showing how, if you could make any changes you wanted, you would change the way your neighborhood looks. Awards were presented at the West Oakland Library on May 16.

In the photo are Brandon Price (Club Speaker and presenter), Frenswa Raynor, Xavier Rivers (high school), Walter Riley (Club-Co-Chair), Jah’kyma Thomas (high school), and Angelah Cannon (middle school). Cesar Acosta (not pictured) shared the \$400 elementary student prize with Frenswa Raynor

Why Single Payer Health Care

Some thoughts after reading some articles in the *El Cerrito Democratic Club News*—ed.

The term “Single Payer Health Care” is confusing to most people. Don’t we really want universal health care? (81% of Californians do according to a Field Poll) What’s the difference?

Single Payer is simply one form of universal health care. It is not “socialized” medicine where the doctors work for the government. Instead, Single Payer just eliminates the health insurance companies.

Single Payer is the plan used in Canada and many other countries. Medicare is a form of Single Payer. Here are some key features of Single Payer:

- No one is excluded
- Patients choose their provider, unlike the

restrictions under most private health care plans

- Costs are reduced by eliminating forms, reviews, and administrative waste
- The program emphasizes prevention and timely medical treatment rather than overuse of emergency rooms
- No one goes bankrupt because of medical bills (62% of all bankruptcies in 2007 were caused by medical problems).

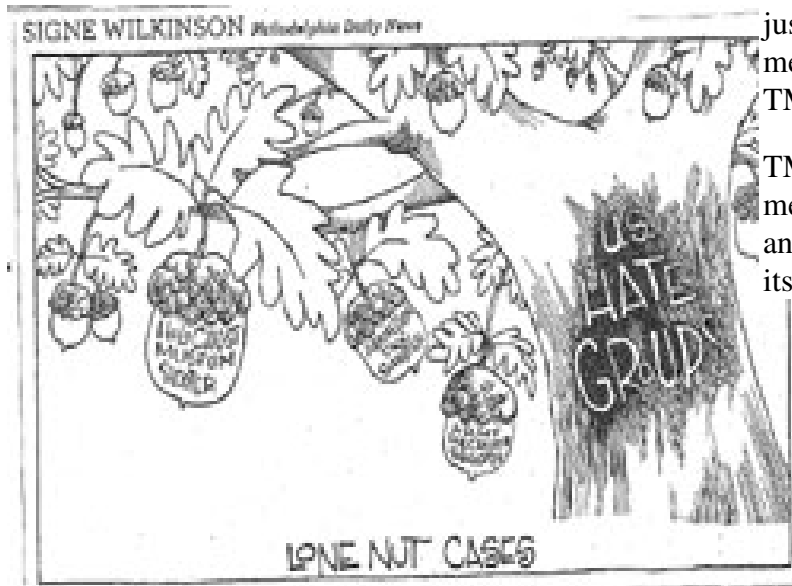
Jim Hightower, in his *Lowdown*, gives the main argument against single payer—he writes:

“An editorial in the *Washington Times* (the Capitol-area mouthpiece for the Republican Party) succinctly expressed the GOP’s position on health-care reform: ‘The government cannot possibly do for Americans what the marketplace can.’

Let’s see—that would be the marketplace that presently:

- Excludes 47 million Americans (8 million of them children) and undercovers about twice that number
- Has doubled our insurance premiums in the past 8 years
- Costs us more for health care per capita than any other country in the world
- Limits our choice of doctors
- Routinely and aggressively denies doctor-prescribed treatments to sick people
- Delivers a quality of health care that ranks 37th in the world (one notch above Slovenia)

I think the *Times* is right. Government couldn't possibly do all that for all Americans."



Oakland Tribune cartoon referring to "lone nuts" who killed an abortion doctor in Kansas and shot up the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC—and their ties to U.S. hate groups

A Mentoring Opportunity

By Alona Clifton

"Forty-eight years ago, John F. Kennedy issued a call to national service using a still novel technology for political communication: television." He stated Ask what you can do for your country."

Now Barack Obama is reprising the call to service. He is using the Internet, through millions of e-mails, hundreds of thousands of You Tube views and a new social-networking site created by his Inaugural committee. (TIME -January 09)

Service is such an important concept otherwise known as volunteerism. Well, for those of you seeking a local opportunity ~~ do I have a deal for you! ~~ become a mentor with ***The Mentoring Center (TMC)***.

I recently joined the Board in keeping in line with an issue that most concerns me: Youth caught in the net of juvenile justice system which more often than not leads to getting caught in the net of the adult criminal justice system. And for me, most importantly, this means primarily African-American males. (note: TMC serves all youth)

TMC is a nationally recognized a leader in the mentoring field. TMC provides technical assistance and training to Boards, Staff, and Mentors through its diverse and enriched programs.

- Transformative Intervention Institute – intensive three day training for organizations serving youth offenders and highly at-risk youth
- Mentoring Institute for Trainers and Managers – training of trainers course conducted by TMC at UC Berkeley

Locally, TMC is also a direct service provider. It serves 90-130 adjudicated (to hear and settle (a case) by judicial procedure) and incarcerated youth between the ages of 14-25 annually through the following TMC designed programs at California Youth Authority (CYA):

- Transition Program – a 24-week intensive program for young people incarcerated in CYA with re-entry services when they are released. After release and graduation from the program TMC continues to assist the formally incarcerated.
- The African American Male Transition Program (AAMTP) - it's a group mentoring program serving groups of youth/young adults from 15-25; also serves CYA clients;
- Project Choice – a federally funded program that serves “serious and violent” youth and adult offenders.
- Pathways to Change – A City and County funded program that serves pre-adjudicated juveniles that are repeat offenders in Oakland.

Please think of TMC when you are looking for local service/volunteer opportunities. We also need your support in identifying other resources including financial resources. Become a part of our social networking!!

For more in depth information, Visit the website at www.mentor.org or contact TMC, 1221 Preservation Park Way, Oakland, CA 94612 (510) 891-0427.

TMC directs three community based programs:

- Positive Minds Group – a group mentoring program conducted in TMC’s Oakland Preservation Park offices.
- Project First – a violence prevention program that serves first time youth offenders in order to prevent their further involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- Proud Parenting Program – a manhood and fatherhood development program.

Finally, since 2003 TMC has been the lead agency in two City of Oakland Initiatives:



**John George Democratic Club
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