Stop. Now. It’s time, right now, to put a stop to an ugly undercurrent which has crept into the discussion of whether it’s a good idea to demolish two of Berkeley’s branch libraries in order to rebuild them.

This has absolutely nothing to do with historical preservation or architectural merit, but it has everything to do with civil discourse and what we want Berkeley to be. What is disturbing is a spate of thinly veiled accusations of racism directed against the plaintiffs in the environmental lawsuit regarding the city’s plans to replace the library buildings in South and West Berkeley.

At last night’s rally to support demolition, I heard Councilmember Max Anderson, an African-American, refer to “standing in the library door”. This publication seldom identifies speakers by race, but this time it’s relevant because of the historic associations with that choice of words.

The few younger people present last night might not have caught the allusion, but for veterans of the civil rights struggles of the 50s and 60s, who include both Anderson and me, it echoes the famous stance of segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace, who described himself as “standing in the schoolhouse door.” That’s dirty pool, and it should end right here, right now.

Another speaker, an older African-American minister, referred to the bad old days “back in Louisiana”—nothing specific, but again, to us oldtimers, clear enough.

These comments, sadly, confirmed what I’d picked up in the last couple of weeks on the gossip circuit. It seems that there are some demolition proponents who would like to create the impression that demolition opponents don’t want Berkeley’s children of color to have nice libraries. This canard is absolutely untrue, and any African-American or European-American Berkeleyan who wittingly or unwittingly allows himself or herself to be associated with it is doing a tremendous disservice to the public interest and to the cause of interracial harmony.

If there’s any history of racism to be uncovered in this discussion, historians might ask why the existing South and West branch buildings were allowed to deteriorate to the point where many in good faith believe that they cannot be salvaged. Why did the citizens of North Berkeley and the Claremont district get architecturally significant and sturdy branch libraries in the first place, while South and West Berkeley seem to have gotten lesser structures which are now described by some as falling apart? That was the true racism, but what the appropriate remedy should be is open for discussion.

The people who support renovation of branch libraries instead of replacement sincerely believe that this will result in better libraries for the people who live in South and West Berkeley. They’ve gone to the trouble of paying a well-regarded architect to draw up alternative plans, an architect who has received awards for his brilliant adaptive re-design of Richmond’s Municipal Natatorium (swimming pool). His design, whether or not it’s finally determined to be better or less expensive, is certainly larger than the buildings the city of Berkeley and the Library Foundation promise in their demolish-rebuild schema.

Those of us who took an active part in the civil rights movement remember when “divide and conquer” was a popular strategy on the part of those who opposed progress toward racial equality. It was a normal tactic to seek out “Negro community leaders” willing to aver that what the White People In Charge were doing was just fine, and it sometimes worked for a while. But it would be a grievous mistake for Berkeley’s current generation of prominent African-Americans,
some of whom I count as good friends, to allow themselves to be used by those with other agendas in a discussion which has nothing to do with race. And it verges on criminal when European-American Berkeleyans perpetrate these vicious accusations sub rosa.

It is crucial that we all agree that everyone involved in this dispute wants nothing but the best possible branch libraries for all sections of Berkeley. It’s perfectly okay to argue strenuously on behalf of one plan or the other, and it’s even okay for the plaintiffs to seek the remedies provided for by law if they wish. We’ve published dramatic essays on all sides of the dispute in this space, and we’re happy to get more from all participants.

But right now, let’s all agree that differences of opinion about branch library design have absolutely nothing to do with race or with racism. I’d even go so far as to say that Judith Epstein, the only person courageous enough to be a named plaintiff in the Concerned Library Users’ environmental impact lawsuit, is owed an immediate apology by anyone who has suggested, by direct statement or oblique hint, that her motives are racist in origin. She might be wrong, dead wrong, but she’s no racist, and it’s a serious injustice to suggest otherwise.

News

City Council Moves Branch Library Demolitions Forward, Sets Hearings

By Steven Finacom
Wed Apr 27 11:31:00 -0700 2011

In an early morning extension of their April 26 meeting the Berkeley Council moved forward with controversial plans to demolish and rebuild the South and West Berkeley branch libraries.

However, in somewhat of a surprise turn, at the suggestion of Councilmember Kriss Worthington, the Council stripped at least one controversial element from the proposals.

Some Council members also verbally clashed with members of the audience who had waited for up to five hours for the item to come up, with debate during the public testimony period erupting between at least two Council members and public speakers.

Four of the Council members—Anderson, Capitelli, Maio and Moore—had earlier gone down to the front steps of old City Hall to participate in a pep rally by library demolition / rebuild supporters. The first three spoke, essentially telling the small crowd of demolition supporters that they agreed with the goals of the rally.

Then they returned upstairs to participate in the meeting that had the “quasi-judicial” function of reviewing the zoning amendments and use permit proposals pertaining to the South and West branch libraries.

While it finally approved the zoning amendment that would make it easier to build the proposed new branch library structures, the Council added, on Worthington’s motion with Wengraf’s second, a qualification that “This ordinance shall apply only to the four neighborhood branch library projects funded by Measure FF.”

Previous language would have applied the standards to all five Berkeley Public Library sites and continued the relaxed zoning standards into perpetuity. The wording change limits the zoning alterations to only the four projects the City proposes to fund with bond money from the voter approved Measure FF in 2008.

Two concerns which the amendment apparently addressed were that the zoning changes as originally proposed would apply to the library sites in perpetuity, beyond the currently planned renovations, and would also loosen the development review procedures not only for the four branch library sites but also the historic Central Library, in the Downtown area where a majority of the Council has promoted intense new development and tall buildings.

Under the wording of Worthington’s motion the relaxed zoning standards would “sunset” after the currently proposed branch renovations or rebuilds are done. No major projects are currently proposed for the Central Library.

On the other two library items on the agenda, however, the Council majority apparently stuck with the plan to proceed with demolition of the South and West branches by setting public hearings on the Zoning Adjustments Board and Landmarks Preservation Commission actions, rather than remanding the agenda items back to the two Commissions.

Worthington made a motion to hold new public hearings on the two items to “wipe out any mistakes or any illegal things that were done...and then the City can address this and follow all the procedures as scrupulously as humanly possible.” The motion failed for lack of a second.

However the Council then voted to set public hearings on the demolition of the South and West branch libraries.

Before the vote, Councilmember Maio commented, “I don’t understand where people who are opposing moving ahead on these libraries think we’re going to go...It’s time to look to the future. If there were mistakes made or there was somehow people felt that they were misled, is that a reason to have no libraries of modern construction for the children, seniors, disabled, people in West Berkeley? I don’t think so.”

“And I really have to say I don’t understand the continued opposition to our libraries, which are our treasures. I simply don’t get it.”

Judith Epstein from Concerned Library Users, which has sued the City over the use of Measure FF funds and the zoning amendment, came to the podium during the public comment session following the vote to speak to Maio’s remarks.

“Councilmember Maio, you mischaracterized what the opposition to the use of Measure FF money for demolitions is”, Epstein said. “If it is something that as you say you truly do not understand, I would be more than happy to discuss it with you.”

“I have seen your writings. I understand what you are saying. I don’t understand the motive,” Maio retorted.

As Epstein started to answer, Councilmember Wozniak interrupted with a motion to adjourn the meeting in the middle of her public comment time.

“Could we please have courtesy for everyone?” said Worthington.

“The motives are that the voters passed Measure FF based on the language of renovation,” Epstein said. “Measure FF passed by 750 votes and it may not have passed at all had you used the language of demolition. The voters have the right to be informed about what their money is being used for and what projects to support.”

“In the same election, Measure LL failed; 56% of the voters voted against Measure LL which would have weakened our landmarks ordinance. These are precisely the voters that would have voted against Measure FF had it specified demolitions. And I do remain open to talking to you,” Epstein concluded.

Before the vote and this exchange, the Council heard public testimony from several individuals who spoke to concerns about the zoning amendment and the proposed branch library demolitions. The Council limited public comment on all three items under
consideration to three minutes, total, per audience member.

“It’s a late hour,” said Mayor Bates, explaining the testimony restrictions.

“You were the one who scheduled it late,” someone in the audience said.

It was about midnight when the Council decided to take the public testimony on three agenda items together: the zoning amendment that would change the zoning for Berkeley’s five public library sites to enable development there to proceed with a use permit, not variances; the decision of the Zoning Adjustments Board to grant use permits for the South and West branch demolitions and rebuilds; the decisions of the Landmarks Preservation Commission not to suspend the demolition permit for the West Branch (a City of Berkeley Structure of Merit) or initiate the South Branch (a landmark eligible historic structure) for landmark consideration.

“The correct remedy is actually to remand these issues back to the original bodies,” said Judith Epstein, who was the first speaker. “I’ll explain why.”

“The city attorney has consistently enforced a policy requiring the recusal of any member of a quasi-judicial body who expresses an opinion about a land use matter before voting on it. Carole Kennerly was required to recuse herself from her temporary appointment to LPC [Landmarks Preservation Commission] because on March 2nd she sent a letter to the Planning Commission saying, and these are her words, ‘I strongly support the demolition and renovation plans for the south and west branch libraries.’ These were exactly the issues she was to vote on.”

“That letter was referred to the city manager by Councilmember Anderson in your presence so you were all aware of it. You were all aware of the very strong opinion that she had expressed. The error to appoint Ms. Kennerly may have been unintentional but the process was tainted. Ms. Kennerly was an active participant in the LPC ZAB decision and she made some of the motions.”

(Kennerly was a one-meeting replacement appointee to the Landmarks Preservation Commission at the April 14 meeting when the LPC, in a marathon five-public hearing joint session with the Zoning Adjustments Board, acted on the Library demolition proposals.)

Lori Kossowsky spoke next. She told the council that that Max Anderson, her councilmember, had called her in what she described as an undisclosed ex-parte discussion on an issue that would later come before the Council.

Anderson was “really yelling at me about the people who filed the lawsuit and he just went on and on and I am not part of the lawsuit. He was bullying me…”

“Bullying!” Anderson said from the dais.

“Yeah, when you don’t let me get a word in edgewise, that’s what it’s called,” Kossowsky retorted. “You’re not supposed to be interrupting me” during public testimony, she added.

Anderson, Kossowsky said, “would not stop” when he called her to complain about the lawsuit.

“I have trusted Max and have been proud to have him as my representative, but this was uncalled for…and not provoked. And it’s been clear that you have already made up your mind from the library projects because of this phone call.”

“I hope Max and the other people who show poor behavior will tell the truth about what is really happening regarding the libraries…Please, I am asking that all the lies and bullying from those who disagree with the lawsuit stop immediately.”

“Thank you, next please,” said Mayor Bates.

Christopher Lien, from the Le Conte neighborhood (one neighborhood east of the South Branch library) came to the podium to describe a neighborhood meeting at which “everyone who showed up spoke about the library issue.”

“It’s something that really resonated in our neighborhood and is something that is creating a lot of interest and a lot of concern. Our primary concern is that we feel that we were lied to. The language on the library bond, Measure FF, makes it very clear that it is for renovation.”

“The citizens in Le Conte, and other neighborhoods as well, expected that if they voted for this funding, this 26 million, that those libraries would be preserved as much as possible and that you would be preserving and protecting those historic features. Demolition of the south branch and the west branch are clearly outside the scope of this bond measure, and so the bond funds should not be used for demolition.”

“I remember when I lived on Julia Street” said the next speaker “and my son was ten years old, walking over to the south branch library many times.”

“And I am concerned about the demolition funds and where they come from because we know the general fund is very constrained as we heard many times tonight.”

(Councilmember Worthington had previously mentioned that the City Manager had found general fund money to pay for demolishing the two library buildings. This would allow the City to avoid spending Measure FF funds on the actual demolition, but the bond monies would still be applied to constructing new buildings on the cleared sites).

“And I remember when we lined up here last June for things that were being cut, Willard Pool, and I am just very afraid that if a million dollars, or whatever it takes to demolish the south and the west branch, will come out of these restricted funds and we’re all concerned for the kids of the city and the programs that wouldn’t be there, and so we really need to be wise in our use of funds.”

“And certainly the refurbishing of both the south and the west branch is an option, and you don’t have to be concerned with the money from the $26 million (Measure FF money). I’m sure there’s plenty of funds there to do what needs to be done to have fine libraries for the children, and us adults, too, who love to read in the future.”

“Under the Zoning Adjustments Board decision, the treatment of the library branches will be separate but not equal,” with the South and West branches suffering, said Gene Bernardi, the next speaker. Her father was an architect with the famed Bay Area firm of Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons.

She praised the Todd Jersey alternative plans submitted by Concerned Library Users for renovating the historic portions of the South and West branch libraries and constructing new additions, and criticized the overall character and “ticky tacky intrusions” in the City’s design for an all-new West Branch Library.

Peter Warfield, from the Library Users Association group, objected to the “greasing of the skids, essentially, for the demolition of two libraries…like some of the other speakers, I suggest you send the decision of ZAB and LPC back.”

(Disclosure: the author has written extensively on the library issues, including both news stories and opinion pieces, in the past year. He does not believe Measure FF allowed demolitions. He is not a member of Concerned Library Users.)
Berkeley Library Demo Draws Dozens In Support

By Steven Finacom
Wed Apr 27 08:03:00 -0700 2011

A modestly sized rally of about 60 to 70 individuals gathered at the steps of City Hall on the evening of April 26, 2011 to express support for the demolition and rebuilding of the South and West branches of the Berkeley Public Library.

The future of the branches is at issue in a lawsuit filed by Concerned Library Users against the City of Berkeley, seeking to block the demolition of the branches and promoting a partial renovation / partial new construction approach instead.

A key issue in the lawsuit is whether the Library can legally spend money from the 2008 library bond, Measure FF, on demolition and rebuilding of the South and West branches. The bond measure referred to renovation, expansion, accessibility and seismic improvements at the branches, but did not propose or identify demolition as something the funds could be spent on.

All the speakers at the rally, organized by a new group calling itself New Libraries Now, favored the demolition and complete rebuilding of the two branches.

New Libraries Now didn’t announce any detailed information about its composition at the rally, but it appears to have at its core Berkeley Public Library Foundation leaders, two or three City Councilmembers, and several African-American community leaders.

An overlapping group gathered privately this past winter in what was promoted as a “community meeting” about the lawsuit that Foundation leader Linda Schacht later described as a strategy meeting to plan a response to the lawsuit. That strategy appeared to be unfolding at this rally.

Speakers included a Berkeley School Board member, a local minister, a Downtown businessman who has organized a peti-
tion drive aimed at the lawsuit proponents, the president of the Berkeley Federation of Teachers and three City Councilmembers.

The speeches were thick with condemnation of the lawsuit, claims that it would delay reconstruction of the branches, generalized statements about, and praise for, the good done by public libraries, calls to protect and educate Berkeley’s children, and a few religious allusions.

The Councilmembers who spoke—Linda Maio, Max Anderson, and Laurie Capitelli—pledging their support for demolition and rebuilding of the South and West branches. A fourth Councilmember, Darryl Moore, stood with them and applauded, but did not speak to the crowd.

At six o’clock, the time publicized for the rally start, I counted about 30 people standing around at the base of the City Hall steps. Two boys poised for photographs with a sign calling for “New Healthy Branch Libraries”, while a girl sat nearby on the steps.

Dave Snyder, the paid Executive Director of the Berkeley Public Library Foundation, bustled around organizing speakers to stand on the steps.

At about 6:10, the group—speakers and audience—had grown to close to 60. Protestors from a demonstration against Berkeley’s proposed “sit / lie” ordinance passed by up the steps, on their way into City Hall. Some of the “sit / lie” protestors remained outside on the City Hall steps, propping or holding their signs in view of the crowd.

The largely white, matronly, and middle-aged audience for the library rally looked on in some bemusement and confusion as young homeless men and women, Cal students opposing the sit / lie ordinance, and a few grizzled veteran Berkeley activists filtered through the library rally and into the building.

During and at the end of the library rally the group of those there to support the rally numbered about 60 spectators at the base of the City Hall steps and another dozen or more speakers and those standing with them on the steps.

I counted several times and kept coming up with about 60-70 people, total, who were clearly there for the library demolition / rebuild cause.

I also looked at the apparent composition of the crowd. Among the 60-70, there were about 15-20 African-American and Hispanic faces. Of course I didn’t have a chance to ask everyone there the ethnicity with which they identified, but as you can see from the crowd photo accompanying this article, the majority of those attending were clearly middle aged to elderly Caucasian men and women, including several I recognized from the Library Foundation, the Friends of the Library, and various public hearings on the Library issues.

There were several high-school age attendees (some of whom spoke) and some younger children; after posing for photographs with signs, the latter spent much of the rally playing on the adjacent lawn.

African-American faces were more visible at the top of the steps and the speaker rostrum, including Berkeley’s two African-American Councilmembers, one of whom spoke later.

“I welcome you all for New Libraries Now!” said David Snyder, beginning the event, and restless patrolling the top of the steps like a game show host on stage. “Thank you!”

“We have a few individuals who would like to make comments of their support for why we should have new libraries at our West and South branches,” he said. “We were excited here in Berkeley, when Measure FF was passed, we expected to see the community come together.”

He referred to “the 26 million dollars that we as citizens have allocated for this project, and we look forward to seeing this project move forward on time.”

Winston Burton, a member of the Board of Library Trustees, was the first speaker and began to rouse the crowd. “Just getting ready to rock! Are you with me? Fired up! Fired up! Ready to go!” Burton urged. The audience cheered.

The Library construction, Burton said “had led to the first Project Labor Agreement” in Berkeley “to promote local dollars and local business.” “Let’s keep the Berkeley voter’s money and local dollars which support Measure FF in Berkeley! Keep the Berkeley money in Berkeley! Are you with me?”

“Yeah!” the crowd cheered.

Burton recalled that he was one of three campaign chairs for Measure FF in 2008.

“What we consistently heard back from the community was what they wanted in their libraries, and it was consistent. They wanted their libraries to be beautiful—not cute” (derisive laughter came from the crowd). “They wanted accessible. They wanted them to be green, high-tech, comprehensive…and they also wanted a community room that we can hopefully use at night, hopefully.”

“Over the next two years I heard the voices of the community as concerned library users came to numerous meetings at each branch to review plans and proposals.”

“After two years the community said they consistently wanted their libraries to be, guess what?” Burton said. “Beautiful, not cute, accessible, green, high tech, comprehensive…”

“You see now it’s three years later, the message hasn’t changed, it’s the same, the community knows what it wants, it knows what it needs.”

“This opportunity may not come again, and it may not come again for fifty or even a hundred years….Let’s not waste a minute! Let’s not waste a penny!” he concluded.

“We wanted to take the opportunity to have some of our City Council members make their comments,” said Snyder, “so please, Councilmember Susan Wengraf…” as he turned to Councilmember Linda Maio who was standing next to him.

“We’re in session right now so we came down to be with you”, said Maio, quickly recovering from the mistaken introduction. She stood in front of Councilmembers Max Anderson, Darryl Moore, and Laurie Capitelli, all of them holding signs that said “New Libraries Now For South and West Berkeley:”

“We’ve come down to thank you for joining us for new libraries for south and west”, she said. “There’s one word in Measure FF that’s in contention, it’s called the word ‘demolition’. Because of one word we may not have libraries for south and west for our kids, for our families, for our seniors, and for our disabled. It’s simply not fair. It’s simply not right.”

“We have to go ahead with what we’ve got, and what we’ve got is the taxpayers, the taxpayers of Berkeley say Yes! we want good quality libraries for all of Berkeley…” And so with your help we have to get the word out because once taxpayers hear it, let me tell you, once they hear it, they are angry. They’re angry because we’re stalled. And we’re stalled because of a few people who nitpick.”

“Your presence here means that you have reinforced the commitment that this city expressed on election day in 2008”, Councilmember Max Anderson said. “We want good, quality, modern libraries in all parts of our city. We want a fair and equal distribution of resources in the city.”

“We want our families and our children to have access to the materials and the education and the books they need to have a successful life…no matter whether you live
in North Berkeley, whether you live in the Claremont area, or in South or West Berkeley.

"Yay! Yay!" a woman screamed from the crowd, followed by applause.

Anderson then offered an analogy about his experience with his home kitchen remodel. He said “we had no plans to tear down the wall but what we found during the course of our process compelled us if we were to have a decent kitchen.”

“Now if any of you find dry rot and bad things in the walls of your house and your plan is revitalizing your kitchen, you’re not going to walk away from it because you discovered dry rot, you’re going to fix it to the highest standard you can.”

“What people have to decide is, what side are you going to be on? Are you going to stand in the library door, or are you going to try to facilitate the availability of these resources to all of our community?” Anderson concluded. “You’ve done your job, and we’re going to go in there and do ours.”

Councilmember Laurie Capitelli came forward next, clutching a yellow “New Libraries Now” sign. “I just want to say, number one, the voters said overwhelmingly ‘spend the money, rebuild the libraries, have modern libraries for everyone’”, he said.

“Number two, we’ve spent, all of you, many of you, hundreds of other people, hundreds if not thousands of hours planning these four libraries. NO ONE stepped forward at any of the meetings I went to and said, Stop. NO ONE. It was only after a very small minority didn’t get their way or perceived of some way to stop this project that they’ve moved forward with obstructionist activities. It’s time to move forward, it’s time we as a community said, the overwhelming majority of people have said, move ahead and build these libraries. Thank you!”

“That you Councilmember, we appreciate your support”, Snyder said, calling on the next speaker, Beatriz Leyva-Cutler.

The four Councilmembers disappeared into the building, where they rejoined the Council session, which was scheduled to vote on EIR certification, zoning revisions, and use permits for the South and West branch demolition and rebuild projects.

“We want our libraries now!” Leyva-Cutler called, introducing herself as president of the School Board. “Today I come here to this rally to share my opinion as a private citizen, a homeowner and a childcare director of Berkeley. Because I simply can’t be quiet about something so important to our community of Berkeley. I want you to help me, and whenever I say ‘Libraries’, I want you to shout out, ‘We want our libraries now!’.”

The small crowd complied a bit too enthusiastically, sometimes drowning out her remarks after each mention of ‘library’.

She talked about her own children and the children she teaches going to the library. “We take children to promote their reading. Families go to the library.”

“We need libraries in west and south Berkeley.” “Taxpayers voted for new libraries. We voted this in 2008 and now a small group of people are stopping the rebuilding of our libraries,” she said.

“Who will listen to them? Who will listen to them? NOBODY!”

“They just want attention!” yelled a woman from the crowd.

“It is simply unfair, it’s not right, and it’s simply a waste of time and money to stall the renovation of the West and South Berkeley libraries,” Leyva-Cutler continued.

“You do what you have to do to get back into your house, and we want to get back into our libraries.”

“Children and the community deserve to have the beautiful and safe and inviting libraries that we were promised. Libraries are a lifeline for many and we can’t be quiet on this….Please sign the petition that is circulating and those naysayers who would rather take the City to court and pay lawyers than build our libraries, enough is enough. Stop wasting valuable time and build our libraries.”

Reverend M. Peeples was then introduced.

“When I think about what has happened to us here in Berkeley it really disturbs me… What I’m saying now is I don’t like what I hear, what I see. I want the City Council to move forward with rebuilding our libraries.”

“We encouraged our people in our community to vote for the bonds for the libraries and for people to step in, and stop, and try to keep our kids from learning, it is not fair. The kids in south and west Berkeley need libraries more than people in other parts of our city.”

“I would hope that you would move forward, Council, in terms of doing what the people have said to do, and move forward and get these libraries rebuilt.”

“Those are the ones that are held up because of the lawsuit. Now, we don’t need any one speaking any more because the people have already spoken.”

“We have to do it. If we need to march again, let’s march. If we need to lay in, let’s lay in. Do what we have to do, because our children need these libraries today.”

“I’m upset because people are messing with my children,” Peeples continued. “We need to move forward and do what we have to do. We cannot be caught in a ‘trick bag’. I hope you hear what I’m saying. It’s just another trick bag that has been played in Berkeley for some many years.”

“We hope that the people who are trying to stop, who have a lawsuit against the process, will reconsider what they are doing and think about the babies. The babies don’t have anything to deal with, they need the libraries to do what they need to do.”

“It breaks my heart because teachers know that libraries are critical to the education of our children”, said Cathy Campbell, president of the Berkeley Federation of Teachers. She said her organization had supported the campaign for the library bonds.

“Every part of our town deserves high quality, modernized, sufficient, even more than sufficient, libraries.” “We have to have libraries that are excellent in all parts of our town.”

“We need to grow this movement…when do we want our libraries?”

“Now!” the crowd chorused.

Snyder took back the microphone for a moment and gave a plug for a Facebook page promoting the demolition / rebuilding. “Look for New Libraries Now, like it, pass it along, get the communication going…”

He then introduced Ben Bartlett, owner of a downtown Berkeley business and the son of Dale Bartlett(once the aide to former Councilmember Maudelle Shirek) who was in the crowd. “I’d like to take a moment to remind us what’s truly at stake here” Bartlett said, describing beautiful, ideal, library buildings. He was flanked by five teenagers.

“The future I’m talking about here clearly is not an imaginary future. It’s real. You chose it. You planned it and you funded it. And now, due to some misguided lawsuit, you’re defending it.”

“Who knows better how to spend your money than you do? Nobody.” “And who knows how to raise your family better than you do? Nobody.”

“You did the right thing for this community…you passed Measure FF. You are in control,” Bartlett said.

“So right here, we’ve got some young people, who when they learned of this AT-TACK on their future, they did something about it. They put together a petition by their own hand…Hundreds, literally hundreds, of their own friends signed it.”
“So please, say hi to my child soldiers,” handing the microphone to the teenagers standing behind him.

“I’m really glad to see that everybody is behind us”, said a boy named Jonah.

“Libraries are wonderful things in this community, and we as a community need to uphold and support them to the best of our ability”, said Noah Hardy.

“Reading is Fundamental”, emphasized a woman described as Bartlett’s relative, who was standing with the Berkeley High School students.

“Indeed”, said Bartlett, taking the microphone back. “The kids said it, let’s not let them down here.”

“As adults we have a duty to create a successful society for the next generation… we are Berkeley.”

“Where would Berkeley be without our libraries?” a woman called plaintively from the crowd.

“Exactly!” said Bartlett, reciting a litany “Libraries are the first step of independence. They teach knowledge, they teach responsibility.”

“I’m really pleased at the community at large,” said Bartlett, reciting a litany “We are Berkeley.”

“Let the City Council and the litigants know that Berkeley needs world class libraries,” Bartlett said.

“We are Berkeley.”

“The petition being circulated read simply, ‘NEW LIBRARIES NOW’” the Berkeley Public Library Foundation Fundraiser who had previously been in the forefront of criticism of the library lawsuit.
explains what’s wrong with the proposed ordinance as he makes protest signs.

The sit-down protest attracted a variety of demonstrators.

By Steven Finacom

Students joined the demonstration.

More than 60 sitters, lie-ers, crawlers, and a clown engaged in a little street theater Tuesday at the old Cody’s building on Telegraph Avenue, demonstrating what might happen if a new measure prohibiting sitting or lying on public sidewalks were to be adopted by the Berkeley City Council.

Afterwards, demonstrators moved on to speak in the public comment period of the Berkeley City Council meeting, picking up more supporters along the route. They were joined by a large group of Cal students, workers at the Suitcase Clinic—who weren’t getting course credit for their efforts. The clinic provides medical treatment for homeless and other underserved clients.

At the city council meeting, five names were drawn at random to make public comments before the meeting started about items not on the council’s agenda for the night. Suitcase Clinic workers, who had become a sizeable percentage of the 100 or so protesters who occupied most of the seats in the council chamber, made impassioned statements defending the rights of their clients to sit down when they needed to, even on public sidewalks.

According to one of the protest organizers, Gina Sasso, the goal of the action was to influence three city council members who protesters believe might change their yea votes to nays as the idea of a sit/lie prohibition moves closer to adoption at City Hall.

“Funny thing is, if you believe a quip made by Mayor Tom Bates during the comment period—there is no sit/lie ordinance proposed. But others claim one is in the works. Ordinance drafters are waiting to monitor legal challenges to San Francisco’s recently passed sit/lie ordinance before they pull the trigger, according to Roland Peterson, spokesman for Telegraph Avenue businessmen, who, he intimates, are mad as hell and aren’t going to take allegedly blocked doorways and other perceived threats to business on the Ave.

“We also want to be less restrictive with our Berkeley ordinance,” said Peterson. “For instance our ordinance won’t—like S.F.’s—apply citywide,” he said, “and will focus on the most egregious violations, such as blocking business doorways.”

Councilmember Kriss Worthington, who represents the Telegraph Avenue area, says that the main push is not coming from merchants, that some commercial property owners in Berkeley “just want to maximize their high rents.”

But if the property owners would lower their rents to market levels, he says, “we could rent all the vacant storefronts.”

He noted that similar efforts to get people off the street were made by local business groups in good economic times. “They tried to do it when the economy was booming, and now they’re trying to do it when the economy is down.”

“Why is it that the sales are down worst in the areas with the fewest homeless people on the street? It’s clearly the recession,” he believes.

According to Berkeley homeless activist and renowned muralist Osha Neumann, an attorney at East-Bay Community Law Center, some Berkeley police “think sit/lie has already passed.” He pointed out a protester who readily displayed his ticket for allegedly trespassing in a Cody building doorway.

As Neumann lay prone during the demo, blocking the walk at Haste and Telegraph, two Berkeley police officers watched from across the street on Haste. The police left without doing anything more than eyeballing the civil disobedience event and kept citations to themselves.

Neumann said that he hoped the action is going to be the start of an awakening in Berkeley...so we can move on from the fight to come together.”

“This is absolutely not the way,” he said. “We already have an ordinance against lying on the sidewalk during the day.”

He noted that laws of this sort have “hidden consequences”, and “don’t help the businesses.”

“The City’s own studies show that the areas that have the most people on the street

By Ted Friedman

This Suitcase Clinic volunteer spoke to the Berkeley City Council during its public comment period.
had the least decline in revenue” recently, he said. Business areas in Berkeley with the fewest homeless have actually seen the biggest drops in sales and City revenue, because of the recession, according to the city’s Office of Economic Development.

Neumann sees the demonstration as representative of Berkeley’s “progressive values, the outgrowth of an earlier culture.”

He remembers that Berkeley’s current tradition of progressivism and activism “grew out of a period when people were sitting on the sidewalks all the time…this political culture had its finest moment in the FSM when people sat down in front of a police car.”

He believes “Berkeley could set an example here of not going with the flow, not scraping the bottom of our moral barrel.”

The city could “talk about the real problems in our public spaces and deal with them without going for the police state,” he suggested.

Later in the evening, on the sidewalk in front of Old City Hall as the protesters left the council meeting, Neumann, Sasso and other organizers agreed that the first outing of the loose coalition that has come together to try to head off yet another attempt at enacting a sitting ban in Berkeley had been a definite success.

Becky O’Malley and Steven Finacom contributed to this article.

BUSD To Consider Dumping All Pre-K Extended Day Programs--
Goodbye 2020 Vision to Close Achievement Gap! (Partisan Position)

By Pablo Paredes
Tue Apr 26 09:40:00 -0700 2011

My Name is Pablo Paredes and I am a parent of a child in one of the last four remaining extended day programs in BUSD’s Pre-K system (attached is a photo where my son interacts with his exclusively students of color classroom). I am also the Chair of the School Governance Council for the three Berkeley Preschools. I was shocked to learn that in order to address the 15 % state mandated budget cuts and 10% reduction in per pupil reimbursement the strategy that staff will submit for approval by the BUSD Board next [today], Wednesday, is to cut the last remaining four classrooms that offer extended care forPre-schools in Berkeley. Maybe even the last of their kind in the state. This is a major issue for families of color in Berkeley. A quick site visit at Hopkins, King or Franklin CDC to the 9.5 hour classrooms will reveal classrooms that almost exclusively serve working poor families of color and these are the classrooms on the chopping block.

2008 began for Berkeley with a wake up call about racial inequity in our schools learning that Berkeley Unified boasted the highest racial achievement gap in the state and that at Berkeley High there was one Black student enrolled in AP courses (despite a 3000 plus student body). A Black Youth Conference at Berkeley high was soon held at which District folks made 3 promises the first and most important was to address the achievement gap by focusing resources on Kindergarten readiness in other words investing in Pre-K programs especially those who serve disproportionately students of color such as the 9.5 hour classrooms aka extended hours.

The response to a lot of bad media and the vehicle to fulfill promises like those made to black Berkeley High Youth was the 2020 Vision which was supposed to look to erase the achievement Gap by 2020. One of its three planning lenses was an early childhood development lens. One of its four task forces were specifically supposed to address 0-5 year old factors the primary area of focus for this group was strengthening access to and quality of a pre-school experience for students of color. However by the end of the Year the recession was on everyone’s mind and suddenly the 2020 vision commitments seemed irrelevant to the decisions being made. By 2010 BUSD had handled a round of state and federal budget cuts at the Preschool level by reducing many of the extended care classrooms to 3 and 6.5 hour programs. The key difference between the former and both of the latter is that the extended day programs cater almost exclusively to children of color where as the 3 and 6 hour programs are where many of the white parents are concentrated meaning BUSD, now a year after planning the 2020 vision, is considering decisive steps that increase the Achievement Gap.

Now that BUSD is down to only 4 extended day Pre-K classrooms serving 96 families from over 8 or more classrooms and at one point serving over 300 families with extended care - the plan being looked at is to put a nail in the coffin of the 2020 Vision by chopping all four of the remaining extended care pre-k classrooms. In effect, the entire 15% budget cut at the preschool level would be shouldered by classrooms that serve predominantly children of color. To give you a sense of how clear the class lines of this cut are, look no further than the very write up for the BUSD meeting in the Board packet from staff in which they admit that after this cut they will struggle to find Head Start program eligible families so they are cutting their ties with Head Start as well. (write up is attached here and available at the BUSD website as well)

Why is this relevant to the Achievement Gap? Well beyond the fact that children of color will shoulder the entire budget cut we have to be clear about the importance of pre-school toward impacting the achievement gap. According to Jacqueline Jones of the U.S. Department of Education’s early learning office every $1 dollar spent on early childhood ed is worth seven because children who attend prekindergarten are more likely to not need remedial education, to graduate from high school, to go to college and to have higher-paying jobs that produce more taxes.

We have already seen how Berkeley is failing black students with the dismal enrollment of black students in AP courses at Berkeley High but the situation for Latin@ families and Early Childhood education is uniquely disturbing due to language issues.

To quote Bruce Fuller a professor of Education and Public Policy @ UC Berkeley and the author of a study on Latino children
and Pre-school, “We know that quality preschool lifts the early literacy and social skills of Latino children, especially those from Spanish-speaking homes. So, as fewer Latino kids benefit from preschool, they will experience less success as they move through school.”

This Wednesday the Board will consider an approach to the state mandated budget cuts that will exacerbate the achievement gap. No other options are being explored. The City of Berkeley committed to work with BUSD to implement 2020 but they are not being tapped to save the PRE-K classrooms that do the most to impact the achievement gap. Programs like BPEF are not being tapped. Creative ways to use BSEP money are not being explored. Before taking a way a key lifeline to our lowest income Berkeley families and feeding the monster known as the “achievement Gap” we should leave no stone unturned but currently we are on route to cutting this lifeline without turning a single stone.

I am writing in hopes you may cover this story which is going unnoticed. I am organizing with parents to have a presence at the Board Meeting next Wednesday, also meeting with city council folks to seek city support, also with union members to see if there are compromises that can be made to keep serving these children, and other possible stake holders.

Feel free to call me @ 510-967-1357.

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Peace-War Melodrama Debuts in Berkeley’s People’s Park 42nd Anniversary Entertainment; Easter and Weather Attack Teley Street Fest

By Ted Friedman
Tue Apr 26 11:46:00 -0700 2011

Easter Sunday and bad morning weather threatened to attack this year’s 42nd anniversary of the battle for People’s Park in 1969 and take out Teley’s “Last Weekends Festival” too.

If the cold 15mph wind and sometimes hard rain had continued into the afternoon, People’s Park would have been slogged and sound amplifiers driving the Telegraph Ave. fest would have been blown by rain, according to the event’s organizer.

The People’s Park amps and onstage entertainment were tented. But park revelers would have sunk in ‘quickmud,’ according to park sources familiar with the park’s legendary water drainage problems.

The day was somewhat saved when weather changed its mind. Easter doesn’t do change. The fair’s organizer, an avenue head shop owner, joked that he’d emailed the Easter bunny requesting weather change. The bunny came through.

Nevertheless, the south side event was not as well attended as popular past street fairs, according to some street vendors on Telegraph.

Easter may have lowered attendance, according to vendors, who said the scary morning weather was also a factor. They questioned the decision to compete with Easter when a lot of parents are pre-occupied fooling with eggs.

Another vendor questioned the wisdom of scheduling two events — Park versus Teley — for the same weekend.

Yet another theory, from a security officer: competing fairs in the city. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, two major fairs drew thousands to the city Sunday.

Berkeley’s Spring street fair on Telegraph, in its third year, was organized by Al Geyer, 66, owner of Annapurna, an avenue head shop founded in 1969 — the same year as the People’s Park riots and the impetus for Sunday’s People’s Park celebration.

Geyer acknowledged that this year’s avenue fair had been reined in if not rained on.

A Teley streetfair last spring drew as many as 4,000 and attracted mainstream media, according to Geyer. This year it will have to settle for low attendance and the Planet, according to no one in particular.

An enthusiastic, if not overflowing, park crowd of more than 100 taking in the sun, free food, and each other stayed on until near dusk for some kick-ass Indy bands. Avenue fair-goers were wowed by great bands, the back-by-demand bucking bull, and an aerialist playing with fire.

Park festivities were kicked off by Gilbert Blacksmith, of the Lacota tribe in full Indian dress who performed a high spirited Indian dance — accompanied by Indian chants and drumming.

As his set was ending, he invited park early birds to join him in a circle dance.

Before he left, he addressed the crowd with a plea for peace urging everyone to be good citizens and follow the laws of the land. “Our planet is running out of time,” he said. Afterwards, he made it clear that each of us is “running out of time.”

Had he been reading the lurid People’s Park stories in the Planet and decided to tame the park? Nope; he said he had simply commended with the universe that morning and was relaying a message from “the great unknown.”

Sound like peace?

Free food in the park was courtesy of Food Not Bombs, but Zachary Running Wolf Brown, 47, “dropped a bomb,” — his words — of his own while introducing the park’s first performer, Phoenix, a member, along with Running Wolf, in the Blackfeet tribe whom Brown — in a humor aside — noted was a “pretty Indian,” unlike Brown.

Then Running Wolf dropped his bomb. The tree sitting protest against the university would resume when “the students leave” for summer break, according to Running Wolf.

Bombs are used in wars.

Wolf, a former mayoral protest candidate who is running again, honored an absent Matt Dodt, the previous tree-sitter. Dodt, 53, could not attend the park event because he is observing a three year stay-away-from-the-university order which he intends to challenge July 15 when he faces misdemeanor charges related to the tree-sit.

After three months in a tree in the park, Dodt was hauled from his perch by a U.C. crane after poking a counter protester in the hand with a “campers” tool. Counter-protesters claimed to represent the opinion in the park that the tree-sit was counter-productive to the park.

Easter Sunday, the Easter Bunny saving the day, an aerialist playing with fire, and a dancing Indian bearing a message of peace to People’s Park. Great vibes, top-flight Indy bands, and sun, if not son. And oh yes, a war cry from Running Wolf.

Berkeleyans and guests doing what Berkeley does best — war and peace melodramas.

Ted Friedman reports for the Planet from the Southside.

Local Protesters Pay Big Bucks to Disrupt Obama’s Fund-raiser

By Gar Smith / Environmentalists Against War
Tue Apr 26 11:49:00 -0700 2011

On April 21, 2011, a group called the Fresh Juice Party political action staged an “interrupt/interaction/performance art happening” during a Presidential fund-raising dinner in San Francisco. A table of 10 people attending the $5,000-a-ticket fund-raiser surprised the other attendees when they suddenly stood up and broke into a song in the middle of the president’s remarks. Unlike
the Bush Era, no shoes were thrown and no one was wrestled to the ground and beaten during this Presidential Protest. President Obama politely stopped his speech to listen, the protesters were allowed to finish their song, and no one was arrested. (But maybe this is the kind of special treatment that comes with spending $50,000 to sit at one of these fund-raising tables.)

The Fresh Juice disrupters hoped to call attention to incarcerated whistleblower Pvt. Manning. The polite protest took place on the same day Manning was transferred to Leavenworth where he will remain in solitary confinement, 23 hours a day while awaiting trial for leaking -- among other things -- video evidence of US war crimes in Iraq. Here are the lyrics to the protest ditty that interrupted the president’s event.

**Song Lyrics:**
Dear Mr. President, we honor you today, sir
All of us have given you our tax dollars
It takes a lot of Benjamins to run a campaign
I paid my dues, where’s my change?

We’ll vote for you in 2012, yes, that’s true
Look at the Republicans -- what else can we do?
Even though we don’t know if we’ll retain our liberties
In what you seem content to call a “free society.”

Yes, it’s true that Terry Jones is legally free
To burn a people’s holy book in shameful effigy
But at another location in this country
Alone in a 6x12 cell sits Bradley
23 hours a day is night
The 5th and 8th Amendments say this kind of thing ain’t right

Nobel Peace Prize/ Whistle blowers
Guantanamo/ Quantico
Juan Mendez/ Due Process
Crimson Tide/ Laurence Tribe
8th Amendment/ Cruel and Unusual
5th Amendment/ Punishment before a trial
Terry Jones/ Burin’ that Quran
Promise of transparency/ Dennis Kucinich
We paid our dues, where’s our change?
We paid our dues, where’s our change?
Video: The President Debates the Issue

After the disruption, the president paused to debate the issue with several members of the audience. Here is a transcript of the conversation, which was captured on a cellphone.

**Pres Obama:** We’re a nation of laws, we don’t individually make our own decisions about how the laws operate.

**Pres speaking about Price:** No no, he’s doing fine, he’s doing fine, he’s being heard -- he’s asking a question.

**Back to Price:** He [Manning] broke the law. Well --

**Price:** He was telling the truth.

**Pres Obama:** Well, what did he do was he dumped. Well, what he did was he dumped. No, it wasn’t the same thing. Ellsberg’s release wasn’t classified in the same way. So... anyway. Alright.

**President Obama:** so [...] people can have philosophical views about, eh, sort of [...] no, no, but look: I can’t do diplomacy on an open source. That’s not how [the] world works. And if you’re a -- if you’re in the military, and -- I have to abide by certain classified information, and if I release stuff that I’m not authorized to release, I’m breaking the law.

“Vbanti2,” the online commentator who provided the transcription, also provided the following response to Obama’s logic: “Perhaps [Manning] did break the law. But does that justify his being tortured? Does that justify his being denied due process? And how can you claim that Ellsberg’s whistle blowing was fundamentally different? What legal distinction are you making? Why not produce a short video address to America’s citizens, explaining this? Wouldn’t that be a good way to address our reasonable concerns that Manning’s whole case has been bungled?”

May 4 Lawson Lecture To Highlight Earthquake Issues

*By Steven Finacom*

**Tue Apr 26 16:22:00 -0700 2011**

The 105th anniversary of the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake on Monday, April 18, was commemorated by Mother Nature herself with a little bump of an offshore tremor that afternoon. Another way to remember 1906—and to prepare for the inevitable major earthquakes in the future of the Bay Area—is to attend the 2011 Lawson Lecture sponsored by the Seismographic Laboratory at the UC Berkeley campus.

The annual event, established in 2003, is named for UC geologist Andrew Lawson who suggested the name for the San Andreas Fault. Each year the program presents a talk by a leading seismologist or other earthquake expert outlining cutting edge research in the field.

This year the Lawson Lecture takes place on Wednesday, May 4, at 5:00 PM in the Banatano Auditorium in Sutardja Dai Hall on the UC Berkeley campus. It is free and open to the public.

The speaker is Dr. Mary Comerio of the Department of Architecture.

Her topic is “Two Earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand: lessons for California.”

“Comerio visited Christchurch, New Zealand, after the September, 2010 (magnitude 7.1) earthquake and after its surprisingly damaging February 2011 Magnitude 6.3 aftershock. She will talk about the tectonic setting of the two earthquakes and why the damage from the smaller one holds important lessons for California.”

Comerio is also known for her trail-blazing 1998 study, published in book form, *Disaster Hits Home*. In it she reviewed the impacts of natural disasters on the housing stock, particularly the way in which Federal policy tends to aid homeowners trying to rebuild after a widespread disaster—flood, hurricane, earthquake, wildfire—but does not do much to assist in the rebuilding of rental housing.

That’s an important consideration in a place like Berkeley where a large portion of the housing stock is occupied by renters.

To see the lecture flyer, go here: [http://seismo.berkeley.edu/announcements/2011_lawson_announcement.html](http://seismo.berkeley.edu/announcements/2011_lawson_announcement.html)

Information on the Lawson Lecture series overall is here: [http://seismo.berkeley.edu/news/lawson_lecture.html](http://seismo.berkeley.edu/news/lawson_lecture.html)

AB 410(Equal Access to Public Information for the Blind) Passes the Assembly Business and Professions Committee

*From the Office of Assemblyman Sandre Swanson*

**Tue Apr 26 16:33:00 -0700 2011**

Today, the Equal Access to Public Information for the Blind Act passed the Assembly Business and Professions Committee with a unanimous vote. “Blind and visually impaired people have a right to the same information that state agencies are required to provide to the rest of the public,” explained author Assemblymember Sandré R. Swanson (D-Alameda). “AB 410 codifies
fundamental democratic principles of equal access and public notice by requiring state agencies to provide regulations in a format that is accessible to the blind and visually impaired.”

Current state law, the Administrative Procedures Act, requires each state agency to make proposed regulations available to the public, giving them an opportunity to participate in the process by providing input before a regulation goes into effect. “This transparent process of regulation review and development is central to public participation in state government,” Swanson explained. “Sadly, the blind and visually impaired are unable to participate in this process because the reading software they use is not equipped to interpret the formatted text state agencies are currently using,” said Swanson.

Assemblymember Swanson’s office worked closely with the bill’s sponsor, the California Council of the Blind, to develop a regulation format that can be accurately interpreted by reading software. The narrative description required by AB 410 is a straight-forward explanation of the regulation, without any strikeouts, italicization, or other stylized text that is unreadable by the software used by the blind.

Jeff Thom, Chairperson of Governmental Affairs with the California Council of the Blind, emphasized how the narrative description required by AB 410 will give blind persons equal access to the governmental process. “AB 410 will empower persons who are blind or who have low vision to have the same ability as their sighted counterparts to work with state agencies in implementing the laws of California.”

Unlike Swanson’s AB 1787 of last year, which required state agencies to translate every regulation into a narrative description format, AB 410’s requirements are only triggered when a blind or visually impaired person requests the narrative format. Frank Welte, the Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs for the California Council of the Blind, worked closely with Swanson’s staff to craft both versions of the bill and is confident that the more measured approach of AB 410 is a sensible and fair solution. Welte testified to the Assembly Business and Professions Committee today. “AB 410 takes a fiscally responsible approach to providing Californians who are blind or visually impaired greater access to state regulatory information.”

Swanson concluded, “I am confident that state agencies want to do the right thing. We all want the blind and visually impaired to have access to public information. This bill gives state agencies some practical guidance on how to make that happen.”

AB 410 now moves to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

Spring Party Brightens Willard Park at Easter

By Steven Finacom, Special to the Planet
Tue Apr 26 11:09:00 -0700 2011
About equal numbers of young children, parents, and digital cameras flooded into Berkeley’s Willard Park on Saturday, April 23, to participate in and record the City of Berkeley’s annual “Egg Hunt Extravaganza”.

Carefully classified as a “Spring” (not Easter) celebration, the event was staffed by a busy and smiling contingent of City of Berkeley Parks and Recreation staff.

Activities included a “Kid Carnival” with games, arts and crafts, face painting, classes in dancing the “Bunny Hop” and a chance to be seen with the “Spring Bunny”, a large, white and pink creature who wandered through the crowd with a handler, a basketful of candy, and a penchant for posing for pictures.

By late morning the Park was filled with celebrants, some in colorful costume, others in daily attire. There was no Easter Parade, but rather a kaleidoscope of activities. No rain either.

The northern half of the large Willard lawn was reserved as an “egg hunt” area with carefully planned schedules for each age group. “One year old and younger” got to go at 10:30, eight to ten year olds had to wait until 11:45.

It wasn’t so much a hunt, really, as a scattering of hundreds of plastic eggs and other colorful, small, objects on the open grass but all the participants seemed to be pleased as they rushed happily about. City staffers went about tossing out handfuls of extra eggs as freely as parking tickets.

To bring you, dear readers, an accurate account of the proceedings I investigated a couple of overlooked eggs. They contained not candy but small toys. City staff had also placed bins around with signs encouraging participants to recycle the plastic eggshells.

$5 bought each child a colorful straw basket and a wristband to participate in the games and events.

One of the more popular activities was a small petting zoo set up under an oak tree at the edge of the lawn. Within the wire enclosure there were ducks, little chickens, a tiny pig, a young miniature goat, multiple and multicolored rabbits, and an enormous rooster. Children were let in a few at a time.

The rooster, one of the petting zoo staff said, was a rose Cochin, four months old. He looked like the largest animal in the pen and stalked about regally. Around 11:00 am he started to crow, the perfect Saturday wake-up call for Berkeley residents needing a reminder that it was time to go to brunch.

The little pig wandered around wagging its tail, the goat looked adorable, and the bunnies did rabbity things including nibbling on the lawn. At one point a little black and white spotted bunny climbed on the back of a much bigger brindle rabbit.

The brindle was not accommodating. The spotted one persisted. The brindle dashed away, setting off a short bunny stampede through the enclosure.

Near the pets, Berkeley fire engines and their crews also took turns posing for pictures and letting children climb carefully on the apparatus.

The digital camera dictated the day. Each child came away from the event with a couple of dozen pieces of candy or prizes, and each parent probably had a couple of hundred photographs. It was not uncommon to see one adult accompanying a child and the other chasing behind (or running ahead) to get the best picture.

On a historical note, Berkeley Easter / Spring events go back a long way. In the 1920s and 30s real eggs were decorated and collected for a mass hunt in Codornices Park.

Bonus activity; see how many times you can spot the “Spring Bunny” in the accompanying pictures.

MEMORIALS MARK WEEK AT UC BERKELEY

By Steven Finacom, Special to the Planet
Tue Apr 26 21:17:00 -0700 2011
If the week before last there was a spirit of celebration on the UC Berkeley campus, including the Cal Day Open House, the third week of April might be characterized as more contemplative.

The Armenian Student Association held several days of events as part of Genocide Awareness Week, concluding on campus with a “United Hands Across Cal” commemoration on Sproul Plaza. Students and community members gathered to hold hands, listen to speeches, music, and silence during the Friday lunch hour. Berkeley City Councilmember Kriss Worthington was one of the speakers, and words of support were offered by representatives of Jewish, Muslim, and Iranian student organizations.

Earlier in the week, symbolic candles and an information table marked Memorial Glade in front of Doe Library.

Friday evening about 70 students and others from Newman Hall, Holy Spirit Parish—the Roman Catholic student center south of the University—participated in a Good Friday “Ecumenical Stations of the Cross” procession across the Berkeley campus, reenacting the journey of Jesus to his crucifixion.

Beginning at Sather Gate they carried a cross to several stops on the campus where Biblical verses were read and more recent social activism recalled. Students alternated in carrying the wooden cross. At one point the procession passed behind a contingent of the Cal Marching Band which was giving a concert on Lower Sproul Plaza. Another one of the stops was next to the “Football Players” statue on campus.

On Monday, an array of small black ribbons was placed on a lawn near Sather Gate, in front of a sign that said “On Average, 1 Mexican Murdered Per Hour Because of the Drug War in Mexico, since 2006...What will YOU Do?”

**Opinion**

**The Berkeley Times, Just Another Arm of the Machine**

*Gale Garcia*
*Tue Apr 26 11:57:00 -0700 2011*

A reporter from the Berkeley Times called a couple of weeks ago to interview me about the lawsuit over the misuse of Measure FF library bond funding. I returned his call for two reasons, to read him the clear, unambiguous wording of Measure FF and to see if the Berkeley Times would do justice to the
I believe that Berkeley voters were deliberately misled about library officials’ intentions for the South and West Branch Libraries when Measure FF was on the ballot in 2008. The Argument in Favor of Measure FF stated, “Renovations will preserve and restore the historic architectural features at the branch libraries” – with no mention of demolitions at all. The Argument, which was an important piece of ballot information for the Measure, was signed by Tom Bates, Shirley Dean, Miriam Hawley, Darryl Moore and Nancy Skinner.

I think it is unconscionable to have promised restoration of the historic features of the branch libraries if the intention was, as it appears, to restore the North and Claremont Branch libraries and to demolish the libraries in the flatlands.

The Berkeley Times reporter never asked me where I reside, but said in his article, published on April 14, that I lived in the Claremont district. I wrote a short letter to the editor correcting this mistake. I clarified that in my many decades of residence in Berkeley, I have only lived in Districts 3 and 1, the very districts where the South and West Branch libraries are located.

I sent an e-mail to the Editor of the Times, Todd Kerr, asking him to confirm that he had received and would print my letter. He responded that he had received it and that he would call me, which he never did. He did not print my letter. Instead, another biased article promoting the position of those who want the flatland libraries demolished appeared in the April 21 issue. It stated as a “correction” that the previous article had not made it clear that, “Gale Garcia is currently a resident of South Berkeley” (well, yes, currently – and for the last 33 years – and cumulatively for most of my life).

I have been suspicious of the Berkeley Times ever since its first issue was published right before an election with a school bond measure on the ballot – it seemed odd that a new newspaper, printed in full color (very expensive), would have articles about Berkeley schools on 12 of its 20 pages. If you read the Berkeley Times for news, be aware that you might be getting only one side of the story, the side that the Bates Machine wants you to hear.

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A Missing, but Significant Piece of the Branch Library Renovation Debate.

By Blane Beckwith
Wed Apr 27 11:15:00 -0700 2011

Lately there has been much heated debate about tearing down the South Berkeley library. Many people around this neighborhood are quite outraged, and keep protesting that this building doesn’t need to be torn down. However, I say otherwise. This building should be replaced.

During this entire debate, there is one very notable aspect that seems to have been forgotten. That forgotten factor is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the safeguards it provides to guarantee physical access to public facilities. As a person with a disability, I’m rather insulted that this important issue hasn’t, to my knowledge, even been mentioned let alone taken into consideration.

In its present condition, the South Berkeley library is so far out of compliance with the ADA it isn’t even funny. In fact, it’s deplorable. This building is so crowded with bookshelves, tables, chairs, computer terminals for Internet access, newspaper racks, and other things that one can hardly make it inside the front door with a wheelchair.

As a disabled person who uses a wheelchair, I haven’t been able to use this facility for at least ten years. I am sick and tired of this fact, especially since I only live three blocks away from it. Even though I am this close to the South Berkeley library branch, I can’t use it and must go clear downtown whenever I want to use the library. It’s totally ridiculous!

For those people who oppose tearing down the South Berkeley library, I would like to ask one big question. How do they plan on making this small, inadequate building ADA compliant and maintain its present level of service? In my opinion, it cannot be done. This building is simply too small and needs to be replaced with something larger.

The Americans with Disabilities Act was twenty years old this past June, and it’s high time that people started realizing to not take this crucial issue seriously is wrong, both morally and legally. Granted, there is very little we can do to change people’s morals. However, when it comes to legal issues, we most certainly can.

The ADA gives we disabled the power to not only file a discrimination claim with the Department of Justice, but also gives us the power to file a lawsuit for discrimination.

The South Berkeley branch of the Berkeley Public Library, in its present condition, is a major lawsuit just waiting to happen. It’s a testimony to the patience of the numerous people with disabilities in this City that it hasn’t already happened.

In any lawsuit of this type would probably be rather high profile, and attract a fair amount of media attention, especially if that was a class-action lawsuit with numerous plaintiffs. How would this look in Berkeley, California the so-called “birthplace of the independent living movement”?

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The Coup in Côte d’Ivoire

By Jean Damu
Wed Apr 27 10:45:00 -0700 2011

As peace loving and progressive forces in the West and in the US in particular deliriously celebrated the awakening of pro-democratic movements in white dominated Islamic countries that routinely and officially kick blacks to the curb, growing evidence suggests the West, led by France, engineered a political and military coup in the Côte d’Ivoire, that some say is designed to re-colonize that country.

Set beside widespread beliefs the West i.e., Europe and the US, is doing much the same in Libya, the Côte d’Ivoire situation needs to be looked at anew, especially in light of late reports indicate fighting has broken out among the very forces of Alissane Ouattara that overthrew and arrested the constitutionally certified president, Laurent Gbagbo.

Fascinatingly in the US among the very few that have raised a note of protest to the alleged coup are Evangelical Christians, led by Pat Robertson and his Christian Broadcasting Network. In Africa a growing list of countries including Gambia, South Africa and Angola are protesting the intervention of the West and the overthrow of President Gbagbo.

The Mouse that Roared

Despite the fact Gambia is the smallest country on continental Africa on Sunday, April 17 Gambian president Yahya Jammeh issued a vigorous anti-colonial, anti-imperialist call in defense of the deposed Gbagbo.

The statement read on Gambian television and reprinted in Banjul newspapers said in part,

The events in Ivory Coast have vindicated us on our earlier assertion that Western neo-colonialist sponsored agents in Africa that owe allegiance only to themselves and their Western masters are ready to walk on thou-

-15-
sands of dead bodies to the Presidency. That is what is happening in Ivory Coast.

Africans should not only wake up, but stand up to the new attempts to re-colonize Africa through so called elections that are organized just to fool the people, since the true verdict of the people would not be respected if it does not go in favor of the Western backed candidates, as has happened in Cote D’Ivoire and elsewhere in Africa.…

Our position is very clear. The case of Laurent Gbagbo is a replica of the case of Patrice Lumumba who, as a freedom fighter for the dignity and independence of not only Congolese people but the entire black race, was overthrown by Western powers including the UN, and handed over to his enemies to be murdered.

History is repeating itself as the same neocolonial forces that overthrew Patrice Lumumba, captured him and handed him over to his enemies almost fifty years ago, are the same forces involved in the Ivory Coast with the only difference being that it is now a different former colonial power.

The statement went on to suggest that an interim government of national unity be formed to immediately organize new elections and that Ouattara be excluded from running based on his illegal taking of power.

In January, South Africa, in a move that temporarily frustrated international efforts to dislodge Gbagbo parked its naval frigate SAS Drakensberg off the coast of the Cote d’Ivoire. The move was widely seen as a statement that South Africa wanted a diplomatic end to the standoff and with Gbagbo included in any coalition government.

South Africa’s aggressive posture was counteracted by then acting Nigeria president Goodluck Johnson. Johnson, who also presided over ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) provided political cover for French and UN intervention by declaring West African support for Ouattara.

The South Africa-Nigeria split on Cote d’Ivoire was complicated by the fact both countries are vying to become permanent members of the UN’s Security Council and both are attempting to gain ascendancy over African foreign policy issues.

Tellingly however, Johnson who on April 16 was declared the winner of Nigeria’s presidential election is now being accused of voter fraud on virtually the same scale alleged against Ouattara.

In early April Angola had issued strong words in support of Gbagbo that backed the Gambian position. “…we also think that

Ivory Coast should create should create a government of national unity, on the basis of dialogue, since Laurent Gbagbo was constitutionally elected.

“War doesn’t work, there needs to be a peaceful solution to the crisis. Angola will not enter Ivory Coast like the French.” Angolan government spokesman Jose-Marie Fernandes said.

Curious and Likely Unreliable Allies

The current crisis in the Cote d’Ivoire (if it can still be defined a crisis) witnessed the takeover of the capital Abidjan by northern rebels led by Alissan Ouattara, the arrest of president Laurent Gbagbo and his family and finally Ouattara being sworn in as president. The crisis stems from Gbagbo’s refusal to accept results from what he considered the highly fraudulent presidential elections of November 28, 2010.

Gbagbo and his supporters say that in the November elections, elections that compare to US primaries, Gbagbo received tens of thousands of votes in the 4 northern regions- but in the runoff election he was credited with not one single vote.

“This is a statistical impossibility!” wailed US Senator James Inhofe (D-OK) to his senatorial colleagues. Inhofe, an evangelical Christian and key speaker for the creationist movement in congress, went on to point out to his fellow senators that in one northern region, “We have the precinct tallies of one region alone where Ouattara received 94,873 votes and Gbagbo received none…”if you multiply that times four you have the margin that Gbagbo allegedly lost the election by.”

Despite Inhofe’s shaky logic (you would need to examine all 4 regional vote totals to reach his conclusion) it doesn’t seem possible that any responsible political body would certify an election in which one of just two candidates received no votes in 500 polling stations. But that’s just what the Electoral Commission did, they certified the election claiming Ouattara received 54.1% of the vote while Gbagbo received just 45.9%.

In an anti-climax, however, Constitutional Council president Paul Yao N’dre appeared on state television and declared the election results “invalid.” The Constitutional Council is the legal body charged with upholding the Cote d’Ivoire constitution. It is they who swear the president into office.

“CEI (Independent Electoral Commission) was supposed to declare the results by latest on Wednesday (Dec. 1) midnight, but due to disagreements (among themselves ed.) over results from some regions (four northern regions controlled by Ouagttara where Gbagbo received no votes, ed.), it was not able to do so and therefore the Constitutional Council will take up the issue and make a ruling.”

Their ruling: Laurent Gbagbo was the winner.

In an interview CBN international affairs correspondent Gary Lane asked evangelical tycoon Pat Robertson an interesting question, “Who swore Ouattara in as president? The UN? France? I spoke to all seven members of the Constitutional Council and to a man they laid out all the evidence of why they declared Gbagbo the president and why they think the election was fraudulent. So who swore Ouattara in?”

The answer: Ouattara swore himself in! He did it by sending an email to the Constitutional Council declaring himself president. He did this immediately after the Council had sworn in Gbagbo.

Lane went on to say that he considered “a soft coup d’etat” had taken place in Cote d’Ivoire in an obvious attempt by France at re-colonization.

“Gary, I think you’re right on the money,” Robertson said.

Evidence in support of this theory is that Gbagbo was beginning to make noises and threats regarding nationalization of Cote d’Ivoire’s cocoa industry, an industry that has seen world cocoa prices skyrocket.

But Robertson’s real interest in the Cote d’Ivoire is likely bolstered by his concern, real or imagined, that a new government there would restrict evangelical teachings of the Bible

However the malevolent Three Blind Mice (France, the UN and European Union) weren’t having it-they declared Ouattara the legitimate president of Cote d’Ivoire and began aiding and fueling his forces and sending in their own forces.

The social base of Ouattara’s movement is mostly comprised of the offspring of large numbers of migrant workers from Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) who were encouraged in the 1960’s by first Cote d’Ivoire president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, to migrate and work on the coffee and cocoa plantations. They have remained and to this day are considered by many to be foreigners.

Alissane Ouattara, despite (or maybe because of) having been an official at the World Bank, had been instrumental in organizing a series of military coups against Gbagbo. Though the earlier coup attempts failed the 2002 attempt was successful in virtually splitting the country in half, which explains why the 500 polling stations that
claimed Gbagbo received no votes were all in the regions dominated by Ouattara forces.

As reports of murder and detention of Gbagbo supporters increase likely the Cote d'Ivoire story is far from over.

Time for the KPFA Community to Come Together

By Akio Tanaka, KPFA LSB member
Wed Apr 27 11:26:00 -0700 2011

This time last year KPFA was in dire financial circumstances. The Pacifica National Board (PNB) stepped in to bring the KPFA finances under control which necessitated some cuts in staff. Seven people took voluntary severance, and in the end two people were laid off.

A controversy about the cuts ensued and has divided the KPFA community. The five months of controversy have revealed some of the substantive differences between those who propose different solutions, but it is time for the KPFA community to come together.


September: The ‘Listener Support’ declined sharply between 2005 and 2009, ‘Payments to Pacifica’ was reduced proportionately and Pacifica laid off most of its staff two years ago, but there was no corresponding reduction in ‘Salaries and Benefits’ at KPFA. KPFA was on a brink of bankruptcy so the PNB intervened to make cuts in the staff. However, some claimed that Pacifica had a hit list to purge political opponents which caused much alarm amongst the staff.

November: Pacifica offered all the KPFA paid staff an option to take voluntary severance. In the end seven people took voluntary severance and two people were laid off, Brian Edwards-Tiekert and Aimee Allison. The layoffs followed the union contract which says: “In cases where skill, ability, knowledge and job performance are all equal, or could be equal in the opinion of the Employer after reasonable orientation and training, seniority shall prevail”.

The contract also gave seniority bumping rights to laid-off members. However, some claimed that layoff violated the terms of the union contract and that Pacifica was engaged in union busting which caused many labor supporters to question the cuts.

March: Brian exercised his seniority bumping rights, which was available to him from the beginning, and was rehired as a paid staff of the News Department. However, some claimed that Pacifica was forced to hire Brian back and that Pacifica then tried to layoff John Hamilton in retaliation.

2. Casting the Cuts as Management-Union Conflict.

Some have tried to cast the cuts as a conflict between management and union and vilified the Pacifica management, especially the Executive Director Arlene Engelhardt.

One board member, Matt Hallinan wrote in the Planet that “ArleneEngelhardt seized all power at KPFA.”

Arlene saved KPFA from brink of bankruptcy by making the necessary cuts, after which she installed a General Manager and an interim Program Director.

Another board member, Pamela Drake, posted on the Web that “Arlene-Engelhardt-Walker and her austerity budget, but has she taken a pay cut?” “Austerity, austerity, austerity, Engelhardt takes lessons from Gov. Walker. Shame, shame. She is killing the station as every staffing cut they make seems to reduce income while she takes more for the Pacifica bureaucracy. Shame.”

Arlene, the Executive Director, makes twice the salary of an entry level paid staff; Pacifica has a very flat organizational pay scale.

Another board member, Mal Burnstein, posted on the Web that “From what we are hearing so far, the new IGM is sounding like a fig leaf over Arlene’s exposed genitals.”

Kris Worthington of the Berkeley City Council astutely observed, this is not a battle between management and union but a battle between progressives that have differing visions for KPFA and Pacifica.

We need to reject people who have tried to cast this as management union conflict, and especially those who have engaged in vilification of Arlene Engelhardt.

3. Time for the KPFA Community to Come Together

Because seven people took voluntary severance, only two people were laid off, and one of those was rehired by exercising his bumping rights.

The new morning line up has Democracy Now in a timeslot where more people can listen to it, and KPFA listeners can now also listen to Al Jazeera.

In the interim, to help meet the financial challenges facing the station, volunteer listeners and the unpaid staff stepped up to produce the Morning Mix.

We should be thankful of the skills and dedication of paid and unpaid staff that have allowed the station to continue to broadcast good radio in times of financial challenges.

We progressives can engage in constructive debate about how the station should be run, what really serves the progressive community and furthers the goals of independent media, but first and foremost the station must be financially viable in order to remain independent.

In spite of the conflict at the station, the listeners have continued to financially support the station, donating very generously during the recent fund drives, so that April financial report shows that KPFA has slight surplus for the fiscal year. (Station still has sizable past due expenses.)

We should give credit to the Executive Director Arlene Engelhardt for trying to reign in the precarious financial situation at KPFA and helping to put the station on a more solid financial footing.

General Welfare (Verse)

By Ove Ofteness
Tue Apr 26 16:29:00 -0700 2011

Promoting the general welfare,
We’ll cut education and health care.

Do not reach maturity.
Social Security?
We see no promise of wealth there.

Letters to the Editor

Tax Refunds Held by City of Berkeley; Library Lawsuit; Worth Repeating: Democracy; School Project Query; Curiosity; Confidence Game; Republicans; Budget

Tax Refunds Held by City of Berkeley

I’m just wondering if you have received information about the City of Berkeley attaching peoples’ tax returns for parking violations even after those citations had been paid off? I paid off my parking citation to the City of Berkeley in November and $156 was still deducted from my state income tax refund in March. Since that time it has been like pulling teeth to get the over-payment refunded to me. Even though the City’s records showed I had paid the citation, they made me send in all back up documentation, which I did right away. Today I was told it would take another 4-6 weeks to receive reimbursement of the overpaid/collected $156. When I call they just seem to push the issue under the carpet and keep making excuses as to why I am being reimbursed the over-
collection. It would seem that someone from the City should have notified the collection agency they hired when payment were received rather than the collection agency proceeding with collecting debts that had been paid in full from tax refunds. I am a single working mother and should certainly be entitled to my own tax refund rather than the City of Berkeley holding onto money not owed to them. I just wonder how many other people have run into this issue and how much money the City of Berkeley is sitting on rather than reimbursing the over-payments.

Pam Dahl

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Library Lawsuit

Patti Dacey writes that charges of racism are being thrown around in the discussion of the library lawsuit.

Her reference to racism is the first time I’ve seen the word used in this context. Let’s not try to make it look like something is happening that isn’t. The plaintiff is not racist, but the lawsuit may have the same effect.

Linda Schacht

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Worth Repeating

Tom Del Beccaro, California Republican Party chairman said, “We’re going to bring this state closer together.” What, with Republican and Tea Party anti-abortion, anti-gay and anti-tax crusades? With budget cuts to services for the elderly, poor and needy, who are already living hand to mouth? By more tax cuts to the uber-rich who are already insulated from the rest of society?

How can a mostly white, pseudo-religious and conservative party, that brooks no difference, unite with the rest of California that is young at heart, racially diverse and open minded? This looks like more smoke and mirrors from fraternity who sees dwindling support for its archaic and mean-spirited policies. Where is the common ground?

Ron Lowe

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Democracy

As the conventional wisdom goes – especially in the West – Israel is the “only democracy” in the Middle East. And that is so, particularly for its Jewish citizens. However Israel has been anything but democratic for the indigenous people of the land, the Palestinian Arabs. By nature and precedence, foreign military occupation is temporary. Colonialism on the other hand, and more precisely civilian colonization, is a socio-political system of ruling over another people.

Israel is really a police state. If they don’t put you in jail, they at least put you out of your job for saying anything they don’t want you to say. They claim they don’t have censorship--Possession is nine-tenths of the law. Occupancy is very difficult to overcome and Israel has already got the Palestinians’ land.

The only way they will ever give it up is if they’re thrown out. There is no other way that they’ll ever give back the Palestinians their share of the land. It’s encouraging to see how divided the Jews are amongst themselves, “A house divided against itself shall not stand.”

The Palestinians are a lot more together than any of them, at least they’re united--the Christians and Arabs. I’m glad to see a lot of the Jews are sympathizing with the Arabs.

Ted Rudow III, MA

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School Project Query

We are a group of four Berkeley High Seniors who are interested in getting the word out about our Senior Project. For your general information, the Senior Project is considered to be one of the more important final pieces of collaborated and intensely thought out work students produce near the end of their high school experience. Our project is a full-scale guide and interview manual of Berkeley High and life in Berkeley. We are intending on making this a full-scale publication and have it published, even after the deadline of the assignment. Lucian Novosel, closely related to Jim Novosel, was the brainchild of this idea. We are attempting to interview various classes at Berkeley High, the Berkeley High Administration and even the Security Guards to get a wide berth of information. We are wondering if you would be able to make a short news post about this on your site, so that we have a reliable source of promotion and also so that we can see if some of the community of Berkeley would be interested in perhaps being interviewed by one of us about the city so that they can be credited in our project.

We’re really looking forward to our project and to be able to do something for the city that’s educated us for practically our whole lives. Please consider us and let us know what you think. Thank you!

Muhammad Khan, Emiliano Ruiz, Rina Li, Lucian Novosel.

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Curiosity

If I could have what I wished for I would want all children to keep their curiosity. They would be eager to discover things and eager to turn their vision into reality. When will our lawmakers understand the value of the creativity of young minds? When will they feel happy about allocating enough money to help young people become scientists, doctors, social workers and educators? In the current hurry to balance the budget lawmakers have forgotten about the needs of our youngest citizens. They tell us to be self dependent and find the solution ourselves. But I wonder how three year olds can be finding their way or how they can be left alone to look after themselves. Require them to practice fiscal responsibility at this age? What happened to common kindness? Young children need attentive teachers and safe environments in which to learn. How do we expect educational standards to improve without giving young children the opportunity to learn from well-educated teachers? Let us think about investing in children first. Our keenest self interest lies in creating capable and thoughtful citizens of the America of the future.

Romila Khanna

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Confidence Game

The cycle of recession and rebound is what you would call a confidence game, perpetrated by the biggest con man and swindler. He has succeeded very well, and the economic world has a false foundation today, a paper one, which could go up in smoke if the right match were applied to it. They seek to trick and swindle as many people as possible.

Accord to the Wall Street Journal, hedge funds are bouncing back, with return-hungry investors pumping up the industry to a size not seen since before the financial crisis laid it low. Total hedge-fund assets are approaching $2 trillion and are soon expected to surpass their peak in early 2008, according to industry analysts. .The resurrection of hedge funds, which invest money for wealthy individuals, pension funds and other large investors, marks yet another sign that the effects of the financial crisis are receding."

So, little by little, the skeptics are won over to invest their funds, to take a chance on making more money. And there is a rebound, for there are still people to be convinced that things will keep going up—indeed, must keep going up. And one day, the downturn will become another recession, the recession will become a depression, and the depression will become another Crash.

Ted Rudow III, MA

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Republicans

-18-
Do you remember the 8 years of the Bush presidency, with White House spokesman Ari Fleischer saying, “People should watch what they say?” There was the Patriot Act, the weakening of habeas corpus, stolen elections, and dissent was characterized as treason by the Bush administration.

From illegal wiretaps, the unlawful imprisonment of American citizens, and the creeping influence of religious extremism at the highest levels of the U.S. government, we saw it all.

Is that what you want again? Do you think Republicans have changed one iota except to become worse? The GOP, and its joined at the hip sidekicks the Tea Party, will do anything to regain power and the White House in 2012.

That includes derailing the economy. We’re already seeing Republicans using budget cuts at the federal and state levels, trying to suck the life out of the improving economy.

Ron Lowe
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Budget

I am not sure who came out on top in the budget negotiations. The Democrats blamed the Republicans for threatening to shut down the government, but the Democrats should have passed a budget before the fiscal year began on October 1st when they had a majority on both houses of Congress. Republicans supposedly were trying to cut government spending and help the economy, but if they had indeed shut down the government, it would have damaged our economy. The shutdowns in late 1995 and early 1996 cost the government more than $1.4 billion to repay salaries of employees on furlough, lost national park and museum fees, etc. In short, the budget war reflects incompetence and cowardice. As Will Rogers said, “This country has come to feel the same when Congress is in session as when the baby gets hold of a hammer.”

Ralph E. Stone

Columns

The Public Eye: The Death of Bipartisanship

By Bob Burnett
Tue Apr 26 10:22:00 -0700 2011

At the beginning of the 112th Congress, a Bay Area Congresswoman was invited to a Washington gathering of new Representatives, mostly Republicans. When she men-

tioned that, in previous eras, the two Parties had often worked together, a freshman Republican barked, “We were sent here to shrink the government, not collaborate with you.” President Obama seeks bipartisanship, but most Republicans aren’t interested in pursuing the common good.

As Congress plods through its business, Democrats and Republicans are miles apart on issue after issue. On jobs and the economy, Democrats want more government intervention, while Republicans believe the Feds should get out of the way of the “free market.” On the Deficit, Democrats advocate taxes on the rich and selective cuts to programs; Republicans abhor taxes and demand massive cuts to entitlements. On Healthcare, Democrats want the Affordable Healthcare plan to become a single-payer system; Republicans want “Obamacare” to be repealed. Republicans take Global Climate Change seriously and advocate a drastic change in energy use and production; Republicans deny the problem and argue America should extract oil and gas wherever we can. It’s difficult to find any area of agreement or political middle ground.

As the US faces a series of daunting problems, political dialogue grows increasingly adversarial. President Obama seeks compromise, but Republicans seem ideologically intractable, unable or unwilling to change their stance.

There are four possible explanations for the adamantine Republican posture. The first is political. Republican legislators have been indoctrinated to believe that if they do not toe the conservative Party line, radical “Tea Party” activists will campaign against them in the next election. As a consequence, many Republican politicians are afraid to compromise less they lose office.

Cultural differences provide a second explanation for Republican political rigidity. Since the 2000 election, the United States has become more polarized and the differences between Blue and Red areas have increased. Even in a Blue state, such as California, gerrymandering has created Congressional districts that are deeply Red. Across the US, public sentiment differs dramatically in Blue and Red districts. Here are on the Left Coast, one seldom hears serious discussion of whether or not Barack Obama was born in the United States and we do not believe that Muslims, in general, hate America. In Red areas, voters take the “birther” controversy seriously and fear Muslims. Blue and Red districts have widely different information silos. Blues listen to Rachel Maddow and Reds hang on every word Rush Limbaugh utters. As a consequence of these cultural differences there are two radically different perceptions of “reality.” Republicans don’t appreciate a Democratic policy position because they never hear it discussed seriously; the conventional “wisdom” in Red districts is dramatically different from that in Blue districts. There is a huge communication failure.

Perhaps Republican dogmatism stems from their negative worldview. UC Professor George Lakoff’s classic Moral Politics postulates that Democrats see the world in positive terms – the “nurturant parent” model – and value collaboration and empathy. In contrast Republicans adhere to the “strict father” worldview, where life is dangerous and citizens must take a defensive stance and organize hierarchically. It could be that Republicans don’t compromise because they view it as a sign of weakness; they regard Democrats as wimps and fools who don’t understand how perilous the US situation is.

Differing values provides a final explanation. In recent years Democrats and Republicans have developed conflicting perspectives on core American values. On April 13, President Obama gave a succinct summary of historic American values: “we are all connected,” “each one of us deserves some basic measure of security,” “We believe, in the words of our first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, that through government, we should do together what we cannot do as well for ourselves,” [we value] “faith…shared responsibility and shared sacrifice,” and “this sense of responsibility – to each other and to our country – this isn’t a partisan felling… It’s patriotism.”

In contrast, many Republicans no longer believe Democracy is based upon empathy; they no longer accept the axiom, “we are all connected.” As a consequence, Republicans do not share the Founders’ vision of the basic American social compact. In their “patriotism” each of us stands alone.

Moreover, these differences between Democratic and Republican values suggest that political polarization has had significant psychological consequences. In his bestseller, Mindsight, UCLA psychiatrist Daniel Siegel notes that happy people are empathic and share characteristics “such as gratitude, compassion, open-mindedness, and curiosity.” Dr. Siegel contrasts these folks with unhappy non-empathetic people in states of distress “characterized as either rigidity or chaos…stuck in depression or paralyzed by fear.” Dogmatic rigidity is an indicator of poor mental health, a state that leads to poor life decisions and ultimately disintegration.
The values that Barack Obama defends are those both of the Founders of the United States and healthy people in general. In contrast, Republicans values—“you’re on your own,” “the market will provide,” “compromise is for wimps”—are profoundly dysfunctional and signal the death of bipartisanship.

Bob Burnett is a Berkeley writer. He can be reached at bobburnett@comcast.net

Dispatches From The Edge: Europe’s Crisis & The Pain In Spain

By Conn Hallinan
Tue Apr 26 09:47:00 -0700 2011

When the current economic crisis hit Europe in 2008, small countries on the periphery were its first victims: Iceland, Ireland, and Latvia. Within a year it had spread to Greece and Portugal, though the GDP of both nations—respectively 11th and 12th in the European Union (EU)—are hardly central to the continent’s economic engine.

But now the contagion threatens to strike at the center of Europe. Spain, the fifth largest economy in the EU and 13th largest in the world, is staggering under a combination of debt and growth-killing austerity, and the balance books in Italy, the Union’s fourth largest economy, don’t look much better. Indeed, Italy’s national debt is higher than that of Greece, Ireland or Portugal, three countries that have been forced to apply for bailouts.

Spain is a victim of the same real estate bubble that tanked the Irish economy. In fact, house prices in both countries rose at almost exactly the same rate: 500 percent over the decade. A feeding frenzy of speculation, fueled by generous banks and accommodating governments, saw tens of thousands of housing units built that were never inhabited. There are currently 50,000 unsold units in Madrid alone and, according to the web site Pisosembargados, Spanish banks are on track to eventually repossess upwards of 300,000 units.

Bailing out Ireland, Portugal and Greece has strained the financial resources of the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but rescuing Spain would be considerably more expensive. If Italy goes—with an economy a third larger than Spain’s and more than twice as big as that of the EU’s three current basket cases—it is not clear the Union or its currency, the Euro, could survive.

Given the current tack being taken by EU and the IMF, that might not be the worst outcome for the distressed countries involved. The current formula for “saving” economies in Ireland and Greece consists of severely depressing economic activity that is likely to lock those countries into a downward spiral of poverty and unemployment that will last at least a decade.

First, it is important to understand that the so-called “bailouts” of Greece and Ireland, and the one proposed for Portugal, will not “save” those countries economies. As Simon Tilford, chief economist for Center for European Reform, points out, the money is being borrowed—at a high interest rate—to bail out speculators in Germany, France and Britain. It is German, French, British, and Dutch banks that will profit from these “packages,” not the citizens of Ireland, Greece, or Portugal.

Indeed, Portugal was forced to ask for a bailout, not because its economy is in particularly bad shape, but because speculators in other EU countries drove up borrowing rates to a level that the government could no longer afford. Rather than intervening to nip off the speculators, the European Central Bank sat on its hands until the damage was done, the government fell, and Portugal was essentially forced to sue for peace. The price for that will be steep: severe austerity, brutal cutbacks, rising unemployment, and a stagnant economy.

Spain and Italy are vulnerable to the same forces that forced Portugal to its knees, only they are far bigger countries whose economic distress will have global effects.

The current blueprint for reducing debt is to cut spending and privatize. But in a recession, cutbacks increase unemployment, which reduces tax revenues. That requires governments to borrow money, which increases debt and leads to yet more cutbacks. Once an economy is caught in this “debt trap,” it is very difficult to break out. And when economies do improve, cutbacks to education, health care, housing and transport put those countries at a competitive disadvantage.

For instance, Spain has drastically cut its education budget, resulting in a wave of “early leaving” students—at a rate that is double that of the EU as a whole—and a drop in reading, math and science skills. Those figures hardly bode well for an economy in the information age.

The “cuts to solve debt” theory is being played out in real time these days.

When the Conservative-Liberal alliance took over in Britain, it cut spending $128 billion over five years, on the theory that attacking the deficit would secure the “trust” of the financial community, thus lowering interest rates to fuel economic growth. But retail sales fell 3.5 percent in March, household income is predicted to fall 2 percent, and projections for growth have been downgraded from 2.4 percent to 1.7 percent. In terms of British people’s incomes, this is the worst performance since the Great Depression of the 1930s. “In my view, we are in serious danger of a double-dip recession,” says London Business School economist Richard Portes.

As bad as things are in Britain, they are considerably worse in those countries that bought into the “bail out.” Ireland’s growth rate has been downgraded from an anemic 2.3 to a virtual flat line 1 percent, personal income has declined 20 percent, and unemployment is at 14 percent. Greece is, if anything, worse, with a 30 percent jobless rate among the young, an economy that is projected to fall 4 percent this year, and between 2 and 3 percent the next.

If Portugal—with an unemployment rate of 14 percent—takes the $116 billion bailout, it will torpedo what is left of that nation’s economy.

Even the managing director of the IMF seems to be taking a second look at this approach. Dominique Strauss-Kahn recently quoted John Maynard Keynes about the need for full employment and a more equal distribution of wealth and income. He also warned that bailing out the financial sector and focusing just on debt at the expense of the economy is a dead end strategy: “…the lesson is clear: the biggest threat to fiscal sustainability is low growth.”

Is this a serious change of heart by the organization, or does one needs to take the IMF director’s recent comments with a grain of salt? He is rumored to be resigning this summer to run for president of France as a Socialist. Hard-nosed market fundamentalism is not exactly the path toward heading up that particular ticket. And while Strauss-Kahn says one thing, the IMF’s board of directors—largely dominated by the U.S. Treasury Department—has yet to signal a change in course.

However, the director’s comments may reflect a growing recognition that “bailouts” that protect banks and their investors, while locking countries into a decade of falling growth and rising poverty, are not only politically unsustainable, they makes little economic sense.

The next step is debt restructuring, which means investors will have to take some losses—a “haircut,” interest rates will be
lowered, and payments stretched out over a longer period of time. So far, Greece and Portugal are refusing to consider restructuring because it will affect their credit status, but in the end they may have no choice in the matter.

“The basic reality is that we cannot service our debt,” Greek economist Theodore Pelagid told the New York Times. “We don’t need another bailout, we need creditors to take a hit.”

Of course, there is always the Argentine approach: default. Faced with an astronomical debt burden, a stalled economy, and growing poverty, Buenos Aires tossed in the towel and walked away from the debt in 2001. “The economy shrank for just one quarter,” writes Mark Weisbrot of the Guardian (UK), “and then grew 63 percent over the next six years, recovering its pre-crisis level of GDP in just three years.”

So far there is no talk of defaulting by the financially stressed European countries, but the subject is sure to come up, particularly given the growing anger of the populace at the current austerity programs. Hundreds of thousands of people have poured into the streets of Athens, Lisbon and London to challenge the austerity-debt mantra, demonstrations that are likely to grow in the coming months as the full impact of the cutbacks hit home.

Iceland recently voted to reject a 30-year plan to pay British and Dutch banks $5.8 billion to cover their depositors who speculated on Iceland’s high interest rates. Britain and the Netherlands are threatening to block Iceland’s EU membership bid if it doesn’t pay up, but these days, threats like that might be treated more with relief than chagrin in Reykjavik.

The bailouts have had a devastating impact on European politics. Governments have fallen in Ireland and Portugal, and the Greek government is deeply unpopular. In essence, the demands of banks and bondholders are unbalancing democratic institutions across the continent.

Spain’s unemployment rate is 20 percent, the highest in Europe. If the EU and the IMF sells it a “bailout” similar to the ones Ireland, Greece and Portugal accepted, Spain’s “pain” will be long lasting and brutal.

And Italy—with its decade-long 1 percent growth rate—waits in the wings.

If Italy goes, the EU will be split between northern haves and southern have-nots. Can a house so divided long endure?

Read Conn Hallinan at dispatchesfromtheglobe.wordpress.com

Senior Power: “Try to reason about love, and you will lose your reason,” wrote Russian playwright Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904).

By Helen Rippliner Wheeler

Tue Apr 26 10:30:00 -0700 2011

Three Sisters was produced in 1901, in Moscow. It is one of his several great plays: Ivanov (1887-1889), The Seagull (1896, a comedy), Uncle Vanya (1897), and The Cherry Orchard (1903-04). He may have been inspired by the 19th Century literary Bronte family associated with northern England’s historic Yorkshire county -- sisters Charlotte(1816–1855), who wrote Jane Eyre using pen name Currer Bell, Emily (1818-1848) and Anne (1920-1849) -- and brother Patrick Branwell Brontë (1817–1848), a painter and poet. Or by three sisters who were living in Perm, in the European part of Russia.

Chekhov must have been, in today’s lingo, a nice person. And not just because he is subtle, is concerned about women’s lives, and combines realism (his belief that life is ordinary) with hope and love and work. Three Sisters was written at the turn of the 20th Century, when he was about 40 years old; within 5 years, his life was ended by tuberculosis.

When we meet the Prozorov family, Russia is about to experience social and political upheaval that will transform her forever. The sisters “age” considerably as it becomes clear that they are doomed to remain isolated in a provincial town far away from their beloved Moscow. Eldest sister Olga’s opening line -- “It’s exactly a year ago today since Father died” -- is the first clue Chekhov gives us. Olga is 28 years old, Masha 25, and Irina 20. Plus schlemiel brother Andrei.

Chekhov is also concerned about the elders and not-young people who frame this picture. Ferapont, door-keeper watchman whatever at the local council offices, is an old man with a hearing loss. He blurs out irrelevant facts, usually relating to Moscow. Andrei calls him a nuisance.

Chebutykin is an eccentric old man, an Army doctor-family friend who lavishes upon Irina a gift of an expensive samovar. As the play opens, it is her name day, and there’s a celebration going on. Chebutykin loved the sisters’ mother. Some critics have suggested that Chekhov is suggesting that Irina might be his daughter.

Chekhov is different from those other greats of Russian literature, novelists Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) or Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881). His plays have been described as a succession of little scenes. The characters often speak in little soliloquies. They sometimes seem alone in a crowd. There is no clear message, no clear advocacy for social reform, for example.

The frustrated sisters rely on pie-in-the-sky assumptions that are compounded by failure in love and work. If only… Olga regrets being a spinster and dislikes being a schoolmaster’s wife. Irina’s fiancé is killed in a duel, and she dislikes working in the post office. Even brother Andrei. He would have liked to have been a professor in Moscow, but works for the municipal council, chaired by his wife’s lover. Time passes. Andrei complains “Where is my past life, oh, what has become of it – when I was young, happy and intelligent, when I had such glorious thoughts and visions, and my present and future seemed so bright and promising?”

Months may pass between scenes. Time is a crucial ingredient in Chekov’s drama. He does not make it easy for us. The question of why the sisters are necessarily doomed to remain isolated in the boonies is not resolved. What’s to stop them from returning to Moscow? Is he suggesting that in the face of disappointment, women aren’t assertive? I don’t think so – there is plenty of action! Is this drama sad or funny? Both, I think, for there is humor, and at times the sisters are perky, despite their disappointments in love. Victor Sawdon Pritchett, in praising Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s writing, described her “Chekhovian in her detached observation of the comedy of self-delusion”.

It’s life, folks. He is able to manipulate themes of denial and hope within lives of
love and work. Realism-- if you need to put a genre name to it

I attended a performance of the West Coast premiere of Three Sisters. Matinees at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the award-winning nonprofit regional theater in downtown Berkeley, attract senior citizens-- the volunteer ushers are helpful, and there are no-charge, assisted listening devices available. Senior Rush provides $10.00 seats an hour before the show.

Chekhov wrote Three Sisters for a prosenium theater, in which the audience directly faces a stage that is typically raised several feet above front row audience level. This production is designed for viewing on the Berkeley Rep’s Thrust stage three sides and providing space for the cast to disperse.

Originally produced in four acts, Sarah Ruhl’s translation is three not-at-all tedious hours, with one break. Her new version, directed by Les Waters (remember their In the Next Room, Or The Vibrator Play?), is at the Berkeley Rep through Sunday, May 22, 2011.It is based on a literal translation by Elise Thoron, with Natalya Paramonova and Kristin Johnsen-Neshati. Ruhl has earned many honors including a MacArthur Fellowship and two Pulitzer Prize nominations. Her plays have been performed around the world in numerous languages. Waters is the associate artistic director of Berkeley Rep. In the last 5 years, his productions have ranked among the year’s best in The New Yorker, New York Times, Time Magazine and USA Today.

If you are unable to attend this real theater, you can borrow from the Library the dvd of the National Theatre Company of England’s Three Sisters motion picture, originally released in 1970 and a literal version of Olivier’s stage version. The cast includes Alan Bates (1934-2003) as Col. Vershinin, Derek Jacobi (born 1938) as Andrei, Laurence Olivier (1907-1989) as Dr. Chebutikin, and Joan Plowright (born 1929) as Masha. Plot keywords assigned to it by the International Movie Database are feeling old and dissatisfaction.

NEWS and DATES (Best to phone to confirm): Friday, April 29, noon, free admission. UC.B Dept, of Music. (510) 642-4864. Chamber Orchestra. Hoh Chen, conductor. Igor Stravinsky: L’Histoire du Soldat (The Soldier’s Tale) With original choreography by artistic director Claire Calalo, and dancers from the UC.B community.

Monday, May 2 6 PM Central Berkeley Public Library. Free. Evenving Computer Class. (510)981-6100. (Also Monday evenings, May 9, 16, 23)

Wednesday, May 4 1 noon – 1 PM. Albany Branch, Alameda County Library, 1247 Marin Av. Free. 1-on-1 Computer half-hour computer tutoring, registration required: (510) 526-3720 x 16. (Also on Wednesdays, May 11, 18, 25)


Thursday, May 5 10 AM. Central Berkeley Public Library. Free. Computer for Beginners. (510)981-6100. (Also Thursdays, May 10, 19, 26)


Saturday, May 7 2 PM. Central Berkeley Public Library. Free. Local Places…Sacred Spaces presents “Berkeley Partners for Parks,” a talk and slide show by the Berkeley Path Wanderers. Information and to confirm no charge: (510)981-6100.

Wednesday, August 10, 2011, 10 A.M.-2 P.M. 10th Healthy Aging Fair. Largest annual free health screening event for older adults in Alameda County. More information at dwalker2@acgov.org.

By March 1, 2013: If you receive Social Security or SSI benefits by paper checks, you must switch to electronic payments. Details at www.GoDirect.org.

The Digital Inclusion Community Service Initiative is a free Internet and email training program designed for older learners at 7 locations in Oakland and Berkeley. Further information (510)238-4920 or your senior center.

Kelly Wallace, Manager of Berkeley’s Aging Services, will be conducting town hall meetings in April for all seniors and is “always available to answer questions or provide clarification.” (510) 981-5178. [April 20,2011 Tri-Center Nugget, page 3]

California’s budget crisis is threatening to decimate crucial health and social services for everyone, but the people who would be most harmed by the proposed cuts are likely to be seniors and people with disabilities. Data obtained by the National Senior Citizens Law Center show that among recipients of the state’s In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) -- a major target for Sacramento budget cutters -- 49 % speak a language other than English at home. [New America Media, Commentary, Katharine Hsiao and Anna Rich, Posted: April 11, 2011.]

A legislative report by the Senate Office of Oversight and Outcomes, released on April 21, 2011, suggests that California is putting its elderly population at risk of theft and abuse because the state does not regulate in-home caregivers. It found that California is one of a handful of states that does not regulate in-home care agencies. Few people even know they have a right to request a background check on a potential caregiver. The report urges the state to let clients check on past convictions and create a registry that would allow clients to find caregivers who have been screened. It also recommends a public awareness campaign to let the elderly know they are entitled to a state Department of Justice background check when they are thinking of hiring a caregiver.

The Associated Press reports that on April 14, 2011 the world’s oldest man died, at age 114. Walter Breuning lived in a Great Falls, Montana retirement home and died of undisclosed natural causes in a hospital. His secret to a long life: embrace change, eat 2 meals a day, work as long as you can, help others, never be afraid to die.

Drugging of California nursing home residents is at an all-time high. California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR)’s campaign to Stop Chemical Restraints in Nursing Homes has a petition to the Governor. You can sign it online: www.canhr.org/stop-drugging/. About 25,000 California nursing home residents are currently given antipsychotic drugs that greatly increase their risk of death.

Vermontis weighing a bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide. Terrence Youk, brother of a Michigan man whose 1998 euthanasia death ultimately sent Dr. Jack Kevorkian to prison, believes Kevorkian was providing a service, not committing a crime. He supports a “death with dignity” bill before the Legislature, says people should have the option. The Vermont bill does not contemplate euthanasia, but, rather, physician-assisted suicide. It would let doctors prescribe a lethal dose of pills for patients deemed mentally competent and have been diagnosed with less than 6 months to live. The patient would then administer the drugs to himself or herself. [“Vermont man has unique perspective on lawmakers’ end-of-life debate; brother was Kevorkian patient,” byJohn Curran. Associated Press. April 17, 2011]
The Spring Mansion will be open on BAHA’s Spring House Tour.

Daniella Thompson

The Adams house, built by Water H. Ratcliff in 1913.

The residential neighborhood gracing the hills east of Arlington Avenue and above the Spring mansion is one of Berkeley’s most scenic early 20th-century garden suburbs. Tree-shaded streets are lined with picturesque period-revival houses reminiscent of Italian villas, Norman country houses, Tudor manors, and beguiling “storybook” cottages.

Beginning in 1909, John Hopkins Spring, owner and developer of most of what became Albany and North Berkeley, subdivided a succession of tracts, the first of which was Thousand Oaks, followed by Arlington Villa Sites (1910), Arlington Heights (1911), Arlington Oaks (1912), and Thousand Oaks Heights (1912). All these tracts were laid out by landscape engineer Mark Daniels, who worked in partnership with Vance Craig of Osmont, an expert in the volcanic rock so abundant in this area.

Like Spring’s other subdivisions, Arlington Heights boasts quiet, sylvan streets that undulate with the hills, sweeping marine vistas, generous lots, and secluded walking paths that used to provide easy access to streetcar lines, commuter trains, and ferries. Early residents of the neighborhood enjoyed a bucolic lifestyle within a 30-minute ride to San Francisco.

Although John Spring began construction on his own mansion in 1912, World War I delayed the full development of his tracts. Most of the lots in the Arlington subdivisions remained vacant until the 1920s, a boom decade in Berkeley, when the city’s population ballooned from 56,000 to 83,000. Much of that growth took place in hilly areas such as this one, which had streets and transportation lines ready for new home-builders.

One of the few early houses built in the area was the residence of philosophy professor George Plimpton Adams. Built in 1913 at 745 Santa Barbara Road, the redwood house was designed by Walter H. Ratcliff.

The Adams family was living on the hills east of Arlington Avenue and above the Spring mansion is one of Berkeley’s most scenic early 20th-century garden suburbs.

East Bay: Then and Now:
BAHA Spring House Tour
Will Explore Picturesque Villas in Arlington Heights

By Daniella Thompson
Wed Apr 27 16:49:00 -0700 2011

The Adams children attended the William Institute, and their mother was engaged to teach various subjects, including history, English, Latin, and geography. For her first class in ancient history, Mary Adams focused on Egypt. She enlisted the help of Bernard Maybeck, who came to class and assisted the children in making models of early Egyptian buildings. “We made our own bricks for these huts out of grass and mud and used modeling clay in making the pyramids,” wrote Cornelia Lonnberg. “Mr. Maybeck was very helpful also when we made enormous posters of the Great Sphinx of Giza, the sun god Ra, and the god Osiris, drawing them first, coloring them, and hanging them at the top of the red plush carpeted stairway for the whole school to see.”

One of Prof. Adams’ closest friends was Prof. Jacob Loewenberg, his colleague from the U.C. philosophy department and later his next-door neighbor. Jack Loewenberg was famous for having no sense of direction. When Mary Adams invited him to dinner for the first time, he paid no attention to the explicit directions she provided on the phone. Upon arrival, Loewenberg reported that he had taken the Euclid Avenue car to the end of the line, whereupon he walked fifteen minutes up Grizzly Peak Blvd., eventually passing Prof. Calhoun’s house (George Calhoun of the U.C. Greek department lived at 1056 Euclid Avenue). Calhoun was working in his garden, and Loewenberg asked him how to get to the Adams house. Fifteen minutes later, Loewenberg passed Calhoun’s house again, and the latter told him that he spent most of his time directing lost metaphysicists to the Adams house.

Clad in barn shakes, the Adams house is a

Daniella Thompson

The Spring Mansion will be open on BAHA’s Spring House Tour.

Sidney Webb

Prof. George P. Adams and his family at home on Santa Barbara Road.

courtesy Adams family

Rear view of the Adams house in its early days.

Southside when Mary Adams talked a realtor into driving her and her visiting mother-in-law for an outing in the Berkeley hills, ostensibly to look at property. “The hills were brown and bare,” wrote her daughter, Cornelia Lonnberg, 63 years later. “There were no houses to the north to be seen, and my mother fell immediately in love with the area. Needless to say, three lots were bought on the spot.”

Just before Christmas 1915, John Spring left his wife for a younger woman and moved away from Berkeley. The Spring estate was sold in late 1917 to the educator and mathematician Cora L. Williams, who established in it her Institute of Creative Development (later Williams College), a tony elementary and secondary school known for its focus on languages, poetry, music, and literature, along with interpretive dance inspired by Isadora Duncan.

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Clad in barn shakes, the Adams house is a
singular Arts & Crafts presence in its neighborhood. Most of Arlington Heights reflects the taste of the 1920s, favoring the various romantic styles known collectively as Period Revival. Here you will find Mediterranean houses with red tile roofs and stucco walls alongside half-timbered and turreted English and French country houses or Italian villas.

The picturesque houses of Arlington Heights were designed by local architects, from Maybeck and Ratcliff to a younger generation of U.C. graduates, including Edwin Lewis Snyder, Henry Gutterson, John Hudson Thomas, Roland Stringham, and the brothers Sidney and Noble Newsom (Noble was John Spring’s son-in-law). Design-builders such as Joseph M. Walker, Walter W. Dixon and Richard K. Schmidt also left their mark with fanciful designs.

Ten Arlington Heights houses, among them the Spring Mansion, the Adams house, and two houses designed by Maybeck, will be open on Sunday, May 8, during BAHA’s Spring House Tour. The tour will be preceded by a lecture on Storybook Style, to take place at the Hillside Club on May 5 at 7:30 pm.

BAHA’s House Tour, “Picturesque Villas of Arlington Heights,” will take place on Sunday, May 8, from 1 to 5 pm. The tour-day ticket booth will open at noon at the Spring Mansion, 1960 San Antonio Road. For further information and advance tour and lecture tickets, visit http://berkeleyheritage.com.

Daniella Thompson publishes berkeleyheritage.com for the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association (BAHA).

Wild Neighbors: Apologies to William Rich Hutton

By Joe Eaton
Tue Apr 26 09:56:00 -0700 2011

Close to five years ago, I wrote a piece for the Planet about an obscure native California bird, the Hutton’s vireo. It’s a small greenish thing, often mistaken for a ruby-crowned kinglet; the accompanying photo shows the vireo’s diagnostic broken eye-ring, grayish legs and feet, and stronger beak. Unlike our other vireos—the migratory Cassin’s, warbling, and Bell’s—Hutton’s vireos appear to be year-round residents. They frequent oak woods, build their nests with hanging lichens, and commonly join mixed-species foraging flocks in winter. Much of the species’ life history is undocumented.

At the time, all I could dig up about the eponymous William Hutton was that he had collected the type specimen of the vireo near Monterey in 1847 and sent it to Washington, DC where it was formally described by the ornithologist John Cassin. (Cassin got his own vireo, along with a finch, a kingbird, and an auklet.) Cassin seems to have been lobbied by the Smithsonian’s Spencer Fullerton Baird (who has a sparrow and a sandpiper) to name the new bird after Hutton. Cassin groused a bit: “This kind of thing is bad enough at best, but to name a bird after a person utterly unknown is worse than that,” he wrote to Baird. But he went along in the end.

According to the references I had on hand, that was about the last anyone heard of Hutton. Cassin and Baird mentioned that he was somewhere near San Diego in 1851. Then the trail went cold. There was nothing else in Barbara and Richard Mearns’ authoritative Audubon to Xantus, or Ernest Choate’s Dictionary of American Bird Names, or Edward Gruson’s Words for Birds—not even dates of birth and death. Which allowed me to speculate: “Hutton may have been abandoned bird-hunting for gold-hunting; he may have returned east in time to be killed in the Civil War; he may have disappeared into Mexico, like Ambrose Bierce. It’s anyone’s guess.”

Last Saturday, working my way up Valencia Street in the Mission after a book event at Flora Grubb Gardens and a catfish po’-boy at the Hard Knox Café, I found a used copy of Whose Bird? by Bo Boelens and Michael Watkins at Dog-Eared Books: another biographical dictionary of people who have had birds named for them, this one covering not just North America but the entire world. That included the Adelie of the penguin, the Zenaida of the dove, and the infamous Colonel Meinertzhagen, spy, specimen thief, and probable murderer, of the snowfinch and warbler. Bought it, of course. That night, just on principle, I looked up Hutton, and the mystery was solved.

According to Boelens and Watkins, William Rich Hutton (1826-1901), born in Washington, was an artist, surveyor, and civil engineer. He went out to California in 1847 (another source says 1846) to clerk for his uncle, who was paymaster for the First New York Volunteers in the Mexican War. Two years later, then-Lieutenant Edward Ord (as in Fort Ord) tapped him for a state-wide survey, which seems to have allowed ample spare time for sketching landscapes and collecting specimens.

Far from wandering off into Mexico, Hutton returned to Washington in 1853, married into the Clopper family, and devoted the rest of his career to engineering, somehow avoiding the Civil War. His projects included the Washington Aqueduct, the Washington Bridge over the Hudson, and the Hudson River Tunnel. A biographical sketch on the Baltimore Architecture Foundation’s web site (baltimorearchitecture.org/biographies/william-rich-hutton) also mentions his work on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, the Western Maryland Railroad, and the Kanawha Canal, for which he designed the lock system. When he learned that Cassin had named the vireo in his honor, he was more embarrassed that anything else. “It goes against my principles to name after individuals unless for important scientific service,” he wrote to a relative.

Hutton was not at all obscure, then. It was just that no one had ever connected the young bird collector with the distinguished
engineer. My hat is off to Boelens (AKA the Fat Birder) and Watkins for assembling the pieces.

On Mental Illness: Responding to the Anti-Psychiatry Movement

By Jack Bragen
Tue Apr 26 10:26:00 -0700 2011

A man wrote in claiming that I am doing a disservice with my column because I am promoting psychiatry, which he claims is a fraud.

I get the point that many people who have seen my column completely disagree with the practices and theories of psychiatry. I am not a psychiatrist. I have not always believed that I require medication. In my thirty years as a mental health consumer, I have seen some of the abuses perpetrated by the mental health treatment system.

Being presumed and treated as incompetent, as less of a person, as a less intelligent person, and as a non-person are somewhat subtler abuses that continue to happen to us to this day. Many psychiatrists continue to prescribe electro convulsive therapy. While it may provide relief for some, for others it causes terror and partial amnesia.

I am familiar with the abuse that happens to psychiatric patients. I would rather not describe my experiences in detail. I tolerate the mental health treatment system in spite of its many instances of unfairness because I have a disease that requires treatment; and I cannot afford to get this treatment on my terms—I am not a wealthy movie star. Many in the anti-psychiatry movement apparently believe that the human brain will automatically fix its own problems through the natural regulatory mechanisms that Mother Nature provided. They believe that intervening on an episode of mental illness with medication only prevents this restoration from naturally occurring, and actually worsens the problem. This argument seems to be the most important one in the anti-psychiatry movement. Furthermore, there is the claim that in third world countries, where psychiatric treatment is unavailable, people don’t get mental illness.

I have also heard that in India, before that country became modernized, catatonic patients were often worshiped as enlightened beings. If so, it would dispute the idea that there are no mentally ill people outside the reach of psychiatry. Prior to the invention of Thorazine and other medications, mentally ill people were often kept chained up in prison-like asylums. Or, they became the town idiot, or the town drunk. My wife, who has traveled to Kenya, has seen for herself the untreated mentally ill. She says they wander around aimlessly, are very thin, and can barely, if at all, survive.

Concerning a statistical study proving the theories of the anti-psychiatry movement, statistics can be deceptive depending on how the data is gathered and how it is processed. Multiple conclusions can be drawn from a given set of statistics. Untreated mental illness, perhaps not in every case, but much of the time, will continue to worsen, causing the inflicted person to suffer astronomically.

Concerning the mental health treatment system being fraught with abuses, the anti-psychiatry movement is right on. Concerning there being no need for it because these illnesses don’t “truly” exist, this is not accurate.

Asserting that mental illnesses don’t “really” exist is like saying that the Apollo Lunar Landings never took place. You can write as many books on the subject as you want, and you can argue the point until blue in the face. I will still believe the Lunar Landings took place, and mental illness exists. Everyone else is entitled to their own opinion.

Readers are welcome, as always to contact me at bragenjack@yahoo.com with your stories or comments.

Arts & Entertainment

Around & About in the Performing Arts

By Ken Bullock
Tue Apr 26 20:41:00 -0700 2011

Music: Quinteto Latino at the Berkeley City Club

Theater: Ireland’s Druid performs Martin McDonagh’s The Cripple of Inishmaan at Zellerbach Playhouse

Berkeley Chamber Performances will present Quinteto Latino--Diane Grubbe, flute; Kyle Bruckmann, oboe; Leslie Tagorda, clarinet; Armando Castellano, French horn; Shawn Jones, basson--in an evening of Mexican music by Carlos Chavez (Soli no. 2), Mario Lavista (Cincos danzas breves) Arturo Maquez (Danza de Mediodia), and a traditional piece (Son de la Bruja, arranged by Jose Luis Hurtado) on the eve of Cinco de Mayo, 8 p. m. Tuesday May 3 at the Berkeley City Club, 2315 Durant. $25; high school students free; post-high school students, $12.50. 525-5211; berkeleycham-
In my experience, it's not a good idea to talk to large bunnies in the bar. A bunny this size usually turns out to be someone's leftover hallucination from the sixties... This is 2011... gah!! You don't want people to see you talking to someone else's hallucination... but this bunny is hard to ignore... a real obnoxious bunny... but he did buy me a drink...

Hi! I'm new in town...

This bunny claimed he was one of the Easter Bunnies... not the Easter Bunny, though... he was the bunny in charge of the chocolate egg factory... the hens normally don't like laying chocolate eggs... so he uses a whip, he says...

Yeah... new in town, that's me... do you have any naked pictures of your mother? No? Want to buy some?

Honest, I've never seen him before...

If he's not your hallucination, why did he buy you that tequila?

The part about the whip is convincing... these leftover sixties hallucinations are clever... I realize that Easter is upon us... it's logical that a lot of bunny hallucinations would be hanging around...

but he's not my kind of hallucination... I only have religious hallucinations this time of year...

I knew my wife was dead. The sex was better, and the dishes piled up.

Yeah... sure you do. I'm calling the cops...

I told Al I only had high class hallucinations... religious frenzies... bloody death and rebirth... not this secular bunny stuff... yeah? says Al... who told me little guys in green suits were painting the word BUDWEISER on all the shamrocks on St. Patrick's Day? Non sequitur, Al. I said... St. Paddy's Day is not a religious holiday... and those little guys in green suits were union guys...

How can you be sure he's not one of your hallucinations? My hallucinations are too cheap to buy me a drink...

He said, you picked the ugliest one in the flock.