

THE ROSSMOOR DEMOCRAT

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President Jane Walter's Message

Ground Zero: the California Democratic Party Convention

I recently had the opportunity to attend the California Democratic Party's annual convention, which was held from May 15–17 at the Anaheim Convention Center. Overall it was exciting and encouraging to see the Democratic Party in California lead the national party in adopting a progressive agenda.



After arriving in Anaheim on Friday afternoon, **the first event I attended was a panel discussion on income inequality.** A young fast-food worker emotionally described how difficult it was for him to live on his low-wage salary. He said that, without paid time off, he was threatened with losing his job if he took time off to attend his child's birth. He described the efforts of low-wage workers to unite and join unions to "Fight for 15" as a living wage. **"Worker Fairness" was a dominant theme for speaker after speaker.** The Democratic Party of California is staking its claim as the party fighting for decent pay and working conditions for America's low-wage workers. This means not only increasing the minimum

wage, but also stopping "wage theft," where workers are forced to work overtime or off the clock without being paid time and a half.

Speakers also called for paid sick and vacation time, affordable day care, universal preschool, full-day kindergarten, and paid maternity leave. These bread-and-butter issues cut across party lines and America is waking up to their importance. Just before the convention the City of Los Angeles raised its minimum wage to \$15 per hour,

giving a raise to over 700,000 low-wage workers. On a personal note, as a former working mother, these issues really resonate with me. I know what it's like to need a decent salary and benefits to help support my family.

Speakers reminded us Democrats that workers form unions for good reasons. Because of their current decline, millions of American workers are suffering in low-wage, no-benefit jobs while big corporations rake in millions. Speaker after speaker noted that even though both the California and national economies are recovering, income inequality means that most American workers do not

Continued on page 2

Table of Contents

<i>President's Message</i>	1	June 8 Film <i>Dixie Chicks: Shut Up & Sing</i>	6
June 25 <i>General Meeting: Jonathon Simon</i> ..	3	July 8 Film <i>Generation War</i>	6
<i>Did You Know?</i>	4	July 23 <i>General Meeting: Carla Marinucci</i>	6
July 6 & August 3 <i>Summer Reading</i>	4	<i>Welcome Aboard</i> (new members)	7
<i>County Democrats Look Ahead to 2016</i>	5	<i>Upcoming Events</i>	8
June 9 <i>So What's Up With BART?</i>	5	<i>Membership Form</i>	8

President's Message, continued from page 1



share in this prosperity. This is an inequity that must be a priority as we approach the 2016 elections. California Democrats are already very much on board.

The convention kicked off with a welcome by Governor Jerry Brown. He praised the party for assuming leadership in California's economic revival and noted the positive effects of Prop 30 in returning funding to public schools. He also pointed out that there is still much to be done.

The highlight of Saturday morning was a rousing speech by Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. She expounded passionately on her favorite Progressive themes: Big banks must be broken up, the deck is stacked against the American worker, income inequality must be addressed, the power and influence of Wall Street and big corporations must be reined in, and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) must be defeated in Congress because it's bad for the American worker. She finished by telling the crowd, "It is not the banks that are too big to fail, it is the middle class." That evening, former Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank underscored the same themes. He criticized the trade alliance under consideration and said that if Congress is going to consider it, they should at least extract some concessions from Republicans such as an increase in the minimum wage.

Other notable speakers were House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, California's U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, California Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom, California Attorney General Kamala Harris, and California Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez. Harris and Sanchez are both running in 2016 for retiring Senator Barbara Boxer's seat. Both are

extremely impressive spokeswomen for the Progressive cause, and I came away from all the speakers greatly impressed by the depth of talent in the California Democratic Party.

While the speakers rallied the troops, other business was ongoing. Throughout the day and evening group caucuses met. Regional directors were elected; our director, Craig Cheslog, ran unopposed. Phone banks were also held in support of Susan Bonilla's campaign for our local state senate seat.

The Resolutions Committee forwarded a series of resolutions that were then voted on in the General Assembly. Essentially the California Democratic Party was staking out positions on a variety of issues. One resolution opposed the fast-tracking of the TPP, which was seen as a massive loss of American jobs. Another called for modernizing workers' compensation laws to correct gender-based discriminatory policies. Others supported a California bill requiring that all children be vaccinated, divesting UC of fossil fuel interests, and making commercial property tax codes more fair.

Additional resolutions called upon the Republican Party to stop blocking student loan debt reform, to address climate change now, and to oppose the decision to allow Shell Oil to drill in the Arctic's Chukchi Sea. One resolution called for the requirement that the police wear body cameras and appoint independent investigators in cases of police deadly force. On a larger scale, a resolution called upon the Democratic Party to encourage candidates and elected officials to fight income inequality.

This agenda stands in sharp contrast to the Republican candidates who are still trying to serve up the failed policies of "Trickle Down Economics" and austerity as the path to prosperity. **I look forward to working together with all of you to make the Democratic agenda the winning agenda in 2016.**

Best Wishes,

Jane

If Dignity Matters—Restoring Criminal Justice after the Era of Mass Incarceration

Professor Jonathan Simon Will Speak June 25

UC Berkeley Boalt School of Law **Professor Jonathan Simon** will speak at DoR's June 25 General Meeting in the Event Center. The social hour and town square will begin at 6 p.m., and the speaker will begin at 7. Refreshments will be served.

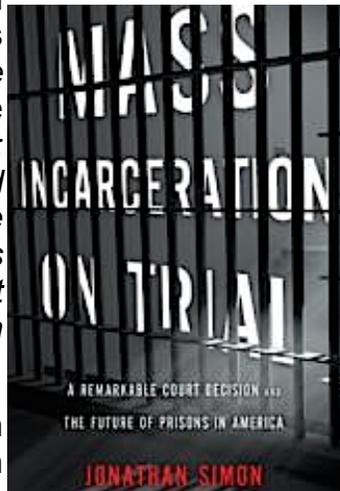


Jonathan Simon is a professor of law at UC Berkeley and Faculty Director of the Center for the Study of Law & Society. He is an expert on criminal justice issues and has written three books: *Poor Discipline: Parole and the Social Control of the Underclass*; the award-winning *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*; and, most recently, *Mass Incarceration on Trial: A Remarkable Court Decision and the Future of American Prisons*.

Simon has written extensively about both California's and the nation's record on incarceration, the police, and the role of the courts in ultimately creating today's system of mass incarceration and prison overcrowding. In his voluminous blogs (governingthroughcrime.blogspot.com) he writes about capital punishment, the police, California Proposition 47 (which changed some felonies to misdemeanors), and the general inhumanity of the prison system as it operates today.

Writing about capital punishment, Simon refers to significant court cases, including the U.S. Supreme Court case (currently under consideration) challenging Oklahoma's lethal injection execution procedures. He compared Justice Samuel Alioto's passion for the death penalty with "the Officer...in Franz Kafka's *The Penal Colony*...in which the condemned are placed into a complex machine...that effectively kills them by slowly inscribing the name of their crime into their body with metal needles." Simon questions the current system of policing, "invented in the 19th century," and advocates for a core police

function based more upon neighborhood patrols and less upon SWAT teams and other quasi-military ancillary functions.



Simon sees the "war on crime" as a major part of the problem, writing that it "simultaneously valorizes cops as warriors in an existential struggle with violent crime and compels

them to engage in a necessarily brutal campaign to clear the streets of ... those widely perceived as a threat to public safety, i.e., young men of color."

This is the first general meeting speaker to talk about incarceration and prisons. Don't miss it! And remember that if you want to double-check the time, date, or place of any DoR event, the information is just a click away at democratsoffrossmoor.org.

"Justice will only exist where those not affected by injustice are filled with the same amount of indignation as those offended." — Plato

Did You Know?

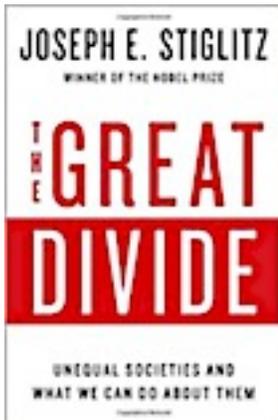
Contra Costa County was recently recognized as a model for prison realignment implementation in a study commissioned by Californians for Safety and Justice. Among the findings:

- Contra Costa—the ninth most populous California county—incarcerates individuals at one-half the rate of the rest of California.
- Over a recent 3-year period, the recidivism rate for felony probation was 20%, far lower than the 60% or higher statewide rates.
- Contra Costa County issues shorter probation terms than neighboring counties, matching a growing body of evidence that longer terms can do more harm than good.

The county's record is broadly attributed to close communication between key criminal justice agencies, effective defendant representation, and quality supervision in the probation department.

Summer Reading: Upcoming DoR Book Club Selections

Nobel Prize-winning Joseph E. Stiglitz claims in his book *The Great Divide: Unequal Societies and What We Can Do About Them* that the United States' divided landscape of haves and have-nots is very much a choice rather than the result of economic events beyond government control.



Stiglitz writes that we as Americans can choose a different outcome than living in a world of the superrich, a declining middle class, and a growing pool of poverty. The choices that have led to this, as

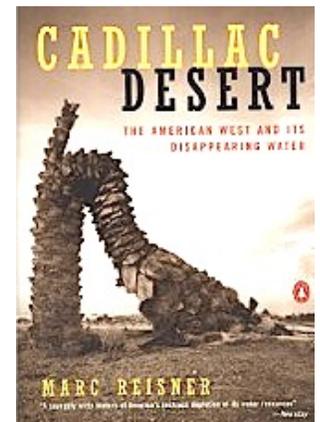
summarized in an online Kirkus review, “hinge on protecting the financial industry at the expense of the taxpayer.” Stiglitz claims that inequality kills democracy, and that by this measure the United States is now on a par with Russia and other developing nations.

***The Great Divide* is the DoR Book Club selection for July, and will be discussed at 3 p.m. in MPR 2 on Monday, July 6.**

Looking ahead to the August 3 meeting, the book club selection will be *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water*, by Marc Reisner, which has been updated since its original publication in 1986.

Cadillac Desert reads like a novel and is a must-read in our time of prolonged drought. The book explains how it came to pass that more than 40 million people in the western United States now depend upon the Colorado River, once the continent's wildest river and now dammed to create the extensive reservoir system that is less than half-full today.

The book was made into a four-part PBS series. The book is widely available and an essential read for all Californians.



Don't miss the discussion of the highly relevant book *Cadillac Desert* at 3 p.m., **August 3, in Gateway MPR 2.**

County Democrats Look Ahead to 2016

With the recent hotly contested county race between Susan Bonilla and Steve Glazer for the state senate seat vacated by now-Congressman Mark DeSaulnier over and done with, local Democrats are regrouping and looking ahead to the wild ride that's sure to come with next year's presidential election, post-Citizens United.



Contra Costa County community activist Chuck Carpenter says that overcoming the top-two primary and U.S. Supreme Court decision "making corporations people" are, in his view, the top-two biggest things to overcome. Next up is "Overcoming FOX News pushing cynicism 24/7. Cynical people don't act."

Region 2 Director Craig Cheslog says that Bonilla's failed bid for the senate seat was "another campaign that shows the folly of Citizens United." He adds that Democrats "need to do more to explain the difference between" campaign expenditures. We need to educate people...need to focus on those actually making the messages. We (Democrats) don't have as many billionaires. We have to talk about disclosure."



So What's Up With BART?

Rossmoor sits atop BART's busiest route — the Pittsburg/Bay Point–SFO/Millbrae line. The Walnut Creek station is also the second-busiest in Contra Costa County, with 5,920 exits each weekday; only El Cerrito del Norte is busier in the county. Over half of all passenger transit miles in the Bay Area are traveled on BART.

the U.S. in over 60 years. It now has 44 stations and plans to add extensions to Warm Springs, Santa Clara County, Livermore, and East Contra Costa. An extension to Oakland International Airport was recently completed and is now operational.



So what questions and concerns do you have about BART's operation and expansion plans?



BART District 1 Director Gail Murray, whose area includes Rossmoor, **will speak on Tuesday, June 9, at 7 p.m. in the Club Room at Creekside.** This is a special mid-month DoR presentation.

When and where BART extensions are located is frequently contentious as areas around the Bay Area vie for stations in their communities. BART is also undergoing a renovation and replacement program to upgrade its aging cars and infrastructure, which includes train control stations, facilities, and equipment. Passenger fares make up 71.8 percent of BART's operating costs, with the remainder a combination of local and federal funds and other sources.

When it began operation in 1972, BART was the first new rail rapid transit system built in

Bring your questions to the June 9 BART presentation!

Appearing June 8 at Peacock Hall

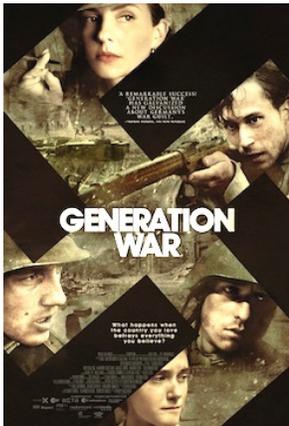
Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing will be shown at Peacock Hall on Monday, June 8, at 1:00 and 7:00 p.m.

Originally released in 2006, the all-woman Texas-based country music trio made headlines by publicly criticizing then-President Bush's decision to invade Iraq. The film follows the three years of fan backlash and public scrutiny that followed.

Texas native and lead singer Natalie Maines's declaration to a live audience at a 2003 concert in London, that "Just so you know, we're on the good side with y'all. We do not want this war, this violence, and we're ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas." The Dixie Chicks faced a huge public backlash in the U.S. though, at the time, a million Londoners had recently demonstrated against the Iraq invasion.



Don't Miss this July Movie! by Emily Ehm



Generation War (titled *Our Mothers, Our Fathers in Germany*) will be shown at the Peacock Hall on July 8. The film will begin at 3 p.m., have a one-hour break at 6 p.m., and conclude from 7–9 p.m. For the intermission, bring a sandwich or whatever else tickles your fancy, along with

your own bottle of wine or other beverage. And remember, free popcorn for everyone!

The film is in German, has English subtitles, and has won many awards. Yes, this movie is

long, but when the Jewish Film Festival showed it a couple of months ago, everyone returned after the break to see the ending.

This film was made in Germany to explain to Germans how their parents could have been led into World War Two and how moral choices were made at the time. The film follows five young Germans as they go through the war and attempts to clarify their thinking, their actions, and the driving morality that ultimately propels those actions. *Generation War* shines a light on how politicians and conditions can together make terrible decisions and how ordinary people can be swept along with them.

Questions? Call Emily Ehm at 943-7610. See you at the movie!

July 23 General Meeting

The speaker at the **Thursday, July 23, General Meeting** will be Carla Marinucci, Senior Political Writer at the *San Francisco*

Chronicle. The Town Square will start at 6:00 p.m. in the Event Center, with the presentation starting at 7:00 p.m.

Welcome Aboard!

by Marilyn Davin

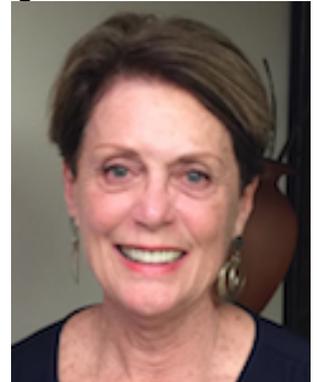
DoR is delighted to welcome several newcomers to the Club. Be sure to introduce yourselves and welcome them when you meet at DoR events.



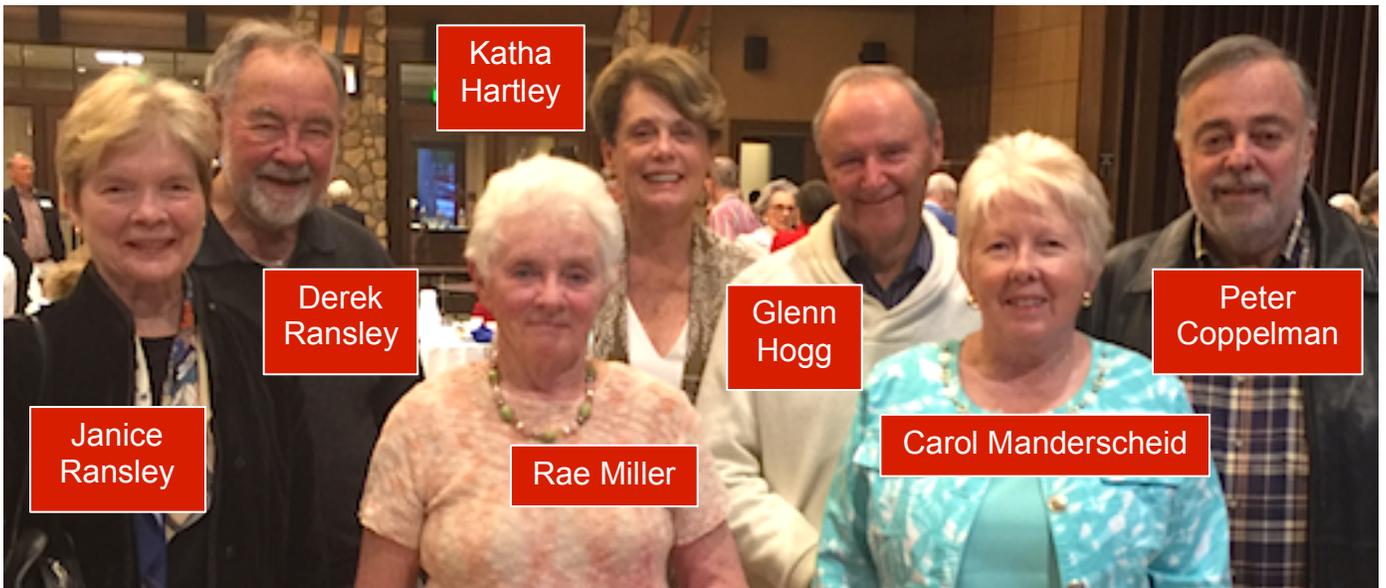
Linda Stephens joined DoR this year after four years of travel following her retirement from Kaiser Permanente, where she trained nurses on software programs. She was based in Emeryville and Pleasanton while at Kaiser.

Linda is originally from deep-red Texas and grew up in a family that was also “very red.” She says her move to California changed her politics. “I was so surprised to find that my family was so bigoted,” she laughs. She moved to California in 1989 to work for Bank of America before moving to Maui to run a wedding business. Linda’s interests so far, aside from Democratic politics, include music and singing with Harmony, an all-women’s group here in Rossmoor.

Newcomer **Katha Hartley** came to Rossmoor in February, but she found the Democrats of Rossmoor’s website before she even moved. A life-long Democrat originally from a big Irish Catholic family on Chicago’s Southside, she grew up in a very politically active family (and even has a photo of herself with JFK from some volunteer work she did in high school).



Katha married her college sweetheart John on St. Patrick’s Day. They were married for 52 years and raised five children before his death two years ago. Katha and John’s professional life reads like a travelogue; they lived on both coasts and in many areas in between. They even joined the Peace Corps following their initial retirement and served in Grenada in the West Indies. Katha worked on Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign, and says she’s especially proud that she helped get 61% of Democrats out to vote in Colorado, where she was living at the time.



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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT www.democratsOFrossmoor.org

Upcoming Events

June 8 Film: *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up & Sing*
Peacock Hall, 1 & 7 p.m.

June 9 Special Presentation
Gail Murray: *Better BART, Better Bay Area*
7 p.m. Creekside Club Room

June 25 General Meeting
Jonathon Simon: *If Dignity Matters—
Restoring Criminal Justice after the Era of
Mass Incarceration*
Event Center, 6 p.m. social, 7 p.m. speaker

July 6 Book Club: *The Great Divide*
Gateway MPR 2, 3 p.m.

July 8 Film: *Generation War*
Peacock Hall 3 p.m.
6 p.m. intermission
7–9 p.m. film continues



July 23 General Meeting
Carol Marinucci on Local Politics
Event Center, 6 p.m. social, 7 p.m. speaker

August 3 Book Club: *Cadillac Desert*
Gateway MPR 2, 3 p.m.

Democrats of Rossmoor 2015 Membership Dues

Membership runs January through December and costs \$20 per person.

Check One: New member Returning member

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Please print.

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Are you a registered voter? _____ Are you a registered Democrat? _____
(We need this information for the Democratic Party, Region Two)

Can you occasionally volunteer for any of the following?

____ Voter Registration ____ Phoning on behalf of Democratic Party candidates
____ Putting together mailings ____ Event set-up

Place your check (made out to Democrats of Rossmoor) and this form in an envelope and:

- Leave it in the Democrats' mailbox at Gateway during office hours,
- Mail it to Patsy Sharaf, 3441 Golden Rain Rd. #4, Walnut Creek, CA 94595,
- Or bring the form/check to the Membership Table at any meeting.

Thank you for joining the Democrats of Rossmoor!