
GreenGram

The Green Party of NJ Bulletin - January 2009

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[Special thanks to Anthony Wille for his help in gathering material for this issue]

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GREEN REGISTRATION ON THE RISE IN NEW JERSEY

Since June of 2007, the number of Green Party registrants in New Jersey has increased from 721 voters to 953, a gain of 32%. By county, the biggest gainers were Hunterdon, more than doubling (12 to 30); Sussex, also more than doubling (17 to 35); and Burlington, an increase of 72% (29 to 50).

The June 2007 numbers can be found here:

www.njelections.org/2007results/07primary-election/2007-primary-election-by-county.pdf

and the current figures are listed here:

www.njvoterinfo.org/counties/voterregistrationsummary1020081/index.html

(above research done by Matt Thieke)

County Local News

BERGEN COUNTY

On Jan. 10 Ed Fanning, Alvin Meyer and Ali Etandali traveled to Washington, DC to participate in the protest against the Israeli massacre in Gaza. The following is a report based on submissions from Ed and Alvin:

We were proud that Cynthia McKinney and Ralph Nader both spoke forcefully at the rally. Thousands of people from the east, south and midwest attended in spite of the inclement weather. It appeared that about 85% of the crowd was of middle eastern heritage.

Alvin was interviewed by The Arabic Hour, an Arab-American community TV program (www.arabichour.org). He spoke against the atrocities, mentioning the positions of the Green Party on Israel/Palestine.

We conversed with many people on the march and talked about how the GP supports their efforts. One Palestinian man was particularly impressed that we made the long trip to support his people's cause. Alvin met up with Titus North, the Green Party 2008 Congressional candidate from the Pittsburgh area (Titus garnered almost 23,000 votes running in a race where there was no Republican Party candidate).

The three of us were glad we made the trip to support our Palestinian brothers and sisters. We left determined and invigorated.

BURLINGTON/CAMDEN

According to reports from Matt Thieke and Mark Heacock, the Green Party of Camden County intends to run a full slate of candidates this November - for state assembly, county freeholder, and Camden City mayor and council. Some meetings have already been held toward beginning the process of recruiting and vetting potential candidates.

ESSEX COUNTY

In December the Essex Greens hosted an event where they showed two short movies about renewable energy and green jobs. This was followed by a presentation from the first teacher at a new "green academy" at Essex County Vocational school and then a lengthy discussion session. Turnout for the event was good, with 35 people in attendance. Three new people then came to the next monthly local meeting, and it looks like they will join and become active with the Essex Greens.

In January the local will be holding a public forum: "Who Caused the Housing/Credit/Economic Crisis, and How Can We Solve It?" Date: Wednesday, January 28, at 7:30pm. Location: the Bloomfield College Student Center, 198 Liberty Street (corner of Oakland), 2nd floor, Bloomfield, 07003. The featured speaker will be John Atlas, president and founder of the National Housing Institute, which publishes Shelterforce magazine. For over 35 years, John Atlas has been a public interest lawyer, activist, writer, radio talk show host and organizer (see: www.zcommunications.org/zspace/johnatlas). He helped create the NJ Tenant Organization and was one of the founders of NJ Citizen Action. On Jan. 28 Atlas will give his views on the causes of and remedies for the subprime mortgage catastrophe. There will be a question and answer period. The meeting is free, but donations will be accepted. Parking is available in a large lot across the street from the Student Center (put a "Visitor" sign on your car dashboard). For more information: indpol@igc.org; 973-338-5398; www.essexcountygreens.org.

Reporting by Ted Glick and Jane Califf

GLOUCESTER COUNTY

Submitted by Margie MacWilliams (co-chair)

The Gloucester County Green Party has been active participating in several clean-up projects organized by the Environmental Commission and hosting regular monthly meetings. The next meeting will be on Sunday, January 25th at 2:00pm at the Moore Perks Cafe in Wenonah. More information (including a song about the Green Party!) can be found on facebook.com - go to "Gloucester County Green Party."

MIDDLESEX COUNTY

(this article is based on a report by Matt Natale, our new Middlesex County Coordinator)

Toward reviving the Middlesex local, Matt has been doing extensive outreach and has been posting to the Middlesex County Green Party Yahoo group (GPNJ-Middlesex). He is planning to set up a Meetup for the local. The Meetup's schedule and location will be announced on the Yahoo group and in the GreenGram.

He recently attended a "Campaign for Liberty" Meetup in an effort to generate interest in the GP. The group had invited county coordinators from the Green, Libertarian, and Constitution parties to make presentations. After his talk, Matt distributed information and invited people to come to the future Middlesex County Green Party Meetups. He is also in the process of establishing a Green support group at Brookdale College.

Matt has been working closely with breakthematrix.com (alternative news media), writing articles about the GP and posting Cynthia McKinney speeches. His name has been featured on several of their broadcasts, with the audience advised to read his columns.

On Jan. 13 Matt attended the Emergency Town Hall Meeting ("A Call To Act: Stop The Israeli Massacre in Gaza") in New York City, where he had a chance to converse with Cynthia McKinney. At the event he was interviewed by the Revolution newspaper (one of the event sponsors) and got in some positive comments about the Green Party.

MONMOUTH COUNTY

Submitted by Rich Fuller

The Green Party of Monmouth County (GPMC) is solidifying its working relationship with Clean Ocean Action (COA), the environmental and ocean advocate for New Jersey's coastline and its offshore areas. Since the days when Earl Gray was County Coordinator and a GPNJ officer, our members have participated in the biannual "beachsweeps" sponsored by COA. More than a year ago GPMC officially became one of 125 participating organizations committed to advocating for, and educating about, maintaining a clean ocean. In related recent news, we were happy to see the Green Party of Ocean County become a participating organization by officially adding its name to this important list of ocean advocates.

At the December GPNJ Green Council / Executive Committee meeting a resolution offered by Rich Fuller was approved: that GPNJ become an official supporter of Clean Ocean Action's Anti-LNG (Anti-Liquid Natural Gas) Campaign. This campaign to protect the ocean is designed to prevent three proposed industrial islands from being located off the Jersey/New York shorelines. The closest facility would be about 15 miles off Asbury Park. At its website, COA has a scientifically documented 60-page book on why an LNG island ("Insanity Island") would be unwise, unsafe and unsustainable.

In December, Rich attended a press conference announced by COA at Langosta Lounge, Asbury Park. He gave a brief speech against the LNG proposals alongside a half dozen other speakers. That group constitutes just a segment of a growing coalition of clean ocean advocates led by Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of COA.

Other proposals to further strengthen the relationship between the various Green parties of New Jersey and COA are in the planning stage and will be proposed one at a time to the Green Council.

OCEAN COUNTY

Coordinator Jason Koralja has expressed interest in running for a seat on the Surf City Boro Council this year. He says, "In this mostly Republican Boro, the same politicians run unopposed for the same spots year after year."

Running for such seats - at the local level, where an incumbent runs unopposed because the oppositional major party fails to run a candidate - often gives the Greens a chance to make a significant impact in the race, get in the press, and start to build a base.

From GPNJ Chair Nick Mellis to Kari Martin of COA

Dear Ms. Martin:

It is with pleasure that I report to you that the Green Party of New Jersey (GPNJ) has voted to endorse our inclusion into the Anti-LNG Campaign Coalition. We look forward to working together with Clean Ocean Action to help promote a more sustainable New Jersey shoreline and ocean. Our vote included all of our County chairs throughout the state. Rich Fuller, Chair of the Monmouth County Green Party, has volunteered to be the contact/liason between our two groups.

I look forward to both speaking with you and working with your group in the future.

[Kari Martin is COA's Policy Communications Director]

KEN WOLSKI INSTRUMENTAL IN PROMOTING MEDICAL MARIJUANA BILL

Green Party member Ken Wolski of Lawrence Township is Executive Director of the Coalition for Medical Marijuana-New Jersey. CMMNJ held its most recent monthly meeting on Jan. 14, where it was announced that the NJ Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee in December voted 6-1 in favor of bill S119, "The New Jersey Compassionate Use Medical Marijuana Act" (see: www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/S0500/119_S1.HTM).

The bill will now go to the entire Senate for a vote, probably in February. CMMNJ will send press releases before the vote to rally support, and after the vote to discuss the outcome. Governor Corzine has said that he will sign the bill when it gets to his desk.

Thirteen states have laws that protect medical marijuana users and now, hopefully, New Jersey is poised to become the 14th state to protect patients who use marijuana with a doctor's recommendation. CMMNJ supporters are urged to contact their state senator to show support for the legislation (<http://capwiz.com/norml2/issues/alert/?alertid=12326996>).

On Dec. 16 CMMNJ had a letter published in the Trenton Times (<http://drugsense.org/temp/009VjCjDcCHb.html>) on behalf of multiple sclerosis patient John Wilson, who was arrested recently for cultivation and use of medical marijuana. New Jersey Network (NJN) did an excellent short feature on him on Jan. 7. John faces 10 to 20 years in state prison, according to NJN.

There has recently been a good deal of favorable media attention for this issue, including:

**- Lawrence Ledger article
www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=53204144807**

**- Lawrence Ledger editorial endorsement
www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=53204144807#/note.php?note_id=54674664807**

**- Trentonian article
www.trentonian.com/articles/2009/01/12/news/doc496ac3f8e9f76415477024.txt**

- WZBN cable TV spot on Jan. 13

CMMNJ will be featured on WIBG 1020 AM Radio (also on the Web) on Jan. 20 from 10:00-11:00am.

For the latest newspaper stories, photos, and the CMMNJ Annual Report for 2008, visit: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=502598656.

Tax deductible donations to CMMNJ can be made through Paypal (www.cmmnj.org/contribute.html); or checks made out to "CMMNJ" can be sent to: Coalition for Medical Marijuana-New Jersey, 844 Spruce Street, Trenton, NJ 08648.

Their next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 10 at the Lawrence Twp. Library, 7:00-9:00pm. All are welcome; light refreshments are served.

CHRONOLOGICAL REPORTAGE RE: CYNTHIA MCKINNEY ON THE DIGNITY

Green Party's Cynthia McKinney on Relief Mission to Gaza

News from FreeGaza.org 12/28/08

Larnaca, Cyprus - The Free Gaza movement will hold a press conference at 16:30, Dec. 29 at the port in Larnaca. The organization is sending the Dignity on an emergency mission of mercy to Gaza loaded with three to four tons of urgently needed medical supplies.

On board are four physicians, including Dr. Elena Theoharous, a surgeon and Member of Parliament in Cyprus. Also going are the Hon. Cynthia McKinney, former US Congresswoman and Green Party presidential candidate, and Sami al-Hajj, an Al Jazeera reporter and former detainee at Guantanamo.

The medical supply list includes bandages, splints and rubber gloves, items that any medical community should have access to, but, because of Israel's policies of collective punishment, these supplies are not available.

Eliza Ernshire, one of the Free Gaza organizers says, "We have calls for surgeons willing to go into Gaza and work there throughout this crisis. The doctors inside are exhausted and unable to cope with the number of wounded. We will do our best to send in the DIGNITY as often as we can over the next few weeks, bringing in physicians and medical supplies."

Israel accused of ramming Gaza aid boat

by Mark Tran in the UK Guardian 12/29/08

Activists trying to bring aid to Gaza today claimed their boat had been rammed by Israeli gunboats in a "criminal attack" in international waters.

The Free Gaza Movement said its vessel, the Dignity, was intercepted by several Israeli ships as it headed to the Gaza strip, which has been under Israeli aerial bombardment since Saturday. One gunboat rammed the Dignity on the port bow side, causing heavy damage, although no one was hurt, the group said.

"When attacked, the Dignity was clearly in international waters, 90 miles off the coast of Gaza," the group said on its website. "The gunboats also fired their machine guns into the water in an attempt to stop the mercy ship from getting to Gaza.

"At no time was the Dignity ever close to Israeli waters. They clearly identified themselves, and the Israeli attack was willful and criminal."

The Dignity later arrived in the Lebanese port of Tyre, where it was met by cheering crowds. Lubna Masarwa, a Free Gaza spokeswoman, said the boat had gone to Lebanon - despite Israeli navy orders that it sail back to Cyprus - because of a lack of fuel.

Masarwa said the ship was "in bad shape" due to damage sustained in the collision and was taking on small amounts of water. The Lebanese president, Michel Suleiman, ordered that the Dignity be "rescued" and welcomed back in Lebanon.

The Dignity flies the flag of Gibraltar and is piloted by an English captain. Its 16 passengers include Cynthia McKinney, a former US congresswoman. It left for Gaza from Lanarca in Cyprus yesterday. The group said journalists on board filmed the attack.

Israel declared Gaza a closed military zone after it launched air attacks on Hamas targets on Saturday in response to Hamas firing rockets into Israel. Israel said the Free Gaza movement boat would not be permitted to dock in the Gaza strip.

The Free Gaza group has made five boat deliveries of aid to Gaza since August, defying a blockade imposed by Israel when Hamas won control of the territory in June 2006. Aid ships for the Palestinian coastal territory often stop at Cyprus before heading to Gaza, opting for the indirect route to deprive Israel of any excuse not to allow them in.

Oh, What a Day!

by Cynthia McKinney 12/30/08

When we left from Cyprus, one reporter asked me "are you afraid?" And I had to respond that Malcolm X wasn't afraid; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wasn't afraid. But little did I know that just a few hours later, I would be recollecting my life and mentally preparing myself for death.

When we left Cyprus, the Mediterranean was beautiful. But sometimes it was rough, and we got behind on our schedule. There were no other ships around us and night descended upon us rather quickly. It was the darkest black and suddenly, out of nowhere, came searchlights disturbing our peace. The searchlights stayed with us for about half an hour or so. We knew they were Israeli ships.

They were fast, and they would come close and then drop back. Then they'd come close again. The cat and mouse game went on for at least a half hour. What were they doing? And why?

[For a while] there was complete blackness once again and all seemed right. And then, out of nowhere we were rammed - and rammed again and rammed again, the last one throwing me off the couch, sending all our food up in the air; and all the plastic bags and

tubs - evidence of sea sicknesses among the crew and passengers - flew all over the cabin and all over us.

We'd been rammed by the Israelis. How did we know? Because they called us on the phone afterwards to tell us that we were engaging in subversive, terroristic activity; and if we didn't turn around right then and return to Larnaca, Cyprus, we would be fired upon. We quickly grabbed our lifevests and put them on. Then the captain announced that the boat was taking on water. We might have to evacuate. One of my mates told me to prepare to die. And I reflected that I have lived a good and full life. I have tasted freedom and known what it is. I was right with myself and my decision to join the Free Gaza movement.

I remembered my father's parting words, "You all will be sitting ducks." Just like the U.S.S. Liberty. We were engaged in peaceful activity, a harmless pleasure boat, carrying a load of hospital supplies for the people of Gaza, who, too are sitting ducks, currently being bombarded in aerial assault by the Israeli military.

It's been a long day for us. The captain was outstanding. Throughout it all, he remained stoic and calm, effective in every way. I didn't know how to put my life jacket on. One of the passengers kindly assisted me. Another of the passengers pointed out that the Israeli motors for those huge, fast boats were US made - a gift to them from the US. And now they were using those motors to damage a pleasure boat outfitted with three tons of hospital supplies, one pediatrician, and two surgeons.

I have called for President-elect Obama to say something. The Palestinian people in the Gaza strip are seeing the worst violence in 60 years. To date, President-elect Obama has remained silent. The Israelis are using weapons supplied to them by the US government. Strict enforcement of US law would require the cessation of all weapons transfers to Israel. Adherence to international law would require the same. As we are about to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, let us remember that he said: (1) the United States is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world, and (2) our lives begin to end the day we remain silent about things that matter.

I implore the President-elect to not send Congress a budget that contains more weapons for Israel. We have so much more to offer. And I implore the Congress to vote "no" on any budget and appropriation bills that provide more weapons transfers, period.

Israel is able to carry out these intense military maneuvers because taxpayers in the US give their hard-earned money to our representatives in Congress and our Congress chooses to spend the money in this way. Let's stop it and stop it now. There's been too much blood shed. And while we still walk among the living, let us not remain silent about the things that matter. We really can promote peace and have it if we demand it of our leaders.

We Lived to Tell the Story: Lebanon Rescued Us

by Cynthia McKinney 1/1/09

Yesterday, we met with the President of Lebanon, the Chief of the Military, and the Interior Minister who all thanked us for responding and risking our lives on a mission of mercy; we profusely thanked them for rescuing us.

What would we have done, stranded out at sea, prohibited from reaching our destination, low on fuel, with a badly damaged boat, if Lebanon had not accepted us? Lebanon sent their ships to find us. Lebanon rescued us. Lebanon welcomed us. And we are truly thankful.

We've been told that the sturdy, wood construction of our boat, Dignity, is the reason we are still alive. Fiberglass would probably not have withstood the impact of the Israeli attack and, under different circumstances, we might not be here to tell the story. Even at that, the report that came to us yesterday after the Captain and First Mate went back to Sour (Tyre) to inspect the boat was that it was sinking, the damage is extensive, and the boat will take, in their estimation, at least a month to repair.

My personal, and I know the group's, thanks must go to Al Jazeera, that allowed three of their reporters to be onboard with us on our voyage. As a result, Al Jazeera carried the story of the Dignity live: From castoff in Cyprus when our spirits were high; through the menacing maneuvers of the huge, super-fast Israeli ships before they rammed us; the Israeli calls on the ship phone after the ramming, calling us terrorists and subversives, and telling us to return to Cyprus; the fact that we didn't have enough fuel to follow their instructions; the threat to fire at us if we didn't turn around; ending with our beaten-up boat limping into Sour harbor in Lebanon. Al Jazeera carried our story as "breaking news" and performed a real service to its audience and to us.

One of the Al Jazeera reporters with us was Sami al-Hajj, who was detained in Guantanamo by the United States for six incredibly long years. What an honor to even exchange glances with such a humble man who had endured so much pain at the hands of the US government. I apologized to him that my tax dollars were being used in such a despicable way. And Sami's crime according to the US? Born in Sudan, reporting for Al Jazeera in Afghanistan, Sami was the wrong color, the wrong nationality, the wrong religion, reporting for the wrong news outfit, telling us the truth about a wrong war. And for that he endured incarceration for six long years.

Another incredibly committed journalist who was with us was CNN's Karl Penhaul. Karl reported the truth even when his own station was repeating Israeli disinformation. The fact that we were traveling with these alert journalists added to the flat-footedness and obvious crudeness of the Israeli response. Sadly, Israel has changed its story too many times to count, and that's because they are not telling the truth.

We lived to tell the story. Karl's incredible reporting, just a portion of our story, can be seen on CNN at:

www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/12/30/gaza.aid.boat/index.html

A little more of the story and film of the extensive damage can be seen at:

www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/12/30/gaza.aid.boat/index.html#cnSTCVideo

This video and the photos of Karl's report are particularly interesting given that Israel claims that our boat was only scratched and that, in actuality, our captain, while trying to outmaneuver them, damaged their warship.

Last night I was on PressTV.com, along with others who were on the Dignity, and we debated a representative from WINEP, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. I reminded the audience that the Palestinians don't have nuclear weapons, depleted uranium munitions, white phosphorous, or F-16s, but the Israelis do. The facts, however, tend to get garbled after being processed by the organ of state-sponsored disinformation utilizing the world's press.

On the drive from Sour through Saida to Beirut, we were welcomed like heroes because our ordeal had been seen by everyone on Al Jazeera. The mayor of Sour came to welcome us. The mayor of Saida insisted that we stop there, on our way to Beirut, for a special ceremony. But there was something else that was visible along our drive, and that is the devastation that Lebanon, itself, has received as a result of the Israeli war machine. The scars of the war are still evident everywhere.

And one final note, President-elect Obama roared like a mighty lion onto the political scene, but now he is as silent as a lamb in the face of the death and destruction that is happening in Gaza. As we approach the birthday celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. let us remember what Dr. King said: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Cynthia was busy with numerous appearances in the wake of the incident-at-sea. On Jan. 8 she appeared on Al Jazeera English, along with Clara Short, British MP, who was able to make it to Gaza onboard the Dignity prior to Cynthia's aborted trip. Here is the link to the Al Jazeera audio:

www.sendspace.com/file/urprky

Cynthia spoke at the "Let Gaza Live" demonstration in Washington, DC on Jan. 10 (text of speech below) and a fundraiser for the Free Gaza Movement in Los Angeles on Jan. 11.

On Jan. 13 she was featured at an Emergency Town Hall Meeting ("A Call To Act: Stop The Israeli Massacre in Gaza; We Condemn the US Role in this War Crime") held at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. Other speakers included Chris Hedges, Najla Said (playwright and actor, who performed an excerpt from her play PALESTINE about a visit to Gaza in the early 1990s with her father Edward Said), and Adam Shapiro (a founder of the International Solidarity Movement; before the event, Shapiro received threats from the "Jewish Defense Organization," the militant Zionist group that broke with the Jewish Defense League back in the 1980s; see: www.progressive.org/mag/mc011409.html - "Critic of Israel Threatened Before Talk in NY"). In addition, Vanessa Redgrave made a surprise appearance. The well-attended event (a Standing Room Only crowd estimated at over 500) included a good contingent of Greens, including our Middlesex County Coordinator Matt Natale. It was initiated by Revolution Books and endorsed by the Brooklyn Greens, among others. A video excerpt of Cynthia's talk at the event can be viewed at: www.gp.org

Cynthia will be in Northampton, MA on Jan. 19, Martin Luther King's Birthday, joining journalist Keith Harmon Snow, the Green/Rainbow Party of Massachusetts, and Friends of Congo.

Cynthia McKinney's speech at the Jan. 10 "Let Gaza Live" demonstration in Washington, DC

We don't see the images. They are neatly censored from our view in this country. But everywhere else around the world the carnage that is Gaza is being seen and the people are revolted by what they see.

They see dead babies, decapitated bodies, defenseless relief workers killed. Maimed men, makeshift morgues, mortified mothers. They see exploding white phosphorus shells, cluster bombs, depleted uranium munitions. They see what is reportedly the world's fourth most powerful military using all of its power against a defenseless people.

In fact, they are witnesses to 15 days of war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. They see Hugo Chavez expel Venezuela's Israeli Ambassador and they see lawmakers in Ecuador condemn Israel's actions, calling for an investigation into Israel's crimes against humanity.

And despite the obvious facts of an Israeli-sponsored terror campaign against Palestinians in Gaza, a piece of territory roughly twice the size of the District of Columbia, they see the US Congress endorse a resolution totally supporting Israel, even though Israel is in violation of US and international law.

They see Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, swaggering in insult to black America by initially refusing to seat Roland Burris from Illinois in the Senate, yet that same Reid cowers before the pro-Israel lobby, and they wonder why.

And sadly, they see the US President-elect, who roared onto the scene like a lion, remain as quiet as a lamb in the face of the utter inhumanity of Israel's actions, and they wonder why.

And then they see us, gathered here in front of the White House, reaffirming our own humanity, and that of millions of people around the world, including in Israel, who disagree with this death and destruction. The tears of the Palestinians roll down our cheeks, even as we bury our own victims of police murder.

A new day is coming in US politics. We will use the power of our vote to change US policy. We will no longer check our values at the door and support politicians and political parties that fail to deliver.

Not one more bomb to Israel. In defense of humanity, we will not give up and we will win.

EU LEADERS SQUANDER CHANCE TO PROMOTE PEACE IN THE MIDEAST

In the Guardian newspaper of 12/30/08, Caroline Lucas, the Green Party [UK] leader, drew attention to the EU-Israel association agreement. Under this agreement, the EU could suspend preferential trading links between the EU and Israel on the grounds of the Israeli government's failure to adhere to its human rights clauses. "Instead, by choosing to upgrade EU relations with Israel just a few weeks ago (against the advice of the majority in the European Parliament), EU leaders have squandered a key opportunity to put real pressure on the Israeli authorities to lift the blockade. Israel's continuing assault on Gaza is not only 'disproportionate,' as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is reported as saying. It is also deeply counter-productive."

Commenting on the long-term situation Dr. Lucas said, "The population of Gaza is already suffering the devastating consequences of the Israeli blockade, which has accelerated their decline into even greater hunger and poverty. Casualties among the civilian population only serve to make people more angry, and sow the seeds for further conflict. Violence can never be justified or condoned on either side. But the longer the deadly blockade and occupation continue, the further away the conditions for peace will get."

www.greenparty.org.uk/news/Gaza-eu-israel-association-agreement.html

INGRID BETANCOURT THANKS HUGO CHAVEZ

By Erik Sperling and Gregory Wilpert 12/9/08

From: venezuelanalysis.com

Former Colombian hostage Ingrid Betancourt met with Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez in Caracas on Monday, to "hug and thank him" for his successful efforts to free hostages held by rebel groups in Colombia.

Betancourt highlighted the process led by Chavez last January and February, which resulted in the unilateral release of six hostages held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC by its Spanish acronym.

"The first step towards my freedom was thanks to Hugo Chavez," Betancourt declared. "If those contacts hadn't been made and that framework hadn't been in place, there wouldn't have been an Operation Check-Mate," she said, referring to the Colombian army's rescue maneuver that freed her.

"The voice of President Chavez was the voice that gave us hope even in the most terrible moments of captivity, the voice that allowed us to see the light at the end of the tunnel and believe that we could be freed soon," Betancourt said.

Speaking to the remaining hostages, Betancourt spoke of a "chain of love that has been created in the continent, that is going to get you all out of there." The former Green Party presidential candidate, who spent six years in captivity, was freed along with 14 others in an operation by Colombia's army last June.

GREEN PARTY'S RICH WHITNEY ON ILL. GOVERNOR ROD BLAGOJEVICH

Civil rights attorney and 2006 Illinois Green Party candidate for governor Rich Whitney issued the following statement on the arrest and criminal charges against Ill. Governor Rod Blagojevich. Whitney has not yet formally announced himself as a candidate for governor in 2010 but has publicly acknowledged he is making preparations for such a run:

We've all heard the expression, "I hate to tell you so - but I told you so." But in this case, I honestly don't hate to say it: We did tell you so! While I did not make any specific allegations against Mr. Blagojevich during the campaign, every informed Illinoisan knew that pay-for-play was endemic in our state and that illegal job patronage had not stopped but had gone underground. But it was only the Whitney campaign and the other campaigns of the Illinois Green Party that raised the issue of serious campaign ethics reform, front and center. Indeed, one of my campaign themes was to clean up

government, along with cleaning up the environment and the budget mess. Now we're even deeper in the hole financially and we have truly hit bottom - I hope, anyway - in terms of corruption in government.

In announcing the criminal charges against Blagojevich, Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the FBI, stated that they "reveal that the office of the Governor has become nothing more than a vehicle for self-enrichment, unrestricted by party affiliation and taking Illinois politics to a new low." While I understand the sentiment, I would respectfully remind Mr. Grant, and Illinois voters, that there is one political party that has stood up for the principle of not accepting any corporate campaign contributions whatsoever, and that has stood firmly on a platform of making serious campaign ethics reform a top priority. And that is the Illinois Green Party.

I would also remind voters that this problem goes beyond the corruption of one man. This is a systemic problem that demands a systemic solution. The people of this State need to mobilize to gain control over what is supposed to be their government. And the way to do that is by building a grass-roots political party that is beholden and accountable only to the people, not the same big-moneyed special interests who have made practice of buying and selling politicians.

As an attorney, I have combated illegal job patronage. As a candidate, I called for all non-policy-making state jobs to be selected on the basis of objective criteria by an independent bureau. I also promised to appoint an Inspector General from an opposition party, to prevent and root out illegal job patronage and help remove the cloud of corruption over our state. I advocated the formation of a Citizens' Budget Review Commission, to review proposed budget proposals to help ferret out wasteful pork spending and political favoritism. And I called for campaign contribution limits of \$500 per candidate per campaign.

And of course, as with all Green Party candidates, I declined to accept any corporate campaign contributions - and advocated making a ban on corporate contributions the law of our state.

The news about Rod Blagojevich is but the latest symptom of a much more pervasive disease. The Democratic Party has had complete control of Illinois state government for several years now - and everyone can see for themselves that it has given us a completely dysfunctional government that has now led us into the abyss. Yet the Republican Party is just as cravenly supportive of the same corporatist agenda; they have simply been even less effective politically.

If the state of Illinois politics today doesn't demonstrate the need for the people to embrace and build the Green Party - a true party of, by and for the people - I don't know what will.

Whitney for Governor - P.O. Box 3803, Carbondale, IL 62902
www.whitneyforgov.org

CHAIR OF THE MAINE GREEN PARTY INTENDS TO RUN FOR GOVERNOR

Lynne Williams, Chair of the Maine Green Independent Party, has announced that she intends to run for governor in 2010. Based on the article below in the Bangor Daily News, Williams has a strong resume and could have a major impact in the race. In 2006 Green Party gubernatorial candidate Pat LaMarche won almost 10% of the vote in Maine. In 2002, Green Party gubernatorial candidate Jonathan Carter won 9.28% of the vote.

Maine Green party chairwoman to run for governor

By Bill Trotter, Bangor Daily News 12/10/08

Bar Harbor, Maine - An attorney who has championed numerous environmental and human rights causes in Maine has announced that she intends to run for governor in 2010.

Lynne Williams, 58, is state chair of the Maine Green Independent Party and serves on the planning board in Bar Harbor. In 2004, she ran unsuccessfully for the Maine House of Representatives as a Green party candidate in Rockland.

In addition to her legal degree, Williams has a doctorate in psychology from the University of Southern California. She announced her Blaine House bid in a prepared statement she sent Monday to the Bangor Daily News.

"The Green party platform, and my own values, are particularly suited to guiding a state through this type of [difficult economic] period," Williams said in the statement. "I seek to create a new definition of growth and progress, where such terms are not defined by how many Wal-Marts are in a region, but rather by how much people in that region support and patronize their own locally owned businesses."

Williams has been involved in numerous environmental and human rights causes in Maine over the past decade.

As an attorney, she represents Forest Ecology Network and RESTORE The North Woods in their roles as intervenors in the permitting process for the Plum Creek development proposal on Moosehead Lake. She represents the Wildlife Alliance of Maine and Animal Welfare Institute in their efforts to protect endangered lynx by increasing restrictions on trapping in the state.

She also represents groups that oppose the development of liquefied natural gas terminals in Washington County and southern Maine towns that are concerned about Poland Spring's use of groundwater in its water-bottling operations.

Former clients include anti-war protesters charged with criminal trespass after refusing to leave the Bangor offices of US Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe, and Friends of Magurrewock, which sought to halt construction of a new border crossing in the

Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge in Calais. She also represented Deane Brown, an inmate at Maine State Prison in Warren who unsuccessfully sued prison officials for barring him from speaking to the media.

Williams has advocated for repeal of Maine's school administration consolidation law, favors impeachment proceedings against President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, and briefly represented two men who were accused of trespassing on Martha Stewart's property on Mount Desert Island. She has helped gay and lesbian couples in Maine register as domestic partners and has been honored by the Peace & Justice Center of Eastern Maine for representing nonviolent protesters of the Iraq war.

CALIFORNIA GREENS STATEMENT RE: YOUTH SHOOTING DEATH

Green Party of California News Advisory

www.cagreens.org

For immediate release: January 9, 2009

Democrats blocked legislation holding police accountable for misconduct; political solution may have prevented shooting death of Oakland youth on New Year's Day, charges Green Party

OAKLAND - Political remedies to hold police more accountable for outrageous acts such as the shooting death of an African-American youth here on New Year's Day have been blocked by even supposedly "sympathetic" Democratic Party politicians, charged Green Party of California spokespersons Friday.

Greens said the killing of 22-year-old Oscar Grant by Oakland police should spark a renewed interest in police misconduct, transparency and accountability.

"Elected officials, including lawmakers representing the Bay Area such as Democrat Assemblywoman Fiona Ma (D-SF), have been blocking police accountability for years in Sacramento. She helped kill police accountability legislation in 2007," said Erika McDonald, a spokesperson for the San Francisco Green Party.

Ma was a member of the 2007 Assembly Public Safety Committee which refused to even bring to a vote two pieces of legislation, SB 1019 and AB 1648, which would have given the public access to police records about misconduct and discipline involving police officers, including excessive force, officer-involved shootings and dishonesty.

"Another young man of color is dead. So much for change we can believe in, and an end to a practice of allowing law enforcement officials to act as a protected class. Supposedly

'progressive' Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, and the District Attorney, both Democrats, have not done what needs to be done," added McDonald.

"Public access to police records about sustained police misconduct not only protects the public by helping deter police misconduct, but it generates public confidence in the police by holding police accountable," said Cres Vellucci, Green Party spokesperson and member of the ACLU Board of Directors in Sacramento.

GREEN PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

www.gp.org

For Immediate Release: December 10, 2008

Greens offer six big steps for economic recovery

Greens support workers occupying a factory in Chicago after layoff

Bailout money isn't being used to help working Americans

WASHINGTON, DC - Green Party leaders said today that the incoming Obama Administration and Congress should take six major steps to reverse the financial meltdown and restore financial security for Americans.

The steps include a Green public works program, aid for state and municipal governments, expansion of mass transit, Single-Payer health care, a peace dividend gained by ending the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, and an end to the wasteful war on drugs.

Green Party candidates running for local, state, and national office in 2008 promoted many of these ideas even before the crisis precipitated. In September, Cynthia McKinney published a ten-point list of solutions and reforms in response to the Wall Street meltdown, titled "Seize the Time."

Greens expressed support for United Electrical Workers union members occupying a Republic Windows and Doors plant in Chicago after the plant was shut down and they were laid off with three days' notice and told they had no assurance of receiving severance and unused vacation pay. The company's creditor, Bank of America, received \$25 billion from the government's financial bailout package. Greens said that the bank's actions, including refusal to allow Republic to give workers 60 days notice (as required by law), demonstrates how bailout money isn't being used to assist working Americans facing financial hardship.

Six Green steps for economic recovery:

(1) Enact a massive Green public works program, creating new living-wage jobs in conservation (including weatherization and energy retro-fitting); clean and safe energy technologies to replace fossil fuel and nuclear sources and create a carbon-free economy; repair and improvement of America's deteriorating infrastructure (especially water and sewer systems); and improvement of public schools and Green job training programs.

(2) Bail out financially ailing towns, cities, and states before bailing out private corporations: millions of public sector and contractor jobs depend on the fiscal security of municipal and state governments.

(3) Jumpstart our country's mass transit system, giving people an alternative to cars while saving them money and providing jobs.

"Making autos more efficient will only get us part way toward solving our energy and climate challenges. We need to get people out of their cars altogether. Communities need the ability to provide local solutions for mass transportation: new trains, subways, light rail wherever they fit," said Wes Rolley, co-chair of the Green Party's Eco-Action Committee.

(4) Enact a Single-Payer/Medicare For All national health plan, providing every American with coverage and removing the burden of health care from small and large private businesses.

Single-Payer would cover all Americans regardless of income, employment, residence, age, or prior medical condition, allowing choice of health care provider, and costing working people far less than they now pay for private coverage. In 2003, the New England Journal of Medicine published an article estimating that Single-Payer could cut health care costs by \$350 billion annually (www.pnhp.org/publications/nejmadmin.pdf). Greens sharply criticized Barack Obama during the election season for rejecting Single-Payer out of concern for health insurance companies.

(5) End the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The staggering expense of the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions and occupations haven't only cost American, Iraqi, and Afghan lives. It also ate up trillions of dollars that could have been spent on human and environmental needs. If we call home our troops right now, we can divert the money needed for military occupations to Green public works and other programs to jumpstart the economy - a new peace dividend," said Starlene Rankin, co-chair of the Lavender Green Caucus.

The Green Party opposed both wars from the beginning and has criticized Mr. Obama's plans for delayed and partial troop withdrawal from Iraq and for sending more troops to Afghanistan.

(6) End the war on drugs, which wastes billions annually, hasn't curbed drug use, and ruins lives by incarcerating nonviolent offenders (mostly young, African American, Latino, and poor white) at further government expense.

"The war on drugs is America's longest and costliest war. With Afghanistan providing the world's biggest poppy crop, it's one of the main reasons the US is fighting a war there," said Cliff Thornton, co-chair of the Green Party and co-founder of Efficacy, Inc. (www.efficacy-online.org), which promotes major reforms in drug policy.

Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron has estimated that legalizing cannabis would save federal, state, and local governments \$44 billion a year in enforcement costs (www.prohibitioncosts.org/mironreport.html). Governments could collect another \$33 billion in revenues by taxing cannabis as heavily as alcohol and tobacco.

MORE INFORMATION

**Green Party of the United States - www.GP.org
202-319-7191, 866-41GREEN**

**Tally of Green election victories
www.gp.org/2008-elections/election-results.html**

**Green candidate news
www.gp.org/2008-elections/candidate-news.php**

**Green candidate database for 2008 and other campaign information
www.gp.org/elections.shtml**

**Green Party News Center
www.gp.org/newscenter.shtml**

**Green Party Speakers Bureau
www.gp.org/speakers**

**Green Party ballot access page
www.gp.org/2008-elections**

**"The financial meltdown requires far-reaching Green solutions, say Green Party leaders"
GPUS press release, September 23, 2008 - www.gp.org/press/pr-national.php?ID=107**

**"The Auto Bailout Shows the Failure of Corporate Government More than the Failure of Detroit: And Solving it Presents Opportunities for a New Economy" by Kevin Zeese
11/21/08**

www.opednews.com/articles/The-Auto-Bailout-Shows-the-by-Kevin-Zeese-08112\1-683.html

