



# Pio Pico Progressive Democratic Club

Pico Rivera\*Santa Fe Springs\*Whittier



Pio Pico "El Ranchito"  
Whittier, CA

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4 April 2011 **NEWSLETTER**

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Thank you to our members who have renewed at a greater level of membership:

Platinum: *Madeline Shapiro*

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## President Message

We had a great March meeting with a great speaker and a great turn out of members and guests. Now that spring is here, the **Uptown Whittier Farmers Market** will start on Wednesday. We will share a table with **Peace and Justice**. The purpose is to register voters and hand out flyers with information about our club. Please let me know if you would like to help out, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. **Ana Valencia** from **UTLA** is our guest speaker for April. Ana will speak about the crisis in public education. Hope to see you there!  
- Celeste

## ACLU Project to Abolish The Death Penalty

By *Gina Wong*, Newsletter Editor

**Mr. James Clark**, an attorney with the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California**, our guest speaker for March, spoke about the **ACLU Project to Abolish the Death Penalty Campaign**. Working across Los Angeles County, he is speaking to city councilmembers and organizations, garnering signatures for the ACLU Resolution to End Death Sentencing in Los Angeles County. In presenting his case for ending the death penalty, James Clark focused his arguments on the monetary costs, disparity of geography, racist aspects, and errors in convictions. He also spoke about particular difficulties garnering support in Los Angeles County, emphasizing the importance of voters.

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*Mr. James Clark - ACLU, Celeste Zabala*

## [ACLU Project to Abolish The Death Penalty](#)

continued

Portraying himself as the “money messenger”, James Clark explained the factors that contribute to the enormous costs of a death penalty trial in comparison to a trial “when life is not on the table”. He explained that death penalty defendants require two attorneys and more experts. Defendants are given the best attorneys and leading experts. A death penalty trial is lengthy. Defendants are required to request permission each step of the way, causing delays. Selecting a qualified death penalty jury, and the penalty phase, are longer processes. Defendants are entitled to 3 appeals and 12 habeas corpus, which taxpayers pay for, and special housing on death row, which the State pays for.

James Clark further advised that pursuing the death penalty costs an extra 1 million dollars per case, translating to 400 million dollars per year, and 1 billion dollars for 5 years. “When death is on the line” he made clear, “the costs are astronomical”.

“In the end” James Clark bluntly established, “A defendant spends an average of 25 years on death row, dying from natural causes or suicide, not from execution”.

Indicating the enormous amount of money that would be saved by converting current death penalty convictions to life without parole, James Clark exclaimed “At a time when California is facing a worsening economic crisis, it’s counterintuitive to put someone to death, the savings in housing and appeals would provide a real budget solution”.

What else is wrong with the death penalty? James Clark further identified problems of geography, race, and errors in convictions.

Death penalty convictions vary from county to county. A defendant in Los Angeles County is more likely to be sent to death row than any other county. In fact, Los Angeles County sent more people to death row than any other state, other than California. In quantifying the death penalty as “arbitrary”, James Clark credited the inconsistency to “pro-death attitudes that are cultural and ingrained”.

Identifying race as an important determining factor in convictions, James Clark believes it is the “subconscious way racism operates, the way in which human lives are valued differently”. To further illustrate his point, he explained “If the victim is white, a conviction is 4 times more likely than if the victim is Latino, and 3 times more likely than if the victim is African American”. Additionally, Latinos are sent to death row at a higher rate in Los Angeles County.

In reference to Illinois Governor Pat Quinn recently abolishing the death penalty because of concerns that innocent people have been executed, James Clark shed light on the fact that 138 people have been exonerated after being sentenced to death. Three of these people were sentenced to death in California. Whereas some people may advocate speeding up trials and cutting costs, the result would be an increased risk of executing innocent people, according to the ACLU.

“We have the power to end the death penalty” James Clark made clear, “By influencing elections of District Attorneys and opposing pro-death candidates, voters can send a strong message that they do not want the death penalty”.

As a final point, James Clark requested Pio Pico Progressive Democratic Club to join the ACLU by signing their [Resolution to End Death Sentencing in Los Angeles County](#).



## California's Crisis: Reaganomics Is Alive And Well

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By Scott Ratigan  
April 2, 2011

The crisis that we are living through in California can be boiled down to this: Reaganomics lives on in the hearts and minds of California voters.

The Republicans in the California legislature have just sabotaged the plan—Governor Brown's plan—for addressing the State's budget crisis. Governor Brown's plan was the least worst plan. He proposed to address the \$25 billion budget deficit (actually, covering eighteen months) through \$12 billion in cuts and \$12 billion in revenue from the extensions of tax hikes now set to expire. He proposed to put the tax extensions up to a vote in a special election in June. The problem was that getting the measure on the ballot required two Republican votes in the Assembly and two Republican votes in the Senate. On Friday, March 25, 2011, the Republican's list of demands—the ransom note—was revealed to show that the Republicans were being totally unreasonable and not serious about negotiating with the Governor. Governor Brown ended the negotiations, and now we are waiting for Plan B.

What is the problem, you ask?

The problem is that California voters still believe that taxing rich corporations and individuals is bad for the economy. In order to get elected, Governor Brown decided that he needed to say that he would not raise taxes “without a vote of the people.” Why isn't he saying, “We are going to make rich corporations and individuals pay their fair share”, a winning political stance? Here is what Sacramento insiders know: Corporations have the resources to crush any progressive taxation initiative on the ballot. Democrats can only hope to pass tax measures that the business community does not oppose. Terrifying - and this fear is not without merit. Consider the example of Proposition 24 on the

ballot last November's. The California Teachers Association put Proposition 24 on the ballot to repeal some egregious corporate tax breaks paid to Governor Schwarzenegger as ransom during the previous budget negotiation. Proposition 24 was a straight-up, no-brainer, progressive tax measure targeting corporations and holding harmless ordinary people. It went down to resounding defeat 42% to 58%. (When it comes to elections for ballot measures, 51-49% is close, 55-45% is not close, and 58-42% is a thumping.) Corporations poured money into the campaign against Prop. 24 and destroyed it.

As progressives we have no choice but to take up the long-term project of building a movement in favor of progressive taxation. California voters are so scared of this economy that they are unwilling to tax corporations for fear that there would be less money for jobs. The California Federation of Teachers made a great effort in the correct direction last spring with their March for California's Future from Bakersfield to Sacramento. More efforts like that will be needed if California is to avoid catastrophe.

*Scott Ratigan is a PPPDC member,  
and California State Worker*

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## Paul Ryan's Plan, the Coming Shutdown, and What's Really at Stake

By Robert Reich

Source: *The Huffington Post*

I was there in 1995 when the government closed because of a budget stalemate. I had to tell most of the Labor Department's 15,600 employees to go home and not return the next day. I also had to tell them I didn't know when they'd next get a paycheck.

There were two shutdowns, actually, rolling across the government in close succession, like thunder storms.

It's not the way to do the public's business.

Newt Gingrich got blamed largely because his ego was (and is) so big he couldn't stop blabbing that Clinton should be blamed. (Gingrich's complaint of a bad seat on Air Force One didn't help.)

## Paul Ryan's Plan, the Coming Shutdown, and What's Really at Stake continued

But the larger loss was to the dignity and credibility of the United States government. When average Americans saw the Speaker of the House and the President of the United States behaving like nursery school children unable to get along, it only added to the prevailing cynicism.

This has been the basic choice all along -- when the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution, in the Civil War, when we went through World War I and World War II and the Great Depression in between, during the Civil Rights movement and beyond.

The president needs to remind us that as members of the same society we have obligations to one another -- that the wealthiest among us must pay their fair share of taxes, that any of us who loses our jobs or homes or gets terribly sick can count on the rest of us, and that we have collective obligations to our elderly, our children, and the rest of the planet.

Cynicism about government works to the Republicans' continued advantage.

Case in point: House Budget Chair Paul Ryan unveiled a plan today that should make every American cringe. It would turn Medicare into vouchers whose benefits are funneled into the pockets of private insurers. It would make Medicaid and Food Stamps into block grants that allow states to ignore poor people altogether. It would drastically cut funding for schools, roads, and much else Americans need. And many of the plan's savings would go to wealthy Americans who'd pay even lower taxes than they do today.

Ryan's plan has no chance of passage -- as long as Democrats are still in control of the Senate (even Democratic deficit hawks like Kent Conrad and Ben Nelson are appalled by it) and the White House.

But this so-called "blueprint" could be a blueprint for America's future when and if right-wing Republicans take charge.

Which is where the cynicism comes in -- and the shutdowns. Republicans may get blamed now. But if the shutdowns contribute to the belief among Americans that government doesn't work,

Republicans win over the long term. As with the rise of the Tea Partiers, the initiative shifts to those who essentially want to close it down for good.

That's why it's so important that the President have something more to say to the American people than "I want to cut spending, too, but the Republican cuts go too far." The "going too far" argument is no match for a worldview that says government is the central problem to begin with.

Obama must show America that the basic choice is between two fundamental views of this nation. Either we're all in this together, or we're a bunch of individuals who happen to live within these borders and are mainly on their own.

This is why we have government. And anyone who wants to shut it down or cut it down because they say we can't afford it any longer is plain wrong. We are the richest nation in the world, richer than we've ever been. We can afford to remain a society whose members are in it together



*Madeline Shapiro attends  
April 26<sup>th</sup> Downtown Los Angeles  
"Save the American Dream"  
rally held in support of  
union workers in Wisconsin.*

## Losing Our Way

By *BOB HERBERT*

The New York Times

So here we are pouring shiploads of cash into yet another war, this time in Libya, while simultaneously demolishing school budgets, closing libraries, laying off teachers and police officers, and generally letting the bottom fall out of the quality of life here at home.

Welcome to America in the second decade of the 21st century. An army of long-term unemployed workers is spread across the land, the human fallout from the Great Recession and long years of misguided economic policies. Optimism is in short supply. The few jobs now being created too often pay a pittance, not nearly enough to pry open the doors to a middle-class standard of living.

Arthur Miller, echoing the poet Archibald MacLeish, liked to say that the essence of America was its promises. That was a long time ago. Limitless greed, unrestrained corporate power and a ferocious addiction to foreign oil have led us to an era of perpetual war and economic decline. Young people today are staring at a future in which they will be less well off than their elders, a reversal of fortune that should send a shudder through everyone.

The U.S. has not just misplaced its priorities. When the most powerful country ever to inhabit the earth finds it so easy to plunge into the horror of warfare but almost impossible to find adequate work for its people or to properly educate its young, it has lost its way entirely.

Nearly 14 million Americans are jobless and the outlook for many of them is grim. Since there is just one job available for every five individuals looking for work, four of the five are out of luck. Instead of a land of opportunity, the U.S. is increasingly becoming a place of limited expectations. A college professor in Washington told me this week that graduates from his program were finding jobs, but they were not making very much money, certainly not enough to think about raising a family.

There is plenty of economic activity in the U.S., and plenty of wealth. But like greedy children, the folks at the top are seizing virtually all the marbles. Income and wealth inequality in the U.S. have reached stages that would make the third world blush. As the Economic Policy Institute has reported, the richest 10 percent of Americans received an unconscionable 100 percent of the average income growth in the years 2000 to 2007, the most recent extended period of economic expansion.

This inequality, in which an enormous segment of the population struggles while the fortunate few ride the gravy train, is a world-class recipe for social unrest. Downward mobility is an ever-shortening fuse leading to profound consequences...

Overwhelming imbalances in wealth and income inevitably result in enormous imbalances of political power. So the corporations and the very wealthy continue to do well. The employment crisis never gets addressed. The wars never end. And nation-building never gets a foothold here at home. New ideas and new leadership have seldom been more urgently needed.



**March 19<sup>th</sup> – Los Angeles**  
[AnswerLA.org/Anti-War Rally](http://AnswerLA.org/Anti-War Rally)

Top: Anti-War Protesters

Middle: Jocelyn McFaul, PPPDC

Bottom: Charell Charlie, PPPDC

(Photos - Ray Wong, PPPDC)

# Our Silent Spring

By James Carroll March 21, 2011

Source: The Boston Globe

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When **Rachel Carson** entitled her prescient 1962 book “**Silent Spring**”, she was imagining the dawning of the season without the sweet sounds of wildlife. She noted that, even then, in many parts of the United States, spring “comes unheralded by the return of birds, and the early mornings are strangely silent where once they were filled with the beauty of birdsong.”

Carson’s book was heard as a resounding alarm, jumpstarting the contemporary environmental movement. In important ways, her warning was heeded (restrictions on DDT), but the human assault on the natural world only escalated in the decades since, with last week’s catastrophe in Japan a latest signal of the danger.

*“There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings”* The book begins with what Carson calls a fable for tomorrow. *“Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community . . . No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in the stricken world. The people had done it to themselves.”*

As Carson wrote, America’s first commercial nuclear power plant had just come on line (in 1958), and she could hardly have imagined the escalation of risk that took off then. The contaminations of chemical poisons that so worried Carson can seem benign compared to the ruins of radiation, if the worst happens. The Fukushima experience suggests what expert reassurances are worth. More than 500 nuclear power plants are in operation or under construction around the world today, with every one of them being viewed with new skepticism. One chance in a million — such predictions of disaster suddenly seem less of a long shot. What have we done to ourselves?

That more than 10,000 Japanese are likely to have been killed by the natural phenomena of the earthquake and the tsunami relativizes the prospect of far fewer being killed, injured, or sickened by released radiation from the damaged reactors — the expected outcome as of now. But the global anxiety attached to this multivalent catastrophe rises to another level of concern. Alarm is drowning out all the other sounds of spring this week.

The combined destructiveness of the shaken earth, the furious sea, and the nuclear product of industrial technology in Japan is a perfect expression of the perennial tension between nature and human inventiveness. The story of homo sapiens has been a tale of two impulses, at least since the invention of agriculture more than 10,000 years ago.

There is the embrace of nature, even unto cultivation and celebration — the sustenance we take from grown food, the lift of our hearts at birdsong. And there is the crushing of nature for greed, land into property, carbon monoxide into the air, habitual lying waste and moving on.

Ironically, whether out of love for nature or exploitation of it, the broad result of the double-barreled human impulse, as is now apparent, has been the obliteration of climate stability — a problem that transcends all political, economic, and cultural preoccupations. Because it is transcendent, the climate crisis is hard to contemplate, and that is where the news from Japan comes in.

The issue suddenly is not just the radiation danger of commercial nuclear power, but the true and total cost of industrial technology — not only to nature, but to the human future. Whether the reactors at Fukushima go into meltdown or not, the incipient Japanese environmental trauma underscores the way in which the fragile atmosphere of Earth has already begun its meltdown. Could Rachel Carson have imagined Montana’s Glacier National Park without glaciers (as soon as 2020, according to the US Geological Survey), or, for that matter, the polar icecap without ice (NASA predicts ice-free Arctic summers by 2100). Even if we are urgently mobilized, will humans have more long-term success in restoring climate stability than the valiant Japanese technicians and firefighters are having in short-term cooling of the overheating reactors?

That humankind is by nature conscious of itself has led us to imagine that we are above nature — our tragic flaw. Faced this week not only with nature’s capriciousness, but with the deadly consequences of that human flaw, we fall silent.

Our silence, for once, echoes the silent spring.

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## PIO PICO PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIC CLUB PROUDLY SUBMITS OCTAVIO "TOBY" CHAVEZ FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE 4TH ANNUAL CESAR E. CHAVEZ HUMANITARIAN AWARD

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WRITTEN BY JAN BAIRD, SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF PIO PICO PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIC CLUB

Octavio "Toby" Chavez has been a resident of South Whittier for nearly 50 years. And, for that same 50-year time period he has been the "go-to" person when something needs to be done, when a person has a problem, or when the community needs assistance.

Toby's father brought the family to the United States in hopes of getting a good education for his children. Toby's father instilled a yearning for a higher education in his children and Toby did the same for his children. Toby and his wife, Estella, settled in the South Whittier area and began raising their three children. Along with the children, Toby found himself immersed in AYSO soccer and coaching duties. He has always believed that involvement in his children's lives would be one of great priority in order to impress the importance of their education and assist them in making positive choices throughout their lives. Toby did these things by making himself an example of good parenting and citizenship.

Toby was very involved in **PTA** and the **School Site Counsel** at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. His involvement at **Pioneer High School** is still a source of pride within his family and neighborhood.

Toby Chavez has been a **Trustee of the South Whittier School District**, as well as a **Trustee of the Whittier Union High School District**. He still attends the school board meetings and stays on top of issues. He participated in lobbying legislators on education issues and is still active in communication with legislators today.

Since 1992, Toby has been a member, and currently is the President of, the **Whittier County Community Coordinating Council (WCCC)**, an organization comprised of selected community members who meet monthly to address local issues. This group actively works with County departments to improve and enhance the safety of our neighborhoods.

Toby is currently a member of the **Advisory Board for the Rio Hondo Satellite Campus** at the Star Center in Whittier. He was instrumental in getting the satellite campus planned and built. The campus offers various classes, including computer technology, and is accessible to local residents including high school students who want to get a jump on college credits.

Toby is also a member of the **American GI Forum**, which is a Congressionally-chartered Hispanic veterans and civil rights organization whose motto is: "Education is Our Freedom and Freedom should be Everybody's Business".

Currently, Toby is working to bring **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)** to several of the local schools in our community. STEM is a national project that was formed to meet the growing need for skilled science and technology professionals in the United States.

Toby was awarded the **Patriot Award in 2010**. He has been an active member of the **National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARF)** for a number of years. He is a proud **U.S. Air Force Veteran** and an anti-war activist. He has served as a member of the **Los Angeles Civil Grand Jury** for three terms. He has received numerous recognitions for community service throughout his lifetime.

To receive the Cesar E. Chavez Humanitarian Award would be exceptionally appropriate since Toby has had the honor of personally knowing Cesar Chavez and his family. Toby Chavez has been unrelenting in his drive to make our community a better place. His work on behalf of the young people has been a constant focus. He is very willing to share his vast knowledge with others and is not shy about speaking out for those in need.

Pio Pico Progressive Democratic Club is honored to submit **Octavio "Toby" Chavez** for consideration of the **Cesar E. Chavez Humanitarian Award**.

12200 E. Washington Blvd., Unit D  
Whittier, CA 90606

*PIO PICO PROGRESSIVE  
DEMOCRATIC CLUB*  
NEWSLETTER



### Key Dates for April

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|---|---|
| 18 <sup>th</sup>                          | Passover Begins at Sundown  |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup>                          | Earth Day   |
| 24 <sup>th</sup>                          | Easter  |
| 28 <sup>th</sup>                          | <b>PPPDC April Meeting</b>  |
| 29 <sup>th</sup>                          | National Arbor Day  |
| 29 <sup>th</sup><br>- May 1 <sup>st</sup> | <b>California State Democratic Convention<br/>Sacramento - <a href="http://CADEM.org">CADEM.org</a></b> |

### **PIO PICO PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIC CLUB** Regular Meeting

**Thursday, April 28th**

**6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

Greenleaf Café  
7203 Greenleaf Ave.  
Whittier

Guest Speaker: **Ana Valencia, UTLA**  
Topic: **Crisis in Public Education**

**For more info:**  
**Celeste Zabala (562) 965-9175**