

Prescription For Action

"Prevent what we cannot cure"

Inside: *Chemical Data Needed, page 2 • September 11 Families Speak, page 3 • LA's Secret Military History, page 5
Radiation and Health, page 5 • Member Profile: Nancy Gibbs M.D., page 7*

Spring 2006 • Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles • Volume 25 No. 2

End the War

Congress has the power to end the war in Iraq. But Congress will not act unless forced by public pressure.

The war in Iraq has raged for three years – with no end in sight. Despite public support waning, Congress has refused to debate the war since the initial authorization in 2002. And, since 2002, Congress has given Bush over \$300 billion in taxpayer dollars to wage this misbegotten war.

Please join Physicians for Social Responsibility in Washington DC on May 21 and 22 to lobby Congress on the war. Organized by United for Peace and Justice and Peace Action, PSR chapters from across the country will be descending on our nation's capitol to carry the



PSR-LA will join other groups to lobby for Congressional debate on the Iraq war, May 21-22.

news that the war must be debated and an exit planned and announced.

On May 21, an extensive lobby-training will be offered at the University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law. The following morning, May 22, many hundreds of activists will

walk the corridors of Congress talking with legislators and their aides.

Our congressional visits will focus on legislation that seeks to end the war in the shortest possible time while supporting reconstruction efforts. Specifically,

Continued on Page 5

Chernobyl, Twenty Years Later

A Public Health and Environmental Assessment

by Rochelle Becker, Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility

Almost twenty years has passed since I last traveled to Ukraine, a mere six months prior to the terrible Chernobyl disaster of April 26, 1986.

In the fall of 1985, no one in Kiev appeared concerned about the four reactors just seventy miles away – and yet after that fateful day their lives would be forever altered.

At Chernobyl, a routine twenty-second shutdown of the RBMK-1000 reactor #4 created a surge resulting in the release

of 100,000,000 curies of radiation into the atmosphere. The explosion spread contamination over parts of Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and throughout Europe. Chernobyl's radiation was further dis-

Attend PSR-LA's Chenobyl Event

Sunday, April 23

See page 4.

tributed throughout the world due to global trade winds.

According to official reports, thirty-one people died immediately and 600,000 "liquidators" involved in fire fighting and clean-up operations were exposed to the high doses of radiation. Over 8,400,000 people in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia alone were exposed to high doses of radiation.

The nuclear industry continues to downplay the devastation of the Chernobyl nuclear fire. Yet the costs cannot be denied. According to the United Nations, "Massive radioactive contamination forced the evacuation of more than

Continued on Page 4

PSR-LA Annual Membership Meeting



Joseph Cirincione, Director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Monique Harden, Co-Director of Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, spoke at PSR-LA's Annual Membership Meeting on March 16.

PSR LA

**Physicians
for Social Responsibility
—Los Angeles**

617 South Olive St, Suite 810
Los Angeles, CA 90014-1629
Phone: (213) 689-9170
Facsimile: (213) 689-9199

Email: lainfo@psr.org
Website: www.psr-la.org

Executive Director
Jonathan Parfrey x107

*Health and Environment Programs
Director*
Martha Dina Arguello x101

Director of Development
Denise Duffield x102

Security / Development Associate
Sharmeen Premjee x108

Public Health Organizer
Melissa Burch x109

Healthy Homes Collaborative
Linda Kite x106

PSR-LA Board of Directors:

Donald Broder M.D., *Co-President*

Jimmy Hara M.D., *Co-President*

Curren Warf M.D., *Vice President*

Jose Quiroga M.D., *Treasurer*

William E. Perkins M.D., *Secretary*

Felix Aguilar M.D., M.P.H.

Neal Baer M.D.

Judith Broder M.D.

Robert Dodge M.D.

Nancy Gibbs M.D.

Jeanne Londe

Shirley Magidson

Richard Saxon M.D.



California Currents

Chemical Information Act Needed

Currently, there are more than 80,000 chemicals registered for use in the United States, 1,400 of them considered high-production-volume chemicals, yet data on human exposure exists for only six percent. Of the 58 million pounds of chemicals reportedly released annually in the state of California, scientists are able to track less than 10% of these chemicals as they find their way into the air we breathe, water we drink, and our bodies. For a large portion, perhaps even most chemicals in current use, we do not have full safety data on how it may impact health or their environmental fate or if we need to take precautionary action.

This lack of data represents one of the fundamental failures in how chemicals are regulated. Comprehensive chemical data that includes the fate of chemicals in our air, water and soil could provide a greater incentive for choosing safer alternatives. By filling these data gaps we could create market incentives for the chemical industry to produce safer chemicals. Under the current system California labs within the Department of Health Services, Department of Toxics Substances Control, the Department of Food and Agriculture, and the Air Resources Board must develop and test analytical methods for chemicals falling

under their jurisdiction. Developing these methods can take a significant amount of time and cost between \$20,000 and \$200,000 per chemical, per medium for each medium such as air, water, and soil. This indicates that it could cost the state up to \$1 million to develop lab methods for all media, for just one chemical. The costs of producing these methods should be the responsibility of the chemical manufacturers and not on the tax paying public.

In order to protect human health and the environment, we must be able to prioritize which chemicals to regulate and target. For exposure reductions we need the development of these testing methods. California is leading the nation in promoting policy proposals that will fill these dangerous data gaps in the form of AB 289. This bill authored by Wilma Chan and co sponsored by California Communities against Toxics and Environment California will give California Environmental Protection agency and the Department of Health Service the ability to request this data from chemical producers.

For more information about this bill contact Martha Dina Arguello at (213) 689-9170. •

- Wendy James, Better World Group

PSR-LA Welcomes September 11th Families



Loretta Filipov and other family members spoke at a series of events.

Loretta Filipov had some trepidation about visiting Los Angeles. The last time she'd been to LA was with her husband Al during the summer of 2001. On September 11th of that year, Al headed from Boston to LA for business as a passenger on American Airlines Flight 11 – the first plane to hit the World Trade Center on that terrible day. Al planned to take a redeye back to Boston on September 14 so he could be with Loretta for their 44th wedding anniversary.

Exacerbating Loretta's emotions about coming to Los Angeles was the fact that she would take the exact same flight her husband had taken (though the specific flight number had been discontinued.) Ultimately, the reason for her travel – to represent September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows in a series of events with PSR-LA – prevailed. Loretta was accompanied by another member of the group, Andrea LeBlanc, whose husband Robert was killed on Flight 175, also headed to LA.

Loretta and Andrea's journey was part of a healing process as much as it was to spread the message that war and violence are poor tools to resolve conflict. In Los

Angeles they were joined by seven others members of Peaceful Tomorrows, a group composed of family members of those killed on September 11, 2001 that offer a perspective of peace and reconciliation in the face of terrorism.

On February 12, PSR-LA co-hosted the event "Civilian Casualties: Ours and Theirs - Unique Perspectives from Physicians and Family Members of the September 11th Attacks," at the Unitarian Church in Santa Monica. PSR-LA board co-chair Don Broder MD presented on the destruction of Iraq's once advanced health infrastructure due to the war and its dire effects on civilians; without electricity, clean water, and medicine, the prospects for providing adequate health care are very grim.

David Potorti, who lost his brother James at the WTC and is the director of Peaceful Tomorrows, discussed the group's many projects to promote peace including visits to Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, and Japan to meet with victims of war. Loretta and Andrea also spoke, as did Peaceful Tomorrows members:

- Talat Hamdani, mother of police cadet Mohammed Salman Hamdani,

killed at the WTC,

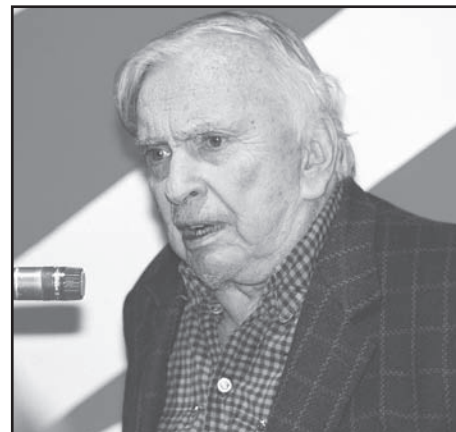
- Colleen Kelly, whose brother Bill was killed at the WTC,
- Adele Welty, mother of firefighter Timothy Welty, killed at the WTC.

Peaceful Tomorrows also met with UCLA medical students. Colleen Kelly, a nurse practitioner, discussed her experiences in Iraq reaching out to families who have lost relatives to the terrorism as well as consequences on Iraq's medical community. She was joined by fellow Peaceful Tomorrows members:

- Barry Amundson, brother of Craig Amundson, killed at the Pentagon,
- Anthony Aversano, son of Louis Aversano, killed at WTC,
- Terry Rockefeller, whose sister, Laura, was killed at the WTC.

The event inspired the UCLA PSR-LA chapter to begin a campaign to remove US troops from Iraq.

On February 14, PSR-LA board member Shirley Magidson graciously opened her home to host a reception with author Gore Vidal. Mr. Vidal gave a troubling assessment of the Bush administration. He further addressed the scandal of irregularities with electronic voting machines. The



On February 14 author Gore Vidal spoke at the home of board member Shirley Magidson.

noted author warned that no amount of activism would be effective if ballots are not counted.

The 9/11 organization appreciated PSR-LA efforts to bring their unique voice and perspective to Los Angeles. We, too, appreciate their appeal for healing and reconciliation in lieu of vengeance. •



Chernobyl *(cont.)*

100,000 people from the affected region during 1986, and the relocation, after 1986, of another 200,000 from Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Some five million people continue to live in areas contaminated by the accident and have to deal with its environmental, health, social and economic consequences.¹

Agriculture and forestry are forbid-

den in wide areas, yet poverty has forced many people to eat contaminated berries, mushrooms, game and fish, and to feed contaminated hay to their cattle and burn radioactively contaminated firewood in their stoves. Many of those living in the affected areas are ignorant of the risks that they face, or have adopted an apathetic and fatalistic attitude.²

The sarcophagus covering Chernobyl's nuclear coffin is today leaking. A new cover is set to be in place in three years. In the meantime, radiation is being released into the environment.

Returning to Ukraine

Last September, I returned to Ukraine, joining representatives from other countries to remember this life-altering travesty. Since my last visit in 1985, Ukrainians have gone from denial to a new skepticism that the government will effectively stop the radiation from leaking in their lifetime.

As a result of this international meeting, the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility and Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles, Students Physicians for Social Responsibility-UCLA and UCLA Institute of the Environment will hold a commemorative event at UCLA on April 23 (*see announcement below*).

Today, in light of the Bush Administration push to revive nuclear

power, the tragedy of Chernobyl must not be forgotten. Please join us to remember Chernobyl on April 23. •

1. *Environmental Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident and Their Remediation: Twenty Years of Experience Report of the UN Chernobyl Forum Expert Group "Environment" (EGE), August 2005.*

2. *The Human Consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident A Strategy for Recovery A Report Commissioned by UNDP and UNICEF with the support of UN-OCHA and WHO 25 January, 2002 Final: 25.01.02.*

Join PSR-LA's Action Alert Network!



Make your voice heard. Participate in our democracy. Sign-up to PSR-LA's ACTION NETWORK. Go to the web-site: http://actionnetwork.org/psr_la/home.html or call the PSR-LA office for more information: (213) 689-9170.

CHERNOBYL TWENTY YEARS LATER:

A PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Speakers include:

- **Yelena Zmushko** will show her autobiographical film "Chernobyl 20."
- **David R. Marples**, University of Alberta, "Twenty Years after Chernobyl: Dealing with a health and demographic crisis in Belarus."
- **Daniel Hirsch**, President, Committee to Bridge the Gap, "Chernobyl's Victims: The extent of radiation poisoning, cancer and other disease."
- **Angelina M. Galiteva**, Chairperson, World Council for Renewable Energy, "Strategic Opportunities in Renewable Energy."
- **Rochelle Becker**, Executive Director, Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, "Nuclear Accidents: Can they happen here?"

Sunday, April 23, 2006 – 2:00-5:30 PM
UCLA - La Kretz Hall Auditorium (Room 110)

Cost: Free-of-charge

Parking: \$8. Enter on Westholme off Hilgard. Ask for a pass for parking structure # 2 For more information call (213) 689-9170 x107

End the War *(con't.)*

we will support H.R.4232 – the End the War in Iraq Act – and HRes543. In the Senate, we will ask Senators to introduce companion legislation to the above House resolutions, and support SRes171 – which calls for an explanation of the mission in Iraq and a timeline for troop withdrawal.

Washington is pretty in May, and we promise to have fun as well. Arrangements for travel and lodging are being coordinated out of our office.

Please call (213) 689-9170 x108 or write lainfo@psr.org.

Herbert Abrams, April 26

Radiation and Health

Exposure to X-rays and gamma rays, even at low-dose levels, increases risk of cancer. That is the bottom line of a comprehensive five-year study by the National Academy of Sciences committee that included Herbert L. Abrams, a founding member of Physicians for Social Responsibility.

“There appears to be no threshold below which exposure can be viewed as harmless,” observed Dr. Abrams, professor emeritus of radiology at Stanford and Harvard universities.

Herb was one of two physicians on the committee of sixteen international experts in epidemiology, radiation biology, genetics, cancer biology and physics. As a radiologist, Dr. Abrams “was able to serve as a bridge between the epidemiologists and the biologists on the committee, whose approaches to risk were based on completely different data sets.”

The landmark 700-page report, entitled “Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VII,” confirms that progressive exposure to radiation causes DNA damage which correlates with an increased risk of developing cancer.

On Wednesday, April 26, 6:30 PM, Herbert Abrams MD will present on National Academy’s Radiation and Health Study, at the Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center, 3050 Los Angeles Avenue, Simi Valley. For more information call 213-689-9170 x107.

LA's Secret Military History

On June 10, PSR-LA will offer the first-ever Military Tour of Southern California – and you’re invited. This all-day tour will carry PSR members and supporters to the military sites that have shaped the world and, in some cases, the health of Californians.



Few realize that Los Angeles is one of the nation’s foremost military regions. Weapons are regularly shipped from our shores, from Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station to warships outside Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S. Marines depart from Camp Pendleton to Iraq. Intercontinental ballistic missiles are built in Canoga Park, their engines are tested in the foothills, and test-launched from Santa Barbara’s Vandenberg Air Force Base.

The missile defense program, and most of our nation’s military satellites are manufactured in the South Bay. The eastern half of the San Fernando Valley and entire San Gabriel Valley are EPA Superfund sites due to the military industry’s sloppy environmental activities.

Despite the presence of this influential industry in our midst, the economic, environmental and moral implications of local military activities have remained ignored.

The tour proposes to discuss not merely the global security issues associated with these sites as well as the environmental,

public health and moral repercussions of military production. Local experts will present information on dozens of LA sites on busses and at locations along the way.

Participants will gather at UCLA at 9:45 AM, and on clean-air buses visit the following sites:

- Santa Susana Field Laboratory
- Jet Propulsion Laboratory
- Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station
- Los Angeles Air Force Base

Busses will return to UCLA by 5:30 PM. The tour is free-of-charge but lunch costs \$15. To sign-up, please call Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles at (213) 689-9170 x100, email lainfo@psr.org, sign-up at our website: www.psrla.org/militarytour.htm.



Santa Susana Field Laboratory; site of nuclear meltdown.

VOICES IN WARTIME

"Startlingly literate"

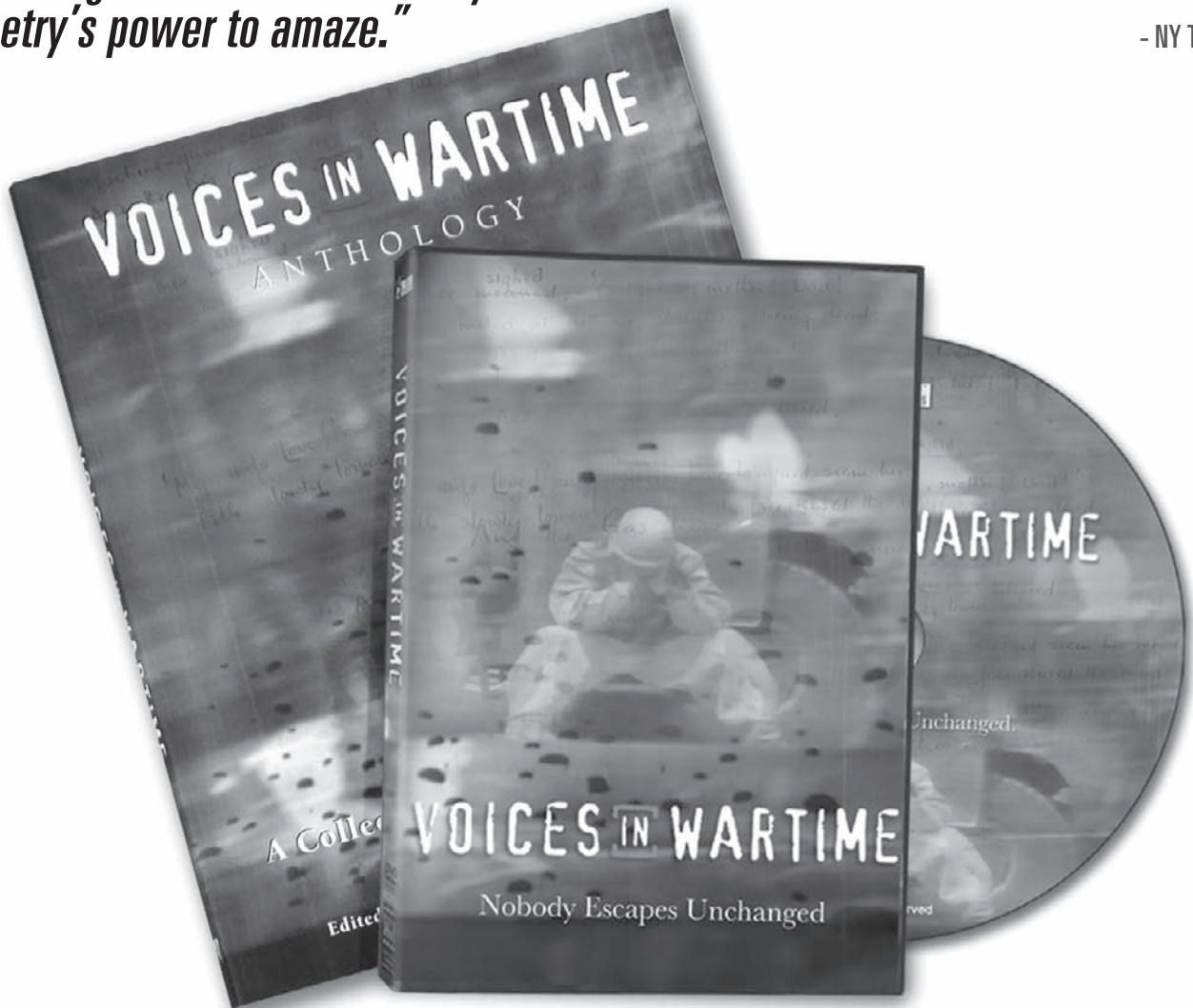
- S.F. Bay Guardian

"Powerful poetry and shattering images"

- TV Guide

"An elegant statement not only about the devastation of war but also about poetry's power to amaze."

- NY Times



DVD AND COMPANION ANTHOLOGY

74 minute documentary and 240 page anthology dissect the experience of war using the power of poetry. Poets, soldiers, journalists, psychologists, civilians and historians present their diverse perspectives on the effects of war.

FEATURING POETS AGAINST THE WAR.

PART OF OPENING OF THE HEART EDUCATION AND IMAGINE A CULTURE OF PEACE PROJECTS

www.voicesinwartime.org

Physician Profile: Nancy Gibbs M.D.

Nancy Gibbs' social conscience was formed growing-up in south Chicago during the turbulent years of the civil rights struggle. She recalls the rampant prejudice and, by today's standards, unthinkable experiences such as going to a restaurant with black friends and not being seated.



Nancy attended Michigan State University for undergraduate studies and Loyola-Chicago for medical school where she specialized in family practice. She performed her residency at the University of Minnesota. While in college the Vietnam war was in full-swing and Nancy participated in a number of protests; she recalls once being blasted by tear-gas.

Through Catholic Medical Missions, Nancy spent a summer working in Haiti where she witnessed terrible poverty and environmental destitution. She dealt with widespread tuberculosis and parasitic diseases resulting from a lack of public health

programs and proper waste management. After medical school, she went to St. Lucia as a medical volunteer. Ever since, she has had a great interest in third world health issues.

Dr. Gibbs moved to California in the early 1980s and joined Physicians for Social Responsibility shortly thereafter; she joined PSR-LA's board of directors in 1999. She has served as a PSR-LA spokesperson at press conferences, performed in-service trainings at community clinics, and is currently chair of PSR-LA's development committee.

Dr. Gibbs works at Kaiser Permanente-Baldwin Park in family practice and geriatrics with additional appointments at Glendale Adventist and Westside Neighborhood Clinic.

"PSR-Los Angeles is the only organization I know," Dr. Gibbs said, "that is paying attention to the nuclear threat in an active way. I really appreciate PSR's perspective on war – how we diagnose war as it affects people's health. And I like the way PSR frames the issues of the day through the health prism – whether it is the nuclear threat or gun violence or environmental issues. Everyday we physicians see people who have been impacted by environmental toxins, such as dirty air impacting patients' COPD. For this reason, we have a great opportunity to provide education to the public, to legislators, and to physicians who may not realize their medical training has given them a way to think about social issues in an entirely new way."

Dr. Gibbs would like to encourage other physicians to join PSR-LA. "It's a great place to put your energy and work to create a safer healthier world."

UN Day in Support of Victims of Torture

PSR-LA will be celebrating United Nations' International Day in Support of Victims of Torture with an event that commemorates the plight of torture victims internationally and brings public awareness to the 132 countries that still utilize torture as a tool, despite international law banning it. The program includes expert speakers, survivor stories, and cultural performances. It will take place on **Sunday, June 25th, beginning at 2 PM, at Barnsdall Park** in Hollywood. The program is free to the general public and is hosted by Program for Torture Victims, in collaboration with Amnesty International, the Congolese Community of Southern California, the International Rescue Committee, International Criminal Court Alli-

ance, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

The event will focus on abuse at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib Prisons. Dr. Steven Miles, an advocate of socially responsible health care, will be speaking on the role of medicine and medical professionals in carrying out torture. Dr. Miles is a Professor of Medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School in Minneapolis. His forthcoming book, *Oath Betrayed: Military Medicine and the War on Terror*, stemmed from his attempts to learn why U.S. medical staff in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay did not report or intervene to stop the abuse of prisoners for the two years preceding the public release of the Abu Ghraib photographs. Miles has

assisted victims of war and torture with the American Refugee Committee and the Center for Victims of Torture.

James Yee, the only Muslim Chaplain at Guantanamo Bay, will also be speaking on his experiences at GITMO and in the US army. While Yee joined the army with intentions of guiding Muslim prisoners and fellow Muslim officers in their faith, he instead witnessed abuse and degradation based on religion. Since being discharged from the Army, Yee has spoken out against the abuse of Muslims and the conditions in Guantanamo. He is the author of *For God and Country*.

Please join us at a special reception for PSR members with Dr. Miles and Chaplain Yee after the program. The cost of the reception is \$50 per person. For more information, call 213-689-9170 ext 108.

Calendar of Events: Spring 2006

Sunday, April 23, 2 – 5:30 p.m.

Chernobyl Twenty Years Later: A Public Health and Environmental Assessment

Speakers include: Daniel Hirsch, Committee to Bridge the Gap, David R. Marples, University of Alberta and author of "The Social Impact of the Chernobyl Disaster," and Rochelle Becker, president of The Utility Reform Network, Yelena Zmushko, who will show her autobiographical film "Chernobyl 20." Kretz Hall Auditorium (Room 110), UCLA. Free admission. For more information and reservations call 213-689-9170.

Wednesday, April 26, 6:30 p.m.

Herbert Abrams MD presents on National Academy's Radiation and Health Study Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center, 3050 Los Angeles Avenue, Simi Valley. For more information call 213-689-9170.

Saturday, April 29

A Climate of Change: The Planning and Conservation League's 2006 Symposium
Sacramento Municipal Utilities District, SMUD Customer Service Center, 6301 S Street, Sacramento, CA. For more information call 916-444-8726 or e-mail pclmail@pcl.org.

Wednesday, May 3, 7 p.m.

HAMMER Forum on the Environment

Laurie David and Elizabeth Kolbert address climate change. Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center at UCLA, 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles. 310-443-7000.

Saturday, May 6

World Asthma Day. A community day of action to unite children, adults, and advocates working to combat asthma in Southern California. Neighborhood march, health education fair, speakers, refreshments, activities for children, and prizes. Hooper Ave Elementary School, 1225 E. 52nd St., LA 90011. For more information call Melissa Burch, PSR-LA 213-689-9170 ext. 109.

Friday, May 12, 7:30 p.m.

American historian and activist Howard Zinn and Italian surgeon and author Gino Strada, M.D. will be featured in a symposium on the theme, "The Just War." Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 3300 Wilshire Boulevard. Call 323-350-7800 for more information.

May 21 - 22

Lobby on the War - PSR-LA. A massive Congressional lobbying effort to bring about an end to the war in Iraq. The Sunday conference will provide training in discussing the issues with members of Congress. Call the office to get group rate on lodging, 213-689-9170 ext. 107.

Saturday, June 10

Military Tour of Los Angeles. Will address the global security issues associated with local sites as well as the environmental, public health and moral repercussions of military production. PSR-LA is offering this guided tour free-of-charge on low-polluting South Coast Air Quality Management District buses. For more information call PSR-LA 213-689-9170 ext. 107.

Sunday, June 25

United Nation's International Day in Support of Victims of Torture featuring Army Chaplain James Yee who tended to prisoners at Guantánamo, only to be imprisoned on false charges of treason, and Steven Miles MD, professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota, and author of *Oath Betrayed: Military Medicine and the War on Terror*. For more information call PSR-LA, 213-689-9170 ext. 108.



617 South Olive St., Suite 810
Los Angeles, CA 90014-1629

www.psrla.org

Presorted
First Class Mail
U.S. Postage Paid
City of Industry, CA
Permit No. 4127

Return Service Requested