



Activist Info

#8 11/27/09

RICHMOND PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE

Violence to women knows no city or school boundaries

The horrific rape and assault of the 16 year old at Richmond High School has deeply impacted us.

Although this incident occurred in Richmond, there is no doubt that it is symptomatic of a much larger problem. While the national



media has chosen to cast disparaging light on the City of Richmond, this incident is not about Richmond. It is about violence to women, experienced daily throughout America. Every nine seconds in the US a woman is sexually violated.

A Richmond High teacher rightly said that this is a "teachable moment," and it is a teachable moment that must extend beyond the moment and sink deep into our national consciousness. Sexism, along with racism,

poverty, and all forms of social injustice continue to exist in our nation because we have not put all forces to bear into opposing them.

While each and every individual must commit to righting these wrongs, every institution of our society must shoulder responsibility. Family, educational, economic, political, and media institutions all contribute and shape consciousness.

Why did some among our youth stand by in the face of this heinous crime? Yes, there is something wrong here, but it doesn't originate in our youth and it doesn't originate in Richmond. The status quo culture throughout our nation does not encourage youth to stand up against the ongoing injustices that exist day in and day out. Nor

does it encourage youth to speak their truth to those in positions of power. We see young people too often being shaped, molded and told to "fit in" to this unjust society without questioning its persistent flaws and failings. When we call upon our youth to not stand by passively in the face of a crime, we must call upon ourselves to not stand by as our youth come of age in a world filled with problems, and instead encourage them in the strongest way possible to stand up for something better.

In Richmond we have among the brightest and most empathetic youth as you will find anywhere. Many have overcome huge challenges in their young lives already. They are refusing to take on the image that the media too often places on Richmond youth and our community as a whole.

In response to this rape, I participated in many activities within Richmond and I must say that among the most moving were the press conference and vigil organized by youth groups at Richmond High School. The strong voices of our youth, their teachers, and their adult allies were heard loud and clear. When others try to stereotype and mischaracterize our community, our youth are standing in opposition. I stand with them, proudly. We know a better Richmond and a better society is possible, and we are committed to making it happen together!

-Gayle McLaughlin

RPA Activist Info

is for Richmond community members who want to be active in taking on the problems of the environment, racism, joblessness, housing, and crime to create a healthy Richmond. We believe that community involvement means more than voting every two years. It means regular communication with the candidates we elect, letting them know our issues and positions, supporting them as they try to take our issues forward. It means we attend meetings, use the email, phone our neighbors, or go on marches building an organized movement to create real change.

Comments and columns are welcome. Signed articles and columns are the views of the author and not necessarily those of the RPA. Send photos, articles, and comments to RPAactivist@gmail.com or call the RPA at 510-595-4661

RPA Community Meeting on Utility Users Tax

There will be a fall ballot measure to force Chevron to pay the same as everyone else in Richmond.

**Wednesday, January 13, 7PM
402 Harbor St**

Current Details and other events are listed on

[RPA Public Events Calendar](#)

If you want your event listed send it to RPAactivist@gmail.com

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How Chevron gets its way

Every person has one vote. Corporations have no votes. So how do giant corporations like Chevron seem to dominate the political decisions of our communities. The wealth and social power of corporations give them many tools--some open and easy to spot. They can make direct contributions to political candidates. They can engage in mammoth advertising campaigns to "greenwash" their image. But there are also less obvious ways: They can hire lawyers to attempt to outlast or drain the cash of anyone who challenges them. Their lobbyists win influence by doing research and legwork for holders and candidates of political office. They can make their hiring and firing and construction plans seem to be dependent on political compliance.

Periodically the RPA Activist looks at some of these methods. Recently one was documented in an article in the *East Bay Express*. *A Friend of Chevron Gives It a Costly Gift* by Robert Gammon. In short, it explains how Chevron gives large sums of money to BAPAC— Black American Political Action Committee. BAPAC in

turn campaigns for candidates who are pro-Chevron and funded picketing of a Measure T press conference. It also happens that Joe Fisher, who is President of BAPAC volunteered for the County Assessor's panel to review Chevron's appeal of its assessment and voted to overturn the County Assessor and **give Chevron a \$12.6 million dollar refund.**

Read the full story at <http://www.eastbayexpress.com/eastbay/a-friend-of-chevron-gives-it-a-costly-gift/Content?oid=1371631>

One might think that this would be embarrassing to BAPAC. After all the African American community in Richmond has been hard hit by lack of jobs and social services and an increase in crime. In making a decision that shifts the burden of government services from the wealthiest corporations to the people who can least afford it BAPAC claims that Fisher was just objectively following the law. The idea that Fisher's objectivity— might be influenced by the fact that Fisher depends on Chevron's largess for the PAC he controls, apparently is irrelevant. BAPAC has now gone on the offensive. While it has attacked Jeff Ritterman it has not protested to the *East Bay Express*. Below we reprint a letter that BAPAC is circulating and a reply by Jeff Ritterman

--Mike Parker

Letter from BAPAC (excerpts)

Date: November 10, 2009

To: Jeff Ritterman

From: Black American Political Action Committee (BAPAC) of Contra Costa County Board of Directors

Subject: Allegations, Assertions and Untruths Published about Joe Fisher & Black American Political Action Committee

This paper is written in response to both the October 21st East Bay Express article by Robert Gammon ("A Friend of Chevron Gives It a Costly Gift") and subsequent emails originated and circulated by you and forwarded to members of your cabal, the Mayor and members of the Richmond City Council. Since your emails were not sent by Councilman Jeff Ritterman, for the purposes of this paper you will be referred to in most cases as Jeff Ritterman.

First of all BAPAC is appalled that you Jeff Ritterman, a councilman for the City of Richmond would use a degrading word such as scandalous to describe Joe Fisher who has been an upstanding volunteer public servant and community leader in the City of Richmond for over 40 years. Mr. Fisher, President of BAPAC has an impeccable record of public service and the accusation of perceived conflict of interest is baseless....

BAPAC denounces the absurd allegations reported in the East Bay Express on October 21; they are without merit. BAPAC also unequivocally denounces your statement that "It also implicates BAPAC as being basically on Chevron's payroll." We challenge you, Tom Butt and Courtland Booze to produce evidence to substantiate your statement.

BAPAC also denounces your statements that "campaign contributions to John Marquez and Harpreet Sandu were laundered through BAPAC." Also, you stated "if the story is accurate" then we need to change the system to remove these corrupting influences. The context of your statements imply to the readers of your email that BAPAC has been engaged in illegal activities. We view this characterization of BAPAC as an attempt at organizational assassination. BAPAC is demanding that you retract the statement.

BAPAC is a political action committee established under the California Fair Political Practices Commission and has not violated any laws or rules governing political action committees. All contribu-

tions received and expended are reported on state campaign contribution forms, completed by an outside Certified Public Accountant and filed with the Contra Costa County Registrar's office. Unlike the East Bay Express, BAPAC believes in full and accurate disclosure....

We strongly suggest that in the future, before you make degrading character damaging statements that could potentially cause you financial and or political ramifications, you consider the source of your information....

The bottom line is that we refuse to go back to the plantation where we were told what to do and say. This position is firm and non negotiable

Jeff Ritterman Replies

Dear BAPAC,

The article in question raises serious questions of conflict of interest. To my mind, you still have not answered the charges.

If it is true that Joe Fisher was involved in receiving and distributing funds from Chevron to BAPAC's chosen candidates, as the article states, then, in my view, it was improper for Mr. Fisher to sit on the Appeals Assessment Tax Board which was charged with deciding Chevron's property tax liability. I see this as a clear conflict of interest, and I do believe it affected Mr. Fisher's judgment, if only unconsciously. Even if it did not, a clear perception of a conflict of interest existed and that is enough to undermine public confidence in the democratic process. We are living in a time when corporate influence over the democratic process has seriously weakened our democracy and we should not allow that to happen in Richmond. It's bad for the city and it's bad for Richmond's residents.

Given that, I believe that Mr. Fisher should have recused himself.

If my characterization as "scandalous" is too strong, I gladly retract it, apologize for it, and substitute the words "improper" or "inappropriate."

If you would like to discuss this further, either in a public forum or privately, I am happy to do so.

In partnership, **Jeff Ritterman, M.D**

Climate Change Negotiations in Copenhagen begin in December.

Who will decide the future of the world: the Corporations or the People ?

The RPA is a member group of the Mobilization for Climate Justice

On **Monday, November 30th (N30)**, the 10th anniversary of the global justice movement's successful non-violent shut-down of the WTO, join us for a national day of action for climate justice. There will be **safe and fun spaces for children**, parents and everyone else who cannot be too near civil disobedience.

When: 11:30am, November 30th (Remember **11/30 at 11:30**)

Where: Meet at **Justin Herman Plaza** and go from there to a mass action with non-violent civil disobedience at the Bank of America on the corner of Pine and Kearny. On N30, we will expose some of San Francisco's worst climate criminals, demanding that they stop financing climate change and standing in the way of climate solutions. The following targets have been chosen for the national day of action: Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, Chevron, British Petroleum, American Electric Power. **The San Francisco action will target Bank of America**, which is the 3rd biggest financier of the oil & gas industry in the world and the second biggest financier of coal in the U.S. We support affinity groups organizing autonomous actions against the other targets. For more details on the targets, see <http://www.actforclimatejustice.org/tools-resources/dirty-money-and-dirtier-fuels-6-corporate-climate-criminals/>.



Upcoming organizing meeting & non-violent direct action trainings:

Saturday, November 28th, *Station 40, 3030b 16th Street, San Francisco*

1-3pm: Non-violent direct action training

3-4pm: Climate Justice Teach-in

4-6pm: N30 action planning / spokescouncil meeting

5. On **Monday, December 7th** at 7am, on the first day of climate change negotiations in Copenhagen, join us at the world headquarters of **Chevron** in San Ramon to tell one of the world's worst climate polluters "our climate is not your business!"

When: Monday, **December 7th, 7am**

Where: **Chevron Corporate Headquarters** (6001 Bollinger Canyon Road, San Ramon)

For detailed directions (including carpool and shuttle information), see <http://west.actforclimatejustice.org/upcoming-events/december-7th-chevron-protest/directions-to-chevron-headquarters/>

DEMANDS: We are going to Chevron's headquarters demanding that they take the following steps to stop obstructing the urgent action that must be taken to confront climate change:

1. Support equitable, science-based targets and climate solutions in international climate change negotiations and domestically.

2. Pledge not to support any fake "grassroots" campaigns against national climate change legislation

Cap the crude and stop expanding into heavier sources of crude oil.

For more details on these demands, see

<http://west.actforclimatejustice.org/upcoming-events/december-7th-chevron-protest/>.

We need volunteers who are willing to **risk arrest to make a difference** and send a clear message to Chevron. To **sign up for non-violent civil disobedience** on December 7th, send an email to mcjbay@gmail.com, attend the following meeting on December 6th, and attend a non-violent direct action training if you are new to civil disobedience.

Organizing Meeting / Teach-in / Civil Disobedience training:

Sunday, December 6th: *Berkeley Unitarian Fellowship 1924 Cedar St. (at Bonita), Berkeley (http://www.bfuu.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=27)*

12-3pm: Non-violent direct action training

3-4pm: TEACH IN: Premier screening of the new animated film, "**The Story of**

Cap & Trade: Why you can't solve a problem with the thinking that created it" By Annie Leonard Free Range Studios, makers of the Story of Stuff. With special guest from The Story of Stuff.

Antonia Juhasz, author of the Tyranny of Oil, will explain Chevrons leading role in creating climate pollution and blocking climate change solutions.

4-7pm: Dec 7th orientation / planning meeting