PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Laurie Ordin

The recent editorial by Tom Perkins, the legendary venture capitalist, in the Wall Street Journal, comparing the “plight” of the one per-centers to what the Nazis did to the Jews in WWII got me to thinking. This thinking thing is always dangerous for me, but quite of few of you (the cereal box and milk carton readers among us) have come up to me and told me that you are enjoying the “Ponderings” columns. I really appreciate your feedback. Thanks!

One of our members, who was not born in the U.S., told me that sometimes when he reads the column, he worries about me. He thinks, “She's going to get herself killed!” He came by my office to check and see that I’m okay! Isn’t it great to live in a country where we can write what we wish and not get in trouble for it? And I get to vent about many of the disturbing things I read and watch in the news.

I think that Tom Perkins meant to be outrageous and draw attention to himself, but what I’m worried about is the resentment that is brewing because of the chasm being created by economic inequality. In the Bay Area we are now hearing about how long time San Francisco residents resent the white Google buses that carry young techies from their homes in the city to their jobs in Silicon Valley. Having large numbers of people take a bus rather than driving solo in their cars is a good thing, but the white buses clog up the public transit bus stops and they are not paying their share for the privilege of using the stops. The ability of these very wealthy young people to bid up the housing prices in the City is making housing unaffordable for almost everyone else and the buses have become a symbol of the disparities that are dividing us.

Before World War II, most Germans had never met a Jew. I would venture to say that most of us have never met a person in the so called 1%, although here in Marin County they are probably among us. When Tom Perkins was interviewed on Bloomberg News after his WSJ article, he was asked if he thought he was out of touch. He said he didn’t think so, that he gives a lot to charities and universities, and that’s how he’s in touch. But I wonder, does he spend time with people in the >>
lower 99? When people have great wealth, they can isolate and insulate themselves from the rest of the world and become insensitive to the pain that is suffered by people who are less fortunate. There also seems to be a sense of entitlement from many at the top, that they deserve the huge sums that they are “earning.” In my experience, however, the harder the job, like farm work, the less one is paid.

We are constantly hearing from Tom Perkins and others like him that the 1% are job creators and I’m sure that is true to some extent. But many people in the so-called 1% work in the financial sector for hedge funds and private equity firms. Some of them deal in derivatives. Derivatives? What are derivatives? What are hedge funds? What are private equity firms? To most of us these are opaque instruments that allow wealthy individuals to gamble with other people’s money and skim huge profits off for themselves. We all remember hearing about Governor Romney’s successes at Bain Capital, where he made a $250 million fortune loading up companies with debt and then paying himself million-dollar fees from those same companies, in exchange for the “job creating” service of telling them who needs to be fired in order to finance the debt payments he saddled them with in the first place. What jobs are being created?

I don’t think we really resent so much the successes of people like Eric Schmidt, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. We love our devices and search engines. And we think that really brilliant people who come up with these ideas should be well compensated. I think the resentment comes from the workers who may not be the idea people, but who, nevertheless, work hard, a full day or more, a full time job or three, whether assembling devices or cleaning and cooking for the idea people. When people like this are living in poverty and they can’t afford to feed their children nutritious food, provide them with safe shelter and quality schools, this causes resentment. When workers at places like the jobs creators Walmart and McDonald’s (just to name a couple) need food stamps and still can’t make it, this causes resentment. When the taxpayers who pay for the food stamps are essentially providing tax breaks for these employers so that the employers don’t have to pay a living wage, while these same employers are raking in huge corporate profits, this causes resentment. When investment income is taxed at 15%, but the CEO’s secretary is taxed at 28%, this causes resentment. When the worker bees see such huge disparities, these are the things that cause resentment and the bashing of the 1%. People are being named as scapegoats.

During the post-World War II period, when taxes on the wealthy in this country were a lot higher, financial regulation was stronger, public education was well funded, and good union jobs were available, the vast middle class was comfortable and there was the feeling that the next generation would be more prosperous than that of their parents. Now that feeling is gone and the middle class is well on its way to being gone.

We need to come together, the 1% and the 99%, to figure out a way forward. This is a new economy, one where there are not as many unskilled jobs, one where we have global markets with uneven labor laws. We need to figure out how to make this world one where hard work is rewarded with a living wage for all people. I think our cultural outlook has to change and be modified from one of rugged individualism to one where we realize that we are all in this together and have to take care of each other. We need to abandon the theory that if we will just get out of the way of the rich, their success will “trickle down” to the rest of us, mainly because it hasn’t trickled down and things have gotten a lot worse.

We need to do this....talk to each other...and we need to do it now before bricks start being thrown through windows. We need to do it now in an organized and civil way. We can’t wait for bricks to be thrown, because once that happens, they can be hurled in uncontrolled ways with terrible outcomes.

Here, as UPM members, we are in an uncommon position. We are lucky to still have our union protections and live what is left of a middle class life. We are not so isolated from the struggles of many of our fellow citizens. We see those struggles every day with our students. It is our job to stay informed, stay in touch and stay involved.
EDITORIAL

IN A RECENT MEMO to CoM employees, the Human Resources Department reported the “disappointing news” that Kaiser and Health Net will be raising their rates by 15%; increases that HR said were “very problematic” for the District.

In response to this news, HR has formed an Employee Benefits Advisory Committee to address this problem.

The presentation that HR made to the Advisory Committee suggests that they are planning to resolve this rate increase problem by passing on these increases to our faculty and staff, either through payroll deduction or by decreasing covered services. HR presented several options, but in each of these options the increased benefit costs or loss of service was borne by our employees.

QUESTION: Why is there the assumption that the burden of these increased costs must fall on CoM employees? Might they not be covered by the District?

In presenting their plans to the Advisory Committee, there seems to be an assumption that our faculty will accept the District’s solution to the problem, i.e. a pass-through of these increased premiums to our faculty and staff.

But there is another possible solution. The District could cover these increases.

Medical coverage is the most important benefit we have. It is not a perk like a free parking space or copy machine privileges. It is part of our earnings and working conditions. If it costs us more, it’s like taking a cut in our pay. And if we accept a health plan that offers fewer covered services, it’s like a deterioration of our working conditions. We need to fight to hold on to these benefits just as we would fight to resist a cut in our wages or a worsening of our working conditions.

We don’t have to accept the conventional wisdom that the solution to this problem must be a pass-through to us. Another solution can be that the District could pay these increases. And they can do it out of District reserves if necessary. That’s the kind of unanticipated expenditure for which these reserves could and should be used.

Under our Contract with the District, medical coverage is a negotiable item and our UPM bargaining team is aware that there is a solution other than the “pass-through” solution that the District seems to be advocating. ☐
“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle.”
-Frederick Douglass/ 19th Century Black Abolitionist

The Civil Rights Movement was not solely an African American movement, but a movement that demanded civil rights and human rights for all Americans.

The next pillar on the road to Civil Rights was the arrival of Marcus Garvey from Jamaica in the early 20th century. Garvey set about establishing a vision that would be known as Garveyism, a mass movement of millions dedicated to economic empowerment, racial pride, and Pan Africanism. Garvey’s success prompted the FBI to hire its first...
African American FBI agent to infiltrate and undermine the Garvey Movement. Garvey followed a long list of Pan African leaders including Paul Cuffee, Martin Delaney, Maria Smith, Henry Highland Garnet, and Ida B. Wells.

Throughout the early part of the 20th century African Americans faced discrimination and racism in labor and labor unions. In 1925, Pullman porters, who represented one of the largest groups of black workers, met in New York under the banner of “fight or be slaves.” A. Phillip Randolph, an avowed Socialist became the leader of what would be known as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Randolph’s goal was to organize Pullman Porters in the three key cities of Chicago, St. Louis, and Oakland. In 1925 the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was the first black union to receive a charter from the American Federation of Labor. Randolph continued his activism in 1941 by threatening to stage a march on Washington to protest discrimination in the granting of defense contracts. This pressure forced President Roosevelt to sign legislation banning discrimination in defense industries.

Two key themes dominate the post WW II history of African Americans in the United States. First, the return of African American soldiers from World War II along with the demand that their service in the military be recognized with substantial social and political changes at home. African Americans questioned why they should have sacrificed their lives and their families overseas to defeat “Nazism” and return back to a country still unwilling to confront violent racism and national patterns of discrimination. Second, the continuing struggle by African Americans to achieve access to education at both the graduate and elementary school levels throughout the United States. The Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision and Brown v. Board of Education II decision gave African Americans the impression that the federal government, even in a limited way, had recognized the righteousness of their long-standing protests for Civil Rights.

The murder of Emmitt Till and the Montgomery Bus Boycott set the stage for the entrance of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. into the Civil Rights movement. Dr. King led the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, and in 1967 gave his most powerful speech “Why I Oppose the War in Vietnam.”

The speech highlighted the impossibility of the United States spending massive amounts of resources on war and being able to adequately fund social programs at home. When Dr. King was assassinated in 1968 he was at the forefront of organizing sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee in their battle for union recognition. Dr. King had made every effort over his short tenure in the Civil Rights Movement (14 years) to have the federal government become more active on issues of political and economic justice for African Americans and for all Americans. He faced a country that chose to spend its resources on war instead of social programs, much like today. He faced states and a federal government that continued to spend more money on incarceration than on schools, and a legal system still rooted in the notion of African Americans as “second class citizens.”

Black History Month is more relevant than ever. The historical road behind Black History Month is a painful symbol that there is much more to be done to confront the scourge of racism and exclusion.

Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, A. Phillip Randolph, Ida B. Wells, Reverend Martin Luther King, Fannie Lou Hamer and Malcolm X were not simply great “black leaders” but great American leaders working and struggling to ensure equality and opportunity for all citizens. Their challenges to what might be termed the “citizenship contradiction” speak directly to the urgency of addressing the contemporary issues of immigration, a living wage for workers, racism, and criminal justice reform. The struggle continues.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

News and Opinion
by Arthur Lutz

VOLUNTARY TRANSFER

ARTICLE 6 OF OUR CONTRACT gives our permanent faculty the right to transfer from one service unit/discipline to another if they meet certain qualifications.

These qualifications include: teaching experience, teaching recency and the appropriate academic credentials, all of which must be relevant to the new position and attained within the previous two years. And there must also be available units in the department into which the applicant wishes to transfer. And there are certain time-lines and other program considerations that must be met in order for a transfer to occur. It's a high bar to meet, and over the years few of our faculty have met the necessary requisites in order to be eligible.

However if the qualifications are met, under our contract, permanent faculty may not be denied their right to transfer from one department to another, and they can replace adjunct faculty who may have been teaching in a department for many years.

Is this a contractual right that permanent faculty should have? Are the transfer criteria sufficient to insure quality education at CoM? And is this ‘bumping’ privilege fair to adjunct faculty?

Some faculty and department chairs in some departments (and some deans) have expressed the view that in order to protect the integrity of their programs, the right of voluntary transfer should be eliminated, or that members of a department (or the dean) should have the right to veto an applicant’s right to transfer into their ranks, regardless of whether the applicant has met the mandated contractual requirements.

UPM has maintained that it is both fair and appropriate for permanent faculty to have the right to transfer if they have met the qualifications; that the criteria are sufficiently rigorous to protect, and indeed advance, the best interests of the discipline, the institution and our students.

After years of probationary service during which time there is continuing evaluation and the right of dismissal by management, we believe that permanent faculty have earned the right to claim that they have the experience, the character, and the expertise (if they also meet the subject matter qualifications) to teach in an area other than the one for which they were initially hired.

Our institution and our students are well served when we have faculty who are intellectually curious and want to advance their professional careers by preparing themselves to teach in areas in which they were not originally hired. It benefits faculty, students and the institution.

Regarding the demand by some faculty (and some administrators) that faculty and deans in an incoming department should have the right to veto any applicant wishing to transfer, such a veto right would be anti-democratic and a throwback to the old “spoils system” where those in power were able to assign or deny employment on the basis of patronage or personal whim, rather than on the basis of merit. In the past, colleges used this veto as a way of excluding those who, for whatever reason, (race, religion, gender, age, etc. ) did not suit the personal fancies of those in power. This undemocratic system began to change when Civil Service rules were instituted for Federal employees making measurable, testable qualifications, as opposed to personal preference, the sole criterion of whether someone should get a job. Our Contract demands such an objective determination of the qualifications of a transfer applicant.

Our institution and our students are well served when we have faculty who are intellectually curious and want to advance their professional careers by preparing themselves to teach in areas in which they were not originally hired.
But there still remains the question of the fairness of a full time instructor having the right to "bump" an adjunct from a department where that adjunct may have been teaching for many years.

There is no doubt that contingent faculty have been consistently and notoriously exploited and disrespected in American Academe. They are paid less for the same work and they are evaluated more harshly and more frequently. Many receive fewer fringe benefits and certainly all are more vulnerable to being fired and to the pressures that management can impose on them because of their vulnerability to dismissal.

Yet adjuncts do the same work as permanent faculty, and they have the same academic credentials. So it’s obviously an unfair two-tier system.

But the solution to this unfairness is not to take away the rights that tenured faculty have fought for and enjoy, (voluntary transfer being one of them). Rather, the solution should be to expand the rights of adjuncts by granting them tenure, (as is done in some colleges), or by demanding that management open more tenure track positions so that adjuncts they can share in the benefits that permanent employees enjoy (the right of voluntary transfer being one of these benefits.)

Or by demanding parity pay for adjuncts so that there is no financial incentive for management to maintain them in second-class status.

It is management, not tenured faculty or our union Contract, which is responsible for the unfairness that adjuncts have been subjected to.

Over the years, and continuing today, UPM has continually fought for the rights of our adjunct faculty. We’ve achieved the highest pro-rata pay for adjuncts in California (95%), and our bargaining team is currently demanding 100% pro-rata for adjuncts. If we achieve this, the financial incentive to keep our adjuncts in second-class “servitude” will be eliminated.

And our contract has the best ETCUM protection rights for our adjuncts of any community college, and better fringe benefits. And our union consistently defends our adjuncts against contractual violations by management.

Yet in spite of our efforts, there certainly remain disparities between the rights of our permanent faculty and our adjuncts. But leveling the playing field by taking away tenure rights from permanent employees (including voluntary transfer), is not the best solution to these discrepancies. Rather, let’s fight so that our adjuncts can also enjoy the same hard won benefits that permanent faculty enjoy, (including voluntary transfer). □
REMEMBERING PETE SEEGER
1919 – 2014

In 1882 Friedrich Nietzsche declared that God was dead. For many people in the labor and progressive community Nietzsche was premature – last month God really died – Pete Seeger passed away.

Those of us who are saddened by Seeger’s death know how Nietzsche felt when he lamented the loss of “a source of received wisdom.” For many of us, Pete was the source.

Two of Seeger’s songs expressed his wisdom best:

One man’s hands can’t tear a prison down
Two men’s hands can’t tear a prison down
But if two and two and fifty make a million
We’ll see that day come round
We’ll see that day come round.

and...

Step by step the longest march
Can be won, can be won
Many stones can form an arch
Singly none, Singly none...
And through union what we will
Can be accomplished still
Drops of water turn a mill
Singly none, Singly none.

Pete Seeger was the quintessential ‘socialist man.’ He believed that through communal action and labor solidarity a better world could be created. He was teacher, guide, sage, avatar and role model to those who work for a just workplace and a more equitable society. He did it through song, through story, through community activism – but mainly he did it by modeling a life of integrity.

Now that Pete is gone, many are asking who will carry his legacy forward. Pete would probably say it will have to be all of us – together...

“DROPS OF WATER TURN A MILL
SINGLY NONE, SINGLY NONE.”

Arthur Lutz
2/14
PETE SEEGER WAS OFTEN ASKED how he could be so hopeful and optimistic when things in the world were going so badly -- when people were acting so stupidly, despoiling the environment and attempting to solve problems by dropping bombs?
Pete would say to them, “Did you think that our great Watergate president [Nixon] would leave office the way he did?” “And did you think that the Berlin Wall would come down so peacefully?” “And did you think that Nelson Mandela would become President of South Africa?”

And they would usually answer, “No, I wouldn’t have predicted those things.” “Well then, said Seeger, if you couldn’t predict those three things, then don’t be so confident that there is no hope.”

“I’VE OFTEN THOUGHT, standing onstage with 1,000 people in front of me, that somebody over on my right had a great-great grandfather who was trying to kill the great-great grandfather of somebody off to my left. And here we are all singing together. And wouldn’t it surprise all those great-grandfathers if they could see their great-grandchildren singing together? They’d probably say, ‘Why did we fight so hard?’”

ON THE SUGGESTION THAT “This Land Is Your Land” should become American national anthem: Pete said, “Please no — can’t you see the marines marching into the next little country singing ‘This land is your land, this land is my land?’”

PRESIDENT OBAMA eulogized Pete Seeger saying: “Once called ‘America’s tuning fork’ Pete Seeger believed deeply in "the power of song" to help bring social change.”

"But more importantly, he believed in the power of community -- to stand up for what’s right, speak out against what’s wrong, and move this country closer to the America he knew we could be,"
"Over the years, Pete used his voice -- and his hammer -- to strike blows for worker’s rights and civil rights; world peace and environmental conservation. And he always invited us to sing along.”

“For reminding us where we come from and showing us where we need to go, we will always be grateful to Pete Seeger.”

"Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to Pete’s family and all those who loved him.”

“BEING GENEROUS OF SPIRIT is a wonderful way to live.”

“REALIZE THAT LITTLE THINGS lead to bigger things. That’s what seeds are all about. There’s this wonderful parable in the New Testament about the sower who scatters seeds. Some seeds fall in the pathway and get stamped on and they don’t grow. Some fall on the rocks, and they don’t grow. But some seeds fall on fallow ground, and they grow and multiply a thousand fold. Who knows where some good little thing that you’ve done may bring results years later that you never dreamed of?”

“BE WARY OF GREAT LEADERS. Hope that there are many small leaders.”
“FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER”
Myth, Mirth and Miscellany for the Union Faithful

COM SUPPORTS CCSF’S FIGHT FOR FAIR ACCREDITATION

ON THURSDAY AFTERNOON, February 6th, to an overflowing and supportive audience in Deedy Lounge, faculty, student and trustee representatives from San Francisco City College (CCSF) told of their ordeal with the ACCJC Accrediting Agency.

The presentation was sponsored by United Professors of Marin and our CoM Academic Senate, with introductions by UPM President Laurie Ordin and brief welcoming remarks by President Coon.

Representing different segments of the CCSF community, CCSF faculty librarian Karen Saginor, Trustee Rafael Mandelman, and student [Sgt.] Daniel Acree (see photo above) spoke of the history and politics of the ACCJC decision, how ACCJC’s unfair accreditation process had affected them personally and professionally, and the disastrous impact that closure would have on CCSF’s 85,000 students, on its faculty, and on the economy of San Francisco. The event was valuable in helping to foster unity among Bay Area community colleges, all of whom (including CoM) might similarly be impacted by ACCJC’s retrograde evaluation policies.

An informative and engaging discussion period followed the presentations.

For further information about the CCSF/ACCJC situation, see: www.saveccsf.org.

- Nadia Sanko

UPM CONGRATULATES OUR NEWLY HIRED FULL-TIME FACULTY

- Kristin Whitaker Acredolo, Professor, Court Reporting.
- Paul Cheney, Professor, History and Political Science.
- Mia Chia, Professor, Computer Science.
- Marco Gonzalez, Professor, Sociology.
- Robert “Bob” McCoy, Professor, Psychology.
- Lori Moraca, Site Supervisor, Child Development Program.
- Shawn W. Purcell, Professor, Psychology.
- Susan Rahman, Professor, Behavioral Sciences (Psychology and Sociology).
- Leah Z. Sharp, Professor, Physics.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 2014 as National African American History Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT OBAMA’S MESSAGE, our Associated Students (ASCOM) is sponsoring a celebration of Black History Month on Monday, February 24th at noon. Location to be announced.
UPM BARGAINING UPDATE
John Sutherland
UPM Chief Negotiator

NOW THAT THE SPRING 2014 SEMESTER IS UNDERWAY, UPM/MCCD Contract Negotiations have resumed. At our initial meeting of the year, we reviewed our efforts up to this point and set dates for future bargaining sessions.

The District still has not responded to UPM’s Article 1 demand of 100% pro rata pay, nor has it countered UPM’s demand on RETCUM status (Article 6) for retirees. As well, the District is preparing to counter UPM’s Article 8 demands on Full-Time instructors’ schedules and office hours, on Department Chair compensation and on Non-Credit Teaching Load. UPM is still working on a policy demand regarding Privacy and Personal Property Rights. Though the District opened on Article 3, Wages, we have stayed with our initial agreement to deal with wages (and benefits) when we have covered all other Articles.

We’ve made progress on other Articles as well: Article 5, Leaves; Article 6, Transfers, and Article 9, Calendar. We’re still working on Article 7, Evaluations, and we believe that we have reached agreement. As soon as we do, we’ll give you an update.

Finally, the District has announced that it will offer another retirement incentive, this one with an option of a Health Reimbursement Account. It will likely be in effect on January 1, 2015. Details to come.

As always, we will continue to give you updates as we make more headway.

EDITOR’S NOTE
We encourage your comments and opinions on matters of interest to our UPM membership. Please send your letters to:

arthur@unitedprofessors.org

Names withheld upon request.

The story of the labor movement needs to be taught in every school in this land.... America is a living testimonial to what free men and women, organized in free democratic trade unions, can do to make a better life. We ought to be proud of it.

-Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey
HARRY BRIDGES ON UNION PARTICIPATION

The following is an excerpt from a column written in 1964 by the legendary Harry Bridges, president of the International Longshore Union. The ILWU was, and remains one of the most democratic trade unions in America.

“The ILWU has always led the way in having large rank and file turnouts at union meetings. It is fair to say that non participation at union meetings contributes as much to anti-labor principles as the so-called “right-to-work” laws. These laws legalize the idea that the worker on the job does not need to be a member of a union. But even if they are union members, those who do not participate in union business also help these phony “right-to-work” laws, by weakening the union’s ability to protect the job, the wage, welfare benefits, safety, and security that goes with a strong militant union. Participation is the most important privilege we have in a democracy, especially if you expect to have a voice in running your affairs.”

-Harry Bridges

Here at College of Marin, if we expect to have voice in protecting our jobs, our wages, our benefits and our safety and security, we also should all participate by being members of our union. If you are not a member of UPM, please fill out the application form below.

UPM MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I hereby apply for membership in the United Professors of Marin, AFT Local 1610

Name: __________________________  SS#: __________________________
Address: _________________________  City: ______________  Zip: __________
Date: ___________________________  Email: _________________________
Home Phone: _____________________  Campus Ext: ______

Check the appropriate category:
____ I am a permanent credit or non-credit employee or leave replacement
____ I am a temporary credit or non-credit employee on the semester system
____ I am a Community Education instructor

Return to the UPM mailbox or to the UPM Office, TB-124.
And please make sure you have completed the UPM payroll deduction option, in Human Resources.

Please Note: Unless you have filled out the above UPM Membership Application, you are only paying a representation fee and you are not entitled to UPM’s full membership benefits.