On March 11, a powerful earthquake and tsunami destroyed offsite power to the atomic reactor complex at Fukushima, Japan, and damaged its backup diesel generators. Without power to run the pumps, three reactors lost cooling, resulting in their fuel melting and radioactivity being released in copious amounts. Cooling to storage pools filled with intensely radioactive spent fuel failed as well, with the fuel apparently catching fire. Intense radiation doses were reported nearby and contamination spread over large areas of land and sea.

On December 6, the state of California, the United States Department of Energy (DOE), and NASA executed legally binding and enforceable agreements for the cleanup of radioactive and chemical contamination at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL). Bridge the Gap and the local community, in alliance with a set of courageous public officials, have fought for three decades against great odds and much resistance for this remarkable achievement.

At their core, the agreements require DOE and NASA to clean up all the soil contamination they created, with narrow exceptions.

HISTORIC CLEANUP AGREEMENTS SIGNED FOR NUCLEAR MELTDOWN SITE
Extraordinary Victory, Culminating 31 Years of Struggle

JAPANESE NUCLEAR DISASTER
Dante Could Not Have Imagined Such an Inferno

by CBG President Dan Hirsch

ON MARCH 11, A POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI destroyed offsite power to the atomic reactor complex at Fukushima, Japan, and damaged its backup diesel generators. Without power to run the pumps, three reactors lost cooling, resulting in their fuel melting and radioactivity being released in copious amounts. Cooling to storage pools filled with intensely radioactive spent fuel failed as well, with the fuel apparently catching fire. Intense radiation doses were reported nearby and contamination spread over large areas of land and sea.
The Boeing Company is suing the state to obtain the cleanup law.

In the early 1980s, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission estimated that a meltdown at San Onofre could result in 330,000 immediate deaths, 300,000 cancers, and 600,000 genetic effects, for about a million killed and injured. There are huge amounts of radioactivity inside these reactors. The plants are nuclear weapons and one can’t ever permit it to escape. The Japanese tragedy should be a wake-up call. This is simply too dangerous a technology to tolerate. It proliferates nuclear weapons; produces highly radioactive wastes dangerous for hundreds of thousands of years, for which no safe disposal method exists; is a target for terrorists; is uneconomical; and, as now shown in stark relief once again, poses an unacceptable risk of accident. It is time to “bridge the gap” between our current reliance on this unsafely dangerous power source and a safe, renewable energy future.

And for the gap to continue that fight. We need to learn the lessons of Fukushima so painfully taught, and turn to a safer path.

The first goal was to shut down of nuclear activity at SSFL, CGO and other interests intervened in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission proceedings proceeding which eventually led to a withdrawal of the license for DOE to prove to the Environmental Protection Agency, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the City of Los Angeles had to file a federal lawsuit against DOE, in early 2008. At CGO, Dan Hirsch testified. Also testifying was a DOE official, who said that DOE could agree to allow work to continue. DOE would agree to all but a very small fraction of the contaminants.

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sources, the Obama Administration has proposed billions and billions of dollars in loan guarantees and other handouts, and the industry propaganda machine continues to claim that nuclear power is clean, safe, and that there is nothing to worry about in terms of atomic weapons proliferation.

The Truth to Power campaign seeks to clearly articulate the choices we are being offered by media and in the halls of Congress – to “pick your poison” – between replacing carbon dioxide with plutonium. With nuclear energy the risks of accident, terrorism, waste disposal, and proliferation of weapons are too great, and there are sensible and safe alternatives that truly address the global warming problem. The choice must be between the sun and the wind and carbon dioxide and plutonium.

Although the need for this campaign was clear in January, the recent ongoing tragic events in Japan magnify the importance of countering the nuclear industry’s spin machine in the United States. Even as the reactor cores were melting at Fukushima, nuclear industry talking heads proliferated on media outlets, assuring the public that “it can’t happen here.” But we know that it can, and unless the public has all the facts about nuclear energy, the nuclear lobby will continue to promote these radioactive factors as a “clean and safe” solution to climate change.

The "Truth to Power Campaign" will take Hirsch and Freeman on speaking tours across the country to speak to educators, students, and local officials about the risks of nuclear energy and the clear, sensible, renewable-efficient alternatives available. These tours will initially target those states that are considering licensing new or renewing nuclear plants.

Meet our New Board Member

JACK MILES

JACK MILES has been a friend and supporter of Bridge the Gap for 35 years. Jack is a Pulitzer-prize-winning author (for God: A Biography), a MacArthur Fellow (the “Genius Award”), and currently Distinguished Professor of English and Religious Studies at the University of California, Irvine. Jack previously served on the Los Angeles Times Editorial Board (where he wrote numerous editorials opposing the then-proposed Ward Valley nuclear waste dump) and as editor of the Times’ Book Review Section. We are very grateful to have him aboard.

X. David Freeman conducted the first major study in 1973 for the Ford Foundation that showed how energy efficiency could be the most cost-effective way to reduce pollution. Former Chair of the Tennessee Valley Authority (1977-84), when he pioneered solar power and efficiency measures and shut down eight nuclear plants; former Chairman of the New York Power Authority, former head of the decommissioning of the Rancho Seco Nuclear Power Plant; former head of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the New York Power Authority; featured in the film, "Who Killed the Electric Car?"; author of Winning Our Energy Revolution. Former Chair of the Tennessee Valley Authority (1977-84), where he pioneered solar power and efficiency measures and shut down eight nuclear plants; former President of the California Public Utilities Commission, where he initiated solar programs in California, implemented efficiency measures, provided the decommissioning of the Rancho Seco Nuclear Power Plant, former head of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the New York Power Authority; featured in the film, "Who Killed the Electric Car?"; author of Winning Our Energy Independence. An Insider Shares His Book.

AS RADIOACTIVITY SPREAD out of the damaged Japanese atomic reactors and spent fuel pools, officials in the U.S. were quick to reassure the American public that no “harmful” radiation could reach this country. What they didn’t say was that the National Academy of Sciences has repeatedly found that there is no such thing as a safe level of radiation—all radiation increases cancer risks, with more radiation producing more risk, and less radiation producing less risk, but with no threshold below which there is no risk.

And what they also didn’t say, but took Bridge the Gap to reveal, was that the half of EPA’s radiation monitors were reported as running. Many of the broken ones had been broken for months. Those that were working depended on sucking air through filters for three or four days, sending them by FedEx to Alabama, where an additional day to several days are taken to measure the radioactivity, meaning there is a time delay of a week or so to produce results. Furthermore, most of one of the key monitors, working or otherwise, on the California coast between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

CBG also disclosed that EPA had intended to deploy “deployable” radiation monitors, which are capable of seeing radioactive iodine, up and down the West Coast to fill in the gaps where there were no stationary monitors, but that EPA headquarters in Washington ordered them not deployed. An EPA regional official sent out an email almost apologizing for the decision, but inexplicably, in the midst of the Japanese nuclear disaster, the deployable monitors were ordered not deployed. There was extensive national news coverage of the NBC’s report.

Despite claims by EPA that radiation levels detected were “thousands of times lower than any conservative level of concern,” CBG disclosed that levels of radioactive iodine in rainwater were 25-200 times higher than EPA’s Maximum Contaminant Levels specified by the Clean Water Act. The pattern of federal government denials and bland reassurances is troubling, raising the specter of whether the Administration’s push for more taxpayer subsi- dized new nuclear plants was conflicting with its obligation to provide accurate information about the potential impacts of the Japanese atomic disaster.

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CBG LAUNCHES TRUTH TO POWER CAMPAIGN

In January 2011, Committee for Bridge the Gap launched its “Truth to Power” campaign with S. David Freeman. CBG is fighting the nuclear industry’s efforts at a nuclear expansion for years. At a time when the nation’s resources and energy should be concentrated on truly clean, renewable energy alternatives that truly address the global warming problem. The choice must be between the sun and the wind and carbon dioxide and plutonium.

CBG DISCLOSES FAILURE OF U.S. RADIATION MONITORING SYSTEM

...less than half of EPA’s radiation monitors were reported as running. Many of the broken ones had been broken for months.

CBG FIGHTS EFFORTS TO WEAKEN RADIATION PROTECTION STANDARDS

IN ITS LAST FULL DAY IN office, the outgoing Bush Administration attempted to release new guidance that would have increased the permissible concentra- tion of radioactivity in drinking water many thousand-fold. The draft Protective Action Guides (PAGs) would have also dramatically weakened requirements for long-term cleanup of contamination, allowing doses so high that, by EPA’s own estimates, one in every four people would get a cancer that they would not have gotten in the absence of the exposure. Bridge the Gap led a successful effort to get the PAGs pulled back, just before they were to be published in the Federal Register, and to push the new Administration to reconsider them. That review, alas, continues to drag on. The good news is that we have to date prevented bad PAGs from being issued. The troubling news is that EPA still hasn’t issued guidance that is affirmatively protective (i.e., that requires drinking water to meet the Safe Drinking Water Act standards and long-term cleanup to meet Superfund standards).

CBG has exposed—and pressed EPA to fix—a range of other failures to adequately protect the public from radiation exposures. Despite findings by the National Academy of Sciences that exposure to general radiation is 35% more dangerous than current official agency estimates upon which safety regula- tions are based, and that X-rays and the radioactive material tritium may be 2-3 times more dangerous than general radiation, EPA has so far refused to correct its standards accordingly. Radiation continues its status as a “privileged pollutant,” allowed at risk levels that far exceed what is permissible for any other carcinogen. Occupational radiation limits, for example, are set at the equivalent of about 1000 chest X-rays per year. If workers received the permissible dose each year over 50 years, an astonishing one fourth of them would get a cancer from that exposure, according to the government’s own estimates. Yet occupational radiation limits haven’t been tightened in decades. CBG continues its fight for radiation standards that are truly protective.
TEENS AGAINST TOXINS
A Message From Devyn Gortner

AS THE FOUNDER OF THE YOUTH GROUP, TEENS AGAINST TOXINS, I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF WORKING CLOSELY WITH DAN HIRSCH FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS. WE ARE ALL OVERJOYED THAT THERE IS FINALLY A SIGNED CLEAN UP DEAL AT SSFL AND BELIEVE DAN IS DUE THE BULK OF THE CREDIT. HIS ENTHUSIASM, TENACITY, HUMILITY, KNOWLEDGE, AND DRY SENSE OF HUMOR HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLY INSPIRING TO ME AND ALL THE TEENAGERS IN MY ORGANIZATION.

For those of you unfamiliar with Teens Against Toxins, we are a youth group dedicated to the cleanup of SSFL, other polluted locations and harmful toxics in our environment. Our group’s first effort was a tongue in cheek “Bake Sale for Boeing” which raised $99.31. We presented the check to Boeing which was featured on CNN’s Toxic LA show with Warren Olney. Absolutely none of this would have happened without Dan Hirsch and Committee to Bridge the Gap. I am honored to know Dan and proud to be associated with Committee to Bridge the Gap. We hope you will support this important work.

This past fall we joined a number of local elected officials including Assemblywoman Julia Browley, Supervisor Linda Parks, Congressman Brad Sherman and LA City Councilman Greig Smith, in presenting an oversized letter to Boeing similar to our oversized bake sale. Our teen group also filmed a short video which was featured on CNN’s Toxic Towns website. All our videos can be seen at our website www.teensagainsttoxins.org.

Our more recent efforts include letters to editors of local papers, press conferences, gathering petitions at local farmer’s markets and setting up a several thousand person Facebook campaign to get comments in on the AIP’s (Agreements in Principle). Just last month Dan and I were both interviewed on NPR’s local Which Way LA show with Warren Olney.

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IN MEMORIUM
BRIDGE THE GAP HAS LOST THREE BELOVED FRIENDS

MILLIE PLUTKIN, along with her husband Shel, began serving on the CBG Board in 1974, continuing until her health made it no longer possible in 2009. Her commitment to the organization is perhaps best demonstrated by her quiet some years ago when a foundation wanted to give us a grant but was concerned because we had a married couple on the Board whom the foundation worried could represent a voting block. Millie told the foundation that if it would help us get the grant, she would be willing to divorce Shel! Millie was a feisty, progressive soul, and we will miss her. Our hearts go out to Shel.

REVEREND H. MIKE FINK also served on the CBG Board for more than three decades, from 1977 until his death. Mike was a Methodist pastor, serving for many years as the Chair of the interfaith University Religious Conference at UCLA. He was instrumental in finding us a home lasting 27 years in the First United Methodist Church of WLA when we lost our previous office after holding a news conference about the Three Mile Island accident. A gentle and committed soul, he exemplified the best aspects of quietly making faith visible in service to social justice.

S. DELL SCOTT was one of the original founders of Bridge the Gap, literally helping, give birth to and sustain us. Dell was a prominent lawyer and progressive force in Los Angeles. In the midst of the Vietnam War, he recognized the importance of finding a way to “bridge the gap” between the generations, reach out and change opinions in order to work to end the war. He and his wife Ruth held countless meetings in their home with young people, bringing in neighbors and friends, to break through misconceptions about the war and related issues, changing minds, opening hearts. Ruth and their daughter Carol remain in our thoughts.

2010 Commendation: Former Executive Director Joe Lyou with (left to right) Barbara Johnson, Diane Koudalis, Holly Griff and Marie Mason.

Bottom row: The crowd catches up with old friends at reception; CBG Board Chair, Johnson, Dawn Kowalski, Holly Huff and Marie Mason.

Middle row: Assemblywoman Julia Browley presents Dan Hirsch with Commendation; Former Executive Director Joe Lyou with (left to right) Barbara Johnson, Diane Koudalis, Holly Griff and Marie Mason.

Bottom row: The crowd catches up with old friends at reception; CBG Board Chair, Johnson, Dawn Kowalski, Holly Huff and Marie Mason.

CBG’S 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND CONCERT
A GREAT SUCCESS

The June 13, 2010 celebration for Committee to Bridge the Gap’s 40th anniversary was attended by over 120 people. While honoring 40 years of hard work and commitment, the event also proved to be a great reunion. Co-founder S. Dell Scott was able to attend as well as early members Joel Hirsch, Marshall Glick, Dr. Roger Kahn, former executive director Joe Lyons and former staff, Bill Magavern. A number of current volunteer staff from around the state, Tony Zepeda, David Weisman, Emily Churg and members of the Rockedyn Clean-up Coalition, who often communicate via email, were delighted to be able see one another face to face. Following presentations by the Teens Against Toxins, Assemblywoman Julia Browley, and a speech by Dan Hirsch, the lovely Amanda McBrown inspired and amused the crowd with her singing, featuring her Grammy winning song, The Rose.

Photos: Top row, left to right: The Abolition: An American Melody; Teens against Toxins, Michelle Stucklebi, Ryan Mooreman, Robin Katin and Devyn Gortner; CBG Executive Coordinator, Catherine Lincoln.

Middle row: Assemblywoman Julia Browley presents Dan Hirsch with Commendation; Former Executive Director Joe Lyou with (left to right) Barbara Johnson, Diane Koudalis, Holly Griff and Marie Mason.

Bottom row: The crowd catches up with old friends at reception; CBG Board Chair, Johnson, Dawn Kowalski, Holly Huff and Marie Mason.

Photos: Left to right: The Abolition: An American Melody; Teens against Toxins, Michelle Stucklebi, Ryan Mooreman, Robin Katin and Devyn Gortner; CBG Executive Coordinator, Catherine Lincoln.