



Upper Left Caption: Crowd at Big Red Church, Image by Howard Watkins. Upper Right: Amy Goodman reads from her new book, Democracy Now! Covering the Movements Changing America. Image by Howard Watkins Lower Left: KFCF staff including executive producer Rych Withers with Denis Moynihan (far right) Image by Howard Watkins. Lower middle: Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan sign copies of their book. Image by Howard Watkins. Lower right: KFCF reporter and Community Alliance contributor Vic Bedoian speaks before crowd at Big Red Church. Image by Howard Watkins

Democracy Now! in Fresno

By Hannah Brandt

On April 29, the Central Valley was fortunate to welcome Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan to Fresno thanks to an event put on by local KPFA Pacifica Radio affiliate, KFCF 88.1. Amy Goodman is host and executive producer of KPFA's national weekday TV and radio news program Democracy Now! Denis Moynihan is an award-winning independent journalist and author. The two have been traveling around the country promoting their new book, *Democracy Now! Twenty Years Covering the Movements Changing America*.

Pacifica Radio was started immediately following WWII by two pacifists in Berkeley, CA as a progressive, independently funded radio network. After organizing a group of conscientious objectors to create the Pacifica Foundation, KPFA went on air in 1949. Democracy Now! began broadcasting on KPFA in 1996, at the wake of the explosion of cable news channels and conservative talk radio. The show was developed as an alternative to corporate media and is now the largest public media partnership in the U.S., airing on 1400 public television and radio stations. In addition, millions of people around the world listen and view it through democracynow.org.

Democracy Now! is

celebrating twenty years on the air at the same time the Central Valley KPFA affiliate, KFCF, is marking forty years in the air. In fact, KFCF was one of the first stations to carry Democracy Now! Goodman and Moynihan spent one day in Fresno, first at a small gathering meet-and-greet in their honor. Those of us who got up close and personal were given the chance to talk briefly with them about important issues like education, the environment, racism, human rights, and the responsibility of the media. Their visit culminated in a large presentation at the Big Red Church near Fresno High. Around 200 people attended this main event, squeezed in elbow-to-elbow, with several people standing in the aisles.

Ears strained to hear Goodman talk about her work over twenty years of reporting. Her speech, in some ways a sermon, preached to the choir, mirrored the layout of the book. She began by talking about the War and Peace Report, which is the subtitle for Democracy Now! Goodman said, "the United States is engaged in what can only be called an endless war." The war in Afghanistan is the longest war in U.S. history. President Obama has been at war longer than any other U.S. president. She asked the question, "What if war were not an option? What if people had

to resolve their conflicts non-violently?"

While this is one of the central questions Democracy Now! asks on a regular basis, corporate media does not. Therefore, most Americans are unaware that there are other viable resolutions to international differences or even that there is an anti-war movement in this country. When it has resurged at times in recent years, the anti-war movement has been quickly suppressed by policymakers and law enforcement and gone unreported by most media outlets. There was vehement dissent against the War in Iraq, but few outside Democracy Now! reported it. In 2002, "Dennis Kucinich's experience in his own congressional offices confirmed the results of research we conducted at Democracy Now! namely that the telephone calls flooding Congress against a military invasion of Iraq outpaced calls in support many times over." The truth of this has only increased since the movement has become more marginalized.

She also discussed how this endless war has created a "national security state where torture, spying, and killing of innocent civilians and mass surveillance at home have become normalized." Stressing the dangerous, but crucial work of whistleblowers is a main

focus of the show as Goodman interviews Glenn Greenwald, Laura Poitras, Julian Assange, and Edward Snowden himself, remotely tracking these realities and the concerted effort to shut them up. When the media becomes part of this effort to silence important voices, it loses its purpose.

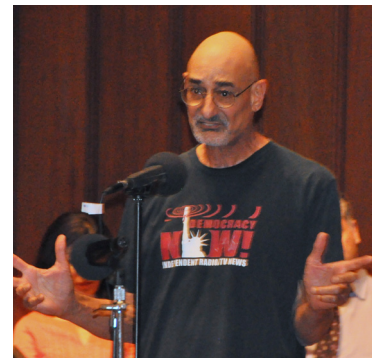
The book also tackles immigration and the fear undocumented residents feel about demanding their rights. The fact that 1000 people on average have been deported daily during Obama's presidency has forced many to organize into action. Goodman pointed out that "today's immigration policy is a political quagmire that enflames passions and incites racism and xenophobia." She said John F. Kennedy's denouncement of how immigrants were treated sixty years ago is still true. They are only welcome "...as long as they come from Northern Europe, are not too tired or too poor or slightly ill, never stole a loaf of bread, never joined any questionable organization, and can document their activities for the past two years..."

Goodman also trudged into the Occupy movements, militarized police forces, American white supremacy, climate change, and the LGBTQ movements. While mainstream media focuses on these issues for a hot minute, Democracy Now!

continues to follow up on these subjects over years. When Bree Newsome scaled up the flag pole of the capital building in South Carolina to take down the Confederate flag, it did make all the networks. But a few days later other outlets had moved on and forgotten it, failing to dig into the historical significance of this human moment. Democracy Now! had lengthy, meaningful interviews with Newsome rather than brief sound bites.

In this age in which the news media is increasingly controlled by corporate conglomerates, the public is crying out for authentic, investigative journalism. Very often it is obvious there are pieces of the story missing in mainstream media, voices that are not heard. There appears to be quiet, where there is actually a blaring clamor. As *Covering the Movements*' book jacket states, "Goodman takes the reader along as she goes to where the silence is." On April 29, she called on Fresnoans to never give up the fight for justice, truth, and equality.

Hannah Brandt is the editor of Community Alliance newspaper. You can follow her on Twitter and Instagram at @HannahBP2. Follow the paper on Facebook at Community Alliance Newspaper and on Twitter and Instagram @fresnoalliance.



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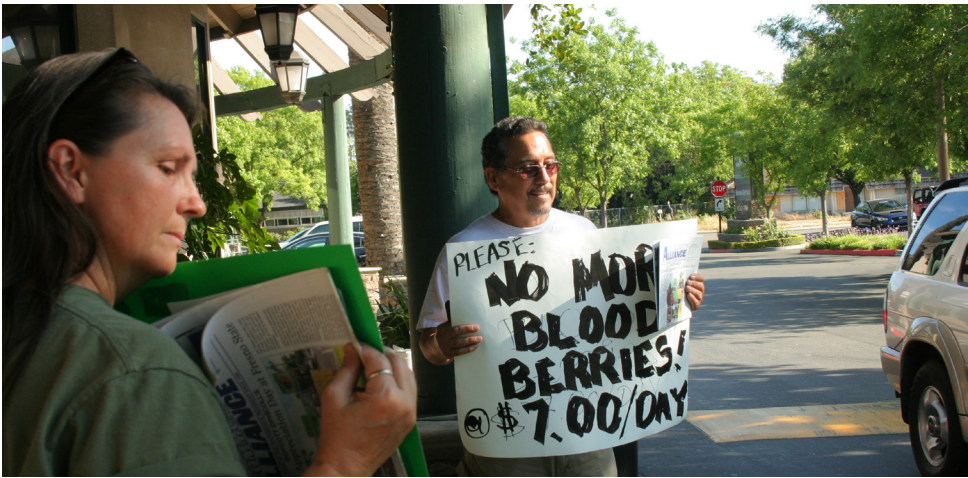
ROCK THE VOTE

Rock the Vote: The Central Labor Council registered voters and held a rally at Ted Wills Community Center in Tower and Lowell Districts on May 14. Images by Hannah Brandt.



BOYCOTT DRISCOLL'S

Boycott Driscoll's: Local activists picketed Driscoll's Berries outside Whole Foods grocery store in Fig Garden on May 14. Images by Hannah Brandt.



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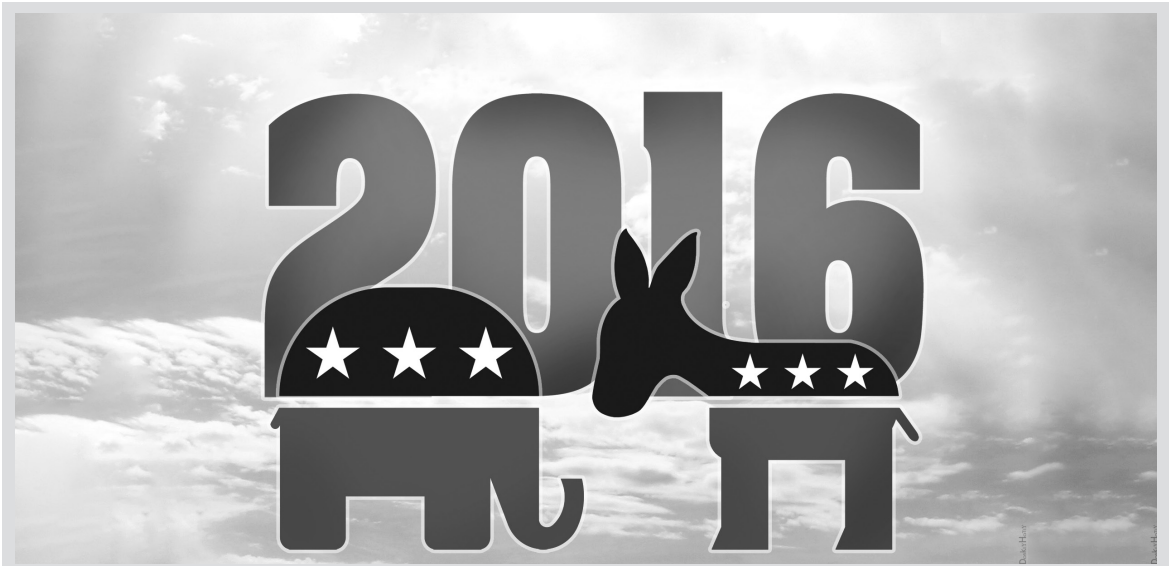


In case you’ve missed it, there is an election this month. It is the California Primary on June 7th. In most presidential election years, by the time the California Primary rolls around, our votes are of little consequence because one nominee for each party is already so far ahead. We know this is the case for the Republicans, as Donald Trump has pushed all of his competitors out. I will get back to that in a minute. But on the Democrat’s side, while Hillary Clinton has a commanding lead, the movement for Bernie Sanders cannot be ignored.

As Progressives, many of us are a part of that movement, but some of us are not. Some of us are Green Party members, others of us are citizens who feel represented by none of the political parties or candidates. Many, but not all of us, have come to the decision that we would not be satisfied with Hillary Clinton presidency. Regardless of where you sit in this circus, you probably feel like you are riding a rollercoaster.

Elections usually do, especially once we get this far into the process. By this point, there has usually been a fair amount of mudslinging, exaggerations, and half-truths. If the past is any indication, that will only increase as we head into the general election. Many Americans from all sides of the political spectrum get fed up every four years and want nothing to do with politics. Progressives usually determine that it is better to exercise the right to vote, though some prefer to work for justice outside the electoral process.

I believe it is fair to say that all of us are concerned that Donald Trump never become president. Regardless of whether his candidacy was launched as joke or dare, the fact he has gotten as far as he has is no joke. It goes without saying that the possibility of such a racist, misogynistic, and incompetent man in the Oval Office would



By DonkeyHotey via Flickr Creative Commons

be extremely dangerous. Leaders have emerged on the Right in recent years who have the same values, including other Republican 2016 candidates for president, but no one has condensed this hate so succinctly or threatened to carry out such violent and repressive measures as Trump has.

Most of us have friends and family who say they will move to another country (usually Canada) if he becomes president. Others stay we must stay and fight for our country. As someone with pacifist ancestors who were forced to flee to other countries when their homeland was taken over by authoritarian, militaristic leadership, that doesn’t sound as farfetched to me as to some. I have also lived overseas and have always felt like more of a citizen of the world, than merely the U.S. I was raised in a family that never felt truly represented by presidents because, in the end, they were all Commanders in Chief. I honestly do not know what I would do.

The question so many of us on the Left are asking is what is the best way to defeat Trump? Predictably, we do not agree. Being a woman in my thirties, it has been interesting to see the way Progressives of my age group have responded to the political landscape. It is a bit different than those a bit younger or older. Many more of my friends have been stalwart supporters of Hillary Clinton, than those ten or more years younger than us. Having moved back to Fresno from the Bay Area recently, many of my friends still live there, in arguably the most Progressive part

of the state.

I actually do not think this is surprising. We came of age in a Clinton world. I was a freshman in high school when Bill Clinton was elected and graduated from college right before George W. Bush came into office. For us as young women, there were practically no female role models in politics but Hillary Clinton. Many of our college and early job applications cited Hillary Clinton as our role model. Although we lived in California, I remember a few friends proudly displaying Clinton for NY Senate bumper stickers on their cars. She was a lifeline to a generation of girls grasping for examples of smart, strong, independent, and successful women to show that we could be, too.

Of course, this is not 2001 and we are not in our early twenties anymore. The world has changed. And so have we. Hillary Clinton has done and said many things since then, some admirable and some not. Many of us have become disillusioned with Hillary just as we have with many male politicians who might also have been role models. Somewhere along the way, innocence in politics as in all of life, is lost. So we weigh the pros and cons and make our choices.

No matter how you feel about any candidate on the Left, no matter how you see the strategy to defeat Trump, do not think that your voice and your heart and mind do not matter. They do.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FAIR WAGE

By Raymond Ensher

Evidently, Fresno business chamber leader Al Smith (letter, 1-30) has not been watching “Undercover Boss.” The employees who appear state they need a fair wage so they do not need to work two or three other jobs to survive. Many of these stories brought tears to my eyes and to those of their bosses.

On several programs, employees related that their

families had become homeless and could not afford their homes.

I greatly admire businesses who share their profits with their employees or give them shares in their company. That is the right things to do. After all, if they did not have devoted employees, they could not have profitable businesses

I recall a number of years ago, a furniture business burning down, but the boss continued to pay the employees’ wages. Now that’s a compassionate boss.

As to the Fair Wage initiative on the ballot, there would be a gradual increase to \$15 an hour by 2021. The real goal is to provide a living wage to all American workers. This can happen in this great country if businesses realize this overdue need and provide from the front line workers. It can be done!

The *Community Alliance* is an independent voice for workers and progressive groups in the Central San Joaquin Valley. The goal of this monthly newspaper is to build a powerful progressive movement that will support social, environmental and economic justice; immigrant rights; and a living wage for all working people. We seek to expose social and political injustices and to link the diverse network of activists working in our community.

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By Tiffany A. Potter

Most days this is where I live, in the gray. The older I get the more acutely aware I am that life is not black and white; but rather, a perpetual shade of gray. We're most always living in the time between "now" and "when". When I become successful. When I find the right person. When I make enough money. When I have a family. When, when, when. As if the pot of gold at the end of the proverbial rainbow ends at "when _____."

Living in the gray means that some days life is a darker shade; more morose and heavy, laden with sadness and worry. Other days life, and the shades that represent it, feel as light as air. Black (as life always contains a little bit of it as we age, perpetually looming over us with the loss of loved ones, financial troubles, and all around anxiety about this life we've got to work with) mixed with the brightest of sunshine and cloudless skies, when things just don't seem so bad comparatively. It's those light gray days we wish we could hold on to forever. Not a perfect day or perfect life (as no one has one), but a beautiful one represented by flashings of the brightest white with only hints of black droplets mixed in.

I just returned from a week-long trip to Los Angeles for work followed by three days farther south, in my old home of San Diego. I always have mixed emotions when I return to my city. Spending time in San Diego, more so with the people still there, keeps me grounded. The city and my most amazing friends humble me in a way that nothing else does. I oscillate between wanting to move back

down there tomorrow to be with them and content that I have left that city and its experiences in my past.

My time in San Diego was the epitome of gray; I just didn't appreciate it then. The four years between the end of my marriage and the beginning of the next chapter, when I moved back to Fresno, was all gray. And I wish I could have lived in those moments more. I fell victim to fixating on my pain and my ideas of how great life will be "when", that I didn't pay enough attention to the "now" as I was experiencing it in real time. I lived as if something better was right around the corner and I just had to be patient; I needed to keep moving forward filling my time *until*. Turns out though, there wasn't something better! I had the best for that time in my life, right in front of me. I was living it every day and I practically missed it.

Reflecting back as I drove through my old neighborhood, I was flooded with memories of that time. That time when I was grocery shopping for one, before Costco cards became a necessity and a hassle. That time when my one bedroom apartment in the center of everything that mattered to me, was heaven. That time when my running course as I trained for a race took me to Balboa Park and back whenever I so chose to put my running shoes on and go without a second thought of dinner times and menus. That time before back problems and adult bills to be paid. That time when every Saturday morning was reserved for breakfast at the beach with my girls, when we would talk politics just as much as we would talk the dates we had gone on the previous week or where we were going that night to dance. That time in my life when I was wholly unattached to anything or anyone outside of myself, my cat, and my career; and it was glorious, only I didn't know how much so at the time.

TIFFANY'S TAKE

One Girl's Journey Through Conscious Living

Gray



Image by Dan Thibideaux Flickr Creative Commons


Those gray years molded me and shaped me into the fiercely independent woman I have become, but it's not something I ever could have planned. Mother Universe seems to have a way of gently directing us to become who and what will best serve us, regardless of how foreign it may feel at the time; and perhaps it will only make sense when you look back over your shoulder.

Currently I find myself thinking "I can't wait for *when* my company is self-sustaining." or, "I can't wait *until* I'm officially an international disability consultant" or, "I can't wait *until* we have the opportunity to move to Mill Valley". But in looking at life this way I've come to realize that I'm at risk of missing the beauty of the gray again, the beauty of today, of this very moment. This time between "now" and "when"; if I'm not careful will completely pass me by again, and wouldn't that be a shame?

So loves, I offer you this; slow down. Relish the moments that are in front of you. Be mindful of what you have

right now, practice living in gratitude. Never stop growing and dreaming big of course, but also, never busy yourself so much that you miss the little wonders. Breathe. Take it all in. For if you allow it to be, gray, in all of its shades, is a beautiful place to live, full of your most beautiful high highs and low lows that merge into the life experiences that have made you who you are. If you're lucky enough to live another day you will have acquired a bit more happiness and peace; and a bit more sadness and loss (it's unavoidable) and that's okay. Find the beauty in the gray, it's there; and appreciate where you are at this very moment for some day you'll miss it and as much as we wish we could make it so, the clock doesn't turn back.

Tiffany is a disability consultant, entrepreneur, inspirational speaker, and change agent. Find her at: www.TiffanysTake.com. Instagram: [Tiffanys_Take](https://www.instagram.com/Tiffanys_Take).



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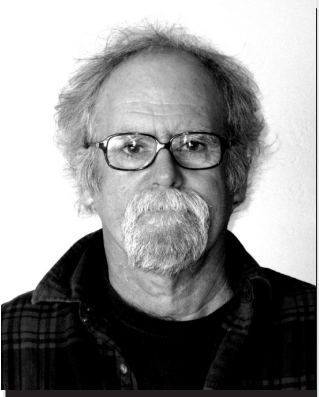
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The American Lung Association (ALA) has once again confirmed, in their annual report, that San Joaquin Valley residents are breathing the worst air in the nation and subsequently suffering the worst health effects from pollution. Fine particulate levels (PM 2.5), our most deadly form of pollution, have actually gotten worse in recent years according to the ALA and monitoring data.

At the same time, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District recently declared attainment of one of the oldest and least health protecting mandates called the one-hour ozone standard.

Although ozone levels have improved slowly the past decade or two with the slow turnover of our vehicle fleets to cleaner burning engines, it is questionable whether this old standard has actually been attained.

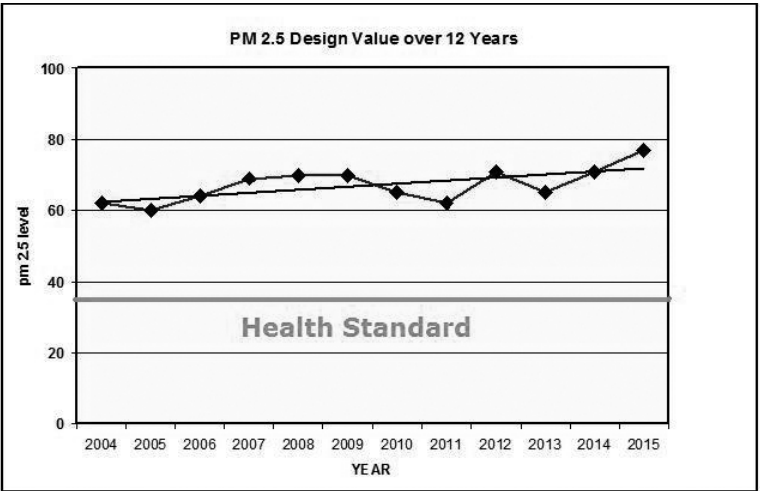
The problem is in Arvin at the southern end of the valley. A monitor there was removed in 2010 which had consistently measured the worst ozone readings in the valley for approximately 20 years. With its removal the air in the region suddenly improved dramatically, surprise, surprise! This has led to the air district now claiming compliance with the standard. Both the state Air Resources Board and the federal Environmental Protection Agency pointed out earlier that they could not certify attainment of any ozone standard unless that monitor was back in place. But, after several years of the air district crying foul, these agencies gave in this year and approved the claim of victory. That approval eases the pressure on the air district to make stricter rules decreasing local air pollution sources.

Our air district has also submitted a bill for Congress to hopefully pass this year. It is labeled HR4775 and is referred to as a Clean Air Act modernization plan. It is, in fact, a blatant attempt to gut the Clean Air Act in favor of big polluters.

CLEARING THE AIR

Air District Claims Success While Air Quality Worsens

By Tom Frantz



The bill would take away penalties and contingency measures mandated by a failure of the air district to demonstrate progress in cleaning up our air. It would allow the air district to weaken air quality rules based on a subjective interpretation of the economic feasibility of proposed measures. It would also void violations of air quality standards during periods of extreme heat, stagnant air, or drought conditions, all of which would be determined by their own biased criteria.

This proposal is a direct attack on the people of the San Joaquin Valley. We need for the Clean Air Act to be strengthened, not weakened. Dirty air is costing the valley billions of dollars in health related costs annually while taking years off of our life expectancy.

The air district governing board basically thinks the profits and tax dollars of a few huge polluters are more valuable than the lives of several million people. They are protecting factory dairies, the oil industry,

power plants, biomass incinerators and glass factories from the imperative to pay the true cost of their emissions which are causing premature birth, premature death, and a lowered quality of life for local residents. This is a criminal action where the crimes are being perpetrated by a veil of immunity for elected officials. The San Joaquin Valley is governed no differently than Flint, Michigan.

Longtime clean air advocate Tom Frantz is a retired math teacher and Kern County almond farmer. A founding member of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, he serves on the CVAQ steering committee and as president of the Association of Irrigated Residents. CVAQ is a partnership of more than 70 community, medical, public health, environmental and environmental justice organizations representing thousands of residents in the San Joaquin Valley unified in their commitment to improve the health of Californians. For more information, visit www.calcleanair.org.

Green Party Primary 2016

By Richard Gomez

A person who has taken a bold step forward and out of the wreckage that is considered politics by registering with the Green Party generally identifies with Green values. That person is usually horrified with the two corporate parties but still needs to be convinced that working for the Green Party or giving money to it will in fact lead to a thriving oppositional party to the two political elites. This year the presidential primary election in California has five Green Party members running for office. Which members will be chosen depends on the party's decision in the convention in August. (See ad) Personally, I believe that we

have the best five candidates in the country. Of course, election seasons are never without their problems.

First, I have to acknowledge that Bernie Sanders has surpassed most expectations of his Presidential campaign. I, like many others, thought his candidacy would feel the fate of Julius Caesar and fail to get beyond the Ides of March. I was wrong but I am grateful that his message of health care as a human right, commitment to holding Wall Street accountable for its greedy corporate money laundering and immoral operations, as well as other forms of corruption is resonating with so many people. The Green Party for years has

fought the political power elites who control both major parties with these same messages that today bring crowds to see, hear, and cheer Senator Sanders. Many Greens who have supported these very ideas have been punished, ridiculed, and ignored when running for political office to get that message out to the public. It is interesting that it now comes relatively easily to Senator Sanders who, by choosing to run as a Democrat, has found the media more benign. What little face time he has had on television is much greater than all the third party candidates.

Those of us who are working for the Green Party

find the values it espouses to be pretty much what we personally believe. We do not feel those values should be compromised for the sake of expediency. We believe that there is no other choice but to build this Green Party up. In general, we see the Democrats/Republicans as bankrupt and as part of the shell game that keeps the autocrats in power. I also fear that in this country the population in general has been conditioned to believe that it is up to someone else to be part of building something, rather than that the party must come to them.

As we all know by now, our laws were made to prevent people and organizations like

the Green Party from making the changes necessary to prevent horrific catastrophes from happening to the environment and humanity. Protecting the profit has become more important than a thriving Earth where the people thrive, too. Your vote can begin to make that change but you must believe that you can make that vote.

Richard Gomez is a council member of the Fresno County Green Party. Contact him at 559-408-3320, richardgomez136@yahoo.com, richard.gomez.9843@facebook.com or via the Green Party Web site (<http://FresnoGreens.localgreenparty.org>).

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Voting Progressive in the California Presidential Primary

By Yezdyar “Yez” Kaoosji

By the time this newspaper is distributed readers will have barely a week left to vote for a truly progressive candidate in the California Presidential Primary.

So, where have we been and where are we headed?

Over the past three decades the once-progressive Democratic Party has incrementally adopted a Neo-Liberal platform ... and much like a frog in a slowly boiling pot of water progressives in the party have accepted this transformation as a norm.

During this Presidential election process, we have reached a stage where three candidates have emerged. The GOP nomination has been locked in by Mr. Donald J. Trump. Now the shaken GOP is vacillating between ousting him and taming him. In the Democratic Party, while the process of selection is far from over, the party machine continues to do everything possible to hand the nomination to Mrs. Clinton.

Thirteen months ago when Sen. Bernie Sanders responded to a groundswell of citizen activism and agreed to seek the Democratic Party nomination for President, his progressive candidacy was dismissed as a “fringe movement”. However, since day one of his campaign we have seen an unprecedented national surge of support, despite a system designed to diffuse any opposition to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s nomination, which at that time was being styled as her “coronation”!

Sen. Sanders’ strong issues driven campaign adopted a platform based on his consistent four decade record of public, political and legislative ser-

vice. He has based his campaign on issues and has consistently rebuffed efforts by the corporate media to be dragged into name-calling and commenting on his opponent’s personal problems. He launched an issues oriented political campaign, never before witnessed in US history, and has assembled a broad and enthusiastic following.

It is interesting to note that during the past year Mrs. Clinton has incrementally segued to the left to mirror Sen. Sanders’ campaign platform. Cleverly worded speeches and debate rhetoric have camouflaged her actual positions. She claims that she is a progressive and stands for everything Sen. Sanders supports.

For the past few months the Clinton campaign has been attempting to win over Sen. Sanders’ supporters by complimenting the Senator for “moving her to the left”. Mrs. Clinton is not a piece of furniture to be moved around to match the decor of the day, nor is Sen. Sanders running in the race to position her as a progressive! The record is clear that Mrs. Clinton is not and has never been a progressive.

Consider these differences as you assess progressive credentials of these two Democratic candidates:

When she was Secretary of State Mrs. Clinton promoted the Trans Pacific Partnership, as “the gold standard” for trade. Then, before the first debate she reversed her position stating she had now studied the details of the pact! This begs the question: What judgment can be attributed to her when she swings across the world to promote the TPP that she now claims she had not studied, and changes her position to sound

like Sen. Sanders? The Senator has consistently opposed the pact and similar trade policies over the years, because they outsourced jobs to low-wage countries and impacted domestic employment.

Sen. Sanders’ campaign is unique in that it does not accept large private, corporate and Super PAC funds. Mrs. Clinton is the recipient of campaign funds and speech-making fees from corporations, lobbyists, Super PACs, billionaires and Wall Street interests. This raises questions about the influence her donors have had on her actions in the past (TPP support, for example?) and will have on her actions in future.

Mrs. Clinton claims she supports raising the federal minimum wage. But in fine print her plan increases it to \$12 while Sen. Sanders is proposing \$15.

Mrs. Clinton says she also supports education reform, yet uses a phrase conservative’s love – she is against giving away anything free. Sen. Sanders’ education proposal to provide free public education for everyone, from K-to-16 is funded through a new Wall Street transaction tax, and includes other proposals like debt reduction and lowering interest for future student loans.

Mrs. Clinton’s healthcare program is an incremental change in the Affordable Care Act, and opposes Sen. Sanders’ Medicare for All. She prefers to tweak Obamacare which will continue to work with profit-making insurance companies as part of her plan. A *status quo*! The Sanders plan eliminates insurance company profits and all related premiums, co-payments and deductibles, replacing the cost of operation and company profits, with a smaller increase in taxes

that will provide free healthcare to all Americans.

These outrageous claims from the Clinton campaign have incensed the Senator’s supporters.

They have also seen the impact of election rules imposed by the Democratic Party. Super Delegates to counter Pledged Delegate votes. Closed primaries that disenfranchise Independent voters. Arbitrary removing names of thousands of voters from targeted precincts and boroughs. Tampering with election results. When Sen. Sanders’ supporters object and agitate against such unfair practices at state conventions and polling places, they are accused of being violent.

Such complaints against Sanders supporters from the Democratic Party machine, remind me of the tale of a little bully who comes home from school with a bleeding nose and complains to his mother. When mom asks what happened, he says, “It all started when Johnny hit me back”!

These distractions move the attention away from the election. Our voting decisions need to focus on why America needs a consistently committed bold and unwavering progressive in the White House, irrespective of the label by which we choose to identify ourselves - Democratic Socialist, Liberal, Moderate, Center-Left, whatever!

In April 2016 Gallup reported that USA has 25% voters registered as Republicans, 31% registered as Democrats and 49% registered as Independent with no party preference. Of these independents 41% lean to vote Republican, 49% lean to vote Democratic and 10% remain uncommitted. Numbers that

demonstrate clearly why Mrs. Clinton who does not attract Independents, is less likely to win against Mr. Trump than Sen. Sanders, who will have a much broader national following than her in November.

Finally, Sen. Sanders is running more than a Presidential campaign. It is an American revolution that will continue during and beyond his presidency, and with the support of the millions of followers he is committed to build a progressive agenda for the nation, hopefully within the Democratic Party.

To conclude, here is a quote from the Senator’s recent speech at a rally in Carson, California:

“The Democratic Party has a choice. It can open its doors and welcome into the party people who are prepared to fight for real economic and social change – people who are willing to take on Wall Street, corporate greed and a fossil fuel industry which is destroying this planet. Or the party can choose to maintain its status quo structure, remain dependent on big-money campaign contributions and be a party with limited participation and limited energy.”

Sen. Bernie Sanders
Carson, CA - May 17, 2016

Yezdyar “Yez” Kaoosji is a progressive activist who writes an occasional column “Progressive Voice”, for the Community Alliance. You may contact him at: yezdyk@comcast.net

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Earth Day Fresno 2016

By Richard Iyall

Earth Day Fresno 2016 was celebrated on Saturday, April 23, 2016 at Radio Park. It was the perfect day for people in Central California to show their gratitude to the wonderful water planet which provides the perfect setting for life in this Milky Way galaxy, which is in a cluster of 22 galaxies. The west coast of the continent known as the Americas had been experiencing the severe stress of a cataclysmic drought until the rains came again a few months previously. Many trees in the mountains along the west coast of the country called the United States had died, due to the drought conditions. The strain on the ecosystem of the region was severe. Yet major corporations, under the approval of human governments, continued to use toxic methods to extract resources from the land, especially for oil and natural gas. In doing so they used precious, sacred water as a commodity to implement their extraction processes, which resulted in less water for other uses and much more toxicity where the processes were being done. The drought is not over. There has been a respite. The future is up to us.

This region was taken from the indigenous peoples known as the Yokuts many years ago by people who did not have the love, respect, understanding of and connection to the land, the water, the other elements, the other life forms and to the spirit world that the indigenous people of the land had. Neither did they have respect for the people who were here before them, using genocidal actions to gain and maintain their political power. Over time the immigrants who took control of the region, primarily people of European descent, gained knowledge of technology, of communication methods, of centralized control and more. They used governmental actions, indoctrination and religious persecution of peoples who did not conform to their laws and culture to implement their pursuits of exploitation. They used man-made chemicals, genetically engineered life forms, drugs,

machinery, weapons, a centralized monetary system and other things for their pursuits. What transpired was a greater understanding of third dimensional laws of the universe. Yet there developed a great disconnection with nature and with the higher dimensions, which operate in greater harmony, for the benefit of all.

The Central Valley became the breadbasket for the production of food for a great number of human inhabitants on this sacred planet. Yet so much of the food was produced using mono-culture techniques which produce large amounts of single commodity food items, for the short term benefits of providing food items which had longer shelf life and could be transported long distances without much damage. It would provide a small number of people with large amounts of financial credit, while providing a large number of people with a means for surviving in this environment, though being subjected to unhealthy and life-shortening experiences including pesticides, miserable working conditions and a loss of freedom and culture. This type of activity and other related activities which have transpired for such uses of the resources has resulted in a great reduction of the viability for all life in the area. One of the great assets to be lost was variety.

On the globally recognized Earth Day, April 22, rains came to Central California. It is believed that the ascended master Gaia, who produces the manifestation of this life-giving planet, was forgiving of the people for this celebration of her many gifts which make life possible here. It was a day of celebration for those who have learned to live more in harmony with nature. It was a day for people to enjoy life in spite of many contrary actions of the past. It was a day to celebrate life and lessons learned, to see friends, to make new friends and to just be. It was a day for a renewal of our core energies. The event was organized by Esperanza “Espí” Richart.

HOWARD’S HOPEFULS

Here are my June 7, 2016 primary election voting recommendations. Most are clear choices, some are close calls. I hope you find this list helpful. However you choose to vote, PLEASE VOTE! Thank you.

Howard K. Watkins
P.S. Last day to register to vote is May 23rd.

FEDERAL		
PRESIDENT	6/16 Sanders	11/16 Clinton
US SENATOR	Harris	
CONGRESS #4	Derlet	
CONGRESS #16	Costa	
CONGRESS #21	Huerta	
CONGRESS #22	Campos	

STATE		
St. Assembly #23	Morris	
St. Assembly #31	Arambula	
STATE PROP.	YES on 50	

FRESNO COUNTY		
BD. OF SUPS. #3	Ronquillo	
BD. OF SUPS. #5	Magsig	

DEM CO CENTRAL COM DIST. #1	Darden, Miller, Smith
DEM CO CENTRAL COM DIST. #2	Evans, Dockery, Hall, Hernandez, Kren, Zarate
DEM CO CENTRAL COM DIST. #3	Barnes, Brown, Krugman Miller

CITY OF FRESNO		
MAYOR	Perea	
CITY COUNCIL #6	Pope	

LOCAL MEASURES		
Measure C	YES	

YOUR VOTER GUIDE

Fresno County Democratic Central Committee

On June 7, 2016, Democrats living in Fresno County Board of Supervisors Districts 1 and 2 will be voting for the people who will represent them for the next four years on the Fresno County Democratic Central Committee. The candidates listed below have actively demonstrated their commitment to the Fresno County Democratic Central Committee’s goals. They walk precincts, register people to vote, support candidates and raise funds to ensure that Fresno maintains its full-time Democratic Party office located at 1035 U St. Voting for them will help guarantee continuing positive, proactive, collaborative Democratic efforts on your behalf in Fresno County.

District 2 Candidates

Michael D. Evans, Incumbent

- Chair, Fresno County Democratic Party since 2010
- Delegate to the State Democratic Party
- Representative to the State Party Executive Board
- Chair, CA Federation of Democratic Central Committee Members
- Endorsed by Kennedy & Stonewall Democratic Clubs, and the Central Valley Progressive PAC



Thomas Hernandez

- Volunteer at Fresno County Democratic Headquarters
- Lifelong Democrat involved in campaigns starting in 1984
- Retired Senior Project Manager VP Staff, Network West AT&T
- Endorsed by Evolve-ca.org, a grassroots organization
- Endorsed by Fresno Immigration Coalition and the Central Valley Progressive PAC



Ruben Zarate

- Labor Relations Representative, Laborers’ International Union
- E-Board Member, Central Labor Council
- Political Activist and Consultant
- Chair, Democratic Party Strategic Planning Committee
- Endorsed by Kennedy Democratic Club



Austin Travis Dylan Hall

- Candidate Assistant to Dr. Joaquin Arambula Campaign
- Administrative Assistant for the April Special Election
- Field Organizer for SNOPAC/LJANE
- Board Member, Fresno County Bicycle Coalition
- Volunteer, Sal Quintero for Supervisor Campaign



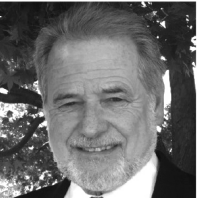
Jeni-Ann Kren, Ph.D.

- President, Clovis Democratic Club, 2012 to present
- Alternate, Democratic Central Committee, 2012 to 2016
- Assembly Dist. 23 delegate, CA Democratic Convention
- Endorsed by Evolve-ca.org, a grassroots organization
- Endorsed by Kennedy & San Joaquin Valley Democratic Clubs and the Central Valley Progressive PAC



Jim Dockery, Esq.

- Former Chief Deputy Public Defender
- Alternate to Democratic Central Committee, 2013 to 2016
- Executive Board Member, Democratic Central Committee
- Fund-Raising Chair, Democratic Central Committee



District 1 Candidate

Dorothy “Dottie” Smith

- Chair, Fresno County Democratic Women’s Club
- Member, Democratic Central Committee, District 1
- 33 years, State Center Community College District Trustee
- Retired 37 years as an educator



Vote in the June 7 Presidential Primary!

Advertisement paid for by the above
Democratic Central Committee Candidates

By Stan Santos

Communications Workers of America District 9 is in a struggle with AT&T for the jobs and livelihoods of almost 16,000 members in California and Nevada. Over a dozen members from Districts 9 and 7 traveled to Billings, Montana on April 28-29 for the 2016 AT&T Shareholders Meeting at the Northern Hotel. They met at 7 a.m. in the chilly morning air with signs, leaflets, and a banner which declared, "SHAME ON AT&T!" Gathered around the banner were Stan Santos of CWA 9408, John Adams of 9421, 9400 President Bill Demers, Monica Alvarado of 9423 and Jason Justice of 9510.

Security was tight around the Northern Hotel and included at least a dozen uniformed guards along with several non-uniformed AT&T security personnel. Billings Police Department patrolled the street in front of the entrance, challenging a few pedestrians who attempted to jaywalk. Inside the building, there were several armed officers complete with black paramilitary garb.

Around 8:30 a.m. the CWA activists entered the reception area of the hotel where they were greeted by AT&T employees and vendors demonstrating an assortment of products including cell phones, smart watches, and drones with surveillance camera capabilities. A curtained breezeway separated the reception area from the room where the shareholders meeting would take place.

Behind the curtains, some of the most powerful men (and a few women) of corporate America would make decisions affecting the lives of thousands of workers and millions of people throughout the United States. The individuals who comprise the AT&T Board of Directors include a former Ambassador to the European Union and Chair of the Federal Communications Commission. There are also former and current CEO's of institutions such as the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, the PricewaterhouseCoopers investment firm, the NASDAQ Stock Market and health insurance giant Humana. They control the largest telecommunications,

AT&T 2016 Shareholders Meeting

CWA Activists vs "Business as Usual"



Image by Stan Santos

data and information network in the world.

Voices of labor and shareholders silenced

The CWA activists were disappointed though not entirely surprised when they learned that AT&T recently changed the format for the meetings, silencing the voices of labor and the public who are also shareholders. The meeting followed a very tightly scripted agenda, with opening remarks by Chairman Randall Stephenson and a brief introduction of the Board members followed by votes on key strategic matters in rapid succession.

In a matter of minutes and with calculated efficiency, Stephenson conducted an election for the new Board and ratified the continued contractual oversight of Ernst & Young LLP as the independent auditors. Although his recommendations for the Directors were immediately approved, there was an attempt from the audience to address the issue of the continued reliance on the same accounting firm since 1982. CWA District 9 leader Louie Rocha rose to speak against the motion, asking, "Is it standard practice to have the same auditors for so many years?"

Ernst & Young LLP provides accounting services and representation to 30% of the Fortune 1000 Oil and Gas companies. Their client list boasts such firms as BP of the Deep Water Horizon Gulf Coast disaster, ConocoPhil-

lips, and Koch Industries. Ernst & Young LLP services include fraud investigations, business integrity, and insurance claims. In 2013, Ernst & Young agreed to pay \$123 million to settle a criminal case in the US. They admitted that some of its most senior tax partners had been involved in developing, marketing and defending tax avoidance schemes totaling \$2 billion on behalf of about 200 wealthy individuals. In 2014, they were implicated in a similar scheme with the Disney Corporation and Koch Industries.

The objections to the motion were intended to preserve the integrity of the accounting process. Representatives of Ernst & Young responded that it was not unusual to have the same firm; the auditors assigned to the AT&T account rotated every five years. The motion to approve their continued services was quickly passed, along with approval of compensation for AT&T executives and the 2016 incentive plan.

Call for transparency
Another set of resolutions was proffered by representatives of investment firms that control several hundred thousand shares of AT&T. The resolutions sought transparency in political spending through full disclosure of direct donations to candidates for office. According to publicly available data, AT&T has spent over \$28 million in corporate funds on political activities since 2004. During that same period, there have been ten similar shareholder resolutions asking for disclosure and oversight of its corporate-funded political spending.

The statement cited lobbying in various states for deregulation and the abandonment of landline customers, including collaborative efforts with the American Legislative Exchange Council. ALEC created model legislative pieces attack-

ing regulatory agencies in a state-by-state process which has spread throughout the United States. California was partially deregulated in 2012 by one such bill, SB 1161, and is now the target of Assembly Bill 2395, which would complete the withdrawal of AT&T from providing landline service by the year 2020.

With 3.3 billion total votes cast, the resolution regarding transparency in political contributions was defeated with 71% of votes cast against; transparency in lobbying was defeated with 66% of votes cast against. An additional resolution which



Image by Stan Santos

sought to separate the roles of Chairman and CEO into two positions also was defeated by 76% of votes cast against.

CWA emerges more determined

Throughout the day, leading up to and following the Shareholders Meeting, CWA activists engaged with the leadership of AT&T with discipline and professional courtesy. We debated the issues with Mark Royse and Melba Muscarolas, EVP and VP respectively of Labor Relations who are driving the 2016 bargaining for AT&T. We put a human face on our bargaining concerns, including job security,

healthcare, and a retirement with dignity for our members.

One moment was revealing when Royse declared that they "gave CWA 6000 new DIRECTV members..." He had to be reminded that it was contractual and that we worked for them. At another point Louie Rocha in his typically direct style asked him politely to not "blow smoke..." and that we would not be misled.

A Local 9408 representative took the opportunity to press ATT Chair and CEO Randall Stephenson regarding the widespread dissatisfaction of DIRECTV techs since the AT&T acquisition. He cited the severe pay cuts and the fact that AT&T is adding insult to injury by continuing to hire new techs and maintain a force of over 34 subcontractors in the Fresno area. Meanwhile, over 140 DIRECTV techs see overtime capped and in some cases hours cut to below full time.

To his credit Stephenson said, "We need our people doing that work..." and promised to look into this matter. The 9408 representative was surprised when contacted at his office by Labor Relations at the request of "the Chairman".

CWA activists who attended the 2016 Shareholders Meeting came away with a clear understanding that we face the most powerful forces in the polit-

ical and economic structures of the United States and beyond. We emerged determined to continue the fight for a collective bargaining agreement that is equal to the needs and dignity of our members and their families. Despite the efforts to stifle a true debate in the shareholders meeting, CWA will continue reaching out to the public and members from coast to coast. We are taking the fight for the 2016 Contract to the workplace and the streets.

Stan Santos is an activist in the labor and immigrant community. Contact him at ssantos@cwa9408.org.

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LEAVE INSPIRED!

Map and program calendar available at
www.reedleypeacecenter.org

Fresno County Public Defender’s Office Under Fire from ACLU

By Amanda Tripp

A lawsuit accusing the Fresno County Public Defender’s office of providing inadequate defense will continue to move forward; mid-April Judge Mark Snauffer ruled in favor of allowing the case to proceed. The suit, filed in July of last year by the ACLU, the ACLU’s Criminal Law Reform Project & Paul Hastings LLP on behalf of Peter Yepez, accuses both Fresno County and the State of California of underfunding and overloading the Fresno County Public Defender’s office to the point that it causes inadequate defense to the thousands of clients the office serves.

Peter Yepez, a Fresno County Resident, pled no contest to burglary and stolen property charges after having a total of 9 Public Defenders appointed to provide him counsel on his case. Yepez spent almost an entire year in Fresno County Jail before his attorney was able to interview Yepez regarding the case.

Yepez’s attorney, whose duty it was to be representing him and ensuring his rights were not violated in the criminal justice process; didn’t have time for nearly an entire year to sit down with his client and

discuss the case. Yepez’s trial became a revolving door of overworked attorneys appointed by the Public Defender’s Office. These Attorney’s had such little time and resources to go around that Yepez was encouraged to take a plea deal even though there was strong evidence of his innocence. Yepez is not unique, his story is like countless others over the years that have passed through Fresno County’s Public Defender’s Office, which has been in need of help for many years.

On any given day the Fresno County Jail population is made up of 70% to 80% of people who have not yet had their cases go to trial, the average spending about a year just waiting for their trial to begin. This is to say that a large majority of the people sitting in Fresno County’s Jail are folks that are to be presumed innocent as that they have not gone to trial to be convicted, yet they are sitting behind bars. The majority of these people are in jail awaiting trial because they cannot afford to post bail to resume their lives.

It is no surprise then that since the majority of those people in the Fresno County Jail cannot afford bail can also not afford to pay for an attorney.

This makes for huge caseloads for a severely understaffed Public Defender’s Office. The National Advisory Committee recommends a yearly felony caseload of 150 cases per defense attorney. The Public Defenders in Fresno County take on an average on 612 felony cases each year. If you had a doctor that was trying to take on 4 times as many patients as the national recommendation you would not feel like your health, safety and well-being were in good hands. The people of Fresno County have put justice in hands that are already too full.

With the Public Defenders’ high caseloads, they are not able to meet their client’s right to counsel as it is laid-out in the 6th Amendment. In many cases, clients like Yepez, are encouraged to plead guilty to move things along and save the time and resources that a trial takes. The lack of resources in the Public Defender’s Office not only translates to pressure to plead guilty, it also translates to less time spent with each client, postponement of trials, harsher sentencing and waving of appeal rights.

The Fresno County Public Defender’s Office has caught the attention of the community for many years now. The suit states that these problems have escalated since 2008 when funding was slashed and more than half the staff was laid off. These layoffs included support staff such as legal assistants and investigators. Not only do Public Defenders have to handle more cases but they must take on the job duties previously done by other staff. District Attorney, Lisa Smittcamp, has publically commented on multiple occasions about the lack of resources the Public Defender’s office has available in order carry out their duties. In 2013, the Public Defender’s Union voiced their concerns about their members being overworked and having a lack of resources leading to them jeopardizing their client’s constitutional rights.

In 2014, Chief Public Defender Kenneth Teniguchi was replaced after his staff spoke out about the large caseloads, lack mentorship, and inability to effectively provide counsel to their clients. Teniguchi was replaced with Elizabeth Diaz in hopes that new leadership would restore the confidence of the office. Yet here we are in 2016 hoping that this lawsuit will be the turn around that is long overdue.



Image by Unitarian Universalist Service Committee on Flickr

When there is such a discrepancy in funding between the Public Defender’s Office and the District Attorney’s office it is hard to make an argument that the hands of justice are balanced, that a defendant’s right to fair and speedy trial are not being compromised. The County of Fresno and the State of California have hired lawyers to make that argument. In the months to come, we will see how this suit fares in court.

Amanda Tripp is a Fresno citizen engaged in criminal justice reform and a member of Community Alliance editorial board. You may contact her at AmandaNTripp@yahoo.com.

The content in this section is paid for by the Central Valley Progressive PAC

CVPPAC Endorses Perea for Mayor

After decades of Republican mayors in this city, we have the highest concentration of poverty in the country, air that is not healthy to breath and a corrupt political system that benefits those with close ties to City Hall. Progressives in Fresno demand a change.

At the Central Valley Progressive PAC’s endorsement meeting on May 14, members discussed the mayoral candidates and voted to endorse Henry Perea for mayor because he is the only candidate running that can and will change the course of this city to move in a more progressive direction.

The other three major candidates in the mayoral race (Spees, Brand and Vagim) eliminated themselves from consideration by participating in a Tea Party debate that exposed their bias in favor of right-wing “solutions” to city issues. They are all opposed to raising the minimum wage, believe that “market forces” should determine growth and development and tripped over each other



Henry Perea

trying to get Tea Party support. You can watch the video on YouTube.

Perea, on the other hand, supports a living wage for workers, believes in improving and expanding public transportation and will listen to progressive concerns about a wide range of public issues. Progressives will have a seat at the table when Perea is elected mayor of

Fresno.

CVPPAC members did have concerns about Perea (e.g., his close ties with builders and developers), and nobody has any illusions that we are going to agree with him on every issue. But he is far closer aligned with progressive values than anyone else in the race.

Another compelling argument for voting for Perea in the June 7 primary is that it is possible for him to win outright with more than 50% of the vote and avoid a November runoff. The Republicans will split their vote and if enough people turn out in June, particularly those who live in the southern part of Fresno, Perea will win. Polls already show that he has more than 40% of the vote, and if progressives turn out in large numbers we can be the decisive factor that puts him over the top.

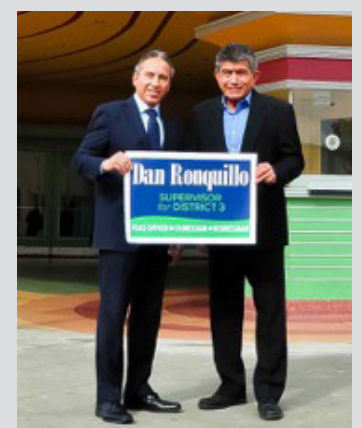
After a long discussion about the mayoral race, CVPPAC members voted overwhelmingly to support Perea for mayor.

Dan Ronquillo for Board of Supervisors District 3

The Central Valley Progressive PAC endorses Dan Ronquillo in his race against Sal Quintero in the Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 3 race. This is the seat that Henry Perea vacated to run for mayor, and he is supporting Ronquillo in the race.

Ronquillo is a former Fresno City Council member and is closer to progressives on most issues than his opponent. The issue of homelessness came up at the CVPPAC endorsement meeting. Quintero, while he was on the City Council, had an ordinance come before him that would ban the homeless from sleeping on sidewalks, alleys, etc. He said that he was undecided until he received a letter from Larry Arce at the Rescue Mission, which he read aloud, talking about how the homeless needed to have their shelters destroyed—that the tough love would bring them into the programs they needed to get off the streets.

Ronquillo’s approach



Dan Ronquillo

to the homeless issue is different. Both he and Perea are willing to discuss establishing safe and legal places where the homeless can live with dignity and start to receive some of the services it will take to get them off the streets and into a home of their own.

Everyone who spoke about Ronquillo at the CVPPAC meeting had good things to say about him, and he received the group’s endorsement.

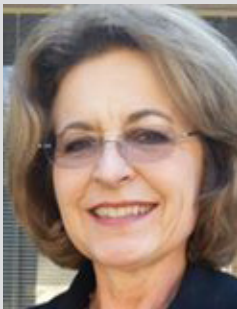
Candidates for the Democratic Central Committee Get Support



Michael D. Evans



Tom Hernandez



Jeni-Ann Kren

The Central Valley Progressive PAC endorsed three candidates running for the Fresno County Democratic Central Committee (District 2). They are as follows:

Michael D. Evans
Tom Hernandez
Jeni-Ann Kren

This was the first time the CVP-PAC has voted to endorse candidates running for a central

committee of any political party. The discussion about the endorsement centered on supporting the positive and progressive direction of the local Democratic party under the leadership of Michael Evans, who is the chairperson.

Because the CVPPAC is only able to endorse candidates who submit answers to a questionnaire sent to them, the full slate of candidates could not

be considered. But you can find the full slate supporting Evans in this issue of the *Community Alliance* newspaper.

If you are interested in the responses of the candidates who responded to the CVPPAC questionnaire (for mayor, the Board of Supervisors and the Democratic Central Committee), they are available at www.cvpac.org.



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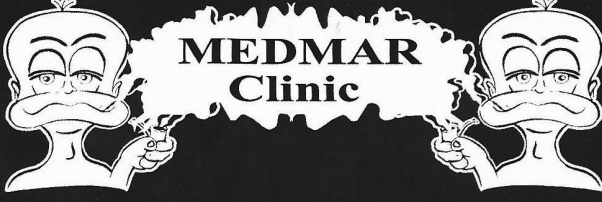
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Stand with Students

By Community Alliance Staff

Throughout this school year, the Fresno Teachers Association (FTA) has organized community meetings in the residential districts within Fresno Unified School District (FUSD). Stand with Students is a “program to bring people together from different backgrounds to work together for students.” That is according to Tish Rice, president of FTA, a graduate of Fresno High who taught at the school for 25 years. She noted that “not all schools are created equal.” When she goes from school to school throughout Fresno the disparity in resources is stark. The wealth gap in schools results in predictably varied educational outcomes for students.

One of the biggest gaps in services is in social and emotional supports. Schools in less affluent areas do not have full time school nurses or psychologists or even social workers. “FTA is committed to using not only words but actions to collaborate with the community.” Rice stated that when FTA asked the parents, teachers, administrators, students, and support staff (including clerical and janitorial staff) how to use the school district’s discretionary money three areas stood out. Fresnans in each region voted at their Stand with Students meeting to allocate funds to address class size, campus safety, and social/emotional supports.

While the decision to reduce class sizes, increase campus safety assistants, and ensure full time nurses and psychologists on each campus was undisputed, the issue of money has been a contentious one in Fresno Unified. For the last two years, the district has been embroiled in a lawsuit and federal investigation regarding building contracts and the leadership of superintendent Michael Hanson. The district has been accused of breaking the law when it entered into no bid contracts with construction companies for building on Fresno campuses.

The Fresno Bee reported that between 2011 and 2014, Fresno Unified entered into 25 so-called leaseback con-

tracts. Originally developed for under resourced schools, these contracts let schools get around the standard bidding process to select a contractor, and pay back the costs over time. The issue is that Fresno Unified had a large influx of funding during this time. The district has argued this was all done legally, but the 5th District Court of Appeals undermined this argument in its statement regarding the district’s contract with Harris Construction to build Gaston Middle School. The Supreme Court denied the district’s request to revisit the appellate court decision.

The School Board has been divided about how to respond to the litigation and there have been conflicting answers from members about what official actions have been taken. While at the Stand with Students meetings for the Roosevelt region in February and that for the Edison region in May, FTA expressed their concerns about reports that Fresno Unified covered \$500,000 worth of legal fees for Michael Hanson and hired more attorneys for him rather than use that money for those items the community asked to be set aside for student needs.

The executive director of FTA, Louis Jamerson is a graduate of Roosevelt High who returned to Fresno after working elsewhere for twenty years as a labor organizer. When he came back to Fresno he was shocked to discover how severe the problems in education were here. He covered the troublesome trends in the district. Statistics indicate that while more students graduate than previously, fewer are ready for college. 75-90% of African American and Latino students are proficient in Math and English. Fresno also has high rates of racial segregation and unequal access to resources.

Jamerson declared that everyone in the community, from teachers and administrators to parents and students and their neighbors are accountable for the education of youth. He told the Edison

region audience in May: “If you came here tonight to point fingers, you came to the wrong meeting.” He went on to say that if we have elected officials who are not taking responsibility, we have problems. Teachers need tools and training to be effective and students need support. We need a holistic approach and comprehensive plan.

According to Rice and Jamerson, FTA has a plan, but only three school board members signed this platform. At the Roosevelt region meeting, School Board president Luis Chavez, said he has signed the platform, including the commitment to smaller class sizes, social/emotional supports, and increased safety measures. The district had \$123 million more this school year than in 2014-2015. Jamerson asserted that it was misguided to put \$10 million into new textbooks when 15% of students cannot read them.

At the Edison region meeting, the community was told that pastors from West Fresno and FTA leadership met to discuss whether or not to recall trustee Cal Johnson, who represents the West Side of the district. They were convinced to give Johnson another chance to prove that he had the interests of the students at heart and was not in the pocket of the superintendent. The 200 members of the community who came to the May 12 Stand with Students meeting were not so convinced.

Teachers and parents and other members of the community asked Johnson tough questions about his votes to approve money to cover Hanson’s legal fees. Johnson denied these charges and said that Hanson was paying for all his legal fees himself. When pressed about the meager 2% of students who graduate from Fresno high schools college ready, he disputed the statistic. When asked how should the community should help you to help our children, he said to turn the television off. He would not agree to commit to smaller class sizes unless the

budget could be shown to allow for it. One teacher accused Johnson of being out of touch.

When asked about the decrease in the number of African American principals in Fresno since Hanson became superintendent, Johnson replied that recruiting and retention of qualified candidates was a challenge. One audience member asked why a petition to keep a principal that garnered many signatures had been ignored by the School Board. He claimed it was not a board decision. When queried about retaining teachers, he claimed that FUSD has the highest salaries in the Valley. A Spanish speaker asked why there were not more supports English language learners. Instead of directly addressing her question, Johnson responded that language is also an issue for African American students.

Most of those in the attendance voiced frustration and dissatisfaction with Johnson’s answers to their variety of questions. Moderator Pastor Criner had to quiet the crowd a few times and remind everyone how hard it is for any individual to be interrogated in public by so many people. To an outside observer, Johnson seemed unprepared to address the concerns and uneducated about the problems. To those intimately involved, he appeared to placate them and avoid responsibility.

At the end of the Edison region meeting a local politician addressed the group saying responsibility shouldn’t all be directed at the trustee, but also toward teachers, FTA, and the superintendent (who was also in attendance). Jamerson told the policymaker he was welcome to organize such an event. He said that he was willing to answer questions of any kind. In closing he said that FTA has put together a plan to address the fact that leadership in Fresno has failed to be accountable to student needs.

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REQUIEM FOR A MALL

The Fulton Mall, Sprawl, and Revitalization

By Jacob Clark

The destruction of the Fulton Mall is underway. The sculptures have been uprooted, the trees chopped down, and the ground plowed asunder. The city says this restoration of Fulton Street will bring businesses back and revitalize Downtown Fresno. But the problem isn't the Fulton Mall. The problem is Fresno's rampant northward sprawl.

The sprawl is evident if you drive through northeastern or northwestern Fresno. New tract homes and strip malls are underway, gobbling up weedy former agricultural plots. In these new neighborhoods as in the slightly older neighborhoods surrounding them, the car is king, the houses are cookie cutters, and the retail in the strip malls consists of the same big box corporate chains. In short, typical monotonous suburban sprawl.

Instead of investing resources to tackle the urban blight in many of Fresno's neighborhoods, the city's plan seems to be to build its way out of the problem, leaving the blight and poverty behind as the city flees to the north to create perfect, profitable oases, unwalkable suburban utopias behind the fortress walls of gated communities and prestigiously named estates.

The Fulton Mall and the rest of Downtown Fresno have been forgotten and left to decay, while River Park and other new shopping centers have been built. There is such an overwhelming amount of pride surrounding River Park, which I find inexplicable. Yes, it is a nice mall, but it's just a mall, a corporate space empty of any purpose other than consumption, full of the same stores that can be found in countless other malls.

It is hard to find something to do in Fresno that does not involve some kind of transaction. What made the Fulton Mall unique was that it existed as a sort of community center, a space that one could stroll through or relax in without necessarily having to buy anything. Of course, this made it a major congregating



Images from They Killed Fulton Mall Facebook page.

place for Downtown Fresno's homeless.

I think this reason more than any other was the deciding factor to destroy the Fulton Mall. The reality of the unsolvable homelessness problem is a major thorn in the city's side. If they can remove one major attraction of the homeless and turn it into a more manageable space, then that is perceived as a solution.

As the revitalization of Downtown Fresno progresses, I foresee that the homeless population will be pushed further and further away, out of Downtown Fresno, with the possible exception of the Poverello House. Of course, if High Speed Rail brings more gentrification, as the city hopes, it may face pressure to close, as well. There will be a big crack-down because the homeless are bad for business.

Let's say that the newly restored Fulton Street is successful in attracting businesses, it will then require people to patronize these businesses in order for it to truly be successful. The way things are now, it's going to take a lot of gentrification to bring people Downtown Fresno

to achieve that. Don't get me wrong, I don't think gentrification is all bad and I definitely think that Fresno could stand a little gentrification. However, what is the draw going to be? Why would people who live north of Shaw come all the way to Downtown Fresno when they have their own safe, clean shopping plazas near their homes? How many starving artists and hip young professionals do they expect to move into behemoth developer Granville's ugly new lofts and apartments?

The worst thing to happen would not be that Fulton Street fails but if Fulton Street becomes another River Park. Downtown Fresno has a lot of character and a lot of potential and it would be tragic for all this character and potential to be lost under the facades of the same old stores and brands that you can find anywhere else in the city and beyond. That was the appeal of the Fulton Mall - even though it was far from thriving, what businesses that exist there are hardscrabble mom and pop shops, botanicas, and restaurants that have somehow managed to stay in business despite being tucked away in the

forgotten corner of Downtown Fresno.

There's nothing we can do now to save the Fulton Mall from destruction. I hope that the current project is successful, but frankly Fresno does not have the greatest track record when it comes to revitalization and the various architectural facelifts Downtown Fresno has received over the years. What we as a community can do now is ensure that the revitalization of Fulton Street and Downtown is a responsible, civic-minded revitalization that preserves Downtown Fresno's past, embraces the future, promotes small business interests, creativity, and public space, is inclusive instead of exclusive, and which actively works to ameliorate poverty and homelessness instead of further criminalizing and marginalizing Downtown's homeless residents.

The marquee of Warnors Theatre reads, "Believe in Downtown." While I'm not sure if the city itself truly believes in Downtown, I know that we, as members of the Fresno community, can believe in Downtown, but it's going to take more than buying an \$8 organic, gluten-free quinoa muffin at whatever new bakery boutique opens on Fulton Street. Believing in Downtown requires believing in alternative models of development beyond suburban sprawl and in redevelopment and investment in all of our struggling neighborhoods south of Shaw.

We must believe in the entirety of Fresno so that our entire community, not just our revitalized commercial districts, can thrive.

Jacob Clark studied English and Geography at UCLA before moving to Fresno in January of 2015. As a newcomer to Fresno, the city's problems (and potential) have had a major impact on him, and he aspires to help in encouraging social and economic development that is sustainable, equitable, and, ultimately, livable. He lives in central Fresno with his girlfriend, cat, and two goldfish.



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Bill Kreml -A graduate of Northwestern University (1962), Northwestern University Law School (1965), and the Indiana University Ph. D. program in Political Science (1972); I've authored nine single authored books on the dysfunction of our government and an original, psychologically based political ideology. I have lectured all over the world, at a Moscow conference with [former Soviet Premier] Mikhail Gorbachev and the Dalai Lama in 1992. For information: http://www.gp.org/william_kreml_for_president.



Sedinam Kinamo Christin Moyowasifza Curry - My objective is about building a permanent third political party that is neither funded nor controlled by corporations and corporate interests. I see the way forward must be for "Greens" to emphasize a direct action strategy and tactical plan with the current traditional electoral political system that is geared toward women, people of color, immigrants, independents and progressives in a clear and measurable manner. For information: therealmsskcmcurry@gmail.com.



Kent Mesplay -The first Native American president and wants the treaties honored by the U.S. "government". A Ph.D. Biomedical Engineering, retired Air Quality Inspector and Emergency Shelter Manager trained by the San Diego County, California Office of Emergency Services. I ran a shelter during the 2007 fire-storm. I've been a consistent advocate of how our civilization needs to transform RAPIDLY in the face of climate change. Living sustainably means we are better prepared for emergencies. It increases our local resilience, self-reliance and independence. For more information: <https://mesplay.org/>



The civil rights of people—whether homeless or stably housed—are also at stake in encounters and detentions by police, whose duties are evermore burdensome. As of 2016, the anti-profiling law, has taken effect, banning one’s race and one’s identity from use in reaching law-enforcement decisions. The state’s Penal Code, at section 13519.4, subdivision (f), now prohibits a peace officer from profiling the identity of a person whom the officer decides to “subject to a stop or in deciding upon the scope or substance of law enforcement activities following a stop” (*id.*, subd. (e)) based on the person’s “actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or mental or physical disability” (*ibid.*).

The anti-profiling law was not written to protect only unsheltered people. But the new law heightens the challenges of police patrol and on-call work—particularly work involving unsheltered people who have a higher rate of disability than does the general population.

(LGBTQ youth face a higher risk of homelessness than other youth. So, in case of apparent curfew violation, an officer is burdened with proving she decided to stop a young person after 10 p.m. because of his or her age and not because of any attire or appearance that might have set off the officer’s ‘gaydar.’)

Poverty or socioeconomic status is not among the identifying characteristics protected by the new law. Prior to 1941, California’s “anti-Okie” law made it a misdemeanor to bring into the state “any indigent person who is not a resident of the State, knowing him to be an indigent person.” In a landmark decision that year (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwards_v._California), the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the “anti-Okie” law as unconstitutional. In so doing, the Court referred to an 1837 decision upholding an anti-poor sentiment, saying “Whatever may have been the notion then prevailing, we do not think that it will now be seriously contended that because a person is without employment and without funds he constitutes a ‘moral pestilence.’ Poverty and immorality are not syn-

Fresno’s Homeless Forsaken

By Those in Power, part 2 | By Paul Thomas Jackson



Image by Maureen Barlin Flickr Creative Commons

onymous.” Although difficult to prove in individual cases, the state and federal constitutions do give a person some protection from discrimination because of his poverty.

Again, the housing, health, and safety laws weren’t written with unsheltered people in mind. Within the cold and exacting way of legal machinery, abatement of makeshift shelter operates without regard to the immediate consequence of depriving its former occupants of their only shelter. Obvious as that consequence is to the knowledgeable observer, and cruel as this may sound, it has no bearing on the lawfulness of the health and safety functions carried out by the demolition of encampments. (Glad though we are social workers now arrive on the scene of the imminent demolition.)

The legal system has already spoken loudly in favor of the rights of unsheltered people who don’t panhandle aggressively; who don’t encamp or otherwise create a public nuisance; and who are simply in a public place without ‘loitering’ there. Currently, a bill is pending in the California Senate (608) that would give people the “right to rest” in public places, a right that if passed into law, would merit the respect of police, and would clarify the rights of a person, homeless though she may be.

Coldly and swiftly as the economic system may operate, the legal system has done much and may soon do more to make the lives of unsheltered people more livable. So, why, then is life so difficult for them?

The Fresno Homeless Advocates’ answer to these dilemmas is shelter: Shelter from the legal storm. It comes as a legislative enactment. It’s a statute that’s contained in the state’s Health and Safety Code; the statute permits a person or organization to establish an *organized camp*. Under the statute, the public health official of the County on whose geographic territory will exist authorizes the camp operator to establish it and renew the application annually.

Around the country, there are about 480 such camps, being governed by the laws of their respective jurisdictions. In Fresno County, the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, and church-affiliated groups operate organized camps. And, although the statute wasn’t written for homeless people, in particular, there is no reason it can’t be employed in their favor. Nor does the organized-camp statute require a camp be in a wilderness area. But, if lying within the limits of a city, the proposed camp is subject to the zoning jurisdiction of the city.

Late last year, the public health official of Santa Clara County authorized such camps for homeless people there. Further, the San Jose City Council partnered in permitting organized camps for the homeless in that city. One difference in the operation of the camp is that no adult supervision is required for campers over the age of 17. In partnering, that city council found neither zoning nor environmental concerns were raised by the application to operate an organized camp there.

The Fresno Homeless Advocates’ vision for organized camps here embraces the immediate and short-term needs of the unsheltered population here, who are mostly older men and all enrollees to be over that age. Without this legal protection, unsheltered people are subject to the cold, heartless requirements of whatever jurisdiction they happen upon on their life journeys. Even the closest adherence to the anti-profiling law and the passage of the “Right to Rest” Act don’t necessarily ensure the stable living situation of an ably-directed organized camp intended for the homeless.

In a letter sent March 12, 2014, we stated our vision for organized camps. Yes, that is two years ago, and 20 months before local government in San Jose deferred to similar recommendations of homeless advocates there. Our March 2014 letter was sent simultaneously by first-class mail to ten City officials: Mayor Swarengin, city manager Rudd, purchasing manager MacDonald; and councilmen Baines, Brand, Brandau, Caprioglio, Olivier, Quintero, and Xiong. Thus, the letter constitutes “official communication” with the City.

Our 2014 letter further invites the City of Fresno to partner with homeless advocates here, much as the City of San Jose has recently done with homeless advocates there. The letter proposes that the City of Fresno purchase certain lots of land lying south of downtown, away from public view, and still within reach of services vital to homeless people. The letter does not insist the City do so. But it suggests the proposal would serve the City’s bottom line, inasmuch as the proposed partnership would improve the City’s posture in any future civil rights litigation involving the homeless.

One might imagine an attorney for the City showing a jury all of the good things her client has made possible for unsheltered people by partnering with operators of organized camps for them. The attorney says, ‘We do so much to help homeless people. And now we’re being sued for treating them unequally?’

Two full years have elapsed without a formal response to our March 2014 letter. A few Councilmembers have had tête-a-tête with homeless advocates. But the 12-page letter—and its 45 footnotes citing applicable state laws and regulations, as well as 20 direct references to the Fresno Municipal Code throughout—have not gained due attention of the City, whose officials rest on their ostensible laurels, the HUD-funded Renaissance projects having a total of 121 dwelling units for formerly homeless people. Although not intended for the very long term, the total start-up costs of organized camps would be but a small fraction of the costs for such housing projects!

It is high time the City give a formal response to the March 2014 letter. The residents of this city deserve to know that elected officials care about the plight of the homeless as was expressed by the words they spoke at their workshop on homelessness held in February 2014. For every Fresno resident who would like a formal response to that letter, a petition will be available at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence (FCNV) for signature. To lessen the plight of unsheltered people and to hold elected officials accountable for their words, please visit FCNV at your earliest convenience and consider signing.

Paul Thomas Jackson is an L.A. native who first came to live in Fresno in 1996, transferring to Fresno State as a Public Administration major. A decade later, he prepared the claims that paved the way for the homeless lawsuit that settled for \$2.35 million. He now administers the Fresno Homeless Advocates’ Facebook group of about 200 members.

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Thomas Hernandez	Emelio Huerta
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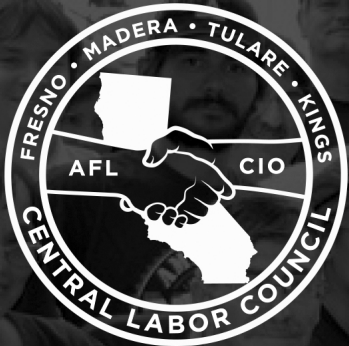
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**WHY IS THE LABOR COUNCIL
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In today's political environment, just about everybody is questioning “the political establishment”. Voters from every part of the country, in both parties, from all religions, are skeptical about how our democracy works.

With a iphone in one hand and a TV remote in the other, voters are getting overloaded with information about how to react to current events, and most of it is negative. “Politics” has become a dirty word to the average person. Or something too complicated to sacrifice personal time for.

We've all been there. We've seen the commercials. We've experienced negative campaigning. We're educated on Citizens United. At some level, we all know that we are engaging in an ugly sport that brings out personal issues and hurt feelings. That's never the intent, but it's always the case.

So nobody can blame the uneducated voter or overloaded iphone user. We have to find unique ways to connect with voters so we can provide them with education on our values. That's the bottom line for every advocacy group. And in 2016, most people view their union as a safety net, not a source of education on current events. So when we do provide relevant information, it is often ignored or less appealing than a personal issue that requires attention. This is not the world we created, but it is the world we live in.

With all of this in mind, the leadership of the Central Labor Council decided to take a new approach to electoral campaigns in 2016, hoping to create that unique space where we can connect with our voters. After decades of relatively similar campaign activity, we have built our new political program around five basic principles:

1. Great food (usually free)
2. Entertaining atmospheres
3. Community involvement
4. Family friendly activism
5. Non-partisan, union messaging

These principles, together with many failures and national training conferences, have generated our very first Rock the Vote series.

We have long known that free food is a major factor to recruiting activists. We have learned recently, however, that the real key to activist retention revolves around providing a great meal before and after a volunteer activity. Thus you will never have a bad meal at our Rock the Vote events.

(Cont.) While enjoying your asada tacos, chicken fajitas or BBQ chicken sandwich, you'll be able to watch one of our live bands, send your kids over to the bounce house or pick up helpful information on local elections from one of our community booths. If you need legal assistance or resources on United States citizenship, that's available as well.



Finally, we have worked hard to alter our outreach methods so that volunteers are far less likely to have a negative experience while volunteering for the Labor Council. The major culprits of a bad volunteer experience tend to be poorly timed events, lack of adequate training, unrealistic goals and confusing scripts. We have overcome these factors by hosting robust trainings before each walk and framing our scripts around relevant issues that our meant to educate our voters, rather than sell them on a specific candidate. This has helped us increase our positive identifications at the door and reduced the number of angry voters our volunteers come across.

By reducing the negatives and maximizing the entertainment surrounding our Rock the Vote series, we are proud to be a part of something innovative and fresh in politics. While we are not officially connected with the nationwide “Rock the Vote” campaign, we hope that Fresno families, both at the door and at our volunteer events, will appreciate our new take on being an active member of the community.

-DILLON SAVORY, CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

FRESNO UNION DELEGATION TO CUBA



In May of 2016, a delegation of 34 union leaders from California embarked on a mission to help establish better relationships between the workers and industries in Cuba and the United States. The following is an excerpt from a full article to be published in the July edition of the Community Alliance:

“The first cruise ship from Florida in 50 years has just landed in Havana. The people cheer from the famous Malecon seawall. Dionys, our taxi driver, hands me his e-mail address and cell number. “Call me when you want to go back to your hotel but if

(Cont.) the makers of “Fast and Furious 8” call me, you will have to find someone else. They are paying \$200 per day for 1956 Ford Fairlanes”.

This is how I find out that the new movie is being filmed here. How is it that a Hollywood movie can evade the trade embargo, but a farmer from Madera or Visalia can't sell raisins to the Cuban market? The San Joaquin Valley has plenty of goods that can be sold here. Cubans want to buy our beef, wine, cotton and orange juice. If we can sell our goods to Vietnam, Russia and China, why do we continue to follow a failed 50 year old cold war policy? It makes no moral or business sense.



Only congress can lift the embargo. I would like to see our valley Representatives Costa, Denham, Valadeo, McCarthy and Nunes lead a delegation to Cuba on behalf of the San Joaquin Valley. Talk to Cubans and you might find out that you have more in common than you realize.”

-SANTOS GARCIA, CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

UNION ENDORSEMENTS

DR. JOAQUIN ARAMBULA
for Assembly District 31

HENRY R PEREA
for Fresno City Mayor

SAL QUINTERO
for Fresno County Supervisor (3)

NATHAN MAGSIG
for Fresno County Supervisor (5)

GARY BREDEFELD
for Fresno City Council (6)
YES ON MEASURE C

Partial list of local endorsements

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Pener Nunez
Debra Rockwood
David Pena
Rey Mendoza
Mike Fursman
James Scoggins
Eric Ellis



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

All content paid for by WILPF Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

JUNE 3 - YOUR INVITATION TO A DIALOGUE WITH THE PRESIDENT - - - - of WILPF-US

National WILPF President Mary Hanson Harrison will visit Fresno WILPF June 3 We will meet with her from 1 PM to 3 PM at 4533 Del Mar Ave in Fresno. All WILPF members are welcome at this meeting. Before the meeting, please send your questions, issues, and comments to Patty Bennett patriciajb@aol.com 225-9511 so we can organize our discussion. What is the current relationship between our chapter, other local chapters, and national WILPF? Are there ways we can work together more productively? Bring your thoughts and a snack to share.

SPOTLIGHT ON COMMITTEES

Budget Committee - working hard to keep us organized and solvent. No news is good news. Hooray for Jay Hubbell.

Membership - another quiet committee without which we could not function. If you didn't renew your membership at the Craft Faire in December or since, or to receive your membership directory, contact Nora Dewitt noradewitt@gmail.com (thank you, Nora)

Intern - May was the last month for terrific intern Sirina Resendez, who is graduating. Congratulations and thanks from all of WILPF Fresno! and thanks to Joan Poss, who makes this happen, and *Women in Black* too.

Raging Grannies - Can't call this a quiet committee. Singing out for peace, justice, and all of us, with or without permission. We love you all. Next performance - Gay Pride Parade June 4.

Middle East - many WILPF members attended the Islamophobia Conference organized by Peace Fresno - we thank and honor Dan Yaseen and Camille Russell - and co-sponsored by Fresno Center for Nonviolence, the Human Rights Coalition of the Central Valley, and Fresno WILPF. Contact Teresa Castillo for this committee.

Earth Democracy - the most recent activity was the hugely successful Enlightened Apocalypse workshop in March. Now an informal speakers series is in the planning stages: the presenters from the workshops and others can give us more fascinating

information, since they have so much to share. In the works - contact Jean Hays. Coming Soon To Fresno! The Fracking Tour DVD! You must have this video, whether or not you were able to be on the tour - get in touch with Jean Hays; she and Joan Poss chair this committee.

Cuba and the Bolivarian Alliance - Save the Date - July 13 - The Pastors for Peace Caravan, sponsored here by WILPF Fresno and Fresno Center for Nonviolence, will be in Fresno. WILPF members participating this year include Gerry Bill, Leni V Reeves, and Betty Sempadian, along with Fresno Brown Beret Juan Ralph Avitia. We can all go to our legislators' offices on that date to educate and advocate about ending the blockade of Cuba and the travel ban, and have our Cuba Party afterward. Event times and locations in July Community Alliance, or contact Leni V Reeves for more info. Check out some personal experiences in Cuba on usmdincuba.blogspot.com

Corporations vs. Democracy - get in touch with Kit Williams to work on these issues.

Disarm/End war - Carol Urner and Ellen Thomas informed us of the Nuclear Free Campaign and HR-1976, and WILPF members attempted to educate our legislators.

Legislative - this committee meets monthly with the staff in our legislators' offices and sends educational advocacy letters directly to our representatives

and senators in Washington. An issue is chosen each month - this month the issue is water and state as well as national legislators will hear from us. Recent issues have included Keystone XL Pipeline, immigration, TPP, Guantánamo Naval Base and Prison, Blockade of Cuba, US-Iran relations, gun control. We welcome your participation - contact Jean Hays. She and Ann Carruthers and Betty Sempadian are our top letter-writers. Gracias, compañeras.

Building Beloved Community - Dakota Eco-Garden

We had a very successful fundraising garden party event on May 22. This is being written before the date of the event, but we have received many sponsorship donations so we know we will have a healthy fund for residents' education and health needs. Thanks to all who helped make this happen. And thanks to all the others who have contributed in so many ways, from a Fresno Bee subscription to toilet paper donations.

We are formalizing our relationship with the Service Learning Department at CSUF. We had student help with the fundraiser and had an exchange with Professor Wei Wu's construction management class in conjunction with their assignment to design tiny houses (or sleeping units) for very little money. We also are grateful for help from students from City College who help out at the DEG. We are happy to sign off on their required community service hours. We have spoken

at an Auberry Library event, at an Edison High School Key Club meeting, and at the arts-centered Rotary Club that meets at Arte Americas. We have a tentative date in early June to speak at the Auberry Rotary.

We may have a room vacancy (\$250-\$350) and a tent vacancy for someone, or pairs of persons, who would otherwise be homeless. Contact Nancy W at 559 224-1738. Basic eligibility requires the homeless factor plus our determination that the applicant has a good chance of using his/her tenancy to make progress toward independent living.

See Facebook page for Dakota EcoGarden and web page: www.ecovillagefresno.org. Nancy Waitdflow

Homeless - Wings
Bev Fitzpatrick is working hard with this group to aid the homeless by providing help with documentation, housing, furnishings and household items. 340 households of formerly homeless people were helped with furniture in the 1st 5 months of this year. A WILPF donation helped provide ecologically sound cleaning products. Donations and volunteers are needed: www.wingsfresno.org or contact Bev.

Library - The WILPF Library Committee finished the last of four donations of sets of 2015 Jane Addams children's award books on May 11 at the Betty Rodriguez Library. Librarian Evelina Guekguezian accepted the books for the Betty Rodriguez staff. Donna Salwasser spoke to the group about the importance of books which

WILPF BUSINESS MEETING
WILPF will meet Thursday June 9, 7 PM, at Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N Van Ness. This meeting is open to all members.

WOMEN IN BLACK
June 1, first Wednesday of each month at noon at Fresno County Courthouse; come on the month in which your birthday falls! Wear black, bring a sign if you wish, and stand in silence for peace. You should seize this June opportunity to stand up for peace, because Women in Black will be in recess July and August.

STIR IT UP
WILPF - ON KFCF 88.1 FM (LISTENER-SUPPORTED FREE SPEECH RADIO FOR CENTRAL CALIFORNIA) June 22, 3 PM (4th Wednesday of each month) Jean Hays does outstanding interviews on subjects involving WILPF interests and activities. Tune in!

RAGING GRANNIES
Meetings on selected Mondays at 7 PM. Call Ellie at 229-9807 for details.

The WILPF page is compiled and edited by Leni Villagomez Reeves. Contact her at lenivreeves@gmail.com.

encourage children to think about issues of peace, human rights, environmental justice and community. WILPF continues to celebrate the Fresno County Library as a great Community Library. The other branch libraries that received book donations are Central, Gillis, West Fresno. WILPF and community support just keeps on growing. Ann Carruthers keeps this group of Dangerous Women organized. Special shout-out to librarian-member Sandra Rios Balderrama who made our bookplates and facebook page - www.facebook/WILPF-Library-Committee



Ann Carruthers and Donna Salwasser (with Jane Addams) doing an interview with Channel 30 at the book donation at Betty Rodriguez Library.



Joan Poss, educating the public about where our tax money goes.



June 7th

Democratic Blue!



Central Committee

Elect Progressive Voices!

Your District and Your Vote Matter!

"Democrats Stronger Together"

DISTRICT 1:

- ☒ **Janet Miller:** Educational Consultant, Learning Specialist, Campaign Organizer, Hillary for America Fresno Core Team, Hillary for America Nevada Fellow

DISTRICT 2:

- ☒ **Gail Gaston:** Incumbent; Campaign Consultant, Past President Fresno County Democratic Women's Club, Business Owner, Founding Member: Central Valley Progressive PAC
- ☒ **Hope Valdez:** Campaign Consultant; Interim Pres: CA Latina Democrats - Fresno County; California for Bernie Sanders
- ☒ **Brayden Perri:** Campaign Coordinator; LGBT/Civil Rights; 2014 CD-22 Congressional Campaign - Lead Dem Intern; (frmr) Board Member: Fresno Survivors of Suicide Loss, Hillary for America Fresno Core Team
- ☒ **Susan M Carrasco:** Incumbent-Alternate ex-Officio; CDP Delegate AD23; (ret) Executive Recruiter, Membership Chair Fresno County Democratic Women's Club, (frmr) Secretary: National Women's Political Caucus - Fresno
- ☒ **George William Hess:** Incumbent-Alternate; Attorney - Immigration, Workmen's Comp, Farm Labor, California for Bernie Sanders, DNC Delegate Bernie Sanders

DISTRICT 3:

- ☒ **Pat Brown:** Attorney, Certified Mediator, Founder - Hillary for America Fresno Core Team, Past President Fresno County Democratic Women's Club, VP of Kennedy Club, Sunnyside High Site Council (4 yrs elected member)
- ☒ **James Martinez:** Fresno County Young Dem; Political Field Organizer; IT Specialist at St. Agnes Medical Center; current University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Commutation and Journalism Graduate; Candidate for Master of Communication Management degree

Note: These Progressive Candidates Volunteer, support, belong to most or all of these organizations. These are NOT Endorsements. Many organizations have yet to endorse or do NOT endorse in these races

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. CA Democratic Party Assembly District Delegate | 2. San Joaquin River Restoration | 3. Fresno County Bar Association |
| 4. Stonewall Democrats | 5. San Joaquin Valley Democratic Club | 6. San Joaquin Progressive Democrats |
| 7. Kennedy Club Democrats | 8. Central Valley Progressives PAC | 9. Fresno County Democratic Women's Club |
| 10. California Latina Democrats - Fresno County | 11. Sanger Democrats Club | 12. National Women's Political Caucus - Fresno |
| 13. West Fresno Democratic Club | 14. Clovis Democratic Club | 15. Chicano History - Revisited |
| 16. Fresnans Against Fracking | 17. Volunteers for Change | 18. Tenants Together |
| 19. BWOPA - Black Women Organized for Political Action | | |



Fresno Center for Nonviolence



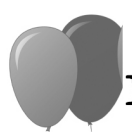
1784 N. Van Ness Ave., 93728 - www.centerfornonviolence.org - email: info@centerfornonviolence.org
Across from Fresno City College * SE Corner Van Ness & McKinley Ave. * Entrance on Van Ness Ave. *
Our Staffed Open Hours are: Mon thru Fri, 11 AM - 3 PM. (559) 23PEACE, (559) 237-3223



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FCNV page editor:
Richard Gomez

SATURDAY, June 18th for the FCNV 24th Anniversary

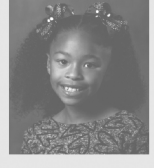


Your're cordially invited to the
Fresno Center for Nonviolence **potluck event**
24th Anniversary at the
Community United Church of Christ,
5550 N. Fresno Street from 4-6 p.m.



Who will walk away with our coveted "Way of Peace Awards" which goes to deserving adults, young adults an organization and a special children award. Well I will tell you:

Childs Award ~ Danay Ferguson ~ started a non-profit book donation program called Reading Heart at the age of 8, dedicated to serving children in underserved communities and children in hospitals. She wanted to share her passion of reading and the joy of escaping in a good book with other children. With the support of friends, neighbors and community members she has now collected over 200,000 books. Danay, now aged 9, is working on opening a 6,000 square foot book distribution center and has a cool van called Reading Ride that she uses to reach kids and hand out free books.



Youth Award ~ Simone Cranston-Rhodes ~ Due to high levels of inequality in Fresno, Simone developed a life-long passion for creating social justice. At the age of 21, Simone began running electoral campaigns, including the state wide Proposition No on 32 and Yes on 30, which fought an anti-union proposition and supported a proposition to put more money into schools. Simone has had an opportunity to work for several organizations in the area of social justice including ACLU, Tenants Together, and she is currently a political activist for the Fresno Teachers Association. Her skills range from working in electoral politics to community organizing to film production.



Organization Award ~ Wings ~ Wings is an all-volunteer organization that was created by a coalition of several churches and community groups in Fresno. They refer to themselves as a ministry for homeless ad Wings has a furniture bank, a warehouse in Fresno full of donated furniture and household items that get distributed to the homeless who are lucky enough to obtain housing, but who are unable to furnish the housing on their own. Wings also helps the homeless obtain birth certificates, ID cards and similar documentation. They've grown tremendously over the last two years, and they fill what was previously a huge gap in homeless services in Fresno.



Silent Auction ALERT!



Call to donate for auction..
(559)435-6383



Congratulation to Jeff Robinson and his staff for another Great Gay Pride Parade & Festival.

Adult Award ~ Ron Vineyard ~ has been a part of our Center for many years now, mostly as our very talented treasurer. His service has been invaluable; he maintains not only our accounts, but many separate accounts including the recent addition of a number of new programs all requiring specialized accounting. You will find Ron helping in other ways too - tabling, sorting books, silent auctions etc.



Adult Award - Hannah Brandt ~ writing has always been a powerful vehicle to work for peace and positive change in a fraught and trouble world for Hannah. Currently as the editor of the Community Alliance newspaper, her work on social justice, war and conflict resolution, the environment, history and health has been featured in multiple publications in print and online. As a former teacher she continues to value working with young people, educating the public and lifting up the voices of the marginalized and vulnerable.



Fresno Center for Nonviolence begets a trio of good summer videos.

July: "Where to Invade?" Michael Moore's most recent movie to learn what the USA can learn from other nations, he playfully "invades" them to see what they have to offer.



August: "Countdown to Zero." Countdown to Zero traces the history of the atomic bomb from its origins to the present state of affairs: with the world held in a delicate balance that could be shattered by an act of terrorism, failed diplomacy, or a simple accident.



September: "Return of Navajo Boy." A decade after its release and initial acclaim, the documentary "The Return of Navajo Boy" is still garnering attention and educating audiences about Native American issues, past and present." - Oregon Gazette Times



The FCNV is a
Host Organization
to the many non-profit groups in the Fresno community. We provide a safe meeting place and media resources to the groups using our facility, including:

Community Alliance - the 1st Sunday at 1pm,
CVPPAC -the 2nd Saturday at 3:30pm,
Peace Fresno - the 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm,
FFCF -the 3rd Tuesday at 7pm,
WILPF -the 2nd Thursday at 7pm.

These organizations meet at diverse time, and day. Please check their websites or Face-books.

CCCJC- www.cccjc.org,
FIYA,
PMP,
Earth Day Fresno
and the Raging Grannies - go to WILPF page.



Wednesday, June 8th at 3pm



This June we hope you tune into the Fresno Center for Nonviolence's monthly radio show hosted by Richard Stone. His guests will be Board members talking about the Center's history, and our 24th anniversary on June 18. We will introduce some of our newest Board members and more. There will be call-ins at (559)266-8888. For info call (559)-237-3223 Mon-thru Fri 11-3pm. So stay tuned in...

Our May's Stir it Up radio show was hosted by Richard Gomez and his guest was co-chair of Fresno Coalition Doug Richert discussion regarded the Fulton Mall and whether or not it could be saved. You can listen to it again by clicking on the link below: <https://www.adrive.com/public/KKkDvq/Stir%20it%20Up%20with%20Doug%20Richart%205-11-16>

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

The Peace and Social Justice Calendar is sponsored by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence.

Friday, May 27 • 6:30-8:30
(Summer Film Series) Reedley Peace Center. Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, L Street between 12th and 13th Streets in Reedley. Map available at www.reedleypeacecenter.org. Film: The Wanted 18 2015 NR 75 min. This true tale from the Palestinian intifada of the late 1980’s uses animation, re-enactments and interviews to narrate the effort by Palestinian residents to maintain and protect their own herd of milk cows, in defiance of Israeli occupation laws.

Monday, May 30 • 2 - 4:00 p.m.
David Swanson and Cindy Sheehan together in Fresno! Community United Church of Christ, 5550 Fresno St. David will be discussing his latest book **War is a Lie**, Second Edition. David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, and radio host. His books include When the World Outlawed War, and War No More: The Case for Abolition. Swanson serves as director of World Beyond War, and host of Talk Nation Radio. He blogs at DavidSwanson.org and WarIsACrime.org. He was a 2015 and 2016 Nobel Peace Prize nominee. Swanson was instrumental in exposing the Downing Street Minutes and other evidence of Iraq war lies. Cindy Sheehan is an American anti-war activist, whose son, U.S. Army Specialist Casey Sheehan, was killed by enemy action during the Iraq WarFree and open to the public. Sponsored by Peace Fresno, and other community organizations.

Wednesday, June 1 • 6:30 p.m.
Fresno County Central Committee Monthly Meeting. Democratic Party HQ, 1035 U St. For more info, call 559-495-0606

Thursday, June 2 • 5 – 8:00 p.m.
Art Hop Downtown and the Tower District Meet and greet with the artists and enjoy the reception and music. Museums, studios, galleries and other venues open their exhibitions Free to the public...For more info; <http://fresnoartscouncil.org/arthop/>

Friday, June 3 • 6:30-8:30
Reedley Peace Center. Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, L Street between 12th and 13th Streets in Reedley . Map available at www.reedleypeacecenter.org. Speaker: Andrew Fiala, Professor of Philosophy and director of the Ethics Center at Fresno State. Topic: Who Needs Marriage?
Tuesday, June 7 • Polls are open 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Primary Election Day. Please Vote! More info, Clerk-Elections@co.fresno.ca.us

Wednesday, June 8 • 3:00– 3:30 p.m.
KFCF 88.1, The Fresno Center for Nonviolence monthly “*Stir It Up*” radio show will be hosted by Richard Stone. His guests will be other Board members talking about the Center’s history, what they’ve been up to recently and our 24th anniversary on June 18. We will introduce our newest Board member, Rita Bell. There will be call-ins at 559-266-8888. For information call the Center at 559-237-3223. Mon-Fri 11-3. We always record the show on a flash drive and create a link to the program. Call the Center at (559) 237-3223 Mon-Fri 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. if you want to receive links by email.

Friday, June 10 • 6:30-8:30
(Summer Film Series). Reedley Peace Center. Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, L Street between 12th and 13th Streets in Reedley. Map available at www.reedleypeacecenter.org. Documentary: He Named Me Malala 2015 PG-13 87 min.Vividly portraying the obstacles Pakistani women face in getting an education because of prohibitions by the Taliban, this affecting documentary chronicles the story of Malala Yousafzai, a 15-year-old who was shot because of her advocacy efforts.

Saturday, June 11 • 8:30 - 1:00 p.m.
Awaking the Dreamer Symposium. First Congregational Church, “The Big Red Church” 2131 N Van Ness Blvd, Fresno, CA 93704 Host: John Minkler The

Awakening the Dreamer Symposium is a half-day transformative journey that educates people on the challenges and possibilities of this moment in time and the role they can play in creating a new future. This workshop explores how people can create a new future. The goal is to educate and inspire engaged people who are committed to bringing forth a world that is environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling and socially just.The Symposium describes exciting movements that are emerging now and inspires participants to consider where we go from here and how to work together to contribute to solutions.The Pachamama Alliance empowers indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture and, using insights gained from that work, educate and inspire individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world. Cosponsored by:Citizens’ Climate Lobby, Community United Church of Christ, Fresno Center for Nonviolence, Unitarian Universalist Green Sanctuary and Social Justice Committees, Fresnans against Fracking

Saturday, June 11 • 3:30 p.m.
The next meeting of the CVPPAC, FCNV, 1584 Van Ness, Fresno 93728. Join us and be a part of the Progressive Political Community. For more information call Pam Whalen (559) 994-9390

Thursday, June 16 • 5-8:00 p.m.
Art Hop Downtown and the Tower District Meet and greet with the artists and enjoy the reception and music. Museums, studios, galleries and other venues open their exhibitions Free to the public...For more info; <http://fresnoartscouncil.org/arthop/>

Thursday, June 16 • 6:30 p.m.
The monthly meeting of Fresnans against Fracking at Marie Callender’s at Shaw & Cedar. We have reserved a new place in Marie Callender’s, in the east dining room. For more info, Ron Martin,

(559) 222-5524, home; (559) 394-9417, cell

Thursday, June 16 • 7-9:00 p.m.
Fresno Move to Amend meeting. Village Gardens Clubhouse, 5350 North Colonial,93710 Fresno , CA. For more info, Jack Erickson, 559-448-9474

Friday, June 17 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Reedley Peace Center. Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, . L Street between 12th and 13th Streets in Reedley Map available at www.reedleypeacecenter.org. Speaker: Gary Johnson, retired professor from Ventura College. Topic: Response and Reaction to Cultural Change in the Sixties.

Saturday, June 18 • 4-6:00 p.m.
Fresno Center for Nonviolence 24th Anniversary and Silent Auction. Community United Church of Christ, 5550 N. Fresno (between Bullard and Barstow). Our annual Way of Peace Awards will be given to Hannah Brandt, Ron Vineyard, Simone Cranston-Rhodes (youth), “Wings” (organization) and a special award to 9 year old Danay Ferguson for her book program “Reading Heart”. Dixie Salazar will be reading some of her poems. It will be a potluck so please bring something to share. (For more information or if you would like to donate something to our Silent Auction, call the Center at 559-237-3223 Mon-Fri 11-3.)

Friday, June 24 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
(Summer Film Series) Reedley Peace Center. Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, L Street between 12th and 13th Streets in Reedley Map available at www.reedleypeacecenter.org. Documentary: Soundtrack for a Revolution 2009 NR 82 min. Music was a powerful tool in the American Civil Rights Movement, spreading a message that was difficult for many to hear and serving as an energizing force nonviolent protest. This documentary celebrates that intersection of movement and music.



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Fresno, CA 93729

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Wesley United Methodist Church
1343 E. Barstow Ave.
Fresno, CA

Phone: 559-434-6540
www.pflagfresno.org
info@pflagfresno.org




National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC) is a multi-partisan, multi-racial, grassroots organization dedicated to increasing women’s participation in the political process and creating a true women’s political power base to achieve equality for all women. Dinner Meetings the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm at Toledo’s Restaurant at Shaw and Blackstone.

PO Box 5553
Fresno, CA 93755-5553
nwpcfresno.org
Contact: Cathy Brass 559-225-5433(home) or 559-256-6347(work)
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What we have to do... is to find a way to celebrate our diversity and debate our differences without fracturing our communities. – Hillary Clinton

In memory of our past president, Carol Bequette.

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Islamophobia is Racism

By Hannah Brandt

“Most terrorist attacks are not carried out by Muslims or any people from the Middle East, S. Asia or Africa. In fact, Muslims and people from this part of the world are often the victims. After 9/11, attacks on Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim went up threefold. Since those against Charlie Hebdo and San Bernadino, acts of hate against Muslims have skyrocketed in the U.S.” Dan Yaseen, President of Peace Fresno and moderator of the forum, Islamophobia: The Current Face of Racism in America.

This discussion on Islamophobia was hosted by Peace Fresno and sponsored by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Human Rights Coalition of the Central Valley. The panelists for the talk were Reza Nekumanesh from the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno, Raj Singh Badhesha from the Sikh Council of Central California and Deputy Attorney for the City of Fresno, Darryl Muhammad, student minister with the Nation of Islam, Sab Masada, a survivor of WWII internment camps of Japanese Americans, Richard Iyall, a Native American peace and justice activist and freelance photographer, and Juan R. Avita from the Fresno Brown Berets and the Mexican American Political Association.

Each panelist was asked to talk about their community’s history with racism in America. Nekumanesh spoke first, defining Islamophobia. He said, the different communities represented tonight face similar issues of racism. When asked if discrimination directed against Muslims is racism he says he knows people often say it cannot be because it is directed at a religion. But the truth is, those who attack people they think are Muslims do so because they think they look a certain way. “In fact, the Muslim community is the most diverse community in the U.S. and come from all parts of the world. Twenty-five percent are Black Muslims; half are born outside America. Most are U.S. citizens.”



Panelist Reza Nekumanesh (right) greets member of the community. Image by Richard Iyall.

He pointed out that while Islamophobia is racism, Muslims and those perceived to be Muslims, are not “the” new group that Americans are racist against. Islamophobia is not new, and other forms of racism are just as virulent as they ever were. Scholars do categorize it as racism because it is directed against non-white Muslims or those non-whites mistaken for Muslims.

Badhesha from the Sikh Council spoke next. He said if you see someone with a turban in the Central Valley, most of the time they are Sikh, not Muslim. “Because Sikh people have olive skin and dark hair we get lumped into racism against non-whites, especially Islamophobia. Even though Sikh turbans look totally different from head coverings worn by Muslims, very often we are mistaken for Muslims and attacked for it.” Sikhs live in constant fear. When he was recently in Bakersfield at a mall he noticed people looking at him suspiciously, which he called “the seed of racism.” He said that until you have felt discrimination and fear from racism personally, you cannot ever understand it fully.

Darryl Muhammad said that he appreciated being included in the panel because when Muslims are asked to participate in these discussions they are rarely Black. He said the Nation of Islam is usually portrayed negatively by others, not in our voices. Many Africans brought to the Americas as slaves were Muslim, Christianity

was imposed on them. “Like the founders we want independence and to live in peace and freedom, justice and equality. We teach our children to be kind, have understanding and tolerance for others. If we are allowed to speak to the larger community, it will increase tolerance.”

Sab Masada is concerned about an increase in racist language and the fomenting of fear against ethnic groups bringing about a similar situation for Muslims as what happened to him as a Japanese American during WWII. The mass incarceration of the Japanese was claimed to be for national security, just like Donald Trump’s calls to ban all Muslims. It is the same logic as that of Earl Warren, later a champion of civil rights legislation, who testified that the absence of evidence

that Japanese Americans had committed any crimes was proof that they would. Masada said he spent four years in an internment camp “based on U.S. government lies about his race and Buddhist religion.”

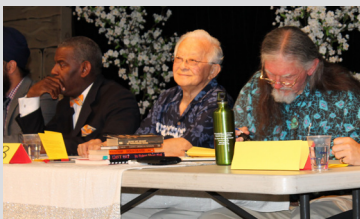
Richard Iyall spoke as a member of the Cowlitz tribe, whose ancestors came from the Washington state area. Originally the tribe had four counties worth of land before the U.S. federal government took it. The tribe is now in a court case regarding whether any of the land and fishing rights will be returned to them. Iyall said, “This country was founded on the promise of religious freedom, but that freedom was only extended to the European settlers. Native Americans had Christian religion and customs forced on them and were either killed for practicing their traditional ways or forced onto reservations and into residential schools.”

Juan Avita is an educator as well as an activist with the Fresno Brown Berets and Mexican American Political Association. He stated, “Youth are not often getting the education they should: learning about the “original sin” of this country, racism.” Avita has been appalled by the way mainstream, corporate media has enabled the discriminatory rhetoric and propaganda tactics of the 2016 election. Latin America, also ravaged by colonization, is very diverse. He noted that the attire of the revered Virgin de Guadalupe is influenced by Islamic attire.

Hannah Brandt is the editor of Community Alliance newspaper. You can follow her on Twitter and Instagram at @HannahBP2. Follow the paper on Facebook at Community Alliance Newspaper and on Twitter and Instagram @fresnoalliance.



Far lower Left: Panelist Raj Singh Badhesha Image by Richard Iyall. Upper middle: Panelists prepare to speak. Image by Hannah Brandt. Lower middle: Audience Q & A. Image by Hannah Brandt. Far upper right: Panelist Darryl Muhammad, Sab Masada, and Richard Iyall. Image by Hannah Brandt. Far lower right: Local activists from Black Lives Matter, Standing Up for Racial Justice, and Uprooting Racism. Image by Hannah Brandt.



Songs of Struggle & Hope

By Mike Rhodes

Agustín Lira and Patricia Wells are world class musicians living in Fresno who are starting to get some of the recognition they deserve. Their new CD, being released this month through Smithsonian Folkways, is a milestone in the promotion and preservation of their unique music.

Lira and Wells have been involved in the struggle for peace, social and economic justice for many years. Lira says “this album has all these different memories through songs, and they reflect the realities of a lot of people in this country and also people from outside this country. . . people need to hear those songs. . . it is a real history that has taken place here and it should not be forgotten.”

In 1965 Lira co-founded Teatro Campesino, a theatrical and cultural group supporting the United Farm Workers Union here in the Central Valley. He has been performing ever since. Together with Wells and Kavi Knypstra they form the band Alma.

Lira says one song on the CD was inspired by a series

of article in the Community Alliance newspaper. He wrote *Don’t Come to Fresno if you are Homeless* “because of the treatment that the homeless veterans received at the hands of the City of Fresno. As you know, my uncles were World War II heroes but that didn’t cut any slack for them and they were discriminated upon all of their lives. I don’t care for war nor for those that promote it but I do understand that the youth who are made to fight those wars, are unfortunate pawns that do not deserve cruel treatment and neglect.” The song condemns the heartless attacks against the homeless by the city and calls for a different approach, one that treats all people with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Patricia Wells says her favorite song on this CD is *She Won’t Be There*. The piece opens with a lingering lead melody on guitar, followed by an equally lingering vocal line, which sets the tone of this romantic ballad. Lira expresses the cultural driven need to write and sing about hope-filled love in the midst of struggle: “How could you not sing and write beautiful love songs to

people - because it is the culture?”

‘Songs of Struggle & Hope’ features signature songs of *la causa* as well as new creations—all composed by Agustín Lira and newly recorded by the trio—that speak to social injustice. The songs boldly discuss Chicano struggles of the past and present.

Quihubo, Raza, the upbeat first track of the album

featuring a button accordion, became an anthem for Chicanos during the 1960s. *El inmigrante* discusses the traumatic process of being uprooted from one’s homeland and living in constant fear of deportation: “Women, children, and elderly, they throw us out of this nation,” the trio sings. “Farewell, beloved countrymen, now they will deport us.”

Hugo Morales, former

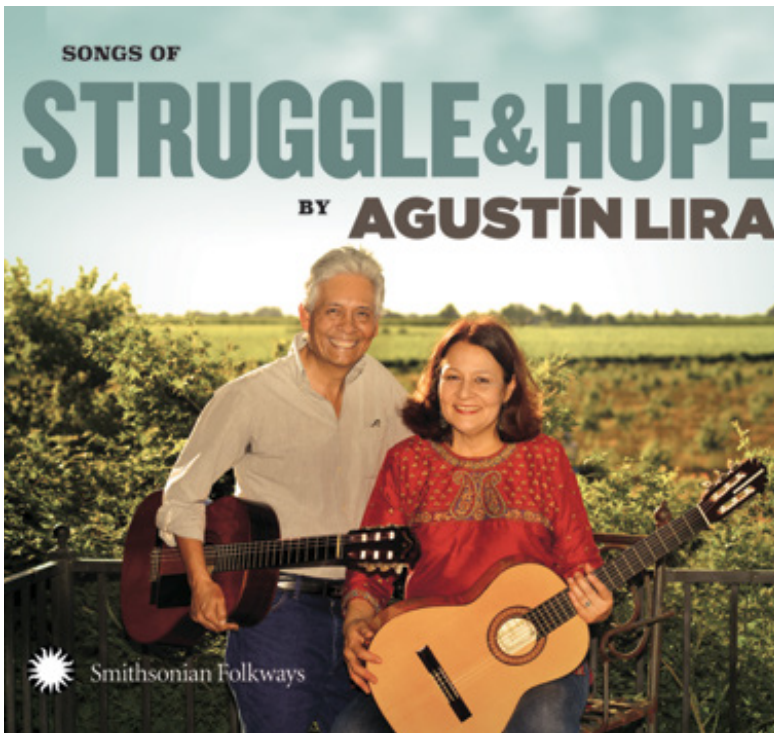
farmworker, Harvard-educated founder and director of nonprofit Radio Bilingüe, said: “Agustín Lira speaks the truth; he tells it like he sees it. He says things that other people are afraid to say.”

Lira says that “it means a lot to be recognized by the Smithsonian, because they don’t do this for everybody. They think the music is worthwhile, saving and putting into history. So do I.”

The Songs of Struggle & Hope CD will be released on Friday, June 24. On the same day at 5 p.m., both Lira and Wells will be on the Street Heat radio show (KFCF 88.1 FM) listening to the songs from the CD, talking about the music and taking calls from listeners.

On Saturday, June 25 there will be a CD release party and cultural celebration at the Alfonso Hernandez Youth Center at 1515 E. Divisadero Street in Fresno. For more information about this event, call (559) 485-8558 or go to their website at www.teatrotierraonline.org.

Mike Rhodes is a journalist in Fresno. His book, *Dispatches from the War Zone, Homelessness in Fresno 2002-2015*, was published earlier this year.





Images by Santos Garcia.

Havana, Cuba

By Santos Garcia

Today I fulfilled a lifelong dream. I have always wanted to travel from Madera to Cuba. As part of a 34-member Labor delegation from California, union members from the San Joaquin Valley have been invited by the Cuban Labor Federation to visit and establish ties to the island. Letter Carriers, Teamsters, laborers, teachers, and SEIU workers of all crafts get on a plane to Havana.

May 1st is International Workers Day and we are invited to attend the May Day Parade. To our surprise, we are seated in front of the main podium along with European and South American delegates. Presidente Raul Castro and invited guests from all over the world are right above us. As I made preparations to visit Cuba, I asked myself what would be the best gift to bring along. The answer was Baseball. Cubans love baseball. Fidel Castro was

a pitcher in his youth. Dodger right fielder Yasiel Puig hits home runs off of Giant pitchers all of the time. So I went to the sports store on Shaw Avenue and bought 24 brand new Little League baseballs to give to the first Cuban kids that I saw.

I spot a group of boys and girls in the “Cuban Young Pioneers” Youth group and hand them the baseballs. LOL, they begin to take selfies of the baseballs on their cell phones! Ah youth, they are the same everywhere. As a former little leaguer myself, there is nothing like the feel of a new baseball in your hand. The U.S. established a trade embargo on Cuba during the Cold War in 1960. Subsequently, my 2016 Visa card is worthless here and Cubans can’t buy products made in the USA... What are the conditions in Cuba? Is it true that we must bring our own towels and toilet paper to the hotel? No! Can we spend dollars there? Yes.

You must convert them to Cuban currency at the airport, hotel, or exchange houses.

Just ahead of our visit, the Rolling Stones had performed “Satisfaction” in the Plaza De La Revolution. President Obama’s official visit was the first since Calvin Coolidge. The drive from Jose Marti Airport was educational. Homes shaded by palm trees, 1950’s era cars mixed in with cars built in 2015 were everywhere. Cell phones are being used, but my ATT phone has no service here. CNN and ESPN (Cubs/Pirates) in Espanol are being viewed on large screens. The Hotel Velado was simple but clean. Towels, soap, toilet paper, conditioner, and shampoo were in our room. We are clearly not on the Vegas Strip, but then again, who wants to be?

Restaurants range from luxurious, (The National) where a piano player plays Mozart, to homes opening up their living

rooms for simple Cuban fare (La Familia). Like the strip, barkers invite you into their restaurants for the best Lobster, Mojitos or Cuban Cigars. The first cruise ship from Florida in 50 years has just landed in Havana. The people cheer from the famous Malecon seawall. Dionys, our taxi driver, hands me his e-mail address and cell number. “Call me when you want to go back to your hotel but if the makers of “Fast and Furious 8, call me, you will have to find someone else. They are paying \$200 per day for 1956 Ford Fairlanes”. This is how I find out that the new movie is being filmed here. How is it that a Hollywood movie can evade the trade embargo, but a farmer from Madera or Visalia can’t sell raisins to the Cuban market?

The San Joaquin Valley has plenty of goods that can be sold here. Cubans want to buy our beef, wine, cotton, and orange juice. If we can sell our goods to

Vietnam, Russia, and China, why do we continue to follow a failed 50-year-old Cold War policy? It makes no moral or business sense. Only Congress can lift the embargo. I would like to see our Valley representatives, Costa, Denham, Valadeo, McCarthy, and Nunes, lead a delegation to Cuba on behalf of the San Joaquin Valley. Talk to Cubans and you might find out that you have more in common than you realize.

Santos Garcia is a retired letter carrier, union member National Association of Letter Carriers AFL-CIO, and staff member of the Central Labor Council Fresno. You may contact him at 413 South A Street, Madera, CA 93638. Tel: 559-708-8484 Email: santosian@mailcity.com



Images by Santos Garcia.