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## Central Valley Hearts Enflamed for Education

By I. smiley G. Calderon

In the small west Fresno County city of Huron, there is an active battle for education that is gaining momentum.

Dozens of concerned Huron parents filled the local John Palacios Community Center in mid-March to rally for a better education for their children.

"It's time that Huron has its own high school," said Nancy Ramirez as she passionately addressed the attentive Spanish-speaking crowd in her native tongue. "And I know that together, united, we can succeed in getting a high school here in Huron."

Maria Cabrera, a parent, echoed the same resolve, "It's time that we raise our voice because we are tired of all of the injustice that is happening in Coalinga."

Established as an important water stop for the Southern Pacific Railroad in the late 19th century, Huron is about 25 miles northeast of its bigger sister city, Coalinga, named for being the railroad's coaling refueling station in the area at the time. Both cities have an intertwined history, and both are relatively small.

Today, Huron has about 7,000 residents and Coalinga is more than twice as big, with a population of about 17,000. Huron consists mainly of migrant farmworkers of Latino descent, whereas Coalinga boasts booming industries that include not only agriculture and oil but also a state prison and mental health hospital, among other growing industries.



Maria Cabrera, with a sign saying "Equal Education," applauds a speaker at the event for a Huron high school. Photo by Peter Maiden

Both cities share a joint unified school district for their K-12 public education, the Coalinga-Huron Unified School District (CHUSD).

"There is no trust between the communities," said Ben Silva, a longtime Huron resident and community organizer.

He, like many others in Huron, feels disenfranchised in their public education relationship with Coalinga. Many feel that Coalinga gets all the resources while Huron suffers.

The heart of the matter is a high school in Huron. There isn't one.

Hundreds of Huron's high school age students are bused to Coalinga High School, the only high school in the

district—a six-hour walk—each day just to get to school. Of course, the kids aren't walking (they'd never make it); instead, they rely on CHUSD busing for their government-guaranteed education—a grueling commute longer than an hour each way.

"If you're lucky, the bus ride is an hour," continued Silva. "There are some routes that are an hour and a half...they have to stop and pick the kids up at the farms—there's no choice. And those kids deserve an education—they have to be picked up. These kids are suffering big time."

"Think about it this way: it's a marathon. You run a marathon, and then you get to school and they want you to

Continues on page 2

## BOS Goes Bonkers

By Michael D. Evans

Buoyed by their success ignoring community input with its decennial redistricting, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors (BOS) has gone on the warpath against the citizenry.

On Feb. 22, the BOS rejected possible funding for a California Resilience Challenge grant that would have studied the impact of climate change on our community.

Public Health Director David Luchini said that the program would assess challenged populations on such issues as vulnerability to severe heat, droughts, wildfires and diseases from non-native mosquito species.

"Even during Covid, 70% of our county falls in that lowest quartile of highest-risk populations," said Luchini. "We're going to focus on the rural areas where these populations live to see how vulnerable they are."

After hearing what the study would address, District 2 Supervisor Steve Brandau weighed in: "They might say after studying Fresno County weather in the month of August that we need a cooling center for 175 grand."

That seemed to be Brandau's talking point on the issue as he returned to it later in the discussion. "CBOs [community-based organizations] get the money to go out and tell us that we need a cooling center in Mendota when it's over 100 degrees. I don't need to spend 175 grand on that."

Luchini added that the county would be partnering with CBOs for the grant project research. Brandau was having none of that. "Some of the CBOs [mentioned] have kind of a sketchy resume in Fresno County." (He was referring to the highly effective Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability and Building Healthy Communities.)



The seal of Fresno County. Photo courtesy of The Commons

"Here's what happens. The CBO wants money," says Brandau. "This grant the state's offering, we need to partner with the University of Merced [sic]. The University of Merced makes that decision in under 30 seconds. They don't care, they'll study anything. They'll agree to a grant to study anything."

"So, we have some great partners, like UCSF, you know, Community Hospital, they're all willing to be a part of this, but they don't care because it's not their money, they're just signing onto it."

District 5 Supervisor Nathan Magsig, not one to let a colleague steal his thunder, intoned that "half of our electorate wants to move one direction, half the other. And

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## Advocacy Groups Kick Off "Know Your Worker Rights" Drive

By Estevan Gutierrez

State labor agencies have initiated a "Know Your Worker Rights" drive as a proactive and creative approach to educate and engage hard-to-reach residents who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic including farmworkers and other agricultural workers.

On March 8, a roundtable discussion took place at the Carpenters Local 701 union hall in Fresno outlining workers' rights, demystifying processes and providing feedback to state bureaucracies. The dialogue among state agencies, workers and community advocacy groups included how workers can maintain safety and health in the workplace, especially in the food and agricultural industries.

Entering the third year of living with the global Covid-19 pandemic, it's clear that this disease will not be eradicated anytime soon and that both employers and state agencies must be fluid in meeting workers' needs.

The roundtable launched the Worker Week of Action for the COVID-19 Workplace Outreach Project, which helps increase awareness of the resources provided by various agencies.

The California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA), the Department of Industrial Relations, the Agricultural Labor Relations Board and Cal/OSHA, along with the UC Merced and Community Labor Center, collaborated on the Worker Week of Action. The roundtable was attended by 14 Central Valley advocacy groups capable of supporting vulnerable workers in communities with limited resources in the event they fall ill to Covid-19.

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# Central Valley Hearts Enflamed for Education

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sprint. How are you gonna do it? You're not gonna compete with the other kids. You're already tired. Just the trip over there you're tired already, not to mention the trip back.

"When I was in school [at Coalinga High], I used to come in really late, like 10 or 11 p.m. It's true, I didn't study or anything when I got home—I just took a shower and went to bed. I used to wake up at 4 a.m. in the morning just to do my homework, you know. Things have to change."

Another parent echoed a similar story: "I have a daughter in high school, and every single day she has to wake up very early before dawn to go to school. Our kids lose a lot of sleep time."

This concerned mother also brought up another important underlying issue, "Our kids feel a lot of discrimination because they are Latino and children of immigrants. Our children suffer from a lot of bullies...The next generation of Huron kids will continue to suffer if we don't support a high school here in Huron."

Huron grandmother Maria Mejia had a heartfelt message for the younger generation present: "I am here to represent the community of Huron to ask for a high school in Huron because I remember my children going through an incredibly difficult time when they went to high school in Coalinga, and I am afraid that our youth attending high school in Coalinga now are still experiencing the same kinds of things, and I don't wish that on any Huron child."

The CHUSD's website states that it "is committed to advancing the District's mission to provide the best education and career opportunities to all students...We invest in our children by investing in the people, programs and facilities of our great district." Yet, according to the parents in Huron, their students aren't even getting the bare minimum.

"These are the people that are suffering," lamented Silva. "These parents are making their sacrifice out there in the fields because of the future of their kids."

"And what future is there if they don't even have a high school? We're not asking about a college. We're talking about a high school. It's just a basic necessity. And that's what the state says, we're supposed to have a free and appropriate education—what we are being denied."

"Under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment," Silva elaborated, "CHUSD is violating our

civil rights for education. Plain and simple. We know it's a violation on both the federal and state levels."

Proud Huron parent Maricela Gregorio made it clear why Huron families packed the community center on a busy Friday night: "We are here to fight for a high school for our children, for a better future."

Also at the rally were some Fresnans who took the hour-long trek to support Huron residents. "I am from Fresno," noted one Fresnan, "and we are here to support all of you parents in Huron. We don't have to live here to support you. We support education...because education is important to all of us."

"We want our children to have a better life. We are only fighting for our children to have an education. I don't understand why this is something bad."

"All of you parents present here should be very proud—proud that you are standing up for your children, doing everything you can as parents, and fighting for your children so that they can have a better education." The crowd erupted in applause.

"We need to stay focused on Huron High School," Silva emphasized. He understands that his hometown has a lot of other pressing needs, for example, more elementary schools, but he also knows that these needs could distract from the primary objective of getting a high school built in Huron as soon as possible.

Silva's mother, Dolores Lopez Silva, a retired Huron teacher turned CHUSD board member back in 2004, was the first to ask and push for a high school for her community during her four-year term, but she was always told that there just wasn't enough money for one.

Now, with tens of millions of dollars in Covid relief funds given to CHUSD and readily available for use, her son Ben is carrying the torch and following in her footsteps to keep CHUSD accountable and fight for a fair and equal education for their hometown students—fighting for a high school—in Huron.

"Once Huron High is built and completed, then we can work on getting another elementary school," Silva reassured. "But building another elementary school without a high school will keep the community locked into the same situation for another 20 years of riding the bus."

The situation is serious. Imagine students who simply want to participate in sports, music or other normal high school extracurricular activities. Sometimes they don't get back home until after 11 p.m. And when there is no bus available, Huron parents have no choice but to drive all the way to Coalinga to pick up their kids.

Going to high school while living in Huron is like working two jobs—it's incredibly exhausting. All of this leads to more dropouts and low community graduation rates. This, in turn, leads to less economic opportunity in the community,

which, of course, is a recipe for perpetual poverty and social disenfranchisement. Something must be done soon, and now is the time.

At the gathering, Fresno Democrat Phil Arballo, a candidate for California's 13th Congressional District, briefly addressed the crowd in English (with a Spanish translator) to tell them how he would support Huron's cause if elected. It was his first time in Huron, and he was able to see firsthand the passion of these farmworker parents for a better education for their children—something they know and are convinced a local high school would bring.

But Silva is tired of empty promises. He commented privately: "That's why we tell all these guys, 'hey, where's your will?' Being elected isn't enough, where's your will? I mean, is this America?"

"These government officials want these people to go fight in the military—we're veterans here—and yet, we're coming back home to this crap? We're just asking for the basics."

Also present at the rally was Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District Trustee Eliseo Gamino. Gamino, who is also running for Fresno County Superintendent of Schools this year, is president of the Central Valley Leadership Roundtable and when he was alerted to the community struggle in Huron he didn't hesitate to help. He's been advocating for Huron anywhere he can—from packing recent board meetings in Coalinga to filling community centers in Huron. He says that his role is to "support the parents—to support a just cause."

A long overdue high school would radically change Huron for the better. Gamino wants elected officials to do everything they can to help. He commends State Senator Anna Caballero (D-Merced) for committing to help the families and community of Huron.

"As Fresno superintendent, I would take Huron's case directly to the state in my elected capacity...I'm committed and I'm a man of my word. I can't make any promises that I can't keep, but one thing I can do is be here fighting alongside the parents. This is a social movement—this is my heart."

In this critical struggle for limited public education resources between the old coaling town and the old watering town in Fresno County, we must continue to remind all decision-makers and stakeholders how important a high school is to a student and how vital it is to a community.

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*L. smiley G. Calderon is a fellow with the Community Alliance newspaper. He is a Gen X Chicano and lifelong educator who spent a career in academia in Southern California but is most proud of being a father.*

## Jeff Robinson: Fresno's Gay Mayor Remembered

By Vic Bedoian

Jeff Robinson, an iconic leader in Fresno's LGBTQ+ community and longtime host of a pioneering radio program on KFCF, died at the age of 60 last month. He was widely respected for his enduring service to the entire Valley community. Robinson was called the "Gay Mayor of Fresno," and it was a title that fit him perfectly.

Robinson was a respected and beloved activist, organizer and inspirational force in Fresno's LGBTQ+ community. His groundbreaking work and activism helped make historic and hard-won changes in Fresno's social and cultural scene. His pioneering radio program on KFCF, *It's a Queer Thing*, has been on the air for 32 years. It became the center of gravity for LGBTQ+ information, entertainment and activism.

That activism went back to when he was a Fresno State student in 1987. Veteran journalist Peter Robertson got to know Robinson as a fellow student and recalls Robinson's relentless activism while combatting a hateful atmosphere toward gay people on campus in those days, such as the burning of the United Student Pride booth.

"Jeff was there throughout many incidents, such as this. When times got rough and friends couldn't be found, Jeff was our bridge over troubled waters," noted Robertson.

"He inspired my social justice activism, which remains to this day. Jeff was a humble and quiet leader whose tireless leadership touched the lives of so many in our community."

KFCF General Manager Rych Withers, a longtime friend and radio colleague of Robinson, touched on some of Robinson's numerous accomplishments.

"Jeff was very involved in a lot of the activities and a leader of the LGBTQ community here. He was involved in Act Up when the county did not want to fund any medical or nursing positions for AIDS. That was the first time I met him, and then he got a radio show on KFCF."

"Also, in the ensuing 30 years [he] started Gay Pride in Fresno. He started the Pride film series, youth groups and senior groups for LGBTQ people, and a number of things like a community center."



Jeff Robinson, an iconic leader in Fresno's LGBTQ+ community, died at the age of 60 last month in Fresno. In this image, Robinson is at the microphone of *It's a Queer Thing*, his radio show on KFCF. Photo by Rych Withers

"You know, the whole reason we got involved with KFCF back in the early days was that we were battling one of the radio stations here that was a hard rock radio station that had a segment called 'Manly Man.' And they were really gay-baiting and really getting out there and encouraging the listeners to go to one of the local bars that was a gay bar and to go show those queers what manly men were."

Robinson's life was celebrated at a community gathering held on March 12 in the Tower District. He was fondly remembered by many friends and loved ones including Tracy Cisneros, who is the volunteer coordinator for the Rainbow Pride Parade that Robinson inspired, "Activist leader, mentor, hero, friend, papa. One of my favorite quotes from him is that 'the world has gotten a bit darker, but the heaven's a bit sassier.'"

She said from the first time she met Robinson, she knew that he was a man on a mission. "His mission really didn't have anything to do with the parade or a festival or really a celebration of any kind. It was clear his mission was to encourage, inspire and grow the activists and leaders of the future."

Jeff Robinson will be sorely missed and long remembered.

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*Vic Bedoian is an independent radio and print journalist working on environmental justice and natural resources issues in the San Joaquin Valley. Contact him at vicbedoian@gmail.com.*



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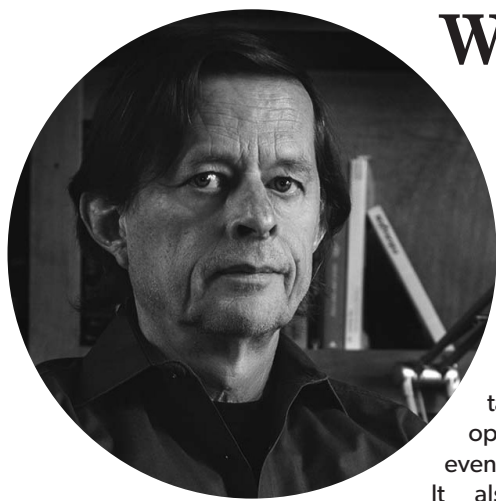
Withers recalls first meeting Robinson at a Fresno County Board of Supervisors meeting when Robinson led a cohort of Act Up protesters to demand funds for medical support for AIDS patients that the politicians wanted to eliminate.

Robinson evoked the negative social atmosphere back in those days in a 2018 interview.



FROM THE EDITOR

# War in Ukraine Exposes Much



The unjustified and repudiated war started by Russia against Ukraine has exposed the warmongering of Western countries, led by the United States, taking this as a good opportunity to isolate Russia even more.

It also has exposed the hypocrisy of Western leaders, including Joseph Biden. For instance, they accuse Russian President Vladimir Putin of being a "war criminal" but forget the wars and crimes they were and are involved in.

The Iraq war of 2003 was unjustified and illegal, with more than a million Iraqis dead. We could also mention Vietnam, the "secret war" in Laos and Cambodia, and the list can go on and on.

The United States also organized criminal coup d'états in countries such as Chile (1973) and Argentina (1976), countries in which a military submissive to the United States killed thousands of their own citizens and imposed an economic and social model dictated by Washington.

And there is the Cuban blockade.

The war in Ukraine isn't good, but the militaristic reaction of the United States doesn't help at all to pacify the region. On the contrary. It shows that our country is still ruled by the old militaristic guard that is using this war for its own purposes.

All this means that Washington will increase indiscriminately the militaristic expenditures and financial support to Ukraine. The majority of Congress supports this action while refusing to support the Build Back Better program because of the high expenditure!

Finally, the war in Ukraine has exposed the racism of Western countries, "concerned" about Ukrainian refugees because they are White after having despised Syrian and Afghan refugees.

Political corruption has many faces. Till next month.

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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## Letters to the Editor

### Kudos to Gadebusch re Olympic Comments

Ruth Gadebusch's column is the first I read every month. While I didn't watch all 2,800 hours of the Olympics, Ruth lays out that modeling peace and cooperation from the participant nations is more potent than a Model United Nations.

My only criticism of the 2022 Games is that NBC didn't hire Ruth to teach and correct some of its sport commentators when they too often used adverbs incorrectly. I cringed every time they dropped the "ly" at the end of an adverb. Ruth proves that grammar matters.

Patricia Brown  
Posted online

### Correction

In the article titled "A Peek Inside the *Community Alliance*" in the March issue, the paragraph about two departing board members should have read as follows:

We miss Linda Kobashigawa, who was on our board since 2016 and left in January 2022. Linda, along with her friend and fellow board member

Amanda Tripp-Messier, really did hold up half the sky at the newspaper at the exact time we needed it most. We miss both of them very much.

In the "GV Wire Sparks School Board Attack" story, also in the March issue, the first sentence of the fifth paragraph should have read as follows:

The surprising connection between the Assemis and the local fascist movement with direct connections to the Jan. 6 Insurrection is found, of course, on Facebook.

The *Community Alliance* encourages you to inform us of any errors or problems with this month's paper. Send corrections to editor@fresnoalliance.com.



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# The Struggle for Human Dignity in Fresno

By Mike Rhodes

Lewis Brown was living in a homeless encampment near Highway 180 and West Avenue when he was brutalized by several members of the Fresno Police Department.

In a lawsuit filed on Brown's behalf, attorney Kevin Little writes: "The City of Fresno's longstanding adversity toward the homeless is exemplified by the facts underlying Mr. Brown's individual causes of action.

"On February 21, 2020, Mr. Brown disagreed with officers who arbitrarily sought to evict him from the campsite that had been his home for nearly a year, which was not even on City property.

"In response to his protestations, Mr. Brown was beaten up and seriously injured, falsely arrested, wrongfully prosecuted for a year and a half, and had virtually all of his worldly possessions taken and destroyed.

"If Mr. Brown's unfortunate saga were unique, this case would only be about him. However, it is not. Mr. Brown, therefore, brings this action not only on his own behalf but also on behalf of all others similarly situated."

The complaint, filed in federal court, seeks to make this a class-action lawsuit. Little says it could take some time for the court to decide whether this qualifies as a class-action lawsuit.

The last class-action lawsuit in Fresno defending homeless people's rights resulted in a \$2.3 million settlement with the City. That case, in 2006-2007, was about city workers taking and immediately destroying homeless people's property. The settlement money compensated homeless people for the loss of their property and at least temporarily stopped the City from its unconstitutional conduct.

Homeless advocates claim they continue to see City workers taking and immediately destroying homeless people's property. In response, the Fresno City Council has adopted an ordinance that would prevent homeless advocates and the media from witnessing this demolition with the threat of arrest. The ordinance goes into effect on April 1.

The lawsuit filed on behalf of Brown is viewable on the *Community Alliance* website ([fresnoalliance.com](http://fresnoalliance.com)). There is also a link to a video where you can hear Brown tell one of the officers that he is in the process of moving his property and the police officer replying, "Well, you're not packing fast enough." A minute later, Brown is on the ground crying out "I can't breathe."

According to the complaint, "Sgt. Miller, Officer Holden, Officer Diaz and Officer Quisenberry then used clearly unreasonable and excessive force on Mr. Brown, then a frail 60-year-old.

"Mr. Brown was thrown down to the ground face first, had his legs crossed and raised up behind him toward his waist, had another officer place a knee in his mid-back toward his neck, and had another officer withdraw his firearm. The firearm was at times pointed directly at Mr. Brown's head.

"One of the officers, believed to be Sgt. Miller, gratuitously walked over and stepped on Mr. Brown. The officers had no reason to believe that Mr. Brown was violent or armed, and they had no reason to assume that a man of his apparent age and health could withstand



This is Lewis Brown shortly before having his legs kicked out from under him. This is a Fresno Police Department body-cam screenshot

the force used upon him without sustaining serious injury. This use of force incident was captured on the officers' body-worn cameras.

"Mr. Brown sustained injuries to his face, knees, back and torso as a result of the defendant officers' uses of force. Mr. Brown was then hoisted up by his handcuffed arms and taken to another area within the 180 Camp, near police vehicles, even though he still had not been told why he had been arrested.

"When Mr. Brown reached the vehicles he was told to sit down. Mr. Brown explained that he had physical limitations, in addition to having just been brutalized. In response, Mr. Brown's legs were unceremoniously kicked out from under him, causing him to fall to the ground."

Asked his opinion about this case of police brutality, Paul Boden, executive director of the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) in San Francisco, said, "This clearly is brutality—and also happens wayyy too often!

"There are clearly, and it is so often documented like this, two different sets of realities when it comes to policing in this country...There is the wealthy, White, 'important people' reality, and then there are the poor and persons of color reality in terms of how police proceed to protect and serve their community."

Boden recommended that Fresno advocates to "decriminalize homelessness by supporting the Right to Rest Act [the] next time it comes up in the state [legislature]—or pass a local version and make damn sure police adhere to its mandates."

In 2007, Jeremy Alderson, director of the *Homelessness Marathon*, a national radio broadcast, came to Fresno, where we hosted the show. It was like a town hall meeting broadcast live with the mayor and other elected officials in a panel with homeless people and their advocates asking questions.

Alderson, speaking about the current situation in Fresno, said, "I hate to say it, but beating a homeless person has a flavor to it of whipping a slave. Homeless people are already seen as less than human in society's mind, so it's hardly surprising that they're treated that way by police fists. And as was the case with slavery, ending homelessness will require a broad shakeup of the society that's tolerated it."

Connecting this situation to what is happening globally, Alderson said, "People in Fresno and everywhere need to understand that these kinds of assaults on homeless people are very much like the 2014 Russian attack on Crimea. They're not one-offs. They're warnings of much deeper trouble."

If you are homeless and want to be a part of this class-action lawsuit, contact the Law Office of Kevin G. Little (1225 E. Divisadero St., Fresno).

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*Mike Rhodes is the executive director of the Community Alliance newspaper and author of the book Dispatches from the War Zone, about homelessness in Fresno. Contact him at [mikerhodes@comcast.net](mailto:mikerhodes@comcast.net).*

## City of Fresno Sued Over Homeless Ordinance

Soon, advocates and media personnel will not be allowed to witness and document police and city employees' activities while conducting a "clean-up" operation at homeless encampments.

Yes, the City will criminalize homeless advocates and journalists for doing their job.

The ordinance establishes a \$250 fine and potential misdemeanor charges to those who invade the "buffer area" established by the police and/or city employees while conducting a "clean-up" activity at an encampment.

The ordinance was authored by Council Members Miguel Arias and Luis Chavez, and was scheduled to go into effect on March 31.

But homeless advocates decided to fight back and are suing the City. This effort is led by We Are Not Invisible, an organization headed by homeless advocate Dez Martinez. A second lawsuit has been put forth by the ACLU.

## Refusing to Remain Invisible

By Bob McCloskey

A historic lawsuit, led by longtime homeless advocate Dez Martinez, founder of We Are Not Invisible, has been filed against the City of Fresno. Because of Martinez's efforts, unhoused residents of the city will be represented in court. A judge will have to approve the class, which could take several months.

On Feb. 21, 2020, Fresno Police Department (FPD) officers assaulted and injured Lewis Brown at a homeless encampment near Highway 180 and Hughes Avenue in West Fresno. The encampment was not located on City property, and Brown had been living there cooperatively with other residents for more than a year.

Ironically, Brown is back living at this same encampment two years later. After Martinez assisted him in finding legal counsel, Brown is now the lead plaintiff in the class-action lawsuit seeking justice for the unhoused of Fresno.

Brown describes the day he was assaulted as follows:

"I had just woken up, starting to do my daily chores, fed my dog, and I saw the [FPD] Homeless Task Force walking up. The officer said you have to evacuate this place. I said, 'why is that?'

"He said it's because you're on City property. I said it's not City property, it's private property. The officer said 'if you don't move you are going to jail. You have 10 minutes to move.' I told him, 'well okay, whatever, I'll tell these guys'" (referring to other residents).

"I go walking back to my tent with my dog and had my friend tie my dog up. The police officer, [Andrew] Diaz, said that I told the people [the other residents] that they didn't have to move. I said I didn't say that, and then I started packing my stuff.

"The officer looks at me and says, 'oh yeah,' grabs my arm, and says 'stop resisting,' right off the top. He threw me to the ground with four other cops, and from then on, they were beating me up.

"As I was packing my stuff, I did nothing against their orders. They never told me I was under arrest. They put their knees on my back, rubbed my face into the ground, busted my eye open. And I just had eye surgery three weeks before, a cornea transplant; they messed it up.

"They picked me up off the ground and took me to the police vehicle and kicked my legs out from under me, then said, 'have a seat.' The whole time I was trying to cooperate, Officer [Gary] Holden kicked my legs out when handcuffed, and I have bad knees. They beat me up for about three minutes with my arms up way over my head.

"In court, they said they never saw someone treated like that, and I'm lucky I'm still walking. They searched me, found some marijuana. I smoke weed. I use it for pain.

"I'm in a lot of pain. I'm 62 years old, my knees are bad and the police abuse made my pain worse. They searched me while I was laying there. They yanked me up, called the paramedics and arrested me while I was in the ambulance, on the way to the hospital.

"This never should have happened. They dropped the charges, right away, of resisting arrest and possession and trespassing. A week later, they refiled charges after my attorney filed charges against the City. It was retaliation for filing charges against the City.

"It took about two years to go through court, and I was found not guilty on all charges. Now I am part of a class-action lawsuit against the City."

The lawsuit is being filed by Attorney Kevin Little on behalf of Brown and all others similarly situated. The City estimates that there are more than 4,000 unhoused individuals, however, advocates estimate the number to be twice that. This lawsuit represents all of them.

In addition to the City, the lawsuit is filed against Police Chief Paco Balderrama, former police chief Andy Hall, Mayor Jerry Dyer and five police officers involved in the incident. It is also filed against unknown law enforcement officers who might have engaged in unlawful conduct throughout the city.

The complaint seeks damages, declaratory and injunctive relief, and demands a jury trial. It cites Brown's case as an example of how the City mistreats the unhoused. This mistreatment includes the ongoing removal to other locations, taking and destroying personal property,

*Continues on page 9*



# When Tragedy Knocks at Your Door

By Bob McCloskey

Lewis Brown, a 62-year-old homeless man, was assaulted by Fresno Police Department officers at a homeless encampment in West Fresno in February 2020. He has now filed a class-action lawsuit against the City. He became an unsheltered person in 2012.

*Community Alliance:* What is a day like? Rough?

Lewis Brown: Yeah, it's a struggle. I don't have any money. I don't have a vehicle, so I can't make money.

CA: How long have you been homeless?

LB: Since 2014. I had a job, a house; my kid lived with me. I lost my house in 2012. I went to prison after I bought a car for car parts and didn't know it was stolen. I got 16 months in prison for stolen property.

CA: Do you have relatives?

LB: Yeah, my mom's still alive. My sister works for the County. I don't want to stay with my mom and put a burden on her. My son got killed by the cops in a high-speed chase, only 21 years old, in 2014. He stayed in a coma for seven months with a busted spine and internal injuries, and then he passed away. I had just gotten out (of prison).

CA: What a tragedy and the police caused that?

LB: Yeah, they clipped him at 120 miles per hour and caused the accident. He was ejected 100 feet and severely injured.

CA: I am so sorry for your loss, what a needless tragedy. It must be so difficult for you out here.

LB: Yeah, I need a house. It's hard for me to get a job, I'm injured, I can't see in one eye."

CA: What do you think about the housing and support system?

LB: Well, everyone out here wants a place to stay, to shower and sleep, but the way they treat people in the shelter system is bad. They've got a lot of messed-up rules. The staff mistreats people. Then they only give you the room for 90 days. I don't want it. Just because we're homeless, we shouldn't be treated like animals. They say their mission is to help us get back into society, but they don't do anything to help. They're supposed to help get food stamps and other services, but they don't.

CA: Do people get mental health or substance abuse services?

LB: I don't think so, from what I know."

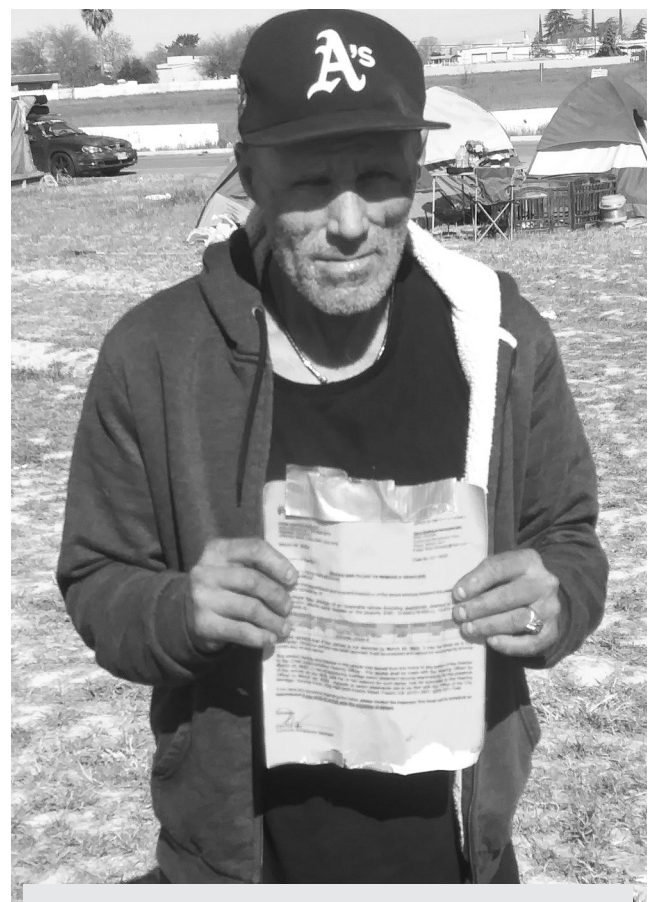
CA: What do you hear from people about why they are homeless?

LB: Because of a crisis, something happened in their family... it's not because they're drug addicts. That's what everybody thinks. There are good people out there. Everybody's had jobs. I know electricians, carpenters, construction workers. People have a tragedy, they lose their families. It's rough. It's cold out here.

CA: What should the City and County focus on?

LB: The tiny home villages, permanent housing, permanent apartments and then services if people need them. The City needs to do more street outreach. All they have is Poverello. The City has good intentions, I think, of getting rid of us!

As Brown's lawsuit proceeds, a team of lawyers will be gathering statements and depositions from unsheltered persons in Fresno who have been mistreated by the Fresno



Lewis Brown holding the "retaliation" citation that he received requiring him to move his vehicles. Photo by Bob McCloskey

Police Department and/or have had property taken and discarded by the city, as well as city employees. As the case unfolds, the *Community Alliance* newspaper will keep readers updated on the latest developments.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bob McCloskey is an organizer for the Fresno Homeless Union.

## BOS Goes Bonkers

Continued from page 1

so, I never want government to get put in the middle where we're picking sides. So, everything that we do needs to be evidence-based and we need to be defensible."

Then, true to his duplicitous track record, Magsig proceeds to refute his own guideline. "Do our partners support preserving and expanding agriculture and do they have a history of fighting to protect our agricultural economy?...If you can't tell me that our partners support these things—this is at the core of who we are here in Fresno County—then I can't support this process moving forward."

District 1 Supervisor Brian Pacheco added that he tends "to agree with my colleague, Supervisor Brandau, we keep [the study] in-house."

Exactly how is keeping the research in-house, under the purview of the BOS, with a requirement to support big ag, "evidence-based" and "defensible"?

Earlier in the same meeting, the BOS addressed a request from the Registrar's Office for more voting machines.

Brandau asked Registrar James Kus if this was the item about the Dominion voting machines, and Kus replied that it was. Then Brandau did his best Magsig imitation.

"I think everything is going great in Fresno County...I have a little bit of trouble with us having adopted the Dominion voting systems. And it's not that I believe they are failing here in Fresno County..."

"But we have really lost touch with our society when it comes to our voting in the United States of America. At least a full 50% of the population really have issues with this Dominion system, and I don't even declare that the Dominion system is bad.

"I am declaring that I don't think that I can support it as long as 50% of our population is distraught about any of these issues. That's a big problem we face in America."

Wow, Magsig must be proud of his student.

Magsig, though, again in danger of being upstaged, added that "on many issues, we are polarized. It seems like this nation is split 50-50, but using the logic just laid

out, there's many issues that you would have to vote no on because at the end of the day half of the public nationally is going to be on one side of the issue and then half on the other."

Magsig then voted for the voting machines. Brandau was the sole vote against the motion.

At the March 8 meeting of the body, the BOS addressed revisions to its legislative platform. Most of the platform includes noncontroversial references to various areas where state legislation could help the county and how that would be funded.

According to County Administrative Officer Paul Nerland, the item would "adopt changes in our legislative platform...I can say with confidence that the things you [the supervisors] identified as priorities have been added to the platform either specifically or they are already generally there."

Brandau, who obviously had not read the platform, asked if several items were included. Nerland assured him that they were. For the record, the platform and a redlined version showing changes from the previous year were part of the supervisors' meeting package and are available on the county website.

One of the items Brandau wanted to confirm was opposition to AB 2030, a bill introduced by Assembly Member Joaquin Arambula (D-Fresno) to create an independent commission for future Fresno County BOS redistricting.

Although none of the other supervisors had any issue with the legislative platform, they nevertheless felt obligated to pontificate.

District 4 Supervisor Buddy Mendes seemed to address the Groundwater Stabilization Act concluding "I kind of doubt that we're going to actually have any [water] plan in this part of the Valley that will be acceptable."

Then he added, "When you talk to some of the old-timers that have been in this deal for years, they'll actually plainly admit that the state isn't even following the law now." How rich is that accusation coming from a supervisor given that the BOS has defied state law with its delinquent General Plan reporting for two decades.

Magsig then went out of his way to pander to Mendes' comments, leading Mendes to respond that the state's water policy "is basically taking the Soviet system and concentrating it, you know, at Soviet Headquarters in Sacramento." (You can't make up this stuff.)

But Magsig wasn't done. He went on to "educate" the BOS (who else was he talking to?) on how fossil fuels are used. This was in opposition to a bill introduced by Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco [red flag! red flag!]). Magsig ultimately lamented that restricting fossil fuels would deny him shoelaces.

Subsequently, on March 15, Pacheco, as the BOS chair, drafted a letter to Arambula outlining the BOS's "strong opposition" to AB 2030.

That opposition, however, is based on some false suppositions.

The letter states that "the County did not solicit information from the commissioner applications, nor select commissioners based on his/her political party preference."

So, the supervisors didn't look at the applications when making their selections for members of the Redistricting Advisory Commission? And to say that party preference was not considered is disingenuous. Eight of the 11 commission members were Republican, and one supervisor stated that he intentionally chose both a Democrat and a Republican in his district.

The letter called the 2021 redistricting process a "transparent, collaborative success, that included a model for community outreach and greater access to information and mapping resources than ever before." Community involvement was outstanding in the process, but that participation was driven by CBOs, not the BOS consultant's poor outreach efforts. And if the process was a "collaborative success," why did the BOS refute the will of the collaborative?

Moreover, the letter refers to maps not chosen that were "submitted by various special interest groups," when, in fact, the map that the BOS finally chose was a slight tweak of a map presented by a Republican political operative with ties to each of the Republican supervisors. Talk about special interests.

In specific challenges to the Arambula proposal, Pacheco mentions the following:

The bill "takes the redistricting process away from the voters." The voters are already removed from the process as the supervisors egregiously confirmed with their decision to ignore the community's voice. The Arambula bill puts the decision in the hands of actual voters.

The bill "gives [authority] to appointed special interest groups." Actually, eight of the 14 commissioners would be selected via a random drawing of applicants who meet the specified requirements. And those eight commissioners would choose the remaining six with respect to racial, ethnic, geographic and gender diversity.

Who do you think has the power now? There are two farmers on the BOS and a third who enthusiastically panders to ag. A fourth is the former head of the Central Valley Tea Party. Talk about special interests.

The bill "proposes to usurp local control." How exactly does a commission of 14 people, all from within Fresno County, "usurp local control"? The proposed commission, by definition, is local control. What it usurps is the power elite's grip on power.

The new redistricting map approved by the BOS essentially ensures that four of the five incumbents will easily win reelection. The only potentially competitive district is the District 4 Mendes seat.

You're probably sensing a pattern in the BOS discussions. Out of the gate, Brandau gets the wacky going, Mendes weighs in when there is an opportunity to trash Sacramento and Magsig concludes the discussion with his Wikipedia-inspired soliloquies. Pacheco tries to avoid being embarrassed by the others but votes with them anyway. And District 3 Supervisor Sal Quintero? Sal? Sal? Where are you?

\*\*\*\*\*

Michael D. Evans is a political activist, editor and writer. Contact him at [evansm@usa.net](mailto:evansm@usa.net).

## Act Now!

Contact your supervisor now. Here are some issues you could raise:

- Support AB 2030.
- Change the name of Squaw Valley.
- Accept grant funds to study the effects of climate change on our community.
- Spend ARPA money on the community as per the guidelines.
- Reverse your resolution to expand oil production in California.
- Call them. E-mail them. Attend Board of Supervisors meetings. Hold them accountable.



# City of Fresno Opens New Office for Immigrants

By Emily Garcia

The Mayor's Office of Community Affairs (OCA) is a new office providing a way for the City of Fresno to serve its diverse communities most in need of assistance.

Areas of assistance include helping first-time homebuyers with down payments, emergency rentals, youth training and workforce opportunities, transportation resources, immigration support, public health and safety support, volunteer opportunities and more.

The OCA has liaisons specializing in four areas.

Serving the Asian Pacific Islander community is Sandra Lee. She has an extensive background in nonprofit organizations and refugee resettlement programs in Fresno.

Harjinder "JR" Saini works with the Asian Indian community. Saini is a business expert who has recently partnered with the parks department in the city.

Pastor B.T. Lewis is working with Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

Alma Martinez is the immigrant affairs liaison. She works with residents who are Latinx or foreign born.

"Basically, how we see this department is threefold," says Martinez.

"First and foremost, we do direct constituent services. If anybody needs anything in the city, any department, we are there to make those connections."

Second, each liaison is conducting a survey of their respective communities to determine what the needs are and the best possible solutions. The OCA plans to use the survey results as a blueprint for future city decisions.

The third component of the OCA goals is collaborative tables. This focuses on specific needs rather than general issues.

"Sandra and JR are part of the Afghan resettlement committee," says Martinez. "We are welcoming over 100 Afghan neighbors into Fresno, and our team is part of those conversations."

Pastor Lewis is involved with diverse clergy offices, whereas Martinez is working with the Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative (CVIIC) and the Immigrant Fraud Task Force.

Fresno is the fifth California city to open an OCA after San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Jose.

Martinez says that the city is aware of residents' needs. Although there are available resources, they are not always easy to access. Not everyone understands how to access the resources, who to speak to or even how to take the first step to engage with the City.

Many in the immigrant community find it difficult to ask for help when they need it.

"I myself am an immigrant, I was born in Jalisco and came to this country at the age of three, undocumented," says Martinez.

"I remember coming to Fresno, to Fulton Street, and going to, back then, what was the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] office and applying for residency. And I actually became a citizen at the Veterans Hall."

Martinez says that having someone who speaks their language or understands where they come from can make all the difference in connecting with immigrants. Achieving a deeper connection on a personal level can establish the level of comfort needed for individuals to come forward and accept a helping hand.

A constituent tracker is used to determine how many people have been helped, but such data are not ready to be released. However, the OCA says that specific issues have been addressed since the office opened.

For instance, the OCA observed that communities were being hit hard by housing difficulties. Whether that be a dangerous neighborhood, issues with a landlord or renters, the OCA has been there to help.

There have also been numerous individuals seeking business help, especially immigrants. Many want to own a business but are not always able to given that undocumented people cannot legally obtain a Social Security number. The City's Economic Development Division has been working diligently in sharing information on state-level funding to help establish



Office of Community Affairs liaison Alma Martinez at City Hall. Photo by Peter Maiden

immigrant businesses using grant funding. They have been partnering with the CVIIC to get this information out.

The OCA encourages people to apply for various sources of funding, especially the SEED [Social Entrepreneurs for Economic Development] initiative, which helps both new and established businesses. New businesses can receive up to \$5,000, and established businesses can receive up to \$10,000.

The liaisons want to make this process as easy as possible and ensure the community is aware of all of the available financial assistance. Bringing hope to the community is what their job is all about.

"I am super happy that I'm here, and I would love to see the department grow," says Martinez. "I think the need is there, and I would love to continue to be a part of it. I'm honored and humbled to be here."

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Emily Garcia is a fellow of the Community Alliance newspaper. She is a journalism and mass communications major at Fresno State. Contact her at emilyvb432156@gmail.com.

## Office of Community Affairs

The Mayor's Office of Community Affairs (OCA) offers services and resources for Fresno residents. It engages all members of the Fresno community by serving as the City government's liaison to key constituent groups, associations, multicultural and immigrant populations, faith-based, civic and human service, and others including community benefit organizations. Under the purview of Deputy Mayor Matthew Grundy, the OCA operates as a division of the Mayor's Office.

Contact:  
Alma Martinez  
559-621-7923  
alma.martinez@fresno.gov

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# Local Democrats Honor Black History

By Daren Miller

In celebration of Black History Month, Fresno County Democrats hosted an event honoring Black elected officials (BEOs) and Black candidates seeking office this year. Held in the parking lot of the Fresno County Democratic Headquarters in downtown Fresno, the event was attended by approximately 120 people.

Attending BEOs included Fresno County Board of Education Trustee Kimberly Tapscott-Munson and Central Unified School District Trustee Shawn Brooks. Malia Cohen, a member of the state Board of Equalization and a candidate for state controller, participated by phone.

Also attending were Black political candidates: Lourin Hubbard, who is running in the Congressional District 22 special election to replace Devin Nunes; Dr. Daren Miller, who is running for Fresno County superintendent of schools; and Terri Edwards, who is seeking the Fresno Unified School District Trustee Area 7 seat.

As Black history is American history, the event also featured elected officials and candidates from other cultures. State Senator Anna Caballero, Kingsburg City Council Member Jewel Hurtado, Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 4 candidate Jose Antonio Ramirez and Fresno Unified School District Trustee Area 5 candidate Andy Levine addressed the assembled audience.

In addition to hearing from the public officials, the event featured Heaven Hamilton singing the Black National Anthem, the Purposed II Praise dance troupe and the Fresno African Drummers. Each group added its own flair to the day's activities.

The event organizer, Bianca Orejel, said that "this event was important for us because we wanted to give a platform for Black elected officials and candidates. We wanted to acknowledge the history behind the month and simultaneously amplify Black voices."

"It is important that we never forget the contributions that have been made by our Black constituents past and present," noted Tapscott-Munson. "Black history is a part of Americans' history, which we should recollect and celebrate every day."

"People of color need to see themselves reflected in the country's struggle, success, economy, growth and power," stated Caballero. "However, persistent disinvestment, neglect and a lack of representation have left our communities of color struggling to find their voice."



Members of the Purposed II Praise dance troupe cheer on their teammates. Photo by Peter Maiden

"Celebrating Black History Month in Fresno County—a region with deep African American roots—is an excellent opportunity to celebrate, educate and mobilize our friends and neighbors to stand up and take action. We must do better! The future of our children and grandchildren depends on it."

\*\*\*\*\*

Dr. Daren Miller is a lifelong member of the Democratic Party and a 2022 candidate for the Fresno County superintendent of schools.



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## SIERRA CLUB TEHIPITE CHAPTER



Invites you to join with us this Earth Day 2022 to celebrate our forebearers in the development of electric power:

We celebrate the Chinese who discovered that a floating lodestone would float to point North.



We celebrate the ancient Greek, Thales, who discovered that rubbing amber would attract particles and even make an electric spark.

We celebrate Jean-Antoine Nollet, who in 1746 demonstrated the speed of electric current by sending a shock from a Leyden jar through a circle of monks a mile in diameter, holding an iron wire.



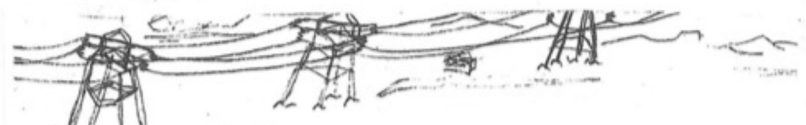
We celebrate Benjamin Franklin, who in 1752 charged a Leyden jar from lightning through a kite string, and later invented the lightning rod.

Franklin laid the groundwork for Faraday, Ampere, Ohm, and also Volta, who invented the electric battery in 1799.



We celebrate the first human-carrying electric vehicle With its own power source, tested along a Paris street In April 1881 by French inventor Gustave Trouvé. (credit: Wikipedia)

We celebrate Nicola Tesla, who in the 1880s spread long-distance power grids through the use of alternating current.



Let us celebrate these inventors by powering all our energy use with sustainable electricity. The Sierra Club is at work to transition California and the world fossil fuels to sun, wind, and water electricity.

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Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

**WILPF FRESNO SAYS NO WAR!**

Photos by Sandra Iyall

Members of our Fresno Branch of WILPF joined Peace Fresno and others as part of an international day of antiwar action on March 6. Member Jan Slagter brought a poster calling attention to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which acknowledges the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Some were there with petitions in support of the nuclear weapons ban.

WILPF US Section's Statement regarding Russia, Ukraine, the United States and NATO, March 1, 2022:

We demand that Russia cease its invasion of Ukraine, and that all sides enforce a cease fire, including NATO countries and other countries preparing to send weapons to Ukraine.

In this extremely volatile situation, we in WILPF are reminded of our foremothers, who, in 1915, responding to the breakdown of security systems between nations and the onset of World War I, joined together with women from opposing sides to demand mediation of the conflict.

Now we do so again. The situation in Ukraine and on the international scene shows us that, once again, war cannot and will never be a solution for peace and stability. In these times, the most sensible thing we in WILPF can do is to build international solidarity—to come together and channel all our individual voices into one collective, loud and decisive voice that calls for an end to militarization and war-mongering.

We in WILPF know that the people will suffer, as they always do, when the so-called great global powers wage war. This is intolerable.

During a recent meeting of the UN Security Council, discussing the Russia-Ukraine situation, Martin Kimani, the Ambassador from Kenya, recounted an African saying: "Our internal divisions and fragilities were weaponized on the altar of geopolitical rivalry. It confirmed the truth of the African saying that recognizes when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers."

We deplore the impacts of militarism that degrade the environment in numerous ways, affect women and children disproportionately (including an increase in domestic violence) and trample widely on human rights.

We in our WILPF US Section recognize that the NATO expansion, begun in the late 1990s, was essential to the US scheme for a "unipolar" world. NATO expansion is contributing to the crisis today, starkly contrasting with Mikhail Gorbachev's vision for the demilitarization of "a common house of Europe," made safe for human rights."



**NOW IS THE TIME to Join WILPF or Renew Your Membership!**

In times like these, your WILPF membership is more important than ever. Your membership in the Fresno Branch of WILPF is a membership in the oldest and boldest women's peace and social justice organization, one that works at local, national and international levels.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom was founded in 1915 during World War I, with

Jane Addams as its first president. WILPF works to achieve, through peaceful means, world disarmament, full rights for women, racial and economic justice, an end to all forms of violence, and the political, social and psychological conditions that can assure peace, freedom and justice for all.

WILPF works with the multiple connected issues that are important to us—peace and disarmament, environmental issues and the intersections of race, women and economic policy—areas in which U.S. foreign policy is particularly wrong and harmful, including in the Middle East and the Americas.

The basic membership rate is \$35 per year, which all goes to WILPF-US; some of that then goes to International WILPF. So you are not only helping fund a strong women's peace and justice organization in this country, but you might also be helping LIMPAL Colombia to maintain a feminist, anti-militarist organization for the protection of the rights of women and girls in the harsh conditions of Colombia's deadly ultra-right government, for example.

If you cannot afford \$35, our low income rate is \$20. If you can afford more, please give a bit more to contribute to the fund for low-income memberships and to fund other activities of Fresno WILPF. We are all volunteers here, and we support projects in our community.

**Fresno Branch**

Every month our WILPF branch financially supports local peace and social justice groups: We buy a full page in the Community Alliance newspaper, we rent monthly meeting space at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence and we rent space at the Dakota EcoGarden to have a storage shed on the property. A quick incomplete sampling of our activities and contributions:

We sponsor a film about environmental issues, especially water, for CineCulture, organize water forums, and participate in and co-sponsor Earth Week.

We contribute to Teatro de la Tierra, give sets of Jane Addams Peace Award books to local libraries and schools, contribute to REFORMA and Children in Crisis, and participate in and contribute to local Hiroshima Day activities.

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**WILPF MEETING**

April 14, Thursday, 7 p.m., online. Watch your e-mail for an announcement with a link and call-in number. For more information, contact Teresa at [taca\\_03@ymail.com](mailto:taca_03@ymail.com) or Leni at [lenivreeves@gmail.com](mailto:lenivreeves@gmail.com).

**STIR IT UP—WILPF KFCF 88.1 FM**

April 27, 3 p.m. (fourth Wednesday of each month). Jean Hays highlights people and events important to our WILPF community.

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Contact Leni at [lenivreeves@gmail.com](mailto:lenivreeves@gmail.com).

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Contact Bev Fitzpatrick at [dfitzpatrick29@comcast.net](mailto:dfitzpatrick29@comcast.net).

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Contact Evonne Waldo at [evonnewaldo@yahoo.com](mailto:evonnewaldo@yahoo.com).

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Zoom discussion on the last Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m. RSVP with your e-mail address to [drjeankennedy@yahoo.com](mailto:drjeankennedy@yahoo.com) or text 559-270-1023.

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# Fresno Bee Columnist Platforms Fascist

By Kevin Hall

Deep into *Fresno Bee* writer Marek Warzawski's recent column on anti-vaxxer disruptions at Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) board meetings comes this oblique reference: "All but one of the 22 speakers lashed out at the board for some reason or another."

I felt like that "but one" on Feb. 19. Speaking under the public comment that evening, I offered a rebuttal to the invective being thrown at Trustee Veva Islas by angry speaker after angry Bible-quoting speaker.

However, I wasn't focused on vaccinations and masks. I was following the money. And Facebook. Those factors didn't interest the columnist; he was there with a preconceived storyline of disruptive anti-vaxxers versus violent Brown Berets, with both sides looking equally ridiculous from his perch.

For my part, rather than contradict the ill-informed opinions of anti-vaxxers, I asked trustees to instead recognize the real firestarters: Granville Homes President Darius Assemi, Fresno County Supervisor Steve Brandau, Fresno City Council Member Michael Karbassi and their weekly online broadcast, the unselfconsciously titled *Unfiltered*. I argued that Trustees Keshia Thomas, Terry Slatc and Elizabeth Jonasson-Rosas were throwing gasoline on flames by granting interviews to GV Wire or appearing on its incendiary "digital news site" known for platforming fascists.

Just last April, attorney Mariah Thompson of the National Lawyers Guild-Fresno Chapter praised the Bee for not giving fascists a platform for deception and normalization of their views. "Passing the mic to members of hate groups, neo-fascists or White nationalists allows them to gloss over" their violent history and intent, wrote Thompson in her critique of GV Wire.

Yet that's what Warzawski did in his Feb. 19 column. He indulged himself in an easy put-down of the uninformed anti-vaxxers, akin to shooting fish in a barrel, and when presented with lies from the fascist agitator present, he platformed them without question. He liked the false, simplistic framing of the issue as "red versus blue" rather than Thompson's more intellectually challenging dichotomy of fascism versus freedom. He wasn't going there.



Developer Darius Assemi is Granville Homes' president and the GV Wire media outlet founder. Photo by Eduardo Stanley

## CLIMATE POLITICS

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ALLIANCE  
COMMUNITY  
APRIL 2022

But fascist extremists do not reflect the "red" Republican Party, rather its internal struggle driven by people who reject the mores of democracy, and Warzawski failed to seek any counterpoint.

Instead, he leaned in and amplified a racist dog whistle, implying the Brown Berets had attended the board meeting two weeks earlier with violent intent—the meeting he missed—writing: "No sign of Brown Berets or any civilian group with militaristic tendencies." A stunning oversight, considering he was surrounded by White, nondenominational churchgoers agitated by the militaristic individual whose Facebook livestream offered repeated suggestions of violence leading up to and during the Feb. 2 board meeting.

This merger of church prayer meetings and school board sessions just happens to be the biggest radical political movement in America today.

Warzawski swallowed and repeated the fascist lie that they had only organized a defensive action two weeks earlier, but the agitator had been harping GV Wire agitprop articles from Jan. 28 and 29—days before their first board meeting attack—as justification to be angry and go on the attack, saying Islas was suspect for supporting Brown Berets, labeling her racist and a "brown supremacist."

Islas received threatening phone calls for days before the Feb. 2 meeting; word spread through the community that she was at risk, and people turned out to keep her safe. Good thing, too. An angry, unmasked, unvaxxed crowd was waiting for her outside afterward; earlier, the agitator had initiated a loud argument with an Islas supporter inside the meeting room and later referred to a group of Islas supporters as "insects."

Yet in his column written two weeks after the fact, Warzawski stroked the fascist with a warm, colloquial voice, ignoring the sequence of events and online evidence, offering instead: "He made darn sure his side was well-represented, too." Darn sure? His side? Golly gee, what a swell guy, Marek. Sounds like you two made a connection.

The false controversy, which stems from a funny tweet about impotence among anti-vaxxers as a public health "win-win," was ignited and fanned by the overpowered Assemi political machine and a former colleague of Warzawski's, GV Wire's Nancy Price ("GV Wire Sparks School Board Attack," *Community Alliance*, March 2022).

But they're just pawns. The real power stems from decades of increasingly obscene profits from the development of residential sprawl subdivisions, city apartment complexes, and rural almond and pistachio orchards and processing plants, all bolstered by public subsidies.

In the last two-year election cycle of 2019–20, a network of 15 Assemi family members, companies and employees gave more than \$200,000 in Fresno County campaign contributions alone, excluding state and federal races, money that arguably should have been paid into public coffers.

Area politicians must either agree to accept the lucre and sign onto the developers' agenda of meager public health protections, road subsidies and low impact fees or face online articles and videos critical of them that later serve as fodder for Assemi-funded political attack ads.

And now officeholders must weigh the added threat of violence characterized by some as "legitimate political discourse." The corruption is so blatant now that FUSD board candidate Daniel Renteria has a billboard at Olive and Van Ness avenues actually labeled, "Paid for by Granville Homes." Indeed he is.

In *Death of the Liberal Class*, Pulitzer Prize winner Chris Hedges lists the press, liberal religious institutions, labor unions, universities and the Democratic Party as the five pillars of the liberal establishment needed to sustain Western Democracy. He warns that journalists sell out their constituents when they treat fascism as mainstream politics. We all do.

From those standing daily for human rights with the We Are Not Invisible coalition of directly impacted homeless advocates, to the antifascist frontline being held by the Save the Tower Theatre Demonstration Committee every Sunday morning, there are Fresnoans who are resisting. Bravely. Notably missing in action are the institutions of media, academia, Democratic Party politics, liberal religions and labor.

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Kevin Hall hosts Climate Politics on KFCF 88.1 FM every second and fourth Friday, 5 p.m.–6 p.m. He tweets as @airfresno and @sjvalleyclimate, coordinates an informal network of climate activists at [www.valleyclimate.org](http://www.valleyclimate.org), and can be contacted at [sjvalleyclimate@gmail.com](mailto:sjvalleyclimate@gmail.com) for presentations and information.

## Refusing to Remain Invisible

Continued from page 4

using excessive and unreasonable force, attempting to silence and punish those who advocate for themselves, and restricting other advocates from assisting the unhoused.

Brown sustained injuries to his eye, face, knees, back and torso. The officers had no reason to believe Brown was violent or armed, yet they clearly used unreasonable and excessive force, all of which is documented on police video cameras.

In addition, the officers on the scene ordered the destruction of all Brown's property. The destruction of his property is a direct violation of a court order and injunction issued in the *Kincaid v. Fresno* decision more than a decade ago.

After his release from custody, Brown spoke publicly about his experience. He was assisted in speaking out by Martinez and Mike Rhodes, a journalist and homeless advocate. Only after Brown spoke out was he charged criminally for resisting arrest, possession, trespassing and refusing to leave private property and unlawful lodging. Brown was ultimately found innocent of all charges by a jury after only 90 minutes of deliberation.

For many years, the FPD and other City agencies have harassed unhoused residents of Fresno. Many have been arrested simply because of their homeless status. Many have been issued citations for things that result from being homeless such as loitering, trespassing, public urination, having unlicensed dogs, littering and other conditions that are difficult to avoid while homeless.

Harassment and arrests result in incarceration for petty offenses as well as having warrants issued against them for failure to appear in court or failing to pay a fine.

The City has continued over many years to engage in cleanup sweeps of homeless encampments. Sometimes these sweeps result in the belongings of the unhoused being treated like trash and thrown away. Shelters, tents, clothing, pets, bedding, medicines, appliances, food, utensils and priceless items of sentimental value have been thrown away, often on short or no notice.

Many advocates and others believe the City's strategy is to continually force people to move from one location to another. Although the city and county have received millions of dollars for housing and homeless services in the past 20 years and many more millions recently, no permanent solution to the crisis has been implemented.

The Housing First approach has been ignored, and instead a failed system of temporary shelters, transitional housing and limited services for the chronically homeless is being used.



Lewis Brown's legs were unceremoniously kicked out from under him, causing him to fall to the ground on Feb. 21, 2020, by Fresno Police Department officers. This is a Fresno Police Department body-cam screenshot

A statewide system of shelter operators, service providers and public agencies is wasting billions of dollars perpetuating a self-serving and failed industry that actually exacerbates homelessness. For example, Fresno has not provided any permanent supportive housing for those suffering on the streets since 2016.

Instead, the city is remodeling motels in the motel corridor called Parkway and warehousing those who are removed from encampments in rundown motels, all of this housing is called temporary housing by the city.

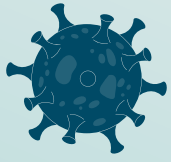
There are many different reasons why people become homeless. Sometimes a family crisis or other crisis starts the process—a job loss, a health condition that leads to bankruptcy, a mental health crisis, falling into addiction and substance abuse, losing foster care housing, being evicted for various reasons, being a victim of domestic violence, cannot afford a rent increase, the list goes on—but poverty, inequality, institutionalized racism and the domination of a White, patriarchal elite are the root causes.

Our capitalist economic system perpetuates homelessness, and our amoral culture allows it to happen. If we are serious about ending homelessness, we must recognize that and use that to continue our struggle.

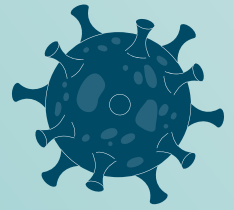
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Bob McCloskey is an organizer for the Fresno Homeless Union.





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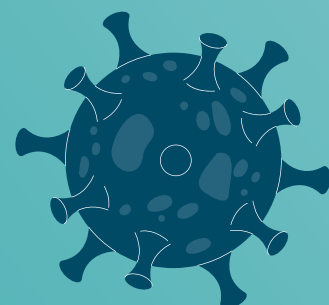
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## MASK UP

Masking up along with vaccination and self-testing helps protect you and others by reducing the chance of spreading COVID-19.

**Remember:** Any mask is better than no mask.





# Agustin Lira: A Voice for Change

By Paulina Cruz

Looking at the world today, it's easy to be overwhelmed by bad news. Climate change, discrimination, unjust systems and wars riddle the daily news. Although it is important to keep up with these tragedies to stay educated and informed, it is also important to look at the good things taking place.

Agustin Lira, a respected and well-known artist, has worked his whole life to uplift Hispanic communities through theater and music. This year, Lira received the Legacy Award from the California Arts Council in recognition of the years he has dedicated to serving his community.

Lira was the co-founder of Teatro Campesino, which played an important role during the farmworkers' strike in the mid-1960s at the birth of the United Farm Workers (UFW) union. He worked closely with Cesar Chavez in Delano.

Later, he moved to Fresno and dedicated his life to teaching music and theater. Lira's music has always revolved around the issues that Chicanos and Chicanas face, hoping to educate people on the history of these struggles and how to change them.

Growing up in the Valley in the 1960s, he was aware of racism and exclusion as a result of the environment that had been created by an unjust system at an early age. By nine years old, he was helping his mother pick cotton in the fields. In high school, he was lucky enough to be exposed to music and acting through choir and drama classes.

Unfortunately, he recalls the lack of education relating to his own culture and history. "There was never a mention about anyone Mexican in our books."

Things turned for the worse when his mother passed away, leading him to become homeless for two years. During this time, he depended on the kindness of families that had known his mom. One morning he saw an ad in the newspaper; the UFW was offering food and a place to sleep for volunteers as well as an opportunity to move up the ladder.

Intrigued with this opportunity, Lira traveled to Delano to see if this could be the right move for him. When he arrived, he was mesmerized, saying, "Delano was a kind of awakening for me." There, he found a place to call home



Agustin Lira (left) during a presentation of Teatro Campesino in the mid-1960s. Photo courtesy of A Song for Cesar Chavez (film)

where he could grow, learn and be part of something bigger than himself.

The idea for Teatro Campesino evolved from a problem Lira had noticed during union meetings: communication. "Some people only knew English, some only Spanish and some only spoke Filipino dialects. So you can imagine the union meetings would go on and on and on! It took forever to translate everything."

At the age of 19, Lira co-founded Teatro Campesino with this specific issue in mind. Teatro Campesino was about delivering information in a way that everyone could understand, which is why they performed in English, Spanish and even Tagalog (the official language of the Philippines) as much as they could.

Lira would perform with others in front of everyone who came for weekly meetings, during marches, on picket lines and wherever else they were needed. They would do skits and sing and teach songs to the audience. Although the plays and skits they performed touched on the serious themes the fieldworkers were dealing with, they did so through comedy.

"We chose humor because it was the best way to deliver our message instead of through anger and hatred. This way, we showed people that *teniamos cabeza y corazón* (we had a head and heart)."

Teatro Campesino wasn't an instant success; like any other project, it experienced trial and error. "We had a few failures until we hit on something real," explained Lira.

He went on to describe the success of one of their plays, *Conscience of a Scab*. For this play, they had actually hired someone who had previously been a scab for the role of a drunken scab talking with his troubled conscience about a strike.

"It was amazing," Lira beamed. "We had people rolling out of their chairs!"

Of course, it wasn't all fun and games. Their work was exhausting and dangerous. During the day, Lira and his fellow artists walked with the protestors, then set up and performed late into the night, barely getting any rest.

When protestors were harassed or attacked, there was no justice. "We were also scared. The system wasn't friendly. The growers weren't friendly. The courts weren't friendly. The police weren't friendly, and even the media wasn't friendly."

There were many dangers and obstacles the movement had to face and overcome, including a system run by people against them.

Lira continues to be as passionate as ever, believing his work isn't just about art, music and theater but also about using these tools to educate people on current events and the history of where we live. After all these years, he still cares deeply about issues that affect not only the world but also the people in the Valley.

Lira touched on problems currently plaguing Fresno including poverty, lack of resources such as food, and a clear split between the wealthy and the poor living in this city. He continues to write, produce and record music and plays about issues such as the southern border, Covid-19, racism and the hate that is constantly taught to people.

Regarding his important recognition from the California Arts Council, Lira first pointed to Patricia Wells, who had also participated in the strikes led by the UFW. Wells would later join El Teatro de la Tierra, a nonprofit arts organization founded by Lira. They celebrated 50 years of working as a team in 2021.

Second, he expressed gratitude, "I'm very grateful for the Legacy Award, but I'm also grateful for all the years of support of our projects here in our community, and thanks to them we were able to be as successful as we have been in our community."

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Paulina Cruz is a fellow with the Community Alliance newspaper. She is a Mexican immigrant currently attending Fresno State. She is currently working on an anthropology major with a minor in psychology. She spends her free time writing poetry or painting.

# Dialectic between Inorganic and Organic Art

By Homer Gee Greene Jr.

As a bonsai artist and bonsai enthusiast, I remember a bonsai exhibition that had a profound aesthetic effect on me and how I view artists and artistic expression. Below are some of my recollections of this show:

There was an interesting exhibition that ran from Jan. 6 to Feb. 3, 2005, hosted by Fresno City College. This new exhibition was held in the Art Space Gallery, and the exhibition was entitled "Installations of Art Responding to Bonsai." As the title of the exhibition implies, this aesthetic display attempted to exhibit the nexus between art and bonsai.

The exhibition was a collaboration among the Fresno City College Visual Art Faculty; invited artists Heather Anderson, Robyn Bates, Jake Elliott, Michael Garcia, Fletcher Niehaus, Robert Ogata, Anne Scheid, Jim Shepard, Howard Statham,

Laura West and Kathy Wosika; and bonsai artist Steve da Silva.

I was impressed with their attempt to blend diverse mediums of Western art forms with the various styles of the art of bonsai, which is an Eastern art form from Japan. What really jumped out at me is that this exhibition truly showed the dialectic, the juxtaposition of two opposite, between inorganic, non-living, media and organic, derived from living matter, media. The Western art in this exhibition represented the inorganic, and the trees represented the traditional Eastern organic art of bonsai, translated as trees in pots.

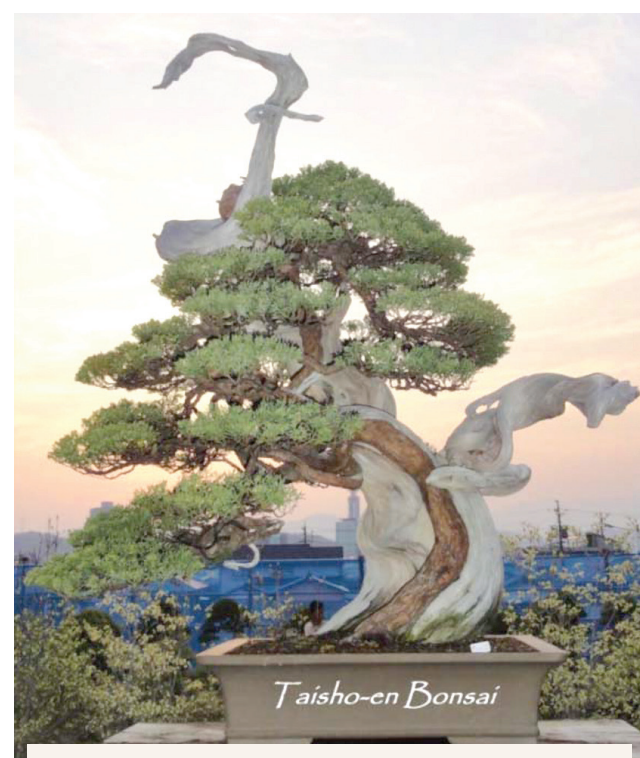
The inorganic was represented by various styles of Western art that included sculpture, painting and mixed media. The organic is represented by bonsai trees trained in one of the following bonsai styles: upright, informal upright, cascade, semi-cascade, slant, clump and broom.

There were the following species of trees styled as bonsai: evergreens (junipers, olive, heavenly bamboo, cedar, schefflera, black pine, boxwood) and deciduous (ginkgo, Japanese zelkova and dawn redwood).

To get the trees into the desired shapes, the trees were wired to train the tree into the image or shape that the bonsai artist wanted the tree to transform into. The main goal of the bonsai artist was for the tree to be designed into an image that reflects a tree in nature. The wire can also be aesthetically viewed as the body of a serpentine dragon coiling and slithering its body around and up the trunk and onto the branches of the tree and mystically shaping the tree into the vision of the artist.

The dialectic of the art presented is that Western art is static, dead and inorganic, whereas the Eastern art is dynamic, alive and organic. The Western art that was exhibited either just hung there or just stood there and will always be non-active whenever it is exhibited. On the other hand, the art of bonsai is active and living.

During the life of a tree that has been trained as a bonsai, from 100 years



A bonsai tree. Photo courtesy of Homer Gee Greene Jr.

to 800 years, the tree is pruned yearly and wired when needed in order to maintain the aesthetic shape of the tree. The trees remain outdoors all year but are brought inside on occasion to be exhibited for short periods.

At the reception that was held on Jan. 23, 2005, participants were able to ask questions of the visual artists as to their vision in harmonizing or blending their inorganic Western aesthetic expression to an organic object or tree. They were also able to ask the bonsai artist about the art of bonsai, the styling of the trees, how he blended or harmonized his organic Eastern aesthetic expressions to inorganic aesthetic objects and the history of each tree. Some of the trees exhibited were collected, meaning dug up, from Fresno City College.

The dialectic of the exhibition was balanced from the point of view that both the visual artists and the bonsai artist share the same muse of personal aesthetic creative expression. This desire to create is the mean or nexus that harmonizes the Western and Eastern halves of the inorganic and organic dialectic.

Some artists argue that art is alive. I would counter argue that we (humans) are the ones that make art come alive. The

Continues on page 14

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# Southwest Fresno to Get a Soccer Field

By Community Alliance Staff

An area of Fresno that for decades was ignored received good news a few days ago: The dream to build a soccer field is close to becoming a reality thanks to a significant grant.

Saint Rest Community Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) has received a \$100,000 grant to support the first phase of construction for a soccer field at southwest Fresno's Saint Rest Baptist Church—near B Street and Church Avenue—a project that has been in the planning stage for several years.

Recently, the area has seen an increase in investments and new development.

Saint Rest Baptist Church formed the Saint Rest CEDC to address some of the issues affecting its surrounding community. The soccer field and multipurpose green space aim to provide a safe space for children living in the area to exercise and play. Currently an empty field, new turf will be installed as well as overhead lighting.

A project like this could cost close to \$1 million. The donation from Wood Next Fund is the second gift toward the construction of the space. CalViva Health previously contributed funds to support the project.

"[The] Wood Next Fund is excited to provide catalytic support for this project," said the Fund's director, Nancy Chan. "We hope other funders will join us and co-invest in this much-needed outdoor space for physical activity and community gathering."

In 2019, Saint Rest CEDC and Saint Rest Baptist Church opened Saint Rest Plaza on Elm Avenue, a space for farmers' markets, performances and community activities. In recent years, the organization has constructed a playground and a youth center. The youth center served as a distance learning space for neighborhood children during the pandemic as many families do not have in-home Internet access.

"This generous gift serves as a greater gift to the greatest of our city, Southwest Fresno," said Saint Rest Baptist Church Senior Pastor D.J. Criner.

"This seed gift of \$100,000 will be planted in good soil and, in turn, will produce a soccer field harvest that will feed, motivate and stimulate growth so that our community can kick the soccer ball of hope and score the goal of community economic success."

This is the second grant the Wood Next Fund has provided to a Central Valley nonprofit. Last month, it donated \$180,000 to Next Generation Aviation Academy, an



L to R: Olivia Adams, Board chair of the Saint Rest Community Economic Development Corporation (CEDC); Marcie Santana, executive director of the CEDC; and Pastor D.J. Criner of Saint Rest Baptist Church. Santana is holding drawings of the planned soccer field. Photo by Peter Maiden

initiative focused on utilizing best practices and innovations to train the next generation of aviation professionals from communities of color and low-income neighborhoods in the San Joaquin Valley. Next Generation Aviation is also based in Southwest Fresno.

# Celebrating Earth Day: Do Your Part to Combat Climate Change

By Nayamin Martinez

Before the pandemic, every April was a big time for environmental and environmental justice organizations to come together and organize large events, rallies, lectures and all kinds of activities to celebrate Earth Day (April 22).

Traditionally, the main celebration in Fresno was hosted at Radio Park, featuring booths of environmentally friendly products, opportunities to try electric cars, workshops on how to transform trash into art and education on how to recycle, among many other activities.

When the pandemic hit, Earth Day celebrations moved to the virtual space and that became a challenge. Earth Day is a visible opportunity to call on everyone to divest from unsustainable investments, support eco-conscious brands and products, and use your own skills and voice to fight climate change.

Here are some things you can do at home and in your community to support Earth Day and our environment.

**Reduce, reuse, recycle.** Purchasing is a popular sport in the United States and other industrialized countries. When we grab products from the shelves or hit the click button in our Amazon shopping carts, we do not stop to think that we are affecting not only our wallet but also the planet.

Reducing our consumption of items we do not need, reusing what we have, prioritizing local products and learning how to properly recycle are good first steps. Most cities now offer gray, blue and green waste receptacles, and we often are mailed information on what to put in the correct bin. Yet, many of us are not reading that and not recycling in the right way.

Did you know that California has a law to reduce methane emissions from landfills—which are the third-largest source of methane in the state—by redirecting organic waste to recycling facilities? This legislation went into effect on Jan. 1. Public utilities are working to comply with this law.

The City of Clovis is already allowing residents to dispose of food scraps in the green bins (e.g., coffee grounds, eggshells, fruit and vegetable peels), whereas other cities such as Fresno are still developing strategies to comply with the new standards. Stay tuned to learn what your local municipality is doing.

To learn how to recycle smart, visit [irecyclesmart.com](http://irecyclesmart.com), which the state agency CalRecycle has developed to provide education and important tools.

**Plant trees.** It sounds like a cliché, but it is not. Trees help stop climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the air; carbon dioxide is the main gas that causes global warming.

Through photosynthesis, trees and other plants transform carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into carbohydrates, which they use to make stems, leaves and roots.

Trees store carbon, release oxygen into the atmosphere, provide shade for relief and respite from our hot summers, and lessen pesticide drift from fields close to schools and residential housing. Trees also help beautify neighborhoods, increasing our sense of well-being.

To find opportunities for volunteer tree-planting events, visit [treefresno.org](http://treefresno.org).

**Go electric.** We are all suffering from the high price of gas, but saving money at the gas pump is not the only reason why we should replace our conventional cars with hybrid or electric vehicles. Reducing air pollution is another important reason.

Passenger vehicles are a major pollution contributor, producing significant amounts of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and other forms of pollution.

Our state has set ambitious goals to reduce air pollution from cars. In September 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order requiring sales of all new passenger vehicles to be zero emissions by 2035 and additional measures to eliminate harmful emissions from the transportation sector. This is a bold measure to move the state further away from its reliance on climate change-causing fossil fuels.

Although this transition is not going to be easy, cheap or challenge-free, the good news is that there are programs and investments in place to help those Californians ready to go electric.

Multiple agencies, including the California Air Resources Board and the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District (Air District), provide incentives to low- to moderate-income residents (<400% of the federal poverty level) living in disadvantaged communities of the San Joaquin Valley to purchase or lease electric vehicles (EVs).

Navigating these incentive programs can be overwhelming, but the EV Equity Program could help Central Valley residents simplify the incentive application process with the help of navigators who could help you choose the right EV car and submit the applications to obtain down payment assistance, rebates and tax credits. Visit [evequity.com](http://evequity.com).

Your gas cars are not the only thing you could replace—your lawn mower too. The Air District has a rebate program that helps with the replacement of gas/diesel-powered lawn mowers with new electric landscape equipment. For information on requirements and eligibility, contact 559-230-5800 or [grants@valleyair.org](mailto:grants@valleyair.org).

**Reduce your energy consumption.** Perform a household energy audit. Focus on electronic devices such as laptops that are left on 24/7 (which accounts for 5%–10% of residential energy use per year). Turn these devices off when not in use, and you can save an average of \$100 on your electric bill annually. Around the house, replace old bulbs with longer-lasting, more energy-efficient ones.

Do your part to celebrate Earth Day and combat climate change.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nayamin Martinez is the executive director of the Central California Environmental Justice Network.



Monthly meeting the first Tuesday of the Month. Check the web site or Facebook for details.

Fresno, National Women's Political Caucus is a pro-choice, multicultural, intergenerational, and multi-issue 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.

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# Redefining the Family in a Revolutionary Manner in Cuba

By Leni Villagomez Reeves

Cuba finished writing and approving, by referendum, a new constitution in 2019. Now Cuba is creating a legal code that details the rights set forth in the new constitution. The previous Cuban constitution was written in 1975. It was an advanced document for its time, especially regarding women's rights, but it included assumptions then prevalent about heteronormativity and patriarchal authoritarian family structure.

In the new constitution, the most controversial area was marriage rights for anyone other than heterosexual couples. This is the version that was adopted: "All persons have the right to establish a family... Marriage is a social and juridical (legal) institution. It is one of the forms by which families can organize. It is founded in the free consent and the equality of rights, obligations, and legal capabilities of the 2 spouses."

## All the Rights for All the Families

The Families Code is the name of this set of laws—*Codigo de Las Familias*, in Spanish—a recognition of plurality rather than a single model. This proposed set of laws has more than 400 articles, protecting the right of all people to form a family without discrimination, updating the legal definitions with inclusive models, establishing the right to a family life free from violence, and centering values of love, affection, solidarity and responsibility.

Yes, it will recognize same-sex marriage. "Marriage is the voluntary union of two people on the basis of affection, love, and mutual respect." Now let's consider other aspects of what is truly revolutionary in the proposed new Families Code of Cuba, currently in process of consultation with the people.

## Real Consultation with the People

That's part of what's revolutionary—a serious consultation process involving about 78,000 meetings in electoral precincts in every neighborhood. The new laws establish rights not recognized until now in the legal system. The process pushes the limits of the possibility both in an organization and in conception. People have to work through revolutionary changes.

In May, Cuba's Parliament, the *Asamblea de Poder Popular*, will approve a new version of the text with suggestions from the public consultation. After that, the Families Code goes to a popular referendum.

## Getting It Right

The process of consultation and referendum is true participatory democracy. A variety of opinions enriches the discussion. It works best when there is no manipulation of people's fears and prejudices by those who either wish to promote their own beliefs or wish to destabilize Cuba.

Some of those in opposition have attempted to pick out sensitive issues and then to pervert the dialogue by distorting these issues. A Cuban saying is "*La mentira tiene patas cortas*" ("lies have short legs"), but social media, especially when used by professional manipulators, has given some lies long strides.

Here are some lies or distortions, contrasted with reality:

**Falsehood:** Parental authority is replaced by parental responsibility, which means parents will lose control of their children or legal rights to them.

**Reality:** The Families Code does replace the term *authority* with the term *responsibility*, but this does not remove any parental rights. Parents retain all rights and responsibilities, except in sharply defined circumstances in which a parent is harming the child, as in physical or sexual abuse. The state does not take over any parental authority.

**Falsehood:** The state is going to take over the children. The slogan associated with this myth: Children belong to their parents, not the state.

**Reality:** Children belong with their family and in that sense of "belong to their family" there is no dispute or change in the law, but they are not possessions in the sense of "I can do whatever I want with him—or more often her—because she's mine." Parents must care for and protect their children. Only if they fail to do so must the state step in to intervene in the best interests of the child.

**Falsehood:** Courts will be able to allow the marriage of minors without parental consent.

**Reality:** Just the opposite. The current set of laws allows parents and guardians to consent to the marriage of girls at 14, boys at 16, under exceptional circumstances. The new Families Code prohibits the marriage of minors (under 18). Not with the consent of parents. Not by court order. Not at all.

**Falsehood:** The concept of progressive autonomy for children will allow children to make inappropriate decisions. (The religious right often focuses on fears of children making decisions about gender identity.)

**Reality:** Sex change for minors ain't happening. Whether or not we agree with this model, Cuba does not allow minors to make major decisions involving surgery or hormone treatment before legal adulthood at 18.

And progressive autonomy means that children have rights and that they can exercise these rights according to their level of maturity, assuming new decision-making powers appropriate to their development, while parents continue to make decisions for the child in accord with the child's highest interests, considering the child's character and preferences, during the process of maturation.

**Falsehood:** Surrogate pregnancy legalization means women can carry a pregnancy for pay.

**Reality:** Surrogate pregnancy is legalized, but it must be done for love.

**Falsehood:** People of the same sex can marry, and that's a bad idea.

**Reality:** People can marry whom they choose, and that's a great idea.

## The Opposition

On one side of the discussion is an organized conservative political force, centered on evangelical churches, many of them with strong ties to the conservative evangelical churches and political movements in the United States, which help finance them.

They insist on their presumed biblical mandates on marriage, but it's far more than that; there's a marked authoritarian and patriarchal attitude regarding all family structures. They want to have "custody over" rather than "responsibility for" children, with children regarded as possessions within the family structure, and they want to keep the option of physical and psychological violence within the family.

## Coalition of Those for Inclusivity and Justice

It's important to note that this is "not all churches." There is a liberation theology ecumenical religious movement in Cuba that is also represented in this discussion, part of the coalition advocating for diversity, rights and dignity, upholding this Families Code as a document consistent with a biblical message of full dignity and rights for all.

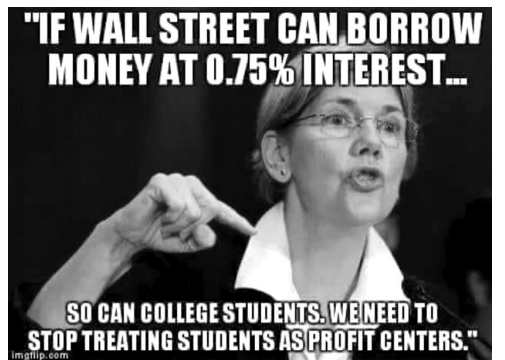
They are part of a broad coalition of organizations and activists for diversity, inclusiveness, feminism, a dismantling of patriarchy and a redefinition of family, with the widening of the concept of family beyond consanguinity to open it to relationships that are built on love, affection and solidarity, a view that promotes equity and justice as root values and extends additional legal rights and autonomy to the elderly, to children and to people with incapacities and disabilities.

The Cuban Revolution, acting with integrity, cannot bargain away the rights of any sector of the people to conform to popular or religious prejudice. Back when the California Fair Housing Act was being considered in 1959, some White people used to think and say that a good argument against laws prohibiting discrimination was "You can't legislate how people feel."

But you can certainly legislate how people act. Cuba is uniquely trying to educate in the process of legislating, but All the Rights for All the Families is ultimately not negotiable.

\*\*\*\*\*

Leni Villagomez Reeves is a local physician and activist. Contact her at [lenivreeves@gmail.com](mailto:lenivreeves@gmail.com). Check out her news and views about Cuba on Facebook ([fresnosolidarity/](https://www.facebook.com/fresnosolidarity/)).



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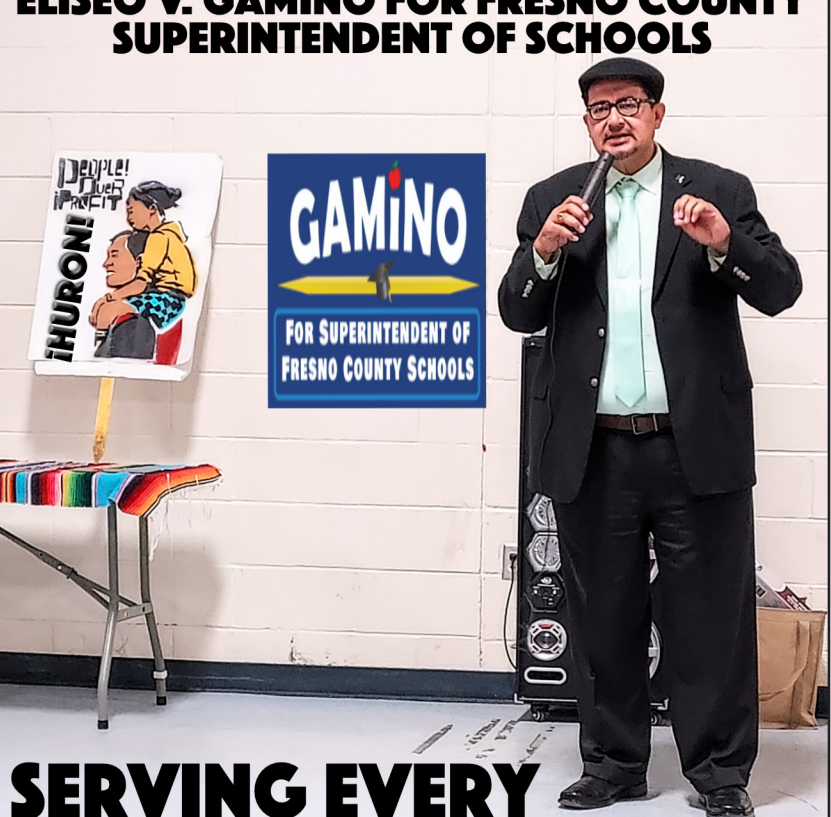
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# Earth Day Redux

By Michael D. Evans

At the risk of revealing my age, I want to reminisce briefly about the first Earth Day: April 22, 1970.

I was in my freshman year of high school. My civics teacher, Mike Thompson, was right out of college with no teaching experience but a vision that the contemporary methods of teaching weren't working. (He was right.)

After following the textbook for the first semester, he decided to shake up things in the second half of the academic year. He asked us—the students—what we wanted to study. Our responses:

- The antiwar movement. It's 1970, the Vietnam war is under way and we're getting close to the draft age.
- Sex education
- Ecology
- Abortion. This was before *Roe v. Wade*, which coincidentally was announced a few years later on my 18th birthday.
- Rock 'n' roll

Mr. Thompson didn't think he could get away with sex education as that more appropriately belonged in biology class. And rock music might just be a bridge too far, although he had previously described *Easy Rider* to the class in detail. For the other subjects, we spent a six-week grading period on each.

Today, such a departure from the curriculum would no doubt be grounds for dismissal, and it might have been then had any of the students shared Mr. Thompson's creativity with a school board member. But we didn't know anything about the school board, so this innovative scenario really played out in a small town in North Carolina.

The ecology discussion was fascinating.

We read Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

We started an ecology club, which we named URTH. That was intended to be a bastardization of the term *earth*, but everyone kept wanting to know what it stood for, so we landed on Ugly Ride To Hell.

About that term *ecology*. Yes, that was what we said then. *Environment* became the accepted terminology later.

The URTH Club actually did stuff, unlike most student clubs that were basically just an avenue to get another photo of yourself in the yearbook. And as a freshman, I was thrilled that my "rookie" status wasn't viewed as a barrier to participation.

We cleaned up an illegal dumpsite near the high school.

We tidied and upgraded an empty lot in the African American section of town. Our town's residences were completely segregated at the time, and this was the first



Earth Day celebration in 1970. Photo courtesy of Earthday.org

year that the schools were fully integrated. As you might imagine, our activity raised some eyebrows.

I was assigned to take the lead on the cleanup of the school grounds—me, a freshman!

For Earth Day, we brought a prominent speaker to campus. This was unprecedented. Everybody got out of class to head to the football bleachers to hear about how our planet was being ravaged but also how we could get in front of that to ensure a better world.

And we were educating others.

At the local drugstore when buying toothpaste, Mr. Thompson brought the box to the counter, took the tube out of the box, laid the box on the counter, and said, "please discontinue use of this excess packaging." You can imagine the clerk's shocked expression.

At home, my parents were somewhat perturbed when I started wrapping presents in newspaper rather than fancy wrapping paper and began insisting that we recycle various products (although, oddly enough, people regularly recycled soft drink bottles at the time, and stores actually paid for that).

At about the same time, a recurring segment of *The Bold Ones* called *The Senator*, starring Hal Holbrook, debuted on network television. The pilot episode had an old friend of the senator's family dying from emphysema and his son taking up the crusade against air pollution in response. Holbrook allegedly got that role because of his earlier portrayal of an aspiring Senate candidate in the cult classic *Wild in the Streets* who advocates lowering the voting age to 15.

So that's how I came to be tabling in downtown Forest City (originally called Burnt Chimney) on the first Earth Day. After school let out, a handful of us URTH Club members set up a table in front of Ron & Eddy's Restaurant (immortalized in the song "The Ron and Eddy Blues" by Rod Abernathy of the band Arrogance) and proceeded to inform passersby about pollution and recycling. You know, revolutionary stuff.

Our small town had two weekly newspapers. One had been around for decades and was a comfortably boring publication that wouldn't have dreamed of disrupting the

status quo. The new kid on the block, called *This Week*, was started by a couple of 20-something journalism majors, and they spiced up things with good photography that dominated the page and feature-style writing that made even the most mundane small-town events worth reading about.

The publisher of *This Week* was there with us documenting the first Earth Day. He later went on to teach journalism at UNC Chapel Hill.

At the time, we thought the warnings of dire consequences for not protecting Mother Earth would take hold. Folks like Ehrlich, Barry Commoner (who would run for President in 1980) and Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day, were sounding that message.

But for a time Earth Day was largely forgotten, celebrated only by the hardcore. Attending a gubernatorial candidate forum in North Carolina in 1976, I started a question by saying "Earth Day is just around the corner..." and then asked an environment-related question. The candidate (who did not win) clearly had never heard of Earth Day.

Now Earth Day has become like elections, each being the most important ever because of the horrific results just around the corner if we don't make the right decisions.

Although we have advanced on the environmental front rather significantly since the first Earth Day—separating our garbage, eliminating Sears Roebuck catalogs, cleaning up some rivers and ponds, shifting from newsprint to online newspapers, reducing auto emissions—for every step forward we seem to take two steps backward. Moreover, we appear to have hit a roadblock for how much of the public is open to enhanced environmental awareness.

Earth Day is every bit as important in 2022 as it was in 1970, maybe more so because time is running short to implement the necessary changes. So, Earth Day 2022 is a renewed call to immediate action.

\*\*\*\*\*

Michael D. Evans is a political activist, editor and writer. Contact him at [evansm@usa.net](mailto:evansm@usa.net).

## Act Now!

To get involved with others working to protect the environment, contact any of the following grassroots leaders in Fresno County:

- Leslie Martinez ([lmartinez@leadershipcounsel.org](mailto:lmartinez@leadershipcounsel.org)), community engagement specialist, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Ron Martin (559-390-1338 or [martinrj93638@yahoo.com](mailto:martinrj93638@yahoo.com)), conservation chair, Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter
- Connie Young (559-225-2547 or [cyoung@sbccglobal.net](mailto:cyoung@sbccglobal.net)), Citizens Climate Lobby
- Nayamin Martinez ([nayamin.martinez@ccejn.org](mailto:nayamin.martinez@ccejn.org)), executive director, Central California Environmental Justice Network

## Dialectic between Inorganic and Organic Art

Continued from page 11

goal of the artist is to create an image that is interpreted by the mind as something that is beautiful or artful.

In Western art, the organic life of a painting or sculpture is dead, whereas in the art of bonsai the tree itself is organic and living and the bonsai artist shapes the tree to aesthetically resemble a tree in nature. The naturalness of the tree is what the viewer perceives as beautiful or as art. Paint and sculpture are just paint and metal, and it is dead or inorganic.

It is the shape or image the artist creates that evokes in the perceiver's mind, and the perceiver interprets this shape as beauty or what is artful. The perceiver's mind comes alive organically interpreting the medium—paint, metal or wood, as an artistic expression—but the paint, metal or wood and any mixture of them is inorganic or dead.

The Eastern art of bonsai is organic, and the bonsai artist shapes the tree to resemble nature that makes the viewer's organic mind view the aesthetic expression like art and therefore artful.

In other words, for Western art, the inorganic is created into a form and that aesthetic form is interpreted by the organic human mind of the viewer as beauty or as art. Bonsai, on the other hand, is organic to begin with and the bonsai artist shapes the tree to resemble nature and the organic mind of the viewer interprets it as beautiful or artful.

To put this argument into a formula: Western art (WA) is inorganic or dead (I), shaped by an artist (SA), interpreted by an organic human mind (M) to be artful or art (A).

$(WA) \rightarrow (I) \rightarrow (SA) \rightarrow (OHM) = (A)$

The Eastern art of bonsai (EAB) is organic (O), a tree shaped by a bonsai artist (BA) interpreted by the organic human mind (OHM) to be artful or art.

$(EAB) \rightarrow (O) \rightarrow (BA) \rightarrow (OHM) = (A)$

The reference point or the mean for art is the artist's creation and the viewer's or perceiver's organic interpretation of what the Western artist or Eastern artist has created as a creation of beauty, a creation that is artful and therefore art.

In a paradoxical way, Western art needs a perceiver because it is created from inorganic materials and shaped into a form that can be interpreted by the organic mind as beauty or art.

The art of bonsai does not really need a perceiver to be labeled art because it is organic and properly maintained and the pruned tree is artful in itself—but a trained perceiver indicates if it is art by how the shape of the tree, shaped by a bonsai artist, based on traditional forms of aesthetic presentations, resembles the trees observed in nature to be beautiful or artful.

Experience the organic art of bonsai through the Clark Bonsai Collection in the ShinZen Japanese Garden at Woodward Park.

\*\*\*\*\*

Homer Gee Greene Jr. is a freelance writer and photographer, documentarian for the Clark Bonsai Collection and founding partner and business manager for the start-up tech company ScholarDev LLC. He is retired from Fresno City College.



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## Peace Fresno



**Could Ukraine Crisis Start a Nuclear Showdown?**  
Saturday, April 9, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

A Zoom panel discussion hosted by Peace Fresno featuring national peace movement leaders. A look behind mainstream media sound bites from people who have made US foreign policy their focus for decades.

Bev Fitzpatrick [president@peacefresno.org](mailto:president@peacefresno.org) for Zoom link

**Alice Slater** is on the Board of Directors of World BEYOND War. She is the UN NGO Representative of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. She writes, speaks, and has traveled to Russia and China on numerous delegations engaged in ending the arms race and banning the bomb.

**John V. Walsh**, a retired Professor of Physiology and Neuroscience and peace activist who has written on geopolitics for Asia Times, SF Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News, LA Progressive, [Antiwar.com](http://Antiwar.com), CounterPunch and others.

**Marcy Winograd**, is a long-time antiwar activist with CODEPINK. She served as a 2020 DNC delegate to Bernie Sanders and co-founded the Progressive Caucus of the California Democratic Party. She blogs about militarism and foreign policy.



# Covid-19 Vaccine Myths in the Central Valley

By Eduardo Stanley

Study after study shows that as more people are vaccinated for Covid-19, the virus is less likely to spread, mutate and potentially become even more dangerous. According to the California Health Department, during the last week of February, unvaccinated people were five times more likely to get Covid-19 than those who had received a booster shot.

Yet in the San Joaquin Valley, where Latinos are the majority in most counties, the vaccination rate remains low, often because of myths about the vaccines.

"'I got Covid, so I don't need to get vaccinated' is one of the many excuses I heard," said Marlen Miranda, who leads the COVID-19 Equity Project of Cultiva La Salud, a Fresno-based nonprofit.

"A couple came to our mobile vaccination center in Reedley. The lady got the vaccine but not her husband. I chatted with him and asked why, and he replied, 'I feel strong.'"

This attitude of machismo is common among men in patriarchal societies.

She mentioned other excuses she's heard: "The vaccine will give you Covid," and "The vaccine doesn't protect you." Some mothers told her they were concerned that vaccinating their children might make them infertile or affect their growth. The No. 1 excuse, she said, is "The vaccine was produced way too fast."

Cultiva La Salud has set up vaccination centers in Fresno's neighborhoods and small rural towns, promoting the centers in stores and offering incentives such as food and live music for those who get vaccinated.

"We also offer gift cards. During one visit to a rural town," Miranda recalled, "a person came and asked if we really were offering a gift card. I explained we'd just run out of the cards, so he refused to get the vaccine."

Another time, three minors came to a vaccination center saying they wanted to get vaccinated but their parents refused to give them permission. That same day, a girl told Miranda the priest in her church "talked bad about the vaccine."

The reality is that word of mouth is a strong influence in Latino culture.

Miranda is concerned that fewer people are going to the mobile centers now. Interest in getting vaccinated seems to be waning, a trend that is true nationwide though the reasons are unclear.

In California, it's easy to get a vaccination appointment (visit [myturn.ca.gov](http://myturn.ca.gov)) using a smartphone or computer, she said, but Latino elders don't have access to those devices or the skills to use them, making vaccination efforts more difficult in Central Valley communities.

Minerva Mendoza, program associate of the Pan Valley Institute, described the excuses she's heard for not getting vaccinated. One is, "How is it possible there's no vaccine for diabetes or cancer, and they came up with a vaccine for Covid in a short period of time?" Others are that vaccinations only benefit the big pharma businesses and that the second dose meant the vaccine wasn't working.

Mendoza, a Fresno State graduate who was born in Oaxaca, Mexico, said, "I also heard, 'Our immune system should take care of Covid.'"

The majority of Latinos are Catholics, and religion, too, is influencing people, Mendoza said. In November 2020, Bishop Joseph Brennan of the Diocese of Fresno expressed "concerns" about stem cells from aborted fetuses being used in vaccine development, and he urged Catholics not to "jump on the Covid-19 vaccine bandwagon."



In the San Joaquin Valley, the vaccination rate remains low, often because of myths about the vaccines. Photo by Eduardo Stanley

Mendoza got Covid in January. "It wasn't fun. I had chest pains and serious difficulties breathing... Fortunately, I was fully vaccinated by then; otherwise, who knows?"

She is concerned about the drop in vaccination numbers and worries about farmworkers, who are "essential workers" but remain a hard sector of the community to vaccinate because of cultural or educational limitations, or fears based on rumors.

"During the pandemic, we stopped working for only two weeks," said Porfirio Hernandez, a team leader who manages a 20-person crew mainly harvesting grapes year-round in the fields of Madera County.

"In my team, most people are vaccinated. Those not vaccinated like to repeat the story of the person who got vaccinated and later she could stick a spoon to her arm. That scares them."

It's essential for farmworkers to stay healthy. Their access to healthcare is limited, and their income is low. Also, there's no medicine man (or woman) in California—important for immigrant workers of indigenous origin who mostly come from Oaxaca.

"I drink teas to prevent certain illnesses, and I also use vitamins," said Pedro Cruz, 62, an Oaxaca-born farmworker from Arvin, Kern County, who relies on traditional herbalism.

Hit by Covid-19 in 2021, Cruz and his family were quarantined, but he was hospitalized for two months and had pain for months afterward. Still, Cruz is reluctant to get vaccinated, though he can't explain why he won't do it to protect himself and his family.

Science has shown that vaccines prevent or minimize sickness and reduce hospitalizations and deaths.

"People believe and repeat things that don't make sense, and this is hurting us," said Hernandez.

\*\*\*\*\*

Eduardo Stanley is the editor of the Community Alliance newspaper. Contact him at [editor@fresnoalliance.com](mailto:editor@fresnoalliance.com).

**A Central Valley Progressive PAC call to action:**

**Vote for  
Andy Levine  
FUSD Trustee Area 5  
(Fresno High)**

The next meeting of the Central Valley Progressive PAC will be **Saturday, April 9**, starting at 3:30 p.m.

We will be considering endorsements in Fresno City Council races, for the Board of Supervisors and more.

Join Zoom Meeting:  
<https://zoom.us/j/92483756535?pwd=bohCSlVveVB3TDBmMopZRoVtM1h4UT09>

Meeting ID: 924 8375 6535  
Passcode: 814922

For more information, contact Simone Cranston-Rhodes  
CVPPAC President  
Cell: 559-978-4504  
E-mail: [simone.rhodes@seiu521.org](mailto:simone.rhodes@seiu521.org)

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# Peace & Social Justice Calendar April 2022

Sponsored by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence

Note: Contact the organizer for up-to-date information on whether meetings are in person or via Zoom.

**FRI 01** **CineCulture: Kuessipan** 5:15 p.m. Discussion via Zoom. A dramatic and poetic adaptation of First Nation Innu novelist Naomi Fontaine's bestselling novel, the film narrates the coming of age story of two young Innu girls, inseparable since childhood, who promise to always stay together no matter what. Secure a link to view the film at [cineculture.csufresno.edu/](http://cineculture.csufresno.edu/). The film will be available online for 3-5 days prior to the discussion. Sponsors: French Program and the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures.

**Reedley Peace Center** 6 p.m. Via Zoom. Presenter: Tobin Miller Shearer, professor of history and director of African-American studies at the University of Montana. Topic: Reflections on Three Decades of Dismantling Racism in White Institutions. Shearer will identify and explore the three most common opportunities and pitfalls he and his colleagues have encountered while supporting the efforts to dismantle racism in predominantly White institutions. For more info, contact [nislykiewer@gmail.com](mailto:nislykiewer@gmail.com).

**SAT 02** **Kennedy Club of the San Joaquin Valley** 9 a.m. Via Zoom. Speaker: Roman C. Rain Tree. Topic: Renaming of Squaw Valley. For more info, contact 559-435-4043 or [claval@comcast.net](mailto:claval@comcast.net).

**MON 04** **Democratic Women in Action** 6 p.m. Via Zoom. Speakers: Assembly District 27 Candidates Esmeralda Soria and Mike Karbassi. Contact 559-681-3140 or [ggaston1234@aol.com](mailto:ggaston1234@aol.com).

**TUE 05** **National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC)** 6 p.m. Sal's Mexican Restaurant, 7476 N. Fresno St. We are back in person with an update on all things NWPC Fresno and to enjoy being social again. For more info, contact 559-222-6212 or [joanne@pbyoga.com](mailto:joanne@pbyoga.com).

**WED 06** **KFCF 88.1 FM: Stir It Up!** 3 p.m. *Community Alliance* radio show hosted by I. smiley G. Calderon. For more info, visit [www.kfcf.org](http://www.kfcf.org).

**Fresno County Democratic Party** 6:30 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-495-0606 or [dems@fresnocountydemocrats.org](mailto:dems@fresnocountydemocrats.org).

**THU 07** **ArtHop Downtown/Tower District** 5 p.m.-8 p.m. Museums, studios, galleries and other venues

open their exhibits free to the public. For more info, visit [FACarthop](https://www.facebook.com/FACarthop) on Facebook.

**FRI 08** **CineCulture: Xueta Island** 5:15 p.m. Discussion via Zoom. The film explores the fascinating legacy of the Xuetas (pronounced Chuetas), a unique group of families on the Balearic island of Majorca, Spain, who are believed to be descendants of the island's Inquisition-era Jewish population. Secure a link to view the film at [cineculture.csufresno.edu/](http://cineculture.csufresno.edu/). The film will be available online for 3-5 days prior to the discussion. Sponsors: Jewish Studies Program and the Jewish Studies Association.

**SAT 09** **Peace Fresno Panel** 2 p.m.-3:30 p.m. Via Zoom. Title: Could the Ukraine Crisis Start a Nuclear Showdown? Panelists: Alice Slate, John V. Walsh and Macy Winograd. Members will receive a Zoom link via e-mail; non-members RSVP to [dfitzpatrick29@comcast.net](mailto:dfitzpatrick29@comcast.net) or 559-355-9717 to receive the Zoom link.

**MON 11** **Central Valley Progressive PAC** 3:30 p.m. Via Zoom. Endorsements. For more info, contact 559-978-4504 or [simone.rhodes@seiu521.org](mailto:simone.rhodes@seiu521.org).

**TUE 12** **Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA)** 6 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, call 559-392-8718.

**Stonewall Democratic Club** 6 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-709-8016 or [conantm@aol.com](mailto:conantm@aol.com).

**Black American Political Association of California (BAPAC)** 6 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-287-1308 or [debbiejarden@gmail.com](mailto:debbiejarden@gmail.com).

**WED 13** **Peace Fresno** 6:30 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 Van Ness Ave. In person/via Zoom. For more info, call 559-355-9717.

**THU 14** **KFCF 88.1 FM: Stir It Up!** 3 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence radio show. For more info, visit [www.kfcf.org](http://www.kfcf.org).

**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom** 7 p.m. For more info, contact 559-360-8054 or [taca\\_03@ymail.com](mailto:taca_03@ymail.com).

**Trivia Night Thursday!** 6 p.m. Democratic Party HQ, 1033 U St. In person/via Zoom. Enjoy a fun night of trivia with fellow Democrats. Bring your competitive spirit. To sign up, visit [mobilize.us/mobilize/event/426575/](http://mobilize.us/mobilize/event/426575/). For more info, contact 530-241-2043.

**Fresno County Equity Coalition Candidate Forum** 6 p.m. SEIU Union Hall, 5228 E. Pine Ave. Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 4 and Fresno County Superintendent of Schools candidates. Translation services provided. The event will be recorded and aired by Radio Bilingüe and CMAC. Sponsors: Radio Bilingüe and Community Media

Access Collaborative (CMAC), Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), California Environmental Voters, Cultiva La Salud, Communities for a New California (CNC), Planned Parenthood, SEIU 521 and Sierra Club. For more info, contact 559-387-5393 or [pwhalen@doloreshuerta.org](mailto:pwhalen@doloreshuerta.org).

**FRI 15** **CineCulture: Spring Break**

**SAT 16** **West Fresno Democratic Club** 9 a.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-930-4909 or [westfresnodemclub@gmail.com](mailto:westfresnodemclub@gmail.com).

**SUN 17** **Democratic Socialists of America** 2 p.m. For more info, visit Facebook @ Democratic Socialists of America, Fresno, CA.

**MON 18** **California Latina Democrats-Fresno** 6 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-859-6203 or [chaircalatinadems@gmail.com](mailto:chaircalatinadems@gmail.com).

**TUE 19** **Central Valley Partnership** 5:30 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-967-1940 or [agrariandemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:agrariandemocracy@gmail.com).

**Covid-19 Booster Shot Phone Bank** 6 p.m. Via Zoom. According to the CDC, among all fully vaccinated adults 18 and older in California, nearly 14% have received a booster shot. Phone bank in our community and help schedule our neighbors for a booster shot. Sponsored by the Fresno County Democratic Party. To sign up, visit [mobilize.us/mobilize/event/427493/](http://mobilize.us/mobilize/event/427493/). For more info, call 530-241-2043.

**WED 20** **KFCF 88.1 FM: Speaking Truth to Empire** 3 p.m. Hosted by Dan Yaseen. For more info, visit [www.kfcf.org](http://www.kfcf.org).

**San Joaquin Valley Democratic Club** 6:30 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, call 559-312-3925.

**Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter** 7 p.m. Via Zoom. Speaker: Shirley Spencer. Topic: Western Artists and Their Influences on the National Parks. Prior to photography, artists became the eyes of a young nation viewing and depicting the splendor of the western landscapes to an eager public. Many of these had an impact on the creation of the national parks and monuments we enjoy today. Visit [sierraclub.org/tehipite](http://sierraclub.org/tehipite) to register in advance for the presentation.

**THU 21** **ArtHop Downtown/Fresno Metro Area** 5 p.m.-8 p.m. Museums, studios, galleries and other venues open their exhibits free to the public. For more info, visit [FACarthop](https://www.facebook.com/FACarthop) on Facebook.

**Clovis Democratic Club** 7 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-322-9740 or [jenikren@gmail.com](mailto:jenikren@gmail.com).

**FRI 22** **CineCulture: The Desire to Live** 5:15 p.m. Discussion via Zoom. The film tells the stories of the indigenous people of Artsakh

after the recent 44-day war with Azerbaijan and suffering a devastating loss of lives and land. The desire to live is really a right to live on their lands and be protected from the threat of war, genocide and crimes against their humanity. Secure a link to view the film at [cineculture.csufresno.edu/](http://cineculture.csufresno.edu/). The film will be available online for 3-5 days prior to the discussion. Sponsor: Armenian Studies Program.

**MON 25** **Fresno County Democratic Women's Club** 11 a.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-960-2292 or [ms.keshiathomasvp@gmail.com](mailto:ms.keshiathomasvp@gmail.com).

**Fresno County Democratic Party Virtual Fundraiser** 5 p.m. Special Guest Speaker: Senator Alex Padilla. Introduction by Rep. Jim Costa. Mistress of Ceremonies: State Controller Betty Yee. \$50/person. For tickets, visit <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/fresnodems2022>.

**TUE 26** **California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)** 10 a.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 510-663-4086 or [californiaalliance.org](http://californiaalliance.org).

# Trash Hauling

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Submit upcoming community activities to [calendar@fresnoalliance.com](mailto:calendar@fresnoalliance.com) by the 15th of the month preceding publication.



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# DOLORES HUERTA FOUNDATION

INSPIRING AND ORGANIZING COMMUNITIES TO BUILD VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS  
EMPOWERED TO PURSUE SOCIAL JUSTICE.

## Our Commitment to Community Wellness

Our commitment to community wellness continues as we host our United Against COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics this month. The United Against COVID-19 Coalition consists of strong leading community organizations like All of Us or None, Building Healthy Communities Kern, Lideres Campesinas, South Kern Sol, Unidad Popular, and Vision y Compromiso. "Throughout this pandemic, DHF has focused on providing science-based information, PPE and resources to our communities to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and get all eligible people vaccinated," said Camila Chavez, executive director of the Dolores Huerta Foundation (DHF). As of March 2022, federal data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that 76.5% of the total population in the United States have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. As vaccines were made accessible, Black and Hispanic/Latinx people have been less likely to receive a vaccine than White people. Lack of access and vaccine confidence might be the answer. Due to this, the Dolores Huerta Foundation has strategically organized free vaccine clinics, as a partner in the United Against COVID-19 Coalition, in the communities that fall behind. The recent data indicates that the racial gap is lessening which further supports our efforts in decreasing vaccination inequities.

To further support these communities, at times, DHF will also distribute donated goods during these vaccine clinics. DHF Campaign Coordinator Elizabeth (Liz), recalls a most recent event in Arvin, California as one of her "favorites" as 130 people were able to test for COVID-19 and 94 received their vaccine. A special thanks to Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK) as 200 people walked away with bags of rice, spaghetti, and other delicious canned goods. We are proud to have each vaccine clinic staffed with community members that prioritize community wellness. Arianna Lema says, "Being vaccinated honestly has never been for me, it's for my neighbors. I want to be protected so others around me have a higher chance of protection as well. Coming from an auto immune family I knew immediately how serious doing your part is. We give the best resources to stay protected so we must use them!" As a trusted messenger in the community we will continue to inform and encourage community members with the facts and make resources available. No appointment, proof of insurance or citizenship is needed. If you're trying to get a vaccinated or boosted contact: 661-383-2588. For more information about our next vaccination clinic visit [www.doloreshuerta.org](http://www.doloreshuerta.org)

"This pyramid of food boxes is something we've been doing for a while and it's fun to see and put together but even better when we're able to really distribute it all to the community members who join us at these vaccine clinic events."

-Elizabeth Palencia, DHF Staff

## A Few Words From Our DHF Volunteers

Arianna Lema, a volunteer at DHF joined the movement because "The environment is like no other and the people we help are very welcoming and grateful. Being and helping at the grass root is always going to remain the most important of an organizer's life. Being vaccinated honestly has never been for me, it's for my neighbors. I want to be protected so others around me have a higher chance of protection as well. Coming from an auto immune family I knew immediately how serious doing your part is. We give the best resources to stay protected so we must use them!"

Haily Lema, a volunteer at DHF joined the movement because, "It's super empowering to me knowing I have the ability to help protect my community against something dangerous and possibly life-threatening to so many others. And if I have the power to help slow it then I will. Being vaccinated will always bring me a little extra sense of security that personally I think everybody can use. It lets me know that I've done what I can to keep myself and everyone around me safe in situations we can't control with the resources we're thankful enough to have access to."

## DHF Youth Program Partners with Sol-Collective

Since the rebranding of the Youth Program, the team continues to build on the capacity of the youth by celebrating their work and uplifting their voices. Recently, through a recommendation from consultant Dr. Susie Lundy, the DHF Youth Program secured a collaboration with Sol-Collective. Sol Collective, a community-based 501(c)(3) partner whose mission is to provide artistic, cultural, and educational programming, has crafted lessons and workshops that incorporate DHF Youth Program's three curriculum pathways which are focused on cultural art, technology, and civic engagement. Virginia Espino, DHF Youth Program's Project Associate believe's the trainings offered by Sol-Collective have "exceeded expectations" as they've provided various workshops and listening sessions tailored to the goals of the department. This training is beneficial to growing minds as expressive art, wellness practices, technology skills and civic engagement training tools are needed to foster a BIPOC youth-led social justice movement.

Sol-Collective continues to provide DHF youth members with skill building sessions / exercises such as video production, digital illustrations, wellness techniques (breathing, meditation, healing circles, healing "activities", poetry, story-telling), and many more! "One of my favorite sessions while being part of the LYFE program has been learning best practices for public speaking. I got to learn a lot about speaking my opinion on important topics influencing kids today. I will use it in giving back to my community by educating many others on these topics and also by helping to solve these issues as well," says DHF Fresno, CA Youth member Alejandro. We believe the skills learned through this partnership will benefit youth in their professional development and journey as social justice warriors.

"One of my favorite sessions while being part of the LYFE program has been learning best practices for public speaking. I got to learn a lot about speaking my opinion on important topics influencing kids today. I will use it in giving back to my community by educating many others on these topics and also by helping to solve these issues as well." -Alejandro, Fresno Youth

To learn more about the progression and development of the DHF youth program, visit [www.doloreshuerta.org](http://www.doloreshuerta.org)

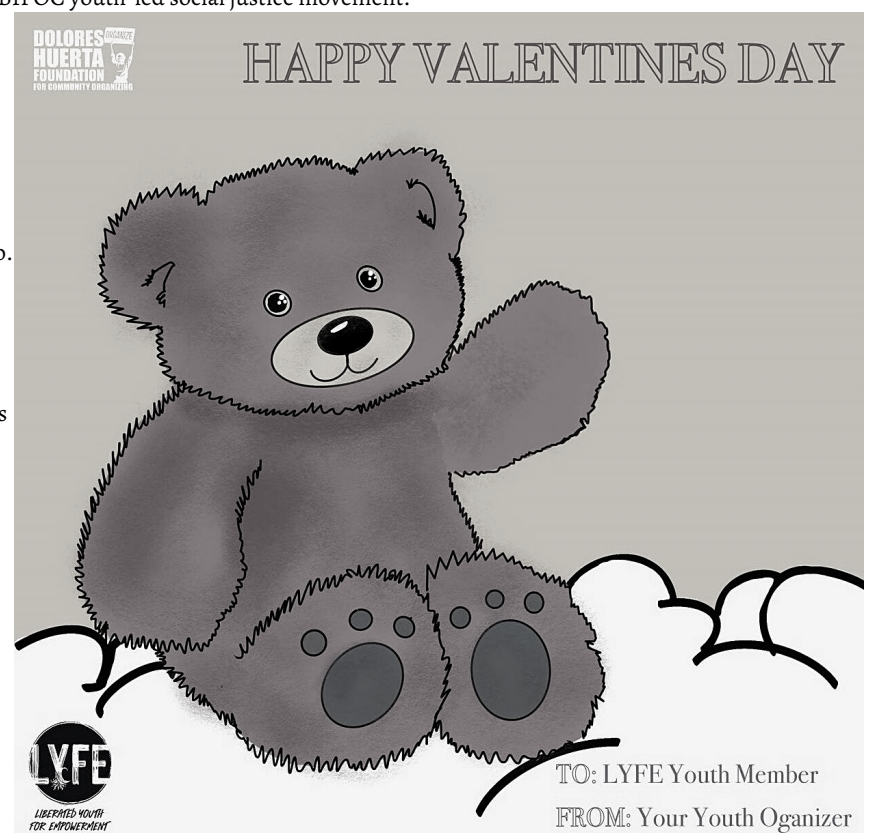
**Let's Cancel COVID!**

Make an appointment to get vaccinated at  
[myturn.ca.gov](http://myturn.ca.gov).

Protect yourself, protect your loved ones.



Lorena Sevier, I continue to volunteer at DHF because I love our mission, helping our communities can make the difference and one day can be reflected by changing people's mind and showing that if we work together we can make things be true...Si Se Puede!!



The illustration above was created by our Youth during one of their many Sol-Collective workshops.

For more information on how you can join the Vecinos Unidos® contact 1-833-564-6343 or 1-833-JOIN-DHF  
To support the organizing work of the Dolores Huerta Foundation, please visit [Give2DHF.org](http://Give2DHF.org)



# FRESNO COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

# NEWS

Fresno County Democrats hosted a community event celebrating Black People's History Month. The celebration honored Black elected officials, Black culture and Black excellence. Elected officials Dr. Crystal Jackson, Kimberly Tapscott-Munson and Shawn Brooks spoke at the event. A big thank you to the Fresno African Drummers, the Purposed II Praise dancers, Kina McFadden and DJ Dave Harris for performing!



PLEASE JOIN THE FRESNO COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY FOR A  
**VIRTUAL FUNDRAISER**  
 MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2022 • 5 PM - 6 PM

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS  
**SENATOR ALEX PADILLA**  
*"We continue to witness an assault on American democracy based on lies and conspiracy theories. The fate of our democracy rests on our ability to protect voting rights for all citizens."*

INTRODUCTION BY  
 REP. JIM COSTA

MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES,  
 CONTROLLER BETTY YEE

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**For event tickets and sponsorships, visit**  
<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/fresnodems2022>  
 Zoom registration link will be sent after you have completed the ActBlue contribution/ticket process.

**For additional information**  
 Contact Marsha Conant at 559.709.8016, call 559-495-0606, 559-709-8016 or e-mail [dems@fresnocountydemocrats.org](mailto:dems@fresnocountydemocrats.org)

DEMOCRACY AT A CROSSROADS

## Fresno County Board of Supervisors: Will Past Be Prologue to the Future?

In the last three months of 2021, activist groups throughout the central and southern San Joaquin Valley waged a vigorous political fight to force county boards of supervisors to adopt redistricting maps that more fairly represent people of color and historically marginalized groups—especially Latinos, who constitute the majority in Fresno County—based on the 2020 Census.

The fight in Fresno County was particularly active. Groups such as the Equity Map Coalition, the Central California Coalition for Equitable Realignment, the Dolores Huerta Foundation, the Central Valley Progressive PAC and the Central Valley Partnership, among others, urged their members to publicly testify at various hearings, and dozens did so.

Redistricting in Fresno County was disingenuous from the start when the supervisors hired National Demographics Corporation (NDC) to manage the process. The hiring of NDC was not subject to a public vote by the supervisors because the budgeted amount to hire NDC barely fell into a discretionary monetary category, not requiring a vote.

Recall that NDC's CEO is Doug Johnson, the protégé of the Republican gerrymandering specialist Thomas Hofeller, who advocated including the "citizenship question" on the 2020 Census. While that question never appeared on the Census, it was likely enough to frighten non-citizens into not responding.

Fresno County supervisors exercised the option to establish an 11-member citizen advisory commission, but it seemed to be nothing more than a smoke screen for genuine citizen involvement. Ultimately, in mid-December, the supervisors adopted a map similar to one presented by Republican activist Alex Tavlian—a map showing little variation from the map adopted after the 1990 Census, but not before hundreds marched in downtown Fresno on Dec. 4, led by civil rights icon Dolores Huerta, to protest the process.

Recent votes by Fresno County supervisors are disturbing to our community.

- On March 8, supervisors clearly put their heads in the sand, thinking that ignoring the reality of anthropogenic climate change will simply make the problem go away. They voted against executing a \$175,000 state grant to assess how climate change affects the health of Fresno County's vulnerable communities, particularly rural populations. Studies of many San Joaquin Valley communities have shown the existence of health disparities based on race, neighborhood, income, immigration status and other factors. No doubt, climate change exacerbates these conditions, and this modest study would help quantify these issues. This study would actually cost less than the county spent to hire NDC to do its redistricting!
- On March 22, the supervisors unanimously passed a resolution put forward by Supervisors Steve Brandau and Nathan Magsig urging the state to increase oil drilling in California given increasing prices at the pump. Groups such as the Climate Center and the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition disagree with the move, which they say simply lines the pockets of oil company CEOs, endangers the health of neighborhoods near any increased drilling and hydraulic fracturing, and steers California away from long-term goals of developing renewable energy. Fact: Any increase in crude oil production in Fresno County would have insignificant impact on reducing gasoline prices. Why? Because big oil bought the oil it is currently refining months ago at much lower prices on the futures market, while their costs of refining have not gone up. It is price gouging by big oil, plain and simple.
- We now set our sights on 2030. What to do? Two months ago, Assembly Member Joaquin Arambula (D-Fresno) introduced AB 2030, which would require Fresno County to establish an independent citizens redistricting commission, which would not be under the foot of the supervisors. AB 2030 passed its first hurdle in late March—approval on a 6-1 vote by the Assembly Fiscal Committee. It now goes to the Assembly Committee on Local Government. The bill is supported by the Dolores Huerta Foundation. If Arambula's bill passes, Fresno County voters will have a fighting chance to make sure that past will not be prologue after the 2030 Census.

### Special Elections in Fresno County

Three special elections in Fresno County are scheduled in April.

#### Tuesday, April 5

##### Congressional District 22

This special election is to fill the Congressional seat vacated by Devin Nunes.

- If there is an outright winner, that person will serve in the House from late April until early January 2023.
- If there is no outright winner in April, the race will be decided in the June Primary, and the winner then will serve from roughly late June to early January 2023.
- There are six candidates, two of whom are Democrats
- Democrats: Eric Garcia and Lourin Hubbard

#### Tuesday, April 12

##### Special Consolidated School Board Election for Fresno Unified and West Park Elementary

- Fresno Unified School District Trustee Area 5
  - Replacement election following the passing of Carol Mills
  - There are four candidates, two of whom are Democrats
  - Democrats: Andy Levine, Daniel Renteria
- West Park Elementary
  - There are two candidates, one of whom is a Democrat
  - Democrat: Araceli Lopez

## DEMOCRATIC PARTY HEADQUARTERS

1033 U Street • Downtown Fresno • 559-495-0606

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# Fresno Center for Nonviolence 2022

April 2022

*Demand Peace from our leaders since living creatures, we take the worst violence and not them. If we refuse to demand peace, then who will.*



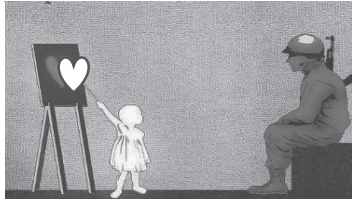
Edited by  
 Richard Gomez.

**Dedicated to PEACE and SOCIAL JUSTICE through**

**SIMPLICITY ~ JUSTICE ~ INCLUSIVENESS ~ NON-INJURY**

1584 N. Van Ness Ave., 93728 - [www.centerfornonviolence.org](http://www.centerfornonviolence.org) - email: [info@centerfornonviolence.org](mailto:info@centerfornonviolence.org)  
 - (559)237-3223. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FresnoCenterforNonviolence/>

Teach your children there is no glory or heroes in war. That the glory comes from the actions that prevent wars, and the heroes are the ones who implement those action.



Congratulations to Dr. Sudershan Kapoor, Professor Emeritus, CA State University Fresno has been selected as the 2022 Arthur Saftstrom Service Award by Fresno State & the Fresno State Alumni Association.  
 To be broadcast on ABC 30 ON Sunday May 1, 2022 at 7pm.  
 Details at:

## On the Worthiness and Unworthiness of War Victims.

Full article may be seen at: [Chris Hedges: Worthy & Unworthy Victims – Consortium News](#)

Rulers divide the world into worthy and unworthy victims, those we are allowed to pity, such as Ukrainians enduring the hell of modern warfare, and those suffering is minimized, dismissed, or ignored. The terror we and our allies carry out against Iraqi, Palestinian, Syrians, Libyan, Somali and Yemeni civilians is part of the regrettable cost of war. We, echoing the emptying promises from Moscow, claim we didn't target civilians. Rulers always paint their militaries as humane, there to serve and protect. Collateral damage happens, but it is regrettable. This lie can only be sustained among those who are unfamiliar with the explosive ordinance and large kill zones of missiles, iron fragmentation bombs, mortar, artillery and tank shells, and belt-fed machine guns. This [separation] into worthy and unworthy victims, is a key component of propaganda, especially in war.

Worthy victims allow an effective tool to

the provocations carried out by the western alliance with the expansion of NATO beyond the borders of a unified Germany, a violation of promises made to Moscow in 1990: the stationing of NATO troops and missile batteries in Eastern Europe; the U.S. involvement in the ouster in 2014 of Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich, which led to the civil war in the east of Ukraine between Russian-backed separatist and Ukraine's army, a conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives, and you are dismissed as a Putin apologist. It is to taint the sainthood of the worthy victims, and by extension ourselves. We are good. They are evil. Worthy victims are used not only to express sanctimonious outrage, but to stoke self-adulation and a poisonous nationalism. The cause becomes sacred, a religious crusade. Fact-based evidence is abandoned, as it was during the calls to invade Iraq. Charlatans, liars, con artists, fake defectors, and opportunists become experts, used to fuel the conflict. [Yet even the response of the Reagan administration to the 1980 rape and murder of three Catholic nuns and a lay worker by the Salvadorian National Guard was sought to blame the murdered victims for their own death.] The nuns were unworthy victims in support of the right-wing government in El Salvador armed and backed by the United States.

It is not that worthy victims do not suffer, nor that they are not deserving of our support and compassion, it is that worthy victims alone are rendered human, people like us, and unworthy victims are not. It helps, of course, when, as in Ukraine, they are white. But the missionaries murdered in El Salvador were also white and American and yet it wasn't enough to shake U.S. support for the country's military dictatorship. The rank hypocrisy is stunning. Some of the same officials that orchestrated the invasion of Iraq, who under international law are war criminals for carrying out a preemptive war, are now chastising Russia for its violation of international law. The U.S. bombing campaign of Iraqi urban centers, called "Shock and Awe," saw the dropping of 3,000 bombs on civilian areas that killed over 7,000 noncombatants in the first two months of the war. Russia has yet to go to this extreme. Those who were cheerleaders for the [Iraqi] war, such as George Packer, Thomas Friedman, Paul Berman, Michael Ignatieff, Leon Wieseltier and Nick Kristof, who Tony Judt called "Bush's useful idiots," dominated the media landscape. They painted the Iraqis as oppressed, worthy victims, who the U.S. military would set free. The plight of women under the Taliban was a rallying cry to bomb and occupy the country. These courtiers to power served the interests of the power elite and the war industry. They differentiated between worthy and unworthy victims. It was a good career move. And they knew it.

All of this remains unspoken as we express our anguish for the people of Ukraine and revel in our moral superiority. The life of a Palestinian or an Iraqi child is as precious as the life of a Ukrainian child. No one should be sacrificed on the altar of Mars. But until all victims are worthy, until all who wage war are held accountable and brought to justice, this hypocritical game of life and death will continue. Some human beings will be worthy of life. Others will not. - Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize – winning journalist and foreign correspondent for 15 years for the New York Times.

**KFCF 88.1 FM**

**Stir it, UP !**

**Wednesday April 13<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm**



In April, our radio show will be hosted by Josh Shurley with guest TBA by radio time.

For more information call on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at (559) 237-3223 or check our website at [www.centerfornonviolence.org](http://www.centerfornonviolence.org)

Our radio show in March was hosted by Josh Shurely with his guest, Marianne Kast from the Fresno League of Women Voters on the topic of voting rights. To hear it again:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-32180140/stir-it-up-030922>

In February, Gerry Bill hosted where the discussion was the renaming James K. Polk Elementary school with the Suarez family member who are leading the change of racism. To hear it again:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-32180140/stir-it-up-02-09-22-malachi-suarez-interview>



# “Why Invest in You?”: Parole Barriers

By Jaime Leyva, Morghan Vélez Young and Andrew Winn

*The grievance process.* When resources become unavailable, or parole officers (POs) misbehave, or a rule is unlawfully enforced, the only recourse that a person has to alleviate the adversity is called the grievance process. The grievance process is slow and drawn out, sometimes taking several months to resolve. People on parole have immediate, real-time issues around enforcement of rules, access to resources, misunderstood parole obligations, court-ordered classes and more. Yet, people on parole are forced to endure unfair treatment until their grievance is addressed in written form months later.

*Forced enrollment in treatment programs.* There are people on parole required to participate in alcohol and drug treatment who have not used any substances within a year or longer. Medical treatment for a disease that has not emerged within a year is unnecessary and serves as a barrier from doing other things that can improve a person's quality of life. Transitional homes are limited and are better prepared than residential treatment facilities for people leaving prison.

*Length of reincarceration for parole “violations.”* People can be imprisoned for up to one year for a rule infraction that might not be a law violation.

*Causes of parole “violations.”* Parole violations do not often indicate that a crime has been committed. In fact, holding persons on probation to a higher standard of etiquette than those not on probation illustrates a parole barrier designed to fail people. For example, there are several activities and actions that those not on parole would not be incarcerated for, including not checking in with a PO on time because there's a family emergency; having access to a knife that is not in a kitchen; not home for more than three days; drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana; and contact with law enforcement for any reason.

*Utilizing a county jail to administer punishment.* POs can drop off a person at the county jail with only the charge of a violation, whether or not the violation is provable. By making the person unavailable to employers and family members via jailing them, the punishment curbs opportunities for full reintegration and success. In addition, after being found innocent of any parole violations, people can be held in jail for several more days after a ruling of innocence.

*No pathways to family restoration.* If a person harmed a family member and was sentenced to prison, that person is ordered by parole to stay away from the family member. However, restorative justice opportunities that exist in regions throughout California can serve the person on parole and the family member(s). Without permission to engage family, the person is without a pathway to restore the relationship.

*Severing relationships with community and family members.* People on parole are ordered to stay away from people who might have the slightest semblance of association with a possible gang or group, and many times this means family members and past neighbors. The threshold to meet this association is arbitrary, incoherent and utilizes racialized reasoning.

*\$200 to rebuild.* When people are released from prison, they are given “gate money” to start their lives over by



Even some of the unofficial repetitive moments of “Why should I invest in you?” happen when parole officers claim that no resources exist. Photo by Hasan Almasi/upsplash

paying for a bus ticket to the county of supervision, a place to stay and food. The \$200 amount is not nearly enough to meet the basic needs of a person in California, and there hasn't been an increase in 49 years.

*Values misalignment.* A person on parole might have career aspirations that might not be in alignment with the PO's perspective. POs often order persons to find another career even though the occupations are lawful. People have diverse goals, and their autonomy in making decisions for themselves is removed in these situations. If they do not follow the PO's instructions, they would be under the threat of a parole violation.

*Attending colleges and universities.* With access to associate and bachelor degree programs in more California prisons, there's an increase of people being accepted to high-quality universities and colleges before or immediately after their release. Currently, prospective students are unable to select to parole to a county where their university or college is located. This creates a barrier to degree completion and forces them to reconsider if college is for them.

Understanding the international context for California's take on “Why should I invest in you?,” California being one of the largest legal systems in the world, reflects some of the debates and experiments with various versions of community-based supervision (e.g., community corrections) versus parole and probation.

These debates and experiments have been under way for decades. They typically unfold in Western countries and some of these countries acknowledge both the oppressive features of parole and probation as arms of reincarceration and the ways that these oppressive features impact Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

“Why should I invest in you?” and its implied denial of a fair chance for reintegration into the community can show up in any supervision approach that is built within a colonial context like the United States.

There are certainly relationship-based supervision models that revolve around community experts supporting reintegration rather than institutional professionals looking for opportunities to return persons to prisons (e.g., we explored parole as a machine in an earlier article).

Importantly, “Why should I invest in you?” is sometimes

directly spoken but also shows up symbolically based on the structures used such as the official and unofficial parole barriers listed above.

Some Western contexts provide us longitudinal examples where parole approaches transitioned from oppressive models into community-based models and yet then transitioned back to the punitive designs with institutional approaches. For example, a 2011 study that tracked this back and forth movement in Western Australia shows us a commitment to less structured parole procedures where community knowledge guided the supervision practices. In fact, during the relationship-based supervision approach, parole officers were required to have social work degrees.

Yet, in this region, the most recent return to institutional approaches includes equating parole and correctional staff. This is an honest public stance; that is, there are no hidden intentions in terms of parole officers acting with the same training as correctional officers—to reincarcerate.

Although in the United States parole and correctional officers do not officially share employment practices as in Western Australia, “Why should I invest in you?,” officially and unofficially in California translates as “The state is going to invest in your return to prison.”

\*\*\*\*\*

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*Andrew Winn is the husband to Kimberlee, a son to Linda and Darold, a dog-dad to Chiko and Pepper, and is from Sacramento. He is executive director of the Insight Garden Program, a nonprofit that offers in-prison programming in 10 California prisons and reentry services for previous program participants. Contact him at [andrew@insightgardenprogram.org](mailto:andrew@insightgardenprogram.org).*

## Advocacy Groups Kick Off “Know Your Worker Rights” Drive

Continued from page 1

Itxel De La Cruz Miguel, a seasonal produce picker and a United Farm Worker leader, found the roundtable discussion empowering, “I was very happy to hear there's a lot of interest in helping people who work in the field like me.”

Employed by Gargiulo Inc. in Firebaugh, De La Cruz Miguel left the roundtable with information to help her educate coworkers on supplemental paid sick leave, workplace health and safety, retaliation, PPE (personal protective equipment), and worker leave and pay benefits.

“A lot of [my] coworkers don't realize they have rights,” explains De La Cruz Miguel. “Sometimes they don't have the information or know the right person that can help them. [Workers' livelihoods] depend on staying Covid-safe and healthy.”

More than 100 organizations throughout the state will be awarded \$17.3 million to “support community engagement, public health education and encourage Covid-19 vaccination among those who have been hardest hit by the pandemic.”

Valley Forward, the education and outreach arm of the Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings Central Labor Council, is one of 14 Central Valley community-based organizations awarded funds to disseminate worker rights materials.

Valley Forward's team of nearly 30 outreach specialists plans to canvass door-to-door in small rural towns that often have a high density of monolingual, migrant, farmworker communities.

“We hope to achieve community empowerment,” explains Reyes Ubiedo, the program manager for Valley Forward.

“Covid hit every community hard, but it disproportionately hit the farmworker community the hardest. This outreach program will help mitigate Covid infections and help workers speak out for their rights.”

The network and connections the organization has at its disposal include referral to legal agencies, the Consulate of Mexico, state labor agencies and tech-savvy students who can provide helpful digital resources to workers who might not be comfortable with technology.

Organizations across the state are launching outreach programs to meet their communities where they live in difficult-to-reach cities, communities and even desolate locations.

They will speak the languages that their target communities speak, armed with the experience of how to engage residents in a culturally relevant manner and respectfully provide resources that keep workers Covid-safe and abreast of their rights as workers in California.

“I learned that we have a strong coalition,” Reyes reflected after the roundtable.

“It's an opportunity to ask the direct questions our community has been asking them and pass them directly to the source of those regulations and bridge the gap between the community and state agencies.”

To stay up to date on information and resources regarding Covid safety protocols and rights on the job, employers and workers can visit [www.saferatwork.ca.gov](http://www.saferatwork.ca.gov) (Spanish: [www.trabajaseguro.ca.gov](http://www.trabajaseguro.ca.gov)).

\*\*\*\*\*

*Estevan Gutierrez is a creative story teller, a foodie, a heavy consumer of music/art, a politico and a labor activist in the Central Valley. He also urges you to support local journalism. Follow him on Twitter @stevg18.*



La Alianza Comunitaria es una voz independiente para los trabajadores y los grupos progresistas en el Valle Central de San Joaquín. El objetivo de este periódico mensual es construir un poderoso movimiento progresivo que respalde la justicia social, ambiental y económica; derechos de inmigrantes; y un salario digno para todos los trabajadores. Buscamos exponer las injusticias sociales y políticas y vincular la diversa red de activistas que trabajan en nuestra comunidad.

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# Impacto de la pandemia y la importancia de las vacunas entre ancianos latinos

Por Eduardo Stanley

Poco se sabe del impacto de Covid 19 entre los jornaleros agrícolas, "trabajadores esenciales". Sus condiciones de vida y de trabajo limitan sus opciones de protección, y por lo tanto las posibilidades de contagios son mayores.

"A todos nos afectó la pandemia, hemos sufrido por las familias que se enferman, los amigos que se han muerto porque no se han vacunado", dice Israel Toledo, un jornalero jubilado de 73 años y residente de Porterville, condado de Tulare. "No podemos reunirnos... y ahora tengo a mi nieto de 10 años enfermo, pero se está recuperando. Y suerte que tiene las dos vacunas".

Los jornaleros agrícolas viajan al trabajo juntos, trabajan juntos y viven en viviendas compartidas debido a sus bajos ingresos y los altos costos de los alquileres. Contagiarse significa transmitir el virus a sus familias, incluyendo a los ancianos.

"Tenemos que vacunarnos y tenemos que cuidarnos, hay que usar la mascarara para no contagiarnos o contagiar a otros", asegura Toledo, quien nació en México y pasó gran parte de su vida en la pequeña localidad de Poplar, cerca de Porterville. "Cuando vino la pandemia me quedé en la casa".

Debido a la pandemia, muchos trabajadores prefirieron dejar de trabajar o limitar los días de trabajo. "Uno se quedó en la casa con mucho estrés", dice María León, de 66 años, residente de Poplar. "Al principio de la pandemia me puse a hacer máscaras porque no había. Y la preocupación era si te contagiabas o si llevabas el virus a los demás".

Al principio de la pandemia había optimismo pensando en que quizá sería algo temporal y no tan grave. "Esperábamos que pasara pronto. Resulta que no, hasta la fecha esta aquí", dice León, quien llegó al Valle Central de California en 1977 desde México y trabajó principalmente



Arriba, de izq a der: Israel Toledo y María León; abajo, de izq a der: Ruth Martínez y Aurelia Ponce. Foto cortesía del Centro Comunitario Larry Hlong

en la pizca de la uva y del empaque de la uva en la llamada "hielera", cámara frigorífica donde se conserva la uva hasta que es despachada a supermercados. "Con mi familia todavía no nos reunimos todos, cuando vamos a casa de mi hija mantenemos distancia. Y esto es muy duro para uno, ya no nos abrazamos como antes. Por eso tenemos que vacunarnos".

León asegura que en su familia hubo enfermos pero no fallecidos. Y ella misma se contagió con Covid 19. "A mi me pegó... siento que mi cuerpo no es igual. La respiración me cuesta, los pulmones me duelen seguido", dijo León, quien actualmente está vacunada. "Estoy contenta porque mi familia siguió mi ejemplo".

Lo doloroso de la pandemia es ver de cerca cómo familiares y amigos sufren por síntomas del virus o mueren a causa de él. "Una amiga mía, que vivía al cruzar la calle, murió de Covid", dice Ruth Martínez, de 79 años y residente de Ducor, condado de Tulare. "Y la semana pasada se murió la hermana de mi yerno, ella no estaba vacunada".

se perderán las sirenas del mar y las hojas del naranjo dejarán de columpiarse en el patio de mi infancia  
Lo que creí y amé  
secreto y tacturno  
como hojas caídas en medio del otoño  
hay un convertido mis restos  
en polvo

Nicolas Mareshall nació en Santiago, Chile. *Estudio literatura hispanoamericana, inglesa y estadounidense en CSU Fresno, California. Cursó postgrados en Creación Literaria y Metodología de la Enseñanza de Idiomas. El año 2001 recibió el premio "Pluma de oro" del Consejo de las Artes y borrones*

Cuando las cenizas del tiempo me cubran y las amapolas mortuorias agiten sus sombras sobre la oscura vestimenta que me amortaja esta pluma  
estará vacía de rumores  
y será escombros  
mi cuaderno de líneas

El viento borrará las coordenadas de mi vuelo

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# Mitos Sobre La Vacuna Contra el Covid-19 En El Valle

*Continúa de página 24*

Esta actitud machista es común entre los hombres en sociedades patriarcales. Ella mencionó otras excusas que escuchó, “La vacuna te va a producir Covid”, o “La vacuna no te protege”. Algunas madres le dijeron que estaban preocupadas de que la vacuna volviera estériles a sus hijos o que afecte su crecimiento. La excusa número uno,

dice, es “la vacuna se produjo muy rápido”.

Cultiva la Salud establece centros de vacunación móvil temporales en barrios de Fresno

Y en comunidades rurales cercanas, promoviendo los eventos de vacunación en negocios

locales y ofreciendo incentivos como música en vivo y comida a quienes se vacunan.

“También ofrecemos tarjetas de regalo de hasta \$50 dólares. Durante una visita a una comunidad rural”, recuerda Miranda, “una persona me preguntó si realmente ofrecíamos tarjetas de regalo. Le expliqué que ya se habían terminado por ese día, entonces esta persona se negó a vacunarse”.

En otra oportunidad, tres menores llegaron al centro de vacunación para vacunarse pero sus padres le negaron el permiso. Ese mismo día, una niña le comentó a Miranda que el

pastor de su iglesia había negativamente de la vacuna.

La realidad es que los números son muy importantes en la cultura latina.

Miranda está preocupada porque últimamente hay menos personas que quieren vacunarse, y esta es una tendencia en todo el país aunque no se saben las causas.

En California es fácil conseguir una cita para vacunarse visitando https://myturn.ca.gov usando un teléfono inteligente o una computadora, asegura Miranda, pero muchos latinos de la tercera edad no tienen acceso a estos aparatos o carecen del conocimiento para

operarlos, lo que hace la vacunación algo más complicado en el Valle Central de California. Minerva Mendoza, Asistente de Programas del Instituto Pan Valley, de Fresno, también

describe su experiencia con la vacunación y las excusas para no vacunarse que escuchó.

Una es, “¿cómo es posible que no haya vacunas para la diabetes o el cáncer pero crearon una para el Covid-19 tan rápido?” Otras son que las vacunas solo favorecen a las

corporaciones farmacéuticas o que la segunda dosis demuestra que la vacuna no sirve.

## La Ciudad de Fresno Abre Oficina Para Inmigrantes

*Continúa de página 24*

OCA está ahí para ayudar.

Muchas personas solicitaron ayuda para sus negocios, especialmente inmigrantes.

Muchos quieren tener sus propios negocios pero si son indocumentados no pueden tener

número de seguro social. La División de Desarrollo Económico de la ciudad ha trabajado

para que los inmigrantes establezcan sus negocios por medio de subsidios. Colabora con

CVILC para diseminar esta información.

OCA motiva a la gente a solicitar fondos, especialmente los provenientes de SEED (Social Entrepreneurs for Economic Development), que apoya tanto a negocios establecidos como

nuevos. Negocios nuevos pueden recibir hasta \$5.000, y los ya establecidos pueden

recibir hasta \$10.000.

Martínez quiere que este proceso sea lo más fácil posible y asegurarse que la comunidad

este enterada de las posibilidades de asistencia económica. Traerle esperanzas a la

comunidad es parte crucial de su trabajo.

OCA está ahí para ayudar.

## Agustín Lira, una voz para el cambio

*Continúa de página 24*

teatro. La música de Agustín siempre ha girado en torno a los problemas que enfrentan los Chicanos y las Chicanas,

con la esperanza de educar a las personas sobre la historia de estas luchas y cómo cambiarlas.

Al crecer aquí en el valle en los años 60, fue consciente

del racismo y la exclusión como resultado del entorno que

había sido creado por un sistema injusto a una temprana

edad. A los 9 años, Agustín ayudaba a su madre a recoger

algodón en el campo. En la escuela secundaria tuvo la

suerte de conocer a la música y la actuación a través del

coro y la clase de teatro. Desafortunadamente, recuerda

la falta de educación relacionada con su propia cultura e

historia. “Nunca hubo una mención sobre ningún mexicano

en nuestros libros”. Las cosas empeoraron cuando su

madre falleció, lo que lo llevó a quedarse sin hogar durante

2 años. Durante este tiempo dependió de la amabilidad de

las familias que habían conocido a su mamá. Una mañana

vio un anuncio en el periódico, la UFW (siglas en inglés

del Sindicato de Jornaleros) estaba ofreciendo comida y

oportunidad de subir escalones dentro de la organización.

Intrigado por la oportunidad, Agustín decidió viajar a

Delano y ver si esto podría ser algo correcto para su vida.

Cuando le pregunté a Agustín de dónde surgió la idea del

teatro campesino, primero explicó un problema que había

notado durante las reuniones sindicales: la comunicación.

Cultivadores no eran amistosos. Los tribunales no fueron

“También teníamos miedo, el sistema no era amigable. Los

fueron hostigados y atacados, no hubo justicia ni apoyo.

Cuando los manifestantes

luego se instalaban y actuaban hasta altas horas de la

noche, sin apenas descansar. Cuando los manifestantes

y sus compañeros artistas caminaban con los manifestantes,

Su trabajo era agotador y peligroso. Durante el día, Agustín

las sillas” Por supuesto que no todo fue diversión y juegos.

sonrió, “¡Tuvinimos gente riéndose tan fuerte que se caían de

conciencia preocupada por la situación. “Fue increíble”,

papel de un rompehuelgas borracho que hablaba con su

que anteriormente había sido un rompehuelgas para el

del Rompehuelgas”. Para esta obra, contactaron a alguien

Y describió el éxito de una de sus obras, “Conciencia

que dimos con algo real”, explicó Agustín.

lleno de pruebas y errores. “Tuvinimos algunos fracasos hasta

que éxitos instantáneos, como cualquier otro proyecto estuvo

que teníamos cabeza y corazón.” Teatro Campesino no fue

de ira y el odio. De esta manera le mostrábamos a la gente

era la mejor manera de transmitir nuestro mensaje en lugar

utilizaron también la comedia. “Elegimos el humor porque

con los que estaban tratando los trabajadores del campo,

Mientras que las obras de teatro representaron temas serios

cantaban y les enseñaban las canciones a la audiencia.

cualquier otro lugar donde se los necesitara. Hacían obras,

sindicales de los viernes, durante marchas, huelgas y en

Agustín actuaba con otros durante las reuniones

tanto como era posible.

incluyeron palabras en tagalog (idioma oficial de Filipinas)

todos pudieran entender, y lo hacían en inglés, español e

trataba de entregar la información de una manera que

con este tema específico en mente. El Teatro Campesino

la edad de 19 años, Agustín cofundó Teatro Campesino

horas! Se tardaba una eternidad en traducirlo todo”. A

imaginarle que las reuniones sindicales duraban horas y

y algunas solo hablaban dialectos filipinos. ¡Así que puedes

“Algunas personas solo sabían inglés, algunas solo español

amistosos. La policía no fue amistosa e incluso los medios

no fueron amistosos.” Hubo muchos peligros y obstáculos

que el movimiento tuvo que enfrentar y superar, incluido un

sistema dirigido por personas en su contra.

Agustín sigue siendo tan apasionado como siempre,

creyendo que su trabajo no se trata solo de arte, música

y teatro, sino de usar estas herramientas para educar a las

personas sobre los eventos actuales y la historia del lugar

donde vivimos. Después de todos estos años, todavía se

preocupa profundamente por los problemas que no solo

afectan al mundo, sino también a las personas aquí en el

valle. Durante la entrevista, se refirió a los problemas que

aquejan a Fresno, incluida la pobreza, la falta de recursos

como alimentos y una clara división entre los ricos y los

pobres que viven en esta ciudad. Sigue escribiendo,

produciendo y grabando música con temas como la

frontera sur, el Covid-19, el racismo y el odio que se le

enseña constantemente a la gente.

Cuando le pregunté cómo se sentía al recibir un

reconocimiento tan importante del Consejo de las Artes de

California, se tomó un momento para reflexionar. Su primera

respuesta apuntó a Patricia Wells, quien también había

participado en las huelgas lideradas por la UFW. Patricia

luego se unirá a El Teatro de la Tierra, una organización

artística sin fines de lucro fundada por Agustín. Juntos

celebraron 50 años de trabajo en equipo en 2021.

En segundo lugar expresó su gratitud, “estoy muy

agradecido por el Legacy Award pero también estoy

agradecido por todos los años de apoyo a nuestros

proyectos aquí en nuestra comunidad y gracias a esos

apoyos pudimos ser tan exitosos como lo hemos sido en

nuestra comunidad”. \*\*\*\*\*

*Paulina Cruz es una becaria de Community Alliance. Ella es*

*una inmigrante mexicana y actualmente está estudiando*

*Antropología y Psicología en CSU Fresno. Paulina dedica su*

*tiempo libre a escribir poesía y pintar.*

## Oficina de Asuntos Comunitarios (OCA)

Esta oficina ofrece servicios y recursos para los residentes de Fresno. Conecta a los residentes sirviendo como enlace entre grupos, asociaciones, comunidades inmigrantes y multiculturales, sectores religiosos, con servicios humanos y civiles, y otros. Bajo la supervisión del representante Matthew Grundy, OCA

opera como parte de la oficina del alcalde de la ciudad.

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*Emily García es una becaria de Community Alliance. Ella estudia Periodismo y Comunicación de*

*Masas en la Universidad Estatal de Fresno. Puede contactarla en emilybv432156@gmail.com.*

honrada y agradecida”. \*\*\*\*\*

Martínez. “Creo que la necesidad está allí y me encanta ser parte de esto. Me siento

“Estoy muy feliz de estar aquí y me encantaría ver crecer a esta oficina”, comenta

*editor@fresnoalliance.com.*

*Eduardo Stanley es el editor de Community Alliance. Puede contactarlo en*

\*\*\*\*\*

Porfirio Hernández.

“La gente cree y repite cosas que no tienen sentido, y esto nos afecta a todos”, dijo

efectos, hospitalizaciones y muertes.

La ciencia nos ha demostrado que las vacunas previenen enfermedades o reduce sus

varios meses. Aun así, Cruz no quiere vacunarse aunque no explíca por qué.

familia hicieron curentena. Estuvo en el hospital dos meses y padeció dolores durante

el condado de Kern, quien depende de la herbolaria. En 2021 contrajo Covid-19 y él y su

Pedro Cruz, de 62 años, un jornalero agrícola nacido en Oaxaca y residente de Arvin, en

“Yo tomo té para prevenir ciertas enfermedades, y también tomo vitaminas”, dice

aqueillos de origen indígena.

curanderas en California, algo importante para los trabajadores inmigrantes, especialmente

a los servicios de salud son limitados y sus ingresos muy bajos. Y no hay curanderos o

Para los trabajadores del campo, mantenerse sanos es imprescindible ya que el acceso

aparentemente por magnetismo. Esto les asusta”.

que se vacunó y después se colocaba una cucharera en su brazo y se quedaba pegada,

de las personas están vacunadas. Entre los no vacunados repiten la historia de la mujer

en la pizca de la uva en los campos del condado de Madera. “En mi cuadrilla la mayoría

Hernández, jefe de cuadrilla de 20 jornaleros agrícolas, quienes laboran principalmente

“Durante la pandemia dejamos de trabajar dos semanas solamente”, dice Porfirio

limitaciones culturales o educativas, o miedos basados en rumores.

son “trabajadores esenciales” pero son un sector de la sociedad poco vacunado debido a

campesinos—su padre trabajó en los campos de cultivo del Valle de San Joaquín—quienes

Ella está preocupada por la baja en el número de personas que se vacunan y por los

quien sabe cómo me hubiera ido”.

difficultades para respirar... Afortunadamente entonces ya estaba vacunada, de otra manera

Mendoza contrajo Covid-19 en enero. “No fue divertido. Tenía dolores de pecho y serías

Covid-19 y pidió a los católicos “no subirse al tren de las vacunas”.

su “preocupación” por el posible uso de células madres de fetos para las vacunas contra

Mendoza. En noviembre 2020, el obispo de la diócesis de Fresno, Joseph Brennan, expresó

La mayoría de los latinos son católicos y la religión influencia a la gente, comenta

dice que también escuchó que ‘nuestro sistema inmunológico se va a encargar del virus’.

Mendoza, graduada de la Universidad Estatal de Fresno y nacida en Oaxaca, México,



# LLAMA A COMUNITARIA LA VOZ DEL MOVIMIENTO PROGRESISTA DESDE 1996

## Mitos Sobre La Vacuna Contra el Covid-19 En El Valle

Por Eduardo Stanley

Estudio tras estudio demuestran que cuanto mas gente se vacune contra el Covid-19, el virus tiene menos posibilidades de propagarse, mutar y eventualmente transformarse en más peligroso. De acuerdo al Departamento de Salud de California, durante la última semana de febrero, las personas no vacunadas tenían cinco veces más posibilidades de contagiarse con el virus que aquellas que recibieron el refuerzo.

En el Valle de San Joaquín, donde los latinos son mayoría en casi todos los condados, el porcentaje de vacunación es bajo, en parte debido a los mitos sobre las vacunas.

“Yo tuve Covid así que no tengo que vacunarme”, es una de las muchas excusas que escucho”, dice Marlen Miranda, quien es la encargada del Proyecto Equity Covid de Cultiva La Salud, una organización no lucrativa de Fresno. “Una pareja vino a uno de nuestros centros de vacunación móvil en Reedley. La señora se vacunó pero su esposo no. Platiqué con el y le pregunté porque no se vacunaba y me respondió ‘Yo me siento fuerte’”.

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## La Ciudad de Fresno Abre Oficina Para Inmigrantes

Por Emily Garcia

La Oficina de Asuntos Comunitarios del Alcalde (OCA, por sus siglas en inglés) es una nueva oficina orientada a proveer asistencia a las diversas comunidades de Fresno.

Las áreas de ayuda incluye asistencia con el pago inicial para compradores de casas por primera vez, entrenamiento para jóvenes y oportunidades laborales, emergencia para inquilinos, recursos para transporte, apoyo migratorio, salud pública y seguridad, oportunidades para voluntarios, y más.

OCA tiene encargados especializados en cuatro áreas.



Alma Martinez, encargada de la Oficina de Asuntos Comunitarios de la Ciudad de Fresno.  
Foto de Peter Maiden

“Primero, trabajamos directamente con la gente. Si alguien necesita algo de la ciudad, de cualquier departamento, nosotros los conectamos”. Segundo, cada encargado está realizando una encuesta en sus respectivas comunidades para determinar sus necesidades y las posibles soluciones a sus problemas. OCA usará los resultados de las encuestas para crear un modelo para la toma de decisiones de la ciudad. El tercer componente es trabajar conjuntamente. Aquí el enfoque es sobre las necesidades específicas mas que en temas generales.

“Sandra an Jr son parte del Comité de Asentamiento Afgano”, dice Martinez. “Estamos recibiendo unos 100 afganos en Fresno y nuestra oficina es parte de este proceso”.

El pastor Lewis está en contacto

con distintas iglesias y ella trabaja con Collaborative (CVIC) y con el Grupo de Trabajo de Fraudes Migratorios.

Fresno es la quinta ciudad en abrir OCA, después de San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego y San José.

Martinez asegura que la ciudad sabe cuáles son las necesidades de sus residentes. A pesar de que existen recursos disponibles, no siempre es fácil acceder a ellos. No todos entienden cómo acceder a esos recursos, con quién hablar e incluso cómo tomar el primer paso para conectarse con la ciudad.

Muchos inmigrantes sienten que es difícil pedir ayuda cuando la necesitan. “Yo soy inmigrante, nací en Guadalupe y vine aquí a los tres años, indocumentada”, comenta Martinez. “Recuerdo venir a Fresno, a la calle Fulton, donde entonces estaba la oficina de Inmigración para los trámites de residencia. Tuve la ceremonia de ciudadanía en el Veterans Hall”.

Martinez dice que tener a alguien que hable tu idioma o que entienda de donde vienes puede hacer la diferencia al momento de conectarse con inmigrantes. Lograr una conexión más profunda a nivel personal puede ayudar a establecer el nivel de confort que una persona quizá necesite para pedir y aceptar una mano de ayuda.

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## Agustín Lira, una voz para el cambio

Por Paulina Cruz

Al mirar el mundo hoy en día, es fácil sentirse abrumado por las malas noticias. El cambio climático, la discriminación, los sistemas injustos y las guerras plagan las noticias diarias. Si bien es importante mantenerse al día con las tragedias para estar educado e informado, también es importante tomarse un segundo y observar las cosas buenas que también están ocurriendo en nuestros propios vecindarios.

Agustín Lira, un artista respetado y muy conocido, ha trabajado toda su vida para elevar a sus comunidades latinas a través del teatro y la música. Este año Agustín Lira recibió el “Legacy Award” del California Arts Council (Consejo de las Artes de California) en reconocimiento a todos los años que ha dedicado al servicio de su comunidad. Agustín fue cofundador del Teatro Campesino, que jugó un papel importante durante la huelga de trabajadores agrícolas a mediados de los años sesenta, durante el nacimiento del sindicato United Farm Workers (UFW). Trabajo de cerca con César Chávez en Delano y desde entonces se mudó a Fresno y dedicó su vida a enseñar música y

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El artista local Agustín Lira fue distinguido con el premio “Legacy Award” del Consejo de las Artes de California.  
Foto de Peter Maiden