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STOP THE HATE

Hate Is in the Air

By I. smiley G. Calderon

In mid-October, two young Latino males enjoying a Friday night together in the Tower District in Fresno were brutally assaulted by a man who apparently did not like the fact that they were holding hands. Robert Calderon, one of the men beaten, suffered a broken nose, two black eyes, a horrible gash on his brow and sore ribs.

The Fresno Police Department (FPD) is investigating this assault and battery as a hate crime. It's been three long months, and this case is still open and unresolved. The perpetrator remains on the loose.

In an emotional Facebook post a day after the attack, Calderon pleaded, "We were attacked for loving each other."

Calderon is a gay man—a proud one at that—who does not hesitate to confess his love to the world for his partner, Lucas Flores, who he was holding hands with that fateful evening.

"There is no doubt I love this man," says Calderon. "I wouldn't let the attackers get to him...I will always love and protect him."

In his Facebook post, Calderon said that his partner "has taken care of me since last night, buying me bandages and wound spray. Giving me tissue for my bloody nose. Holding my hand and crying with me. I couldn't ask for a better man. He takes care of my body, heart, mind and soul...I love you Lucas."

With love like this, who could possibly hate?

Apparently there are some. Hate is in the air. We see it and we feel it, but until we experience it with a bloody face, we might not appreciate its nasty stench. It's the kind of thing that, left unfettered and free, morphs into violence—which is what Calderon and Flores experienced, unfortunately.

This type of hate leads to murders and killings. We know from history that this kind of unchecked hate is even fuel for genocide.



Robert Calderon, a proud Fresno gay man, seen here as Mr. Gay Fresno 2018 and after the Oct. 14 hate crime assault in the Tower District. Photo taken from Facebook public view

Yet, we live in a "free" country, so shouldn't we be able to hate who we want? Yes and no. Yes, we live in a country that protects freedom of speech. So, in that sense, the U.S. Constitution allows for hate speech when it does not affect the civil rights of others. But, clearly, no one likes to be berated or belittled, especially because of one's identity. It's just not right. And simply because this type of "hate" (speech) is legal, that does not make it less hurtful or traumatic.

Certainly, hate speech is distasteful and immature and really has no place in a civilized society—yet it is legal until it crosses a certain line. Sometimes hate speech leads to "hate incidents," which are occurrences that, although perhaps racist, sexist or homophobic, are still not hate crimes. When hate incidents start to threaten a person or property, however, they might become hate crimes.

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We Are on Our Own

By James Mendez

On Dec. 20, 2022, the *Fresno Bee* reported on the status of hospital beds during the current surge of Covid-19, influenza, RSV and other respiratory infections. As of Dec. 20, Fresno County hospital bed occupancy was at 100% bed capacity.

Dr. Rais Vohra, Fresno County's interim health officer, said, "We've got the playbook; we just need to put the playbook into action." The problem is the lack of leadership by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors (BOS). They refuse to utilize the playbook.

The California State Constitution authorizes the county BOS to provide countywide public health services. The Fresno County BOS has indicated that it does not believe in the science regarding SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes Covid-19). The supervisors do not believe in the benefits of masks, vaccinations or social distancing.

The BOS has repeatedly failed to provide the needed leadership to help the residents of Fresno County slow the spread of Covid-19 in our communities.

One example is that after three years of the epidemic, Fresno County still does not have a permanent health officer. Another is their refusal to enthusiastically encourage people to use masks, get vaccinated, to socially distance themselves from one another or to take any action to prevent the spread of disease.

Fresno County residents need to understand that no help will be forthcoming from the BOS in terms of increasing community vaccinations, increasing hospital beds, increasing physician staffing, increasing mask use or limiting public or private crowded indoor situations. We should also not expect help to be forthcoming from overextended state and national agencies.

Given that we cannot expect an increase in needed resources, the only thing residents of Fresno can do is decrease the demand for our current limited resources.



Not enough people are getting booster shots to slow the spread of Covid-19. The new booster, called "Bivalent," is effective and protects against "classic" Covid-19, delta and the newer omicron variants. Covid vaccines and the boosters are free. Photo by Peter Maiden

After almost three years of dealing with Covid-19, we have learned much about the virus:

- We know that people are infected with SARS-CoV-2 through exposure to respiratory fluids carrying the infectious virus. The three main ways it spreads are as follows:
 - a) Inhalation of very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles (aerosol) (most common).
 - b) Deposition of larger respiratory droplets and particles on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose or eye (direct droplet "splashes and sprays" sometimes).
 - c) Touching mucous membranes with hands that have been soiled either directly by virus-containing respiratory fluids or indirectly by touching surfaces with the virus on them (rarely).
- We know that about 1% of people who get the virus will die from the viral infection. Deaths will be

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Excremental Change: Public Toilets Needed Now

By Bob McCloskey

A livable city should have an adequate number of public toilets. Urban planners plan for public spaces, pedestrian access, good transit and parks, but they almost never plan for providing public toilets.

The issue comes up in debates about urban planning, if at all, when talking about homelessness. But it's not just unhoused people who need places to go to the bathroom. Providing public toilets is a diversity issue, an old-age issue, a disability issue, a parents' issue, a feminist issue, a public health issue and an economic development issue.

Most people don't like talking about bathroom functions and the difficulties they might have with finding and using bathrooms. Mothers with young children, elderly people that need to go unpredictably and people with Crohn's disease or other bowel or urinary disorders, as well as unhoused people, have the same difficulties.

Above all, providing public toilets is a health issue for all of us. Human excreta and the lack of adequate personal and domestic hygiene have been implicated in the transmission of many infectious diseases including cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, polio, cryptosporidiosis, ascariasis and schistosomiasis.

Some of the diseases that can be spread through the fecal-oral route include hepatitis A, hepatitis E, cholera, adenovirus and E. coli. These diseases occur due to the viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites that can spread through fecal-oral transmission.

The San Diego region experienced a hepatitis A outbreak in 2017 that spread rapidly through its unhoused

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Hate Is in the Air

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A “hate crime” is a crime perpetrated on an actual or perceived federally protected social group. It can be done to a single person or even to an individual who is simply associated with a protected social group but not a part of it. The key component here, however, is that an actual crime must be committed for a hate crime to occur.

As in the case of Calderon and Flores, a verifiable crime occurred because they were physically assaulted. And given that the crime was evidently motivated by the attacker’s bias against homosexuals—a federally protected group—this crime is being investigated as a hate crime (whether it actually is one will be determined in court if the attacker is ever apprehended).

Hate crimes, according to California Attorney General Rob Bonta, “are not just attacks on individual innocent people—they are attacks on our communities and the entire State.”

The federal government has been prosecuting hate crimes across the nation since the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. At the federal level, seven distinct categories are protected under the law: race/color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender/sex, gender identity and disability.

California needs to upgrade its list to match. Currently, all but gender identity are protected in the Golden State (by comparison, Hawaii, Massachusetts and New York, among other more progressive states, have laws protecting an individual’s chosen gender identity).

South Carolina, Wyoming and Montana, on the other hand, are among the most unprotected states, with no laws protecting gender/sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability categories. Incredibly, South Carolina still has no protection on the books for hate crimes perpetrated on the basis of race/color, religion or national origin.

In the city of Fresno, there is no dedicated police unit assigned to hate crimes. Although that might not look too good for the police department, it’s actually a good thing because it means we don’t have a high enough frequency of such crimes to merit one.

The city has five policing districts, and each district has a group of detectives assigned to investigate common crimes. For serious crimes such as homicide, there is one central group of detectives who work those cases.

The immediate focus for the FPD is on the crime, not on whether it was done due to hate against a protected category or group. However, if a crime is found to be motivated because of or perpetrated in hate against one of the protected California categories or groups, there could be penalty enhancements and increased sentences, especially for aggravated circumstances.

In California, in addition to our Penal Code provisions, we have two civil code statutes that provide further protection from and remedies for hate crimes: the Ralph Civil Rights Act of 1976 and the Tom Bane Civil Rights Act, which ultimately became law in 1988. Restraining orders, attorney’s fees, injunctive and/or equitable relief, damages and a civil penalty of \$25,000 can be awarded to victims of hate crimes in our state.

This is good news for Calderon if his attacker is ever arrested.

But, until then, should he and other homosexuals in the Tower District—a place known to be a safe haven for gays and queers here in the Valley—feel safe in their own community?

Sgt. Diana Vega, assistant public information officer with the FPD, believes so. “I can tell you, we don’t tolerate hate crimes here in Fresno. When a crime is reported, we will investigate and prosecute to the fullest extent of the law anyone that threatens the security of anybody in our community.”

Vega encourages anyone who believes themselves to have been a victim of hate speech, a hate incident or a hate crime to report that to the police.

“Oftentimes people don’t know the difference, but we want people to feel comfortable coming to us, letting us investigate,” Vega said.

“The reality is, if we are not aware of the situation, it’s as if it never occurred. So, we need to know about these incidents if they are happening.”

Yet, what if it’s your own City Council member spewing hate?

Council Member Garry Bredefeld, representing District 6 in northeast Fresno, has been vocal on social media

condemning drag shows, which has incited his base to threaten gay and queer community members at their events. In early December, a family-friendly drag show at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church was met with raucous Proud Boy protestors.

Bredefeld stirred up the pot by accusing the event planners of “evil efforts to sexualize our children.”

Event organizer Isabel Ramos doesn’t agree. “I just feel like...they’re spreading more hate. That’s not what my event is about. My event is about acceptance and love and creating a safe space for our children.”

Bredefeld is unrepentant and won’t rest until violence ensues, it seems. “I wrote what I did on Facebook, and I stand behind every word,” he said at a mid-December City Council meeting. “Just as I opposed the family-friendly drag show at the zoo, I opposed it at the church—and I will continue to speak out.”

When will Bredefeld stop “speaking out” on federally protected gender identity or queer issues? When will the community demand that his hate speech be silenced to prevent hate incidents? When will authorities recognize that Bredefeld is inciting future violent hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community?

Hate is in the air, and it has to be stopped now before it’s too late.

I. smiley G. Calderon 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.

Report Hate Crimes

If you have information about the Robert Calderon hate crime case or if you know the whereabouts of the assailant, call the Fresno Police Department at 559-621-7000.

If you or anyone you know is a victim of a hate crime (or any crime for that matter), report that to the local police and let them investigate and document it. In Fresno, call 559-621-7000. You can also call Fresno County’s anonymous Valley Crime Stoppers line at 559-498-STOP (7867) or submit an anonymous tip at valleycrimestoppers.org/.

We Are on Our Own

Continued from page 1

mainly among the elderly (even if vaccinated), the immunocompromised, the unvaccinated (especially the elderly) and those who are unable to access medical care (poor people, Black and Brown residents and undocumented residents).

- We know that children get the infection at a higher rate than adults and spread the infection to adults, but children rarely become seriously ill or die from the infection.
- We know that many people (possibly 40%) with the Covid-19 infection might be asymptomatic, yet are still able to spread the infection.
- We know that the original vaccines provided protection against the original strain of the coronavirus. Since then, the virus has mutated several times. Scientists developed boosters that have been effective against the omicron variant and other newer subvariants. The current bivalent booster is effective but underutilized by the general population.
- We know that people can get Covid-19 more than once. Immunity wanes after a native infection and

- after vaccinations. And surprisingly, the presence of antibodies does not equate with immunity.
- At the start of the Covid pandemic, many epidemiologists thought herd immunity could be achieved if 60%–70% of the population was immune. Experts now think herd immunity might not occur until 85%–90% of the population is immune.
- Not enough people are getting booster shots to slow the spread of the disease. In Fresno County, only about 13% of eligible residents have gotten the bivalent booster (basically everyone older than six months of age). The bivalent booster protects against “classic” Covid-19, delta and the newer omicron variants.

What Can Fresno County Residents Do?

Over the past three years, we have learned how to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. The following recommendations, based on current science from the Centers for Disease Control and the Food and Drug Administration, are proven to decrease the spread of Covid-19, decrease the chance of getting Covid-19, decrease the chance of dying from Covid-19 and can increase available hospital beds.

- Get your bivalent booster and encourage family and friends to get their booster shots, too.
- Wear a mask, which will decrease the risk of getting or transmitting Covid-19, influenza, RSV and other respiratory viruses.

- Avoid poorly ventilated, crowded, indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Get tested if you have symptoms or have been exposed to someone with Covid-19. If the test result is positive, isolate yourself from others and notify any close contacts.
- Try to maintain physical distancing of at least six feet.
- Good luck to all.

James Mendez came to Fresno in 1977 for his medical residency training at what was then called the Valley Medical Center. He stayed to practice medicine and raise a family. He is now a retired physician and a community activist.

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Our First Edition of 2023

Welcome to the first edition of the *Community Alliance* newspaper in 2023.

After a successful fundraising event in early December, we are moving into the new year with more energy and enthusiasm.

This is a 20-page edition that has become "standard" for us. During 2021 and 2022, we printed several editions of 24 pages and even 28 pages. This is because of the dedication of our writers as well as the hard work of our team, including (but not limited to) our copyeditor and our photographer. We are always looking for ways to inform you better. That requires teamwork and dedication to serve our audience.

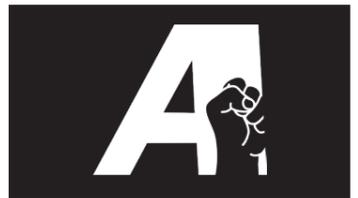
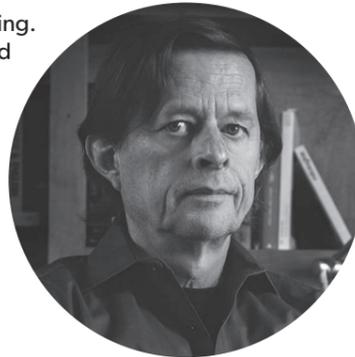
I am proud of the *Community Alliance* newspaper and what it represents for our community.

FROM THE EDITOR

Our community is slowly changing. And we are here to report and analyze such changes, which I hope will be for the good.

Please continue supporting us, and continue to let us know how we are doing. Your input is vital for our work.

Together we can do it.
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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Peace and Social Justice

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Letters to the Editor:

E-mail editor@fresnoalliance.com.
Up to 200 words.

The *Community Alliance* newspaper reserves the right to edit all articles for space and clarity. The *Community Alliance* newspaper is printed on recycled paper. The *Community Alliance* newspaper is a 501(c)(4) entity.

Letters to the Editor

Solving the Homelessness Problem

I will be 82 years old soon and am not in the best of health, and things seem to be getting worse instead of better. I want to think positively, but have only a little hope. I would like to know that humanity is going to survive—and even thrive.

But for a while now I have concentrated my efforts toward seeing what I could do personally to ameliorate Fresno's homelessness. See the WILPF page for information on the Dakota EcoGarden (DEG), which has been my project for the last 10 years.

I thought we'd have homelessness solved way before now! So, here's my attempt to tell whoever may be listening what my thoughts are in this area.

The DEG has done a low-cost version of homeless housing, and I keep thinking some of these ideas could be used widely. But also, I have felt that we have to do lots of types of shelters and services for our varied homeless population.

We need more creativity in working on this problem. We have to include special attention to services and housing for the mentally ill and for those with addictions.

Amazing amounts of money have been coming to our city and county to help the homeless. Some of that money goes to making the problems worse. An example: a friend who bought property and was making progress toward having a mini-DakotaEcoGarden was shut down by the City's code enforcement.

Here's one specific change which could make a big difference: A tax on any property left vacant past a certain time would provide an incentive for the owners to do something useful with the property.

Again, an example: right next to the DEG is a big parking lot that used to be the City's police substation for the area. The substation was moved many years ago, and this big lot could quickly be turned into a safe place for some of the many people who now live in their cars, or it could be a safe and legal campground.

If one of the strip mall buildings were included in the deal, a bathroom and meeting room would also be included. It has electricity, water and fencing all around.

Now it sits, a blight on the neighborhood, deteriorating and attracting graffiti artists and, guess what, homeless people looking for a safe place to spend the night. The property is now owned by a southern California corporation that wants to sell it for big money, and apparently figures that it will increase in value if they do nothing. (And indeed it has.)

A tax on vacant property could give them a reason to revise their thinking. There are cities that are trying this now.

Another idea: tax the rich. Surely it isn't moral, ethical or even helpful for a few people to have so much money, and so many people to have not enough to live, let alone live well.

One last thought: Annalisa Perea, you are now the [Fresno City] Council person for the area in which the DEG is located, and you have visited. I have high hopes for you. Please don't disappoint me. I will try to live long enough to give you a reasonable amount of time to make things happen. And if I can help with anything, please let me know.

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Peace Activist Medea Benjamin Visits Fresno

By I. smiley G. Calderon

In early December, internationally known peace activist Medea Benjamin visited Fresno State on her book tour to deliver an informative and timely talk focused on peace titled "Ukraine War and the Nuclear Threat."

"I wish I didn't have to be here today to speak on this subject," she solemnly greeted the crowd of students, staff and community members at the Grosse Industrial Tech Building.

Looking across the room filled with anti-war posters, she declared: "It's about time we end all the damn wars we have around the world."

"When I see your signs, 'No to Nukes,' it's a reminder that, basically, people around the world have said 'no' to nukes—that's why we have a treaty at the United Nations that bans nuclear weapons—and the only thing missing from that treaty is the nuclear weapons states to agree to it."

She asked the group why that's so and quickly responded, "It's a huge business—a huge business."

Benjamin's assertion was poignant and timely as the U.S. military had just that morning unveiled its newest aircraft, the B-21 Raider, a nuclear bomber with the hefty price tag of \$700 million—each. Benjamin reminded everyone that the aircraft was paid for by us, the taxpayers.

"For those of you who are students here in this room, we're robbing your future when we allow our government to be doing things like this."

Discussing the greedy financial incentives of war in Ukraine, its related enormous energy consumption and huge carbon output, and, of course, the horrible carnage and mass casualties, she said, "We understand that some people may disagree with the analysis of this conflict, but hopefully we can all agree that we must do whatever we can to bring this war to an end."

Benjamin called on the media to promote the voice of peacemakers and encouraged faith leaders to stand up and be vocal for peace.

"We must act now to say 'stop the bloodshed,' 'stop the bombing,' 'stop the madness,'" she urged. "We must work together to demand a ceasefire and negotiations, not world war."

Who could disagree with such a passionate plea for peace? Surprisingly, one in the crowd did.

A woman in the back interrupted Benjamin, shouting "Propaganda!" and trying to drown out Benjamin's voice. The woman got on stage, momentarily taking over the program. She directly addressed the audience with a lot of back-and-forth yelling from the crowd until she went silent and abruptly left.

Nevertheless, Benjamin was graceful and kind and even allowed the heckler to speak—demonstrating Benjamin's authentic commitment to peace and dialogue. Without maligning the heckler, Benjamin told her that she was glad she was there and looked forward to a discussion after the talk.

"We have different points of view, and we have to respect these points of view," Benjamin said.

A peacemaker but not a pushover, Benjamin made clear her disdain for NATO. "I have been opposed to NATO since way before this war began."

"I have been part of a group called No to NATO that has European allies in it that say, 'We don't want to spend our money on militarization...we want to live in peace and cooperation with all the world, including Russia, including China...we want to find ways to negotiate and solve problems—we know that war is not the answer.'"

Benjamin underscored her point: "NATO is a dangerous militarist organization that has put its sights on weakening Russia because it really wants to go after China." Benjamin sees the threat of NATO as a contributing factor to Russia's current aggression in Ukraine.

She didn't mince words about the United States and its allies.

"We in the U.S. are the biggest purveyor of violence in the world," she said, echoing the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "And what we have to do is stop the militarization of our country and Western military alliances that cause conflicts around the world."

The threat of a nuclear war is real, Benjamin noted. And it must be avoided at all costs. She repeated what JFK said after the 1962 missile crisis: "When you're in a war with a nuclear power, never put your adversary in a position where they either face a humiliating retreat or the use of a nuclear weapon."

"That's where we are at this point," she soberly told the crowd.

"We need to find a way to end the wars because it is 'hurting our people'—that's what the world is saying. For the majority of people in the world, what they're saying is this war is hurting all of us," Benjamin explained.

"End the damn war! Get to the negotiating table, find a solution," she pleaded.

"Put the line in the Donbas wherever it's going to be, and then let's send in peacekeepers to keep the peace."



Local nonprofit group Peace Fresno invited peace activist and author Medea Benjamin to Fresno State to talk about the war in Ukraine. Photo by I. smiley G. Calderon

Benjamin's appearance was sponsored by Peace Fresno, which is dedicated to peace across the globe; Dr. Matthew Jendian, director of the Humanics Program at Fresno State; and several departments at Fresno State.

Coordinating the event was Dan Yaseen, a longtime Peace Fresno member, an anti-war and anti-empire activist, and host of *Speaking Truth to Power* on KFCF 88.1 FM. Yaseen had interviewed Benjamin on his October show and discussed her new book, *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict*.

Jendian concluded the event with hopeful words: "We need each other to see ourselves. No one of us can look from the outside onto ourselves. It's through dialogue and discussion we'll come to the end of the war in Ukraine."

I smiley G. Calderon 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.

Take Action

Get involved locally with the international peace movement through Peace Fresno. E-mail president@peacefresno.org.

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Q: How can I get news of upcoming events?

A: 1 [facebook.com/peacefresno](https://www.facebook.com/peacefresno), 2 peacefresno.org 3 join the free email calendar list to get messages a couple of times a month about large and small actions and community events

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Include your address, email and phone number

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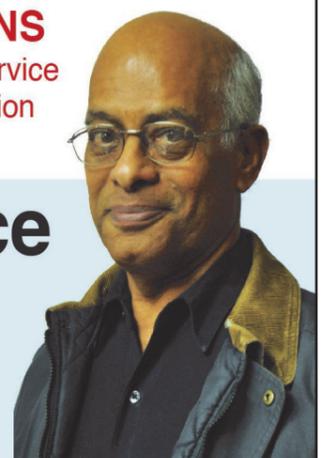
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Deconstructing Antisemitism

By Eva Maiden

It is shocking to watch the rise of antisemitism in America these days. As an American Jew who escaped from Nazi Europe in the 1930s, my first thought is "Not here too!" My next thought, which might be yours as well, is "What can be done?"

Knowing the facts about Judaism is a tool against antisemitism in everyday life. Of course, Jewish people wish to be better known for the things in which we take pride than just for the persecution that has occurred.

Judaism has a long history. When we celebrate the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, this September, it will be the year 5784 on the Jewish calendar. At just 2.5%–3% of the American population, Jews have been a significant part of the landscape since the origin of this country.

The Jews are called the people of the book. Jewish parents generally make great efforts to support the education of our children, promoting their learning at every stage. As you might know, we celebrate the maturity of 13-year-old sons and daughters with a Bar (or Bat) Mitzvah where they are expected to read a section from the Old Testament in Hebrew and discuss it.

A recent survey of more than 800 Jewish adults in the San Francisco Bay Area demonstrates a wide variety of attitudes toward their own Jewish identity. As quoted in the December issue of *J Weekly*, half of those interviewed currently identify with a particular Jewish form of observance (Orthodox, Conservative or Reform) while a quarter say they are more secular, that is, primarily Jewish through family heritage.

Seventy-six percent said that the Holocaust has shaped their Jewish identity. And 32% experienced or directly witnessed antisemitism in the last three years. Another 64% stated they felt uncomfortable about assumptions others made about them because they are Jewish.

Over the past century, there has been some debate about whether Jews are a race, which Hitler and the Nazis put forward in their ideology. Today, Jews are likely to be seen as an ethnic group, as well as a religion. One thing is clear: Antisemitism festers just like any other form of racism.

Considering your own informational background is another step in combating antisemitism. What did you hear and what were you taught early on about Jewish people? What stereotypes were you exposed to in the past? Are you ready to do some reevaluation of your own?

Taking notice of remarks that sound antisemitic is a further step. You can make it a practice to call those out instead of letting them go. Such comments are a way of "othering" a minority. Challenging stereotypes within one's circle of influence can make a difference.

Promoting a more just and fair society is a way to provide countermeasures against racism. To the extent that groups of Americans feel alienated and demoralized, our nation is at risk of feeding racist movements.

We need governmental actions that support family life, equalize job opportunities, face up to today's housing crisis and more. And we need to vote accordingly.

Thomas Jefferson famously said, "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance," and it could be added, continuous awareness of social issues. We also need to demonstrate to our children and grandchildren that we ourselves are taking on tasks that improve our society, be they small or large.

In trying to understand this subject, what are possible contributing factors to antisemitism? One can be the ego boost of seeing oneself as "better than." Also, people who are suffering discontent with their own situations in life might get a kind of relief from assigning blame to a minority group. These "chronic blamers" avoid analyzing their own problems for realistic causes and possible solutions.

Antisemitic group leaders might actually gain significant benefits: creating group cohesiveness, offering a sense of belonging that has been absent in the past and even propagandizing a future terrorist force.



A candle lighting celebrating Chanukah at River Park shopping center in Fresno.
Photo by Peter Maiden

Prejudice leaks into a community through rumor, misinformation and disinformation. Unfortunately, we had an organized incident in Clovis and Fresno just last December when antisemitic fliers were distributed in people's yards one evening. The police responded, explaining that this action is not a crime in the United States. (In Germany today, such an act is illegal.)

Holocaust studies are now part of the California school curriculum. Young people are learning how oppression occurring in Europe led to World War II. While it is painful to expose students to this history, it was part of our modern reality.

My own family's experience of the early days of Nazi domination in Europe left a strong imprint on my life. In 1938, the German army occupied Austria. (Films of that day show a welcoming parade rather than public resistance!)

I was a preschool child, protected at home. My eight-year-old brother was subjected to harassment by a Nazi teacher and soon was expelled from school for being Jewish.

My physician father had his medical license revoked and was fired from a public health job for being Jewish. My pediatrician mother also had her license revoked, but continued her practice covertly with house calls to Jewish children affected by a scarlet fever epidemic.

All Jewish bank accounts were declared to be property of the Reich and sent to Germany.

My father began to hide when Jewish men were being arrested and sent to Dachau. My family was urged to get out of Austria, but what country would accept us as refugees? After much difficulty, the four of us escaped together. We were among the relatively few who were admitted to the United States. Many of our relatives in Austria and Poland were not as lucky.

This year, we are fortunate in Fresno for being chosen to receive an exhibit directly from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum during November and December. The exhibit, titled "America and the Holocaust," will be housed at the downtown public library at 2420 Mariposa Street. Many ethnic groups are planning presentations during the exhibit to educate the public regarding their cultures. Watch for more information as the dates get closer.

Eva Maiden is a retired school psychologist and psychotherapist. She is the author of a memoir titled *Decisions in the Dark*.

Stopping Hate Crimes Town Hall

By Mike Rhodes

Hate crimes are on the rise in Fresno. Recently, a gay couple was physically assaulted in the Tower District (see page 1). A vicious and racist sign was put up near Central High School, anti-Jewish fliers were distributed in Clovis and we have a Fresno City Council member spewing hatred against the transgender community from the dais.

The *Community Alliance* newspaper has joined with groups throughout the state to confront and stop this growing threat to the safety of marginalized members in our community.

The Jan. 25 Stop the Hate Town Hall No. 2 is the second in a series of events we are organizing to call attention to this problem. The first town hall was held in Huron and addressed the institutional racism that is a roadblock to students in that rural community who are not having educational opportunities equal to students in other cities. A high school in Huron is needed to address this inequity.

Our second town hall will be held at Central East High School's Hondo Hodge Performing Arts Center (3535 N. Cornelia Ave.). Doors will open at 5:30 p.m.

Speakers will include a representative from the California Department of Justice's Office of Community Awareness, Response and Engagement (CARE), attorney Patience Milrod, Pastor D.J. Criner of Saint Rest Baptist Church and others representing the ethnic and ideological masses in the city of Fresno. Your participation is essential to the success of this free event, and a Q&A will follow each presentation.

In addition to reporting hate crimes to local law enforcement, incidents should be reported to California State Attorney General Rob Bonta. He is taking the rise in hate crimes seriously and has set up a website where these incidents can be reported (oag.ca.gov/hatecrimes).

The website says that "crimes motivated by hate are not just attacks on individual innocent people—they are attacks on our communities and the entire State. It is the job of Attorney General Rob Bonta to see that the laws of the State are uniformly and adequately enforced.

"The California Department of Justice has tools and resources to aid and assist local, state and federal law enforcement authorities in the investigation of possible hate crimes, including the identification, arrest, prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators of those crimes. If you wish to report a crime, please file a report with the local police or sheriff's department."

The rise in hate crimes throughout California and across the United States has created widespread calls for action, with funding provided for this series by the California State Library under the statewide Stop the Hate initiative. This event is being organized by the *Community Alliance* newspaper and the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance. For more information, visit fresnoalliance.com or sjvmediaalliance.org.

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*. Learn more at www.mikerhodes.us. Contact him at mikerhodes@fresnoalliance.com.

Parents, Families & Friends
Allied with the LGBTQ+ Community

Meetings the 2nd Sunday
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www.PFLAGFresno.org
(559) 434-6540
pflagfresno@gmail.com



The *Community Alliance* Newspaper presents
Stop the Hate Town Hall
Wednesday, January 25, at 5:30 p.m.

Central East High School at the Hondo Hodge Performing Arts Center
3535 N. Cornelia Ave. in Fresno



Diversity is a
STRENGTH,
not a threat.
#FIGHTracism

The rise in hate crimes throughout California and across the United States has created widespread calls for action, with funding provided for this series by the California State Library under the statewide Stop the Hate initiative. This event is being organized by the *Community Alliance* newspaper and the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance. For more information, visit fresnoalliance.com or sjvmediaalliance.org.



DOLORES HUERTA FOUNDATION

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

Donor Spotlight



Wendy Greenfield is a longtime dedicated Dolores Huerta Foundation (DHF) supporter. Born to a progressive family in New York, Wendy grew up with an awareness of the need for racial, social, and economic justice.

Wendy's early years of activism began in middle school when along with so many young people she participated in marches protesting United States participation in the Vietnam War. Her passion for social justice continued throughout her high school years as she actively volunteered with political campaigns in her community. While campaigning Wendy came across a flier describing the conditions in the grape vineyards, the workers' strike and their call for a boycott of California grapes. Wendy jumped into action and led her friends to their first picket at a local grocery store that was selling grapes. She dedicated the next three years of high school organizing and leading successful pickets to stop local grocery stores from selling grapes.

Wendy first heard Dolores Huerta speak at the Brooklyn grape boycott headquarters and was so inspired that in March 1971, she drove her sister Julie and two other volunteers across the country to Delano, California, to the United Farm Workers headquarters where they worked as part of the construction crew of the UFW Clinic at 40 Acres in Delano.

Wendy returned to New York in 1973 and was drawn back to the grape boycott where she worked closely with Dolores as an organizer in Manhattan. She experienced Dolores' respectful, encouraging and empowering leadership. "Dolores never expressed doubt in our ability to do our work or that the combined forces of farmworkers and volunteers would ultimately win the contracts we were fighting for. The attitude of '¡Sí se puede!' permeated the boycott office." Wendy remembers dancing along the sidewalks with that sense of empowerment. It was a life-changing experience.

Almost twenty years ago, Dolores told Wendy that she was going to start an organization for grassroots organizing. Wendy not only became one of DHF's first supporters, but also the first community organizer! To this day Wendy is still actively supporting, donating, and volunteering on local organizing campaigns with DHF. This year, she has participated in the 'Let's Green California!' campaign that DHF co-sponsored with the Romero Institute. She has reached out to community organizations to urge them to endorse SB 1230 which was signed into law by Governor Newsom in September 2022. This bill mandates all new vehicles sold in CA by 2030 be electric, with a goal of making CA a carbon neutral economy. The bill will also mandate electric charging infrastructure in low-income communities and fair labor standards for the workers who build them.

An ongoing initiative that Wendy is excited about, is the project to build the Dolores Huerta Peace and Justice Cultural Center in Bakersfield, CA providing the space to continue to train and empower grassroots leadership, while providing health education & outreach, youth leadership development, education equity, and environmental justice. Wendy is always happy to support the work of the Dolores Huerta Foundation and recognizes that no

movement can be built without the contribution of supporters like her. She encourages everyone to support them by joining our Social Justice Network or become a monthly supporter of Give2DHF.org.

Unhoused Community Care Package Kits



Tulare Liberated for Youth Empowerment (LYFE) organizers collaborated with Voices of the Central Valley (VOCV) to create care package kits for unhoused community members throughout Tulare, CA. VOCV and LYFE organizers worked together to educate youth members about the many and often compounding needs of the unhoused community; and how often challenges such as mental health and addictions are a direct result of becoming unhoused.

VOCV in partnership with the LYFE team created roughly 75 care package kits and distributed them directly to the unhoused living along the railroad tracks near the downtown area of Tulare. Many folks upon receiving their care kit immediately started to use items in the packages to help relieve symptoms they experience as a result of illnesses like Lupus, Covid-19, rashes, cuts, and bruises. Our youth have been moved by the experience and continue to work to support the needs of the unhoused in that area.

Unfortunately, unhoused community members recently reached out to VOCV partners to notify them that they were going to be raided by the Tulare police later that same week. According to the unhoused community members, police officers collected, destroyed, burned, and broke belongings of the unhoused. Many of the unhoused that were impacted by this raid were fortunate enough to be able to take their care package kits with them.

Get Out The Vote!



The Dolores Huerta Foundation (DHF) has wrapped up its "Vote 4 Fair Representation" Election Season! DHF Vecinos Unidos, youth and volunteers engaged in get-out-the-vote campaign efforts such as door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, human billboarding, candidate forums, and poll watching on election day for the California General Election. In partnership with Million Voters Project and California Calls, DHF volunteers reached thousands of contacts giving a voice to communities that for far too long have been left out of the conversation. We're grateful to our relentless team and dedicated volunteers. Rain or shine DHF has boots on the ground engaging the community in civic engagement and strengthening our democracy.

We are victorious in increasing participation in the electoral process and together, we've accomplished so much. The election is over, but we know that transformative change isn't just about critical moments, it's about a movement. You can grow this movement by supporting this work at Give2DHF.org.

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

What would it take to solve the housing crisis?

By Daniel Rodela

Many of the answers are in Vienna, Austria.

Since 2009, Vienna has been ranked 10 times as the most livable city in the world. That's because housing at all income levels is plentiful, and Vienna's 1.7 million households spend about 27% of their income on housing—a fraction of the cost of the average California household.

Thanks to the Global Policy Leadership Academy and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Faith in the Valley's regional advisor, Dr. Janine Nkosi, recently spent a week in Vienna with other California housing thought leaders to take a look at how a city that once had the worst housing in Europe figured out how to solve the problem.

The lessons learned provide a road map toward sustainable, high-quality, permanently affordable housing for everyone in California and the Central Valley. Vienna's almost there, so why not us?

Let's see what they learned.

Vienna's Social Housing Model

More than 100 years ago, Vienna began a pioneering social housing program in response to rapid rent escalation, overcrowding, a major health epidemic and widespread housing insecurity that emerged after World War I.

Today, walking around Vienna, you will see that there is virtually no visible homelessness.

The vast majority of Vienna's residents, about 73%, are renters, and more than 60% live in some form of high-quality social housing that's directly connected to an abundance of amenities such as childcare, public transportation, cafés, healthcare, green space and grocery stores.

Rents are stable and regulated, and rental agreements have no expiration date. As a resident's income grows, the rent remains low—allowing people to save, plan and enjoy life.

As a result, people have financial security, neighborhoods have social sustainability and the city as a whole is thriving.

Unlike the United States, where neighborhoods remain hyper-segregated along racial, ethnic and social class lines, social housing can be found in every corner of the city where people of all incomes, backgrounds and identities coexist. In any one development, you might find retired grandparents, tech workers, custodians, recent refugees and people from all walks of life.

People with no income, such as seniors, are never pushed out of their homes and communities. They're eligible for rental assistance and don't have to wait years for it.

Older adults can transfer housing to their children at the same monthly rental rate, helping future generations to thrive. And students are guaranteed high-quality housing at a low rent.

Building an Affordable Housing Community

Here's an example of what the group saw during the Vienna trip.

The recently completed GLEIS 21 building has 34 private housing units upstairs, and a number of apartments are dedicated to supporting refugees. There are also shared areas such as a communal kitchen, library, sauna, gym and laundromat—as well as a music school, eateries and a cultural café for community meetings.

The development is part of the surrounding social housing community called Sonnwendviertel, which includes 5,500 apartments for about 13,000 residents, 20,000 jobs, a school campus, office buildings, numerous stores and a large park.

Dr. Nkosi noticed that, in Sonnwendviertel and throughout Vienna, people have plants everywhere.

"People have a sense of permanence," she said. "They are setting down roots, expressing their individuality and they have a sense of autonomy."

GLEIS 21 Building

GLEIS 21 Building in the Sonnwendviertel neighborhood includes ample opportunities for communal living upstairs and common areas downstairs for education and community events.

People in Vienna are proud of where they live. There's no stigma attached to being a renter or living in public housing, and they understand that social housing ensures a high quality of life for everyone.

Can you imagine if things were like this in the United States? In California? In the Central Valley? Can you imagine living in a city where no one was worried about their housing?



Housing in Vienna, Austria, at all income levels is plentiful, and Vienna's 1.7 million households spend about 27% of their income on housing, a fraction of the cost for the average California household. Photo courtesy of The Commons

Bringing This to the Central Valley

We know this model works. Vienna has been committed to high-quality, deeply affordable housing for all of its residents for more than 100 years. Today, Vienna's elected officials, business leaders, educators and residents, in general, value housing as a human right and a public good.

But commitment and values alone are not enough. It takes resources and policy to provide social housing at a scale that actually makes a difference.

Currently, the city of Vienna owns, manages and indirectly controls nearly half a million housing units.

To generate resources to pioneer their social housing model, Vienna initially collected revenue from a luxury goods tax, which helped them to build their first 65,000 homes.

Now, the city generates public funding from two main sources: revenue from their existing city-owned social housing stock and a 1% income tax split between residents and business. Combined, Vienna generates \$450 million annually to reinvest into the housing system. California could do something similar by developing a statewide stable revenue source to support a social housing model.

To keep up with ongoing demand for housing, the city buys land for new housing and controls the development process through thoughtful zoning practices and by hosting developer competitions. This process ensures social sustainability, high-quality design, environmental standards and economic feasibility.

Because the city maintains a large affordable housing stock—and the city is consistently adding to it—middle-income residents who live in social housing don't typically crowd out lower-income residents. The city also invests in the upkeep of the existing stock to ensure it remains high quality. As a result, social housing developments don't become segregated by class.

Vienna also has strong eviction protections, as well as universal rent control—something that doesn't exist in California. If California were to do something similar, the state would need a much lower, universal rent control cap and other reforms.

Finally, the group learned from Vienna's top researchers and planners about innovative sustainable building and about their goal to achieve carbon-neutral social housing communities and to ensure that 50% of all land remains green space.

Does this mean everything is perfect in Vienna? No. We have much more to learn about how marginalized people—especially the disabled, the queer and trans community, refugees and the Muslim community—are faring overall in the city. We learned that, even in the most livable city in the world, there must be a commitment to constantly critique and reform the housing systems to make sure that everyone is truly included.

The Central Valley has been facing its own affordable housing crisis for decades, and the pandemic only made things worse. It was inspiring to see viable solutions that we could bring here.

From the group's trip, we learned that a system of housing that prioritizes people over profits is possible. And Vienna has a great road map to help us make leaps and bounds to get there.

"Coming out of this trip, I feel more grounded and hopeful in the Homes Guarantee vision," Dr. Nkosi said. "This is what we need. We can make this happen."

Daniel Rodela is Faith in the Valley's newest organizer, leading efforts to build political power. Contact him at info@faithinthevalley.org.

Black Wealth Then and Now

By Malik Simba

On June 1, 2021, President Joe Biden gave a speech commemorating the 1921 Tulsa (Greenwood) Race Massacre. This incident refers to the total demolition of Black Wall Street, the Greenwood central business district. Thirty-five square blocks of this district were leveled, and the death count neared 300 Black souls along with 1,000-plus homes looted and destroyed.

The Black wealth accrued in Greenwood was equivalent to around \$20 million today. However, it was death by a dream deferred by White terrorism.

The 2001 Tulsa Race Riot Commission chronicled the event by interviewing survivors. Some of their memories:

- Black souls who died were carted away in open cattle cars. One White resident, Ruth Sigler Avery, testified that as a teenager she saw a load of half-naked Black bodies with a Black boy her age dead but eyes fixed on her.
- A prominent Black physician, A.C. Jackson, was shot dead while standing in front of his home.
- The wealthiest Black entrepreneur was John the Baptist Stradford, known as J.B. Stradford, who

owned the three-story, brown-brick Stradford hotel, with 54 rooms, business offices and a drugstore. The Stradford was burned to the ground.

- Another White person, Walter Ferrell, who witnessed the destruction and who lived on the border of Greenwood, testified that he saw two of his Black childhood playmates burn up in their home. Ferrell said, "It was just too terrible to talk about."

Today, to remember that grisly event, a new history center is being built in Tulsa called Greenwood Rising.

Now, in 2023, there is a new type of Black Wall Street, made up of 35,000 Black millionaires. These Black men and women are located throughout the nation.

And, because of the desegregation of America and the socioeconomic gains via affirmative action, the once-used observation, "There are individual Blacks who are middle class," became a relic to a real full-blown Black middle class.

The bourgeois Black millionaires and Black entrepreneurs stand on the shoulders of the petit-bourgeois and working-class base of Black families who live in nice neighborhoods and single-family household/homes, working in well-paying nine-to-five jobs, and on Black blue-collar workers with much longer hours of work.

However, it is the Black bourgeoisie who own and independently control their wealth that is the hallmark of power. For some, what makes this class celebrated and admirable is that they have accepted the "noblesse oblige" of paying it forward or giving back to the Black community.

Seventy percent of this class are college educated, and 90% acquired their wealth via entrepreneurship. Eighty-five percent are men and 15% are women.

Oprah Winfrey, as philanthropist, has given \$400 million to education and, specifically, 400 annual scholarships to Morehouse College in Atlanta.

In sports, NBA star Malcolm Brogdon's Starting Five Foundation has built freshwater wells for thousands in East Africa. Jalen Rose and LeBron James have established Black independent secondary schools in Detroit and Akron.

And the late Beatrice International CEO, Reginal Lewis, gave Howard University a \$1 million grant.

Yes, the Greenwoods within the broader Black America are rising again.

Nonetheless, the disparities between White households and "impoverished" Black household median income keep widening. One major aspect of this gap in household "wealth" is gender. Most Black households are headed by single women with children, with some research noting it to be as high as 75%.

The question posed many times is, "Where are the Black men and fathers?" Black men are absent due to murder via gang violence, divorce, a high rate of reluctance to marry and support a family when their employment stability is suspect, massive penal incarceration, and medical crises such as hypertension and kidney disease.

Continues on page 8

Black Wealth Then and Now

Continued from page 7

One important aspect of Black poverty and households is the variable “social class.” The post-civil rights Black community welcomed the 1965 Fair Housing Act and federal coercive enforcement because the new law’s aim was to give the Black bourgeoisie the right to live in upscale, hitherto “vanilla” suburbs.

Redlining, the practice through which White banks and other lenders racially discriminated by limiting housing loans to low-income inner-city areas called “ghettos” or “the hood,” has diminished. Lenders had city maps in their offices with red lines marking areas of White urbanization versus Black urbanization.

In historical reality, this practice began simultaneously with the federal government and the private sector during the Great Depression.

President Roosevelt’s “New Deal” for relief, recovery and reform was doled out within the segregated social relations of Whites first and Blacks last or not at all. Black Americans called it the “Raw Deal.” Under the postwar G.I. Bill, Black veterans were denied home loans.

By the 1960s, with the enforcement of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the federally supported affirmative action hiring of Black college graduates in corporate America, the petit-bourgeois household median income approximated White petit-bourgeois median incomes, but the inequitable gap between White households and Black households per se, not accounting for social class, has remained.

The Brookings Institute data reveal that even Black petit-bourgeois household family income trails comparable White petit-bourgeois household incomes. Therefore, history matters.

Numerous Black towns such as Tulsa’s Greenwood district have never recovered from racist destruction so Black intergenerational wealth has severely lagged that of Whites. Therefore, financial gains transferred via inheritance and intergenerational wealth never accrued for Black families in the Age of Jim Crow segregation and violence. It is like Black families were held back at the starting line and have never caught up.

This strange new post-civil rights world of race and class has not prevented the idea of a homogenous “Black community” without clear demographic hierarchical lines of social class. Clair and Cliff Huxtable, of *The Cosby Show*, as fictitious as they are, have real counterparts in today’s America.

One can see this class difference play out in the 2011 Hollywood film, *Jumping the Broom*. The plot addresses the class relations within Black America, with one family living high on the hog in Martha’s Vineyard while the other lives in inner-city Harlem.

A marriage will take place between the son of the Harlem family and the daughter of Black millionaires. At the pre-wedding dinner, the mother of the groom senses that the mother of the bride is a stuffy elitist who proudly proclaims that her colonial American Black ancestors owned slaves.

Yes, there was class hierarchy within the slave community as characterized by Malcolm X in his parable on “The House Slave vs. the Field Slave.”

Within today’s class dilemma in Black America, there are approximately 10 Black billionaires, such as Jay Z, Robert Smith, Oprah Winfrey, Kanye West, David Steward, Michael Jordan and Dr. Dre.

W.E.B. DuBois touched on the class disparities in Black life and culture when he advocated for a “Talented Tenth” who, with a liberal arts education, would provide political leadership that would help the masses of Black folk move from a quasi-freedom to true equality before the law.

Besides Oprah, the most prominent philanthropist has been Robert Smith, who paid off the student-loan debt of an entire graduating class at Morehouse College and donated an additional \$35 million to the college itself.



In 1921, the so-called Black Wall Street, the Greenwood central business district of Tulsa, was burned down and more than 300 Black people were killed. Photo courtesy of *The Commons*

DuBois also provided a paradigm to explain the salient contradiction by which the Black bourgeoisie and the Black working class live—his “two-ness” reality of being both “an American and a Negro.” It is being Black that reveals the crisis of Black households even for the bourgeoisie.

During the transition from a Jim Crow America to a post-civil rights America, rich entertainers and especially athletes such as Jackie Robinson, Bill Russell, Willie Mays and others had to arm themselves as they established their households in heretofore all-White enclaves. In fact, before Robinson armed himself, racists would break into his home and defecate on his bed while he was on road trips.

Individual Blacks with wealth are important, but the strategies for collectively uplifting Black wealth have varied. One that is practiced every year is “Black Dollar Day,” which has its counterpart in England as “Black Pound Day.” The aim on that designated day is for Black consumers to only patronize Black-owned businesses (including online), which then circulate Black dollars within the Black community.

Buy Black is exemplified in the sports/hip hop company FUBU (For Us by Us). A critical question should be posed regarding this strategy: Do Black businesses acquiring profits set up profit-sharing schemes for their Black workers?

A much earlier and similar strategy was offered up by the Nixon presidency in which it doled out federal funding for what it called “Black capitalism.” Nixon, in his 1969 Executive Order 1148, directed the federal Small Business Administration to give loans to “minority business entrepreneurs.”

This approach was adopted in one form or another by successive presidential administrations, both Democratic and Republican, and even Trump proposed “free enterprise zones” where tax credits would be conveyed to capitalists to invest in “economically distressed areas.”

Author Herbert Gutman’s examination of Black family households proved that families maintained a Black man and Black woman with children in the same household during slavery and the four decades after the abolition of slavery. However, Gutman found that the destructiveness of racism in free life by 1925 led to the appearance of the classic Black family structure that we still see today of single Black women in households with their children.

Malik Simba, Ph.D., is professor emeritus of history and Africana studies at Fresno State.

The Growth of Low-Wage Jobs in California’s Central Valley

By Melissa Montalvo

(Editor’s note: This story was originally published by FresnoLand.org, a nonprofit news organization.)

As the central San Joaquin Valley sees a rise in warehousing and other low-wage jobs—some regional labor leaders say California can do more to address “widespread” concern with worker wages.

The Central Valley experienced the second highest rates of growth in low-wage sector jobs in the state since October 2019, trailing only the Inland Empire region, according to an analysis by the nonpartisan research group Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). The institute used labor market data from the California Employment Development Department (EDD).

Overall, Central Valley jobs grew 2% from October 2019 to December 2022. But low-wage jobs, including leisure and hospitality, and trade, transportation and utilities—a category that includes warehouse jobs—grew faster, by 5%.

“Because job loss was concentrated in low-wage sectors (during the pandemic), the jobs recovery also skews in that direction,” PPIC researchers said in a blog post explaining the analysis.

High-wage work—jobs in sectors such as information, financial activities and professional and business services—shrank 1% in the Central Valley during this same time frame, according to the PPIC analysis.

According to a separate PPIC survey of 2,307 California adults titled “Californians and Their Economic Well-Being,” which was released in November, 82% of Central Valley adults view the lack of well-paying jobs as either a big problem or somewhat of a problem.

The Inland Empire was the only region in California with higher rates of concern about the lack of well-paying jobs, at 88%.

Ana Padilla, executive director of the UC Merced Community and Labor Center, said the survey indicates that “where warehousing is soaring, there is widespread public concern with worker earnings—particularly in the Inland Empire and the Central Valley.”

Central Valley Leaders Think Wages Can Improve in the Region

Despite the challenge of low wages in the Central Valley, regional workforce and labor leaders say things like strengthened labor protections and job training can raise wages in the region.

Blake Konczal, executive director of the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board, said that in addition to the decline of small businesses and rising inflation, the question of low wages in the Central Valley is “really a question of education and job training.”

“Access to good job training (and) career training directly linked to employment is the answer to that problem.”

The PPIC survey found that a majority of Californians across partisan groups support increased government funding for job training programs.

“The findings are a call for greater public engagement not in changing the industries in the state—because we already have profitable industries—but in wage standards and how business is done,” Padilla said.

“Without those greater standards, any industry could move here and advance low-paying jobs, and it seems the public is already concerned about that.”

Could more unions raise Central Valley wages?

Meanwhile, Dillon Savory, executive director of the Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings Central Labor Council, which represents 50 unions in the four-county region, said the problem of low-wage jobs is a “symptom of the overall problem within our existing economy” that goes beyond the Central Valley.

He said that a combination of complex issues—from worker misclassification as independent contractors to the decline of small businesses to the “broken” labor laws in the country—are just some of the contributing factors leading to the growth of low-wage jobs.

Continues on page 15

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WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM WILPF Fresno, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

EcoVillage Project/Dakota EcoGarden

This is Nancy Waidtlow writing my first EcoGarden report in a long time. First thing, the project is now owned by the nonprofit EcoVillage Project.

My health problems have made it necessary for me to back off from much hands-on work. Luckily, Gerry Bill has taken up the slack. What I do try not to miss is the Second Saturday garden work party with vegan/blueberry pancakes and fresh-squeezed orange juice. (Volunteers are always welcome. Join us.)

Here's a little recent history. We stopped taking new residents at the beginning of Covid and went down to seven residents. We started accepting new residents again a few months ago, and our EcoGarden population quickly grew to 16—more than we'd ever had. Having three couples made this larger population possible.

As the gardening, cleaning and other upkeep is done by residents, the place has looked extra good with so many people dividing up the work. Many residents have found jobs, but low wages and high rents are huge problems, as is transportation.

Our "oversight board," also known as the "small board," consists of Gerry Bill, Dixie Salazar, Caroline Jackson and Bev Fitzpatrick. Our funding is entirely made up of donations from the community.

You are invited to visit the Dakota EcoGarden, at 2231 W. Dakota Ave., to volunteer or even to become a member of the big, or small, board. Call Gerry Bill at 559-341-2254 to make an appointment.

U.S. Democracy Could Work If We Got Rid of Racism

The people have spoken. Sen. Raphael Warnock was the people's choice to represent the State of Georgia and to bring back "balance" to the Congress. This race was about the balance of power.

Power: "The ability or capacity to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events." One could say that this was the job description for a senator.

I was in Atlanta when the runoff took place between Rev. Raphael Warnock and Herschel Walker. I recall that it was a tense evening as we waited to hear the results of the ballots. I recall voters standing in the rain patiently waiting to cast their vote, and I could only admire their commitment to change.

A lot of smear ads on both candidates were blasting the media, but that did not deter the voters from casting their ballots. It was as though people had already made up their minds on who was getting their vote. Before my very eyes, I was witnessing a red state changing to purple.

I was glued to the media as both these men moved closely to the finish line. I would remind myself to breathe. I thought to myself while waiting for the results: "Georgia is about to put themselves in the history books once again."

I could not help thinking that in my lifetime, Jim Crow laws were around to keep Blacks in their places and make it difficult for them to vote. A racist society that did not place much value on Black folks. Or, maybe they knew that once we discovered our power, we would make change.

I imagined the blood of ancestors running down onto the ground, drenched with their blood from the beatings and hangings, and the violence that was done to "Black bodies." But this night, the spirits of the ancestors would witness history in the making one more time, as Georgia would be electing their man for the Senate seat. "Don't nobody get it twisted, Georgians are woke."

What did these two candidates have in common? Well, they both wanted to win the Senate seat. They both presented themselves as men of faith, the same faith, in fact. Their last names started with W.

They were both Black men but on the opposite side of the political agenda; when it came to their political positions, they were very different in what they thought the people wanted. It was obvious that Walker was running as a representative of Republican ideals and Warnock would run on the Democratic ticket.

Do I really need to discuss the "quality" of the candidates? Whom do you think had the credentials for this seat? It was a no-brainer, but why then did the Republicans back Walker, and with big money I might add! Let's unpack racism or maybe the act of racism.

Why did the political powers run two Black men? To split the Black vote. You cannot get any more racist than that! Two Black men, one representing the Republicans, Walker, and one, the Democratic candidate Warnock, for one Senate seat.

Who had more experience on the job? Yep, Sen. Warnock. So, why did the Republicans run Walker? It's a rhetorical question at best. Could you imagine the Reverend signing up to be a "running back" for any football team? Yet the Republicans ran a running back for a touchdown and put money on it. Walker ran an expensive campaign with big money supporting him—Republican money backing an inexperienced candidate.

Do we really want to "Unpack Racism"?

One person described Walker's candidacy this way to me: What happened in Georgia was an interesting sight to see. Here you have a party (the Republicans) that claims to be the Christian party, appealing to White evangelicals and Christian voters primarily, which is a large voting bloc that has "power" in southern states. But in Georgia, they won't vote for a pastor because he's a Democrat, while the guy they are voting for has had problems with adultery, assault, abortion and telling the truth, let alone with making sense while he is talking, period.

In fact, when White people make fun of Black people, he (Walker) actually fits into that character that they (White folks) stereotype us (Blacks) as, and yet they voted for him because he's Republican.

Here is what is even more hilarious about that race for the Senate: The party (Republicans) that always asks "why does everything have to be about race all the time," and seems to be offended when you bring race into something, yet they put an unintelligent (in my opinion) Black man against the Black man running as a Democrat, with the hopes he would win the Black vote.

They could have chosen anyone smarter, but they just needed "a Black guy" to run because they thought that was their best chance of winning. That says a lot about how the Republicans perceive our intelligence level as Black people. Power comes at any cost!

Well, the Reverend won and I say "power to the real people" for casting a vote for Senator Raphael Warnock. Big ups my brother.

—Dr. Jean Kennedy, PsyD/OB/OD

THE CONTENT IN THIS SECTION IS PAID FOR BY WILPF. THE WILPF PAGE IS USUALLY COMPILED AND EDITED BY LENI VILLAGOMEZ REEVES (LENIVREEVES@GMAIL.COM).

Our Location and Description

Dakota EcoGarden: 2231 W. Dakota Ave., Fresno, CA 93705. Big house in front (light green, two-story, banner on front fence). There are two large bedrooms upstairs in the house with a bathroom between them.

We actually charge a small rent for these. Residents in outside shelters are charged a materials fee only.

Behind the house are three Art Dyson-designed bedroom shelters (Dyson is president of the "big board"). Other shelters outside are tents on platforms with rainproof covers and corrugated metal roofs. The 10 x 10 tents inside have straight sides and include a clothes closet and a real bed. Each tent has a small solar panel that powers a light and a fan.

The house has a kitchen, a bathroom, a computer room, a living room, a TV room and a living room. Freezer and refrigerator space and shelf storage are provided for each resident.

Outside residents are invited to use the house to get warm, or cool, or to sit on a comfortable couch or chair. There also is an outdoor kitchen, an outdoor half-bath and a separate outdoor shower. About a fourth of the lot is devoted to an organic garden with vegetables and fruit available to the residents.

Fresno WILPF Book Donation to Libraries

Many parents/guardians/caregivers are searching for support in addressing the tough questions being raised by today's school-age children and youth as they confront social/political questions raised at home, at school and in the broader community. Using the books selected by the Jane Addams Peace Association as award winners for the Jane Addams Children's Book Awards 2022, the conversations can begin.

The Jane Addams Children's Book Awards, sponsored by the Jane Addams Peace Association, annually recognizes children's books of literary and aesthetic excellence that effectively engage children in thinking about peace, social justice, global community and equity for all people.

A national committee of members with passion for and expertise in children's literature and social justice makes the choices each year. The awards have been presented annually since 1953.

The Library Committee of the Fresno Branch of WILPF has celebrated this annual literacy event by gifting six county libraries branches and Jane Addams Elementary School in the Fresno Unified School District with sets of the award-winning and honor books as part of our commitment to building better communities.

For 2022, *Shirley Chisholm Dared: The Story of the First Black Woman in Congress* by Alicia D. Williams was the winner in the Younger Children category. Throughout her life, Chisholm dared to ask questions and challenge the status quo.

This picture book biography portrays Chisholm as an outspoken individual who was curious, stood her ground, pushed the boundaries of what was considered "proper" and blazed trails of her own as a teacher, a school director, a New York State Assemblywoman and a Congresswoman, an inspiration for future generations to follow in her footsteps and dare to follow their own dreams.

The winner in the Older Children category, *How to Find What You're Not Looking For* by Veela Hiranandani, is a historical novel set in the years after the *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court ruling.

Ariel struggles with dysgraphia and is bullied because she is Jewish. Her sister, Leah, runs away with Raj, a recently immigrated Indian man, but her family rejects the marriage because Raj is not Jewish.

Throughout the novel, Ariel questions behaviors she deems contradictory and expresses her thoughts through poetry, while she bravely asks the adults in her world difficult questions that compel them to interrogate their actions and beliefs, demonstrating that activism also includes confronting the everyday acts of racism and antisemitism that we often witness within our own families and communities.

There are also two Honor Books in each category. For younger children, these are *Runaway: The Daring Escape of Ona Judge* by Ray Anthony Shepard and *Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre* by Carole Boston Weatherford. For older children, they are *Strong as Fire, Fierce as Flame* by Supriya Kelkar and *Rez Dogs* by Joseph Burcha.

After being cataloged, a six-book set will be received by each of six Fresno County Public Library branches—Sunnyside, Gillis, West Fresno, Betty Rodriguez, Mosqueda and Central. These book sets are purchased from Petunia's Place with monies from donations and fundraising activities of the Fresno Branch of WILPF.

For more information about the Jane Addams Children's Book Awards, resources and activities, visit www.janeaddamschildrensbookaward.org/book-award/.

Envisioning a future where people actively work to dismantle injustices and build a more peaceful, equitable world is the vision that the Jane Addams Children's Book Awards 2022 celebrates.

To support this annual literary event, you may donate to WILPF Fresno Branch, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755.

—Cheryl Caldera, WILPF Fresno Library Committee Chair

WILPF MEETING

Jan. 12, Thursday, 7 p.m., online for sure, and maybe also in person at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Watch your e-mail for an announcement with a link and a call-in number. For more information, contact Teresa at taca_03@gmail.com or Leni at lenivreeves@gmail.com.

STIR IT UP—WILPF KFCF 88.1 FM

Jan. 25, 3 p.m. (fourth Wednesday of each month). Jean Hays highlights people and events important to our WILPF community.

UNPACKING RACISM

Resumes on Jan. 29 at 6:30 p.m. With Dr. Jean Kennedy. RSVP with your e-mail address to drjeankennedy@yahoo.com or text 559-270-1023.

WOMEN IN BLACK

Jan. 4, noon, Courthouse (first Wednesday of each month). Check first with Sue Kern at skern@netptc.net or 559-349-3777.

MEMBERSHIP

Send dues to WILPF Fresno, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755.

For questions and information updates, e-mail Nancy Hatcher at nhatcher46@gmail.com or Kyla Mitchell at kyla.noelle@gmail.com.

WILPF-US membership is \$35/year. WILPF-Fresno sponsors a low-income rate of \$20.

Peace & Social Justice Calendar January 2023

Sponsored by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence

- TUE 03** National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) 5:30 p.m. Los Amigo's Restaurant, 5088 N. Blackstone Ave. Speaker: Torella McAlister Minor. Topic: What's New at Mollie's House. For more info, contact 559-222-6212 or joanne@pbyoga.com.
- WED 04** KFCF 88.1 FM: *Stir It Up!* 3 p.m. Community Alliance radio show hosted by Daren Miller. Guest: Carole Laval. Discussion of upcoming events focusing on the Stop the Hate Town Hall No. 2 and MLK Jr. Weekend. For more info, visit www.kfcf.org.
- THU 05** 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 on Facebook.
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) 7 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-360-8054 or taca_03@ymail.com.
- SAT 07** Kennedy Club of the San Joaquin Valley 9 a.m. Marie Callender's Restaurant, 1781 E. Shaw Ave. For more info, contact 559-435-4043.
- TUE 10** Black American Political Association of California (BAPAC) 6 p.m. For more info, contact 559-287-1308 or bapacfresno@gmail.com.
- Stonewall Democratic Club 6 p.m., Democratic Party HQ, 1033 U St. For more info, contact 559-709-8016 or conantm@aol.com.
- Peace Fresno 7 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 Van Ness Ave. In person/via Zoom. For more info, call 559-355-9717.
- WED 11** KFCF 88.1 FM: *Stir It Up!* 3 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence radio show. For more info, visit www.kfcf.org.
- THU 12** West Fresno Ministerial Alliance MLK Prayer Breakfast 8 a.m. Westside Church of God, 1424 W. California Ave. For more info, contact booker.lewis@fresno.gov.
- FRI 13** MLK Garlanding Ceremony 11:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m. Courthouse Park. Welcome by Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer. Special guest: Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Michele Cantwell-Copher in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Also featuring the Fresno Unified School District's Black student unions and

the King Elementary School Dancers. For more info, contact 559-435-2212 or 559-681-3140.

MLK Awards Program 5 p.m. Fresno City Hall, 2600 Fresno St. Welcome by Fresno City Council President Tyler Maxwell. Honorees—Educational Leadership Award: Retired Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Jim Yovino; Community Leadership Award: Tiffany Binion Mangum; Public Service Award: Clovis Police Chief Curt Fleming; and Les Kimber Community Service Award: Central Valley Black Nurses Association. For more info, contact summer.gaston-gehris@fresnounified.org.

SAT 14 Clovis Police Department MLK Community Breakfast 9 a.m. California Health Science University, 2500 Alluvial Ave., Clovis. Keynote speaker: Dr. Sudarshan Kapoor. Tickets \$5 each (prepayment required). For more info, contact 559-324-2476 or erinf@cityofclovis.com.

Fresno Bike Station 11 a.m.–3 p.m. Tower Velo, 1440 N. Van Ness Ave. This event is to help you tune-up your bicycle for free. Experienced volunteers available to guide you in repairing your bicycle. Sponsored by Tower Velo Bicycle Shop and the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition. For more info, contact 916-479-2477.

West Fresno Ministerial Alliance MLK Service 6 p.m. Westside Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 2750 S. MLK Jr. Blvd. For more info, contact saintscommunity@sbcglobal.net or booker.lewis@fresno.gov.

SUN 15 Gospel Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 4 p.m. Westside Church of God, 1424 W. California Ave. For more info, contact centralvalleygin@gmail.com or eric.paynecmc@gmail.com.

Candlelight Peace Vigil 6 p.m. Westside Church of God, 1424 W. California Ave. For more info, contact 559-435-2212.

Countdown to King Concert & Rally 9:30 p.m.–midnight. Tower Theatre, 809 E. Olive Ave. Free. For more info, contact edwardthomas858@icloud.com.

MLK Community March 9:15 a.m.–10:45 a.m. St. John's Cathedral, 2814 Mariposa Ave. Marchers assemble at 9:30 a.m. March begins at 10 a.m., stops at Fresno City Hall and then proceeds to Veterans Memorial Auditorium. For more info, contact 559-284-6420.

MON 16 MLK Commemoration Program 11 a.m. Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 245 Fresno St. Celebrate the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his contributions to the community and our enriched culture. Keynote speaker: Marc Philpart of the California Black Freedom Fund. For more info, contact 559-908-0639 or eric.paynecmc@gmail.com.

California Latina Democrats–Fresno 6:30 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact chaircalatinadems@gmail.com.

WED 18 KFCF 88.1 FM: *Speaking Truth to Empire* 3 p.m. Hosted by Dan Yaseen. For more info, visit www.kfcf.org.

MLK Art, Essay and Speech Contest 6 p.m. Clovis Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 808 4th St., Clovis. Hosted by the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools. For more info, contact 559-246-4432.

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

THU 19 Fresno State Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Noon–1 p.m. Fresno State Peace Garden, 5241 N. Maple Ave. Presented by the Fresno State African American Program. For more info, contact Maria Williams at 559-278-4435.

ArtHop Metropolitan/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 on Facebook.

Clovis Democratic Club 6 p.m. Seven Cafe & Grill, 25 Clovis Ave. For more info, contact 559-322-9740 or jenikren@gmail.com.

Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter 7 p.m. Via Zoom. Speaker: Pamela Flick, California program director for Defenders of Wildlife. Topic: The Return of Gray Wolves to California. An overview of gray wolf natural history, ecological role and current distribution and population in North America and in California. The historic reintroduction efforts in the northern Rockies to bring wolves back from the brink of extinction will be discussed, as will implications for wolf recovery in the western states with an emphasis on the importance of coexistence and moving beyond misinformation about this native species. Visit sierraclub.org/tehipite to register in advance.

SAT 21 West Fresno Democratic Club 9 a.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-930-4909 or westfresnodemclub@gmail.com.

Central Valley Progressive PAC 3:30 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-978-4504 or simone.rhodes@seiu521.org.

Democratic Women in Action 6 p.m. Pardini's, 2257 W. Shaw Ave. 6th Annual Celebration Honoring Woman of Action. Honoree: Dr. Carole Goldsmith, chancellor, State Center Community College District. Tickets \$75; <https://bit.ly/dwia-woa2023>. For more info, contact 559-681-3140.

TUE 24 California Association of Retired Americans (CARA) 10 a.m. SEIU Local 521, 5228 E. Pine Ave. For more info, contact 559-360-5955 or 559-704-8384.

WED 25 KFCF 88.1 FM: *Stir It Up!* 3 p.m. WILPF radio show hosted by Jean Hays. For more info visit www.kfcf.org.

Submit upcoming community activities to calendar@fresnoalliance.com by the 15th of the month preceding publication.



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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.

NWPC Fresno recruits, trains and supports pro-choice women candidates for elected and appointed offices at all levels of government regardless of party affiliation.

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<https://www.nwpcfresno.org> • FB: NWPC Fresno

Religious Freedom in Cuba

By Leni Villagomez Reeves

On Dec. 2, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued a declaration designating Cuba, among other countries, as a “Country of Particular Concern” for “having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom.”

Countries included on the list are subject to possible sanctions, including cancellation of scientific and cultural interchanges, suspension of aid for development, blocking of loans and restrictions on exports.

Oddly enough, no evidence is offered for this statement. It seems to be enough that the United States postures self-righteously; facts are irrelevant “because we say so; no proof required.”

The Cuban Constitution recognizes, respects and guarantees religious freedom and provides sanctions for any form of discrimination against believers—or non-believers.

It’s particularly ironic that this should come in a year in which Cuba engaged in a profoundly democratic process of popular consultation to establish a new Code of Family Law consistent with the Constitution of 2019, with a nationwide referendum in September to determine whether the Families Code would be adopted.

Fundamentalist churches throughout Cuba campaigned openly and vehemently against the Families Code, just as they had campaigned against adoption of the Constitution, and for similar reasons. Leaders and members of these churches refuse to recognize any rights of all people, especially regarding marriage, that do not conform to their homophobic and patriarchal beliefs.

The Families Code was adopted by a 67% yes vote; about 33% of Cubans voted no. (The Constitution, also submitted to referendum, was adopted by a 87% yes vote; about 9% of Cubans voted no.) What happened to those who voted no? What happened to those who led campaigns against the Families Law Code or the Constitution? Absolutely nothing.

Some readers might know that the author has spent much time in Cuba. Even leaving aside the Caravans with Pastors for Peace, which visit all kinds of churches at various times and places in Cuba, the author has noticed that the presence of churches and religions is widespread, almost ubiquitous.

When in Havana, the author stays at the home of Nora Cuello in Marianao. It’s next door to a Baptist church. There’s a Jehovah’s Witness congregation just down the block. The apartments facing the next street, back to back with the house, have not one but three *babalawo*—leaders in the African-based religion of *Regla de Ocha*. Sunday mornings are not quiet, with Protestant hymns, drumming and singing in Yoruba religious style, and more.

If you need a Catholic church, the closest one is just around the corner and down one block, one of more than 650 on the island. There are three Jewish synagogues in the Vedado District alone. There is a mosque in Old Havana. The Asociación Yoruba building is right across from the Capitolio.

There are Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Lutherans and the Salvation Army. There are thriving African-based religions including *Regla de Ocha* (Santería), *Palo Monte* and *Sociedad Abakua*, which have great influence in Cuba.

Hey Mr. Blinken: Three different Catholic popes have visited Revolutionary Cuba, and each of them condemned the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

Secretary of State Blinken—who are you trying to fool? For sure not the people of Cuba.

Here’s Cuello’s perspective: “My opinion is simple, and it is that I live here, and I can tell you that I have the Ebenezer Church on one side and another church on the other; in back there are three *babalawo*, on the first floor there’s a man who has an Adventist Center, and the Catholic churches nearby, and they all carry out their religious activities and rites whenever they wish and nobody messes with them.

“Everyone is free to practice and promote or preach their religion. I don’t know where they got that idea, because here everybody has their services and their rites without being bothered by anyone. There are lots of religions. There are those who practice them, others who don’t, everyone according to their own preference.”

Raúl Suarez Ramos, long-time pastor of the Iglesia Bautista Ebenezer and elected representative to the Asamblea de Poder Popular, Cuba’s parliament, says that “today I feel whole, able to love God, carry out my pastoral duties, live my faith, and at the same time feel committed to the humanism of the Revolution, as an indivisible experience, without any contradiction.”

Izett Samá studied at the Protestant Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Matanzas; she is now pastor of the Iglesia Presbiteriana in Los Palos in Mayabeque.

“My work now is in a community in the countryside,” Samá wrote. “We have a very active church with a lot of social projects to help people in many ways. Our country now has a difficult economic situation, and we try to help the people know how we can make changes in our community by ourselves.

“From the Christian faith that inspires us, the revolutionary calling that moves us and complete conviction, we affirm that peace is the way through which we must restore justice and well-being in this world.”

“If it weren’t so serious, it would be laughable,” says M. Lopez, “because Cuba is a country where all religions coexist freely. Really, they don’t know what to do next to accuse Cuba of something.”

According to Alberto Garcia, “The United States is always ‘concerned’ about what is occurring, according to their judgment, in all countries that don’t submit to their rule.

And they include them in lists according to their arbitrary political convenience.

“If we were going to include the U.S. Empire in some lists for their ominous acts, the lists would be infinite. They would be first on the list of Violators of Human Rights, Invaders of Countries, Sponsors of Coups d’Etat, Largest per Capita Prison Population, Most Heavily Armed, Largest Producer of Armaments, Largest Number of Military Bases in Other Countries, Only Country to Use the Atomic Bomb, etc., etc.”

And here’s Blinken again, presumably speaking in our name, “Around the world, governments and non-state actors harass, threaten, jail and even kill individuals on account of their beliefs. These actions sow division, undermine economic security and threaten political stability and peace. The United States will not stand by in the face of these abuses.”

Israel, which is recognized as an oppressive apartheid state on the basis of religion by human rights organizations, and which has this year killed the highest number of Palestinians in the West Bank in more than 15 years, according to the United Nations, is not on this State Department list.

And, of course, the United States still supports and arms Saudi Arabia, which is on the list, but which somehow merits a pass. Apparently, the United States will stand by in the face of these abuses if the price is right.

By the way, although Blinken is not the prime mover of U.S. policy, it is noteworthy that his company, WestExec Advisors, has contracts with Israeli maritime surveillance company Windward and U.S. drone manufacturer Shield AI.

To the U.S. State Department and to those who promote an economic, cultural and media war against Cuba, we say that it’s time to stop resorting to dishonest accusations to maintain and justify a policy of abuse of the Cuban people.

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



A Catholic church on Calle 51 in Havana, Cuba.
Photo by Leni Villagomez Reeves

Excremental Change: Public Toilets Needed Now

Continued from page 1

population. The outbreak was not fully contained for two years, and it sickened nearly 600 people and caused 20 deaths, sadly.

If you live on the streets of the city or county of Fresno you are at a greater risk of infection because of a dearth of public bathrooms.

If an unhoused person has to use the bathroom, it is difficult to find a toilet. Often, it’s in a coffee shop, a convenience store, a fast-food restaurant or in another private building—so it’s not a public toilet.

Since the Covid pandemic, many private businesses have barred everyone except customers from using bathrooms. That remains the case.

The city and county of Fresno have few public restrooms. Most are in parks, libraries and city and county buildings.

The United States has eight public toilets per 100,000 people. That number is comparable with the rate in Botswana and far behind Iceland’s world-leading 56 public toilets per 100,000.

The current lack of public restrooms in Fresno and the nation relates to many different issues, including public health, social services and many types of discrimination.

Public toilets have existed in the United States for many years. The expectation for privacy while going to the bathroom in a public space emerged in the 19th century, with the Industrial Revolution and modern plumbing.

In the 19th century and into the 20th century, sanitation became a greater priority. People began to understand sanitation’s role in containing outbreaks of waterborne diseases and cities built public toilets.

However, because of racism, homophobia and ignorance, bathrooms became segregated. Bathrooms were separated by gender, as they still frequently are.

Public toilets started closing as early as the 1930s, with the LGBTQ+ community as a target. Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, public officials began to complain about “perversions.” They began to complain about same-sex sex in bathrooms.

In the first half of the 20th century, bathrooms often were segregated by race, with Black Americans, or Latinos in the Southwest, as the targets. By the 1960s and 1970s, public toilets requiring small payments sprang up, but those ended up closing after concerns about gender discrimination.

Other efforts to remove public toilets came in the 1980s as part of a broader push to drive unhoused people to the edges of cities by taking away their access to public spaces and aggressively enforcing public urination laws. Unfortunately, limited access to restrooms

and sanitation has remained a practice and a policy in Fresno and throughout the country. And if you are unhoused, the nearest bathroom might be a one-mile walk.

Racial segregation in toilets might sound like distant history or a footnote, but that racism still exists.

In 2018, two Black men were blocked from using the restroom at a Starbucks location in Philadelphia’s Center City. The incident prompted Starbucks to take on a role as America’s de facto public toilets, as it changed policy to allow people to use the restrooms at more than 15,000 U.S. locations without buying anything.

But Starbucks seems to be changing its policy. Starbucks announced in July that it would close 16 stores due to safety concerns.

CEO Howard Schultz said in June that the coffee giant might restrict its currently public restrooms to customers only, as part of its broader push for store safety. If Starbucks makes this decision to no longer serve as America’s public restroom, where will people be able to go?

Even if a person isn’t homeless, bathroom access advocates say there are going to be fewer and fewer options for people to be able to relieve themselves and that this has become a public health issue.

In San Diego, the city acknowledged that a lack of public restrooms, especially for unhoused people, was part of the 2017 hepatitis A outbreak, and installing public toilets and hand-washing stations helped to contain it. Unfortunately, a lack of funding or upkeep quickly led to the toilets disappearing.

A report earlier this year from researchers at San Diego State University found many of the toilets closed after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and that nearly half the county’s Census tracts, home to 40% of the population, had no public restrooms.

Other cities are moving ahead with plans to install new public toilet facilities, including Portland, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. However, there’s still a shortage of public toilets in the United States and it’s pretty dire.

Fresno can install public toilets and hand-washing stations throughout the city. It’s the right thing to do because water and sanitation are human rights under international law.

In 2011, a UN independent expert, Catarina de Albuquerque, studied water and sanitation rights on a mission to the United States. Her report found an instance in Sacramento where public restroom closures and enforcement of public urination and defecation laws led to a homeless person traveling miles to dump a whole community’s human waste.

In the report, she indicated that the laws had a discriminatory effect and led to “a violation of human rights that may amount to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.”

The city and county of Fresno, by failing to provide the right to basic sanitation, are doing the same. What is even more troubling is that the City, the County and the Fresno-Madera Continuum of Care could pay for basic sanitation. They have received \$230 million in funds over the past three years, yet nothing has been spent on providing basic sanitation.

Bob McCloskey is an advocate and activist. Contact him at bobmccloskey06@gmail.com.

Odesa: *Kholodomor* (“Death by Cold”) Will Not Work

By Zarina Zabrisky

The first snow in Odesa, a southern seaport in Ukraine, was neither joyful nor quiet this year. The city woke up to the rumbling sounds of diesel generators shaking the streets. The Odesa region’s 1.5 million residents spent two days without electricity and central heating for the second time in 10 days.

The water pumps stopped working. Traffic lights were off. The Internet was down. The snow was not welcome. Neither were the Russian invaders.

After months of conventional warfare failures, the Kremlin turned to a hybrid war strategy that quickly became recognized as *Kholodomor* (“death by cold”), named after Stalin’s genocidal policy of *Holodomor* (“death by hunger”). Stalin-engineered artificial hunger, *Holodomor*, killed up to 5 million Ukrainians in 1932–1933.

In the winter of 2022, Russian missiles and Iranian-made drones continually target the energy infrastructure of Ukraine, already damaged by previous attacks.

Since Oct. 10, almost weekly, usually, on Mondays, but occasionally off the schedule, a massive air raid starts. Sirens signal the imminent approach of deadly weapons.

Next, a battle of Ukrainian air defense forces with dozens of missiles or Iranian-produced “Shahed” drones ensues. Even though most of the missiles and drones get intercepted and downed, some hit their targets.

On Nov. 23, the whole country of Ukraine lost power after one of the attacks. Most regions lost heat and water. That night, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, president of Ukraine, speaking in an online format to the emergency session of the UN Security Council, said: “When the temperature is below zero outside, and tens of millions of people are left without heat and water as a result of Russian missiles hitting energy facilities, this is an obvious crime against humanity.”

Air strikes and, lately, blackouts have become an everyday reality in Odesa during the nine months of war so there was no panic. Residents have stocked up on water, matches, wet wipes, multiple power banks, LED lamps, candles and flashlights, big containers of water and firewood.

However, by the end of the third day of the blackout, refrigerators started to leak and food supplies were spoiling. For the unwell or elderly residents of many high-rises, getting to the top floor without elevators, in the darkness, became an issue.

Public transportation running on electricity stopped a while ago. The traffic lights or street lamps did not work, and drivers could not see pedestrians stumbling around icy roads with flashlights. The fluctuations in temperature and power supply put prematurely born babies or patients in the ICU. With no running water, sewage soon became an issue.

Yet, Odesa is known for its resilience and sense of humor. Ukrainians are resourceful and proactive. State-run “invincibility hubs,” community centers where people can get warm, charge phones, get in touch with their loved ones and have hot drinks, opened throughout the country.

While the local authorities work around the clock to provide people with all the necessities during the long blackouts, central heating interruptions and halted supply of water, stores, cafés, restaurants and banks switched to diesel and gas generators and offered help to their customers.



Stockpiling firewood. Photo by Zarina Zabrisky

Natasha, Amsterdam restaurant manager, said, “We are used to Russia inflicting blows. We have family in Poland and Turkey, and they ask us to flee but we are not leaving Odesa. We use generators and we are staying.”

In a café, Pepe, also running on a diesel generator, manager Petya said that families come to cook together on the weekends and there is a super-popular master class on making *pirogi*—typical Ukrainian pastries. The employees buy produce at *Privoz*, a famous local farmers’ market, also working amid blackouts.

“We are not afraid at all,” said Petya. “We have love and we care for each other and it makes us stronger.”

A waiter at 12 Monkeys, a bistro on the main street, echoed this sentiment, “We are not in the least intimidated and no one is feeling like negotiating with the terrorist state.”

The bistro has served customers who didn’t have cash, trusting them to pay the bill when the ATMs or credit cards start working again. Obtaining cash became problematic due

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Is This a New Day for Westlands? Part One. Westlands Water District Board of Directors Elects “Change” Coalition Majority

The Westlands Water District, on Fresno County’s rural Westside, is the largest agricultural water district in the nation, roughly 15 x 60 miles in size (see map). It is a significant power broker in the San Joaquin Valley. From 2000 until this month, Tom Birmingham served as the District’s General Manager. The Westlands board of directors granted Birmingham leeway in crafting District policy, and he used his authority to persuade — and cajole, if necessary — the board to bend to his wishes.

Birmingham recently resigned from Westlands, as of January 1. Sarah Woolf, a farmer, agricultural water consultant, and former board member, and farmer Jon Reiter organized a “change” coalition to run for the Westlands board of directors this past November, and it swept all four seats up for election. Two ongoing board members, Kevin Assemi of Elevated Ag (and the Assemis of Granville Homes), and William Bourdeau of Harris Ranch, support the coalition’s policies, which now controls six of nine Westlands board seats.

“The district’s approach was to fight [water cutbacks]. Tooth and nail,” said Woolf, in a recent interview with KQED’s California Report. “They hired the best attorneys. They hired the best lobbyists.” Woolf herself was appointed to the board in 2012, where she tried unsuccessfully to persuade Westlands to sit down with its adversaries to explore compromise. Woolf was in conflict with Birmingham over his policies and leadership style, and she resigned in protest in 2018. “He’s an authoritarian, even a dictator”, Woolf says with a laugh. ‘It’s his show.’

Yet, from a position off the board, Woolf was able to attract the support of board members who shared her concerns. She saw it as important for Westlands to negotiate with the range of players in California water issues: other water districts, government (local, state and federal), environmental organizations, and local, underprivileged communities facing drinking water supply and pollution problems.

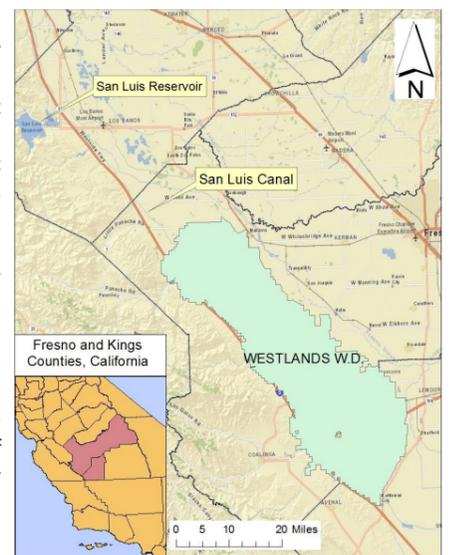
- A campaign mailer identified the proposed agenda of the “change” coalition:
- Urgently develop groundwater recharge
- Create clear pumping regulations
- Develop a strategic plan that incentivizes farming alternatives including land retirement, conversion to solar or other uses
- Improve relations with other water districts, disadvantaged communities, and environmental and drinking water advocacy groups.

Our Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter is encouraged by these developments at the Westlands Water District, and Sarah Woolf’s hard-won efforts to reform its priorities to recognize the importance of groundwater storage to mitigate expected future droughts, which are expected from the climate crisis. With Sierra snowpack anticipated to diminish in the coming decades, and intense storms forecast to bring water to the San Joaquin Valley, existing dams are no longer sufficient to capture the irrigation water farmers

need through the growing season. And with the state’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, we need to replenish our depleted aquifers as a buffer against drought.

The Sierra Club is cautiously optimistic that Westlands will be able to change its course to coexist with natural limits on water, and also with our emerging political realities. An estimated 25,000 Valley residents still lack safe, abundant and affordable drinking water supplies. Working with Sierra Club California, we pledge to work with Westlands, other water districts, and government regulators to ensure the future of farming in the Valley, the needs of our many and diverse communities, and our ecosystem — all of which rely on our finite, precious, drinking water supplies.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED: Our Sierra Club California Water Committee meets monthly on Zoom. We are active and dedicated volunteers with an interest in protecting our water supplies and reallocating them to protect both endangered habitats, such as our San Joaquin Valley wetlands and San Francisco Bay Delta, and the needs of diverse communities and farmers. If you are interested in learning more or participating, contact Gary Lasky at (559) 790-3495.



Map of Westlands Water District. Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation. Westlands Water District Groundwater Warren Act Contract, Draft Environmental Assessment. EA-15-001. March 2015.

Happy New Year and welcome back as we begin a new year of outstanding educational and inspirational programs. This month Pamela Flick, California Program Director for Defenders of Wildlife, will join us on Wednesday, January 18, at 7 PM via Zoom. Her topic is, “The Return of Gray Wolves to California.”

This presentation will provide an overview of gray wolf natural history, ecological role, and current distribution and population in North America and here in California. The historic reintroduction efforts in the northern Rockies to bring wolves back from the brink of extinction will be discussed, as will implications for wolf recovery in the western states with an emphasis on the importance of coexistence and moving beyond misinformation about this native species.

Email Karen Hammer at ecuagirl45@yahoo.com and you will receive the Zoom link the day of the presentation. Advance registration is required.



How the Pandemic Changed Classroom Behavior

By Steven Roesch

(Author's note: My recent articles about education focused on local issues and drew on the experiences and expertise of several local instructors. In the past few months, though, I've reached out to public school teachers in other parts of California and chatted with them via Zoom about their working life, the challenges they've encountered and their thoughts about ways to improve an educational system that's facing its share of grim challenges. Their names have been changed and the names of their schools omitted.)

So how does public education look nowadays? How did the pre-Covid reality differ from what's going on now? In particular, what's it like to teach in California public schools these days?

Two online chats involved a pair of gifted instructors working at different sites. Let's call one of them Ruth.

Ruth teaches second-graders in a Title I elementary school. The majority of the school's students are Hispanic, a quarter are African-American, and—before free meals were made available for all students—virtually all of them qualified for free or reduced meals.

She handles all subjects, and typically her classes have 30–32 pupils. No teacher aide or parent volunteers are available to support her. Given her university background, she's strong in math and science, and now she's playing catch-up in other areas, such as literacy instruction.

Many of her students had wrestled with learning deficits before the pandemic, and now those gaps have grown considerably. When Ruth started teaching them in person again, it quickly became clear that many of them had no knowledge of letters or numbers. Quite a few couldn't write their own names. Many lacked foundational skills in reading—decoding abilities as well as comprehension.

Ruth also encountered stark behavioral changes.

A few years ago, she'd witnessed occasional recalcitrance such as students refusing to do their work. More recently, though, she's seen more extreme behavior—vulgar language, kids throwing things at instructors.

Before the interval of distance learning, many of them had been dealing with a sense of instability due to food and housing insecurity. Now, she finds, there's a permanency in their sense of instability.

To be sure, her site and district have invested time and effort in the area of mental health. For example, her site has partnered with a mental health agency that provides services for those students deemed to have the greatest needs.

It also purchased a social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum that teachers are required to implement for 30 minutes each school day.

The curriculum helps to get students to "vent"—to identify emotions. However, she feels that it's limited in its scope. The program doesn't go on to help kids after they've recognized their emotions. You de-escalate yourself, but it's also important, she argues, to learn how to de-escalate so that you're not harming someone else.

Although the SEL activities regarding self-soothing have improved outward behavior, she can see that some students are passive-aggressive. Some still aren't as aware as they need to be; they're still going through the same harmful behavioral patterns as before.



An empty school during the pandemic in San Francisco. Photo courtesy of The Commons

A majority of her colleagues are burned out, operating at a minimum. The district provides them with free access to counseling and therapy, but "those are just band-aids."

So what would help to alleviate teacher burnout and improve her site overall?

She ticked off some reforms that could make a significant difference. Lower class sizes, for one. In addition, changing the way that discipline and consequences for misconduct are handled.

A more "robust" approach to discipline is sorely needed. As it is, she laments, "I can't do my job" because of the sheer amount of time that's currently devoted to class management.

Like other non-first-year instructors at her school, she now heads for the parking lot each day as soon as her teaching contract allows for that—which means pretty much leaving when her kids do. She avoids taking work for school home with her.

She usually gets to her classroom each day about an hour before instruction formally begins so that she can get herself organized.

Raul, another teacher, spent a few years in special education at the high school level before switching to the middle school where he now teaches. Just like Ruth's site, Raul's has mostly Hispanic students, which works well for him as he speaks Spanish fluently.

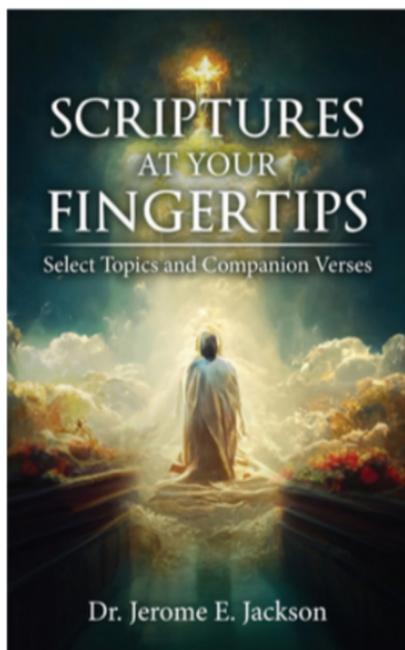
He finds a lot to like about his current workplace.

A public school, it features small class sizes that Ruth can only dream of—5 to 25. Raul's quick to sing the praises of such classes: they're "more intimate," and "you get to know the students better."

Continues on page 16

SCRIPTURES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS: Select Topics and Companion Verses

By [Dr. Jerome E Jackson](#)



Scriptures at Your Fingertips

Christian counseling is a most challenging and rewarding vocation. At the core of Christian counseling is the affirmation that God is in charge. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). This positive view shared in session after session with client after client is the cornerstone of success in Christian counseling.

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This book is a tool designed as a quick reference guide on select subjects. All scripture cited in this handbook are from the Holy Bible, Authorized King James Version. This handy book is a great study source for beginning students, and a wonderful teaching tool for advanced Bible instructors. It is designed for rapid searches and valid answers to practical questions. In about 240 pages the author provides users with a permanent personal supplemental resource for daily devotion, spiritual encouragement, and biblical counseling. Dr. Jackson is the Senior Pastor of the Christian Community Baptist Church, Fresno.

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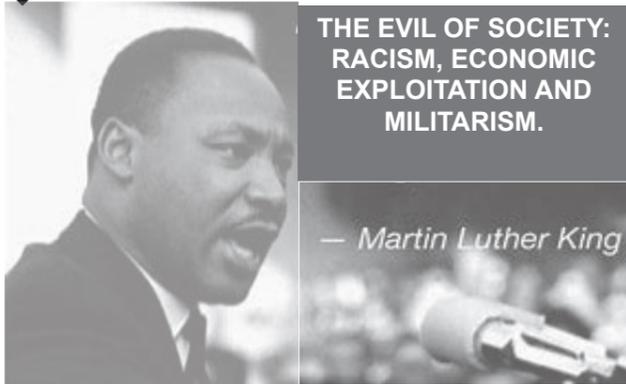
Wake up, everybody it's a new year so what ever you forgot to do last year that was so damn important, you better get on it right away.



Edited by
 Richard Gomez.

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Every year as the MLK holiday weekend approaches I begin to feel a bit nauseated—not because of Dr. King himself, but because of the way our culture has tried to transform his memory into something that will make it more palatable to white sensibilities. I have a great deal of respect for the real Dr. King, which is why I find it so offensive that his message seems to become more diluted each year. Way too much attention is paid to his famous March on Washington speech of August 28, 1963, while the larger body of his work gets overlooked. Indeed, even within the analysis of that one speech, there is too much emphasis on the easiest to swallow, least offensive parts of the oration—specifically, the “I HAVE A DREAM” sequence. That sequence about the dream was tacked onto the end of his speech in an impromptu way. It was not even a part of his prepared text. It is highly unlikely that he wanted the “I have a dream” addendum to be the main takeaway from his speech that day. If one looks at the whole body of MLK’s work a very different picture emerges.

While his life is often portrayed as being about the campaign for racial justice, that was just one part of a much larger puzzle with three interlocking pieces. Dr. King made this clear over and over again in multiple speeches. He refers to the three pieces as the three evils of society, or sometimes the evil triplets. They are Racism, Economic Exploitation, and Militarism. The first piece, racism, is the part that we hear about the most and needs no further explanation here, except to say that it is highly interwoven with the other two. The middle piece was given slightly different names by MLK at different times. In his speeches, economic exploitation is also called materialism, or excessive materialism, and sometimes he would just come right out and say capitalism. In any case, he was talking about how poverty is built into our economic system. MLK’s speeches about the third piece of the puzzle, militarism, posed a huge threat to the military-industrial complex, and is thought by some to be the final straw that led to his assassination.

Dr. King insisted that you could not address any one piece of the puzzle without addressing all three. To mount a serious attack on racism one must also deal with economic exploitation and with militarism. One cannot address the economic exploitation piece without facing the fact that it is an inherent part of our economic structure, which meant MLK was mounting a serious challenge to capitalism. That, of course, was a huge threat to the ruling class, and they had every reason to want to stop him. MLK’s attack on militarism was happening during the war in Vietnam. Young men of color were being used as cannon fodder to advance the agenda of the militarists. When Dr. King linked racism to militarism in his Riverside Church speech of April 4, 1967, he was essentially bringing together the two biggest movements of the day—the anti-war movement and the Civil Rights Movement. That is when the powers that be and the mainstream media really began to go after him and did whatever they could to discredit him. Perhaps it is no coincidence that he was assassinated on April 4, 1968, one year to the day after his Riverside Church speech.

It is really not that surprising, therefore, that those same two forces—the people in positions of power and the mainstream media—are the ones who are doing their best to remake Dr. King’s legacy into something that does not challenge capitalism or militarism, and that only challenges racism in ways that are as inoffensive as possible. All of this helps explain why and how the message of MLK has been altered to deceive the modern audience to maintain the three evils for which we are all the poorer now because of this terrible distortion that has been perpetrated upon us. This article written by Gerry Bill.

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In our December show with our host Josh Shurley and his guest was peace activist Gerry Condon from Veterans For Peace. Discussing the war in Ukraine plus the increasing threat of nuclear weapons.

In November, your host Josh Shurley was peace activist and veteran Susann Schnall, current President of Veterans for Peace. The discussion will be of VFP’s campaign to reclaim Armistice Day and of broader issues related to her work and the work of Veteran for Peace, which is to expose the true cost of war and to abolish war as an instrument of national policy. To hear again: <https://soundcloud.com/joshua-shurley>

The Growth of Low-Wage Jobs in California's Central Valley

Continued from page 8

"At this point," he said, "corporations in America and in California know that they can pay people poverty wages, and those people will have to go get subsidized government assistance."

Savory thinks that one way wages can rise in the Central Valley is through a stronger presence of unions throughout Valley industries, so that employers have no choice but to raise their wages.

He pointed to the Central Valley's food production industry, from processing to packaging to the retail sectors, "we have pretty good density union-wise in that industry."

The "magic" with having enough density in an industry, said Savory, "is that the non-union employers, like Costco, feel the need to absolutely up their game and treat their employees well enough where they won't leave for another job in the same industry."

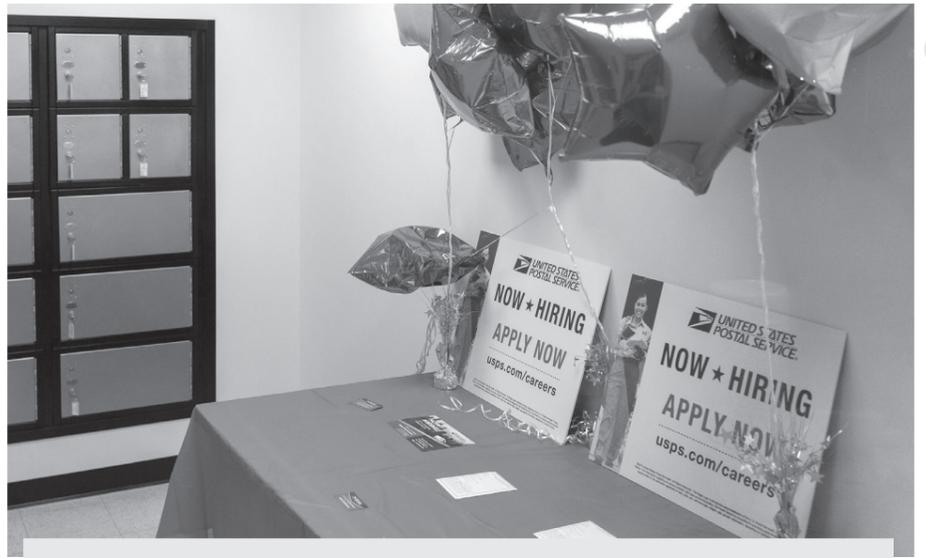
Which job sectors are growing in the Fresno area?

According to EDD labor market data on Fresno County, total industry employment increased by 12,600 jobs, or 3.1%, from October 2021 to October 2022. Nonfarm employment rose by 10,600 jobs, whereas farm employment added 2,000 jobs during this period.

The sector that saw the most growth in this time frame was educational and health services, which posted the largest year-over-year increase of 3,400 jobs.

Government expanded payrolls by 2,500 jobs from October 2021, a majority of them in local government jobs.

Meanwhile, trade, transportation and utilities grew by 1,600 jobs compared with October 2021. Most of this growth was in transportation, warehousing and utilities, which increased by 1,200 jobs.



The San Joaquin Valley has seen a rise in low-wage and temporary jobs.
Photo courtesy of The Commons

The leisure and hospitality industry added 1,100 jobs.

Melissa Montalvo is a labor and economic inequality reporter with the Fresno Bee and FresnoLand. She graduated from the University of Southern California with a B.A. in international relations, minoring in business law and French. She has covered stories about the food and agricultural industries and indigenous and Mexican American culture for platforms such as Civil Eats and LA Taco.

Odesa: Kholodomor ("Death by Cold") Will Not Work

Continued from page 12

to the ATMs being down, and credit cards could not be accepted due to the lack of a connection.

Lyuba, a pensioner, sold flowers at the corner and said that business is a bit slower but still going. She taught the author of this article to fry eggs on a candle and put pillows on the window to keep the icy air out.

"Lifehacks" are popular: Andrey, a massage therapist, shares a piece of advice to buy bulk paraffin to make budget-friendly candles to heat the room.

A new grocery store downtown just opened and ran in the darkness, with a strong smell of diesel inside. Small rooms are not equipped to be running on generators around the clock. However, businesses must keep going, for the sake of the city residents and the employees.

Victoria, the owner of a French bakery, does not plan to close her shop. "People have come here for years and have their favorite pastries," she said. "We have ingredients mailed to us or buy them at the local market, and we have a generator. We are okay."

"They only make us stronger," said Oleksandr Syenkyevich, the mayor of Mykolaiv, another southern port city in Ukraine. Mykolaiv, located close to the frontline

until November, survived almost eight months without drinking water and daily bombardments and is still standing strong.

"Read my lips: Without gas or without you? Without you. Without light or without you? Without you. Without water or without you? Without you. Without food or without you? Without you," Zelenskyy wrote in September, addressing Russia on behalf of his compatriots.

"Cold, hunger, darkness and thirst are not as scary and deadly for us as your friendship and brotherhood. But history will put everything in its place. And we will be with gas, light, water and food...and WITHOUT you!" The president's message resonates with Ukrainians.

In liberated Kherson, people said that they preferred "to live without power, water and the Internet than with Russians." According to a recent poll by the Rating Group, 85% of Ukrainians believe that the Ukrainian victory

in the war with Russia requires the liberation of all territories, including occupied Crimea and the occupied parts of eastern Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, writes *The Kyiv Independent*.

In Odesa, Julien, a French citizen, residing in Ukraine for seven years, taught French and history online from a café, Vitrazh. He said, "People are very strong. They don't give up. They won't let Russians come here in Odesa."

Katya Chalaya, the founder of the art collective Art as Resistance, opened her gallery during the war. The gallery runs candlelit exhibitions, poetry readings, acoustic music concerts and other cultural events even if there is power.

"We try, trust and believe," said Chalaya, as her young daughter danced to the sound of Egyptian drums in the warm candlelight.

Zarina Zabrisky is an American journalist and an award-winning novelist currently reporting on the Russian war in Ukraine. She is a war correspondent for Bywire News (UK), writes a Daily Review column for Euromaidan Press, an online Ukrainian English-language independent newspaper since 2014, and contributes articles and podcasts on information warfare, reports from the sites and interviews with military experts and eyewitnesses for these and other publications, including *The Blyne Times* (UK).



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How the Pandemic Changed Classroom Behavior

Continued from page 13

His district encourages its teaching staff to act as “warm demanders” who are at once caring and committed to high academic standards. He tries to square this circle by making his classroom comfortable for his charges, for example, by always playing music. At the same time, though, he sets up a clear-cut structure for all of his lessons.

The cell phone policy at his current site is far stricter than what he encountered earlier. Phone policies vary from one place to the next, and “it takes a team effort to get school culture right.”

No police officers are on his campus. Instead, “culture keepers”—members of the community—help to keep the school running smoothly. He’s found that this approach works well, given that these individuals are often known to students and parents alike.

The pandemic changed things drastically, and its effects are still being felt.

In addition to academics, the months of distance learning impacted student conduct significantly. They now have a harder time working with each other. Phones have become even more important for them than a few years ago; texting is now the default mode for communicating.

Many show a kind of emotional stunting, often acting out in ways that would be more typical of younger kids. The sixth-graders are “goofier,” for example, when they want to run around the room instead of staying in their seats.

Those exposed to SEL training have acquired self-regulation; they have better social skills than their peers.

In lieu of electives, his school now offers a special reading class, one that augments regular English instruction, to tackle learning loss. A staff member put together a fair amount of the curriculum for the course herself, and she now acts as their lead reading teacher.

Raul gives this course credit for boosting the school’s scores on recent standardized tests—so dramatically that they’re now gaining on the top-scoring school in their area.

On the other hand, he and his colleagues “have to sacrifice” to make the place function.

Compared to the well-heeled district he once worked in, this one doesn’t offer him much in the way of supplies. Previously, he could get basic items—paper towels, tissue—from the school office, but now he buys them himself. He regularly hands out snacks in class to encourage kids to master their vocabulary lists, but that expense also isn’t subsidized.

When Raul describes his actual teaching experiences and his students, he brims with enthusiasm. One case in point: a camping trip that he went on with his sixth-graders a while back. Some in the group had never been out in nature like that before, walking “where only the moonlight lit your path.”

Even though he lives in an area with a high cost of living, he earns essentially what a Fresno Unified School District teacher earns. A lot of his colleagues are tired. A number are “scrappy,” and the salary issue informs this discontent.

Although he clearly enjoys his job, Raul’s also considering moving to another district because of financial considerations.

Steven Roesch is a retired bilingual teacher who has lived in Fresno since 1985.

Support the Community Alliance. See page 17 for a recap of our fundraiser.

Fresno’s Lee Herrick Named California’s Poet Laureate

By Vic Bedoian

Governor Gavin Newsom recently appointed Fresno poet Lee Herrick as California’s newest poet laureate. Herrick is the first Asian American to be so honored. He has been widely published in literary magazines across the nation and is the author of three books.

In bestowing the honor, the governor said that Herrick was chosen because of his dedication to highlighting the diverse experiences of Californians and making them accessible through his poetry. The actual appointment unfolded with a surprise visit from Governor Newsom to Herrick’s Fresno City College classroom.

“It was an absolute thrill, deeply humbling, very exciting,” said Herrick. “It’s starting to settle in now, but having the governor and the first partner walk into my poetry class to tell me in person was unforgettable.”

Herrick was born in South Korea in 1970 and was raised in the Bay Area and San Joaquin Valley by his adoptive parents. His literary inspiration came from the vibrant poetry scene by the Bay and his frequent visits to City Lights Bookstore.

Herrick says what inspires him now comes from his students and his immersion in the celebrated Fresno poetry scene. Juan Felipe Herrera, another Valley writer, was named California’s first Latino poet laureate in 2015. Over the years, poetry and literature growing from Valley soil have gained a national reputation.

“The poetry here is boundless and as powerful as any poetry being written in the country,” says Herrick. “Anywhere I go around the country people will ask me what it’s like to be a poet in Fresno and do you know Juan Felipe and things like that.”

“I could go on and on of the poets whose books are really having a meaningful impact on people’s lives and on the poetry community in general.”

Much of Herrick’s writing revolves around the immigrant experience in America. He says that growing up as a person of color immersed in a White social milieu played an important role in developing an understanding of American culture. That patchwork quilt of diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages and lifeways that describes his San Joaquin Valley is why he feels so at home here.

Herrick has been a Fresno City College professor for more than a quarter-century and affirms that the poetry emerging from the Valley illustrates and celebrates that diversity: “It’s exciting to see how that diversity continues to expand, you know not just with race and gender, but orientation, aesthetic and vision.”

His inspiration to become a poet, Herrick notes, has roots ranging from classical American poets, like Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, all the way to rock, punk and rap musical genres. Music is still a creative stimulant.

In current times, what arouses his muse is the trauma and tragedy of gun violence and the killing of people of color in America and how to cope with it.

Being the state’s poet laureate is more than just an honorific title. It is a job.

His job description is advocating for poetry in classrooms and boardrooms across the

My California

A poem by Lee Herrick

Here, an olive votive keeps the sunset lit,
the Korean twenty-somethings talk about hyphens,

graduate school and good pot. A group of four at a window
table in Carpinteria discuss the quality of wines in Napa Valley versus Lodi.

Here, in my California, the streets remember the Chicano
poet whose songs still bank off Fresno’s beer-soaked gutters

and almond trees in partial blossom. Here, in my California
we fish out long noodles from the pho with such accuracy

you’d know we’d done this before. In Fresno, the bullets
tire of themselves and begin to pray five times a day.

In Fresno, we hope for less of the police state and more of a state of grace.
In my California, you can watch the sun go down

like in your California, on the ledge of the pregnant
twenty-second century, the one with a bounty of peaches and grapes,

red onions and the good salsa, wine and chapchae.
Here, in my California, paperbacks are free,

farmer’s markets are twenty four hours a day and
always packed, the trees and water have no nails in them,

the priests eat well, the homeless eat well.
Here, in my California, everywhere is Chinatown,

everywhere is K-Town, everywhere is Armeniatown,
everywhere a Little Italy. Less confederacy.

No internment in the Valley.
Better history texts for the juniors.

In my California, free sounds and free touch.
Free questions, free answers.

Free songs from parents and poets, those hopeful bodies of light.

From *Gardening Secrets of the Dead*. Copyright 2012 by Lee Herrick. Published by WordTech Communications LLC. Reprinted by permission of Lee Herrick. The poem first appeared in *ZYZZYVA*, a San Francisco journal of arts and letters.

state, inspiring an emerging generation of literary artists, and educating all Californians about the many poets and authors who have influenced our state through creative literary expression. And Herrick has a plan for the mission he wants to carry out.

“I’m calling my platform ‘Our California,’ which will bring together poetry with social justice and civic engagement organizations around the state,” notes Herrick.

“So, wherever I read, I will invite the curator or the organizer to bring on one of those organizations to pair with my reading. And it might include a local poet or a student poet, but I also want to bring that organization to the event so those folks and the poetry folks can be in community and in conversation with each other.”

California Poet Laureate Herrick believes in the power of poetry. That poetry can move people toward action and change and community.

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 vicedoian@gmail.com.



Lee Herrick, the first Asian American to become California’s poet laureate. Photo by Curtis Messer/www.leeherick.com



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A Chapter in a People's History of the San Joaquin Valley

By Chris Schneider

On Oct. 4, 1933, 5,000 cotton workers in Corcoran voted to strike after growers lowered wages below those of the previous season. The strike began at the Tagus Ranch in Tulare County but soon spread to ranches in Kern, Fresno, Madera and Merced counties, stretching more than 114 miles. The strike swelled to 18,000 mostly Mexican (80%) and Filipino strikers and lasted 24 days.

During the strike, armed growers killed three strikers. Hence, the sign "Disarm the Rich Farmer or Arm the Workers for Self-defense."

The union leading the strike, the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union (CAWIU), had four staff organizers on the ground and relied heavily on worker leaders to organize the strike. Women workers played major roles in the organizing.

Workers demanded \$1.00 per hundred weight of cotton (the growers initially offered 40 cents but moved to 60 cents to avoid the strike), recognition of the CAWIU and replacing labor contractors with a union hiring hall.

Almost immediately, growers began evicting striking workers and their families from the labor camps. Local business leaders, bankers, ministers and even the Boy Scouts joined cause with the growers in efforts to drive out the strikers. Growers pressured businesses that supported the strikers.

A sheriff stated: "We protect our farmers here in Kern County. But the Mexicans are trash. They have no standard of living. We herd them like pigs."

On Oct. 10, 1933, one week into the largest agricultural workers strike in California history, strikers gathered at the union meeting hall in Pixley. The sheriff had deputized many of the local growers and had issued 600 citizen permits to carry weapons.

During the meeting, approximately 30 armed growers surrounded the hall and ambushed the people in the hall, killing striker Delores Hernandez and Delfino D'Avila, a representative of the Mexican Consulate office who supported the strikers.

That same day, about 70 miles south of Pixley, in Arvin, striker Pedro Subia was killed. In the two incidents, an additional 20 workers were wounded in Pixley and Arvin.

In Tulare County, eight growers stood trial. The jury deliberated about two hours before dismissing the charges against them. In Kern County, seven strikers were arrested and accused of having conspired to kill Subia. The district attorney, not surprisingly, failed to present any supporting evidence to the grand jury, and no indictments were issued.

While no grower convictions resulted from the killings, union organizer Pat Chambers wound up in jail for leading a march of workers in Tulare County demanding "relief" (public assistance) for the strikers.

Jailing Chambers for leading the march failed to deter him. A few months later, he helped organize a vegetable worker strike in Imperial County, where the growers and police utilized tactics similar to those they used to try to break the cotton strike. The anti-worker forces also had other plans to put a halt to the wave of agricultural strikes across California.

The strike garnered attention in newspapers, local and across the country. Most contemporary reporting sought to spread fear of the communist organizers and/or fan racism. A *New York Times* headline declared "California Clash Called 'Civil War.'"

Los Angeles Times reporter Chapin Hall claimed strikers had a "deadly fear of their leaders." He did not offer any evidence of how thousands of workers found themselves terrorized by the 21-year-old, 4-foot 11-inch, 103-pound Caroline Decker.

The Corcoran newspaper used threatening alliteration stating that workers staying in the strike camp needed to go back to work or "be jailed, deloused and defilthied, and, finally, deported."

Newspapers' fearmongering notwithstanding, the strikers gained significant public support. People from around the state sent food and supplies to them.

After the strike, at least one newspaper reported that the Sacramento police shared letters they claimed demonstrated that movie star James Cagney provided "aid to Reds" by allegedly helping the strikers. The article described Decker as a "notorious California Communist."

Due to public pressure, California Governor James Rolph agreed to provide relief to the strikers. George Creel, chair of the National Labor Board, intervened to mediate the strike.

Although farmworkers were not under the jurisdiction of the National Labor Board, Creel claimed that he had jurisdiction over agricultural strikes. The eventual agreement resulted in an increase to 80 cents per hundredweight but no recognition of the CAWIU or a hiring hall. Both sides claimed victory, and the historic strike ended.

Seventy years after the strike, authors Mark Arax and Rick Wartzman revealed in their book, *The King of California: J.G. Boswell and the Making of a Secret American Empire*, that a son of cotton grower Clarence "Cockeye" Saylor, Fred Saylor, described to them how "Cockeye" came home from the shooting and, with 10-year-old Fred's help, melted his



Workers on strike in 1933. Photo by Ralph H. Powell of Hanford

.38 gun in a coal-fired forge in the blacksmith shop on the ranch. Fred further told them that he still had the forge, and he planned to have it donated to the museum in Tulare after he died.

Interestingly, 22 years later, when grape workers in Delano launched their own historic strike, among their demands were higher wages, union recognition and the replacement of labor contractors with a union hiring hall. Their fight lasted five years, but they won contracts that contained all those demands.

Chambers followed the strike from afar but never communicated with the union while the strike and boycott was on. Once the contract was signed, he visited with Cesar Chavez at United Farm Workers' Forty Acres. He told Chavez that he had stayed away so that the growers could not connect him to the strike and try to do to the UFW Organizing Committee strike what they had done to the CAWIU strike and leadership.

Chris Schneider is a labor and civil rights attorney. His previous work with the United Farm Workers of America, California Rural Legal Assistance, Central California Legal Services and the Agricultural Labor Relations Board provides him insight into California farm labor history. Contact him at chrischneider@gmail.com.

Fresno Supports Local Independent Media

By Mike Rhodes

More than 100 supporters from Fresno, the San Joaquin Valley and the newly renamed Yokuts Valley came to the *Community Alliance* fundraiser on Dec. 3. The event was a huge success giving old friends an opportunity to reconnect, hear from great speakers and help us achieve our fundraising goals.

Every time the *Community Alliance* has faced a financial challenge, we have asked our supporters for help and they have come through for us. In 2022, our operating expenses were \$600 higher than our income each month. The fundraiser erased the imbalance and pushed us over the top to start the new year.

We increased our monthly sustainers from 72 to 100. We have many supporters who give between \$5 and \$100 a month, bringing in about \$2,000 a month. If you have not done so already, please consider becoming a monthly sustainer. You can do that at fresnoalliance.com/support.

Smiley Calderon is working on a video of the *Community Alliance* fundraiser so that you can see and hear what the event was like. We will let you know when that video is available.

Always know that it is you, our supporters, we are accountable to. We will not take funding from developers, right-wing special interest groups, big business or other fat cats. Thank you for making local independent media a reality in Fresno.

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.

Photos by Peter Maiden



The *Community Alliance* fundraiser was held at the SEIU 521 union hall.



Pam Whalen implored the audience to give generously. They did. We got 24 pledges from people wanting to be monthly sustainers to the *Community Alliance* newspaper.



The keynote speaker was David Bacon, the world-class photographer of working people and the culture of the San Joaquin Valley.

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Recordando a Fred Ross Jr., Organizador Social y eFensor de la Justicia Social

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inspirara otros a organizar, y lo hace destacando el impacto que tiene la organización de las bases populares en el cambio a largo plazo. “Como en el caso de su padre, las labores de Fred Jr. nunca trataban de sí mismo”, dijo la UFW en un tributo. “Siempre trató de capacitar a los demás para que creyeran que eran ellos los responsables del progreso que conseguían.

Libertad Religiosa en Cuba

Continúa de página 20

profundamente democrático de consulta popular para establecer un nuevo Código de Ley de las Familias de acuerdo con la Constitución de 2019, con un referendo nacional en septiembre para determinar si se adoptara el Código de la Familias. Iglesias Fundamentales en Cuba hicieron campaña abiertamente, intensamente y vehemente en contra del Código de las Familias, igual como hicieron en contra de la Constitución, y por razones similares. Los dirigentes y feligreses de estas iglesias se niegan a reconocer los derechos de todas las personas, sobre todo con relación al matrimonio, si no están de acuerdo a sus prejuicios homofóbicos y patriarcales. El Código de las Familias se adoptó por una mayoría de 67% votos a favor, con 33% de cubanos que votaron no. La Constitución se adoptó también por referendo, con 87% a favor y 9% en contra. ¿Qué les pasó a los que votaron no? ¿Y qué les pasó a los que dirigieron las campañas en contra del Código de las Familias o en contra de la Constitución? Absolutamente nada.

Algunos de ustedes sabrán que he pasado mucho tiempo en Cuba. Aun dejando aparte las Caravanas Pastores por la Paz, que me han colocado en muchas iglesias en diferentes lugares en Cuba durante muchos años, he notado que la presencia de religión e iglesias en Cuba es amplia, casi ubicua. Mi cuarto en la Habana es en casa de Nora Cuello, en Marianao. Al lado se encuentra una iglesia Bautista. Los Testigos de Jehová se encuentran unas cuantas casas en la otra dirección. En los apartamentos de la otra calle, con patio detrás de la casa viven no solo uno sino tres babalawo—líderes de la religión Regla de Ocha, derivada de África. Los domingos en la mañana no son nada quietos, con himnos protestantes, tambores y cantos estilo de la religión Yoruba, y más. Si te hace falta una Iglesia Católica, la más cercana está a la vuelta de la esquina y una cuadra adelante—una de las más de 650 en la isla. Hay tres sinagogas judías en Vedado. La Mezquita Abdala está en la Habana Vieja. El edificio de la Asociación Yoruba se encuentra casi frente al Capitolio. Hay Bautistas, Pentecostales, Adventistas del Séptimo Día, Presbiterianos, Metodistas, Anglicanos, Cuáqueros, Luteros, y el Ejército de la Salvación. Florecen religiones con raíces en culturas africanas, incluyendo Regla de Ocha (Santería), Palo Monte, la Sociedad Abakuá, que tienen mucha influencia en Cuba. Atención Mr Blinken: Tres distintos Papas Católicos han visitado Cuba Revoluciónaria, y cada uno de ellos condenó el bloqueo impuesto por los EEUU a Cuba. Secretario de Estado Blinken? A quién intentas engañar? Seguramente no al pueblo de Cuba.

Aquí la opinión de Nora Cuello, “Mi opinión es sencilla, y es que vivo aquí y te digo que tengo la Iglesia Ebenezzer al lado y al otro lado otra iglesia, al fondo tengo tres babalawo, abajo hay un señor que tiene un centro adventista, y las iglesias católicas, cada cual realiza su actividad religiosa y hace sus ritos religiosos cuando lo cree conveniente y nadie se mete con ellos. Cada cual es libre de practicarla y promulgarla. No se de donde sacan esta opinión porque cada quien hace su culto y sus ritos sin ser molestados por nadie. Hay una gran cantidad de religiones. Hay quien las practica, otros no, cada quien a su gusto”. Aquí la opinión de Raúl Suarez Ramos, durante muchos años pastor de la Iglesia Bautista Ebenezer y diputado elegido a la Asamblea del Poder Popular, el parlamento de Cuba: “Hoy me siento un hombre de una sola pieza: amar a Dios, ejercer mi pastado, vivir la fe y a la vez sentirme comprometido con el humanismo de la Revolución, forman una experiencia indivisible, sin contradicción alguna.” Izett Samá estudió en el Seminario Ecuaménico Protestante de Matanzas y es ahora pastora de la Iglesia Presbiteriana en Los Palos, Mayabeque. “Mi trabajo ahora es en una comunidad del campo”, escribió ella. “Tenemos una iglesia muy activa con

muchos proyectos sociales para ayudar al pueblo de muchas maneras.

Nuestra patria ahora tiene una situación económica muy difícil e intentamos ayudar a la gente a conocer cómo podemos hacer cambios nosotros mismos en nuestra comunidad.” Y agrega, “desde la fe cristiana que nos inspira, la vocación revolucionaria que nos mueve y con convicción plena, afirmamos que la paz es el camino desde donde necesitamos restaurar la justicia y el bienestar en este mundo”.

M. Lopez ofrece la opinión “Si no fuera tan serio, daría risa, porque Cuba es un país donde coexisten libremente todas las religiones. De verdad que ya no saben qué hacer para acusar a Cuba”. Alberto García dice, “Estados Unidos siempre está ‘preocupado’ por lo que sucede, a su juicio, en todos los países que no se le doblegan. Y los incluyen en listas a conveniencia de su política arbitraria. Si fuéramos a incluir al Imperio Yanqui en alguna lista por su fatídica actuación, serían infinitas. Tendría el primer lugar como Violador de los Derechos humanos, Invasor de países, Patrocinador de Golpes de Estado, Mayor armas por habitante, Mayor productor de armas, Mayor número de Bases Militares en el extranjero, Único país en utilizar el Arma Atómica (Hiroshima y Nagasaki). Etc, Etc, Etc”.

Aquí de nuevo Blinken, supuestamente hablando a nombre nuestro: “En el mundo, gobiernos y protagonistas no-estatales acosan, amenazan, encarcelan, y hasta matan individuos debido a sus creencias. Estas acciones siembran la división, socavan la seguridad económica y amenazan la estabilidad política y la paz. Los Estados Unidos no se quedará de brazos cruzados frente a estos abusos”. Por si acaso preguntaras, Israel no se encuentra en la lista, aunque es reconocido como estado opresivo y de apartheid a base de religión, según organizaciones de derechos humanos. Y además, declara en la Ribera Occidental (West Bank). Y aunque Arabia Saudita sí se encuentra en la lista, los EEUU sigue apoyando y armando a los Sauditas. Aparentemente los EEUU sí se quedará de brazos cruzados frente a estos abusos si les conviene el precio. Aunque Blinken no es el creador principal de la política estadounidense, es de hacerse notar que su empresa WestExec Advisors tiene contratos con la empresa de vigilancia digital marítima israelí Windward y con el fabricante de drones estadounidense ShidAl. Al Departamento de Estado de los EEUU, a los que promulgan la guerra económica y mediática y cultural contra Cuba, les decimos que ya es tiempo de dejar esto de recurrir a acusaciones deshonestas para mantener y justificar una política de abuso contra el pueblo cubano.

Leni Villagomez Keeves es una médica local y activista. Puede contactarla en lenireeves@gmail.com. Chequee sus comentarios y noticias sobre Cuba en Facebook (fresnosolidarity/).

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Las grabaciones racistas

Fueron un “terremoto político” para Los Angeles

Continúa de página 20

“El fondo de la conversación era también una especie de política de suma cero en la que

se pensaba que el aumento del poder político latino se producía necesariamente a costa del poder político negro”, dijo Pastor, que está en total desacuerdo con ese punto de vista.

“Cuando aumentamos el poder político de los negros, mejoramos las perspectivas políticas de los latinos, de los asiático-americanos, de los indígenas que viven en Los Angeles, mejoramos las condiciones para una política progresista”, añadió.

También calificó las consecuencias de la grabación de “terremoto político”, que sacudió los cimientos de la política latina en Los Angeles y brindó la oportunidad de renovar el enfoque en la política de coalición.

Odilia Romero, cofundadora y directora ejecutiva de CLELO (Comunidades Indígenas en Liderazgo), señaló la grabación como una expresión pública del racismo que siempre ha

estado presente contra las poblaciones indígenas de las Américas.

“No me sorprendieron sus comentarios porque es con lo que tratamos todos los días con nuestros familiares latinos y mexicanos”, señaló. También relató una reunión con la cúpula de la Federación Mexicana tras las grabaciones que calificó de “paternalista”.

“Me dijeron: no querrás pasar a la historia como la mujer que desmanteló el poder político latino”, relata, sobre unos dirigentes que no nombró y que actuaban, supuestamente, en

El crecimiento

de los empleos

en el Valle Central

de California

Continúa de página 20

La encuesta de PPIC encontró que la mayoría de los

californianos en todos los grupos partidistas apoyan una

mayor financiación del gobierno para los programas de

capacitación laboral.

“Los hallazgos son un llamado a una mayor participación

pública, no en cambiar las industrias en el estado, porque

ya tenemos industrias rentables, sino en los estándares

salariales y la forma en que se hacen negocios”, dijo. “Sin

esos estándares más estrictos, cualquier industria podría

mudarse aquí y promover empleos mal pagados, y parece

que el público ya está preocupado por eso”.

Pueden más sindicatos aumentar los salarios del Valle

Central?

Mientras tanto, Dillon Savory, director ejecutivo del Consejo Laboral Central de Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings,

Recordando a Fred Ross Jr., Organizador Social y Defensor de la Justicia Social

Por Louis Freedberg

Fred Ross Jr. siempre quiso que lo conocieran simplemente como organizador.

Empezó de joven con su trabajo organizativo en los campos de California al lado de César

Chávez, y ha inspirado a innumerables personas a lograr un cambio social durante más de

medio siglo en el lugar de trabajo y en comunidades de los Estados Unidos.

Ross murió de cáncer el 20 de noviembre a los 75 años

Dolores Huerta, cofundadora con Chávez del Sindicato de Campesinos UFW, por sus

siglas en inglés), dijo que hay dos palabras que describen a Ross: humilde y noble. “Siempre

era tan positivo en todo”, dijo Huerta, ahora de 92 años. “Tuvíamos mucha agitación en el

movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas, pero Fred siempre logró mantenerse por encima

de ella. Siguió siendo un estadista.”

Arnulfo De La Cruz, vicepresidente ejecutivo del Sindicato de Trabajadores de Servicios

(SEIU) Local 2015, recordó haber trabajado con Ross hace dos décadas para sindicalizar

con éxito al Hospital Providence de St. Joseph en Burbank, parte de la tercera cadena más

grande de hospitales sin ánimo de lucro en el Oeste.

“Aprendí mucho de Fred, especialmente lo importante que es involucrar a toda la

comunidad para apoyar a estos trabajadores, a la comunidad de la fe, la del trabajo, a las

personas famosas”, dijo. “Se sentía igual de cómodo hablando en español que en inglés y

largo legado de su familia en la lucha por los trabajadores”.

Ross siguió los pasos de su padre, Fred Ross Sr., otro organizador legendario que tuvo un

impcto profundo en Chávez. “El me descubrió, me inspiró”, dijo Chávez acerca de Ross

Sr., que lo contrató y capacitó como organizador a los 25 años en San José antes de fundar

el Sindicato de Campesinos con Huerta. “El pensaba que yo tenía lo que se necesitaba para

ser organizador. Me dio una oportunidad, y eso llevó a muchas cosas”.

El talento de Ross Jr. consistía en tomar lo que había aprendido de Chávez y su padre,

combinar esas lecciones con campañas sobre el terreno con voluntarios locales, usar

de forma inteligente los medios, y presionar a los patrones, los gobiernos estatales, y el

Ross comenzó su trabajo de organizador de tiempo completo a los 23 años con los

trabajadores agrícolas durante la masiva huelga de la lechuga en Salinas en 1970. Una

contribución notable fue la organización de una marcha de 110 millas contra los vinos de

Gallo, desde Union Square de San Francisco hasta la sede de Gallo, donde por lo menos

10,000 trabajadores agrícolas y partidarios llenaron las calles de Modesto.

Una de las razones de la marcha contra Gallo fue la de presionar al gobernador Jerry

Brown a firmar la Ley de Relaciones Laborales Agrícolas, decretada en junio de 1975. Fue la

primera ley de su tipo que establecía el derecho de los trabajadores agrícolas a organizarse,

votar en elecciones sindicales y negociar con sus patrones.

Ross se valió de reuniones en casas como táctica central a lo largo de su carrera. Ese fue

el sello distintivo del enfoque de Ross para organizar: creaba relaciones individuales para,

según sus palabras, ejercer “poder colectivo”.

Arturo Rodríguez, que sucedió a Chávez como presidente de la UFW y desempeñó ese

papel durante 25 años, dijo que Ross “realmente encarnaba el lema de Si Se Puede”. Dijo

que la creencia de Ross en las reuniones en casas “durante todas estas décadas ha sido

verdadamente increíble, y me dio fe para continuar el proceso de las reuniones en casas

como nuestra manera básica de organizar”.

En los años 80, Ross dirigió Neighbour to Neighbour, que inicialmente se centraba en la

grave situación de los refugiados de Centroamérica, pero que se convirtió en un esfuerzo

mucho mayor para enfrentar las políticas de Estados Unidos en la región que contribuían a

que la gente huyera de sus países.

Después de presionar al Congreso para acabar con las ayudas de Washington a los

Contras, el grupo rebelde de derechas que luchaba contra el gobierno Sandinista de

Nicaragua, Neighbour to Neighbour lanzó un boicot de café salvadoreño para presionar

al gobierno a retirar su apoyo de los escudadores de la muerte. Como resultado de los

picetes formados por Neighbour to Neighbour, los estibadores se negaron a descargar

cargas de café en toda la costa Oeste, incluyendo Long Beach.

Después de que los votantes de California aprobaran la Proposición 187 en 1994

promovida por el gobernador Pete Wilson, Ross ayudó a lanzar la Campaña de la Ciudadanía

activa en Los Angeles que presionó con éxito al Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización

para que acelerara el proceso de solicitud para la nacionalidad a seis meses.

“No solo tuvimos un papel sustancial en ayudar a que miles de personas se naturalizaran,

sino que, y más importante, a que se involucraran mucho más en todo el proceso político”,

recordaba Ross poco antes de fallecer. “Eso fue un verdadero avance para seguir creando

el poder de votación latino en California”.

Durante el último año de su vida, Ross se dedicó a producir un documental acerca del

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durante el último año?

¿Que sectores laborales han crecido en el área de Fresno

otro trabajo en la misma industria.”

lo suficientemente bien como para que no se vayan a buscar

mejorar las condiciones laborales y tratar a sus empleados

sindicalizados, como en Costco, sienten la necesidad de

trabajos no

La “magia” de tener suficiente densidad en una industria,

bastante buena en esa industria”.

y los sectores minoristas, “tenemos una densidad sindical

Valle Central, desde el procesamiento hasta el empaque

Señaló a la industria de producción de alimentos del

aumentar sus salarios.

para que los empleadores no tengan otra opción que

aumentar en el Valle Central es a través de una presencia

más fuerte de sindicatos en todas las industrias del Valle,

Savory cree que una forma en que los salarios pueden

asistencia subsidiada del gobierno”.

salarios de pobreza, y esa gente tendrá que ir a buscar

Unidos y en California saben que pueden pagarle a la gente

“En este punto”, dijo, “las corporaciones en Estados

crecimiento de los empleos de bajos salarios.

el país, son solo algunos de los factores que contribuyen al

pequeñas empresas y las leyes laborales “incumplidas” en

contratistas independientes hasta el declive de las

desde la clasificación errónea de los trabajadores como

Dijo que una combinación de problemas complejos,

nuestro actual economía” que va más allá del Valle Central.

salarios es un “síntoma del problema general dentro de

condados, dijo que el problema de los empleos de bajos

que representa a 50 sindicatos en la región de los cuatro

por sus pares en CCNMA (Latino Journalists of California), como Periodista Latina del Año.

American Dream” y “El Despertar del Sueño Americano”. En octubre de 2018, fue seleccionada

Y políticos de la comunidad latina de los Estados Unidos. Es autora de los libros “Killing the

Pilar Marrero es periodista y autora con larga experiencia en la cobertura de temas sociales

distritos y el funcionamiento de las coaliciones.

sesión sobre la anti negritud entre las comunidades latina y AAPJ, la redistribución de

Esta serie de paneles continuará con otras tres sesiones el año que viene, incluida una

sentimientos antiinmigrantes en múltiples comunidades y construir coaliciones duraderas”.

y el liderazgo comunitario que nos permitirá combatir la anti negritud, la xenofobia y los

de pensar a largo plazo”, dijo. “Necesitamos entrar en la organización transformacional

“Como ocurrió tras los disturbios civiles de Los Angeles, tenemos la necesidad inmediata

moviéndose hacia la izquierda con la elección de nuevos líderes latinos.

remodelación de la política latina que ha prevalecido durante décadas y el ayuntamiento

Pastor calificó este incidente como un “terremoto político” para Los Angeles, con la

semanas, incluso meses, y ¿cómo se trabaja con él o a su alrededor?”.

“Nadie puede obligarte realmente a dimitir, salvo los votantes, pero eso llevará algunas

“¿Pueden la ciudad y el ayuntamiento seguir adelante con él todavía ahí?”, dijo Smith.

dimitir de su cargo.

una de las personas en las grabaciones, el concejal del distrito 14 Kevin de León, se niega a

Los panelistas expresaron su preocupación por la situación en el ayuntamiento porque

preocupen por los negros y que nuestras necesidades queden insatisfechas”, afirmó.

llevo aquí es que temen que los latinos se apoderen de la política de la ciudad, que no se

“Una de las cosas que he oído decir a los angelesinos negros durante todo el tiempo que

en la ciudad, según la columnista del L.A. Times Erika D. Smith.

Este incidente ha exacerbado un problema de confianza entre afroamericanos y latinos

puedes imaginar el trato que reciben, ¿verdad?”.

Llamada Comunitaria

LA VOZ DEL MOVIMIENTO PROGRESISTA DESDE 1996

Las grabaciones racistas fueron un "terremoto político" para Los Angeles

Por Pilar Marrero

La política de Los Angeles "post grabaciones racistas" es un momento tenso para las comunidades de color e indígenas de la ciudad, pero también una oportunidad para el cambio, la renovación de coaliciones que se han trabajado durante décadas y "un tipo diferente de política latina".

Así lo afirmó un panel de expertos durante el primer acto de una serie que promete diseccionar la estrecha relación entre política y racismo en Estados Unidos y que comenzó esta semana con una mirada "A puerta cerrada", un debate sobre las grabaciones filtradas de una reunión de dirigentes de Los Angeles haciendo comentarios racistas.

La Escuela PRICE de la Universidad del Sur de California y su Center for Inclusive Democracy, el California Black Freedom Fund, la Latino Community Foundation y el AAPI Civic Engagement Fund son los patrocinadores de la serie.

"Sabemos que la grabación filtrada en Los Angeles fue sólo la punta de un iceberg siempre presente. Supuso un ejemplo muy público de lo profundamente arraigado que está el racismo en nuestro sistema electoral y en las estructuras de poder en general", afirmó la profesora Mindy Romero, fundadora y directora del CID, que moderó la sesión.

En las grabaciones aparecen políticos y dirigentes latinos de primera fila de Los Angeles, entre ellos la ex presidenta del Consejo Municipal Nury Martínez, los concejales Kevin de León y Gil Cedillo, y el jefe de la Federación Sindical Ron Herrera, haciendo o permitiendo comentarios racistas sobre afroamericanos, oaxaqueños, armenios y judíos, durante una conversación sobre la redistribución de distritos.

El crecimiento de los empleos de salarios bajos en el Valle Central de California

Por Melissa Montalvo

(Nota del editor: esta historia fue publicada originalmente por Fresnoand.org, una organización de noticias sin fines de lucro)

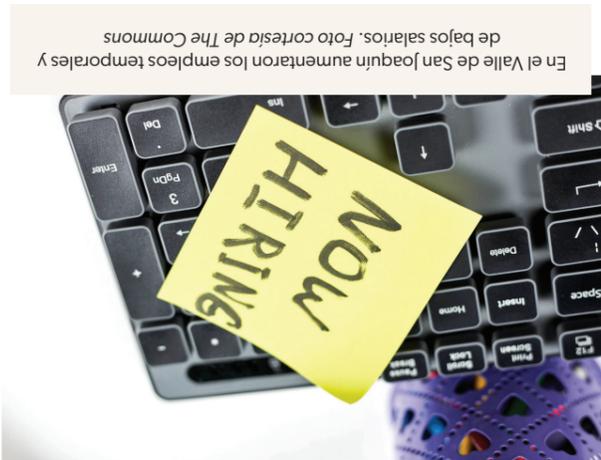
A medida que el Valle central de San Joaquín ve un aumento en trabajos en centros de distribución y otros de bajos salarios, algunos líderes laborales regionales dicen que California puede hacer más para abordar la precariedad "generalizada" con los salarios de los trabajadores.

El Valle Central experimentó las segundas tasas más altas de crecimiento en empleos del sector de salarios bajos en el estado desde octubre de 2019, solo detrás de la región del Valle Imperial, según un análisis del grupo de investigación no partidista Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). El instituto utilizó datos del mercado laboral del Departamento de Desarrollo del Empleo de California.

En general, los empleos del Valle Central crecieron un 2% entre octubre de 2019 y diciembre. Pero los trabajos de salarios bajos, incluidos el ocio y la hospitalidad, y el comercio, el transporte y los servicios públicos, una categoría que incluye los trabajos de almacén, crecieron más rápido, un 5%.

"Debido a que la pérdida de empleos se concentró en los sectores de bajos salarios (durante la pandemia), la recuperación de empleos también se inclina en esa dirección", dijeron los investigadores de PPIC en una publicación de blog que explica el análisis.

El trabajo con salarios altos (empleos en sectores como la información, las actividades financieras y los servicios profesionales y comerciales) se redujo en un 1% en el Valle Central durante este mismo período, según el análisis de PPIC.



En el Valle de San Joaquín aumentaron los empleos temporales y de bajos salarios. Foto cortesía de The Commons

De acuerdo con una encuesta separada de PPIC de 2,307 adultos de California titulada "Los californianos y su bienestar económico" que se publicó en noviembre, el 82% de los adultos del Valle Central considera que la falta de trabajos bien remunerados es un gran problema o algo así.

El Valle Imperial fue la única región de California con tasas más altas de precariedad por la falta de empleos bien remunerados, con un 88%.

Ana Padilla, directora ejecutiva del Centro Comunitario y Laboral de UC Merced, dijo que la encuesta indica que "donde el almacenamiento se está disparando, existe una preocupación pública generalizada por los ingresos de los trabajadores, particularmente en el Valle Imperial y el Valle Central".

Trabajadores del Valle Central, líderes laborales creen que los salarios pueden mejorar en la región.

A pesar del desafío de los bajos salarios en el Valle Central, la fuerza laboral regional y los líderes sindicales dicen que las protecciones laborales fortalecidas y la capacitación laboral pueden aumentar los salarios en la región.

Blake Konczal, director ejecutivo de la Junta Regional de Desarrollo de la Fuerza Laboral de Fresno, dijo que además del declive de las pequeñas empresas y el aumento de la inflación, la cuestión de los bajos salarios en el Valle Central es "realmente una cuestión de educación y capacitación laboral".

"El acceso a una buena formación laboral (y) formación profesional directamente vinculada al empleo es la respuesta a ese problema".

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Libertad Religiosa en Cuba

Por Leni Villagómez Reeves

El 2 de diciembre de 2022, el Secretario de Estado de Estados Unidos, Antony Blinken, promulgó una declaración designando a Cuba, entre otros países, como "País de Precariedad Particular" por "haber participado en, o tolerado violaciones especialmente graves de la libertad religiosa".

Los países incluidos en el listado están sujetos a posibles sanciones como la cancelación de intercambios científicos y culturales, la suspensión de la asistencia para el desarrollo, el bloqueo de préstamos o restricciones de exportaciones.

Curiosamente, no se ofrece ni una gota de evidencia para esta declaración. Parece que es suficiente para los EEUU que se ponga la fachada de moralista hipócrita. Los hechos no tienen nada que ver con el asunto, "es así porque lo decimos sin necesidad de pruebas".

La Constitución de Cuba reconoce, respeta y garantiza la libertad religiosa y sanciona cualquier forma de discriminación contra creyentes o no-creyentes.

Aún más irónica es que esta declaración se proclamó en un año en que Cuba se involucró en un proceso



Iglesia Católica de la calle 51, La Habana, Cuba. Foto de Leni Villagómez Reeves

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Esa conversación expuso, según el sociólogo y economista de la USC Manuel Pastor, una "falta de solidaridad", una "pérdida de liderazgo" y la evidencia de que estos líderes estaban jugando a un juego de "sucesión étnica" y no de "coaliciones étnicas".

Indígenas residentes en Los Angeles participan de las manifestaciones en contra de los concejales Kevin de León y Gil Cedillo a quienes acusan de haber expresado opiniones despectivas y racistas respecto a los indígenas de origen oaxaqueño. Foto cortesía de CLEO

