

# A COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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## City of Clovis Settles with Desiree Martinez

(Editor's note: The City of Clovis made public the announcement of a settlement agreement between the City and Desiree "Dez" Martinez that could have dramatic implications in Clovis regarding affordable housing. The official announcement is included below in its entirety.)

The City of Clovis and Desiree Martinez are pleased to announce a settlement in the *Desiree Martinez v. City of Clovis* litigation. The settlement agreement paves the way for the creation of groundbreaking City programs and significant investments to support and leverage over 3,000 additional affordable housing opportunities in Clovis.

The settlement ends years of litigation between the City of Clovis and Ms. Martinez regarding the City's land use and planning policies. Focusing now on creating affordable housing opportunities in Clovis, the settlement allows both sides to avoid future costly and prolonged legal proceedings.

Ms. Martinez's mother moved the family to Clovis from Oregon when Ms. Martinez was 16. Now disabled, she wanted to move back, but could find no affordable home in the city. She brought the case, with the help of Central California Legal Services (CCLS), the Public Interest Law Project (PILP) and the Law Office of Patience Milrod, to move Clovis to a plan and zone for families of all income levels. Of the settlement, Ms. Martinez said, "Life presents numerous challenging decisions and choices. At times, we must navigate these decisions to pave the way for wise choices. The legal battle initially revolved around my residency situation in Clovis, and after four years of grappling with the city's regulations, it compelled me to delve deeper than anticipated. This legal case has transcended beyond my personal circumstances; it now represents the struggle of every individual combatting the high cost of living and striving to survive. Today, this lawsuit symbolizes the fight



In a major victory for housing advocates, the City of Clovis will build several units for low-income renters after settling a legal battle started by activist Desiree "Dez" Martinez.  
2017 photo by Peter Maiden

for a more inclusive community that embraces people from all backgrounds. For me, this legal battle marks just the beginning as I have more tasks ahead. However, it has also created a significant opportunity for many others to follow suit."

"In partnership with Ms. Martinez and her lawyers, we are pleased to announce we have reached a settlement that includes a comprehensive plan to provide affordable housing options for all who want to call Clovis home. Clovis, and its residents, are committed to address the housing

crisis with solutions that will provide housing opportunities in the near and long-term for our future neighbors. We look forward to working cooperatively with CCLS, PILP, attorney Milrod, community groups and developers as we all move forward with implementing the new programs," said Clovis Mayor Lynne Ashbeck.

"With this settlement, the City of Clovis shows regional leadership in the crucial battle to decently and affordably house all our residents. This agreement brings to the Central Valley best practices from all over the state and country. We congratulate Clovis on its wisdom and vision, and look forward to continuing to work with them toward these goals," said Milrod.

"The City of Clovis has taken a vital step forward in addressing the housing needs of those who need it most. CCLS is proud to have played a key role in helping the City implement changes to create opportunities and housing for individuals at all income levels to live and prosper in the City of Clovis," said Stephanie Hamilton Borchers, CCLS director of litigation and advocacy.

"Each of the programs included in the agreement addresses a significant barrier to much needed affordable housing and in turn will provide significant benefits to the City's residents and the region," said Valerie Feldman of PILP.

Major points in the settlement agreement include the following:

- The City of Clovis will establish a Local Housing Trust Fund and has committed to contributing at least \$1.8 million to support affordable housing developments.
- The City of Clovis will dedicate City-owned sites to the development of affordable housing.
- The City of Clovis will rezone small infill parcels throughout the City to accommodate approximately 1,300 multifamily dwelling units.
- The City of Clovis will adopt an ordinance to require that up to 10% of units in mid- to large-scale new housing development projects will be affordable to low-income families.
- The City of Clovis will create a development impact fee deferral program, deferring the payment of significant portions of City development impact fees for qualifying affordable housing projects.

This settlement agreement is expected to be approved by the court in the coming weeks, after which the work of establishing and implementing the various programs will begin.

## Surviving Injustice

BY ASHLEY ROJAS

Douglas "Chief" Stankewitz, the Monache man from Big Sandy Rancheria (Fresno County), has never wavered in his fight for freedom. Sentenced to death in October 1978, Stankewitz has lived through five scheduled dates of execution.

He has survived and endured 46 years of wrongful incarceration. Stankewitz is the longest serving person on death row in California history.

In 2019, the Fresno District Attorney dropped the death penalty and Stankewitz was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. At present, he is still housed on Death Row. In addition to his habeas proceeding, his resentencing is pending before the Fresno Superior Court.

Steadfast in his bid for freedom, Stankewitz and his legal team won an opportunity for an evidentiary hearing—an opportunity to present evidence they hope will lead to Stankewitz's freedom. This evidentiary hearing alone was a big win and the summation of a seven-year legal struggle by Stankewitz's legal team.

Stankewitz's legal team is mostly pro bono by legendary San Francisco civil rights attorney J. Tony Serra, Bay Area attorneys Curtis L. Briggs and Marshall Hammons, and attorney Alexandra Cock of Washington State, who is working as a paralegal on the case.

Continues on page 2



Native American drummers at a prayer circle for Douglas "Chief" Stankewitz. Photo by Peter Maiden

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# 2 Surviving Injustice

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The evidentiary hearing was granted by Fresno County Superior Court Judge Arlan L. Harrell, who determined there was enough new evidence to warrant the hearing, a notable divergence from Harrell’s record of upholding the Stankewitz conviction, flagging a viable opportunity for a new defense by Stankewitz’s legal team.

In 1978, 19-year-old Douglas Stankewitz, severely abused as a child and a former foster youth who had survived years of horrific trauma, was convicted of capital murder in a rushed trial and without proper defense, which his legal team detailed during the seven-day evidentiary hearing in January 2024.

His co-defendants were given a change of venue, pleaded guilty to lesser crimes and served relatively short sentences. At the hearing, new evidence regarding the validity of the supposed murder weapon having been the gun found in the victim’s vehicle was introduced.

The vehicle was mishandled or not secured by the Fresno Police Department before returning it to the Fresno County Sheriff’s Office, which, in turn, returned it to the victim’s family within two days of the crime. The return of the car predated Stankewitz’s trial attorney being assigned to the case. So his counsel could not inspect the vehicle or its contents.

Additional evidence brought forward was the discrepancy in the evidence collection documentation regarding the supposed murder weapon.

Attorney Hammons stated, “After close to five decades, Chief has finally had a fair hearing where the issues underlying his case, including police, prosecutorial and defense misconduct, have come to light in front of someone who has the power to overturn his conviction. I’m confident we will see Chief released soon.”

During the evidentiary hearing, Stankewitz’s legal team called 20 witnesses and moved more than 20 exhibits into evidence. The prosecution did not call any witnesses, and aside from questioning the witnesses called by the defense did not counter the planted gun theory. Nor did the DA counter the testimony regarding ineffective assistance of counsel or the failure of the court or the Sheriff’s Office to secure exhibits and evidence, creating an opportunity for most anyone to access them.

Information unearthed during the evidentiary hearing confirmed that former Sheriff Margaret Mims and the DA from Stankewitz’s first trial, James Ardaiz, who went on to become an associate justice of the Fifth District Court of Appeals, did in fact exchange the case file although Mims testified that she did not have access to the case file or share it with Ardaiz. However, a Sheriff’s Office captain testified that he gave Mims the file and that she had it for a significant period of time.

In addition, text messages between Mims and Ardaiz indicated that the two were on a first name basis as recently as 2021. Brought forward was confirmation that there was indeed a meeting between the previously assigned DA, the DA investigator and the head of the Sheriff’s Office crime lab wherein they discussed testing the supposed murder weapon and the reasons it was not tested.

Under the law, witnesses under subpoena are forbidden to speak with one another. Yet Ardaiz was found to have contacted the former DA, Warren Robinson, from the second Stankewitz trial in an attempt to review or reinforce details of the case a week and a half ahead of the evidentiary hearing.

On the final day of the hearing, Judge Harrell ordered the DA to bring all their paper files for review and, as a result, it was found that the DA had lied when saying that the entire file before 2017 had been lost as documents reviewed by both parties revealed case files going back to 1978.

Attorney Briggs stated that “the evidentiary hearing went well, and we were able to bring clarity to how unfair Chief’s 1983 trial was. As defense attorneys, it is our job to hold the prosecution accountable.

“Had Chief’s trial attorney done his job, he would have discovered the prosecutorial misconduct and realized Chief was being framed.”

Stankewitz is one of many Native American men, women and two-spirit relatives behind bars. Native Americans are overrepresented in state and federal prisons by more than four times higher than the state and federal prison incarceration rate of white people.

These trends are further exacerbated in Fresno County where racially disparate incarceration rates stand above national averages. Indigenous people in California have survived three waves of colonization and ongoing attempts of culture erasure and genocide.

It wasn’t until 1978, the year of Stankewitz’s arrest and incarceration, that Indigenous peoples won back their right to openly practice their cultural lifeways through the Native American Religious Freedom Act.

Indigenous peoples have long survived forced confinement—removal from ancestral homelands, internment in forts or reservations, forced removal from families and communities through boarding schools, mental institutions, jails and prisons as a means of exercising dominance, dominion and forced assimilation into Western culture.

These systemic and sociopolitical harms have resulted in disproportionate health and social inequities such as higher rates of incarceration and poor health outcomes for Native American people.

Stankewitz’s relative Herbert N. Sample was the primary plaintiff in *Sample v. Borg*, a powerful win protecting religious freedoms for incarcerated Indigenous people in California. Despite these protections, Stankewitz has spent 18 years of his incarceration in solitary confinement in part as a result of wearing his hair long, a Native American cultural/spiritual custom.

Jeanette Sample, daughter of Herbert N. Sample and cousin of Stankewitz, has been in touch with Stankewitz and supported him throughout his incarceration. Jeanette carried her father’s drum into the courtroom, and songs were drummed from it during the prayer gathering ahead of the January evidentiary hearing.

Other members of the Stankewitz family also attended court and the prayer circle. The prayer was led by a local Yaqui elder, David Alvarez Sr., and songs were offered by local native drummers. Louwegie Rede, a Pomo and Yuki dancer and Indigenous justice reentry coordinator, offered traditional prayer songs with his clapping stick.

Also in attendance was a Central Valley AIM (American Indian Movement) leader, Elder Laura Wass, who is an expert on Native American historical trauma.

During the prayer gathering, Stankewitz’s legal team read this statement from him: “I’m thankful for all the supporters, prayers, the sweat and communications from the community helping me achieve my freedom. I’m thankful to this court for giving us the opportunity to have this hearing to let the truth come to light. With all the support and prayers, I am looking forward to being free soon. In freedom, Chief.”

While Stankewitz has returned to San Quentin, his legal team continues their effort. The judge, by his discretion, ordered the legal team to put their closing arguments in writing, with the final brief due on May 31, after which point Judge Harrell will make a decision regarding the outcome of the evidentiary hearing. His decision will be whether to grant Stankewitz’s habeas corpus petition and grant him a new trial or dismiss the case.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ashley Crystal Rojas (she/ella) is a fifth-generation Fresnan born in a small house on Shields and Pacific. She studied community-based public health at San Francisco State, was a 2023 Soros Justice Fellow and is the policy director for Indigenous Justice.



Helena Hicks (right) and Marie Gutierrez outside the Fresno County Courthouse on Jan. 29. They were supporting Douglas “Chief” Stankewitz, who was in a hearing seeking to be released after 45 years on death row. Photo by Peter Maiden

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# VOTE

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Tuesday, March 5th  
Primary Election

DECADES OF PROVEN LEADERSHIP

# Change Needed at Board of Supervisors

The Fresno County Board of Supervisors continues to run the county as if it's their domain, with an unapologetic arrogance and a backward ideology. Their intention to impose their will on more than a million residents without respect for others' opinions or even the most basic common sense makes you wonder about their mental capacity to carry out the task of governing.

Take, for example, their obsession with the name change of Yokuts Valley. This change is a done deal in which the federal government got involved. But, more important, the S— Valley name was questioned for years by Native Americans who felt offended by it. The supervisors ignored that and paid no attention to arguments to revoke the name in an incredible expression of arrogance and contempt for others' opinions.

When the name change happened, the supervisors acted like spoiled, neurotic kids. They immediately reinstalled the old sign with the S— Valley name and sued the state; after all, they don't pay the attorneys with their money but rather with ours. As expected, the suit was tossed out.

Now, the supervisors are presenting voters with a measure to reinstall the old name, an act that will not go anywhere even if the measure is approved by voters.

If the supervisors know that they will not prevail, why do this? Why spend taxpayer money for a lost cause? They like to act "macho" and are grappling with their old, backward ideology without understanding that life is changing, and not necessarily in a direction they want.

The supervisors also want to implement censorship of books at the public library—copying what is happening in other states where Republicans and other twisted people control local governments. Of course, they aim to censor books with content that includes racial, gender and/or class references and criticism.

In short, they don't want young people to read anything that could lead them to think and question history and the status quo.

These supervisors are not in power to govern all residents or to make the county a better place for everyone but rather to perpetuate their ideology and vision of a backward life.

Nevertheless, they can't stop the movement of history. Sooner or later, things will change and intelligent people will one day govern Fresno County. This will not happen magically. We need to help history along and get involved in the process of dumping these old, negative, senseless supervisors.

Till next month.



Since 1996, the *Community Alliance* has been an independent progressive voice for the Central San Joaquin Valley. The *Community Alliance* advocates for

- Racial, social, environmental and economic justice
  - Equal rights for all, including immigrants, the unhoused and the LGBTQ+ community
  - Access to a free quality public education for all
  - Access to healthcare for all
  - A living wage for all working people
- Our goal is to expose racial, social, environmental, economic and political injustices. We will help to build a powerful progressive movement that will make all our communities safer, healthier, more equitable and more livable.

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Up to 200 words.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Kudos to Columnist

I am the author of two books. I am contacting you about "Another Fresno Opportunity" (January 2024 issue) written by Ruth Gadebusch. Born and raised in Fresno, I have never had the pleasure of meeting Ms. Gadebusch, however, I know her name and reputation well.

Thank you *Community Alliance* for your publication. I want to extend a special thank you to Ms. Gadebusch for a much needed article. I have high hopes for the downtown and Chinatown revitalization and plans for the future, including the high-speed rail station here in Fresno.

God bless our westside future!

Mikki Addison  
Fresno

## HART Team Is a Sham

With the elections coming up, when and how's a good time to speak to the [Fresno] City Council? I am outraged that a tent I donated to some poor unhoused individuals was taken and cruelly thrown away by the City right before their eyes, right before this atmospheric river deluge of rain!

It is a lie that the police are holding items confiscated to be retrieved downtown. They throw away people's IDs and blankets right before their eyes while people are pleading to save their meager essential belongings like shoes and socks and tarps! The HART (Homeless Assistance Response Team) is a complete sham!

Abby Roberts

## American Gerontocracy

U.S. President Joe Biden is 81 years old.

Prison-bound Donald Trump is 77 years old.

Supreme Court "Justice" Clarence Thomas is 75 years old and still talking about Coke cans.

And Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is 82 years old.

What the heck, folks? Was it ever seriously the planned intention in America for the vast majority of the mostly powerlessness adult public to be ruled and abused by our elders, like lost and forgotten children hiding from the oncoming next horrific Holocaust in a neighborhood friend's filthy, fearful of fascists attic, with not even one unwilted flower among any of us? For shame!

I would never want to draw any unwanted attention to certain societal institutions of particular note here that may have had a role in the creation of our relatively new American gerontocracy, but by necessity, here goes:

Israeli Huckster Benny Hinn is 71 years old.

Texas Taliban's John Hagee is 83 years old.

The Catholic Pope Francis is 87 years old.

And the United Kingdom's King Charles is 75 years old.

Homer's dad, Grandpa Simpson, is 83 years old, and the onion belt story is getting old.

Jake Pickering  
Arcata

## Israel Is Hamas's Best Recruiter

I am Jewish and have deep family connections to early Zionism. My great grandfather resigned from the Austrian Army in 1896 to become head of security for Hertzl and the Zionist movement. My other grandfather was a childhood friend of Chiam Weizmann.

My parents donated regularly to the JNF (Jewish National Fund). I used to carry a paper can around to my neighbors to collect "Dimes for Israel." I was bar mitzvahed at Temple Beth Jacob in Fresno in 1959.

I grew up in the tradition of progressive humanitarian politics. I have been an antiwar, labor and civil rights organizer. I am a human first, an American of Jewish extraction second. Anti-Zionist does not equal anti-Jewish or anti-Israel, and you should be smart enough to know that.

Rabbi Hillel, threatened by Roman soldiers to stand on one leg and tell them about what it is to be Jewish, stood on one leg and said, "Do unto others as you would have them do to you." Being pro-ceasefire is not anti-Semitic, it is not even anti-Israel. It is anti-violence.

Quotes from Hertz's original political writings make it clear that the elimination of the Palestinian people was a cornerstone of Jewish re-occupation of the homeland. This is called "genocidal politics." This is irreconcilable with the Golden Rule, the cornerstone of Judaism.

After 90 years of demeaning and violent treatment by a government, what would you do to obtain your own freedom? What did the 13 colonies do? What did the Native Americans do? What would you do?

Can you imagine what a 10-year old Palestinian boy would think if he saw an Israeli soldier kill his mother and sisters? What would you do?

The government of Israel is the best recruiter that Hamas ever had. Israeli Zionists cannot be the more powerful political force and then claim "victim" when their actions gain the predictable result (Shylock's fate).

We have put down the other leg and done evil, using our own gain as the excuse.

In the name of the next generation, in the name of Hillel, in the name of our commandments, we should be demanding a ceasefire and a two-party state because it is the human thing to do. It is what we would wish for ourselves.

Be a conscientious Jew (not a Zionist) and do what's right. God is watching.

Joel D. Eis, Ph.D.  
San Francisco

## Controlling the Democratic Committee

Why do Fresno City Council members want to control the county Democratic committee?

Three City Council members have dumped almost \$15,000 into a PAC to elect Democratic county committee slates presumably to act as toadies for their interests. But to what end?

One of these slates even includes Council Member [Nelson] Esparza and his partner (who just happens to work for [Rep.] Jim Costa). And a third person on the same slate works for [Assembly Member]

Esmeralda Soria. Moreover, several candidates who actually do the hard work of running the party are getting pushed aside.

Why put that kind of money into getting Council influence on the county committee instead of giving the money directly to the party itself, where it could be used to help elect Democrats across the board?

Something smells foul here,  
Saul Ross  
Selma

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# Supervisors Reverse Development Restrictions

BY GREGORY WEAVER

(Editor's note: The article below is reprinted by permission of FresnoLand. The Board of Supervisors vote on the issue referenced in the article took place after the original publication, therefore the first few paragraphs have been updated to reflect the outcome of that vote.)

In a move reminiscent of the 1980s, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors (BOS) on Feb. 20 abandoned decades-old planning guidelines and opened the door for extensive sprawl projects around the Fresno area, including a 7,000-acre luxury home development along the Kings River, a 500-acre development north of Copper River and a vast industrial park in south central Fresno.

The newly approved Fresno County General Plan, a result of a sweeping 20-year review, will remove county programs for riparian protection zones and comprehensive wildlife and wetland inventories prior to subdivision approvals.

The Feb. 20 vote was the culmination of a years-long push by two power brokers, Ben Ewell and John Harris, to reimagine a gorgeous 7,000-acre ranch in the Sierra Nevada foothills above Sanger as a future hub for luxury homes and a new college campus. Three years ago, the BOS unanimously agreed to put the area in its new General Plan.

Despite the huge implications of the industrial park and Kings River project, the updated General Plan lacks substantial analysis of the impact of these massive land-use plans, environmental documents show, notably on roads, traffic, climate change and air quality.

Typically, major developments necessitate mitigation measures to curb environmental harm and future plans to pay for infrastructure. But by designating both land proposals as "study areas," the County avoids counting these projects' impacts in their environmental review.

Opponents claim it's a tactic to gain easier approval through piecemeal General Plan amendments down the line, minimizing public oversight of climate and environmental impacts.

This comes as the County's environmental math is already trending in the wrong direction. Over the coming decades, the County concludes it will increase greenhouse gas emissions during the life span of the General Plan. This comes despite state laws requiring emissions to be cut by up to 80% by 2050.

The County "doesn't have any hope" to meet these climate goals, said Jeremy Clar, a Sierra Club watchdog.

"With this plan, we're going backwards for the next 20 years. We're going to have more pollution and more health consequences going forward."

County planners warn that new development outlined in the General Plan update will increase greenhouse gas emissions, requiring a Climate Action Plan to curb the trend. However, officials say work on such a plan won't begin until at least 2026.

Funding efforts for the vital emissions-reduction program are stalled. The County hasn't attempted to find financing, according to an e-mail from the County's assistant planning director Bernard Jimenez.

The County's move to defer the major planning implications of its General Plan highlights a troubling pattern, critics say. After the last major change to the County's General Plan, according to Radley Reep, a County watchdog, Fresno County failed for a decade to fulfill its legal obligation to report on the implementation of the General Plan and its associated mitigation measures.

Since 2018, Fresno County also has not levied developer fees intended to fund major public facilities. Now, as the push to leapfrog over farmland and plant homes in hillsides gears up, the County has removed this developer fee program altogether in its new General Plan.

"This is unacceptable," said Gary Lasky, co-chair of the local Sierra Club chapter. "The County has kicked the can down the road, and now it seems like they've given up. They've greenlighted sprawl without restriction."

## Developers Battle for Control of Kings and San Joaquin River Areas

Nearly a quarter-century ago, Fresno County's two vital waterways seemed to be at a turning point. In prior decades, raw, unchecked sprawl encroached on river habitats on the San Joaquin and Kings rivers, including 15,000 acres of foothill development by John Bonadelle.

In 2000, the County's General Plan unveiled a bold vision: partnering with the San Joaquin River Conservancy to create a parkway master plan, exploring mass transit for river access and enacting a riparian ordinance for stricter environmental reviews of development proposals. All under a comprehensive set of plans, with a 2003 deadline, meant to finally protect the rivers while steering growth toward existing cities.

Yet, year after year, progress reports revealed a troubling pattern of inaction. For the past two decades, Fresno County has failed to implement any of these programs. Now, the revised General Plan faces fierce criticism for erasing those earlier commitments.

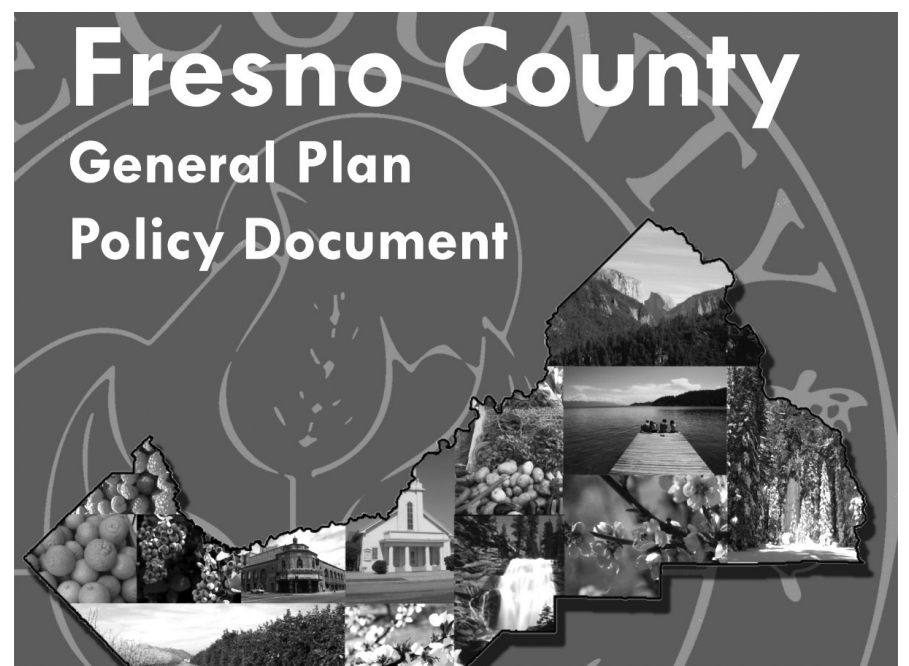
In this year's update, County planners are poised to gut some of the 2000 plan's crucial environmental protections.

Gone will be four programs safeguarding endangered species, fish, wetlands and riparian habitats. Also erased is the promise to create the Friant-Millerton plan, designed to enhance recreational access to the San Joaquin River. Perhaps most alarmingly, the blueprint for future Kings River regional plans could be handed over to developers themselves.

This new approach, some fear, paves the way for large-scale subdivisions that would replicate the leapfrog development that is occurring in Madera County.

Such a shift signals a potential reversal to the pre-1991 era for the County, when a tax-sharing agreement solidified Fresno's role as the center of residential and commercial real estate growth in exchange for the County's 62% share of the property tax revenue.

"The desire for projects similar to Riverstone and Rio Vista is going to be at Friant—or somewhere where people feel like they're not in an urban setting," said Brandau. "I want to allow that to happen."



Cover of the Fresno County General Plan brochure. Photo courtesy of FresnoLand.org

Critics allege the County has given no justification for the deletions of the four environmental programs. Fresno County's chief planner for the General Plan, Chris Motta, could not be reached for comment. While the revised General Plan retains broad goals for preserving riparian areas, its reliance on a single program focused solely on land acquisition leaves an unclear path for implementation.

Responding to environmental groups that challenged the County's dearth of regional programs for riparian habitats, the County said that it will evaluate riparian impacts on a case-by-case basis as development proposals arrive.

But the County's plan to balance preservation with development on local rivers might be impossible. Critics call the General Plan's requirement for developers to restore three acres of riparian habitat for every acre they pave over unrealistic.

Riparian restoration carries a hefty price tag, reaching up to \$500,000 per acre. To illustrate, the 7,000-acre Harris/Ewell proposal could result in hundreds of millions of dollars in mitigation costs for riparian damage alone.

And with no Countywide restoration program, enforcement and financial responsibility remain major questions, said Dan O'Connell, executive director of the Central Valley Partnership.

"There's no logical justification for the exclusion of these programs. It will create harm," said O'Connell, who's also a board member at the San Joaquin River Conservancy.

"It brings up the question of 'why would you do this?' It's the exact opposite of what you should be doing."

The Kings River Conservancy, which is led by Vernon Crowder, a former Bank of America executive who is one of Harris's ex-bankers, told the *Fresno Bee* a few years ago that the Conservancy will likely not oppose Harris's development.

## County's New Farmland Program "Designed to Be Meaningless," Expert Says

Fresno County's changes to farmland protection policies are also facing a backlash. The previous plan included 28 measures aimed at preserving agricultural land, but the County is now scrapping some of these.

Policies allowing for agricultural preserves within areas slated for industrial or residential development are being removed, along with six ag conservation programs.

Critics warn this weakens protections, opening the door to the loss of valuable farmland. The revised plan also allows residential development in rural areas lacking infrastructure, a significant departure from the old plan's focus on building only where infrastructure already exists.

With development pressures increasing, Fresno County's plan to prevent overall loss of prime farmland is under fire. O'Connell, who previously worked at the American Farmland Trust, calls the County's ag solution "unenforceable," by offering developers a vague "menu" of options rather than clear requirements.

O'Connell advocates for a simple 1:1 mitigation policy: for every acre paved over by developers, an acre of comparable farmland must be permanently protected. Instead, he argues, the County's approach is deliberately weak.

"These policies are designed to be meaningless," O'Connell charged. "For the nation's top agricultural county, this shows a complete disregard for preserving our best farmland."

Fresno County's farmland mitigation policy echoes the controversial approach adopted by the City of Fresno. In 2017, the City of Fresno abandoned its strict 1:1 farmland mitigation requirement after intense lobbying from local developers.

The City of Fresno shifted to a "menu" approach after well-known developer Darius Assemi and his lobbyist, Jeff Roberts, protested to the Fresno City Council that the 1:1 requirement was "too restrictive." Since then, only one project has required farmland mitigation, according to City records.

On top of that, Fresno County's mitigation plan includes loopholes that essentially render farmland protection requirements optional for developers.

According to the County's General Plan, developers could avoid having to replace lost farmland if their project aligns with a groundwater sustainability plan or offers "overriding economic, legal, social, technological or other benefits" that supposedly outweigh the loss of agricultural land.

"Basically, you can run a train through that. It's designed to not be effective. It's a power play," said O'Connell. "They [the County] are so vested in being able to literally just do what they want. It's an affront to any sort of good planning."

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Gregory Weaver is a staff writer for FresnoLand who covers the environment, air quality and development.

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# Major New Attack on Workers' Right to Organize

BY LENI VILLAGOMEZ REEVES

Two of the most obscenely rich men in the world, together with the German corporation Aldi, which owns more than 12,000 stores in 18 countries, have directly attacked the only agency charged with protecting U.S. workers' right to organize.

There have been many recent successful union organizing campaigns despite all that unethical employers can do to try to coerce employees. Now, some of the worst anti-union employers—Amazon, Elon Musk and Trader Joe's—are attempting to get rid of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), claiming that it is unconstitutional.

Amazon is accused of illegal interference with workers' right to organize in several cases, but this filing against the NLRB came in a pending case accusing Amazon of illegally retaliating against workers at a warehouse in Staten Island, where employees voted to unionize in 2022. Amazon has recently faced more than 250 NLRB complaints alleging unlawful labor practices across the country.

In January, only one day after the NLRB determined that SpaceX, Musk's company, illegally fired eight engineers for criticizing Musk, he filed a lawsuit against the NLRB. He tried to file it in Texas, although the company is located in California, but a judge in the Texas court moved it back to California.

The NLRB has both historical and current problems, but it has taken some actions to enforce the right of workers to organize. For example, an NLRB judge required Amazon to reinstate an employee illegally fired at a Staten Island site in April 2022, and an agency regional director approved a settlement with the company that required Amazon to rescind policies restricting worker organizers' access to facilities where organizers could interact with coworkers.

A federal judge also granted an NLRB field office petition for Starbucks to reinstate seven fired workers engaged in protected organizing work in Memphis. Around the same time, another NLRB field office filed a complaint alleging that Starbucks unlawfully attempted to withhold pay raises from recently unionized workers.

The current attack on the NLRB's constitutionality is a sort of multipronged fish hook, presumably hoping that something will catch. The arguments: that Board members and administrative law judges are impermissibly shielded from presidential removal, that Board adjudications violate the Seventh Amendment right to a jury trial, that the Board is a separation-of-powers violation as it combines judicial and executive functions, and that the Board presents a major-questions-doctrine problem. (The major-questions doctrine states that the courts must not interpret statutes by delegating major questions to agencies unless Congress clearly has said so.)

Even if these suits lose, they are meant to be a delaying tactic. It already takes unions more than 500 days on average to bargain a first contract even after overcoming the first hurdle of gaining recognition, and legal challenges to the NLRB are only likely to increase that delay.

This is not the first attack on the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) or the NLRB.

In 1935, Congress passed the NLRA, stating that "it is the policy of the United States to encourage collective bargaining by protecting workers' full freedom of association. The NLRA protects workplace democracy by providing employees at private-sector workplaces

the fundamental right to seek better working conditions and designation of representation without fear of retaliation."

Not all workers are covered under this fine-sounding language.

Agricultural workers and domestic workers were excluded from the NLRA as part of a compromise to get the votes of southern Democrats, universally white of course in an era when Black people were not allowed to vote. These Dixiecrats and their northern racist allies were concerned that if non-white workers had the right to unionize and organize and get higher wages, they might get some economic and political power.

(As a United Farm Workers veteran, I've been aware of the NLRB since I was in my teens, precisely because farmworkers are not covered. Cesar Chavez and the union attempted to turn this vulnerability into a strength: Although we were not covered, we were not prohibited from carrying out secondary boycotts. This worked, but only in the short term.)

The NLRB is an independent agency that oversees nearly all union elections at private workplaces in the United States. Congress established the NLRB to enforce the NLRA, which protects the right of some private-sector workers to organize into unions and bargain collectively over their terms and conditions of employment.

The Board has survived a Supreme Court challenge in 1937, as well as many attempts to attack the Board or its members including the House Committee on Un-American Activities' accusations of communism. A House committee headed by an anti-labor Dixiecrat, Howard W. Smith, in 1940 proposed a bill to abolish the NLRB, which, although it was bottled up in committee, led to the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, and seriously hindered the NLRB's ability to enforce even the weakened labor law that remained.

Anti-labor—read Republican for the most part—legislators blocked presidential appointments to the NLRB, then sought court decisions, often successfully, claiming that the depleted Board had no power to make rulings.

In addition to the historical problems and exclusions, the NLRB has been deliberately underfunded and understaffed. There has been a decrease in funding since 2010, with a 30% decrease in staff since that date.

Currently, 71% of Americans approve of unions and about half of nonunion workers say they would join a union if they could. Yet the private-sector unionization rate is just 6.1%. That's not because workers don't want unions.

Instead of bargaining in good faith after successful union campaigns, many companies have done everything they could to avoid unionization, including illegal actions. U.S. labor law is weak, so there are many legal anti-union actions that companies can take. However, they have repeatedly committed illegal actions, hundreds of them.

Because companies have more money for legal representation and more power than the workers, these companies are not being held accountable. Instead, they are able to mount a challenge to already established labor law that is already almost 90 years old. They can undermine union campaigns by using months and months and years of delay, even though their actions are illegal.

The law says the workers are supposed to decide their representation. Money and power say that the companies are above the law. First these companies evade the law, then break the law and then try to get rid of the laws.

Help even the playing field. Make a contribution to a union: Amazon Labor Union, Starbucks Workers United, Trader Joe's United and/or Tesla Workers United (affiliated with SEIU).

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

## 2024 Primary Election Endorsements

CANDIDATE GRID	DEM	REP	Labor	Chamber	FCDWC	Stonewall	CVPPAC
U.S. Senate	—	—	Lee/Porter/Schiff	—	—	Schiff	—
Congressional District 5	Barkley	McClintock	Barkley	—	—	—	—
Congressional District 13	Gray	Duarte	Gray	—	—	—	—
Congressional District 20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Congressional District 21	Costa	Maher	Costa	—	Costa	—	—
Congressional District 22	Salas	Valadao	Salas	—	—	—	—
State Assembly District 8	—	—	—	Tangipa	Helsel	—	—
State Assembly District 27	Soria	—	Soria	—	—	—	—
State Assembly District 31	Arambula	—	Arambula	—	—	—	Arambula
State Assembly District 33	Ruiz	Mathis	Ruiz	—	—	—	—
Board of Supervisors District 2	Herrera	*	—	Brandau	—	Herrera	Herrera
Board of Supervisors District 3	—	*	Chavez	Quintero	Chavez	Arias	Arias/Hinojosa
Board of Supervisors District 5	Cruz	*	*	Magsig	Cruz	Cruz	Cruz
Fresno Mayor	—	*	—	Dyer	—	—	—
Fresno City Council District 2	Karbassi	*	Karbassi	Karbassi	Karbassi	Karbassi	Gillian
Fresno City Council District 4	Maxwell	*	—	Maxwell	Maxwell	Maxwell	Maxwell
Fresno City Council District 6	—	*	*	Bonakdar	—	—	—
BALLOT MEASURE GRID	DEM	REP	Labor	Chamber	LWV		
Prop 1: Mental Health Services Bond	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	No		
Measure A: County of Fresno Charter Amendment - Section 15	No	*	—	—	*		
Measure B: County of Fresno Charter Amendment - Section 12	No	*	—	—	*		
Measure E: Fresno State Transactions and Use Tax	No	*	—	Yes	*		
Measure G: Fowler Unified School District Bond Measure	—	*	—	—	*		
Measure O: Orange Cove Police and Fire Special Tax Measure	—	*	—	—	*		

**DEM:** California Democratic Party & Fresno County Democratic Party

**Labor:** California Labor Federation & Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings Central Labor Council

**FCDWC:** Fresno County Democratic Women's Club

**Stonewall:** Fresno Stonewall Democrats

**REP:** California Republican Party & Fresno County Republican Party

**Chamber:** California Chamber of Commerce & Fresno Chamber of Commerce

**CVPPAC:** Central Valley Progressive PAC

**Measure A:** Sheriff and District Attorney Election Timing Charter Amendment: Would amend the county charter to require elections for sheriff and district attorney to be held during gubernatorial, nonpresidential election years.

**Measure B:** County Board of Supervisors Duty to Name Geographic Features and Places Charter Amendment: Would authorize the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to name or change the names of geographic features or places.

\*Endorsements not posted as of our publishing deadline.

# Where Have All the Public Dollars Gone?

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

California spent \$17.5 billion trying to combat homelessness from 2018 to 2022, reported Nick Watt of CNN, on July 11, 2023. His article, "California has spent billions to fight homelessness. The problem has gotten worse," points out that \$20.6 billion in state funds had been allocated to fight homelessness through 2024, in addition to millions in federal grants.

"Nearly \$4 billion went to local governments to spend on anti-homelessness initiatives. \$3.7 billion went to a program called Project Homekey to specifically buy properties like motels [to convert] into permanent, affordable housing," stated Watt.

On Feb. 16, a press release from the City stated that "to date, the City of Fresno has received \$137,880,079 of Homekey funding from the State of California. More than 3,000 people have been housed in motels purchased by the City."

Watt's CNN article reported that only 13,500 units had been created with Project Homekey funds. He reported that a further \$2 billion went to tax credits for developers, another \$2 billion went to kickstart affordable housing projects and nearly \$2 billion was spent on emergency rental assistance.

Many Californians question where the rest of the dollars have gone and the lack of transparency and accountability for the counties, cities, contractors, and nonprofit and for-profit service providers receiving these public funds. With homelessness worsening, Watt examines the system and sheds some light on a longstanding, self-perpetuating, deeply entrenched industry.

All the agencies in California's current system to address homelessness, including those governed by the 45 Continuums of Care (CoC), are participants in a system that, some say, perpetuates homelessness. Some advocates call it a nonprofit (with some for-profits) bureaucracy that exists to expand funding for needed but mostly temporary services.

Locally, the Fresno Madera Continuum of Care (FMCoC) has 51 members, including the City of Fresno, the County of Fresno and many service providers such as Turning Point of Central California and RH Community Builders, two major recipients of public dollars. This network of service providers and contractors, many of whom are also recipients of state funds, holds a lot of political power and consistently lobbies elected officials for more funding.

CoCs are mandated in each region by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to oversee the distribution of federal funds and state-administered federal grants allocated for homelessness.

According to HUD's website, "the CoC Program is designed to promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness; and improve data collection and performance measurement."

The FMCoC website states that "it assists homeless persons to make the critical transition from homelessness to independent or supportive permanent housing [and] accessing education, health and mental health services, employment training and life skills development."

The FMCoC was cited in a 2019–2020 Fresno County Civil Grand Jury Report. The grand jury found that there was a lack of central coordination, poor communication to the public and a lack of transparency. It also cited potential conflicts of interest because of the structure of the board. These problems continue to exist.

In addition to federal funding, the City of Fresno and the County have received massive state funding that goes directly to contractors, shelter operators and service providers. And there's little oversight and accountability for these state funds and how this money is spent.

The State of California created a homeless task force in 2017 that failed to establish a process to oversee and audit providers that receive state dollars. Finally, in late 2023, that oversight was established by the legislature.

The lack of transparency and accountability thus far has left the public in the dark. And, given that there is abuse in all systems, the public is asking, how much money has been wasted?

## FUSD Needs Updated Cell Phone Policy

BY STEVEN ROESCH

In late January, the *Fresno Bee* ran an article titled "Fresno Unified's Phone Policy Is 20 Years Old. Teachers Say They Can't Teach, Need Support."

In the article, some Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) instructors observed that the growing presence of digital devices has significantly diminished their capacity to teach.

It recounted an experience of Peter Beck, a social studies instructor at Fresno High. He had tried to stop a student from obsessively using his phone—only to provoke an incident that absorbed 25 minutes of class time and involved a vice principal and a campus safety assistant.

The incident that Beck described isn't unique. Before retiring from the district in 2016, I tried to get one of my German I students to put away his phone. The situation escalated, unfortunately, to the point where I also had to call a campus safety assistant to intervene. Other FUSD instructors have faced similar scenes in the past few years; in one such instance, a teacher was physically assaulted.

The *Bee* article suggests that many teachers have given up trying to limit student phone use, given that site administrators and the district as a whole usually won't back up their efforts.

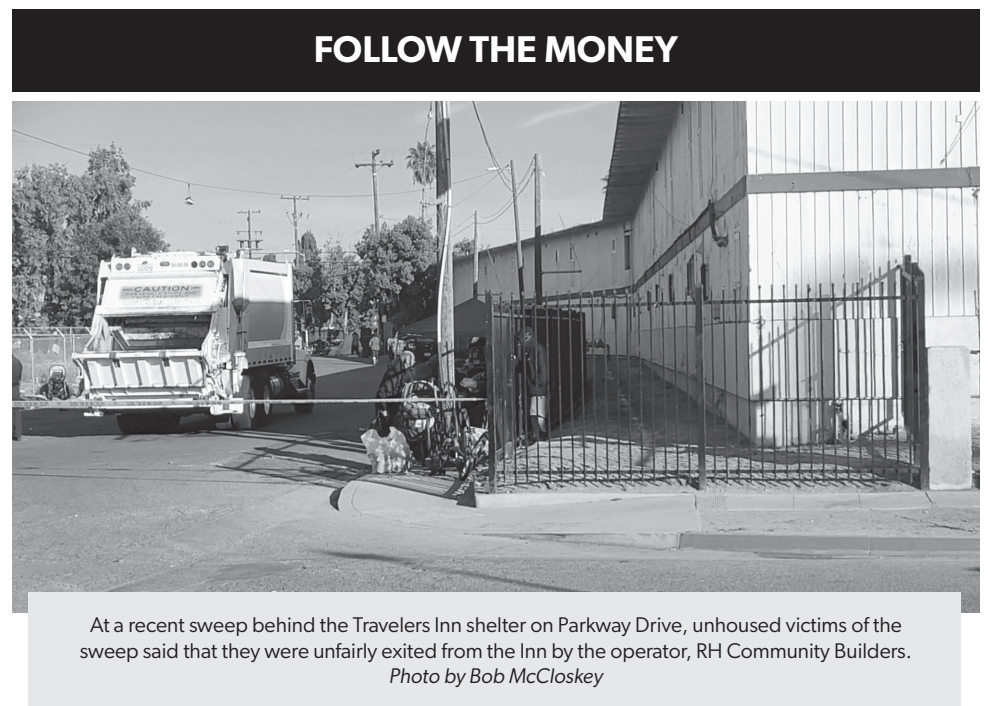
Indeed, Beck suggests, this situation has impacted the very notion of effective teaching, nudging instructors to become entertainers so as to compete with the online content that many of their students are often absorbed in.

The article also notes that the district's current policy concerning electronic devices hails from 2004—well before the widespread use of smartphones.

This vintage 2004 directive limits students' use of devices in classrooms—unless a physician has deemed their use to be necessary for a student's health—and suggests that site administrators "may have the Equipment confiscated and/or the student may be prohibited from possessing the Equipment." It does not, however, establish a binding policy for all FUSD schools.

In the absence of such a measure, according to district spokesperson Nikki Henry, "schools have the authority to build upon these policies for what works best at their campuses." Some sites, notably Bullard High and Hoover High, have developed stricter measures to regulate the use of electronic devices on school grounds, but these sites remain the exception.

Another district spokesperson, A.J. Kato, has said that work is under way to bring the



At a recent sweep behind the Travelers Inn shelter on Parkway Drive, unhoused victims of the sweep said that they were unfairly exited from the Inn by the operator, RH Community Builders. Photo by Bob McCloskey

The current system provides huge public dollars for services as well as for administrative costs, executive salaries (usually six figures) and other overhead costs. Paying workers, nonprofit and for-profit executives, and administrators to run service provider organizations and temporary shelters drains dollars without providing permanent solutions. Giving public funds to a for-profit organization to rehab and manage a small number of permanent housing units is not a solution.

So-called public/private partnerships are not working and merely expand the social services system that continues to drain public dollars. Under the current system of interlinked public and private social services, unhoused people get helped but not in any effective way.

The state has allocated nearly \$4 billion for Project Homekey for shelters, rapid re-housing and permanent housing. When the first round of Homekey funds went out in 2020, the partnership of Fresno-based RH Community Builders, an LLC, and Illinois-based UPHoldings, LLC, and the Fresno Housing Authority were the only ones to receive Homekey dollars in Fresno County. Subsequently, three more Homekey projects were granted to the RH Community Builders and UPHoldings partnership.

With the grants, RH Community Builders, a shelter operator and a for-profit property management company, and UPHoldings, like the other public entities and nonprofits that applied, now hold ownership and collect rents on the Homekey properties purchased with public state funding.

Fresno's Pablo Oriheuda reported on Nov. 23, 2023, that one RH/UPholdings project, Crossroads Village, initially "received \$15.3 million in Project Homekey funds in 2020 to convert the space into emergency rapid rehousing for Californians experiencing homelessness who were at high risk of serious illness or impacted by COVID-19, according to the project's news release. Since 2020, the project [has] received nearly \$60 million in more funding through local programs and Fresno County."

RH Community Builders and UPHoldings are just two examples of how public dollars to address homelessness are allocated.

A Housing First approach with an emphasis on social housing and supportive services on site has been successful where implemented. In addition, modular homes, tiny homes, container homes and other innovative housing options are much less expensive and must be considered if we are to build the number of housing units needed for housing affordability and access. Housing First would provide permanent supportive housing and be far more cost-effective than the current expensive and broken system.

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Bob McCloskey is an activist and a reporter for the Community Alliance newspaper. Contact him at [bobmccloskey06@gmail.com](mailto:bobmccloskey06@gmail.com).

policy up to date for inclusion in the 2024–2025 handbook.

The piece in the *Bee* included the comments of a veteran FUSD instructor who noted that "students know the district won't enforce the [2004] policy with any consequences" and reported "that with each passing year, smartphones become more visible and distracting in class."

To its credit, the story sounds an alarm about widespread phone use and abuse in classrooms, something that clearly diminishes students' opportunities for educational growth.

Such consequences should be taken seriously under any circumstances, but they're especially disquieting in the light of recent standardized test results.

According to the *New York Times* database, FUSD's third- to eighth-grade students are now about two years behind the level that their counterparts were at in pre-Covid 2019. That's significantly lower than the average results reported across California, and far below the national average, to the extent that figures have been made available in various states.

Such statistics should be a call for prompt and decisive action that addresses this issue. By itself, such a move wouldn't guarantee a sea change in the district's test results, to be sure, but it could, along with the district's literacy initiative, play a pivotal role in overcoming the learning loss that the pandemic wrought a few years ago.

On the other hand, far more is at stake for many students than merely a severe blow to their educational progress.

By concentrating on the academic consequences of digital distractions, the story in the *Bee* actually winds up downplaying the gravity of the situation. It sidelines the disturbing psychological and social consequences arising from these devices and the way that they're being used.

This became apparent at the end of January when the Senate Judiciary Committee summoned several leaders of the tech industry—including the heads of Meta and TikTok—and excoriated them for the harm that their products have done to young people.

In a rare show of bipartisan unity, Democrats and Republicans stood shoulder to shoulder in their condemnation of the companies' willingness to pursue profits at the expense of children's emotional health. A video included in the proceedings, the *New York Times* reported, featured underage victims of sexual exploitation who criticized the tech firms' conduct.

Such comments as these, of course, should hardly be front-page news.

Last May, the surgeon general, Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, went on record about these dangers. In a public advisory release, he argued that social media can have "a profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents."

Continues on page 14

# One Judge Tries to Negate All Gun Safety Laws

BY JIM MENDEZ

The *Fresno Bee* reported that ammunition sales at some Fresno gun stores increased from Jan. 30 through Feb. 6. These dates coincide with federal Judge Roger Benitez halting required background checks for the purchase of ammunition.

People who were previously unable to purchase ammo, due to background checks, were able to buy unlimited quantities of ammo. Some gun dealers said ammo sales nearly doubled during this window.

On Feb. 5, the Ninth Circuit Appeals Court stayed Judge Benitez's order. Ammo sales fell on Feb. 6, as background checks were reinstated and blocked some people from purchasing ammo.

"Why and how did this occur?" The answer is twofold: "elections have consequences" and the legal practice of "judge shopping." One of the long-term consequences of presidential elections is lifetime federal judicial appointments. Long after the president that appointed a federal judge is gone, the judge remains.

In 2004, President George W. Bush nominated San Diego-based Benitez for a lifetime appointment to the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of California. Although a substantial majority of the American Bar Association Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary (which evaluates appointments) rated Benitez "Not Qualified," he was nevertheless confirmed on a 98-1 Senate vote.

Judge Benitez switched to semi-retired senior status in 2017 with a reduced caseload. Since then, he has been responsible for most of the judicial cases trying to nullify California's long-standing gun safety regulations.

## What Are California Gun Safety Laws?

As a result of gun safety laws enacted since 1989, California is now one of the safest states in the United States in regard to gun-related injuries and death. Currently, California is No. 7 in the nation in terms of death rate by firearms—gun suicide, gun homicide and mass shootings.

It was not always so. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, California had the highest firearm death rate in the United States. Over the following 30 years, California instituted a variety of sensible gun safety laws. Those laws significantly decreased all gun-related deaths. Moreover, fewer than 50% of gun-related crimes committed in California involve a gun purchased in California.

Some of California's gun safety laws are as follows:

- In 1989, Republican Gov. George Deukmejian signed the Assault Weapons Ban making California the first state in the country to prohibit the possession, distribution, sales and manufacturing of assault weapons.
- In 1991, a universal background checks law was enacted for all gun purchases and transfers, including private transfers and sales at gun shows.
- In 2016, the people passed a gun control initiative, Prop 63, titled Firearms and Ammunition Sales. The legislature also passed SB 1235 that year, which expanded on Prop 63. The bill and Prop 63 included further universal background checks on guns and ammo; a prohibition on the possession of high-capacity ammunition magazines above 10 rounds; fines for failing to report when guns are stolen or lost; and procedures for enforcing laws prohibiting firearm possession by specified persons ("red flag law").
- In 2018, California passed an age restrictions law to limit the purchase of handguns to those 21 and older and the purchase of a long gun to those at least 18 years of age.
- AB 1968 was signed into law by Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown in September 2018. It requires mental health reporting to prevent those with serious mental illness from acquiring firearms.
- In 2023, the legislature passed and Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom signed several other gun safety bills regarding conceal carry laws, the microstamping of semiautomatic pistols, limiting ghost gun production in the state, more training for firearms dealers to prevent illegal sales of guns, and an 11% excise tax on firearms and ammunition to fund public safety programs that decrease gun violence.

## Judge Shopping

All the above laws are currently under attack by gun rights advocacy groups that have found a sympathetic ear in Judge Benitez. There is a federal and California state court rule that allows either party in a legal proceeding to request that their lawsuit be transferred to a judge overseeing a similar "related" case or to a judge who has previous experience on the topic.

This allows a party (plaintiff or defendant) to shop for a judge favorable to the party's position. Gun rights advocacy plaintiffs try to get all their cases heard by Judge Benitez.

In 2022, Judge Benitez gained support from the U.S. Supreme Court, which now has three far-right Republican justices appointed by Trump. After 230-plus years of using legal precedent to determine cases, the current Supreme Court began interpreting the Constitution through the lens of "originalism."

On June 23, 2022, Justice Clarence Thomas wrote the majority opinion in the *Bruen* decision. *Bruen* refers to New York's concealed gun safety laws. Thomas wrote that for any regulation regarding firearms, "The government must then justify its regulation by demonstrating that it is consistent with the Nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation."

The Constitution is no longer to be considered a living document that can change with the moral, political and cultural climate as a result of changing knowledge, technology and values. Originalism commands adherence to history.

Justice Thomas and the other Republican Supreme Court justices appear to want the constitutionality of all gun safety laws to be evaluated on whether similar laws existed when the Second Amendment was ratified in 1791. There were no background checks in 1791, no limits on purchases and no red flag laws. Judge Benitez has adopted that judicial philosophy in his interpretation of the law in the cases brought before him.

## Post-Bruen Rulings on Gun Safety Laws

As a result of Justice Thomas's opinion in *Bruen*, all nationwide gun safety laws are now under attack by Second Amendment gun rights advocates who believe that any public safety gun regulation infringes on their right to own guns. Since the *Bruen* decision, many California gun safety laws are being subjected to review before Judge Benitez.

The California Rifle & Pistol Association (CRPA) is a 501(c)(4) gun rights advocacy group and the official state association of the National Rifle Association (NRA) in California. CRPA President Chuck Michel is also a founding and senior partner at Michel & Associates, P.C., a law firm currently challenging California's gun safety laws.

Via Michel & Associates, the CRPA and the NRA have been able to get all their lawsuits assigned to Judge Benitez, as cases "related" to earlier gun rulings—even though Judge Benitez has a reduced caseload due to his senior status.

In 2017, a year after California voters passed Prop 63, Judge Benitez ruled the ban on high-capacity magazines unconstitutional. An en banc panel of the Ninth U.S. District Court reversed Benitez's opinion. Since 2017, Benitez has ruled against two additional gun safety laws: background checks on ammunition and the three-decade-old ban on assault weapons.

All the cases Judge Benitez has ruled on regarding gun safety laws have followed the same course:

- He rules a gun safety law unconstitutional and that it violates the constitutional right to bear arms.
- The Attorney General appeals to a three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which rules in favor of the State.
- The case returns to Judge Benitez.
- The plaintiffs appeal to the en banc panel of 11 randomly selected judges from the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the laws are ruled constitutional.
- Since Justice Thomas's opinion on *Bruen*, all the cases have again been referred back to Judge Benitez, who again finds the laws unconstitutional and the process repeats itself.

## Background Checks to Buy Ammo

In terms of the law requiring background checks to buy ammo, on June 24, 2022, the case was sent back to Judge Benitez to consider the impact of the *Bruen* decision at the Supreme Court. On Jan. 30, 2024, Judge Benitez issued an order granting a permanent injunction to stop the enforcement of the ammunition law that he deemed unconstitutional.

The State of California (defendants) asked for a stay on the permanent injunction. Judge Benitez refused to grant a stay on Jan. 31, 2024, which meant background checks were not required to buy ammo. The defendants appealed.

While waiting for the appeal decision (Jan. 31–Feb. 5, 2024), background checks to purchase ammunition were halted. During that time, ammo sales increased. On Feb. 5, a three-judge administrative panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, on a 2-1 vote, granted a stay on Judge Benitez's permanent injunction and starting Feb. 6, background checks were again required to purchase ammo.

So far, Judge Benitez has ruled all gun safety laws are unconstitutional and violate the constitutional rights of citizens to own guns. Even so, thanks to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, as of February 2024, all the gun safety laws remain in place. That includes the ban on assault rifles, the ban on high-capacity magazines and background checks for guns and ammo. It is expected that the cases will ultimately go to the Supreme Court.

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Jim Mendez is a retired physician and a community activist. He is the secretary for Enough Gun Violence/Brady Greater Fresno (EGV/BGF), the Fresno Chapter of Brady United.

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## HOWARD'S HOPEFULS

Here are my UPDATED\* voting recommendations for the March 5th Primary. However you vote, please do so. Thank you. Howard K. Watkins, retired attorney. howardkwatkins@gmail.com.

## FEDERAL

President	BIDEN
U.S. Senate x2	PORTER x2
Congress 8th	BARKLEY
Congress 13th	GRAY
Congress 20th	WOOD
Congress 21st	COSTA

## COUNTY OF FRESNO

Dem Central Com #1	GAMINO
Dem Central Com #3	COBLE + BARNES + MILLER* + HANSEN-SMITH*
Dem Central Com #4	GOMEZ
Dem Central Com #5	GUDINO + GIBSON + JOHNSON + ROWELL + KREN
Superior Ct. Judge #1	FREEMAN
Superior Ct. Judge #2	SANTOS
Superior Ct. Judge #3	NEGIN
Superior Ct. Judge #4	MUNOZ
Superior Ct. Judge #5	TERRENCE

## STATE

Assembly 27th	SORIA
Assembly 31st	ARAMBULA
Assembly 33rd	RUIZ
Proposition 1	YES

## CITY OF FRESNO

Mayor	DYER
City Council #2	KARBASSI
City Council #4	MAXWELL
City Council #6	BONAKDAR

## COUNTY OF FRESNO

Superior Ct. Judge #6	KALEMKARIAN
Superior Ct. Judge #7	IDIART
Superior Ct. Judge #8	DOLAS
Superior Ct. Judge #9	MANGANO
Superior Ct. Judge #10	SKILES
Superior Ct. Judge #11	WILSON
Superior Ct. Judge #12	LOR
Supervisor Dist 2	DICTOS*
Supervisor Dist 3	ARIAS
Supervisor Dist 5	CRUZ
MEASURES* A, B & E	NO*

# Endorsements Take Courage, Too

BY KEVIN HALL

When Esmeralda Soria ran unsuccessfully for Congress four years ago, the folks at Courage California, formerly Courage Campaign, heartily endorsed her as part of a slate of progressives, a California version of the famous “Squad” led to victory in 2018 by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.).

The only problem with the endorsement was that it ignored Soria’s voting record on the Fresno City Council. From damaging public health in south Fresno’s most heavily polluted neighborhoods by favoring unbridled industrial expansion to her support for placing “In God We Trust” above the dais at City Hall, she was a proven conservative Democrat.

Now Soria is the State Assembly Member for District 27 covering the Valley’s west side and Democratic majority precincts in parts of Fresno, Madera and Merced counties, and Courage has been evaluating her state house voting record. Better late than never, I suppose, though I predict they’ll repeat their mistake of falling for false promises and identity politics to back Annalisa Perea’s likely bid for State Senator Anna Caballero’s seat in 2026.

For its 2023 scorecard, Courage polled 100 “progressive advocacy groups,” picked 55 bills and evaluated “how well each legislator represents their district by comparing their Courage Score to how progressive their district is.” Sounds subjective, but they are thorough and have developed a metric they call a Progressive District Ranking drawn from district-specific voting data on historical statewide ballot initiatives and general election data. Non-votes are counted as no’s; show some courage, right?

And it’s not all bad news for central San Joaquin Valley residents, just mostly. While Soria’s 20% rating and Caballero’s 18% earned Republican-level “F” grades and State Senator Melissa Hurtado’s 68% got a “D,” Assembly Member Joaquin Arambula scored 84%, a solid “B.” Five of the State Senate’s eight Republicans scored higher than Caballero, and the only Assembly Democrat to score lower than Soria was Bakersfield’s Jasmeet Bains at 18%.

One good indicator of any district’s progressive leaning is voter registration. In Arambula’s district, Democrats have a 46% to 23% advantage. Soria’s is little different with a spread of 42% to 28%. Caballero enjoys a 45% to 28% difference. So why the huge gap between their progressive ratings and Arambula’s?

Courage explained Soria’s abysmal score: “Assm. Soria was called out in the press during her 2022 campaign after seeming to break her pledges to the Green New Deal and No Fossil Fuel Money when she accepted donations from Chevron, Phillips 66, Marathon Petroleum,

Exxon Mobil and Edison International. As a legislator, she has failed to hold these types of companies accountable by recording no vote on SB 253 to require annual emissions reporting for companies with more than \$1 billion in revenue.

“She was endorsed by [the] California Coalition of Law Enforcement Associations and California Correctional Peace Officers Association during her 2022 campaign, and has been a dedicated opponent of criminal justice reform in her first session. She failed to vote on AB 1034 to prohibit the use of facial recognition software in body cameras, AB 1306 to prevent individuals eligible for release from being transferred to ICE custody, and AB 958 to restore up to three personal visits per week for incarcerated individuals.

“Soria also opposed AB 895 which sought to fix the Valley Air Board’s deeply flawed Emissions Reduction Credit System. The bill passed in the Senate but failed in the Assembly. She opposed two similar reform bills aimed at the State Water Resources Control Board.”

Caballero’s low score came for similar failures, according to Courage:

“Of the 22 scorecard bills Sen. Caballero had the opportunity to vote on this session, she failed to take a position on more than 80% of them, including seven bills designed to improve worker power and protections.

“Sen. Caballero celebrated the passage of her climate bill, SB 306, designed to combat deadly extreme heat in her district, but failed to vote on several bills to address the negative climate impacts experienced across the state, including AB 1167 to regulate funding for the decommission and restoration of oil well sites, and SB 252 to divest state pensions from fossil fuels.”

What progressive advocacy groups around the Valley and beyond are up against is a political infrastructure founded and funded by Big Oil, Big Ag, developers and labor unions. The first three of those four oppose all forms of regulation, and labor is mostly focused on expanding its political influence within the Democratic Party rather than direct organizing of non-union workers or standing up collectively to bad bosses in either the private or public sector. Local Democrats have also been taught to believe that law enforcement endorsements are key to election victories.

This problem is not unique to the Valley, but it bites more deeply into the future prospects of kids and young adults alive here today. Like the rest of the world, this region’s ecology hangs by a thread. Rather than preparing the landscape for fire, flood and drought, it’s being further exploited by the biggest producers of carbon emissions as a source of new profits through carbon credit trading.

But the biggest scorecard for 2023 came in the form of record ocean temperatures, a faster rate of atmospheric warming and increasingly dangerous weather impacts. Current greenhouse reduction strategies are based on outdated assumptions, especially regarding the time frame in which societal disruptions will occur on a global scale as climate change morphs into climate collapse.

## CLIMATE POLITICS



Courage California’s 2023 “courage scores” for central San Joaquin Valley Democrats serving in Sacramento were mostly quite low: (clockwise from upper left) State Senator Anna Caballero, F (18%); Assembly Member Joaquin Arambula, B (84%); State Senator Melissa Hurtado, D (68%); and Assembly Member Esmeralda Soria, F (20%).

All by design. The power of profit and the influence of major polluters, particularly fossil fuel companies, cannot be overstated, and they’re well served by market-based responses to climate change designed to maintain the status quo. Polluters’ most useful deception is to convince politicians they have power and are in office to govern, rather than that they’ve been entrusted with responsibilities and are there to serve the public good.

Amid this election year’s deluge of candidate mailers, multimedia ads, robocalls and public appearances, another reliable indicator of progressive politics should appear: the sincerity with which climate change emerges as a candidate’s No. 1 concern—the same as society’s.

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

# Climate Change Adaptation Partnership

BY DEBAY TADESSE

It is not easy to fully understand a system as complex as global climate change. However, a wealth of evidence shows that global warming is occurring. The evidence comes from direct measurements of the rising surface air and subsurface ocean temperatures and observing events such as melting glaciers, rising global sea levels and shifting physical and biological systems.

Human activities are primarily to blame for the recent warming. The Earth’s climate has already changed due to this warming.

The possible impact of climate change on nations troubled by conflict is another area that has received far less attention from scholars and policymakers. In these environments, the effects of previous, current or impending warfare already threaten states and societies.

On one hand, climate change is anticipated to strain political, social and economic structures significantly. On the other hand, conflict is seen to be a primary factor contributing to climate vulnerability.

The previous several years have shown that mitigation alone will not be enough to stop climate change; consequently, adaptation has become more critical, especially for developing nations, because of the disparate effects of climate change. It became essential to consider African responses to climate adaptation as a way to cope with unavoidably occurring but unanticipated environmental changes.

The entire land area of Africa is 11,724,000 square miles. Africa is three times the size of the United States.

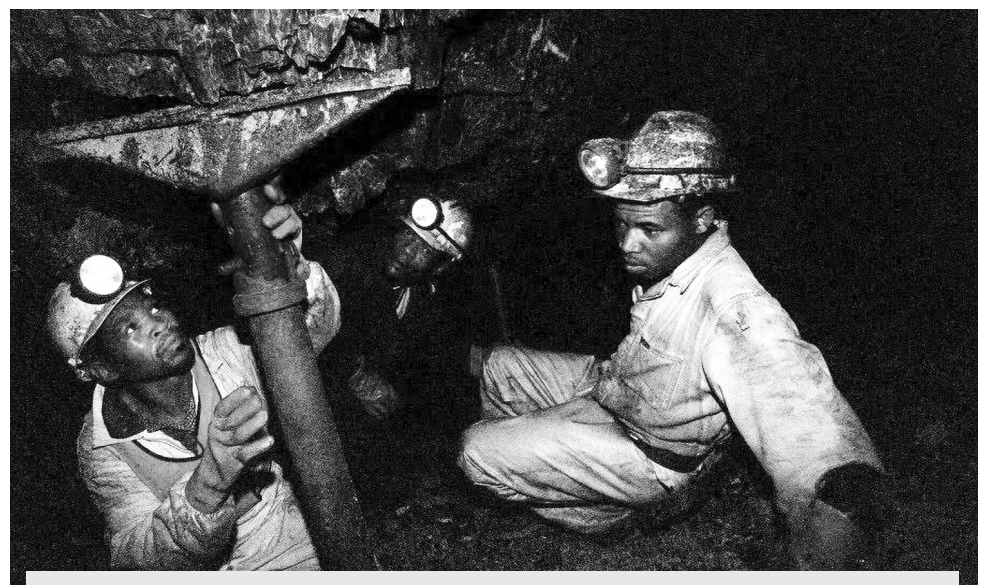
According to the United Nations, the surface of Africa contains an enormous quantity of extremely valuable natural resources. One billion tons of minerals worth \$406 billion were produced in Africa in 2019.

The biggest reserves of uranium, cobalt and diamonds are found on the continent, along with 40% of the world’s gold and 90% of the world’s chromium and platinum. These minerals are necessary for the majority of modern electrical goods including cell phones and computers.

Africa has long been a significant supplier of uranium for nuclear power plants and atomic weapons, and cobalt is mostly utilized in manufacturing lithium batteries.

In addition, Africa is home to 65% of the world’s arable land. Coal and petroleum are among the most abundant resources in more than 22 of the 54 countries that make up Africa.

Therefore, to ensure a sustainable future, the issue of adaptation cannot be solely attributed to one country; instead, it calls for international cooperation. Adaptation is critical, and both theoretical and practical approaches must recognize this to respond to climate change successfully.



According to the United Nations, the surface of Africa contains an enormous quantity of extremely valuable natural resources, making mining crucial for the economy of most African countries. In this image, workers check on a mine fire trap in South Africa. Photo courtesy of The Commons

## Adaptation Partnership

The Adaptation Partnership is an international forum to promote cooperation and communication between organizations and actors engaged in worldwide efforts to increase climate change adaptation and resilience. The Partnership was established in May 2010 at the Ministerial Conference of the Petersburg Dialogue. More than 50 countries were involved, and the United States, Spain and Costa Rica served as its co-chairs.

Together with highlighting needs and objectives, the Partnership seeks to integrate best practices and lessons learned to lower risk and increase resilience to the negative consequences of climate change. The Partnership highlights needs and priorities and identifies opportunities for cooperation to reduce risk and increase resistance to the negative consequences of climate change.

In short, the Partnership’s goal is to improve and enhance communities of practice involved in adapting to climate change. These communities of practice will promote activities and tools that will help link adaptation practitioners to others engaged in complementary efforts and challenges in various regions and around the world.

The Partnership is designed to deliver through three main elements:

- A rapid review of adaptation action in Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Continues on page 21



# The One and Only Rogue

BY I. SMILEY G. CALDERON

You might know a thing or two about typical fringe festivals, but do you know Rogue?

To those who don't know, there are fringe festivals worldwide, but there is only one Rogue Festival—an iconoclastic fringe festival extraordinaire found only in the heart of the Central Valley in Fresno's Tower District—an annual two-week live performance festival unique to the Valley for more than 20 years.

Founded in 2002 as a local grassroots event, it's made a name for itself as one of the oldest and most respected fringe theater festivals in North America, having survived housing bubbles, recessions, pandemics and whatever else that has been thrown its way over the years—but is still going strong.

And it's ready for you.

In fact, after Covid, the Rogue Festival is proud to announce that it is in "full recovery mode" with more than 190 scheduled performances and 40 performers at nine venues this year (from March 1 to March 9). You don't want to miss out on the fun of this once-a-year live theater experience.

What makes the Rogue Festival unique is its absolute commitment to artistic freedom.

"At the Rogue Festival," explained Jaguar Bennett, festival board president, "our core belief is that in a free society, arts administrators are not the proper judges of which artists should be allowed to perform or which messages audiences should be allowed to hear.

"It's not our job to tell anyone what to say, who to listen to, what to hear, or what to think."

"We want to empower artists and audiences and to facilitate a direct connection between the two," said Bennett, summing up the Rogue's mission. There is no "middleman" at the Rogue. In fact, all ticket proceeds for each show go directly to the performer(s).

"We don't curate, we don't vet, we don't edit and we don't censor," notes Bennett. "We provide artists with a space to perform, and we let audiences decide what it all means—period."

"We hope you are entertained at the Rogue," he continued. "But we also want you to get a little upset.

"We want to shake your confidence, unsettle you, horrify you, irritate you, show you the world from a perspective you've never dreamed of, and split your mind wide open so you leave the theater wondering what the hell you've been doing with your life—because if art simply reminds you what you already think and feel, it's wasting your time."

The Rogue is known to challenge your spirit and spark your mind in new ways.

"Unmediated channel—a direct conduit—from the artist to the audience and vice versa," Bennett emphasized. He explained how the Rogue Festival sees connecting artists and audiences as a last bastion of free speech, something crucial in a free society.

Even the way artists are chosen to perform in the festival is egalitarian. It's decided by a simple and fair lottery system months before the start. No one has a guaranteed, institutionalized spot on any show.

This year, for example, more than 60 groups applied for the open lottery but only 30 were selected for the main Rogue-managed venues (five additional performing groups were added at affiliated Off-Rogue and Artists Underground venues).

According to a festival press release, the Rogue is an "uncurated, unjuried, uncensored festival—performers are selected through a random lottery and there are no restrictions on what performers can say or do."

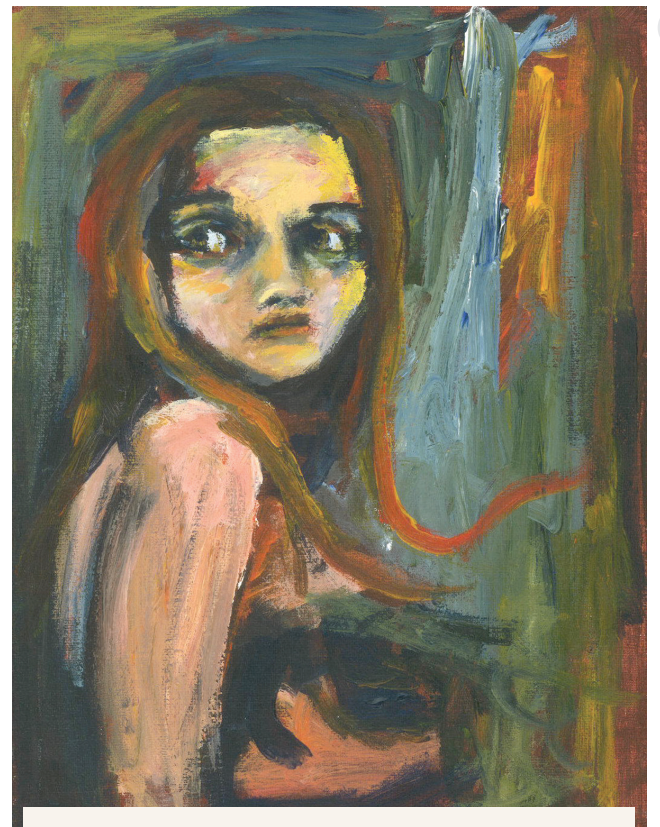
That fact is crucial in light of today's political agenda against personal liberty. The Rogue recognizes this and is openly proud to represent free speech.

"In an age of book bannings and constant threats to free speech," the press release punctuates, "the Rogue Festival stands firm for unrestricted artistic expression and celebrates the power of outsider art to challenge society."

The Rogue is leading the way in its fight for freedom of expression in today's political climate.

Moreover, the Rogue Festival brings quality live performing arts to the Central Valley with performers from all over the world who look forward to sharing their specialized craft with eager audiences.

The Rogue Festival is a real treat for Fresno. And it's simple to get a seat. Visit the Rogue's official website ([fresnoroguefestival.org](http://fresnoroguefestival.org)) and see "How to Rogue." The first step is to buy a Rogue wristband (only \$6), which gives you



"Autumn" is the muse for the 2024 Rogue Festival. Artwork by Elizabeth Castro

entry to any Rogue performance with a purchased ticket (remember: all ticket sales go directly to the performers). It's a fun time especially when you bring a friend or two along.

Fresno has created something unique and special with its Rogue Festival. And there is something for everyone.

"Listen, the goal and purpose of the festival is to surprise you and help you find art that you may not have found on your own," Bennett says, capturing the spirit of the Rogue.

Don't be shy this season; take the time to Rogue out a little. It's a fun and rewarding space for both you and the performers.

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*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.*

Support the *Community Alliance* newspaper by becoming a subscriber on page 3.

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**JAPANESE INCARCERATION**

Victims of the Japanese internment and their families signed their names and wrote the names of the camps where they were held on 48-star American flags. Akiko Peterson signed at a luncheon on Feb. 10 for the Day of Remembrance at the Fresno Fairgrounds. Photo by Peter Maiden

## Day of Remembrance

BY VIC BEDOIAN

It was an historically ironic location for the Japanese American Citizens League's annual Day of Remembrance—the Fresno Fairgrounds, where thousands of American citizens were held for months living in horse stalls at the Fresno Assembly Center while concentration camps for them were being constructed throughout the western states. They just happened to be Americans of Japanese heritage.

On that fateful day of Feb. 19, 1942, the lives of those Japanese Americans who had created communities in the fertile San Joaquin Valley changed forever. Executive Order 9066 was signed into law that day by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, beginning what was surely one of the most heart-rending chapters of American history.

Soon, 120,000 people living in the western states unjustly lost their freedom and their rights as American citizens only because their families came here from Japan.

Observing the Day of Remembrance in 2024 was not an occasion for sadness. It was a time of reflection, camaraderie, catching up with old friends and greeting new ones. The event was both solemn and joyful as it echoed the pain and trauma of the past as well as hopefulness for the future.

There was no hint of bitterness, at least openly, but rather a sense of pride in being survivors and a sense of accomplishment for all that Japanese Americans have contributed to the Valley and the nation. Here in the San Joaquin Valley those achievements are profound and abundant.

Founded in 1929, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is primarily concerned with social justice. Over the years, it has advocated for civil rights and fought racism. It is a robust organization with headquarters in San Francisco and 10,000 members in more than 100 chapters nationwide.

The JACL conducts educational programs to eradicate hate and prejudice, combats negative stereotypes used against Asians and Pacific Islanders, and even provides college scholarships. Lately, it has been active in combating the most recent upsurge of anti-Asian bigotry.

Opening remarks for the Day of Remembrance by Consul General of Japan Yo Osumi spanned the intimate connection that exists between the two Pacific nations and cultures. Since coming to San Francisco for his assignment, Osumi said he has learned much about the Japanese American experience, "I learned a lot about the history, and I learned that to celebrate the Day of Remembrance we gather here to honor those who suffered, struggled and overcame that injustice."

He also learned how important Japanese immigrants were to the state, "As of 1930, California was home to 40 Japan towns from San Diego to Sacramento and further north, and in Fresno alone that's over 5,000 Japanese Americans living, working and contributing to the community."

Osumi emphasized the value of remembering, saying, "Preserving history is making sure that it's shared with future generations. At the end of the day, the crucial points to remember are that human rights were violated and due process under the laws disregarded."

Understanding the past, Osumi stressed, is the key to the future, "Across the world today, both the United States and Japan are strong advocates of supporting human rights abroad



### Patricia Brown Running for Fresno County Democratic Central Committee District 3

**I am a Democrat** who grew up with a mother raised by a single mother, parents who lived in a box car, and four sisters who had to face systemic misogyny. I was the first to attend college and UCSC, where I studied Politics and became a Progressive dedicated to fighting social injustice. I clerked for a federal judge. For 30+ years I have advocated for women and children as a family law attorney. The Democratic Party is a large, diverse tent, protecting rights and freedoms, a party always striving to make all of our lives better.

**Why am I running?** As an incumbent going into my 6th year on the FCDCC, we have so much more to do in this election year where we Democrats must win the down-ballot races, not just Congress and the Presidency. I bring long-term relationships with candidates and other FCDCC leaders, and my excellent writing skills for its resolutions, press releases, and articles in "The Fresno Bee" & "Community Alliance," where I have published many times. I am well-spoken on issues like gun safety, domestic violence, abortion, LGBTQ, voting rights, speaking at our Democratic clubs, political marches, schools, town halls, TV and radio stations.

**My 5 key goals & responsibilities of FCDCC:** 1. Welcoming. Train members & new candidates to organize effectively to win. Strengthen the membership of Democratic Clubs. Every member and alternate is required to be on at least 1 committee. Make more women more FCDCC leaders. 2. Refine and be aggressive in messaging the differences between our Democratic Party, the Republican and third parties. It is not hyperbole to say our democracy is threatened in 2024. 3. Fundraising. Our headquarters is a necessary hub for all Democrats in the County. We are critical in supporting candidates to win. 4. Winning elections: Keeping our standards for viable candidates, partnering with groups like Field Team 6 to register Democrats and Independents, Planned Parenthood, Moms for Gun Safety, Black Women Organized for Political Action, and CA Latina Dems. 5. Implement our existing FCDCC strategic plan. 6. Time and Committee commitments: I am on the fundraising candidate endorsement and by-laws committees. I have brought speakers to the FCDCC like Field Team 6, and as the speaker wrangler as VP of the Kennedy Club. I will continue to work weekly to make sure the FCDCC is strong. I am a past President of the Fresno County Democratic Women's Club, co-founder of the Democratic Women in Action club, co-managed the Hillary Clinton office within a union shop, attended CADEM conventions in SF, LA, Long Beach and Sacramento, and registered conventions in SF, LA, Long Beach and Sacramento, and registered voters at events like the Big Fresno Fair and Clovis Big Hats Days. I organized Town Hall on the Mueller, attended by 65 and opened it to the public. As a pro bono attorney, I helped secure an \$8.7 million state grant for a 49-acre park in my neighborhood benefiting students, seniors and families.

**Vote for me, Patricia Brown,** on March 5th if you live in Fresno County - FCDCC Area 3. Email: ppenncraft@gmail.com

and upholding the rule of law, working in conjunction to advocate for democratic systems of government and finding programs focused on alleviating poverty and preventing conflict.”

Memorializing the struggles faced by Japanese Americans in that dark period, Rep. Jim Costa (D-Fresno) bemoaned the executive action forcing Japanese families to leave their homes, farms and businesses “that they had with passion and desire established [as] a community for themselves and to make America a better country.”

It is a pattern all too familiar in American society, as Costa pointed out, “We have sinned before in our omission to recognize the critical nature of the contributions of immigrants to this country over generations. And sadly, different ethnic communities have had to persevere as they attempt to establish their roots.”

For rising above the trauma they endured, Costa praised Japanese Americans of that era, “I think it is entirely remarkable and says so much about the Japanese American in this country. In their pastime in these camps they played baseball, America’s pastime, even though their respect as citizens was put in question and in doubt.

“And then, of course, the 442nd Battalion (of Japanese American soldiers). When your country is basically imprisoning your families, quarantining your families, but yet you volunteer to serve your country in war. My gosh, what a statement that is.”

Every year, the local JAACL confers their Distinguished American Award. This year it went to Judge Johnny Gogo, a Superior Court judge in San Jose. He launched a remarkable project aimed at educating the public about the history of the internment. He was inspired by meeting Fred Korematsu’s daughter Karen.

An American civil rights hero, Korematsu in 1942 refused to be interned. He tried to join the military as the United States entered the war but was turned away due to discrimination because he was Japanese.

At first, he worked as a welder in Oakland’s shipyards but was soon fired because of his ancestry. Korematsu ignored Executive Order 9066 and tried to live as a civilian by changing his name and appearance. Eventually, he was arrested and sent to a concentration camp.

He fought his legal case while interned at Topaz, Utah. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, but he lost in 1944. Then in 1983, documents were discovered proving that Japanese Americans had never posed a threat to the country and that their internment was unjustified. Korematsu’s conviction was overturned later that year. He committed the rest of his life to working for social justice.

That meeting with Korematsu’s daughter compelled Judge Gogo to do something, “I thought that getting this 48-star American flag, asking those camp survivors to sign the flag, would be a fantastic way to honor their families’ memory, their families’ legacy, and certainly remember the struggle and the hardships and the heartache.”

The first to sign in 2021 was then Rep. Norman Mineta (D-San Jose), whose own family had been imprisoned. In this tribute to history, five of the 48-star flags, the kind that flew over the concentration camps, now have 1,000 emblazoned signatures of survivors.



Yo Osumi, the consul general of Japan in San Francisco, spoke at the Japanese American Citizens League’s Day of Remembrance luncheon. Photo by Peter Maiden

The Nakagawa’s farm survived thanks to the neighboring Raven family, who took care of the land and even handed over a cigar box full of cash, the profits from the internment years. Most Japanese American families, however, lost everything they had worked so hard to achieve.

Baseball was a crucial element of the internment experience. Japanese Americans who came to the Valley were passionate about baseball, and in the early 1920s players organized teams and leagues up and down the state. Their love of baseball was so great that they immediately began constructing baseball diamonds and bleachers as soon as they were incarcerated.

Teams and leagues sprouted up in every internment camp, and there was fierce competition. Teams even went on the road to compete with players in other camps around the West. It was not just something to fill the days while interned.

Baseball had provided a powerful sense of pride and excellence and accomplishment for Japanese Americans in the prewar era. That continued and intensified with baseball played at a high level within the confines of barbed wire as thousands of fans cheered on their favorite teams.

It was uplifting to excel at their craft and to have fun as a counterweight to the daily grind of regimented prison life. It also must have been an ironic source of gratification that they were so good at the game that is considered America’s pastime. After the war, some of the players went on to star on high school and college baseball teams and at the professional level as well.

Nakagawa is on a mission. His goal is obtaining the recognition for Japanese American baseball players that they deserve. “I can compare a lot of our Issei and Nisei ball players that had major league ability. They had the tools, they had the passion.

“But unfortunately, during the 20s and 30s, because of the discriminatory laws and the Jim Crow laws at the time, if you were Asian, Latino or Black you weren’t going to play major league baseball.”

That has changed as players from Japan are now increasingly sought after by major league teams, and some veteran Japanese players such as Ichiro Suzuki head toward the Baseball Hall of Fame.

But that’s still not good enough, Nakagawa asserts, “Hopefully, one day we’ll get to the Baseball Hall of Fame permanently, like the All-American girls, the Negro Leagues and the Latinos in baseball. And that’s our goal. And to also have an enshrinement for one of our Nisei ball players like Kenichi Zenimura.”

Over the past quarter century, Nakagawa has curated a museum-style exhibit featuring Nisei baseball and has taken it far and wide, even having a temporary showing in Cooperstown (home of the Baseball Hall of Fame). He hopes that the exhibit will be recognized by the major league establishment with a permanent place in the Hall of Fame.

What is so impressive about the Day of Remembrance is the grace with which Japanese Americans have absorbed what was done to them, and how they have overcome that unforgettable experience. No other immigrant population has had to prove their loyalty and value to the nation in quite the same way. Their sacrifice should never be repeated.

Because Japanese Americans survived that dismal episode of history so positively, we are all a better and stronger people.

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



Dr. Brian Tsukimura, left, the governor of the Central California District Council of the Japanese American Citizens League, presents Judge Johnny C. Gogo of the Flag Signing Project with the Distinguished American Award at a Feb. 10 event. Photo by Peter Maiden

Keynote speaker Kerry Yo Nakagawa traced the important role of baseball in the concentration camps. Like all Japanese Americans, he had his own unique family story.

Emigrating from Hawaii, the hardworking Nakagawa family set up shop in Fresno’s west side and farmed a 20-acre vineyard near Caruthers. In the 1920s, his grandmother owned a sushi restaurant while across the street his grandfather ran a hardware store.

With the coming of the war and internment, the businesses disappeared. Such losses devastated the successful lives of so many, Nakagawa recounts, “I always talk about how 48% of the cash crops in California, Oregon and Washington were controlled by Japanese American farmers. World War II came, and all of a sudden the Japanese towns, the banks, the restaurants, they all went away.”



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# CVPPAC's Top Priority Is to Elect Progressive Candidates to Local Office

## These are our endorsed candidates



The Central Valley Progressive PAC urges you to **SUPPORT AND VOTE** for the candidates we have endorsed in this election cycle. To learn more about the positions they take on issues that progressives care about, visit [cvppac.org/candidate-responses](http://cvppac.org/candidate-responses).



Stop the Board of Supervisors from changing the name of Yokuts Valley to a racist slur.

The next Central Valley Progressive PAC meeting will be in-person on Saturday, March 9, at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. We encourage you to help our endorsed candidates by financially contributing and working on their campaigns.



**Dr. Joaquin Arambula**  
State Assembly District 31



**Bryce Herrera**  
Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 2



**Miguel Arias**  
Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 3



**E.J. Hinojosa**  
Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 3



**Jennifer Cruz**  
Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 5

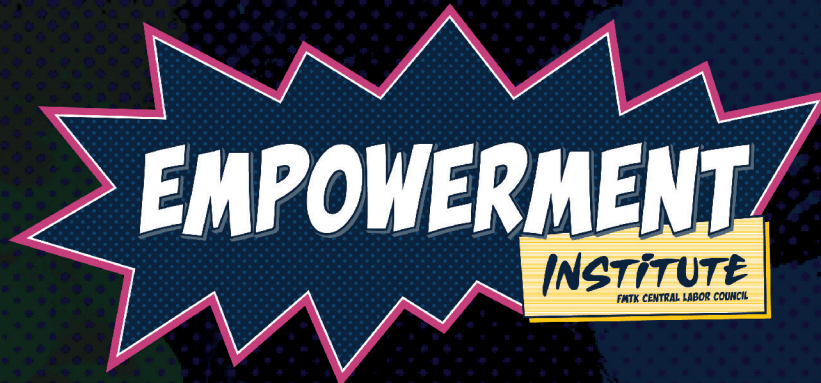


**Matt Gillian**  
Fresno City Council District 2



**Tyler Maxwell**  
Fresno City Council District 4

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# Madera Passes a Gaza Ceasefire Resolution

BY ESTHER QUINTANILLA

(Editor's note: The following story is printed with permission of the Central Valley Journalism Collaborative.)

The City of Madera is the first in the San Joaquin Valley to support a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. In a special meeting on Feb. 14, the City Council voted unanimously to call for a stop to the violence in the Middle East. Mayor Santos Garcia spoke about how the Palestinian struggle resonates with the diverse population in the city.

Pro-Palestine advocates say they will continue pushing for more cities and local governments to sign similar resolutions.

The decision by the Madera City Council comes a few months after a proposed Gaza ceasefire resolution failed in nearby Merced. In December, only two of Merced's seven City Council members voted to support the resolution.

There have also been protests by students at UC Merced and Stanislaus State asking university leaders to take similar actions.

The cities of San Francisco and Richmond have passed similar resolutions.

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Esther Quintanilla is a reporter for KVPR and the Central Valley Journalism Collaborative (CVJC).



Members of the Madera City Council are shown after passing a resolution in support of a ceasefire in Gaza. Photo by Esther Quintanilla/CVJC

# United Against Hate

BY COMMUNITY ALLIANCE STAFF

California Attorney General Rob Bonta will be the keynote speaker on April 6 at the United Against Hate forum at Fresno City College.

"We must stand united against hate and do our part to prevent it in our communities. I am excited to participate in the United Against Hate Forum on April 6 and invite all community members who are committed to eliminating bias to join us," said Bonta.

"The Stop the Hate coalition and their campaign helps to combat hate by promoting awareness on hate crime prevention measures. I want to thank the Stop the Hate Coalition, local leaders and organizations in Fresno and surrounding areas for their partnership and commitment to combating the rise of hate by fostering holistic, community-based responses and providing resources where they are most needed."

This forum is being organized by the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance, the *Community Alliance* newspaper and a coalition of community groups working to Stop the Hate. Over the past two years, this coalition has held town halls, conducted intervention training and shared with the community the most effective ways to report hate crimes and incidents.

Our next big event will be United Against Hate on April 6 at 10 a.m. at Fresno City College (FCC) Forum Hall 101. The goal is to bring together as many community members as possible and all the grassroots Stop the Hate coalition organizations, together with FCC students, to kick off a campaign that expands the work we are doing.

We are asking you to

- Attend the April 6 forum and help make this event a success.
- Help us pass a resolution to Stop the Hate at city councils, school boards, faith groups, unions and community groups. To download a copy of the resolution, visit [fresnoalliance.com](http://fresnoalliance.com).
- Pick up "Stop the Hate, Be the Love" yard signs and bumper stickers at the event to saturate our communities with this message.

This event is being organized by the Stop the Hate coalition, which was made possible by a grant to the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance from the California State Library under the statewide Stop the Hate initiative, of which the *Community Alliance* newspaper is a part.

## Stop the Hate Resolution

The Stop the Hate Coalition is asking community support to get city councils, school boards, unions, community groups and faith groups to pass the resolution below. To download a copy of the resolution, visit [fresnoalliance.com](http://fresnoalliance.com).

We, <organization name>, pledge to stand up to all forms of hate, racism, bigotry and bullying.

We will not stay silent in the face of intolerance based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, ability, country of origin, immigration status or any other factor.

We will work together with our community to create safer and more inclusive communities for all.

By making this pledge today, we promise to

- Learn about what counts as a hate crime.
- Educate our families and friends to recognize hate crime, support the targeted person and report to the police or an appropriate third-party organization.
- Train our staff in hate crime awareness and recognition, and create a safe and all-inclusive environment that supports equality and good relations within and outside the workplace.
- Ensure that our policy procedures are effective in addressing hate crime incidents that might occur in the workplace either between employees, or against staff members or the public.
- Support and create activities in the community and workplace that promote diversity, inclusion, kindness and good relationships.
- Help display visual materials in public areas disapproving all forms of hate in our communities and share this information with others through leaflets, posters and social media posts.
- Report to the police or send details to 559-600-CVAC (2822) if we witness, suffer or become aware of any persons, organizations or businesses that are demonstrating hate speech.
- Encourage victims who have disclosed a hate crime to report it to police or a third-party organization and support them in passing any specific details wherever possible.

## Groups Working on the Stop the Hate Campaign

- Black American Political Association of California (BAPAC)
- Central Valley Partnership
- Community Alliance Newspaper
- Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)
- Dolores Huerta Foundation
- Economic Opportunities Center—LGBTQ+
- Education and Leadership Foundation
- Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM)



Yard signs with the "Stop the Hate, Be the Love" message will be available for those interested at the April 6 United Against Hate event at Fresno City College.

- First Mennonite Church of Reedley
- Fresno City College Social Justice Center
- Fresno Rainbow Pride
- Human Rights Coalition
- Indigenous Justice
- Jakara Movement
- Madera Coalition for Community Justice
- NAACP—Madera
- NAACP—Fresno
- Peace Fresno
- Poder Latinx
- Reedley Peace Center
- San Joaquin Valley LEAP (Huron Mayor Rey Leon)
- San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance
- Stone Soup
- Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)
- The Fresno Center
- The Source (Visalia)
- West Fresno Democratic Club
- Yokuts Valley Residents Committee



California Attorney General Rob Bonta will be the keynote speaker on April 6 at the United Against Hate forum at Fresno City College. Photo courtesy of the State of California Department of Justice

## Across the Great Divide 11:00 AM SUN

Music among friends; folk and acoustic music; singers and songwriters. Familiar and new songs from home and across the sea. Stories of Life, Struggle, and Humor. Hosted by Kevin Vance.



## Americas Back 40

1:00 PM SUN. The hicks from coast to coast. Hosted by Mary Tilson



## Blues By The Bay

11:00 AM SATURDAYS

For over 25 years, Chicago native Tom Mazzolini has hosted this popular blues radio show highlighting this Afro-American roots art form from its rural country roots to the urban manifestations and regional flavors that encompass the genre.

# Peace Is Possible, Ethical Behavior Is Possible

BY LENI VILLAGOMEZ REEVES

During more than 52 years, various right-wing governments of Colombia and revolutionary forces, including the FARC and the ELN, maintained a state of war. In 2012, formal negotiations for a peace treaty began, with the goal that the government of Colombia would cease to attack these rebels and that they would abandon armed struggle and take part in political processes.

To create the environment possible for this to occur, certain conditions were agreed upon, including agrarian reform; political participation; an end to paramilitary violence, narco trafficking and production; a truth and reparations commission; and security guarantees.

The negotiations took place in Havana, Cuba, over a series of years, and initially Cuba and Norway were the guarantor states, a formal agreement with contract stipulations, which Cuba upheld when talks with the ELN faction broke down in 2019, while a group of ELN negotiators remained in Cuba.

Then—Colombian President Ivan Duque demanded their return to Colombia despite the previous agreements. Cuba declined to violate the agreements.

In May 2022, Colombia elected its first progressive center-left government with the ticket of Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez. Peace talks resumed, starting with a bilateral ceasefire between the Colombian government and the ELN. This is now thought to be an irreversible process, the first time such a point has been reached. The sixth cycle of talks in Havana extended the ceasefire.

The government, the ELN, the Catholic Church and the United Nations will lead the verification and monitoring mechanism of the ceasefire. The parties have agreed to dialogue first before responding belligerently to any breach of the ceasefire. Notably, women's and LGBTQ+ organizations, as well as representatives of Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples, were included in the peace process. Victims rights and nonrecurrence were addressed.

In May 2025, an official state of peace will exist in Colombia. President Petro said, "I must express our appreciation to Cuba for their hospitality for peace, which they have offered not just at this time, but as they have accompanied us through a decades-long process to keep us from killing each other in Colombia. Today, other generations will surely have two words in their hearts, like a flag: hope and change."



Francia Márquez, vice president of Colombia. Photo courtesy of Minrex (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba)

Venezuela will be the probable location for the seventh round of talks, and the guarantor states are Cuba and Norway, continuing in that role, with Mexico, Venezuela, Chile and Brazil joining.

### U.S. State Sponsors of Terrorism List

The government of the United States recently issued the annual review of its State Sponsors of Terrorism List. It notes that on Jan. 12, 2021, the Department of State designated Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. As evidence for that designation, two points were listed:

"Citing peace negotiation protocols, Cuba refused Colombia's request to extradite 10 ELN leaders." However, it was forced to acknowledge that "in November, pursuant to an order from Colombian President Petro, the Attorney General announced that arrest warrants would be suspended against 17 ELN commanders, including those whose extradition Colombia had previously requested."

Clearly, that completely invalidates any notion of Cuba's fidelity to the written terms of a guarantor state in the Colombia Peace Process as a reason for inclusion on this list. The government of the country involved has declared that no violation or "sponsorship of terrorism" has occurred. The State Department has only one other reason to cite:

"Cuba also continues to harbor several U.S. fugitives from justice wanted on charges related to political violence, many of whom have resided in Cuba for decades." That's not an excerpt; it's the whole statement.

Cuba's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism is entirely and exclusively based on Cuba offering asylum to U.S. political prisoners of the COINTELPRO war on Black America.

It might be necessary to highlight the fact that there is a government that can act ethically rather than expediently or opportunistically. We are not accustomed to seeing that in the United States, so we tend to believe that it is impossible.

We see our government withdraw all financial support from the UNWRA (UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), which feeds and shelters Palestinian refugees, on the basis of unsubstantiated Israeli claims that 12 employees out of many thousands might be "Hamas."

We are not in a position to comprehend that the government of Cuba would not turn over negotiators protected by a diplomatic agreement to Colombia to gain advantages from the United States.

We find it hard to believe that Cuba will not sell Assata Shakur to the state of New Jersey for \$2 million or to the United States for political advantage and relief from the State Sponsor of Terrorism List international financial restrictions that are crippling Cuba's fine national health system.

Integrity in government is new to us, and startling, yet moving.

\*\*\*\*\*

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

## FUSD Needs Updated Cell Phone Policy

Continued from page 6

His 19-page document notes that media consumption can lead to significant changes in key parts of children's and adolescents' brains and could well impact individuals' emotional and social behavior. Online sites can have a particularly damaging effect in the early stages of adolescence, he notes, when "brain development is especially susceptible to social pressures, peer opinions and peer comparisons."

Indeed, people studying this issue have been sounding the alarm for a few decades already.

Joel Balkan examined the strategies of child marketing at length in his 2011 book *Childhood Under Siege: How Big Business Targets Children*. In it, he observes that "having discovered that manipulating children's emotions is a formula for success, kid marketers push that formula as far as they can, doing whatever it takes without apparent constraint or concern, to work the emotions of youth into profit.

"It is this dynamic...that drives them to ramp up media violence, cultivate addiction, cynically exploit social network friendships, sexualize girls and promote hyperconsumerism."

Several high school teachers have noted that a substantial number of students in

their rooms are on their phones or listening to earbuds during a large chunk of class time. In light of Dr. Murthy's warnings and Balkan's findings, it seems important to understand such behavior as a safety issue—as a likely detriment to students' cognitive and emotional well-being.

One district teacher suggests that a no-nonsense policy that pulls no punches would be an ideal approach. "If the student has a device out (or earbuds in), they are wrong. No discussion."

He also pointed out that there's now a window of opportunity for the district to introduce such a game-changing, district-wide policy. After all, Bob Nelson, the current superintendent, has just announced that he'll soon be leaving the district to take a position at Fresno State.

A new superintendent could well decide to tackle this issue promptly. Indeed, this new educational leader could even opt to make the upgrading of the phone (or "digital devices") policy one of his or her topic priorities.

There are many reasons (academic, psychological, social) why the district should feel compelled to take action in this area—to move fast and fix things, as it were.

Maybe even before the installation of a new superintendent.

\*\*\*\*\*

Steven Roesch is a retired German and English teacher who taught in the Fresno Unified School District for 30 years. Contact him at [stevenroesch12@comcast.net](mailto:stevenroesch12@comcast.net).

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# SIERRA CLUB

## TEHIPITE CHAPTER

### The Fresno County 2042 General Plan Must Be Rejected: Part 1

On February 20, 2024, the Fresno County Supervisors, for the first time in a quarter century, approved an update of the County's General Plan and its Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Despite considerable modifications, and relabeling it as a "2042 General Plan", the County, wanting to assure a *minimum* of public opposition, carefully avoided giving the public time to absorb and comment on these dramatic changes.

As the lead government agency on this project, the County is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to reveal all known, significant, negative impacts created by the General Plan for the environment and the health of County residents, and to mitigate these impacts to the maximum extent feasible. Instead, the County identified the harmful impacts of the 2042 General Plan, declared these impacts to be "significant and unavoidable" — then threw up its hands and *avoided proposing the mitigations* required by law to reduce the impacts as much as possible. This flaw was noted in a public comment on the EIR submitted by the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter, Central Valley Partnership, and League of Women Voters of Fresno.

These harmful impacts include: (1) air pollution from passenger vehicles and diesel trucks; (2) greenhouse gas emissions and their resulting climate impacts; (3) conversion of agricultural land to urban land uses; (4) water quality and water supply impacts; (5) wildlife habitat; and (6) environmental justice issues (siting polluting industries near low-income, Latino and African-American communities). Press reports have reflected these concerns — see this article in the Feb. 19 Fresno Bee, at <https://fresnoland.org/2024/02/19/fresno-county-supervisors-development-general-plan/>.

*What has changed in the 2042 General Plan?* First, whereas the former 2000 General Plan recognized the destructive impacts of sprawl, the new version takes a giant leap backwards to the 1980s, before the drastic impacts to the climate from vehicle carbon dioxide emissions were understood. Today, with the climate crisis all around us, we are faced with a bleak future if immediate, drastic action is not taken to restrict the burning of fossil fuels. Land use planning in Fresno County has now returned to an

era when developers saw limitless possibilities for expansion into our foothill and farmland regions, with more freeways. The County continues its destructive expansion of housing developments and shopping centers on the periphery of the City of Fresno, a trajectory guaranteed to set back any progress on improving air pollution and respiratory disease. Sprawl means the conversion of agricultural lands to urban uses, enriching major developers who purchase farmland and construct subdivisions, passing on the costs to the public.

Second, in the previous General Plan, new housing and other development was limited to areas with *existing* urban infrastructure. With the new 2042 General Plan, this requirement has been *eliminated*. There is no longer any requirement for streets, water supplies, and sewage treatment systems to be in place before a housing plan can be submitted to the County for approval, as is required in the 2000 General Plan. This loophole is a *gift to developers*, who have never been required to pay for needed County infrastructure. Using their friends in government, they shift the cost of infrastructure to the taxpayers, and government fails to aggressively negotiate on behalf of their constituents to require developers to foot the bill.

Third, the General Plan's EIR air quality analysis is inadequate and does not adopt binding mitigation, in violation of CEQA. CEQA requires both, (1) *full disclosure of the type and degree of environmental harms a project may cause* and (2) *binding adoption of all feasible mitigation measures to limit that harm*. The EIR performed by Fresno County here fails on both counts. It consistently declines to provide adequate information on the environmental harm that the 2042 General Plan would cause in Fresno County and beyond, and its proposed mitigation measures are *long on adverbs but short on enforceable mandates*.

California state law requires that General Plans adopted by municipalities in the San Joaquin Valley must contain, among other things: A comprehensive set of goals, policies, and objectives to improve air quality, consistent with CEQA; a plan for the construction of affordable housing; and a set of feasible implementation measures designed to carry out those goals, policies, and objectives.

This EIR contains goals and policies, but what it lacks, crucially, are the *required implementation measures*. It is difficult to determine whether policies in the 2024 General Plan and Zoning Update are enforceable on individual projects by permit conditions or the like, as required by

the CEQA Guidelines. Further, the air quality mitigation discussed in the EIR focuses mainly on emissions from project *construction*, not from ongoing *operations*. The EIR offers a menu of potential mitigations, but does not impose any requirements or criteria to tell us which, or how many, of these mitigation measures are sufficient. This is a violation of CEQA's mandate that projects with significant impacts *may not be approved* unless *all* feasible mitigations are adopted.

Another serious failure to meet CEQA's requirements is the County's apparent elimination of *over 200 mitigation measures* adopted by the County in the 2000 General Plan, but which were *never enforced*. Reclassified as "policies," in violation of CEQA case law, these former mitigation measures may now be unenforceable. No analysis accompanies or justifies these changes. Either a full analysis and justification of the reclassification, supported by substantial evidence, must be made and disclosed to the public, or the County must make clear that the new policies are fully enforceable.

Finally, two new projects which the County Supervisors promised that would be included in the new 2042 General Plan — a 700-acre development on John Harris grazing lands along the Kings River, near Sanger, into luxury homes, and a large property planned for a Business Industrial Campus, east of Highway 99 between Fresno and Fowler, have been designated as "study areas" as a way of evading inclusion of their environmental impacts in the General Plan. This is a creative way for the County to "fudge the data" and evade responsibility, because these two sprawl developments will be governed by the new, laxer, developer-friendly rules of the new General Plan,

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Our Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter is gearing up to fight this backwards-thinking General Plan, and looking for volunteers who are willing to take on two tasks. *No experience is required for these roles, and we will provide all the support you need.* **First**, we need "watchdogs" willing to keep an eye out for upcoming projects, and to research their harmful impacts to our air quality, water supplies, water quality, and other impacts to residents throughout the San Joaquin Valley and foothill communities. **Second**, we need volunteers to write letters-to-the-editor and to make public comments; these do not require detailed knowledge, just a willingness to express yourself. *Contact Gary* at the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter, in Fresno, if you are interested or have questions, at [tehipite.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:tehipite.chapter@sierraclub.org).

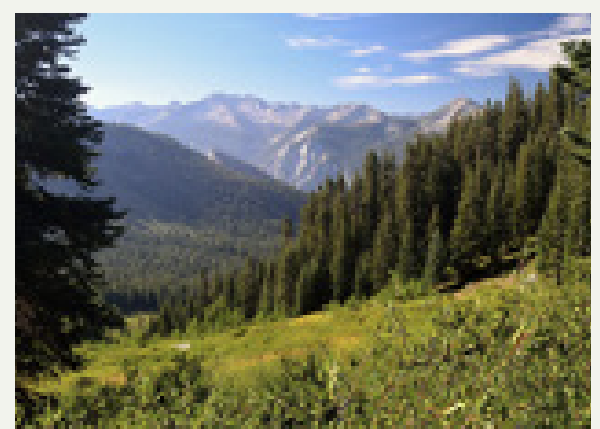
### Potluck and Awards Banquet Saturday March 9 at 5:30 pm

First Congregational Church (The Big Red Church) 2131 N Van Ness Blvd, Fresno

**Our Keynote Speaker:** William Tweed, retired Chief Naturalist at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, presenting "A Shaping Force: How the Early Sierra Club Shaped the Southern Sierra." Tweed is the author of numerous books including "Granite Pathways: A History of the Wilderness Trail System of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks" and "Uncertain Path: A Search for the Future of National Parks."

Bring your potluck item ready to serve with a serving utensil. Suggestions of what to bring: Main dish (P to Z) side dish or salad (H to O) dessert (A to G) This is a free event open to the general public, but you are welcome to make a donation to help defray costs.

Questions? Email: [ecuagirl45@yahoo.com](mailto:ecuagirl45@yahoo.com)



# Stop the Hate Event at the Fresno Center

BY COMMUNITY ALLIANCE STAFF

The latest effort by the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance, the *Community Alliance* newspaper and several co-sponsors in the Stop the Hate campaign was a meeting at the Fresno Center in southeast Fresno on Jan. 24. The "Take Action Workshop" featured information on how to report a hate crime. Around 75 people attended.

Cyndee Loryang of the Fresno Center spoke first. She is program manager for Stop the Hate at the Fresno

Photos by Peter Maiden

Center, which provides a range of services to underserved communities in Fresno, focusing on the Southeast Asian community. Simultaneous translation in Hmong was available at the event, as was translation into Spanish.

David Rasavong, whose family owns a Thai restaurant, spoke about how the family's original location had to be closed because of hateful rumors on the Internet. *Community Alliance* writer Paulina Cruz reported on the closing and the opening at a new location in southeast Fresno with a new name, Love & Thai. Love & Thai catered the meeting, and the food was much enjoyed.

Efraín Botello Cisneros from the California Department of Justice spoke about the department's investment in fighting hate crime under Attorney General Rob Bonta. Fresno Police Department Lieutenant Mike Gebhart, commander of the Southeast District, spoke about actions the City takes when hate crimes are reported. Lt. Gebhart brought with him two Hmong patrol officers, who were well received.



David Rasavong, whose family owns Love & Thai Restaurant, spoke about the hate his family was subjected to after a false claim against them on the Internet.



Around 75 people attended the Jan. 24 Stop the Hate event at the Fresno Center.

The keynote speech was by Hina Fatima, who spoke about treatment for traumatic experiences related to hate crimes and other experiences of repression. She said that trauma causes issues with our internal narratives, which can be explored and healed by techniques related to language.

In closing, the *Community Alliance* presented a concept for a bumper sticker and lawn signs saying, "Stop the Hate, Be the Love." The items feature significant colors and a fist representing community power.

## WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE WE DOING?



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# Lest We Forget

BY RUTH GADEBUSCH

The need for a Black History Month (February) and likewise a Women's History Month (March) is not that we forget, but that all too often the stories of these groups are unknown, having been ignored in most accounts of this nation's history.

Fortunately, there is now a wonderful museum in our nation's capital recognizing the African American population's story. Not so for women except that the African American Museum is generously sharing a portion of its space with those continuing to work to develop a women's history museum.

Congress has appropriated money for other museums, but neither money nor the desired last piece of land on the Mall was ever approved for a women's museum.

In the more than a century since women were successful in the long difficult struggle for the vote, all manner of proposals have been enacted to limit our ability to control our own bodies, hence the renewed effort to pass the Equal Rights Amendment.

We stand on the shoulders of thousands of women and supportive men who fought long and hard to reach this point. We owe them no less than continuing to make their dreams come true regarding the rights of women. In this Women's History Month, let us highlight some elements of the fight for women's equality.

Unlike the husband of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who, realizing his wife was serious about that Seneca Falls, N.Y., women's vote campaign kickoff, skipped town, Harry Burn, at his mother's urging, cast the deciding vote in the Tennessee legislature to ratify the proposed 19th Amendment.

After the group gained access to the church that the minister had "forgotten" to unlock, the husband of Lucretia Mott presided over that first meeting.

Of the 300 in attendance, only teenage Charlotte Woodward would live to see the success of the movement that began in July 1848—the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920.

Then as now, race often became an issue to be overcome. Susan B. Anthony, a Quaker we most associate with the suffragist movement, was to bring her abolitionist and temperance interests to the movement later.

The 19th Amendment is often called the Anthony Amendment because it contains words written by her but defeated by Congress in 1872. It was Harriet Butler Laidlaw of the National American Woman Suffrage Association who reminded us, "In so far as women are like men, they ought to have the same rights, in so far as they are different they must represent themselves."

It should be noted that "male" first showed up in the U.S. Constitution in the 14th Amendment freeing the slaves, followed by the 15th giving Black men but not women the vote.

It was in 1923 that Alice Paul first wrote the words of the still awaited Equal Rights Amendment. Earlier, her efforts organizing White House pickets earned her a 37-day stay in a hospital for the insane.

President Woodrow Wilson offered his support for the vote for women only when he needed their help in the war effort. The women had insisted, "If we can send our sons in battle for the rights of foreigners to self rule, the women should have the same rights at home. Aren't American women as good as French men?"

In the years since Abigail Adams wrote husband John begging that women not be forgotten there has been progress, but we dare not forget the price paid for that progress, or how far there is to go. It isn't just those who sacrificed and fought for the vote but those who continue

## ONE WOMAN'S VIEW



to work so furiously for each of us to control our own body, to manage our reproductive life without interference from outside forces.

The people for whom we cast our precious votes on March 5 will influence history for better or worse. Which will it be? What will history tell us next March?

\*\*\*\*\*

Ruth Gadebusch, a former naval officer, has served on the Fresno Unified School District Board of Education, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Center for Civic Education Board of Directors among her various community interests.

# Killing the Truth in Gaza

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

*"If the genocide in Gaza is not halted, it will presage a new world order. A world where the old rules, more honored in the breach than the observance, no longer matter. It will be a world where nations with vast bureaucratic structures and technologically advanced military systems carry out, in public view, massive killing projects."*

—Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Chris Hedges

On Feb. 18, Al Jazeera News reported the latest numbers of casualties in Gaza released by the Gaza Health Ministry. Since Oct. 7, there have been 28,895 deaths and 68,883 injuries. Many more remain buried under the rubble. The United Nations says that more than two-thirds of the casualties are women and children.

In the West Bank, 396 Palestinians have been killed. Many have been injured, and more than 7,000 have been arrested.

Among the dead are more than 340 healthcare workers, 156 UN staff members and 126 journalists. The healthcare workers include many first responders, shot or bombed when they arrive on the scene to help the injured. UN staff are killed when UN schools and other facilities are bombed. Many believe these groups are targeted for death.

Al Jazeera reports that "officials suggest the targeting of journalists may be a 'deliberate strategy by Israeli forces' to silence reporting. United Nations experts have condemned the deadly attacks on journalists and media workers in Gaza, calling on Israel to allow journalists to enter the besieged territory and to ensure their protection." Many of the journalists killed were Al Jazeera journalists.

And the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) appear to be targeting hospitals, resulting in the deaths of many healthcare workers. According to the United Nations, hospitals and other vital medical infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank have been attacked nearly 600 times since the war began.

In other recent news, on Jan. 26 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Israel to prevent any acts of genocide against the Palestinians and do more to help suffering civilians. However, it stopped short of ordering a ceasefire as requested by South Africa, which brought the case.

The ICJ ordered six provisional measures including for Israel to refrain from acts under the Genocide Convention, prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to genocide, and take immediate and effective measures to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza.

Sadly, nothing has changed since the order and the IDF continues to indiscriminately bomb and shoot civilians. Humanitarian aid remains blocked at the border. Civilians are facing starvation and dehydration. This is all being carried out with full U.S. support.

Recently, the U.S. Senate approved another \$14 billion in military aid for Israel. As of this writing, the aid had yet to be approved by the House.

Many international law experts are saying the United States might be brought before the ICJ for aiding and abetting genocide. As U.S. citizens, we are obligated under international law to demand that our government cease and desist from its unconditional support for Israel's potential war crimes.

Sami Bahous, executive director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), said that "women and girls pay the highest price in conflicts."

She said that 67% of the people killed in Gaza since Oct. 7 are thought to be women and children. "That is two mothers killed every hour and seven women every two hours. We mourn them all."

None of this would be known without journalists on the ground in Gaza and the West Bank. As previously stated, journalists appear to be targeted by the IDF. The IDF told the Reuters and Agence France-Presse news agencies in October that it could not guarantee the safety of their journalists operating in the Gaza Strip, after they had sought assurances that their journalists would not be targeted by the IDF.

Often, journalists' homes are targeted. For example, several journalists were killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza. The Forum of Palestinian Journalists said that on Oct. 25, 2023, Saed al-Halabi and Mohammed Labad were killed in Israeli attacks, adding that Halabi was killed after his house was struck earlier in the day.



Blood on our hands. A recent protest in Fresno. Photo by Bob McCloskey

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) released this statement and a report documenting the bombing of the residences of journalists on Feb. 18.

"CPJ emphasizes that journalists are civilians doing important work during times of crisis and must not be targeted by warring parties," said Sherif Mansour, CPJ's Middle East and North Africa program coordinator.

"Journalists across the region are making great sacrifices to cover this heart-breaking conflict. Those in Gaza, in particular, have paid, and continue to pay, an unprecedented toll and face exponential threats. Many have lost colleagues, families, and media facilities, and have fled seeking safety when there is no safe haven or exit."

The CPJ reports that 88 journalists and media workers were confirmed dead: 83 Palestinian, 2 Israeli and 3 Lebanese.

The report documents that 26 journalists were reported injured, 4 journalists were reported missing and 25 journalists were reported arrested.

The report documents multiple assaults, threats, cyberattacks, censorship and killings of family members.

The CPJ is also investigating numerous unconfirmed reports of other journalists being killed, missing, detained, hurt or threatened, and of damage to media offices and journalists.

Another case of journalists targeted in their homes is the case of Alaa Al-Hams, a 35-year-old Palestinian journalist for the local Palestinian News Agency SND. She recently died of injuries after being seriously wounded in an Israeli airstrike on her family house in Rafah city, southern Gaza Strip, which resulted in the tragic loss of 10 members of her family on Dec. 2, 2023.

Another attack was on Angam Ahmad Edwan, a Palestinian journalist who worked for the Libyan TV channel February. She was killed in an Israeli airstrike on her home in Jabalia city, northern Gaza Strip.

The CPJ documents 86 other deaths of media workers in Gaza and the West Bank. Journalists around the world must demand justice and accountability.

Sadly, the "journalists" and reporters at CNN, MSNBC, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other media outlets in the United States will never do that. They would rather parrot the lies and propaganda the Israeli government sends them than practice real journalism.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bob McCloskey is an activist and a reporter for the Community Alliance newspaper. He was part of a fact-finding mission to Gaza and the West Bank in 1989. Contact him at bobmccloskey06@gmail.com.



# Life and Loss in Kherson Two Years On

BY ZARINA ZABRISKY

On Feb. 5, Russian artillery hit a southern regional center, Kherson, killing four civilians. With 70,000 Russian troops concentrated in Kherson and Zaporizhzhya oblasts along the Dnipro River, the city, despite nine months of occupation, a major flood and daily shelling for a year and a half, remains resilient. It's been two years since the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

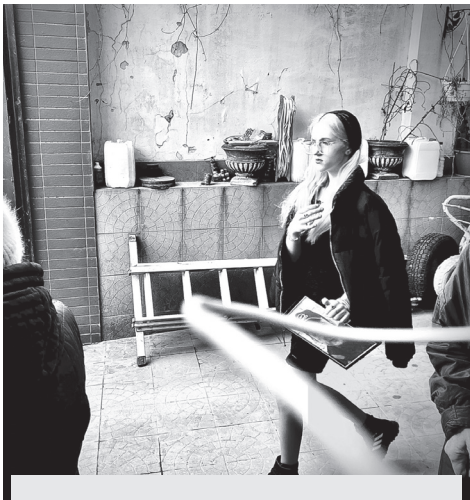
At 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 5, in Kherson, Victor, 45, drank boiling coffee in the spacious kitchen, and, scratching his white cat behind the ear, told his wife of 25 years, Svitlana, that their block might get a new power switch and, finally, power, in the early afternoon. He got up and grabbed the car keys.

"Don't go," said Svitlana.

Svitlana worried. A Russian shell killed her mother. Just a week earlier, the couple buried a close friend, killed by shrapnel. Two days earlier, the Russians dropped yet another aerial bomb downtown.

Every week, fires took the lives of Svitlana's friends and acquaintances. After several attacks left little of their own house, the couple moved to a relative's place, a few blocks down the slope from the Dnipro River. It was the deadliest part of Kherson.

On the other side, a mile away, the Russians targeted their artillery, mortar and tanks at Kherson. Svitlana and Victor sent their children, 16 and 24, to the nearby city of Mykolaiv.



A daughter carries her father's portrait.  
Photo by Zarina Zabriskey

Yet, no matter how hard Svitlana insisted, Victor would not cancel the work assignment by the river port, a major target area for Russians. A welder and an experienced construction worker, he would not budge. Kherson, pummeled by the Russians around the clock, needed its communal services workers to deliver. And anywhere in Kherson was dangerous.

Victor left the house, met his colleague—and a childhood friend—and they drove to the river port neighborhood. The day was foggy so the Russian reconnaissance drones had a harder time hunting cars and dropping explosives on them.

Svitlana stayed next to the city library, destroyed by a Russian aerial bomb. The head of a community association, loved by her neighbors for her ability to solve problems, fearlessness and optimism, Svitlana was in charge of power, water, Internet and overall logistics, a demanding task in the city under daily fire for the last year and a half.

Many houses, just like Svitlana's, were damaged or destroyed; most had no electricity or running water for months. Collapsed roof beams and strange rib-like structures stuck out as if some giant predators feasted on Kherson.

Just like any other morning, Svitlana worked on distributing humanitarian aid and generators to the nearby houses, coordinating with other volunteers and the city authorities, and paying little attention to the habitual rumble of the artillery fire. A few hours flew by fast.

At 12.04 p.m., her phone rang. Olha, a close friend and a neighbor, called. Victor's car was hit by a piece of shrapnel, and caught on fire, she said. The ambulance was on the way. The shelling continued.

Olha, the owner of a grocery store located by the river port, knew what it meant to get such news. Last summer, her fiancé and a lifelong friend were blown to pieces by a Russian mine.

In a few minutes, Svitlana got an update: Victor and his friend burned to ashes. By 2 p.m., four civilians were killed, and one injured. All four were Olha's friends and customers. Liudmila, in her late 60s, was one of the elderly Olha helped with the bills, Internet and driving.

That night, Svitlana had a dream: Victor sat in the kitchen, drinking coffee and playing with the white cat. He told her not to cry. That's when she started to scream. She spent the next day in the morgue and administration offices, obtaining the death certificate and paperwork needed for the funeral.

Her friends and neighbors helped, and by midday, as the Russians started to shell the city again, she was back home, sitting in the dusk, two cats rubbing against her ankles, a charred, thin ring weightless on her palm. All that was left of Victor was a deformed black wedding ring.

Her son, daughter and father sat on a couch across the room from Svitlana, in silence. They just drove back from Mykolaiv. Everything around was built or fixed by Victor. A skillful handyman, he made the large room look cozy and made it their own. Trinkets and framed photos glistened on shelves.

Little light came through the windows, Scotch tape covering the glass in crisscross patterns to protect it from shock waves. A radio blasted the news of the Russian missiles hitting Kharkiv, a city in eastern Ukraine. An air raid siren kept wailing, and dogs howled. Across the street, Olha worked with the maintenance crew on installing the power switch.

Svitlana held a tall glass with a warm Mojito lemonade with a splash of vodka, without drinking it. She took off a black silk scarf because it was squeezing her head, hurting her, and placed it on the desk, next to the death certificate, and a glossy 1990s Kodak photo of Victor.

Married at 20, she and Victor looked alike: many took them for siblings. "He had such dark blue eyes," she said. "Gray, but if he swam for a long time in the river, they turned so transparent turquoise-blue."

His daughter, a tall, skinny teenager in oversized glasses, looked at a recent selfie: she and Dad, smiling. In the morgue, the doctor advised against looking at the remains. "It will haunt you to the end of your days," he said.

Marriage is never easy, and family life in times of war is not a walk in the park. They had fights, but in October they were going to celebrate their 25th anniversary. And the following week, Feb. 14, they were going to go to Mykolaiv for a party for their son's 24th birthday and Valentine's Day. Svitlana would be dancing and singing her favorite



Svitlana, Victor and their daughter. Photo by Zarina Zabriskey

song, "This is my country, this is my land. My family is here. Ukraine..."

A loud explosion roars over the river and echoes through Kherson.

The once thriving southern city with a prewar population of 260,000 stood still. After two years of invasion, Kherson is almost a ghost town, with packs of shaggy dogs roaming the empty parks, torn posters flapping in the wind and faded rags hanging off broken branches.

Once sparkling fountains have dried up; lakes and pools have emptied and tall grass grows through the cracks between the tiles of the pathways. Here and there, mangled pieces of rusty metal wobble like tumbleweeds on the road: fragments of Russian shells and missiles.

Small nail-like darts darken the broken asphalt: the deadly cluster munition parts. No children play at the eerie playgrounds—most were evacuated a long time ago.

With most businesses closed, there are no jobs in Kherson. The financial aid paid by the government is hardly enough to cover food and is not enough to cover the monthly heating, electricity, water and gas bills—even though the riverside districts live without any amenities.

In the 1990s and 2000s, Kherson, like many regions in Ukraine, went through a tough period of mafia rule. Even before the full-scale invasion, the political landscape was complex.

In February 2022, Kherson became the first regional center occupied by the Russian troops. During the occupation, quite a few in the city chose collaboration. They fled with the invaders to the other bank in November 2022 after the liberation. A few empty villas on Svitlana's street used to belong to the collaborators.

On Feb. 8, 2024, about 30 neighbors gathered in the family's backyard for Victor's memorial. About 30 women and men crowded in silence, cradling dancing flames of thin, yellow wax candles with their palms. The casket was closed—and empty. Phones were in airplane mode: Russians looked for the signals conglomerating in one place and targeted such gatherings.

Svitlana sat on a chair, in black, her silk scarf back on, sometimes rocking back and

forth and moaning quietly. Her daughter, in a black veil over her blonde hair, stood by her side, and the son ran back and forth, helping to carry wreaths and distributing traditional favors, simple candies and cookies in plastic bags. Her father sat next to her, eyes blank, remembering his wife's funeral just a few months ago.

The priest said, "With missiles and drones flying today, you could have stayed home. No one would judge you if you didn't come. Thank you for being here and praying. Sometimes, I come to a funeral, and there is no one."

After every sentence came a rumble of explosion. One roared close. People rushed into the garden, squeezing into walls.

"Hide," said one lady. "Remember Hroza?"

In Hroza village, in Kharkiv Oblast, a Russian high-precision missile Iskander killed roughly half of the residents—52 men, women and children attending a funeral service in the fall of 2023.

Olha stood in the back, ready to help, examining the sky for drones. She thought of her fiancé and of her friend Liudmila, also killed on Feb. 5. Olha always said that this was not the time to be emotional. They all would have time to process their grief after the war. Right now, there are too many elderly to assist and amenities to restore.

At the cemetery, a van with the casket drove by dozens of new marble monuments without names on them, by fresh graves of the military, yellow-and-blue flags flapping in the wind. Svitlana kneeled in front of the coffin. Explosions echoed over the graves.

\*\*\*\*\*

Zarina Zabriskey 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 and reports from the sites and interviews military experts and eyewitnesses for these and other publications, including The Byline Times (UK).

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Graphic by Lincoln Cushing



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entirely from our lives  
and institutions"  
National Women's  
History Alliance**

**WILPF Membership Lunch**  
**Sat. March 16, 2024**  
**1:30-3:30 pm**

*\*reconnect\**  
*\*be inspired\**  
**\*Community Leaders\***

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*~ All are Welcome ~*

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**Women's International League for Peace  
and Freedom**

RSVP: Teresa [559.360.8054](tel:559.360.8054) P.O. Box 5114  
Fresno CA 93755



**JANET CAPELLA**

Celebrate the life of Janet Capella on Saturday, March 9, at 10 a.m. in Fresno. Janet's community of friends will be hosting a gathering in her honor at Community United Church of Christ (5550 N. Fresno St.).

Janet Capella was a long-time member of the Fresno Branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. We know her WILPF activism goes back to at least 1980 when she provided publicity for the 65th Anniversary Celebration of WILPF that we were hosting. She was also active in many of our issue committees and efforts: Earth Democracy, Library Committee, Book Club, Crafts Faire and a Mideast discussion group that she hosted at her home.

Janet pioneered WILPF tabling at ArtHop, attended celebrations and



Janet Capella. Photo by Laural Fawcett

protests and always inspired others with her kindness, passion and compassion. She will be remembered, and we will miss her greatly.

Janet Capella died on Jan. 22 of brain cancer and is survived by her loving daughter, Laural Fawcett, and other family.

**CELEBRATE WORLD  
WATER DAY WITH WILPF  
ON MARCH 23**

WILPF Fresno will be part of an environmental organization collaborative celebrating World Water Day—officially March 22. Sponsored by the United Nations, this year's theme is "Water for Peace." It will be celebrated locally on Saturday, March 23, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the San Joaquin River Parkway's Sumner Peck Ranch (14439 Friant Rd.). Look for the Sumner Peck sign and an ornamental white gate a little more than five miles from the Rice Road exit on Friant Road. Also, look for World Water Day signs. Turn into the Sumner Peck entrance off Friant Road, and go straight to the river at the road's end.

After a welcome, there will be 15 minutes to walk around the site silently and take in the beauty of the San Joaquin River and its surroundings. We will then come back together and talk about our



experience. After sharing our comments, our collaborating environmental organizations will then share their thoughts and actions about water.

Hope to see you there on March 23. Need more info? See the WILPF Fresno Facebook page.

Water is essential for our existence! Hope you can join us!  
—Jean Hays

**FRESNO WILPF MEMBERSHIP LUNCH ON  
MARCH 16—PLEASE COME!**

We invite YOU to our Membership Lunch on Saturday, March 16, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Central Library's Sarah McCardle Room (2420 Mariposa St., downtown Fresno).

Help WILPF celebrate Women's Herstory Month's theme "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion." We'd love to share the afternoon with you! Join our branch in celebrating and learning from local leaders.

We have invited a few special women to speak about their work supporting, educating and advocating for diverse populations within our Valley communities.

- *Josie Bustos-Pelayo* is an Instructional Coach in English Language Development for Hanford Elementary School District and Adjunct Faculty at Fresno State. She has served on national children's book award selection committees—Jane Addams Children's Book Award and California Reads for CTA—and as a member of Reforma and ALA, the Pura Belpre Award.
- *Aline Reed* is the current President of the Fresno Freedom School, which has an emphasis on teaching youth life skills for sustainability, including growing your own food. She facilitates a weekly food and clothing giveaway program at the Free AME Church. She was past President and Vice President of the West Fresno Democratic Club. Plus, she has a family history with the Black Panther Party.
- *Sukaina Hussain* is the Deputy Executive Director of CAIR Sacramento Valley/Central California. She has worked for many years to build interfaith relationships with a focus on equity and justice. Through her community advocacy, she addresses systemic issues of injustice through program development and policy advocacy to help improve the quality of life for all families.

We are excited to hear from these inspirational women, and we look forward to learning ways to collaborate so we can grow together as a WILPF branch and continue to give back to our communities. Please join us for an afternoon and beyond, to support and build the involved connections we all need to thrive through equity, diversity and inclusion.

All are welcome! RSVP to Teresa at 559-360-8054.

—Teresa Castillo, Branch Chair and Treasurer, Fresno WILPF

**WILPF MEETING**  
March 14 (second Thursday),  
7 p.m., online. Check with Teresa as to whether the meeting will be in person or at the FCNV. Watch your e-mail for an announcement with a link and a call-in number. For more information, contact Teresa at [taca\\_03@ymail.com](mailto:taca_03@ymail.com) or Leni at [lenivreeves@gmail.com](mailto:lenivreeves@gmail.com).

and events important to our WILPF community.  
**UNPACKING RACISM**  
With Dr. Jean Kennedy. Moving toward community event participation. To join, RSVP with your e-mail address to [drjeankennedy@yahoo.com](mailto:drjeankennedy@yahoo.com) or text 559-270-1023.

**Help us find you!**  
Are you getting our announcements of meetings and events? Our contact list is sometimes badly out of date. Let us know your current information: E-mail Teresa Castillo at [taca\\_03@ymail.com](mailto:taca_03@ymail.com) or text 559-360-8054.

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**STIR IT UP—WILPF**  
**KFCF 88.1 FM**  
March 27 (fourth Wednesday),  
3 p.m. Jean Hays highlights people

**WOMEN IN BLACK**  
March 6 (first Wednesday), noon,  
Courthouse. Check first with Sue Kern at [skern@netptc.net](mailto:skern@netptc.net) or 559-349-3777.

**WHO ARE THE RAGING  
GRANNIES?**

The Raging Grannies were founded in Canada. The Montreal group, or "gaggle," describes Raging Grannies this way: "Spoofing the granny image of a century ago, the Raging Grannies dress in aprons, shawls, feathers [and] flowered hats, singing humorous songs targeting their concerns. In these costumes, they engage in street theatre antics to gain popular and media attention. To quote one of their lyrics, 'We're just a gaggle of grannies, we don't sit on our fannies.'"

The Grannies rage about these topics and more: war, escalating military budgets, nuclear pollution, Medicare, land mines, "fair trade," climate change, GMO foods, toxic pollutants and war toys.

What do you need to be a Raging Granny?

A sense of humor and an ability both to be objective and to compromise when working with others. Willingness to make noise. An open heart to learn something new. No singing ability required although it helps if you can carry a tune. Passion. Joy. Delight. No color sense obviously. A friendly disposition. Kindness. Scientific



curiosity can't hurt. Despite our name, you do not have to be a biological grandmother to be a Raging Granny.

We sing out of a deep commitment to justice, peace and equal treatment for all.

For information about the Fresno gaggle of Raging Grannies, contact Kay Pitts at [kaypitts@gmail.com](mailto:kaypitts@gmail.com) or Evonne Waldo at [evonnewaldo@yahoo.com](mailto:evonnewaldo@yahoo.com).

—Evonne Waldo

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

For questions and/or information updates, contact Nancy Hatcher at [nhatcher46@gmail.com](mailto:nhatcher46@gmail.com) or Kyla Mitchell at [kyla.noelle@gmail.com](mailto:kyla.noelle@gmail.com).

# Climate Change Adaptation Partnership

Continued from page 8

- Regional workshops to facilitate participatory action planning and knowledge sharing.
- The strengthening of communities of practice to support implementation and learning.

The possibility to share knowledge acquired from integrated projects, initial work toward developing tools and guiding principles for obtaining co-benefits through cooperation, and promoting dialogue and collaboration among a diverse array of policy actors are all essential.

The Adaptation Partnership has brought together practitioners and policymakers worldwide to share lessons learned and identify opportunities for further collaboration on crucial adaptation issues. To improve knowledge of the connection between adaptation to climate change, peace and security, and its implications, the Adaptation Partnership must be strengthened.

If governments are to make informed and transformative choices concerning climate change, they require the best and most up-to-date science. Climate information exists that could improve decision-making within these sectors, thereby mitigating the effects of adverse climate change.

However, climate information is seldom incorporated into policy formulation and development decisions. A recent study by the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) found gaps in four main areas: integrating climate into policy, integrating climate into practice, climate services and climate data.

The IRI study results indicate an urgent and high-priority need for a major global effort to include climate risk management in climate-sensitive development processes at all levels.

The IRI study also revealed other issues, such as a lack of evidence regarding climate variability's impact on climate-sensitive development outcomes and the benefits of climate information to improve these outcomes. It is imperative to increase climate information awareness and prove its importance to decision-makers in sectors that are vulnerable to climate change.

There will always be uncertainty regarding the future, but by advancing science, the great uncertainty surrounding the possible local effects of climate change might be reduced. Other top priorities include bridging the gap between traditional and scientific perspectives on climate change and recognizing the need for decision-making in the face of uncertainty.

There are three types of climate information:

- The capacity to quantify variability and the frequency of extremes is made possible by historical data, which also helps to clarify patterns, offer climatic statistics and provide context for present data.
- Real-time data, such as observations on the present climate, which provide short-term forecasts of the effects of particular meteorological events, such as heavy rain causing flooding.
- Climate forecast, that is, climate predictions, ranges from long-term weather forecasts through seasonal forecasts to medium (10-30 year) and long-term climate change projections.

Climate change affects most sectors that development initiatives concentrate on, including water resources, agriculture, health, energy and transportation. The prospect of including climate information in the decision-making and policy formulation process might significantly increase the efficacy of these initiatives, yet they are largely overlooked.

It's becoming evident that multidisciplinary development planning and climate science initiatives require an integrated strategy. Such an approach's usage of climate tools will improve stakeholders' ability to make decisions by giving them new, pertinent information that they can put into practice.

Strengthening livelihoods by improving agricultural productivity, diversifying on- and off-farm activities, providing better access to markets and market information, and improving infrastructure will reduce people's vulnerability to climate variability and extremes.

## Conclusion

Events linked to climate change, such as catastrophic floods or protracted droughts, can have far-reaching social and economic effects and undo years of progress. The detrimental effects of climate change on households compound to harm national economies. Thus, climate change poses a risk to both households and governments.

Climate change education and awareness campaigns should focus on raising public understanding of the environment's role in creating a shared experience and a community of interest. When educational institutions participate in awareness-raising campaigns, the effect is enhanced.

It is now imperative to engage in activities that specifically address the next generation, such as university settings, public outreach and environmental education in primary and secondary education. It would also be beneficial to boost international conferences, seminars and workshops to sensitize the issues further. These are no longer optional.

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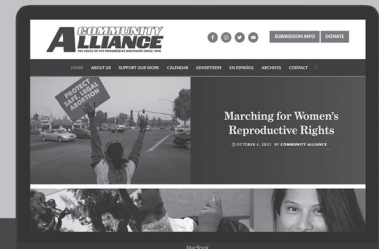
*Dr. Debay Tadesse has a Ph.D. in African studies specializing in public policy and development from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and an M.A. in African history and a B.A. in world history from Georgia State University in Atlanta. He is currently a lecturer at Fresno City College and Fresno State.*

Did you know that the *Community Alliance* newspaper has had a Spanish-language section since 2012?

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over 150 days and the genocide in Gaza continues...  
what's it going to take to stop this?

**how many more...**

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- ✓ protests needed?
- ✓ phone calls needed?
- ✓ letters needed?
- ✓ petitions needed?
- ✓ disruptions of the status quo?
- ✓ appeals needed to stop sending billions of US tax dollars in military aid to Israel?

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Street Demonstrations: Saturdays 3:00 pm Blackstone & Nees  
Monthly meeting: 4th Thursdays, 6:30pm at Fresno Center for Nonviolence

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## Nueva Campaña

# Busca Proteger a la Comunidad Latina de las Grandes Petroleras

POR BRENDA FERNANDA VERANO

(Nota del Editor: se reproduce el siguiente artículo con el permiso de Caló News)

Una nueva campaña estatal llamada "Que No Te Engañen" busca desenmascarar las mentiras que los grandes productores de petróleo propagan dentro de las comunidades latinas. Al mismo tiempo, pretende educar y apoyar a las comunidades de color directamente impactadas por las manifestaciones de injusticia ambiental causadas por estas compañías petroleras.

La campaña se presentó a la comunidad el jueves pasado en una conferencia de prensa en la Plaza de Cultura y Artes en el centro de Los Angeles, lanzada por la coalición La Mesa, compuesta por organizaciones californianas de base en la lucha por el medio ambiente como Médicos por la Responsabilidad Social de Los Angeles, la Red de Justicia Ambiental de California Central, el Comité Cívico del Valle—una organización de justicia ambiental del Valle Imperial—y el Instituto LEAP. "Nuestras comunidades en la justicia ambiental han soportado la peor parte de la contaminación. Durante las próximas generaciones debemos seguir limpiando esa contaminación que aqueja a estas comunidades donde viven los latinos y otras personas de color", dijo a CALO News Luis Olmedo, director ejecutivo del Comité Cívico del Valle. "El combustible fósil está en todas partes en todo este país, pero también a nivel mundial. No existe un plan B. Necesitamos proteger este planeta".

Un estudio de GeoHealth, una sección de la Unión Geofísica Estadounidense, publicado en marzo pasado, revela que los californianos latinos, afroamericanos y de bajos ingresos tienen más probabilidades de vivir cerca de las operaciones de petróleo y gas que el resto de la población. También demuestra que el ritmo de diseminación en la producción de petróleo y gas en California en los últimos 15 años, es más lento cerca de donde viven las personas racialmente marginadas. Entre 2005 y 2019, los residentes afroamericanos del condado de Los Angeles fueron más expuestos que otros grupos a los pozos de petróleo y gas en cada etapa de la producción. Un fenómeno similar fue observado también a nivel estatal.

La campaña genera apoyo público y político para la disposición de medidas que protejan la salud de las comunidades latinas de California. Entre las medidas propuestas está poner fin a las perforaciones de pozos petroleros en vecindarios y granjas ocupadas por familias latinas a las compañías petroleras a limpiar los desechos que a menudo queda en esas comunidades después de décadas de perforación y explotación; y apoyar la transición al transporte limpio, incluidos vehículos eléctricos, infraestructura de carga eléctrica y tecnología de litio.

Martha Argüello, directora ejecutiva de Médicos por la Responsabilidad Social de Los Angeles, dijo que la urgencia de lanzar la campaña surge de las disparidades de salud existentes y que son causadas por la actividad de las petroleras. "Nuestras comunidades están muy enfermas", dijo a CALO News, "a pesar de que hemos trabajado mucho para reducir la contaminación del aire".

Argüello observó el fenómeno en el que muchas grandes industrias petroleras mantienen sus márgenes de ganancias a expensas de la salud de los latinos y al mismo tiempo, se dedican a difundir narrativas falsas de que supuestamente están contribuyendo a las poblaciones al generar nuevos empleos e ingresos. "Necesitamos luchar por una nueva economía que se centre en la salud y en la justicia, en lugar de seguir extrayendo la mayor cantidad posible de ganancias de la Tierra y de las personas, que es lo que está haciendo la industria petrolera", dijo la activista.

Según datos proporcionados por la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de Estados Unidos (EPA), los puertos de Long Beach y Los Angeles son en la actualidad los puertos de entrada del 40% de todas las importaciones que entran al país y también son responsables por el 20% de las emisiones de partículas diésel en el sur de California. El transporte de mercancía de esos puertos por los freeways se constituyó en uno de los mayores emisores de gases tóxicos que envenenan a la población. "La autopista 710 pasa por 15 ciudades y áreas no incorporadas con una población de más de un millón de residentes. De ellos, de 70% son minorías y poblaciones de bajos ingresos. Toda esa área que incluye

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El jueves 25 de enero, en conferencia de prensa celebrada en Los Angeles, se anunció el inicio de una campaña estatal para proteger a los latinos de las grandes empresas petroleras. Foto cortesía de Caló News



La vida de Sandra López en Estados Unidos fue injusta. El deterioro de su salud constituye una preocupación constante. Aunque ella aún vive en Lincoln Heights con su esposo, sus tres hijas viven fuera de California y se preocupan por su salud. "Mi salud empezó a empeorar cuando vine a Estados Unidos. Guatemala está llena de vegetación, con árboles y espacios verdes, y puedes oler el aire fresco. Algo muy diferente a lo que sucede en mi casa aquí, en Lincoln Heights".

El sitio web oficial de la campaña tiene recursos que consisten de infografías, historias y publicaciones de medios éticos como La Opinión, sobre temas que afectan a las comunidades latinas en California, especialmente el daño a la salud y al medio ambiente causado por las grandes compañías petroleras.

"La crisis climática nos está afectando a todos, pero tiene un impacto mayor en las familias de trabajadores agrícolas de bajos ingresos en el Valle de San Joaquín y regiones similares", dijo Rey León, director ejecutivo del Instituto LEAP que tiene su sede en la ciudad de Huron, al norte de Fresno. "La solución a estos problemas pasa por desarrollar e implementar alternativas que combatan la crisis y al mismo tiempo fortalezcan a la población a través de la justicia económica, social y ambiental. No se puede seguir buscando soluciones basadas en el dominio del petróleo. Esto es inviable para nuestra gente, nuestro planeta y nuestros bolsillos".

En los próximos meses, la campaña organizará eventos que llegarán a los latinos en Los Angeles y en todo el estado, quienes, en muchas ocasiones, están excluidos de las iniciativas y conversaciones sobre los temas de justicia ambiental, dijo Argüello.

Por su parte, López espera que otros latinos se unan a la campaña y que compartan sus historias sobre cómo la infraestructura de las grandes compañías petroleras está afectando su salud y bienestar. "No quiero que me mi comunidad siga siendo engañada. Las compañías petroleras distraen todo a su manera para hacernos creer que están trayendo empleos u oportunidades a nuestras comunidades cuando en realidad nos están matando", afirmó.

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Brenda Fernanda Verano es una periodista nacida en Queretaro, México, y criada en South Central, Los Angeles. Verano ganó tres veces el premio de la Asociación de Medios Universitarios de California. Es becaria de Equidad en Salud de USC 2023 y anteriormente escribió para el Cuerpo de Periodismo Estudiantil de EdSource California. Ella cubre Justicia Social y noticias locales y comunitarias para Caló News. Es alumna de CS-Dominquez Hill y ex editora del periódico de esa universidad, Bulletin. Le gusta la jardinería y la poesía. Puede contactarla en [brenda@latinomedia.org](mailto:brenda@latinomedia.org)

# Día del Recuerdo

POR VIC BEDOIAN

Fue un lugar históricamente irónico para el “Día del Recuerdo” anual de la Liga de Ciudadanos Americanos-Japoneses: el recinto de la feria de Fresno, donde miles de ciudadanos estadounidenses de origen japonés permanecieron retenidos durante meses en establos para caballos en el entonces denominado Centro de Concentración de Fresno mientras se construían campos de concentración para ellos en todo el oeste. En aquel fatídico día del 19 de febrero de 1942, las vidas de los japoneses americanos que habían creado comunidades en el fértil Valle de San Joaquín cambiaron para siempre. La Orden Ejecutiva 9066 fue promulgada ese día por el presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt, iniciando lo que seguramente fue uno de los capítulos más desgarradores de la historia estadounidense.

Pronto, 120,000 personas que vivían en los estados occidentales perdieron injustamente su libertad y sus derechos como ciudadanos estadounidenses sólo porque sus familias vinieron aquí desde Japón.

Celebrar el “Día del Recuerdo” en 2024 no fue motivo de tristeza. Fue un momento de reflexión, camaradería, ponerse al día con viejos amigos y saludar a los nuevos. El evento fue a la vez solemne y alegre, ya que hizo eco del dolor y el trauma del pasado, así como de la esperanza para el futuro.

No había ningún indicio de amargura, al menos abiertamente, sino más bien un sentimiento de orgullo por ser sobrevivientes y un sentido de logro por todo lo que los estadounidenses de origen japonés han contribuido al Valle y a la nación. Aquí en el Valle de San Joaquín esos logros son profundos y abundantes.

Fundada en 1929, la Liga de Ciudadanos Japoneses-Americanos (JACL) se ocupa principalmente de la justicia esa”. Cada año, la JACL local otorga su Premio Estadounidense Distinguido. Este año fue para el juez Johnny Gogo, juez del Tribunal Superior de San José. Lanzó un notable proyecto destinado a educar al público sobre la historia del encarcelamiento. Se inspiró al conocer a Karen, la hija de Fred Korematsu.

Korematsu, un héroe estadounidense de los derechos civiles, se negó en 1942 a ser internado. Intentó unirse al ejército cuando Estados Unidos entró en la guerra, pero fue rechazado debido a la discriminación por ser japonés. Al principio trabajó como soldador en los astilleros de Oakland, pero pronto fue despedido debido a su ascendencia. Korematsu ignoró la Orden Ejecutiva 9066 y trató de vivir como un civil cambiando su nombre y apariencia. Finalmente, fue arrestado y enviado a un campo de concentración.

Peleo legalmente su caso mientras estaba internado en Topaz, Utah. El caso llegó hasta la Corte Suprema, pero perdió en 1944. Luego, en 1983, se descubrieron documentos que demostraban que los estadounidenses de origen japonés nunca habían representado una amenaza para el país y que su internamiento era injustificado. La condena de Korematsu fue anulada ese mismo año. Comprometió el resto de su vida a trabajar por la justicia social.

Ese encuentro con la hija de Korematsu obligó al juez Gogo a hacer algo: “Pense que conseguir esta bandera estadounidense de 48 estrellas, pedir a los supervivientes del campo que la firmaran, sería una manera fantástica de honrar la memoria de sus familias, el legado de sus familias. Y ciertamente recuerda la lucha, las dificultades y el dolor”. El primero en firmar en 2021 fue el entonces representante Norman Mineta (demócrata por San José), cuya propia familia había sido encarcelada. En este homenaje a la historia, cinco de las banderas de 48 estrellas, de las que ondebaban sobre los campos de concentración, cuentan ahora con 1.000 firmas blasonadas de supervivientes.

El orador principal Kerry Yo Nakagawa describió el importante papel del béisbol en los campos de concentración. Como todos los japoneses americanos, tenía su propia historia familiar única.

La trabajadora familia Nakagawa, que emigró de Hawái, se instaló en el lado oeste de Fresno y cultivó un viñedo de 20 acres cerca de Caruthers. En la década de 1920, su abuela era dueña de un restaurante de sushi, mientras que al otro lado de la calle su abuelo tenía una ferretería.

Con la llegada de la guerra y el internamiento, los negocios desaparecieron. Estas pérdidas devastaron las vidas exitosas de muchas personas, relata Nakagawa: “Siempre hablo de cómo el 48% de los cultivos comerciales en California, Oregón y Washington estaban controlados por agricultores japoneses-estadounidenses. Llegó la Segunda Guerra Mundial y, de repente, las ciudades japonesas, los bancos, los restaurantes, todo desapareció”. La granja de los Nakagawa sobrevivió gracias a la vecina familia Raven, que cuidó la tierra e incluso le entregó una caja de cigarrillos llena de dinero en efectivo, las ganancias de los años de internamiento. Sin embargo, la mayoría de las familias japonesas estadounidenses perdieron todo lo que habían conseguido con tanto esfuerzo.

El béisbol fue un elemento crucial de la experiencia del internamiento. Los estadounidenses de origen japonés que llegaron al Valle eran apasionados del béisbol y, a principios

Para superar el trauma que sufrieron, Costa eligió a los japoneses estadounidenses de esa época: “Creo que es totalmente notable y dice mucho sobre los japoneses estadounidenses en este país. En su pasatiempo en estos campos japoneses jugaban béisbol, el pasatiempo de Estados Unidos, a pesar de que su respeto como ciudadanos estaba en entredicho y en duda.”

Y luego, por supuesto, el 442.º Batallón (de soldados japoneses estadounidenses). Cuando tu país básicamente está encarcelando a tus familias, poniendo a tus familias en cuarentena, pero aun así te ofrecen como voluntario para



El orador principal Kerry Yo Nakagawa, fundador y director del Proyecto de Investigación de Béisbol Nisei, en el almuerzo de la Liga de Ciudadanos Americano-Japoneses, llamado “Día del Recuerdo”, el 10 de febrero en Fresno. Foto de Peter Maiden

de la década de 1920, los jugadores organizaron equipos y ligas en todo el estado. Su amor por el béisbol era tan grande que inmediatamente comenzaron a construir campos de béisbol y gradas tan pronto como fueron encarcelados. En cada campo de internamiento surgieron equipos y ligas, y había una competencia feróz. Los equipos incluso salieron de gira para competir con jugadores de otros campos del Oeste. No era simplemente algo para llenar los días mientras estaban encarcelados.

El béisbol había proporcionado un poderoso sentido de orgullo, excelencia y logro a los estadounidenses de origen japonés en la era anterior a la guerra. Eso continuó y se intensificó con el béisbol jugado a un alto nivel dentro de los confines del alambrado de púas mientras miles de fanáticos animaban a sus equipos favoritos.

Fue alentador sobresalir en su oficio y divertirse como contrapeso a la rutina diaria de la vida carcelaria reglamentada. También debe haber sido una irónica fuente de gratificación que fueran tan buenos en el juego que se considera el pasatiempo de Estados Unidos. Después de la guerra, algunos de los jugadores pasaron a ser estrellas en equipos de béisbol de escuelas secundarias y universidades y también a nivel profesional.

Nakagawa tiene una misión. Su objetivo es obtener el reconocimiento que los jugadores de béisbol japonés-estadounidenses merecen. “Puedo comparar a muchos de nuestros jugadores Isssei y Nisei que tenían habilidades en las Grandes Ligas. Tenían las herramientas, tenían la pasión. Pero desafortunadamente, durante los años 20 y 30, debido a las leyes discriminatorias y las leyes Jim Crow de la época, si eras asiático, latino o negro no ibas a jugar béisbol en las grandes ligas”.

Eso ha cambiado a medida que los equipos de las grandes ligas buscan cada vez más a los jugadores japoneses, y algunos jugadores japoneses veteranos como Ichiro Suzuki se dirigen al Salón de la Fama del Béisbol.

Pero eso todavía no es suficiente, afirma Nakagawa: “Con suerte, algún día llegaremos al Salón de la Fama del Béisbol de forma permanente, como las chicas All-American, las Ligas Negras y los latinos en el béisbol. Y ese es nuestro objetivo. Y también tener una consagración para uno de nuestros jugadores Nisei como Kenichi Zenimura”.

Durante el último cuarto de siglo, Nakagawa ha curado una exhibición estilo museo sobre el béisbol Nisei y la ha llevado a todas partes, incluso realizando una exhibición temporal en Cooperstown (sede del Salón de la Fama del Béisbol). Espera que la exhibición también sea reconocida por las Grandes Ligas con un lugar permanente en el Salón de la Fama.

Lo más impresionante del “Día del Recuerdo” es la gracia con la que los estadounidenses de origen japonés han absorbido lo que les hicieron y cómo han superado esa experiencia inolvidable. Ninguna otra población inmigrante ha tenido que demostrar su lealtad y valor a la nación de la misma manera. Su sacrificio nunca debería repetirse.

Gracias a que los estadounidenses de origen japonés sobrevivieron de manera tan positiva a ese sombrío episodio de la historia, todos somos un pueblo mejor y más fuerte.

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# EL ENCARCELAMIENTO DE JAPONESES

# LLAMAZA COMUNITARIA LA VOZ DEL MOVIMIENTO PROGRESISTA DESDE 1996

## Madera Aprueba Resolución de Alto al Fuego en Gaza

FOR ESTHER QUINTANILLA

(Nota del editor: la siguiente historia se imprime con permiso de Central Valley Journalism Collaborative.)

La ciudad de Madera es la primera en el Valle de San Joaquin que apoya un alto al fuego permanente en la Franja de Gaza. En una reunión especial el 14 de febrero, el Concejo Municipal votó unánimemente para pedir el fin de la violencia en Medio Oriente. El alcalde Santos García habló sobre cómo la lucha palestina resuena en la diversa población de la ciudad.

Los defensores de Palestina dicen que seguirán presionando para que más ciudades y gobiernos locales firmen resoluciones similares.

La decisión del Ayuntamiento de Madera se produce unos meses después de que una propuesta de resolución de alto al fuego en Gaza fracasara en la cercana Merced.



Concejales del Ayuntamiento de Madera posan junto a simpatizantes de la propuesta de exigir un cese al fuego en Gaza después de la aprobación de esa resolución. Foto de Esther Quintanilla/CVJC

En diciembre, sólo dos de los siete miembros del Concejo Municipal de Merced votaron a favor de la resolución. Las ciudades de San Francisco y Richmond aprobaron resoluciones similares. \*\*\*\*\*

También ha habido protestas de estudiantes de UC Merced y Stanislaus State pidiendo a los líderes universitarios que tomen medidas similares.

## La ciudad de Clovis Llega a un Acuerdo con Desiree Martinez

(Nota del editor: La Ciudad de Clovis hizo público el anuncio de un acuerdo de conciliación entre la Ciudad y Desiree "Dez" Martinez que podría tener implicaciones dramáticas en Clovis con respecto a la disponibilidad de viviendas asequibles.)

La Ciudad de Clovis y Desiree Martinez se complacen en anunciar un acuerdo en el litigio Desiree Martinez v. City of Clovis. El acuerdo extrajudicial allana el camino para la creación de programas municipales innovadores e inversiones significativas para apoyar y aprovechar más de 3,000 oportunidades adicionales de viviendas asequibles en Clovis. El acuerdo pone fin a años de litigio entre la Ciudad de Clovis y la Sra. Martinez con respecto al uso de la tierra y las políticas de planificación de la Ciudad. Centrándose ahora en la creación de oportunidades de vivienda asequible en Clovis, el acuerdo permite a ambas partes evitar futuros procedimientos legales costosos y prolongados.

La madre de la Sra. Martinez se mudó con la familia a Clovis desde Oregon cuando la Sra. Martinez tenía 16 años. Ahora discapacitada, quería regresar, pero no pudo encontrar un hogar asequible en la ciudad. Ella presentó el caso, con la ayuda de Central California Legal Services (CCLS), el Public Interest Law Project (PILP) y el bufete jurídico de Patience Miltrod, para incluir a Clovis a un plan y a una zona accesible para familias de todos los niveles de ingresos. Sobre el acuerdo, la Sra. Martinez dijo: "La vida presenta numerosas decisiones y elecciones desafiantes. A veces, debemos navegar por estas decisiones para allanar el camino hacia decisiones acertadas. Inicialmente, la batalla legal giró en torno a mi situación de residencia en Clovis, y después de cuatro años de lidiar con las regulaciones de la ciudad, me obligó a profundizar más de lo previsto. Este caso legal ha trascendido más allá de mis circunstancias personales; ahora representa la lucha de cada individuo que lucha contra el alto costo de la vida y se esfuerza por sobrevivir. Hoy, esta demanda simboliza la lucha por una comunidad más inclusiva que abarque a personas de todos los orígenes. Para mí, esta batalla legal marca sólo el comienzo ya que tengo más tareas por delante. Sin embargo, también ha creado una importante oportunidad para que muchos otros sigan su ejemplo."

"En asociación con la Sra. Martinez y sus abogados, nos complace anunciar que hemos llegado a un acuerdo que incluye un plan integral para brindar opciones de vivienda asequibles para todos los que quieren llamar a Clovis su hogar. Clovis y sus residentes están comprometidos a abordar la crisis de vivienda con soluciones que brindarán oportunidades cooperativamente con CCLS, PILP, la abogada Miltrod, grupos comunitarios y desarrolladores a medida que todos avanzamos en la implementación de los nuevos programas", dijo la alcaldesa de Clovis, Lynne Ashbeck.

"Con este acuerdo, la ciudad de Clovis muestra liderazgo regional en la batalla crucial para albergar a todos nuestros residentes de manera decente y asequible. Este acuerdo trae al Valle Central las mejores prácticas de todo el estado y el país. Felicitamos a Clovis por su sabiduría y visión, y esperamos continuar trabajando con ellos para lograr estos objetivos", dijo Miltrod.

"La ciudad de Clovis ha dado un paso vital hacia adelante para abordar las necesidades de vivienda de quienes más lo necesitan. CCLS se enorgullece de haber desempeñado un



La alcaldesa de Clovis, Lynne Ashbeck. Foto cortesía de ashbeckforclavis.com

Los puntos principales del acuerdo de conciliación incluyen los siguientes:

- La ciudad de Clovis establecerá un Fondo Fiduciario de Vivienda Local y se ha comprometido a contribuir con al menos \$1.8 millones para apoyar desarrollos de viviendas asequibles.
- La Ciudad de Clovis dedicará terrenos de propiedad municipal al desarrollo de viviendas asequibles.
- La Ciudad de Clovis rezonificará pequeñas parcelas de relleno en toda la ciudad para albergar aproximadamente 1,300 unidades de vivienda multifamiliar.
- La ciudad de Clovis adoptará una ordenanza para exigir que hasta el 10% de las unidades en proyectos de desarrollo de viviendas nuevas de mediana y gran escala sean asequibles para familias de bajos ingresos.
- La Ciudad de Clovis creará un programa de aplazamiento de las tarifas de impacto del desarrollo, aplazando el pago de porciones significativas de las tarifas de impacto del desarrollo para proyectos de viviendas asequibles.

Se espera que este acuerdo de conciliación sea aprobado por el tribunal en las próximas semanas, tras lo cual comenzará el trabajo de establecimiento e implementación de los distintos programas.