

A COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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Activists Call on Costa to Meet with Palestinian and Muslim Leaders

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

On March 22, the Palestine Liberation Group (PLG), the Sacramento Valley/Central California Office of the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-SV/CC), local organizations and activists released a statement and held a press conference calling on Rep. Jim Costa (D-Fresno) to engage with local Palestinian and Muslim leaders.

"Despite repeated requests and five months without a meeting, [Rep.] Costa has yet to agree to a meeting, missing critical opportunities to hear directly from his constituents in a time when fostering understanding and cooperation between elected officials and the diverse communities they serve is more important than ever," according to the statement.

"[Rep.] Costa's refusal stands out as a concerning gap in representation. This press conference aims to highlight the importance of inclusive dialogue and the need for our elected representatives to be accessible to all constituents, including the local community.

"We call on Rep. Costa to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and stop using taxpayer dollars to fund this genocide."

Speaking at the press conference, Sukaina Hussain, executive director of CAIR, added, "Since Rep. Costa has refused to meet with local Palestinians and community leaders, despite many repeated requests, we are here today calling on Rep. Costa to take that crucial step and engage



In front of the downtown Fresno building where Rep. Jim Costa's office is located, a Palestinian named Kareem spoke about his family, many of whom are still in Palestine. Photo by Peter Maiden

with local Palestinian and Muslim leaders and to call for an intermediate and permanent ceasefire [in Gaza].

"[Rep.] Costa's refusal to meet with the community stands out as an extremely disturbing gap in representation in a democracy. [He] is missing critical opportunities to hear directly from constituents and that's failing in his duty as an elected official."

Another speaker, Samai Munoz with the Palestine Liberation Group, said, "As of March 21, 2024, there have been over 32,000 people killed in Gaza, which included over 13,000 children.

"There are countless reports and data showing that Gaza is on the brink of famine, and starvation is being used as a weapon of collective punishment.

"As a diverse community of constituents, we are extremely disappointed that Rep. Jim Costa has refused to meet. Since

October, we have submitted over 600 e-mails to his office. We have made countless calls.

"Every meeting was canceled or proposed further out without adequate explanation or reason. This is not only an insult but [also] a violation of the values of democracy in this country.

"During a time when we see increased Islamophobia and attacks on the Muslim and Palestinian community, his response to meet with his constituents is extremely disturbing."

Zaina Roussn, also with the PLG, added, "President Biden is complicit in this genocide. The resolution that has been put forward by this administration to the UN on March 21 is long overdue, and we hope it will cement an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

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Bitwise: No One Belongs Here More Than You

BY PETER MAIDEN AND I. SMILEY G. CALDERON

A dozen or so stunned techies gathered early during the evening of May 29 last year at Root Access Hackerspace, a modest location in Fresno's Tower District where they were surrounded by computers, 3D printers and a rack of servers. The techies had worked for Bitwise Industries, the now infamous Central Valley tech company. Derek Payton, director of the hackerspace, was also a Bitwise lead and senior software developer.

Bitwise had crashed and burned that afternoon when co-CEOs Jake Soberal and Irma Olguin Jr. announced in a Google Meet call that they had run out of money, the two of them were responsible and all 900 employees would be furloughed. The call lasted six minutes. It was just that simple.

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Ex-Bitwise employee Jenn Guerra at Root Access Hackerspace. Photo by Peter Maiden

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April 6
United Against Hate Summit
10 a.m., Fresno City College
(Forum Hall 101)

Keynote speaker: California Attorney General Rob Bonta
See details on page 9.

April 24
Japanese American Incarceration Panel
with Marion Masada and Dale Ikeda
12:30 p.m.-1:45 p.m., Fresno City College (Forum Hall 101)
See details on page 15.

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Activists Call on Costa to Meet with Palestinian and Muslim Leaders

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"We are calling on Rep. Jim Costa to join many other elected officials in local cities across the United States to call for [a] permanent and immediate ceasefire. [His] silence on the humanity of Palestinians and his vocal support for the Israeli government causes him to be complicit in the war crimes perpetuated by the Israeli government [and] the ongoing genocide."

Kareem, a Palestinian American from Fresno, said, "My life as a Palestinian American, as well as the lives of many Palestinian Americans, has been upside down. And Jim Costa is doing nothing but contributing to the alienation of our community due to his lack of communication and silence about atrocities."

"A big part of my family resides in Gaza, and I'm really struggling to live at the moment. My 80-year-old grandmother, my aunt, my cousins and many other family members are struggling to live in north Gaza."

"Between the months of October and December, my grandmother and her sister had to flee their home to find safety, and then were displaced countless times. My aunt and cousins were displaced numerous times in search of safety."

"On Dec. 9, we lost contact with all members of our family for 40 days. It felt more like 40 years. During those 40 days, you can imagine, we weren't sleeping. Frankly, every aspect of my life is extremely difficult, but how much more difficult is it for my family?"

"I spent hours every day trying to get a hold of anyone in Gaza to let me know if they were still alive. I even contacted the remaining functional hospitals at the time to see if they had their names on one of their lists, because uncertainty, that kind of uncertainty, just paralyzes you. Two weeks ago, I was finally able to get a hold of my family and talk to them."

Rep. Costa has made this statement about the war on Gaza: "The unprovoked attack on Israel by Hamas is an act of war on one of our most trusted and long-term allies in the Middle East. We join with the Israeli people in support of their defense to maintain their independence, sovereignty and freedoms that we share in common."

"Congress and the administration must come together in a strong bipartisan response to reaffirm our support as Israel defends itself from this attack. We must be prepared to provide additional military and economic resources so that Israel can successfully defend itself against this attack and any other aggression by its professed enemies."

Bob McCloskey is an activist and a reporter for the Community Alliance newspaper. Contact him at bobmccloskey06@gmail.com.

Bitwise: No One Belongs Here More Than You

Continued from page 1

The shock among those at the hackerspace was raw. They ate ice cream, drank whiskey and commiserated. Their futures were unpredictable. Despite some negativity, their presence together was the start of a recovery, of "Bitwisers helping Bitwisers."

"No one belongs here more than you"—Bitwise's slogan, which could be seen on their buildings and vehicles—spoke to its inclusionary mission.

Bitwise had championed the training of workers from underserved communities, aiming to give them tech skills that could lead to well-paid work. For example, instead of pursuing farm labor or warehouse jobs, young people of color could become coders.

Bitwise, as a supplier of workforce training, appeared to be making money. Governor Gavin Newsom called Bitwise "a remarkable economic story in Fresno and in the Central Valley."

Bitwise attracted large sums of venture capital. However, for the same reason it was admired—its focus on training—it became a failure to its funders. Workforce training, as great as it was for the trainees and the community, could not "scale up." In other words, Bitwise was not experiencing rapid growth; it could not bring in larger and larger returns on investment.

Soberal and Olguin tried to expand to Bakersfield and several other sites around the country, but that was also a troubled venture. As they got stuck, they took desperate measures. They are now charged with wire fraud and face 25-year sentences.

In a press release, U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert said: "The defendants could have chosen simply to admit the failure of Bitwise's business model. Instead, they used lie after lie to pull over \$100 million into a dying venture through fraud."

"Olguin and Soberal fabricated bank statements, lied to investors, provided false financial information to their board of directors, forged documents and used buildings Bitwise no longer even owned as collateral for loans, all while lining their own pockets."

Payton is more forgiving. "I don't have any hate or resentment toward Irma or Jake," he said.

"The reality is, they did what they did... My guess is that the company was struggling and they were just trying to keep things afloat and did some things that were not super great—legally speaking, maybe ethically speaking too—but with that goal of keeping things afloat at all costs in mind..."

"I believe that if things would have played out the way they hoped, they would have simply fixed things behind the scenes and no one would have been the wiser."

Payton knew Olguin from before Bitwise was founded in 2013. Not for a moment, he said, did he think her ideals were just hype. According to him, she believed deeply in the mission.

She made many gestures of goodwill that people appreciated. You might find her answering the phones at the front desk. She got matching tattoos with employees. She was a role model as a queer Latina, the daughter of farmworkers.

One of the people Olguin brought along was Jenn Guerra. Her story is an example of the openness and fluidity that was found at Bitwise.

Guerra had worked in San Francisco as a mobile massage therapist for many years, going from one high-tech office to another giving massages.

She was in Fresno when the pandemic hit, and she was desperate for work. She knew someone who knew Olguin, and she put her name in to "do whatever." Olguin did a round of hiring, bringing in a hundred workers, including Guerra.

Guerra went to work for Onward, a virtual call center within Bitwise intended to help clients with pandemic employment issues. While she worked there, she took Bitwise classes and did an apprenticeship in inside sales.

Later, she was tasked with finding government grant funding for Bitwise, working with schools developing apprenticeship programs and managing clients. She became a "partnership manager."

Guerra found working for Bitwise appealing, and she was well paid. "I was kind of [doing] everything, like whatever they asked," she said.

"So do it!" she added, laughing.

"I had been self-employed for most of my life. I never wanted to work for a company," she said. But Bitwise wasn't just another company.

Everything seemed fine up until the moment it came crashing down, blindsiding her and so many like her.

She has now gotten on her feet, starting a tech company with a couple of other Bitwisers. It's called Reclaim Technologies, and it creates, she said, "apps, websites and other tech solutions."

"Bitwise helped us to dream...to step up," she explained.

The president and CEO of the Downtown Fresno Partnership (also known as the Downtown Association of Fresno), Elliott Balch, understands how important Bitwise was for the city and community, especially downtown Fresno, where the Bitwise offices were located. Bitwise opened four large buildings downtown: Bitwise South Stadium, the Bitwise Hive, Bitwise 41 and the State Center Warehouse. They have been renamed to remove the Bitwise name.

The offices are more occupied now than when Bitwise was around. Will Dyck is the owner of three of the four buildings. Within days of the news of Bitwise's closure, Dyck focused on



The Bee Hive, formerly the Bitwise Hive. Photo by Peter Maiden

reassuring tenants that things would be okay, retaining 25 of them. He has since gotten 26 new business concerns to move in.

"The reality is that the ownership since taking control of the buildings has done a remarkable job in getting the office spaces filled," Balch said.

"The things that are important are training people for careers in our economy in an inclusive way," Balch emphasized.

"America needs to make sure that our tech industries are creating opportunities inclusively where as many people as possible are able to participate and contribute to innovation. This was true before Bitwise and continues to remain true after Bitwise."

Which is why Payton's Root Access Hackerspace—an all-volunteer community—is so important. Immediately after the furlough, the hackerspace organized a food pantry that was open for months for his former co-workers. It worked closely with City Council President Annalisa Perea, who represents the Tower District, in coordinating headshot photography and resume-building sessions for a mini job fair for immediate placement—"Bitwisers helping Bitwisers."

As Bitwisers had to wait for thousands of dollars in Bitwise paychecks that bounced and weeks of missing pay (which are still missing), Payton's spot was a lifeline for his previous co-workers. Bitwisers only recently could access their 401K contributions—some nine months after the furlough.

Bitwise violated California's Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification, or WARN Act, by not giving a 60-day notice that a furlough was coming.

After several months, the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board (FRWDB) funneled \$2.3 million in California state funds to help ex-Bitwise employees. The State Center Community College District received \$1.1 million of that funding to create apprenticeship programs.

The rest is being disbursed to individual ex-Bitwisers to help them get started again. Although the paperwork for that was too much of a hassle for some, Guerra received assistance. The FRWDB bought her supplies, clothes—even glasses.

Root Access wanted to get funding to set up equipment to train workers in computer-assisted parts manufacturing but was told by the FRWDB it had to have all the equipment already in place in order to receive funds.

Root Access always had a strong connection with Bitwise, without being involved in the fraudulent activity. It grew over the years, from having some folding chairs in an empty room to functioning as a buzzing computer arts center. Therefore, it's surprising that Root Access received none of the FRWDB money.

"Downtown's role in the Valley is to be a place where innovators can go to find community," Balch concluded. "Bitwise's particular approach didn't work out. But downtown still has a role to play in the Valley in terms of creating more technology—agricultural technology."

"There's got to be a place where this kind of tech cluster industry—a knowledge-based industry—can show up and grow and attract the right kind of capital investment. And that's downtown [Fresno]."

Aside from the scandal, Bitwise had a good vibe, which was not quantifiable or corruptible. Downtown needs to hold onto that vibe and broadcast a positive message: "No one belongs here more than us."

Peter Maiden is the photo editor of the Community Alliance newspaper.

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.

To Vote or Not to Vote?

Primaries aren't particularly attractive to voters, so a low turnout for the March 5 election was expected. However, only 30% of the registered voters bothered to vote in Fresno County.

Let's say a candidate wins with 50% of that 30% of the overall voters. That means a small minority of people elected that candidate—about 15% of the registered voters. Can we call that a democratic election? A democratically elected official? Certainly not.

So why don't people vote? What I heard is lack of motivation and mistrust of the candidates and political parties. Nothing new. However, what are the political parties and candidates doing to change this situation? Nothing.

The parties aren't interested in an educated, motivated electorate. They don't really want to be held accountable and discuss openly how politics works, the money involved, and how and why they make decisions.

Republicans, in particular, hate to be questioned; they hate the media. But Democrats are not much better. Yet, in each election period we are bombarded with donation requests by candidates, some from outside our district and whose name we never heard of.

Recently, I had a conversation with a group of young people—and they expressed their frustration and disappointment with the political system and their intention not to vote in November.

"Politics as usual," they said. And if this is a big, national trend, then Democrats are in trouble. Because Republicans are already placing all kinds of obstacles for minorities to vote, hoping to get mostly white and old voters to vote because they know this demographic is more conservative.

I don't see a change in our political system, at least in the near future. Money talks and will continue to talk in our political system, which gives you the feeling that candidates are for sale. And those who donate the most are rich people and corporations.

On top of that, we have a Supreme Court currently dominated by a majority of racist, conservative judges. So, this is a closed circle in which change emerges slowly, if at all. Young people are correct in their criticism of the system. In Congress, little gets done.

The citizenry isn't really represented in Congress. We can't blame voters for being apathetic. Members of Congress seem not to care about their constituents (see "Activists Call on Costa to Meet with Palestinian and Muslim Leaders" on page 1). The "Costa syndrome" is common in our political landscape, and there is little hope that this will change.

People should get more organized to confront this awful situation. We should create groups, or "clubs," to learn and discuss politics—but please, no more nonprofits.

To learn who is who in this poisonous circle, we have to get more involved in the process, away from parties. Perhaps we should join some organizations (but which one(s)?) to push together for change.

It won't be easy, but we can't sustain this circus called Congress or representatives like Costa any longer. And how about a candidate for the White House who is confronting dozens of serious legal challenges in court? How can our system accept this? This ain't democracy, for sure. 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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Deadline:
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Articles 800–1,200 words.
E-mail editor@fresnoalliance.com.

Peace and Social Justice Calendar:

Please submit all activities to
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Letters to the Editor:

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

For a Taxpayers Revolt

Israel's retaliation on Gaza for the horrific Hamas attack of Oct. 7 has devastated its civilian population and infrastructure. It has continued unabated for almost six months.

All this time, the United States has continued to provide generous military aid to the hawkish regime of Prime Minister Netanyahu. After watching increasing public opposition to the war, which included a massive drop in political support for his reelection, President Biden is softly backpedaling with calls for a ceasefire, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called upon the Israeli people to replace their prime minister. Weak rhetoric that only produced an arrogant response from Premier Netanyahu.

Yet, the one obvious action that can stop Israel in its tracks is not even in consideration: The United States continues to provide massive military aid to Israel.

I am reminded of the 1960s when Americans from all social classes started to question the prolonged war in Vietnam in which the United

States had engaged since the end of World War II. I recall the Peace Movement, the anti-establishment furor, the draft and the burning of draft cards, the massive student unrest, the Free Speech Movement and the decision of President Johnson not to seek another term. Leaders at all levels of society joined the masses. The clergy, athletes, social and political activists, doctors and ever so many celebrities.

In that same spirit, we need to elevate our street-corner protests for a ceasefire in Gaza and demand the withdrawal of all taxpayer-funded support to Israel, the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid. But how do we translate our demand to action?

Here is a thought: Just as the young people of the Vietnam War era burned their draft cards, resisted conscription and suffered imprisonment, we, the U.S. taxpayers, could demonstrate our views by withholding a percentage of our federal taxes. That would be a clear message that we do not want our taxes to support the Israeli War that is murdering Palestinians and devastating their homeland.

Yez Kaoosji
Visalia

Social Justice Center Opens at Fresno City College

BY COMMUNITY ALLIANCE STAFF

Students, professors and community activists gathered for the grand opening of the Social Justice Center (SJC) at Fresno City College on March 21.

This new campus group envisions a world in which all people are treated with dignity and justice—a society rooted in equity and one that has eliminated poverty, hunger, homelessness, racism and other forms of persecution.

It envisions a society that values and protects the dignity, freedom and rights of all human beings, especially the most vulnerable.

Lee Herrick, co-chair of the Social Justice Center Committee, was quoted in *The Rampage*, Fresno City College's student newspaper, as saying, "We are excited to open the Social Justice Center, which will further the mission and values of Fresno City College. Justice for all is unattainable without opportunities to learn about injustice in all of its forms."

Monique Reyna, a senior program specialist for the campus CalWORKs Office and an active member of the center, says that "having an SJC shows how important social justice is for us as a campus, and the greater community. This center will provide some folks with a space to continue having the important discussions with one another.



The audience at the opening of the Social Justice Center at Fresno City College listens attentively to Lee Herrick, co-chair of the Center's committee. Photo by Mike Rhodes

"In addition, this center will provide others with a space to move from discussion into action. I look forward to seeing all the amazing collaboration and programming that will come from having a center here on campus."

The San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance, the *Community Alliance* newspaper and the Social Justice Center are part of a coalition that is organizing the United Against Hate forum at Fresno City College on April 6. The event starts at 10 a.m. at Forum Hall 101, and California Attorney General Rob Bonta will be the keynote speaker.

For more information, contact 559-442-8200 ext. 8105 or lee.herrick@fresnocitycollege.edu.

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4 **COMMUNITY ALLIANCE**

Fresno Youth on Hunger Strike for Gaza

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

Three young Fresnans—Ant, Adrian and Justice—began a hunger strike for Gaza on March 16. They are members of palirev.web on Instagram. Following is their hunger strike statement.

This public hunger strike is:

1. To be in solidarity with people who are made unhoused and starved by the ruling class from Fresno to Gaza.
2. A demonstration of the ugly reality that is normalized and pushed aside.
3. A call to action to build mutual aid, decolonize education and fight for justice.
4. This hunger strike is NOT to change the minds of politicians.

We know they don't care if we die of exposure or starve to death, because if they do, they would not have supported Israel stealing and destroying Palestinians' homes, starving them and killing them since 1948.

If they care for the unhoused and starving people around them, they wouldn't have the time and money to run for office. That's why we cannot rely on politicians to feed and shelter people.

We cannot rely on the government to keep us safe. We cannot rely on the ruling class for justice!

We feed and shelter each other.

We keep each other safe.

We define and uphold justice.

Currently, we are funding genocide and you're conditioned to watch from a distance.

Americans need to snap out of normalization and take action.

We interviewed the three hunger strikers at a demonstration for Palestine on March 16.

Ant noted, "21 years ago today, Rachel Corrie got run over by an Israeli bulldozer." Corrie was a young American

crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer operator while trying to protect a Palestinian house from being demolished.

Ant previously engaged in a hunger strike in Washington, D.C. "I did a seven-day hunger strike in front of the White House in response to a call for a global strike by Palestinian journalists in Gaza," she said.

"I wanted to do the hunger strike to motivate people to join the global strike. My hunger strike lasted seven days, and we reached tens of thousands of people. Five other people joined my hunger strike."

Did you get a response from the media? "I was interviewed by *The Hill*, and the response on social media was great."

How long will you fast? "I understand that it is very exhausting, so a three-week hunger strike. We're planning it for three weeks, and I don't know if [everyone] will be going the whole time, of course."

As to his motivations for taking part in the hunger strike, Adrian said, "It's about Palestine. Palestine is the fundamental pursuit of freedom. Palestine is what connects all of us."

"And our goal, really, with palirev.web is to get the youth more involved in more radical actions and to show that there are more than just the two [political] options of liberal and conservative."

Justice said, "That's why we think it's very important right now for people to practice mutual aid and direct action because global warming is here, fascism is here."

"And if we don't know, if we're not familiar with the practice of taking care of each other, we're over. We can't depend on the government to save us. They never have, and they never will."

"They don't see us as people. They see us as workers, and the whole education system is also based on making workers, not intellectuals."



(L to R) Fresno hunger strikers Justice, Ant and Adrian. Photo by Bob McCloskey

"I mean, look at how they're trying to erase Palestine's existence. Jesus was Palestinian, if you want to get biblical; you know, liberation is a collective battle."

For more information on the hunger strike, visit palirev.web on Instagram.

Bob McCloskey is an activist and a reporter for the Community Alliance newspaper. Contact him at bobmccloskey06@gmail.com.

The New Israel

BY RAUL PICKETT

We were stunned when we learned that some had entered onto the home ground of settlers and killed hundreds of women and children, taking captives to serve as pawns in an ensuing battle. History again repeats itself in a cycle of violence that sets one group of people against another—colonizer versus conquered, white against colored, chosen against gentile.

They lashed out to their oppressors. Forced from their homelands, they had been repatriated into a small strip of land where they would be packed into a concentrated and dense area.

Many would be severed from their families and removed to far foreign lands. Children would be raised with a deep-rooted hatred for those that had killed their families, robbed them of ancestral lands and subjected them to the cruel practices of apartheid.

As a historical whirlwind, the raiders ignited the underlying hatred of the current settlers. They had traditionally justified their dominance based on race and religion, which now would be manifested as rage and as an insatiable thirst for vengeance.

There would be no moral equivalent, only an unyielding desire to engage in the genocide of an entire people—an eye for an eye. After all, they were God's chosen people, and bestowed with the right to extend their reach to the seas, and become "the shining city on the hill." They were divinely predestined and empowered as the new Israel.

The retaliation resulted in the mass killing of thousands per day, including a large number of women and children—the numbers so high, they are beyond one's imagination. Such carnage is rationalized as being inevitable and condoned under the "rules of war"—ancient rules that justify the death of multitudes in a conflict and written on Roman parchment.

Several millions of native inhabitants in North America were eventually reduced to about 100,000 via ethnic cleansing through identical scenarios. In California, they would be reduced from 300,000 to 15,000. A process facilitated by widespread forcible displacement from native lands, mass killing, disease and starvation.

While many of the indigenous fought back, they were no match for the prevailing forces sanctioned by the

overseers of Christianity. In the end, those who survived were concentrated into small strips of land (reservations), a ploy learned by the Irish and Scottish after conquest by the English. Choctaw, Cheyenne, Sioux, Apache and numerous others became victims of a premeditated and willful intent to annihilate an entire people.

Palestinians have been confronted with an identical situation that subjects them to the boundless will of those who hold that they are anointed as God's chosen people, a scenario that has transversed history, and that too often contradicts the very essence of humanity. This continued struggle also gives rise to such groups as Hamas that value becoming martyrs for their God.

As with the Native Americans, the original conqueror now attempts to erase any memory of the history of the conquered by eradicating any reference to having once existed from the river to the sea. Similarly, we now oppose references to "Manifest Destiny," the claim that we were predestined to possess the land from sea to sea, now contested as critical race theory.

Our contempt of the indigenous people is most notably revealed in the popular saying of the time "the only good Injun is a dead Injun."

Although we are no longer threatened and downplay such demeaning language, our actions are even more revealing in our continued willingness to condone the ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of a whole generation of people whether Native American or Palestinians. We confront the truth by holding that it is "critical race theory."

In the fulcrum of the media, you can hear the same innate hatred implied as "the only good Palestin-un is a dead Palestin-un!" Israel has been given the license to annihilate an entire people with arms supplied by the United States

OPINION & ANALYSIS

while we impose an unprecedented crackdown on human rights protests for daring to speak up against human rights violations.

Are we trapped in an endless cycle of preservation history, where societies can only exist by resorting to predatory instincts and violent dominance of others based on racial, ethnic or religious distinctions? These distinctions are social constructs, yet we continue to make real life decisions regarding others based on them, determining how, when and where others will survive.

In a civilized society, violence should not beget violence against the innocent. We must break from failed paradigms of the past and seek to safeguard human rights and find solutions in equal treatment and justice. This is the first step in embracing God's providence to truly become his chosen people.

Raul Pickett was born and raised in Fresno. He graduated from Fresno State and retired from the State of California as a staff service manager. He was also the CEO of El Futuro Credit Union.

Haiku for Palestinian Peace 2024

Two state solution
Ending seasonal conflict
Forecast future peace

—Homer Gee Greene Jr.

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Primary Candidates Challenged the Status Quo

BY JAMES MENDEZ

Several progressive first-time candidates ran for elective office in the March 2024 primary. Candidates Bryce Herrera (Board of Supervisors District 2), EJ Hinojosa (Board of Supervisors District 3), Jennifer Cruz (Board of Supervisors District 5), Matthew Gillian (Fresno City Council District 2) and Caleb Helsel (State Assembly District 8) provided local voters with alternatives to incumbent candidates.

Incumbents too often do not represent the views of the majority of residents in Fresno (city and county). With better financial resources and more people voting, alternative candidates could change Fresno for the better. However, the current electoral system favors candidates who have the financial support of developers and Fresno's wealthy, white, older men.

The aforementioned progressive candidates advocated to improve the quality of life and livability of Fresno (city and county). Each discussed the need for improved government accountability, transparency, collaboration and equity.

Some of the incumbent candidates (e.g., Fresno City Council Member Mike Karbassi, District 2 Supervisor Steve Brandau and Fresno City Council Member Garry Bredefeld running for the Board of Supervisors District 2 seat) highlighted spending more on law enforcement as the answer to most local problems. The progressive candidates had other ideas for making Fresno a better place to live.

Studies have shown that additional law enforcement does not equally benefit Black and white Americans. Rather than focusing on law enforcement, the progressive candidates discussed unifying issues that benefit all the people of Fresno—better job opportunities, livable wages, affordable housing, better roads and transportation systems, quality education, more green spaces, clean air, clean water, better access to healthcare, and increased entertainment and cultural options.

It might not be possible to change Fresno's hot weather, but livability can be improved. Little correlation exists between quality of life and the number of police per 1,000 residents or the percentage of the City's General Fund spent on law enforcement.

The City of Fresno spends more than 50% of its General Fund on law enforcement, whereas some cities spend less than 20% and have less crime, fewer homicides and a better livability index.

In running for office and stating their positions on the issues, these progressive candidates opened themselves to attacks. Since the beginning of America's political campaigns, there have been ugly personal attacks on candidates.

Karbassi unleashed a vicious attack on Gillian in their race for the District 2 City Council seat. As the incumbent with better name recognition, more campaign funds and many high-profile supporters, Karbassi was positioned to easily win the election.

Yet, for whatever reason, Karbassi must have felt threatened by Gillian. In the last two weeks of the campaign, Karbassi sent out a racist campaign mailer filled with innuendo and false claims. Rather than present the ideas he stood for, he tried to instill fear in the voting public about gang violence and Black candidates.

This ad was similar to what Karbassi experienced during his June 2022 candidacy for the State Assembly. Now Assembly Member Esmeralda Soria (D-Fresno) was favored to win that race because of better name recognition, more money and more endorsements. Nevertheless, she sent out a mailer that appeared to accuse Karbassi of assault.

Karbassi lost the race and later accused Soria of defamation. The case is going before the California Supreme Court. Karbassi, having learned from Soria, used a similar tactic against Gillian.

Karbassi used "dog-whistle" phrases to attack Gillian. He misrepresented Advance Peace as a "taxpayer-backed program that bribes gang shooters." The ad failed to note that as a Fresno City Council member Karbassi twice voted to support the program.

Yes, Gillian does indeed strongly support Fresno's Advance Peace. Advance Peace is a violence interruption program that has been successful in reducing gang shootings and homicides in Fresno. Contrary to Karbassi's ad, Advance Peace does not offer "bribes to gang shooters" but rather offers stipends to participants who are able to follow and apply the program to their lives over a sustained period.

In the mailer, Karbassi also falsely claimed that Gillian "supported a 'complete defunding' of Fresno's police department."

Karbassi's racist mailer was reminiscent of the 1988 racist attack ad by then presidential candidate George H.W. Bush against Michael Dukakis, governor of Massachusetts. As governor, Dukakis had supported a prison furlough program. The furlough program began in 1972 under a Republican governor, Frank Sargent.

Bush's ad featured a menacing mugshot of Willie Horton, an African American man who had been convicted of first-degree murder and was sentenced to life without parole. He was released as part of the weekend furlough program. He was later convicted of a brutal rape and assault that occurred while he was on the furlough.

Though leading in the polls, Bush played on white fears of Black crime. The Bush campaign linked the Horton crime to Dukakis being soft on crime. The "Willie Horton" ad "remains the key reference point for dog-whistle politics." Karbassi is following a long American tradition of ugly, racist political attack ads.

In recognition of the progressive candidates' efforts, we offer a few lines from a famous speech given on April 23, 1910, at the Sorbonne in Paris by Teddy Roosevelt. The speech is titled "Citizenship in a Republic" but is better known as "The Man in the Arena."

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

Quoting Teddy Roosevelt might be criticized given his racist worldview. He believed African Americans and Native Americans were inferior to white Europeans. But he was also known as a progressive who broke up monopolies, an environmentalist who established the National Park System and a champion of women's rights. He believed individuals can make a difference, regardless of race, religion or gender. We need to remember that people are complex.

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

War on the Poor and Neo-Fascism

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

To be homeless does not mean I don't have feelings.
To be homeless does not mean I can't feel how others treat me.

To be homeless does not make it okay to assume I am dirty.

To be homeless does not mean I do not have a voice.

To be homeless does not mean I am a drug addict.

To be homeless does not mean I want to be here now or in the future.

To be homeless does not mean I am not a person or human being.

To be homeless does not and will not define me as a person, not now, not...ever! Homelessness is not for the weak.

Most of us are only one paycheck away from being homeless and by homeless I mean living with family, at a shelter or, like some of us, on the street. It is not as far away as most people may want to think. It's a loss of income and boom you're there. If that doesn't scare you or open your eyes, what else can? Thank you.

—Corina G.

Creeping Fascism and Homelessness

A person with critical thinking skills can see that American capitalism is in decay. As it decays, fascism has taken root. These fascist trends are targeting unhoused people.

People in America are rightfully fearful of a Trump-led authoritarian fascist regime. Some argue that the United States already has a fascist, albeit socially liberal, government, led by Joe Biden, with a veneer of democracy.

Most Americans understand that corporations and their lobbyists have major influence and control on both domestic and foreign policy. Some Americans believe our government is controlled by, and is a tool of, Wall Street and the corporate lobbies. This is often called corporatism.

Corporatism became one of the main tenets of fascism, and Benito Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy advocated the total integration of divergent interests into the state for the corporate interests. As in all fascist regimes, the poor and unhoused suffered the most under Mussolini's rule.



War against the poor in Fresno. Photo by Bob McCloskey

In Hitler's fascist Germany, homeless people, beggars, vagrants, welfare recipients and, last but not least, "gypsies" and people roaming about in the manner of gypsies were all considered to be "anti-social elements." They were the first to be rounded up and incarcerated.

In Franco's fascist Spain, it was reported that "the poor live off acorns and chestnuts."

Although unhoused people in America are not yet being placed in camps (Trump has recently floated the idea), they are criminalized, arrested for petty crimes and misdemeanors, and harassed. They are often hungry and have a poor diet.

In our culture, unhoused people are considered "anti-social elements" by many. Recently, more harsh ordinances and practices have been implemented. Some are asking, is this a trend toward fascist rule?

Following the "no sit, no stand, no lie, no sleep" ordinances in Fresno and San Diego (see "Kill the Poor" in the July 2023 issue of the *Community Alliance*), similar legislation is being proposed for the same criminalization of the homeless statewide.

State Senate GOP leader Brian Jones of San Diego and State Senator Catherine Blakespear (D-Encinitas) have sponsored a bipartisan bill to ban homeless encampments near "sensitive community areas" in California as Fresno and San Diego have already done.

A War on the Poor

A comprehensive 2023 UC San Francisco study on homelessness found that money, more than addiction, mental health, poor decisions or other factors, is the main cause of—and potential solution to—homelessness.

The UCSF study found that in the six months before becoming homeless, the Californians surveyed were making a median income of just \$960 a month. The median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in California is nearly three times that, according to Zillow. And though survey participants listed a myriad of reasons why they lost their homes, more people cited a loss of, or reduction in, income than anything else.

Continues on page 21

Debrief of First-Time Progressive Candidates

BY JAMES MENDEZ

The 2024 Primary Election did not go well for first-time progressive candidates. They lost every contest in which they appeared.

Fresno progressives had the opportunity to vote for several strong, dynamic, young candidates. Progressive candidates Bryce Herrera, Jennifer Cruz, EJ Hinojosa and Matthew Gillian discussed with us their experience and what they learned during their campaigns. (A fifth candidate, Caleb Helsel, who ran for State Assembly District 8, did not respond to our outreach.)

These candidates offered some suggestions for future candidates:

- Start early to get name recognition (perhaps a year before the election).
- Develop a team of volunteers who will stay with you throughout the campaign.
- Have an inspiring message.
- Open a campaign account early to raise money.
- With money, a candidate can then get paid staff.
- Get early endorsements from fellow Democrats.
- Push for fair and open debates rather than candidate forums.

All were disappointed in the lack of financial support and endorsements from incumbent Democrats and the county's Democratic central committee.

Bryce Herrera

Race: Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 2
 Opponents: Incumbent Steve Brandau, Fresno City Council Member Garry Bredefeld, Fresno County Assessor-Recorder Paul Dictos, Dion Bourdase
 Occupation: owns and operates a catering business
 Result: Bredefeld 37.9%, Brandau 28.1%, Dictos 16.0%, Herrera 10.3%, Bourdase 7.6%; Bredefeld and Brandau advance to the November General Election

Herrera says that he ran to offer a valid alternative to the failed policies of Republicans Brandau and Bredefeld on issues such as homelessness.

"I'm definitely not done," he says. "[It's] just the beginning. I remain optimistic. I will continue to advocate for areas I am passionate about."

Addressing the uphill battle against Fresno's moneyed interests, he said, "We [progressives] need to be better organized and consolidate our support in order to get out the vote."

Herrera says that he would work harder to increase voter turnout (39.9% in Supervisorial District 2, but only 20.3% in Supervisorial District 3).

He would also like to see real debates. He did not feel that candidate forums allowed for a debate on the issues.

Primary Election

For complete results of the March 5 Primary Election, visit fresnovote.com.

Jennifer Cruz

Race: Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 5
 Opponent: Incumbent Nathan Magsig
 Occupation: LGBTQ+ resource manager at the Fresno Equal Opportunities Commission
 Result: Magsig 71.0%, Cruz 28.9%; Magsig wins

"I learned more in 90 days than in two years of law school," Cruz says, regarding her campaign.

She ran in response to the Board of Supervisors passing the Parents Matter Act by a 3-2 vote on Nov. 30, 2023. The act creates an 11-member committee with the authority to review and remove books from the children's section of the Fresno County Public Library that the committee deems inappropriate. District 2 Supervisor Brandau wrote the act to remove books that, in particular, addressed LGBTQ+ concerns.

For quite some time, Cruz had been upset about the "ineffective nature, complacency and corruption of the Board of Supervisors."

During the public comments portion of the meeting on the Parents Matter Act, she told Supervisor Magsig, "We are coming for your seat if you vote for the act. See you at the ballot box."

After Magsig's vote on the Parents Matter Act, Cruz felt obligated to oppose him. Just a week before the Dec. 8 deadline, she rounded up the needed money, got the qualifying signatures and filed her campaign papers.

She feels that her campaign was a success by emphasizing collaboration and partnerships. With no name recognition, no team and no paid staff, in 90 days of campaigning she achieved several of her goals. She made her opponent spend his money. She was told she would not get 10% of the vote. Her goal was to get more than 20% of the vote, and she got almost 30%.

Although she would not commit to running again, she left open that possibility.

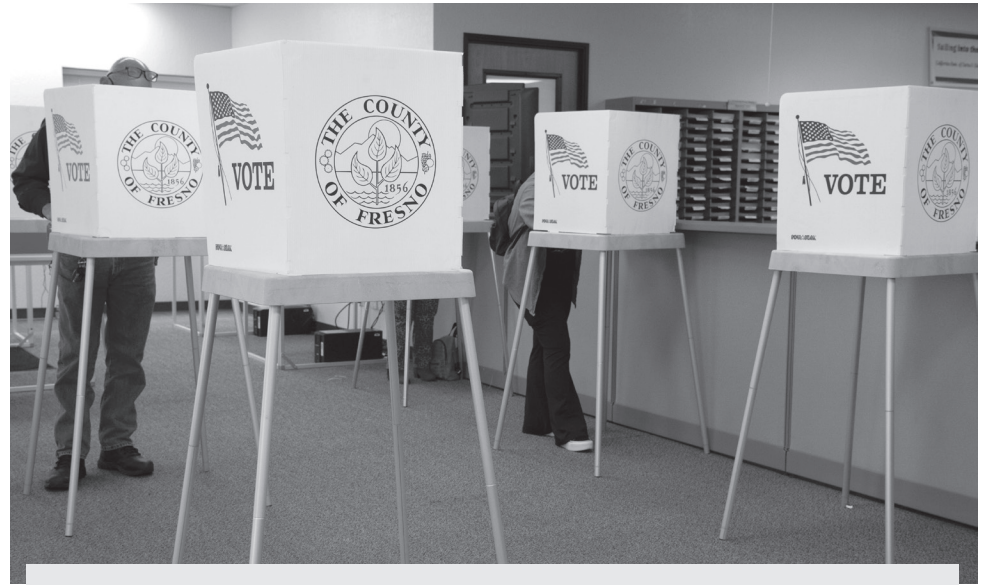
She asked to send a shoutout to strong Democrats Myra Coble and Monte Forkas, who helped with her campaign.

EJ Hinojosa

Race: Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 3
 Opponents: Incumbent Sal Quintero, Fresno City Council Members Luis Chavez and Miguel Arias
 Occupation: music teacher at Gaston Middle School
 Result: Quintero 37.2%, Chavez 26.0%, Arias 19.8%, Hinojosa 16.8%; Quintero and Chavez advance to the November General Election

Hinojosa says that he ran "to bring investment to Fresno County's urban core—investments such as healthcare and mental health services, art and music, business, humane strategies

ELECTION 2024



Turnout was low for the March 5 Primary Election. Photo by Peter Maiden

to address homelessness, and the construction of public spaces like libraries and public markets."

"I feel like a winner by taking 15% of the votes," he says. He considers that a major achievement for an unknown with no name recognition, no campaign manager and minimal funding. Funding came mainly from individuals giving small donations.

He says that a lot of "younger people voting for the first time came out to vote for me" and that his campaign had an impact on the discussion around the issues of homelessness and infill housing. "Increasingly, people are waking up to the Fresno political mire."

Although he would not commit to running again, he is "wide open to future possibilities where I can have a good impact on the community."

Hinojosa hopes that more teachers, trades people and other regular people will consider running for public office.

Moreover, he believes that, locally and nationally, candidates need to address the issues of young people to get younger people to vote. He contends that young people are not voting due to their cynicism and nihilism in terms of their ability to change the political system and address the issues of the economy, housing and education.

What he saw during the campaign is that national politics, especially the war in Gaza, is discouraging millennials and Gen Z voters. They are not enthused by the top of the ticket. Yet, he feels that "it is not too late to right the ship. Democrats in this country need to look at the relationships abroad."

Matthew Gillian

Race: Fresno City Council District 2
 Opponent: Incumbent Mike Karbassi
 Occupation: founding director of Inspiration Transportation, a nonprofit organization that provides sustainable, electric transportation services to underserved communities in the San Joaquin Valley
 Result: Karbassi 72.3%, Gillian 27.6%; Karbassi wins

"I feel it was a good experience and I learned a good amount," says Gillian. "I plan to continue to help people have their voices heard." He says people have asked him if he would run again. He is contemplating whether to do so.

He learned the importance of support in order to run an effective campaign. He better understands the timeline of a campaign, the need for a campaign manager and the need for adequate funding.

He feels that it is most important for the public to be able to see "behind the curtain" how government works and how decisions are being made, which is not necessarily in favor of the average resident. Although he found it necessary to attack his opponent's policy positions, he learned how to talk about his own values and how those affect his policy positions.

Gillian thinks he did a good job of "being authentic while at the same time having conversations with people who would not [usually] have had conversations with a person like me."

As the campaign progressed, his vision of how he wanted to run his campaign and what he wanted to say became clearer. After Karbassi sent out an attack mailer, Gillian says that he learned about the need to be able to respond rapidly to attacks.

While acknowledging the importance of having experienced personnel in a campaign, he would work harder to have more young volunteers (ages 18-25) involved in his campaign.

As a newcomer, he now realizes the importance to compare and contrast to better define his own positions. He would have exposed his opponent's weaknesses more but added, "When you're confident, it is easier to lean into your strengths rather than your opponent's weaknesses."

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



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Aaron Bushnell, A Courageous American

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

On Feb. 25, 25-year-old Senior Airman Aaron James Bushnell, a cyber-defense operations specialist, set himself on fire outside the front gate of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C.

"Immediately prior to the act that was livestreamed, Bushnell said that he was protesting against 'what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonizers' and declared that he 'will no longer be complicit in genocide,' after which he doused himself with a flammable liquid and set himself on fire," according to Wikipedia.

"As he burned, Bushnell repeatedly shouted 'Free Palestine!' while one Secret Service officer pointed a gun at him and two others attempted to extinguish the flames."

Sadly, Bushnell passed away after being transported to a hospital. By all accounts from people who knew him, Bushnell was a kind and compassionate person, committed to peace and justice, who often provided mutual aid to the unhoused community of San Antonio.

In an opinion piece in *The Guardian* on March 2, his friend, Levi Pierpont, said of Bushnell, "He has already inspired so many to stand up for truth and justice.

"It breaks my heart that his life ended this way. I could never do what he did, and I don't believe anyone should do what he did. But we'll never get Aaron back.

"All we can do is hear the message he died to shine a spotlight on: the horrors of the genocide in Gaza and the complicity we share as military members and taxpayers of a government deeply invested in violence."

Mainstream media almost immediately began portraying the act as a suicide by a disturbed individual. Without speculating as to Bushnell's motives, it's important to try and understand what the practice of self-immolation is about in Buddhism.

The following is an excerpt from "Understanding self-immolation in Buddhism after Wynn Bruce's Earth Day action" by Chris Goto-Jones on April 28, 2022.

In brief, it is an extreme form of Buddhist practice, not an instrumental device to bring about calculated political change. Buddhist self-immolation first hit the headlines in North America in 1963, with journalist Malcom Browne's now iconic, Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức sitting in flames at an intersection in Saigon.

President John F. Kennedy famously remarked that "no news picture in history has generated so much emotion around the world." He may have been right, but those emotions were widely varied; how we judge such actions depends upon our own cultural and religious upbringing.

In 1965, Thích Nhất Hạnh wrote a letter to Martin Luther King Jr. in which he expressed concern that Buddhist self-immolation must be "difficult for [the] Western Christian conscience to understand." (The letter appears in Hạnh's 1967 book, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*.) In particular, he wanted to correct two likely misunderstandings: first, the misunderstanding that it was a form of suicide and second, the misunderstanding that it was an act of protest.

In general, Buddhist organizations are very careful not to condone or romanticize self-immolation or other extreme devotional practices, and some Buddhist traditions are strongly opposed to such practices...

In Nhất Hạnh's letter to King, he explains that a self-immolating monk "says with all his strength and determination that he can endure the greatest of sufferings to protect his people."

By setting himself on fire, the monk embodies his vows in the most powerful way he can. By doing it in front of others, he hopes to awaken those who don't recognize that they too are living in a burning house, and that they must find their own way to quench those flames or to escape.

As in Christianity, suicide is strictly prohibited in Buddhism. However, for Nhất Hạnh, the self-immolation of Quảng Đức was not suicide, rather it was a devotional act of embodied practice: "the importance is not to take one's life, but to burn." Rather than intentional self-destruction or instrumental self-sacrifice, Nhất Hạnh encourages us to see manifestations of courageous compassion in the act.



A memorial display for Aaron Bushnell at the Fresno vigil on March 3. Photo by Bob McCloskey

Since Bushnell's courageous act, he has been recognized around the world. A street has been named after him in Palestine, and crowds carry banners with his image in Yemen.

On March 3, there was a vigil honoring Bushnell in Fresno. Several hundred people attended, and speakers Dr. Floyd Harris of New Light for New Life Church, Joshua Shurley of Veterans for Peace and an activist and teacher, and activist Zahra Al addressed the crowd.

"Today we are here to honor Aaron Bushnell and the martyrs of [the] most recent massacre known as the 'flour massacre,' and all martyrs of Gaza due the ongoing genocide in Palestine," said Al.

"Let's also include the innocent lives lost in Lebanon, in Yemen, in Sudan and all areas across the globe. We honor all lives lost unjustly because we are all human and we are all equal.

"We must do everything we can to spread awareness and educate about the 76-year occupation of Palestinian land at the hands of their oppressor. We, Fresno, must support a ceasefire; we must support an end to the genocide.

"We collectively must support and motivate one another to be able to continue to fight for what is right, fight for humanity, fight for liberation, fight for peace, fight for Palestine!"

Shurley said, "While we may have feelings about the way that Aaron chose to go out, what [he] did was in service to others...[Aaron] showed us what the brutality of empire is, and showed us what service and a sense of justice means."

"This is an empire that is crumbling and that the power behind these institutions is a power based on death, deprivation and destruction," added Shurley. "It's power that tells us it cares about humanitarian relief as it drops bombs..."

"Gatherings like this are important to remind us that we are not alone in our opposition to this evil.

"They fear us in large numbers. They fear the ferocity of our message and the solidarity we demonstrate."

Dr. Harris delivered a rousing speech, "When we hear a story of a soldier always giving, giving, instead, [Aaron] went out on his own terms, in the service of others, the service of the innocents, the pursuit of human freedom and in the pursuit of justice.

"Palestine has been oppressed for more than 75 years and has sacrificed. [It] has been pushed down in such a way that it screams out for someone somewhere to do something. And there's no shortage of heroes in that struggle.

"So, we will not allow the powers to erase the voices of Palestine, not in Tel Aviv, not in Washington, and not in Fresno."

Bob McCloskey is an activist and a reporter for the Community Alliance newspaper. Contact him at bobmccloskey06@gmail.com.

Love Demands an Immediate and Permanent Ceasefire in Gaza

BY TIM KUTZMARK, ADELINE MARCHINI
AND STEVE SACKS

The minister, Board of Trustees and Social Justice Team of the Unitarian Universalist (UU) Church of Fresno, in keeping with our church's religious values, state our demand for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the release of all hostages held by Hamas, with the intent of respecting the lives of all people living in Israel/Palestine.

Indiscriminate killing and violence can never be justified. We unequivocally condemn Hamas's savage attack on Israel on Oct. 7 that left 1,200 people dead and hundreds taken hostage. Under international humanitarian law, intentional attacks on civilians, or attacks that do not distinguish between military targets and civilians, are prohibited under all circumstances.

But the resulting and continuing military response of the Government of Israel since that time has been condemned by all major countries, with the United States being the notable exception as shown by its continued military support to Israel. The International Court of Justice in January ordered the Government of Israel to do all in its power to prevent genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. However, all evidence suggests that is not happening. As of late February:

- The Government of Israel has cut off food, water and power and bombed homes, resulting in 80% of Gaza's

2.3 million population being displaced and unhoused. Approximately 1.85 million people in Gaza are living in tents. Deaths due to diseases and starvation are occurring at an alarming rate. Health experts warn that this situation could result in a staggering increase of deaths in the near future.

- Nearly 30,000 Palestinians have been killed with 70,000+ injured. More than 10,000 children have been killed.
- Gaza's infrastructure, including schools, universities, power stations, government buildings, museums, UN shelters and hospitals, has been targeted and destroyed.
- No hospitals in Gaza are fully functional due to lack of supplies or destruction by bombings.

Before Oct. 7, Gaza received 500 daily truckloads of food, which already was inadequate to meet the region's nutritional needs. February averaged fewer than 100 trucks daily—far short of being able to prevent starvation.

This is why the minister, Board of Trustees and Social Justice Team of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno, as well as other religious organizations and secular groups in this country and worldwide, call for an end to the Government of Israel's violence with an immediate and permanent ceasefire. There is presently in Gaza a severe crisis on the verge of becoming a humanitarian catastrophe. To avert this requires sufficient food, water and medical equipment to enter Gaza.

In addition, aid from the United Nations, the United States and other countries will be needed to rebuild Gaza so that the Palestinians there have a functional place to live. The United States must question the billions of dollars of military aid given to Israel. Our government is currently complicit in Israel's targeting of the civilian population in Gaza with U.S. made bombs and weapons.

Our Unitarian Universalist faith has eight foundational principles. The sixth principle states that "we affirm and promote: The goal of world community with peace, liberty

OPINION & ANALYSIS

and justice for all." What is needed is a lasting peace. That can only be accomplished through diplomacy. Long-term diplomatic solutions that honor international human rights and religious freedom are essential.

We urge all concerned citizens to contact our country's leaders, and over and over state clearly that we do not support our government's current responses to this crisis and that it needs to change its course.

Rev. Tim Kutzmark is the minister, Adeline Marchini is the president of the Board of Trustees and Steve Sacks is the co-chair of the Social Justice Team at the Unitarian Universalist (UU) Church of Fresno.

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Investigation of Valley Children's Hospital CEO Payday

BY OMAR SHAIKH RASHAD

(Editor's note: This story was originally published by FresnoLand, a nonprofit news organization. We reprint it with their permission.)

Two Fresno City Council members are calling on state leaders to investigate the multimillion dollar compensation packages for executives at Valley Children's Hospital.

At a recent news conference, Council Members Garry Bredefeld and Miguel Arias called on California Attorney General Rob Bonta to investigate the nonprofit hospital's reported \$25 million in executive compensation.

In 2021, CEO Todd Suntrapak reportedly earned \$5.1 million in total compensation and received a \$5 million home loan "as a retention incentive in lieu of other compensation," according to the hospital's Form 990 tax filings.

"As a nonprofit hospital with nearly 75% of all patients being on Medi-Cal, there's simply no justification for these outrageous and unjustifiable salaries and compensation," Bredefeld said at a news conference at Fresno City Hall.

"The culture of enriching the CEO and his executives on the backs of sick and poor children must come to an end."

In response to calls for a probe, Michael Hanson, who chairs the Valley Children's Healthcare Board of Trustees, issued a brief statement.

"The Central Valley has built one of the nation's premier children's hospitals," Hanson said. "In doing so, we have recruited and retained some of America's best executives, caregivers and team members. As such, the quality of our care and the fiscal management of our organization is—and continues to be—best in class."

The children's hospital is consistently ranked among the best in the world.

Four executives besides Suntrapak received more than \$1 million in total compensation, including the hospital's chief financial officer, who reportedly received about \$2.8 million, and three senior vice presidents, who received between \$1.29 million and \$1.68 million.

Eight other executives received compensation of more than \$600,000, including Clovis Mayor Lynne Ashbeck, the hospital's senior vice president for community impact. She earned more than \$750,000 in total compensation during the second year of the pandemic.

A spokesperson for Ashbeck's office did not respond to a request for comment.

Bredefeld and Arias took special issue with the hospital's board of directors greenlighting such high executive compensation, especially since District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp is a board member.

"She should have known better," Bredefeld said. "This is about integrity. This is about accountability. All of us as elected officials have that duty and responsibility."

A spokesperson for Smittcamp's office did not respond to a request for comment.

The Fresno Council members also called on Assembly Member Jim Patterson (R-Fresno) and California's Joint Legislative Audit Committee to investigate Valley Children's Hospital. Arias said letters were being sent to both Bonta and Patterson's offices.

Tax Filings Show Big Money Moves

During the second year of the pandemic, Valley Children's Hospital pulled in \$354 million in profit, according to its 2021 tax filing. The document also shows \$124.5 million in investments outside the United States, of which most are in Central America and the Caribbean, with the rest in European accounts.

That same year, the hospital had a total of \$712 million in investments and more than \$647 million in cash or savings accounts. The hospital also made \$391,559 in rental income in 2021, although it's unclear what properties the hospital is renting out to either private or commercial customers.

"Their response to this excessive pay scandal makes it clear that they have prioritized profits and awarding executives through record-billing of Medi-Cal and working families," Arias said.

Controversy over the executives' salaries at the Madera-based hospital comes after more than a year of efforts to reopen the community's general acute care hospital, which



Photo courtesy of FresnoLand.org

closed more than a year ago due to bankruptcy. It will also soon be two years since Valley Children's Hospital paid \$10 million for the naming rights to Fresno State's football stadium.

The two Council members also took issue with Valley Children's Hospital seeking donations from the public in its annual Kids Day fundraiser, a collaboration between the hospital, ABC30 and the Fresno Bee. The annual fundraiser was held in the rain, with volunteers selling Kids Day newspapers along Friant Road and Audubon Drive in north Fresno.

"What we've learned is that Valley Children's failed to disclose to us and everyone else volunteering that it was spending five years' worth of Kids Day funds to buy one executive a home in Carmel," Arias said.

The Kids Day fundraiser is known for breaking fundraising goals and records every few years. The most recent record-breaking year for donations was about \$627,500 in 2017.

Last year, members of the public donated \$365,740 to the hospital on Kids Day. The fundraiser also brought in \$318,288 in 2022, \$270,955 in 2021 and \$178,000 in 2020.

"It is an absolute outrage," Bredefeld said. "It's a disgrace that the CEO and his executives are enriching themselves on the back of sick and poor children."

Omar Shaikh Rashad is the government accountability reporter for FresnoLand.

CENTRAL VALLEY BRIEFS

LOUD for Tomorrow

LOUD for Tomorrow (LFT) is a grassroots youth-led organization based in Kern County, which accounts for 66% of the registered voters in Congressional District 22—the seat currently held by Rep. David Valadao (R-Hanford). Founded in 2018, LFT's mission is to build youth power to transform local schools and communities through civic engagement, advocacy and healing justice. LFT is also focused on changing the entire power structure in the Central Valley.

Focusing on youth ages 16–25, LFT organizes young people to register peers and win campaigns for a brighter tomorrow. LFT engages in phone banking, texting, canvassing and voter activation events focusing on first-time voters and low-propensity Latinx voters.

LFT's 2024 goals are to register 3,500+ young voters, run three voter education campaigns, contact 35,000 voters in Tulare and Kern counties, recruit and train 45+ paid and volunteer voter organizers, mail 35,000 voter guides to priority voter blocks and organize 10+ community events to build trust and relationships with voters.

Learn more at loudfor.org.

Central Valley Matters Fundraiser

Central Valley Matters was formed in 2021 after volunteer canvassers realized work needed to be done year-round in Congressional District 22. Its April 25 fundraiser features a conversation with Jane Fonda and Dolores Huerta on "Why Does the Central Valley Matter?"

"As we watch our democracy on the edge of the precipice, we are acutely aware that success lies in the margin of effort." The non-stop attack ads in CD 22 were so bad in 2022 that canvassers found many residents didn't even know the difference between a Democrat and a Republican. Many thought all politicians were bad so they didn't want to spend time learning how, when and where to vote. This form of voter suppression needs to be counteracted one conversation at a time.

Huerta continues to work tirelessly: developing leaders and advocating for the working poor, women and children. As founder and president of the Dolores Huerta Foundation and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, she speaks about issues of social justice and public policy.

Fonda is an American actress and activist who currently works to promote climate action. A film icon, she has received various accolades, including two Academy Awards, two British Academy Film Arts Awards and seven Golden Globes.

The fundraiser will be on April 25 at 5 p.m. via Zoom. Register at mobilize.us/swingleft/event/607149/.

Climate Adaptation and Environmental Justice

The City of Fresno is currently working on a citywide Climate Adaptation Plan & Environmental Justice Element. This element of the General Plan will create standards and programs to reduce environmental health risks and pollution exposure that have occurred over time to historically disadvantaged communities.

A Climate Adaptation Plan helps prepare places for projected hazards resulting from climate change by assessing risks associated with droughts, extreme temperatures, fires, floods and air pollution. From this information, long-term goals will be developed and incorporated into the Fresno General Plan.

An Environmental Justice Element creates standards and programs to reduce environmental health risks and pollution exposure that have occurred over time to historically disadvantaged communities.

Provide your feedback by taking the survey at tinyurl.com/CAP-EJ-Survey (English) or tinyurl.com/CAP-EJ-Spanish (Español).

Affordable Housing Lending

More than half a million people experienced homelessness in the United States in 2022. California, Oregon and Washington have some of the highest levels of housing insecurity in the nation.

Beneficial State Bank attempts to combat financial insecurity and the housing crisis through affordable housing lending. The bank had more than \$337 million in outstanding commercial loans to the affordable housing sector at the end of 2022, accounting for 39% of its commercial loan portfolio.

Beneficial State Bank believes that safe, affordable housing is a basic human right—something that everyone deserves. "We think it's worth fighting for until everyone in our community has it."

The Beneficial State Bank vision is of an economy that restores our planet and extends prosperity to all.

"We practice Beneficial Banking™, in harmony with nature, to help more people and help people more.

"Together, we hold the power to create a new banking system that is environmentally regenerative and equitable for all."

Valley Air Urban Greening Project

In the spring of 2023, the Valley Air District awarded Tree Fresno \$1 million to implement an urban greening project throughout south-central Fresno. The Valley Air Urban Greening Project is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of cap-and-trade

dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy and improving public health and the environment—particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The project will fund 1,200 5-gallon trees for residents living in the AB 617 boundary of south-central Fresno. In addition to residential trees, 500 community 15-gallon trees will be planted.

For more information, click on "Adopt a Tree" at treefresno.org/ or contact julio.lopez@ccejn.org.

Federal Funding for Shaw Avenue Repairs

The City of Fresno has received \$1.78 million in federal funds, along with \$2.67 million in previous grants, to transform Shaw Avenue. This project will revamp a six-mile stretch of Shaw Avenue from Highway 99 to Blackstone Avenue.

Here's the plan:

- The "pothole blitz" is under way
 - Hot patching across the six-mile stretch
 - Crack sealing on schedule, covering 36 lane miles
- Both hot and cold patch methods will be used for Shaw Avenue repairs, ensuring swift action.

Potholes signal pavement issues caused by rain, overloading or lack of maintenance. With more than 1,850 miles of roads in Fresno, the City is tackling the challenge head-on:

- Since 2023, 83 potholes were reported for Shaw Avenue
 - 400–500 tons of cold mix annually
 - New hot mix crew for 2,000 tons per year citywide
- Report potholes via 311.

Spring Haiku 2024

Bonsai buds growing
Green color on branches sprout
Spring has returned

—Homer Gee Greene Jr.

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www.kevinglitttle.com

United Against Hate

BY COMMUNITY ALLIANCE STAFF

With hate crimes on the rise in Fresno and throughout the country, the community must stand together, united against hate. Be part of the solution and attend the United Against Hate Summit on April 6 at 10 a.m. at Fresno City College (Forum Hall 101).

Join with students, the members of more than 20 community groups who are part of the Stop the Hate coalition and California Attorney General Rob Bonta as we stand together in solidarity with the goal of making Fresno a more livable city.

There will be workshops:

- What To Do If You Are a Victim of a Crime
- Stop the Hate Coalition Campaign

- Bystander Training
- Know Your Rights!

This event will kick off a campaign promoting a "Stop the Hate, Be the Love" theme. Yard signs and bumper stickers with that message will be available at the event.

In addition, attendees will be asked to reach out to community groups, city councils, school boards, faith-based groups and organized labor to get those entities to pass the Stop the Hate Resolution (see sidebar). Your help is needed to reach as many groups as possible with this message. Return adopted resolutions to mikerhodes@fresnoalliance.com.

There will be Spanish-language interpretation, cultural entertainment and food trucks where you can get lunch.

This event is sponsored by the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance and the *Community Alliance* newspaper through a grant from the California State Library under the statewide Stop the Hate initiative.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE STOP THE HATE CAMPAIGN IN THE FRESNO AREA, CONTACT THE COMMUNITY ALLIANCE NEWSPAPER WWW.FRESNOALLIANCE.COM



Stop the Hate Resolution

"We, (the name of the organization goes here), 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 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.

Return the approved resolution to mikerhodes@fresnoalliance.com.

UNITED AGAINST HATE SUMMIT

SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 2024

FRESNO CITY COLLEGE
FORUM HALL 101
10:00AM-2:00PM

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
CA ATTORNEY GENERAL
ROB BONTA

WORKSHOPS:

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF A HATE CRIME	STOP THE HATE COALITION CAMPAIGN
BYSTANDER TRAINING	KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

RSVP:

SPANISH INTERPRETATION

ENTERTAINMENT & FOOD TRUCKS



Cyndee Loryang, senior program coordinator for the Fresno Center, will be a presenter at the United Against Hate Summit on April 6 at Fresno City College.
Photo by Peter Maiden

Looking for volunteer delivery drivers for the *Community Alliance*!

The Downtown Fresno and Southeast Fresno routes are open.

Help us get out the "voice of the progressive movement!"

Contact Peter, Distribution Manager, by email:
maidenfoto1@gmail.com

KPFA 75 YEARS

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Fresno County Youth Service Council
We are creating our future!

see civic projects at www.civicedcenter.org



SIERRA CLUB

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

The Fresno County 2042 General Plan Must Be Rejected. Part 2

BY GARY LASKY

Last month, we reported that the Fresno County Supervisors met on February 20 to deliver a long-promised gift to developers: the new 2042 General Plan. Today, our Sierra Club is planning to join a lawsuit against Fresno County to halt this plan. At press time, our partners at the League of Women Voters and Central Valley Partnership have filed to challenge the General Plan under the California Environmental Quality Act. And the City of Fresno has filed a separate lawsuit.

The 2000 General Plan at least recognized that urban sprawl was gobbling up precious farmland. It understood that we need to preserve our recreational spaces for a million residents to swim and boat in Millerton Lake, fish in the Kings River, and picnic in our local parks. But our water supplies and natural resources are finite, and we need now to preserve this legacy for future generations. This work cannot wait.

A General Plan is a blueprint for County growth for the next 20 years, assigning land uses for future development. In a giant leap backwards, the County Supervisors authorized sprawl development with virtually no limits, and to backslide from what little decent land use planning has been done. Whereas the previous 2000 General Plan required urban infrastructure to be in place prior to the submission of a development proposal, that requirement has now been eliminated.

At this crucial moment we recognize that the climate crisis is a product of greenhouse gas emissions, our elected County Supervisors are doubling down on their efforts to expand sprawl into our precious open space. Climate change is causing our blazing heat waves and record-breaking rainstorms, and Sierra snowpack will be drastically reduced in the future. Yet our County Supervisors charge ahead to add housing developments, strip malls, distribution centers, and heavy industry. More of the same, until our air pollution becomes intolerable and our local government can no longer function.

Our existing government budget is strained by the practical need to maintain existing roads, water supplies, schools, and police services. A political culture has been created in which our elected officials are afraid to raise taxes to support basic

human needs. We abandon increasing swaths of our urban core, close malls, build on the periphery, blast quarries in our river beds, and pave over our wild spaces.

Other urban areas in the Southwest, from Sacramento to Albuquerque to San Antonio, have refocused on infill development, creating beautiful urban spaces around their rivers. Meanwhile, our Fresno region's precious natural resources and quiet urban refuges, the San Joaquin and Kings Rivers, are being sacrificed to developers who gobble up our recreational playgrounds.

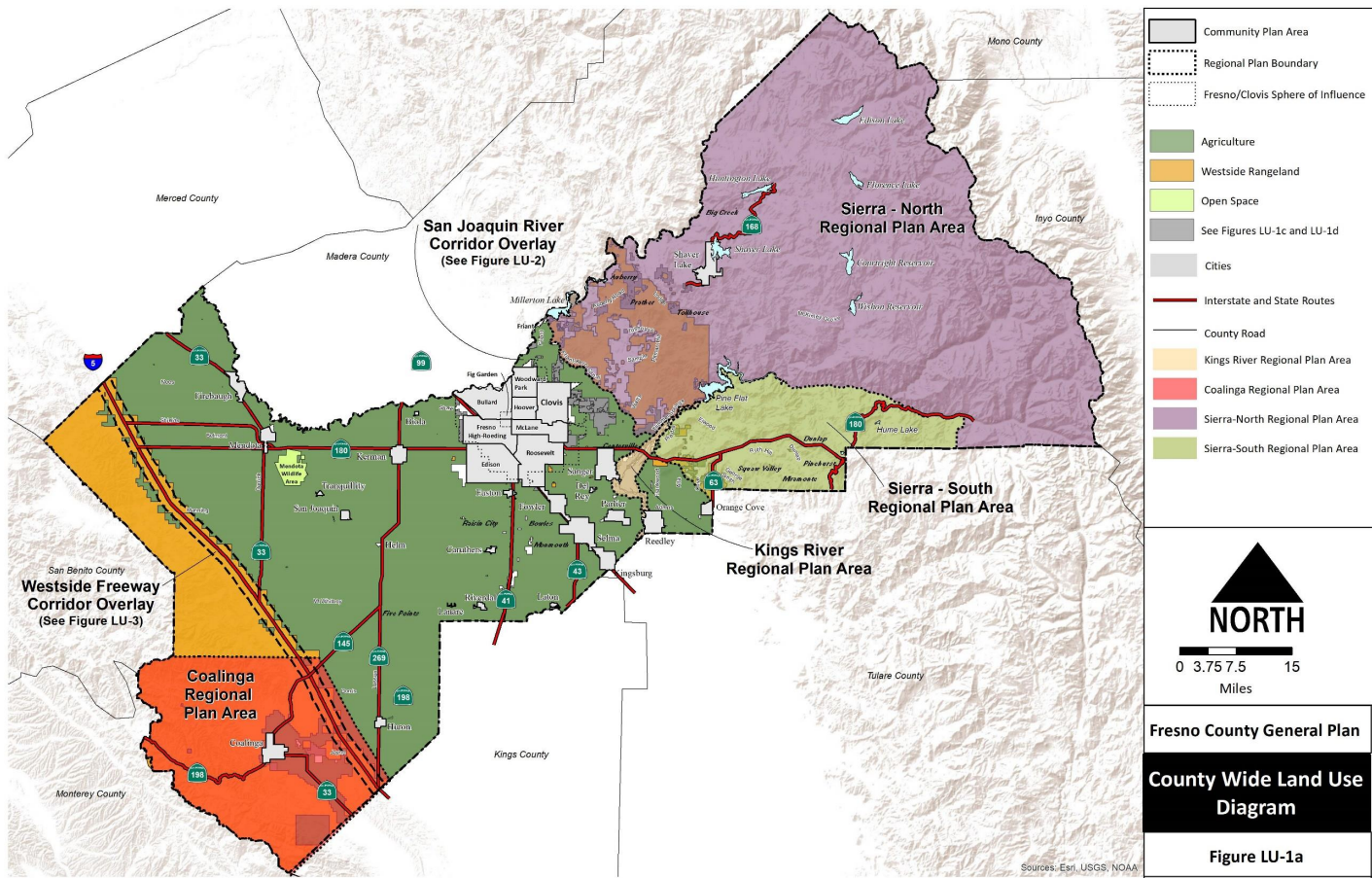
Here at our Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter in Fresno, understand that we have inherited a rich legacy, and know that we can act now to redirect our misguided sprawl machine. We need to join with our allies in the environmental justice, political, and faith movements to forge a path towards a sustainable economy and habitat to pass on to future generations. Please join us in this effort.

What you can do to help: (1) Reach us at tehipite.chapter@sierraclub.org or 559-790-3495 to let us know of your concerns and share your ideas. (2) Notify your friends and family about Fresno County's plans to continue its sprawl into our open space instead of rebuilding our existing neighborhoods. (3) Watchdog the City and County of Fresno by observing meetings, in person or online, take notes, and share issues of concern to you. (4) Submit a Letter to the Editor to the Fresno Bee, and copy us at the above email. (5) Make a tax-deductible contribution to our legal fund.



FRESNO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Figure LU-1a Countywide Land Use Diagram



Join us online for our Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter April lecture

Topic: Being the Curator of the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center and Opportunities for YOU to volunteer!

Date & Time: Wed. April 17th at 7:00 PM, via Zoom.

The Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club will present Conner McIntosh, curator of the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center (formerly known as the LeConte Memorial Lodge).

The Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center has been the Sierra Club's home in Yosemite National Park for 120 years. Come learn about its rich history and what it's like being the curator and manager of this space. Also learn how Sierra Club members can get involved and volunteer as docents at YCHC for short-term stays during summer months.

Visit our website today at sierraclub.org/tehipite to pre-register. The Zoom link is sent on the day of event to everyone who has previously registered.





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

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

**WILPF FRESNO
 MEMBERSHIP
 LUNCH WAS
 AMAZING**

The WILPF Membership Lunch was a wonderful event, with WILPF members putting their spectacular best efforts into food and decoration, transforming the Sarah McCordle Room of the Central Library into a gorgeous WILPF center.

Thanks to all who helped, contributed and worked so hard: Teresa Castillo, Patty Bennett, Cheryl Caldera, Carol Goiburn, Nancy Godwin, Jean Hays, Nancy Hatcher, Sandra Iyall, Kyla Mitchell, Jan Slagter, Leni Villagomez Reeves and Patricia Wells-Solorzano.

Thanks to our impressive speakers!

Thanks to the Raging Grannies who sang for us! In so many cases, they are us!

We were glad to welcome our friends and allies, old and new, and by some incredible good fortune we had just the number of people the room could hold.

"Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion" was our theme, and our speakers were leading examples, as they gave eloquent and insightful answers to questions about equity diversity and inclusion that it was a privilege to hear in full; these few high points don't begin to cover it. All are examples of commitment to working for the future, in a thoroughly dedicated way of life and work.

Our speakers were as follows:

Sukaina Hussain, Deputy Executive Director at the Council on American-Islamic Relations Sacramento Valley/Central California, is a community advocate who has worked to build interfaith relationships with a focus on equity and justice for many years. Driven by her Islamic values, she emphasizes the need to support all communities.

Josie Bustos-Pelayo has been an educator for the past 26 years. Her commitment to education and children is to inspire a love for multicultural/multilingual literacy, learning and culture. She has served on The Jane Addams Children's Book Award Selection Committee (WILPF Fresno gives sets of these books to many libraries in the Fresno County system and to the Jane Addams School), the California Reads Selection Committee for CTA and the REFORMA Pura Belpré Selection Committee.

Aline Reed is a past President and Vice President of the West Fresno Democratic Club, and she is the current President of the Fresno Freedom School. Her political sensibilities were shaped by family members who were Black Panthers, Black Muslim followers of the Hon. Elijah Muhammed and by veterans of the war in Vietnam.

**SOME SPEAKER
 HIGHLIGHTS**

From Sukaina Hussain

Women's opportunities lift the whole community and women's rights are indicators of how well the community, the society as a whole, functions for all.

We as women must advocate for ourselves, and when we succeed, everyone around us succeeds.

It has been important to recognize that even well-intentioned organizations dominated by economically comfortable white people will not be able to represent all. Inclusiveness requires assessment, intentionality and a dedication to change.

Key questions: Who is not here? Who are we making decisions for but not hearing from?

Key focus for people who want to be allies: the "unsexy issues"—those that have no special emotional appeal to us but are crucially important to the people affected. Sexy issues examples were Malala Yousafzai and mandatory hijab wearing. But U.S. drone bombings and U.S. economic sanctions that kill people and that do terrible damage to their lives tend to be ignored.

Palestine is an issue of white supremacy, colonialism, displacement of indigenous people from their ancestral land and attempted genocide.



Raging Grannies singing "Women Hold Up Half the Sky." Photo by LVR



Our speakers (L to R): Sukaina Hussain, Josie Bustos-Pelayo and Aline Reed. Photo by LVR



Sandra Iyall (left) and Cheryl Caldera with the WILPF display case they and Nancy Hatcher created for the Central Library. Photo by Nancy Hatcher

Don't stay quiet. Educate friends and neighbors. Advocate. Stand up and speak out.

Participate. But avoid the savior complex: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time." If you feel that your liberation is bound up with mine, then we can work together.

From Josie Bustos-Pelayo

Josie Bustos-Pelayo arrived in the United States knowing how to read and write Spanish, but this was never recognized or built upon. Here, from the first grade onward, her experiences in education were non-diverse and not representative; non-white history was distorted when it was taught at all. An example was Rosa Parks and her refusal to cede her bus seat to a white person.

It was not until Josie was in college that she learned that this was not due to being tired after working all day, but a conscious protest against discrimination. But what about those children who don't go to college and who will never have the chance to hear the misrepresentations corrected?

Josie studied education to have the opportunity "to be the teacher I never had."

Teachers must advocate for their students and teach students to advocate for themselves. Teachers who want to be inclusive need to look for books that will be inclusive, that will reach students. And teachers must be taught to model advocacy for their students.

Josie's refrain is "Oh, I have a book for you," and her superpower is book-giving.

From Aline Reed

It's hard to believe that we are still talking about this. Equity, diversity, inclusion: Shouldn't this struggle have been won a long time ago? Clearly, racism, hate and the caste system are hard to shake. In the words of Angela Davis *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* (read this book!).

We are in a period when white supremacy and fascism are on the rise and the devil is always busy. We are not going back. Getting out the vote is essential.

A strength of the Central Valley is our diversity. A challenge is finding true allies to work with. Frustrations occur when people are participating, offering their opinions and being ignored.

Oppressed people identify with other oppressed people. Their struggle is my struggle. As Alice Walker said, "The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." Get out and vote.

When you educate a woman, you educate the whole family, and everyone around her. Love on your kids, and let them see Mom, Grandma and Auntie out on the front lines.



Fresno WILPF Chair and Treasurer Teresa Castillo (at left) also fills in for the crucial Middle East Committee, which needs a Chair. Photo by LVR



Ann Caruthers (left), co-creator and first Chair of the Library Committee, and Joan Poss (right), one of our WILPF Fresno founders. Photo by LVR

WILPF MEETING

April 11 (second Thursday), 7 p.m., Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness. Open to all members. Watch your e-mail for an announcement. For info on a possible Zoom option, contact Teresa at taca_03@gmail.com.

STIR IT UP-WILPF

KFCF 88.1 FM
 April 24 (fourth Wednesday), 3 p.m. Jean Hays highlights people 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 or text 559-270-1023.

WOMEN IN BLACK

April 3 (first Wednesday), noon, Courthouse. Check first with Sue Kern at skern@netptc.net or 559-349-3777.

**RENEW YOUR
 MEMBERSHIP NOW!
 HERE'S HOW**

Send dues to WILPF Fresno, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755. 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 or Kyla Mitchell at kyla.noelle@gmail.com.

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

Black Women Reds and Black Women on the Liberal Left

BY MALIK SIMBA

As we left February, which was African American History Month—traditionally referred to as Black History Month—we had Women’s History Month in March. Each month’s purpose is to highlight and celebrate the achievements of each group against the odds of racism, sexism, class exploitation and the remnants of caste ideology of hierarchy and privilege.

What seems peculiar is an emphasis on Martin Luther King during Black History Month and not on the women workers and organizers of civil rights change such as Jo Ann Robinson, Daisy Bates, Fannie Lou Hamer, Diane Nash, Rosa Parks and many others.

The fact is that King cut his political teeth during the Montgomery Boycott in 1955, as Parks cut her political teeth in 1933 by working with the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA) to free the Scottsboro Boys, all falsely accused of raping two part-time prostitutes who were white women.

It was Parks’ activism on behalf of Recy Taylor and Gertrude Perkins, both victims of rape either by white men as private citizens or white police officers, that led Parks to join the Committee for Equal Justice in 1944.

Parks is on both the political left and a progressive liberal because of her support of trade unionism and workers’ rights as demonstrated by her affiliation with A. Philip Randolph and his Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids. As early as Feb. 14, 1936, with the first meeting of the leftist National Negro Congress, Black women on the left, with many being communist, helped develop a resolution to unionize domestic workers, of which 85% were Black. Park’s progressive liberalism is etched in history books.

Grace Campbell, one of the first Black women to join the CPUSA, observed in 1928 that “Negro women workers are the most abused, exploited and discriminated against of all American workers, not only by the capitalist system...but by the unenlightened race prejudice which is found even within the working class and is used by the employers to drive a wedge between black and white workers and thus destroy their unity and fighting power.”

Campbell was a member of the 1919 African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), which was a socialist cadre of whom many were of West Indian ancestry. The ABB voiced an opposite perspective about the evil of capitalist “democracy” in America than the Black nationalist back-to-Africa perspective of Marcus Garvey.

Later, during the Great Depression, Campbell joined the Harlem Tenants League to combat avaricious landlords evicting renters who were jobless, starving and, like millions of workers at this time, down on their luck and asking anyone, “Brother, can you spare a dime?”

The famous Marxist historian Herbert Aptheker observed of the proletariat castouts, “White workers were starving, but Black workers were starving to death.”

Advocating for the interests of the working class elevated the CPUSA in the eyes of millions, and a united front was built across class lines, in part because the United States was an ally of the Soviet Union in the 1940s as they fought against the evils of Nazism and the militarism of Italy and Japan. Black women “Reds” were in the vanguard of this advocacy.

A famous advocacy case involved, in 1948, the Georgia sharecropper/peasant Rosa Lee Ingram and her sons, who defended her against the attempted rape by a white plantation owner who was killed in the confrontation. It was Black women on the left and liberal civil rights Black women

who organized and championed support for the Ingram family.

Urban proletariat women were championed by Black women in the CPUSA. As early as the 1930s, Black women workers accounted for 39% of all women who work.

Leftist Williana Burroughs noted that “in America, the continued search of the bosses for cheap labour has a considerable body of Negro proletarian women.”

Conjoined in these capitalist exploitative social relations is what the future giant of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, liberal leftist Ella Baker, called the “Bronx Slave Market.”

Writing in the NAACP’s news organ, *The Crisis*, in 1939, Baker said that in an enclave located “at 167th Street and Jerome Avenue and at Simpson and Westchester avenues...a market come rain or shine, cold or hot, Negro women, old and young—sometimes bedraggled, sometimes neatly dressed—waited expectantly for Bronx housewives to buy their strength and energy for an hour” at pennies on the hour.

As one can see, Black politics were eclectic. Living in the “Belly of the Beast,” capitalism, Black women Reds and Black women in left-liberal organizations moved in social activism to “fight to win” against a system of racial oppression. One can readily see this political pragmatism in the life and times of Charlotta Bass, the owner and editor of the progressive left newspaper, the *California Eagle*.

Bass’s left leaning could be seen when she ran for vice president of the United States in 1952 under the banner of the Progressive Party. Bass also lent her leadership voice in the Los Angeles branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association founded decades earlier by Garvey.

Bass’s eclectic politics led her to being actively involved in the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP, and she became the national chair of Sojourners for Truth and Justice, an early Black womanist organization.

Another complex but non-contradictory woman was the famous Communist Party member and liberal progressive playwright Lorraine Hansberry. Hansberry wrote the 1959 award-winning play *A Raisin in the Sun*. The play’s plot revolves around a matriarch in a Harlem high-rise apartment, also known as a “ghetto in the sky,” who inherits enough money from her late husband to move her family to a new suburban home. This move permits her family to move from the inner environs of chocolate city to the vanilla suburbs.

A representative from the all-white enclave arrives at the door of the Black family and offers to buy the home on which the matriarch has put a down payment. The matriarch rejects the offer and decides to move her family to the “burbs” to integrate it or, as in the theme song in the Black sitcom *The Jeffersons*, the family was “moving on up.”

As an intellectual who embraced the class question, Hansberry, a lesbian and member of the Daughters of Bilitis, moved easily between two ideologies, Marxism and integration.

These two political ideas became the locomotive of social change. The Black Panther Party (BPP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC/SNICK) embraced these ideas, or the idea of Black Power for the SNCC, and the women members of these organizations believed that one or another other of these ideas would lead to progressive social change for American society.

One such believer in social change was Elaine Brown, who became a powerful voice in the Marxist-Leninist BPP and recorded their theme revolutionary song, “Seize the Time.” Brown became minister of information for the BPP and started the famous Free Breakfast for Children program; upon leaving the BPP, she wrote a tell-all memoir, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story*.

What connects these individual Black women is a bridge encapsulated in the life and times of Molly Moon. Moon was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1907. She attended the All-Black Meharry Medical School in Nashville and worked as a



Rosa Parks being fingerprinted on Feb. 22, 1956, as an indicted leader of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. She was one of 73 people rounded up by deputies that day after a grand jury charged 113 African Americans for organizing the boycott. This was a few months after her arrest on Dec. 1, 1955, for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on a segregated municipal bus in Montgomery, Ala.
Photo courtesy of The Commons

pharmacist before joining the National Urban League (NUL) and founding the NUL Guild, which became its fundraising arm.

Moon connected with billionaire Winthrop Rockefeller and became a fundraising socialite. Her journey to the left began when she and other “New Negroes” traveled to Russia in 1932 to act in a movie on the Black proletariat in America named *Black and White*, but the film was never completed. In Russia, Moon witnessed the class progressivism of a Marxist/socialist nation.

As a socialite, Moon bridged the white, wealthy, liberal progressives who helped fund the movement for Black civil rights. Her baton was handed off to far too many for this essay to discuss.

However, let me mention the leadership of Fannie Lou Hamer, who helped found the MFDP during the 1964 “Freedom Summer.” During that summer, hundreds of White students, many of them women from northern college campuses, traveled to Mississippi to register Black peasants to vote. Hamer had been a peasant/sharecropper who picked cotton on a plantation, but she was fired when the plantation owner found out she was an activist.

Hamer led an MFDP delegation to the National Democratic Convention in 1964 in Atlantic City, N.J., to challenge the all-white delegation from Mississippi.

Hamer, in fighting for her party to be the proper multiracial party to be seated and vote for the designated presidential candidate, gave a speech with these words: “Is this America? The land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hook because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings in America.”

Both Black women who joined the Communist Party U.S.A. and Black women who joined the many liberal-left integrationist parties sought to resolve Hamer’s question by their political involvement and activities.

Malik Simba is a professor emeritus of Africana studies and history at Fresno State.

Black Women at Highest Risk for Pregnancy Deaths

BY VIVIENNE AGUILAR

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

Khadija Fox screamed in pain when the doctor forcefully pulled her baby out in a Stockton hospital birthing room years ago.

The attending nurse yelled at her to stop screaming, so she did.

As a young Black woman in her early 20s with little knowledge of the birthing process, she remembered feeling as if she were being treated like a child.

“You almost forget you’re a grown woman. You’re at the mercy of everyone around you,” Fox recalled of that memory. “I thought this was normal.”

Fox says the birth of her child wouldn’t have been such a traumatic experience if she had been encouraged to listen to her body.

Fast forward about a decade. Today, Fox, 37, is a certified doula—a woman whose services include personal, emotional and physical support throughout a client’s pregnancy.

Unfortunately, Fox says negative experiences with the medical system aren’t uncommon for Black women across the board.

Because of recent changes in state law, however, it’s now easier for pregnant Black women to get help they need from certified doulas like Fox.

It started at the beginning of last year when Medi-Cal benefits were extended to doula work. Then, AB 904, authored by Assembly Member Lisa Calerdon (D-Whittier), was passed in the fall of 2023.

The new law is the first in the nation to expand access to doulas within private insurance networks. It states the cultural, institutional, environmental and social needs of Black, Indigenous and marginalized birthing people are not being met.

The new law lists those factors as the reasons why the United States has the highest rate of maternal mortality among higher-income countries. That equates to roughly 1,200 pregnancy-related deaths annually, three out of every five of which are preventable.

The new law could also be helpful in the San Joaquin Valley, which has some of the highest rates of infant mortality for Black and brown babies in the state, according to the California Department of Public Health.

For example, San Joaquin County had the highest rates of Black infant mortality in 2023, with a rate of 12.4 deaths per 1,000 live births. In the same study, Fresno County was found to have the highest rate of infant mortality among Latinos at 5.9 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Black women have the highest maternal mortality rate in the United States at 69.9 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2021. That’s almost three times the rate for white women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In addition, AB 904 created a new section of California insurance law that will require providers within the state to address the high rates of maternal and infant mortality through the creation of mental health programs and doula coverage by Jan. 1, 2025.

The Value of Doulas

There are several types of doulas dedicated to educating and supporting people on

Continues on page 23

Are you sick of gun violence? So are we. Join us on April 9th

We are Enough Gun Violence/Brady Greater Fresno. As the local chapter of Brady United – the nation’s leading organization fighting gun violence – we work tirelessly to educate, advocate, and take action *in our own community* to reduce gun violence.



Are you interested in working with us to make a real difference? We invite you to attend our upcoming **free community meeting** to find out more. Light refreshments will be provided.

When: Tuesday, April 9, 2024, 6:00-7:30 pm

Where: St. James Episcopal Cathedral, Fireside Room (4147 E Dakota Ave, Fresno)



To stay up to date on our other activities and events, please register using this QR code, also follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/fresnobrady.

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Marion Masada: Survivor, Historian, Teacher

BY VIC BEDOIAN

Marion Masada is a survivor of one of America's most tragic and misguided actions. As we prepared for our interview, she gently admonished me. "Call it a concentration camp, please," she advised. This came after my casual reference to the imprisonment of more than 120,000 Japanese citizens in the official parlance of an "internment."

She knows from her own life and as an historian that it is too soft a word to describe the experience. She not only survived in the ensuing post-World War II years but also thrived. In part, that was due to her inner strength and the strength derived from those traumatic events.

"I had a very happy childhood growing up because my father was a fun-loving man," she said. "He liked to take us children to the circus and all these fun things that pertained to children. This was a chance for my mother to get a rest. And so that worked out fine."

Born Marion Nakamura in Salinas, her early life was spent in one of the most productive farming regions in the state. Like other Japanese American families, they were an important part of the Valley's economic life.

Marion recalls that her father "was very successful at farming. He grew all kinds of vegetables, and he marketed them himself to the grocery stores. And his vegetables were nice and firm and wonderfully presented."

Because her father was not a citizen and could not own land, he rented the farmland of a widow. "She had a beautiful house near the main road," noted Marion. "And then our house was in the back someplace, a smaller house."

"I remember my father said when I turned seven that I had to learn how to cook while my mother and father worked in the fields. My three older brothers were working with my parents, so somebody had to cook the rice, wash the rice and cook it."

That happy life changed forever on Feb. 19, 1942, with Executive Order 9066. Soon, her family was herded into the Salinas rodeo grounds with thousands of other Japanese Americans while 10 concentration camps were being quickly built in America's deserts.

Marion's mother rushed to get the family ready to move, even sewing the duffel bags. They were only allowed two duffel bags to hold everything they might need, not knowing where they would end up.

"So, she just stuffed it as tight as she could so that we would be provided for. She didn't know where we were going and if things would be available to us when we needed it. And so, she's trying to think of all these things."

"It's amazing how she thought of these things, you know, not knowing where we were going, if the climate was going to be hot or cold."

Soon, the family was loaded onto old, dilapidated trains and sent on their way to the prison camp complex at Poston, Ariz.

"The day we left, my mother loaded us children with clothes: sweaters, blouses, jackets, coats, everything. And when we arrived in Arizona, it was 120 degrees. Coming from Salinas, which is near Monterey—so cool to amazingly hot."

Located in Arizona a few miles across the California border near the small Mojave Desert town of Parker, the War Relocation Center sprawled along the Colorado River in a valley that was part of the Colorado River Indian Reservation. It was the largest of the nation's 10 "relocation centers" with 18,000 people in three camps separated from each other by three miles.

According to the comprehensive historical archive maintained by Densho.org, the Poston camp was unique in other ways too.

It had a more diverse professional staff including many African Americans.

There was considerable labor unrest including a mass strike and numerous smaller strikes. Often, disputes were over working conditions and meager pay. Many workers left camp jobs for agricultural work in the area.

And there was politics. Poston had the largest number of draft resisters of any camp in the nation, as well as the largest number of Nisei inducted when the draft returned in 1944.

Culture thrived there as well. People delved in a variety of arts and crafts. An open-air theater was built that hosted plays and movies. Two Japanese-language literary magazines were published featuring locally created poetry and prose.

Despite their imprisoned conditions, the people there kept their pride, their sense of social justice and the fortitude to stand up for themselves against authority.

All that was to come later. When the Nakamura family arrived, they faced the same stark reality that was unfolding for the other 120,000 or so Japanese Americans who had been so rudely and unjustly uprooted from their former lives. Now the family had to cram themselves into a small room, as Marion vividly pictures.

"It was just one room that our whole family was in—25 feet by 25 feet with one light bulb. That's all. And then the floors, the wooden floors, there's space in between so that the grass, you know, would peek through."



Marion Masada in her Fresno home. Photo by Peter Maiden

"There was no partition. So, we partitioned, but with sheets hanging from the ceiling. There was mom and dad, and five of us children. So, we were crowded."

"I remember sleeping on the floor because the cots took too much room. And this way we could line up the girls on one side and the boys on the other side."

Soon, they settled into their new normal and everyone had to pitch in, "My mother and father both worked in the kitchen. And I never saw my brothers from sunup to sundown. When they woke up in the morning and got dressed, they were gone for the day, and they just played with their friends."

"Then, my mother had a baby, so I did all the family laundry. I remember that. I enjoyed doing that. And then my sister below me helped my mother with the baby."

That new normal included the abnormality of regimented camp life. Families had to change what they traditionally ate for mass-produced American fare. For Marion, it calls to mind never having a private family meal during the entirety of their imprisonment.

"You ate what the kitchen provided, and there was a bell that would ring and we all lined up to, like, what do you call it? Cafeteria style. Three meals a day. Yeah. I remember breakfast was either corn flakes or pancakes. And for years and years," she laughed, "I couldn't eat pancakes and cold cereal."

Eventually, schools were set up and Marion has positive memories of her teachers, especially her fifth-grade teacher Ms. Fox, "She was a wonderful teacher. And she read stories to us in the afternoon."

"She said, 'I want to give you a motto to live by, and the motto is this: Only my best is good enough.' And I remember that all my years."

Marion took a small measure of time for herself between school and work chores. Her natural intelligence and curiosity led her to books. "I read. Churches from the outside sent books. Nancy Drew mysteries, [the] Bobbsey Twins and some cowboy stories—just anything and everything they sent."

"They opened up a library, and there were librarians who were Japanese. That's where my love of reading comes from. And because free time for me was not always convenient with other friends."

After a while, she even joined the camp's Girl Scout troop.

One of Marion's friendships sadly led to a lifetime trauma. "I was [around] 11 years old. I was molested by this man. And I was so traumatized that nothing came out of my mouth. And I couldn't scream. I couldn't say anything. It was nighttime."

"His young daughter was a friend of my sister. She invited my sister and me to sleep overnight in her house. It was her father who molested me. Oh, wow."

"It was so traumatic. I had no voice."

It haunted her for a long time afterward in dreams and waking life. Years later at memorial events, Marion met other women who were raped in the camps. It was one more harrowing indignity added to the overall experience of prison life.

At war's end, Marion and her family moved back to California. Her mother considered and rejected an offer to move to Seabrook, N.J., to work in a frozen food factory and live in the company town there. But the place reminded them too much of the concentration camp life they had just left.

Where to go? They had lost everything they owned before the war, and Salinas was still unwelcoming toward Japanese Americans.

"We headed back to Salinas, but they said 'we don't want you back,' and probably there were midnight riders trying to get you. So, my mother said, 'we'll go to Watsonville,' which is the next town over."

"We stayed in the Buddhist church. All of us used churches as a temporary base until we could find a place to live and earn enough money to buy a car so that it could transport our family."

The family found housing and worked in the fruit orchards around San Jose. To ease the burden of a family of 10 living in a small house, Marion lived with a Caucasian family for a time on her weekends off work.

During high school, she met an Italian girl who invited her to live with her family. "They loved me and treated me so wonderfully. It taught me that all Caucasian people were not bad."

Marion worked as a maid through high school and two years of college but eventually moved out on her own as a young working woman in San Francisco. However, prejudice still lingered as she learned when a potential employer asked her to use a Caucasian name for a telephone solicitation job.

"He said, 'your name sounds too foreign.' So, I said, 'this is Ms. Grant.' By the time I finished that conversation, I was so angry that he would tell me something like that. That was not acceptable. I had no words for this man. I grabbed my purse and I left."

Although growing up a Buddhist, Marion was attracted to the Christian faith, which has played an important role in her life ever since. In the years after the war, she worked at office jobs in San Francisco.

She dated but did not seriously consider marriage until meeting Saburo Masada. He was a theological student in San Francisco and a San Joaquin Valley native from Caruthers.

Saburo's modest upbringing on a raisin farm was like Marion's own life before the war. He was also swept up as a 12-year-old into concentration camp life. The Masada family was sent to the Jerome War Relocation Center, where his father soon died of pneumonia, which left his mother on her own to take care of her seven children.



Marion Masada points out her mother in a photograph taken in a concentration camp in Arizona. Photo by Peter Maiden



A scale model of a barracks in a concentration camp, made in the camp, from the collection of Marion Masada. Photo by Peter Maiden

Graduating from San Francisco Theological Seminary, Saburo became a Presbyterian minister and wed Marion on Sept. 30, 1956. He served in Watsonville; Ogden, Utah; and then Stockton in a ministry dedicated to social justice and compassion.

Together, they raised three daughters. After four decades in the ministry, he retired and the couple moved to Fresno. That began a new chapter in their lives. They transformed their own traumatic experiences of enduring racism, losing their rights as citizens and being prejudicially imprisoned into a powerful educational instrument.

Marion emphasizes that she and Saburo were determined to teach new generations about the terrible things that had happened in the past. "I want people to learn that even though bad things happen we can survive and come out stronger people and be able to tell our stories in spite of all that has happened."

Another facet of their kindness was manifest in the regular visits Saburo and Marion made to a prisoner on death row giving her a respite to talk with people and feel like a human being.

Saburo died in 2020, but Marion still carries on. "I go to the prison and visit this woman. She was on death row, and the lawyer was able to get her off of death row about two [or] three years ago [and is now] working to get her free on compassionate release."

Marion and Saburo became a force of nature in educating generations of Americans about what they went through and the value of knowing our collective history. They crossed the country making presentations to thousands of people about the power of love and compassion.

In turn, they have been showered with accolades for their many distinguished accomplishments. Marion, at 91 years old, continues teaching and inspiring.

"I feel that as a person who's gone through it, I need to be responsible for these stories and get them out there to tell students, because they're the future."

"And they need to know that they have a voice. They need to know that they can speak up because we're in America where we can speak.

"We don't have to burn buildings and kill people to tell our stories. We can just speak up. We just need to be brave enough to speak up.

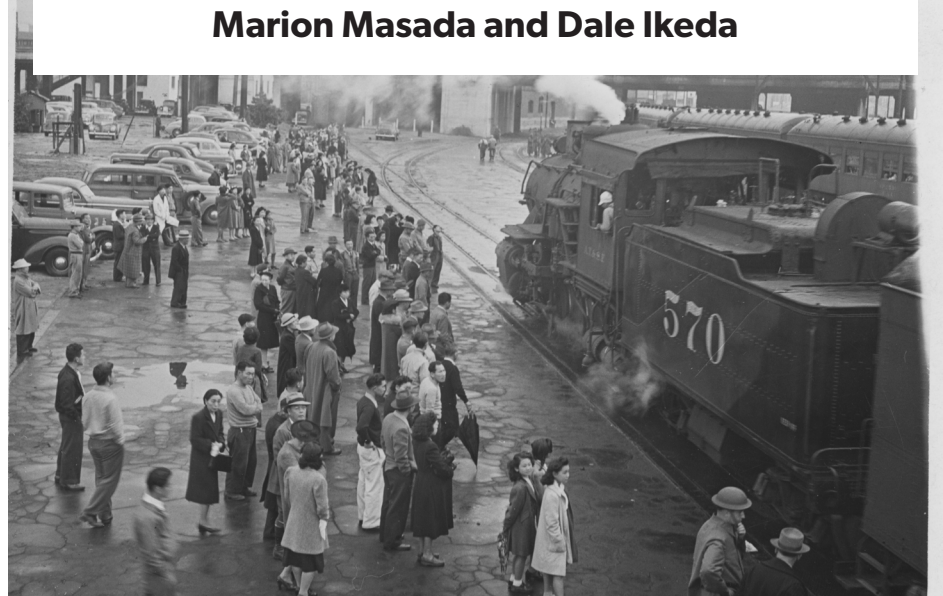
"This is America, where we have freedom of speech, and we need to make use of the voice that we have. Otherwise, history is going to repeat itself over and over."

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.

Fresno City College



Japanese American Incarceration Panel with Marion Masada and Dale Ikeda



Learn about the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II from the direct experience of Marion Masada, a survivor of America's concentration camps. Also, Judge Dale Ikeda, whose parents were incarcerated, will discuss the history and legacy of the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans.

A reception will immediately follow the panel in the new Social Justice Center (OAB 139).



For more information, contact Eduardo Stanley at eduardostanley@comcast.net or Linda Kobashigawa at linda.kobashigawa@fresnocitycollege.edu.

Sponsored by the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance, the *Community Alliance* newspaper and FCC Asian American Studies.



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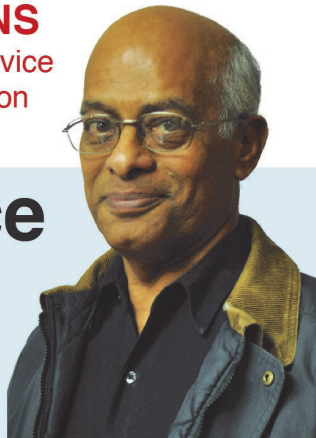
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Call for PERMANENT and IMMEDIATE Ceasefire and Humanitarian Aid into Gaza!

After the Oct. 7, attacks on Israel by Hamas, Israel immediately launched attacks on Gaza. Since then, at least 31,726 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed, 70% of them women and children. Israel has placed Gaza under total siege—blocking access to fuel, water, electricity, food, medical supplies, and other goods. Thousands of relief trucks wait at the border.

Here are 5 things you need to know: (adapted from American Friends Service Committee).

	<p>1. Violence did not begin with the attacks on October 7. Over 100 years ago, the First Zionist Congress, held in Switzerland, settled on the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine, then part of the Ottoman empire and 90% Palestinian Arab. In 1917, the UK issued the Balfour Declaration, promising a "national home" for Jewish people in British Mandate Palestine after WW1.....By 1967, Israel occupied all of historic Palestine, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.</p>
	<p>2. Last year 2023 was one of the most violent years in Palestine in more than a decade. At least 247 Palestinians—including 47 children were killed. Gaza has been under a violent blockade for over 16 years. Even before Israel's current assault began, 80% of people in Gaza relied on international assistance to survive, over 50% were unemployed, hospitals lacked vital supplies, 96% of water was undrinkable and electricity sporadic. Between January 1, 2008 and September 19, 2023, more than 5,365 people have been killed in Palestine by the IDF, including 1,206 children.</p>
	<p>3. Under international law, both Palestinians and Israelis have rights to use violence in self-defense. The same laws of war lay out obligations for occupying powers, and limit their actions. For decades, Israel has systematically violated its obligations under international law toward Palestinians, which they continue to do.</p>



4. The U.S. funds, arms, and supports injustice, inequality, and violence perpetrated by the Israeli government. The U.S. provides \$3.8 billion in military aid to Israel every year. Now Congress has approved another \$14.5 billion, and all this to a country with a population of about 6 million Jewish Israelis and 6 million Palestinians.



5. YOU CAN TAKE ACTION NOW! Call Congress Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121) and the White House Comment Line (202-456-1111) to demand permanent ceasefire and humanitarian aid into Gaza now!

Find your local representatives at house.gov or Call Congress Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121).

It takes less than **10** minutes per day to take action.

We have provided a call script below you may follow or look off of. It is important to give your full name and address (including zip code) if leaving a voicemail so that your call may be counted.



Call Script-

Hello, my name is [NAME] and I'm a taxpaying constituent from [CITY].
I'm calling to demand [NAME] to support

1. the immediate and permanent de-escalation and ceasefire in Gaza,
2. humanitarian aid to be let through to reach the Palestinian people,
3. and to oppose funding Israel's war on Palestine—no more money, no more weapons.

My address is [ADDRESS, ZIP CODE]. Thank you.

It is important to show solidarity with the Palestinian people every day by making these calls until a permanent ceasefire is reached. Don't get discouraged, just because you don't see immediate outcome does NOT mean our calls don't matter.

Want to take more action? Send emails in addition to your daily calls and follow @fresnoforpalastine on instagram for local events! For more info, go to www.peacefresno.org

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Peace & Social Justice Calendar April 2024

Sponsored by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence

ArtHop Exhibit: David Hembree, White Noise (through April 13) Ewert Art Gallery, Warkentine Culture and Arts Center, Fresno Pacific University, 4838 E. Butler Ave. David Hembree creates works of various media and scale that dig into popular culture from the artist's childhood. For more info, contact 559-453-3677 or wayne.steffen@fresno.edu.

MON 01 **Democratic Women in Action** 6 p.m. Democratic Party HQ, 1033 U St. For more info, call 559-325-0540.

TUE 02 **Tower District Design Review Committee** 5 p.m. Room 2165, Fresno City Hall. For more info, contact 559-621-8045 or luke.risner@fresno.gov.

National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) 5:30 p.m. Los Amigos Restaurant, 5088 N. Blackstone Ave. Speaker: Sara Mirhadi, chief programs officer, Poverello House. For more info, contact 559-222-6212 or joanne@pbyoga.com.

KFCF 88.1 FM: Nuestro Foro 7 p.m. Radio show in Spanish hosted by Eduardo Stanley. For more info, visit kfcf.org.

WED 03 **KFCF 88.1 FM: Stir It Up!** 3 p.m. *Community Alliance* radio show hosted by Daren Miller. For more info, visit kfcf.org.

Workshop: Introduction to Podcasting 6 p.m.–8 p.m. CMAC (Community Media Access Collaborative), 1555 Van Ness Ave. Learn how to create a successful podcast: the basic structure of a podcast, the equipment needed and create a teaser for your show. Attendees are encouraged to come with an idea for a podcast. Free for CMAC members, \$10 for non-members. For more info, contact 559-266-2622 or info@cmac.tv.

THU 04 **ArtHop Downtown/Tower District** 5 p.m.–8 p.m. Museums, studios, galleries and other venues open their exhibits free to the public. For more info, visit [FACarthop](https://www.facebook.com/FACarthop) on Facebook.

ArtHop at CMAC 5 p.m.–8 p.m. CMAC (Community Media Access Collaborative), 1555 Van Ness Ave. Celebrating National Poetry Month with a Poetry Slam. Also during April, celebrating the Youth Voices Program by showcasing the media created by past participants about Central Valley issues that matter to them. For more info, contact 559-266-2622 or info@cmac.tv.

FRI 05 **CineCulture: Promises of Our Grandmothers** 5:30 p.m. Peters Educational Center Auditorium, Fresno State. Discussants: Gingger Shankar (director) and Erin Cook (producer). This unique multimedia performance includes a documentary film about the Giniw Collective, a diverse resistance group founded by Tara Houska and led by Indigenous women and two-spirit frontline warriors dedicated to protecting Mother Earth, defending the water and living in balance as they fight Enbridge's Line 3, a pipeline that will carve trenches through 340 miles of Minnesota's unspoiled wetlands. Sponsor: Department of Art, Design and Art History. For more info, contact mhusain@csufresno.edu or visit cineculture.csufresno.edu/.

Author Reading: Cynthia Guardado 6:30 p.m. Room 170, Kremen Education Building, Fresno State. Guardado is the daughter of Salvadoran born parents, a poet and an activist. She is the author of two poetry collections, and translated and transcribed interviews with journalist and Cuban exile Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, which were published in *The Madrid Conversations*. She is currently a professor of English at Fullerton College. Sponsor: Chicana Writers and Artists Association. For more info, contact 559-278-1569 or cwaasubmissions@gmail.com.

SAT 06 **Kennedy Club of the San Joaquin Valley** 9 a.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-435-4043 or claval@comcast.net.

Workshop: Peace Games Simulation 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Fellowship Hall, First Mennonite Church, 1208 L St., Reedley. Multi-party peace process simulation based in Northeast Asia. Through this role-play-style workshop, participants will learn about regional issues in Northeast Asia and the unique challenges and opportunities of negotiating and peacemaking in the 21st century. Sponsors: Reedley Peace Center and American Friends Service Committee. For more info, contact jdeibert@asfc.org.

San Joaquin Valley Stop the Hate Coalition 10 a.m. Forum Hall 101, Fresno City College. Theme: United Against Hate. Keynote speaker: California Attorney General Rob Bonta. Workshops: What To Do If You Are a Victim of a Hate Crime, Stop the Hate Coalition Campaign, Bystander Training and Know Your Rights! For more info, contact 559-978-4502 or mikerhodes@fresnoalliance.com.

West Fresno Community Centers Planning Project 10 a.m.–1 p.m. Frank H. Ball Park, 760 Mayor Ave. Topic: Frank H. Ball and Maxie L. Parks community centers. Share your feedback on what you would like to see in your

neighborhood community center. For more info, contact 559-621-7832 or district3@fresno.gov.

Central Valley Leadership Round Table 10 a.m. Antojitos Guanacos, 260 Oller St., Mendota. For more info, contact 559-250-1253 or gamayer20@gmail.com.

MON 08 **Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA)** 5 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact swgamble@aol.com.

TUE 09 **Black American Political Association of California (BAPAC)** 6 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-287-1308 or bapacfresno@gmail.com.

Community Meeting on Gun Violence 6 p.m. Fireside Room, St. James Episcopal Church, 4147 E. Dakota Ave. Hosted by Enough Gun Violence/Brady Greater Fresno, which is the local chapter of Brady United—the nation's leading organization fighting gun violence. For more info, visit facebook.com/fresnobrady.

Stonewall Democratic Club 6:30 p.m. Los Amigos Restaurant, 5088 N. Blackstone Ave. For more info, contact 559-285-1641 or info@fresnostonewalldemocrats.org.

KFCF 88.1 FM: Nuestro Foro 7 p.m. Radio show in Spanish hosted by Eduardo Stanley. For more info, visit kfcf.org.

WED 10 **Speakers Forum** 11 a.m. Old Administration Building Auditorium, Fresno City College. Speaker: Jose Antonio Vargas, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author of *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*. For more info, contact 559-489-2218.

KFCF 88.1 FM: Stir It Up! 3 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence radio show hosted by Josh Shurley. For more info, visit kfcf.org.

Community Budget Meeting 5:30 p.m. dinner, 6 p.m. meeting. Addams Elementary School, 2117 W. McKinley Ave. Fresno City Council District 3—Central Unified. Interpretation available. For more info, contact 559-621-7832 or district3@fresno.gov.

THU 11 **Panel Discussion: Chinese American Women Leaders** 11 a.m. Room 251, Old Administration Building, Fresno City College. A panel of speakers will discuss their identity as Chinese American women and their path to leadership. Speakers: Florida Cheung, principal, Design Science MCHS; Malissa Lau, U.S. military veteran; Dr. Ya-Shu Liang, director, clinical psychology, Alliant University; and Janice Wong, student activities, Fresno City College. Moderated by Dr. Gena Lew Gong, instructor, Asian American Studies, Fresno City College. Co-sponsored by the Chinese American Museum Project (CAMP). For more info, contact johncho888@gmail.com.

Community Budget Meeting 5:30 p.m. dinner, 6 p.m. meeting. Mary Ella Brown Community Center, 1350 E. Annadale Ave. Fresno City Council District 3—Southwest. Interpretation available. For more info, contact 559-621-7832 or district3@fresno.gov.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) 7 p.m. Online/in person, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. For more info, contact 559-360-8054 or taca_03@ymail.com.

FRI 12 **CineCulture: Signs of War** 5:30 p.m. Peters Educational Center Auditorium, Fresno State. Discussants: Juri Rechinsky (director) and Pierre Crom (co-director and photographer featured in the film). After years of work in the Dutch Parliament, a photographer decides that "it might be more interesting to follow the results of their political decisions rather than make propaganda for politicians." In February 2014, he traveled with a one-way plane ticket to Crimea in Ukraine, one day before its annexation by Russia. From that moment on, he found himself amid a rapidly escalating conflict and decided to stay. For more info, contact mhusain@csufresno.edu or visit cineculture.csufresno.edu/.

SAT 13 **Earth Day Fresno** 10 a.m.–4 p.m. West Lawn, Fresno City College. Electric vehicle test ride and drive, educational exhibits, bike clinic, kids' activities, food trucks, handmade items for sale and more. Nonprofit organizations, government agencies and local businesses provide information, goods and services related to sustainable living and environmental stewardship. Sponsors: Environmental Collaborative of Central California, Central Valley Young Environmental Advocates and Fresno City College Math, Science and Engineering Division. For more info, visit ecocencal.org/earth-day-fresno-2/.

West Fresno Community Centers Planning Project 10 a.m.–1 p.m. Sunset Community Center, 1345 W. Eden Ave. Topic: Sunset and Mary Ella Brown community centers. Share your feedback on what you would like to see in your neighborhood community center. For more info, contact 559-621-7832 or district3@fresno.gov.

Central Valley Progressive PAC 3:30 p.m. Via Zoom. Agenda: November General Election, getting more progressives elected and the annual fundraiser. For more info, contact 559-978-4504 or simone.rhodes@seiu521.org.

Vibe Soul Food Festival 5 p.m.–10 p.m. Trinity Gardens, 1568 N. Millbrook Ave. Celebrate the rich cultural heritage of soul food with people from all walks of life. Enjoy a day of food, music and community. Music by Mali Music and Mysti Que. Hosted by Feather Da'Wyz. For tickets or more info, visit fresnofest.com.

MON 15 **Black Maternal Health Symposium** 9 a.m.–12:30 p.m. 2201 Calaveras St. Theme: Our Bodies Still Belong to Us: Black Reproductive Justice Now! Guest of honor: California Surgeon General Dr. Diana Ramos. Uniting community members, providers, and hospital and health plan executives to prioritize restorative reproductive justice now. For more info, contact 559-790-1905 or shantay@black-enterprises.com.

Panel Discussion: Sikhs in America and the Birth of Khalsa! 12:30 p.m. Room 251, Old Administration Building, Fresno City College. Learn about the Sikh American community, their values, beliefs, customs and their long history of contributions to California, especially in the Central Valley. Moderated by Fresno City College Dean Gurminder Sangha and featuring panelists Manvinder Singh and Gurbeer Singh. Sponsor: Sikh Council of Central California. For more info, contact 559-606-4066 or sikhcouncilca.fresno93@gmail.com.

Community Budget Meeting 5:30 p.m. dinner, 6 p.m. meeting. Tower Theater, 815 E. Olive Ave. Fresno City Council District 3—Tower District. Interpretation available. For more info, contact 559-621-7832 or district3@fresno.gov.

TUE 16 **Community Budget Meeting** 5:30 p.m. dinner, 6 p.m. meeting. The Monarch, 1101 F St. Fresno City Council District 3—Downtown/Chinatown. Interpretation available. For more info, contact 559-621-7832 or district3@fresno.gov.

Central Valley Partnership 5:30 p.m. Location TBD. For more info, contact 559-967-1940 or agrariandemocracy@gmail.com or visit centralvalleypartnership.org.

Big Tell 2024 Showcase 6 p.m.–9 p.m. Tower Theater, 815 E. Olive Ave. Stories created by talented local filmmakers spotlight the people and places that make the Central Valley so remarkable. Sponsors: Community Media Access Collaborative, James B. McClatchy Foundation, Central Valley Community Foundation, KDA Creative Corps, California Arts Council and Valley PBS. For more info, contact 559-266-2622 or info@cmac.tv.

KFCF 88.1 FM: Nuestro Foro 7 p.m. Radio show in Spanish hosted by Eduardo Stanley. For more info, visit kfcf.org.

WED 17 **KFCF 88.1 FM: Speaking Truth to Empire** 3 p.m. Hosted by Dan Yaseen. For more info, visit kfcf.org.

San Joaquin Valley Democratic Club 6:30 p.m. Denny's Restaurant, 1110 E. Shaw Ave. For more info, contact 559-312-3925.

Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter 7 p.m. Via Zoom. Speaker: Conner McIntosh, curator of the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center (formerly known as the LeConte Memorial Lodge). Topic: Being the Curator of the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center and Opportunities for You to Volunteer! The Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center has been the Sierra Club's home in Yosemite National Park for 120 years. Visit sierraclub.org/tehipite to pre-register.

THU 18 **Screening: Chinatown Rising** 11 a.m. & 2 p.m. (two showings). Fresno City College Theater. Film and discussion with filmmaker Josh Chuck. This documentary presents the Asian American Movement from the perspective of the young residents of San Francisco's Chinatown on the front lines of their historic neighborhood in transition. Through publicly challenging the conservative views of their elders, their demonstrations and protests of the 1960s through the 1980s rattled the once-quiet streets during the community's shift in power.

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

Fresno Arts Council's 11th Annual Arts Alive 5:30 p.m. The Barn, San Joaquin Parkway Trust River Center, 11605 Old Friant Rd. "Agriculture: A Juried Exhibition." Reception and award ceremony. Suggested donation: \$20. For more info, 559-237-9734.

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

State of Black and Minority-Owned Businesses in Fresno Noon. Suite 4401, Robert E. Coyle U.S. Courthouse, 2500 Tulare St. Featuring Monita Porter, deputy director of the Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce. Presented by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California's Special Emphasis Program. Register by April 11 to attend in person or via Zoom. For more info, contact 916-247-8730 or sean.vassar@usdoj.gov.

FRI 19 **CineCulture: Driving Madeleine** 5:30 p.m. Peters Educational Center Auditorium, Fresno State. Discussant: TBD. A seemingly simple taxi ride

April 2024 (continued)

across Paris evolves into a profound meditation on the realities of the driver and his fare, a 92-year-old woman whose warmth belies her shocking past. Sponsors: French Program and Department of Modern & Classical Languages & Literatures. For more info, contact mhusain@csufresno.edu or visit ciniculture.csufresno.edu/.

**SAT
20**

San Joaquin River Family Restoration Day 9 a.m.–noon. 300 W. Bluff Ave. Join the Central Labor Council and the Central Valley Partnership in a habitat restoration project at the River West future access site of the San Joaquin River. Educational talks about the river and wildlife ecology. RSVP at bit.ly/riverday24 or visit powerwithpeople.org.

League of Women of Voters of Fresno Annual Meeting 10 a.m.–1 p.m. Stone Soup Community Room, 1345 Bulldog Lane. Speaker: Dr. Lisa Bryant, chair of the Political Science Department at Fresno State. Business meeting/luncheon. \$25/person. For more info, contact 559-226-8683 or info.lwvfresno@gmail.com.

**MON
22**

Fresno County Democratic Women's Club 11 a.m. Marie Callender's Restaurant Garden Room, 1781 E. Shaw Ave. For more info, contact 559-435-4043 or claval@comcast.net.

Screening: Daze of Justice 4 p.m. Room 251, Old Administration Building, Fresno City College. Film and discussion with Cambodian filmmaker Mike Siv. Born in Cambodia in 1975 during the bloody regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, Siv and his mother barely escaped the infamous "killing fields." Thirty-five years later, Siv filmed a group of Cambodian Americans who are civil parties in a historical trial against the Khmer Rouge. Co-sponsor: United Khmer Cultural Preservation. For more info, contact 559-301-4739 or ukcp101@gmail.com.

Exit Strategies and the Ethics of War 5 p.m. Room 170, Kremen Education Building, Fresno State. Presented by Yvonne Chiu, associate professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. She writes on just war theory, international ethics and authoritarianism and authored *Conspiring with the Enemy: The Ethic of Cooperation in Warfare*. For more info, contact afia@csufresno.edu.

Author Reading: Peter Balakian 7 p.m. Alice Peters Auditorium, Fresno State. "Armenian Memory, Writing Across the Borders: A Reading and Talk." Balakian, an award-

winning poet and author, will read and discuss his poetry and prose with a focus on Armenian historical and cultural memory and diasporan imagination. Sponsors: Armenian Studies Program and College of Arts and Humanities. Livestream on the Armenian Studies YouTube channel: bit.ly/armenianstudiesyoutube. For more info, contact barlowd@mail.fresnostate.edu.

**TUE
23**

California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) 10 a.m. SEIU Local 521, 4228 E. Pine Ave. For more info, contact 559-360-5955 or 559-704-8384.

Lao and Hmong Life Cycles Workshop 12:30 p.m. Room 188, Old Administration Building, Fresno City College. Learn about Lao and Hmong cultures and traditions from Kami Thepphavong and Dr. Tchay Her, co-coordinators of Fresno City College's United Southeast Asian American Academic success program. Both speakers will discuss birth, marriage and death traditions, giving participants the opportunity to compare cultural traditions as well as modern-day practices. For more info, contact 559-443-8639.

KFCF 88.1 FM: Nuestro Foro 7 p.m. Radio show in Spanish hosted by Eduardo Stanley. For more info, visit kfcf.org.

**WED
24**

Author Reading: Navdeep Singh Dhillon 9 a.m. Satellite Student Union, Fresno State. Keynote address of the 44th annual Young Writers' Conference. Dhillon is the author of *Sunny*

G's *Series of Rash Decisions*, a young-adult novel about a cosplaying, crocheting Punjabi teen on a prom-night adventure through Fresno with a Hmong cosplaying love interest, as he comes to terms with grief, identity and life after high school. For more info, contact 559-278-1569 or bsaito@mail.fresnostate.edu.

Japanese American Incarceration Panel 12:30 p.m., Forum Hall 101, Fresno City College. Learn about the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII from the direct experience of Marion Masada, a survivor of America's concentration camps. She will share stories of the trauma she endured as a pre-teen and teenager while imprisoned, as well as her family's struggles to survive amid rampant racism and discrimination in the years following their release. Judge Dale Ikeda, whose parents were incarcerated, will discuss the history and legacy of the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans. Reception sponsored by the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance follows the panel discussion in the new Social Justice Center (Room 139, Old Administration Building). For more info, contact 559-304-3714 or editor@fresnoalliance.com.

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

**THU
25**

Central Valley Matters Fundraiser 5 p.m. Via Zoom. A Conversation with Jane Fonda and Dolores Huerta on "Why Does the Central Valley Matter?" and how "great social justice changes in our country happen when people come together, organize and take direct action." Central Valley Matters was formed in 2021 after volunteer canvassers realized work needed to be done year-round. Register at mobilize.us/swingleft/event/607149/.

Peace Fresno 6:30 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. In person/via Zoom. For more info, contact 559-668-0591.

**FRI
26**

CineCulture: Amerikatsi 5:30 p.m. Peters Educational Center Auditorium, Fresno State. Discussant: Michael Goorjian (director). In 1948, decades after fleeing Armenia as a child, Charlie returns in the hope of finding a connection to his roots, but what he finds instead is a country crushed under Soviet rule. After being unjustly imprisoned, Charlie falls into despair until his life unexpectedly becomes entwined with a prison guard's and he begins to see that the true spirit of his homeland is alive in its passionate people. Sponsor: Armenian Studies Program. For more info, contact mhusain@csufresno.edu or visit ciniculture.csufresno.edu/.

**SAT
27**

Asianfest: Year of the Dragon 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Campuswide, Fresno City College. Fresno's largest Asian American festival. AsianFest 2024 is an all-day festival featuring a main stage of entertainment, global vendors, anime show and cosplayers, kids crafts, kickboxing tournament and a wide variety of Asian American foods. For more info, contact 559-536-6055.

Community Workshop: Climate Adaptation + Environmental Justice 11 a.m.–1 p.m. J.P. O'Neil Park, Fresno State. Join City of Fresno staff to identify climate and environmental justice issues in your community. Kids activities and food will be provided. For more info, contact 559-621-8515 or casey.lauderdale@fresno.gov.

America's Secret War in Laos and Its Destructive Consequences 2 p.m. Bonner Auditorium, Fresno Art Museum, 2233 N. First St. Presentation and lecture by Yang Sao Xiong, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Asian American Studies Program at Fresno State and the author of *Immigrant Agency: Hmong American Movements and the Politics of Racialized Incorporation*. Members free, non-members \$10. For more info, contact 559-441-4221.

**TUE
30**

Ethnic Studies Panel 2 p.m. Forum Hall 101, Fresno City College. A panel of Fresno City College instructors in Asian American Studies, Chicano-Latino American Studies, African American Studies, American Indian Studies and Ethnic Studies discuss the topics of antiracism and intersectionality. Gena Lew Gong, Victoria Navarro Benavides, Auguste Kouadio, Erik Escovedo and Rigoberto Garcia will share their thoughts and experiences as scholars and community practitioners in the college's Cultural, Ethnic and Women's Studies Department. For more info, contact 559-442-4600.



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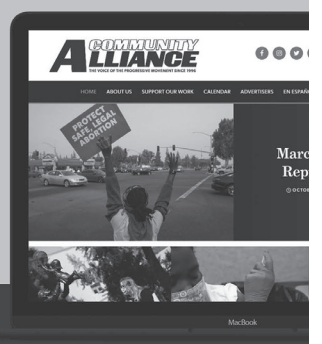
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Fresno, National Women's Political Caucus is a pro-choice, multicultural, intergenerational, and multi-issue grassroots organization dedicated to increasing women's participation in the political process and creating a true women's political power base to achieve equality for all women.

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Mariposa Plaza and Free Speech

BY MIKE RHODES

The City of Fresno announced the renovation of Mariposa Plaza (Fulton and Mariposa streets) at a recent press conference. Fresno City Council Member Miguel Arias pointed out the historical significance of the Plaza.

"This site in downtown Fresno, Mariposa Plaza, was also the first site of conflict around freedom of speech in the city," said Arias. He was referring to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW aka Wobblies), which was organizing agricultural workers. An organizer would stand on a soapbox and speak about the benefits of joining a union.

Police officers would arrest the speaker and take him to jail. Another IWW organizer would then step onto the soapbox, and as he started to talk to the assembled workers

he too would be arrested. Eventually, the jail was full of union organizers. Hundreds of IWW members heard about this and headed to Fresno to join the free speech fight.

The City of Fresno realized that it could not prevail and changed the law that prevented residents from speaking publicly about what was on their minds. That is why we currently have a plaque and Free Speech area at Mariposa Plaza.

"There is a little plaque around the corner here that signifies the struggle for people to speak their minds," said Arias. "I want to assure our progressive folks that that plaque will remain on the new modern outdoor Mariposa Plaza when it is constructed."

The infrastructure improvements will also enhance the connection to the future high-speed rail station, according to a press release issued before the March 21 press conference.

Mike Rhodes is the executive director of the Community Alliance newspaper and the author of Dispatches from the War Zone, a book about homelessness in Fresno. Contact him at mikerhodes@comcast.net.



In 1910–11, the Industrial Workers of the World held an important Free Speech fight on the streets of Fresno. This historical landmark is a part of Mariposa Plaza. Photo by Mike Rhodes

Fresno's Cannabis Condition

BY I. SMILEY G. CALDERON

It's April and everyone knows how cannabis, aka marijuana, aficionados love their unofficial "4/20" holiday, which happens to fall on the 111th day of 2024, a "holy" day for cannabis consumers. Tokers all around the nation will light one up and puff in herbal solidarity. Even in Fresno, where cannabis has historically been suppressed but is now slowly—and legally—making a presence throughout the city.

Currently, there are only seven open and active cannabis retail sites within the city. There should be many more.

The City of Fresno has sanctioned 21 cannabis retail business permits; 12 dispensaries have been preliminarily approved since 2021, and there are two unnamed TBD permits listed at this time. It's a slow process for a full approval of cannabis retail commerce in the city.

Part of the problem is all the costs for the construction and renovation of cannabis retail spots; the City has specific requirements for cannabis retailers. For example, the City requires that a special air filtration system be installed in each shop to keep the cannabis smell from escaping. Premises are also required to have a security lobby/trap room to separate incoming customers from the main store.

There are mandatory million dollar insurance policies, security costs for real-time alarm monitoring, mandatory costs for secured vaults and vault systems to store the cannabis and more costs for a "fully functional color digital video camera system" that is recording 24/7—not to mention extra mandatory costs for an armed guard while the shop is open.

The application and permit fees, conditional-use permit fees and all the other associated fees involved in winning one of the 21 coveted cannabis retail spots (for which there were more than 100 competitive applicants that the City graded on a total score percentage rubric) amount to tens of thousands of dollars, but the de facto cost of a cannabis business in Fresno is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Deputy City Manager Jennifer Ruiz said of the program: "Cannabis is a very highly regulated industry in the state and city. It's a competitive process. The application process is extensive." And expensive.

Moreover, when we follow the money and look at how retail cannabis dispensaries are taxed, it's a wonder any dispensary successfully stays open in California. To start, each city or county has its own cannabis business tax rate.

In the city of Fresno, it's actually rather reasonable, a 4% cannabis retail tax. Compare that to Coalinga, the first city in Fresno County to allow retail cannabis dispensaries. Its cannabis tax is 10%. Then there is the mandatory state of California 15% excise tax imposed on all gross cannabis sales (including the local taxes).

After that is the city sales tax. In Fresno, that's 8.35% (in Coalinga, 8.975%). Sum all this up and a four-gram baggie of weed (about an eighth of an ounce) that retails at \$10/gram in Fresno now costs \$40 + \$1.60 + \$6.24 + \$3.99 = \$51.83. In Coalinga, the same amount of cannabis would cost \$40 + \$4.00 + \$6.60 + \$4.54 = \$55.14.

Four grams of cannabis makes about eight cigarettes. This equates to \$6.48 per cigarette in Fresno and \$6.89 in Coalinga, which means the total tax comes to \$1.48 per cigarette in Fresno and \$1.89 in Coalinga. The state tax alone is \$0.78 and \$0.825 per cigarette, respectively. In comparison, for tobacco, the state tax is only \$0.1435 per cigarette (\$2.87 per 20 pack).

Clearly, the cannabis consumer is overly taxed, which is why it is no surprise that the cannabis black market is flourishing. Fresnoans can regularly find "illegal weed" for sale at local smoke shops and this is a problem for the city.

"It is shocking that smoke shops continue to operate illegally knowing that the City of Fresno has taken such an aggressive posture regarding illegal and unregulated cannabis sales," Fresno City Attorney Andrew Janz said of this challenge.

"Again, our intent is to assist legal cannabis dispensaries [that] have followed rigorous rules and regulations to open their sanctioned and legitimate businesses."

With the combination of heavy expenses to open and operate a legitimate and legal retail cannabis business alongside high taxes for the product, Fresno has had a difficult start in its city cannabis commerce.

Projected cannabis tax revenue for this year is off by millions, again. This, in turn, affects the General Fund, as City Council Member Nelson Esparza has acknowledged, "For several years, we have come up short. The City's come up short in terms of the projections of cannabis revenue that we receive."

In 2021, for example, the City had forecast \$4 million in cannabis revenue for the next fiscal year; it didn't pull in a single dollar.

It's certain that there is a growing market demand for legal weed in Fresno, but the mechanisms that such a free market needs to thrive have to be unfettered from government tentacles for it to really grow. After all, 90% of City cannabis tax revenue is set to go to the General Fund.

Moreover, unsanctioned, illegal cannabis is negatively affecting legal sales in Fresno. But part of the problem is availability.



Currently, there are only seven open and active cannabis retail sites in Fresno, however, the City Council has sanctioned 21 permits, which means that more cannabis stores are forthcoming. Photo courtesy of The Commons

When only 21 dispensaries are allowed in a city of 500,000 residents, and of those 21, only seven are currently open—after three years of winning a competitive preliminary approval—there is a lack of suppliers. To remedy this, the City should think of ways to help already-approved retail dispensaries get on their feet so that legal cannabis can be made easily available for purchase.

That way, everyone can safely (and legally) enjoy their 4/20.

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.



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Facing Fresno Fascism

BY KEVIN HALL

No local Republican elected officials have denounced Donald Trump, his violent political movement or the MAGA takeover of the GOP.

This means every Republican office holder—from the mayor and district attorney to county supervisors, school board trustees and city council members—is on board with Trump’s overtly fascist movement. They seek to end democracy in the USA, exert full control over women’s bodies and demonize immigrants, refugees and every “other” they can target along the way. Discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community continues to spread.

As was pointed out after Charlottesville and the death of Heather Heyer, if you’re in a parade with people carrying Confederate and Nazi flags and don’t leave that parade, you’ve joined them. Judging from the presidential primary results, a full 75% of registered Republicans are in support of Trump’s MAGA agenda. That’s a long parade, and the flags are flying high.

But if you stand alongside the road and passively observe them marching, what does that make you?

Fresno City Council members pose for the cameras with Mayor Jerry Dyer at every ribbon cutting, flag raising and groundbreaking possible.

District 2 representative Michael Karbassi accepted a \$5,500 campaign contribution from Dyer in late January and churned out a vicious attack ad on political opponent Mathew Gillian for supporting the Advance Peace program, signaling his support for the upcoming racist, anti-Prop 47 campaign.

District 3’s Miguel Arias teamed up with northeast Fresno’s Garry Bredefeld to target people living on the streets with a harsh redlining ordinance, boosting Bredefeld in his race for county supervisor. The lists of cross-party endorsements and shared conservative backers are endless.

It’s time for locally elected Democrats to take a stand against their counterparts and call on them to denounce Trump; Democrats must stop normalizing this new breed of MAGA politician by refusing to appear with them at public events beyond meetings required by their official duties.

“You have to fight the entire thing, root and branch,” says Dr. Lars Maischak, author and lecturer in the Fresno State history department, “the Republican Party at every level of government to start with, but also the various organizations that work in a division of labor with it to smear, harass, attack and at times kill those who oppose the program of fascism.”

A useful example of resistance can be found in Maischak’s homeland, Germany. All five major democratic parties—from the Social Democrats through Greens to Christian Democrats—are responding in unison to the emergence of the extreme right AfD (Alternative for Germany) party. They are all refusing to cooperate or collaborate with AfD members; they denounce AfD ideas and goals and won’t appear publicly with members. They call on all Germans to not work with those who work with AfD and to mobilize to drive AfD from schools and universities, workplaces and courtrooms, shopping malls and every public space.

Maischak, my co-host on the bimonthly *Climate Politics* broadcast on KFCF 88.1 FM, speaks from direct experience.



Fresno City Council Member Michael Karbassi’s attack mailer on candidate Matthew Gillian embodies Democrats’ service to local elites and inability to confront the growing fascist movement. Karbassi accepted a \$5,500 campaign contribution from Mayor Jerry Dyer in late January. Photo by Kevin Hall

He was targeted by national MAGA forces and local operatives back in 2017 for calling out Trump’s already treasonous behavior. Maischak witnessed, and suffered professionally as a result of, the inability of liberal colleagues and administrators to understand the dynamics of fascism and the only appropriate response: a direct refutation of their demands. Instead, he was victim-blamed and worse.

Maischak recently taught a course on fascism, available on his YouTube channel. “When you fight fascism, you learn what it is,” he says. “If you don’t learn what it is, you can’t fight it. Liberals look for a definition of the problem that lets them carry on as before without risking changes that threaten their comfort.”

“Of course, the fascists cry ‘freedom of speech,’ but a concerted effort to stamp out a movement hostile to democracy is needed to preserve this and other freedoms that fascism will instantly squash when in power—they’re already doing that in this country,” says Maischak.

“Of course, it is a monumental task to shun and drive from public life an organization with roots in this society going back 170 years. But it has been turned into an instrument of fascism, and there is simply no way around it.”

So far, so good. Democratic activists like to protest against Trump, but this isn’t mere Red versus Blue politics. As important as it is to defeat Trump and the MAGA party in November, and recapture Congress, we have a deeper problem. The largest campaign contributors, including some unions, are very conservative. They’re owners and executives of development and construction companies, fossil fuel giants and agricultural interests, mostly with their related workforces in tow.

“Fascism is driven in large part by elites, including local ones,” says Maischak. “Democrats like to cater to that group: business. If you want to defend democracy, you have to be willing to pick a fight with capital.”

He explains that Democrats treat the threat of fascism as a problem exclusively with Trump, aided by Russia, assorted

demagogues (Tucker Carlson, Steve Bannon, etc.) and a mass of privileged working-class white men who are upset about their perceived loss of status because they have no real problems and are actually privileged and powerful.

“Liberals see fascism as a problem from the margins and the outside of a society that is basically fine,” says Maischak. “I see the threat of fascism originating from the center of a capitalist society.”

“As an ideology, fascism is a radicalization of inhumane attitudes that are ‘normal’ in such a society: Social Darwinism, nationalism, racism, patriarchy. As a movement, fascism draws on a middle class that is fearful of decline, identifies with those above them in the hierarchy and [is] willing to mobilize in defense of the interests of the ruling class (‘capital’).”

“As a political system, it is an alternative means to liberal democracy for administering the common affairs of the bourgeoisie; as such, it is always an option for the ruling class to push the fascist button.”

And they’re leaning heavily on that button now. “Fascism is not just the demagogues and the Proud Boys, the leaders and the MAGA hats. It is a division of labor from the skinheads to the pinstripes, from swastika to diamond-studded cross,” warns Maischak.

In short, it’s time for Democrats to go beyond “Vote Blue and Keep Your Head Down” politics and take real action against their fellow pinstriped, cross-wearing politicians. Time is running short, and the fascist tide is surging all around us.

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 @svalleyclimate, coordinates an informal network of climate activists at valleyclimate.org and can be contacted at svalleyclimate@gmail.com for presentations and information.

Climate Change: Adaptation Partnership Workshop

BY DEBAY TADESSE

As climate change remains one of the most critical factors in the changing landscape of the globe and will likely continue to be for the foreseeable future, developing practitioner toolsets and policy frameworks for adaptation to those effects is essential.

Climate change has many actual and potential impacts on people’s daily lives. The extreme heat waves, floods, storms, droughts and wildfires wreaking havoc on communities worldwide are a wake-up call of the grave risks we already face.

Experts believe that African nations, among the least polluting countries, would be most adversely affected by climate change as they strive toward peace and security, sustainable development and food security.

Furthermore, in today’s globally interconnected world, shared knowledge is required to guarantee the efficacy and conflict-awareness of selected adaptation pathways.

The difficulties posed by climate change require collaboration between countries and communities. Institutions are equally vital in addressing climate change. Sharing ideas, understanding practical necessities, addressing basic needs and ethical responsibilities are the cornerstones of the adaptation mechanisms made possible by institutions.

Under these circumstances, cutting back on emissions caused by deforestation and degradation presents a viable way to provide essential ecosystem services in Africa while also providing mitigation and adaptation strategies. Subsequently, Africa has been the primary geographical focus of these developments, making it a topic of discussion and debate among nations, international media, policymakers, academic communities and the international policy agenda.

A recent report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reveals that “fragile and conflict-affected” states are a significant global concern that remains largely unaddressed, with potentially dire consequences that jeopardize global security and prosperity.

It is not impossible to accurately quantify the price of the resulting human misery. However, according to the report, at least \$270 billion is spent annually on the international system of state failure.



Participants at the second-day Adaptation Partnership workshop that was held with farmers in the remote Ethiopian town of Sululta to discuss the impact of climate change and adaptation strategies. Photo courtesy of Debay Tadesse

Adaptation Partnership Workshop

The Adaptation Partnership is a global platform that facilitates collaboration and exchange of information among organizations and stakeholders engaged in international initiatives to enhance climate change resistance and adaptation.

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Wilson Center), the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), a think-tank research institute where the author worked as a senior researcher in South Africa with a branch office in Ethiopia, collaborated to facilitate two workshops under the Adaptation Partnership to explore further the relationship between peacebuilding and climate change adaptation in Africa.

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What Happened in Santiago and Why

BY LENI VILLAGOMEZ REEVES

On March 17, in Santiago de Cuba, the nation's second largest city, many people took to the streets and held a demonstration because of the long hours of electrical outages due to fuel shortages and other situations deriving from the current economic crisis.

The people who were demonstrating were asking for electricity and food. Some shouts of "*Patria y Vida*" (a slogan of the counter-revolutionary right) were heard from isolated groups within the mass of the people, but these were not taken up by the majority of those there, who were calling for "*corriente y comida*" (electricity and food).

There was a police presence, but no arrests were made. (This has not stopped the usual news distorters from publishing photos from other years and other places.)

Beatriz Jhonson Urrutia, the first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party in the province, and other government civil servants have been present to engage in dialogue with the citizens and pay attention to their demands.

There have been no calls for violence from the demonstrators themselves, but media manipulators and others who are trying to achieve social destabilization in Cuba have posted calls for violence online.

The U.S. Embassy in Cuba, in a cynical and hypocritical statement, said, "We urge the Cuban government to respect the human rights of the protesters and attend to the legitimate needs of the Cuban people." But it is precisely the U.S. government that is doing everything in its power to make sure that the Cuban government cannot improve the economic situation, thereby promoting the suffering of the people of Cuba.

Lester Mallory, a U.S. government official, wrote an internal memo on April 6, 1960, to initiate U.S. policy toward Cuba: "Most Cubans support Castro...There is no effective political opposition...The only possible way to make the government lose domestic support is by provoking disappointment and discouragement through economic dissatisfaction and hardships..."

"Every possible means should be immediately used to weaken the economic life...denying Cuba funds and supplies to reduce nominal and real salaries with the objective of provoking hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the government."

That has continued to be the U.S. government policy to this day.

In response to the U.S. actions, on March 18, the chargé d'affaires of the United States, Benjamin Ziff, was summoned

to the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations by Vice-Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío, who conveyed to him a firm formal protest rejecting the conduct of interference and transmission of scurrilous messages by the government of the United States and its embassy in Cuba regarding Cuban current internal affairs.

In this meeting, attention was also called to the direct responsibility of the government of the United States for the difficult economic situation that Cuba is currently going through, and, specifically, for the shortages and difficulties that confront the people on a daily basis, with the economic depression and insufficiency of supplies and essential services under the burden of the economic blockade designed to destroy the economic capacities of the country.

The obvious determination of the U.S. government to limit and block every effort of the Cuban government to find solutions and respond to the economic and social needs of the country was condemned.

The plan of destabilization and its execution are evident to everyone who looks at the situation. It lies in the reinforcement of a merciless economic warfare to provoke and exploit the natural irritation of the population. Every year, tens of millions of U.S. federal government funds are spent to finance this "aggression against Cuba industry." The United States takes advantage of a powerful technological infrastructure to manipulate online content produced in the United States for Cuban consumption.

If the U.S. government truly had even the slightest honest concern for the welfare of the Cuban people, it would remove Cuba from arbitrary inclusion on the supposed list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, put an end to the persecution of fuel supplies that the country must import, cease to pursue and prosecute every financial transaction Cuba carries out anywhere in the world, put an end to the crude persecution of the programs of medical cooperation between Cuba and other countries of the world, and cease trying to intimidate all those who have an interest in interacting with the Cuban people and have the right to do so.

The National Network on Cuba (of which the author is proud to be a part, both as an individual and as co-chair of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's Cuba and the Bolivarian Alliance Issue Committee), a coalition of 70+ organizations across the United States working to normalize U.S.-Cuban relations and lift the blockade, issued a statement placing the responsibility for shortages and hardships in Cuba squarely where it truly rests: on the United States and its policy designed to achieve the result that we currently see.

"The economic crisis and unrest in Santiago de Cuba underscores the devastating impact of over six decades of illegal U.S. sanctions, the no-evidence-based designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, and the inflationary financial manipulation which have led to shortages of fuel, electricity and basic goods.



Beatriz Jhonson Urrutia, first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party in Santiago Province, met with demonstrators in Santiago on March 17. Photo courtesy of the government of Cuba

"Yesterday, people took to the streets in Santiago de Cuba expressing their frustration at the recent power outages. Miami regime-changers and U.S. government-funded propaganda outlets were quick to exploit these genuine frustrations into calls for the overthrow of the Cuban government, but this does not match the reality of the situation on the ground in Santiago, where the protests were completely peaceful and citizens engaged in dialogue with local leaders and law enforcement.

"In the words of the State Department itself, the goal of the U.S. blockade is to bring about 'hunger, desperation and overthrow of the government' in Cuba...We are seeing this policy play out in real time, and as people in the U.S., we have every responsibility to fight against U.S. attacks on Cuba's sovereignty. True solidarity with the Cuban people necessitates respecting their right to self-determination, and demanding an end to external U.S. interventions which deny Cuba this right and aim to return Cuba to being a U.S. neocolony like Haiti (which the U.S. and its comprador states are preparing to invade yet again).

"We call for the U.S. to take Cuba off the 'State Sponsors of Terrorism' list and lift all sanctions—measures that would immediately help alleviate Cuba's economic crisis."

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

War on the Poor and Neo-Fascism

Continued from page 5

According to a 2019 Urban Institute report, Fresno ranks No. 59 of 59 cities in California for economic inclusion and racial inclusion, making it a divided city.

Across the United States, Fresno ranks 253rd out of 274 cities on overall inclusion. It ranks 263rd on economic inclusion. *Inclusion* is defined by looking at income differences in poverty and wages by race and ethnicity, the number of working poor people, disparities in homeownership and the number of families that spend more than 35% of their income on rent.

Billions on Temporary Solutions

California spent \$17.5 billion trying to combat homelessness from 2018 to 2022. Another \$3 billion has been allocated to fight homelessness through 2024. 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."

These motels are currently transitional housing, and most are going to be converted to low-income housing to be sold. Some are already in that process. In total, 13,500 units have been created with Project Homekey funds in California.

There is lack of transparency and accountability for the counties, cities, contractors and nonprofit and for-profit service providers receiving these public funds. With homelessness worsening, we must examine the system and shed some light on a longstanding, self-perpetuating, deeply entrenched industry. There's little oversight and accountability for these state funds and how this money is spent.

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.

The CEO of Turning Point makes \$381,270 annually and the CFO makes \$289,030 annually, an example of how some public dollars for homeless initiatives are going to nonprofit executive salaries. Turning Point is a major recipient of public dollars and one of only two shelter providers in Fresno.

This network of service providers and contractors, many of which are also recipients of state and federal funds, hold a lot of political influence.

A Lack of Affordable Housing

The California Housing Partnership Corporation (CHPC) recently released its annual Affordable Housing Needs Report for all counties in the state. The 2023 report for Fresno County found that renters "need to earn \$25.23 per hour—1.6 times the state minimum wage—to afford the average monthly asking rent of \$1,312."

It also found that "36,199 low-income renter households in Fresno County do not have access to an affordable home." Moreover, 69% of apartments in Fresno County are at risk of becoming unaffordable for people making lower incomes. It's the highest risk of any county in the state.

According to the report, Fresno County has nearly 17,000 homes at risk of becoming unaffordable for its 36,000 low-income renters. The study specifically looked at apartments in buildings with at least five units. We need rent control in Fresno.

The Fresno Housing Authority opened its housing choice voucher wait-list in June—a key affordability program for lower-income tenants—and more than 10,000 applied after just the first day.

Rents have been increasing in Fresno since the early days of the pandemic in 2020. Fresno's rental vacancy rate—a measure of the number of empty homes—has steadily declined since 2010, according to a CHPC analysis.

Fresno has a vacancy rate of 4.5% from a total of 176,617 units, meaning there are 3,925 vacant units. This number is almost as great as the number of persons labeled

"homeless" in the city. The argument that "we simply do not have enough existing housing" should be examined more closely.

Real Solutions, Housing First and Social Housing

Real solutions require an end to criminalizing unhoused people, adopting a true Housing First approach, building social housing through a public works program and providing ongoing support services as-needed.

New York, Pennsylvania, Colorado, recently California and some other states are implementing a Housing First approach and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is now requiring it. The Housing First approach views housing as the foundation for life improvement and enables access to permanent housing without prerequisites or conditions beyond those of a typical renter.

A Housing First model provides supportive services to those that need them. The approach saves public dollars in the long term (hospital costs, incarceration costs, police enforcement costs and more). Finland, Spain and other European countries have been successful at implementing the Housing First strategy.

Social Housing

The term *social housing* is commonly used to describe a range of housing ownership, subsidy and regulation models in Europe, South America and other parts of the world. These models often go far beyond what's known as "affordable housing" in the United States to promote permanent affordability, democratic resident control and social equality. They are built, owned and managed by government agencies.

If adopted in the United States, billions would be saved by eliminating developers and speculators from using public dollars to reap profits.

In conclusion, cities and counties must immediately stop criminalizing the unhoused, thus ending the slide toward fascism. Housing First, social housing and humane treatment is the way forward. "People before profits" and "Housing is a right" are themes we must organize by.

Bob McCloskey is an activist and a reporter for the Community Alliance newspaper. Contact him at bobmccloskey06@gmail.com.

LGBTQ+ Derangement Syndrome

BY BAYARD TAYLOR

Recently, I went to my mailbox and found a sticker that said “God Hates Fags.” What would drive someone to plaster that kind of message? Is that a way to win converts? No. It’s a way to spread fear and hate. Where is all this fear and hate coming from?

It’s not a new attitude. Think Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Think of the Pulse massacre. Think of the statistical rise in anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes since the 2016 election. And consider that last year the Religious Right and MAGA Republicans in state legislatures have been frothing at the mouth to push more than 500(!) anti-LGBTQ+ bills.

It’s cultural derangement! But why all the fear and hate? What have LGBTQ+ people done to deserve so much approbation, discrimination and ostracism? What have LGBTQ+ people done to provoke so much anti-LGBTQ+ violence? And why are white (it’s almost always white) heterosexual males so scared of and triggered by it?

First Factor: Divine Hierarchy

Our patriarchal culture breeds a deep insecurity in men. If you’re a “real man,” you’re supposed to be macho. If need be, a “real man” asserts his authority through violence or the threat of violence.

Another part of this cultural conditioning comes from religion. The Bible portrays a natural hierarchical order. Men are at the top of ruling society and the family, women have babies and submit to their husbands and children must obey the authority of their parents. This is how things are supposed to be.

There is no place in this patriarchal system for LGBTQ+ people. The dominant “Judeo-Christian” majority doesn’t want LGBTQ+ people to exist or to admit that they exist. If LGBTQ+ people do exist, they are supposed to shut up about it and conform.

Having LGBTQ+ people running around demanding equal rights like marriage equality disrupts this order.

Second Factor: Wrath of God

The problem goes further. The LGBTQ+ movement reminds religious conservatives of Bible stories in which God’s anger at disobedience breaks out and wrecks havoc. Genesis 6-9 tells about how God destroyed humanity, except for Noah’s family, in the Flood.

In ancient Israel’s law book, the Torah lists sexual sins, then says that the reason God drove out the Canaanites and gave their land to the Israelites was that “[t]he land was defiled; so [God] punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants” (Leviticus 18:25). The same would happen to Israel if it, too, defiled the land (Leviticus 18:28).

Korah and his co-conspirators plotted against Moses, so the earth “swallowed them up” (Numbers 16:32). Ananias and Sapphira lied about a charitable gift, so God struck them down (Acts 5:1-11).

Translated to the present day, Religious Righters, many of whom are MAGAs, want to avoid God’s wrath. They consider the LGBTQ+ movement an existential threat to their vision of a “Christian” America.

To thwart the LGBTQ+ agenda, the Religious Right employs sermons, prayers, school board elections, banning books that affirm LGBTQ+ people, politicians both up- and down-ballot, and the courts.

If acts of violence against LGBTQ+ people occur, the Religious Right pretty much stays mum; it does not forcefully repudiate those despicable acts.

Third Factor: Good Guys versus Bad Guys

A third part is “us versus them” culture wars. Members of the Religious Right consider themselves to be “the righteous” and those who oppose them to be “the wicked.” LGBTQ+ people are labeled as especially wicked being called “immoral,” “perverted,” “groomers,” “perverts” and “creeps.”

To maintain this stance, the Religious Right must shut its eyes to moral atrocities and oppression caused by Christians in history such as forced conversions, white

supremacy, racism, colonialism, African slavery, genocide of Indigenous peoples and shielding pastors who are sexual abusers from legal accountability. Add to this the cruelty of “conversion therapy” for LGBTQ+ people, a “therapy” that has been determined to be woefully ineffective.

Regarding culture wars, gender diversity is a hot-button topic. The LGBTQ+ movement questions the claim that only two genders are possible. The Religious Right mocks this idea, noting that the origin story in the Bible talks about Adam and Eve, not “Adam and Steve.” Within the Religious Right, there is no room for gender diversity or gender ambiguity; there is no room for “Two Spirit” people, as found in Indigenous cultures.

Fourth Factor: Rejection of Pluralism

At its core, the Religious Right is theocratic. It demands that “God’s commands” (their interpretation of the Bible) supersede human laws derived from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In this view, a literalistic interpretation of “God’s commands” is supposed to be binding on everyone, even those who are not religious or Christian. Those who resist “God’s laws” must nevertheless submit. Pluralism is out the window.

The founders talked about “equal justice for all.” But the LGBTQ+ demand for marriage equality is seen as an affront to God and must be opposed.

The founders thought that freedom of religion, free speech and free assembly were important. But the Religious Right wants to prioritize biblical law, to muzzle LGBTQ+ people by book banning and to suppress LGBTQ+ public events.

Essentially, the Religious Right is not about “rights”—civil rights or human rights. It is about the imposition of religious laws whether the general public wants the Religious Right’s laws.

How to Respond

Some of us who have grown up in traditionalist or Religious Right communities of faith have had a change of heart. Where does this change of heart come from? Here are some quick thoughts.



The Religious Right points out that the Bible’s origin story at the Garden of Eden talks about Adam and Eve, not “Adam and Steve,” meaning that there is no room for gender diversity or ambiguity. In this image, “Adam and Eve,” a painting by Rubens, between 1597 and 1600. Image courtesy of The Commons

All human beings are created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26). This includes everyone.

Jesus was inclusive in his example and teaching. He didn’t cater to religious prejudice; he hung out with those on the margins of society: tax collectors, prostitutes, the poor, the sick, the oppressed.

The United States was not founded on theocratic principles but rather religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

Real, live LGBTQ+ people are people just like the rest of us. If you get to know some, you’ll find this out.

Love fulfills the law (Romans 13:8).

Bayard Taylor is a resident of the 93675 zip code, a nature lover, the author of two books, a former English teacher and a master’s of divinity graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Contact him at bayardtaylor1@aol.com.

Unprecedented Assault: Russia Attacks Odesa

BY ZARINA ZABRISKY

Odesa, a major Black Sea port located in the south of Ukraine, was targeted by incessant drone and ballistic missile attacks in March 2024. After Russian President Vladimir Putin again announced Odesa “a Russian city” to the outrage of Odesites, the UNESCO-protected “pearl by the sea” became a target for everyday assaults.

Notably, multiple drone attacks followed the distribution of videos from the Shahed-131/136 production plant in Russia, potentially serving as a psychological intimidation operation to undermine Ukrainian morale.

On March 2, a Russian drone struck a nine-story building in Odesa after 1 a.m. A part of the building collapsed and 18 apartments were destroyed, resulting in the death of 12 civilians, including five children.

The youngest, Timofei, only four months old, died in his mother’s arms. So did seven-month-old Lisa, whose siblings, eight-year-old Zlata and 10-year-old Serhii, and the father were also killed in their sleep. The only survivor in this family was a 16-year-old brother who was visiting his grandparents that night. Mark, almost three, also died next to his mother.

Oleksii, a first responder, who discovered the dead children, did not want to comment. He said that rescuers do not have much to say: He just stood by the newly formed cliff of the building, looking at the spot where Serhii was found, curled in a ball.

Svitlana Karnitsova, a 26-year-old math teacher, survived the explosion “by miracle”: She forgot to close her window in her bedroom, and the shock wave did not break the glass over her bed. Waking up in dense dust, with fire just breaking out, she rushed out to the hallway where she met her mother and handicapped father. She had only a minute to grab her “anxiety backpack”—documents, a power bank—and rush her parents out.



The funeral for Baby Timofei and his mother Anna. Photo by Zarina Zabriskey

Their five-room apartment on the first floor was destroyed by the collapsing building. The neighbors’ books—Harry Potter, Russian iconic poet Alexander Pushkin’s verses and Ukrainian folklore—landed next to Svitlana’s home slippers and herbs her mother was drying on the windowsill.

“This is—was—our living room,” said Svitlana, pointing at the mound of gray rubble in a pit. “I have lived here all my life; I was born here. My parents moved here way before that. This was my whole life. Please, help us to stop this. Help us to save lives.”

Her father sat in the yard by the small stash of things the family managed to get out of the ruins. Behind him, local residents continued to bring flowers and stuffed toys in a makeshift memorial to those killed on March 2. March 5 was announced as a day of mourning for Odesa.

The following two weeks brought little sleep and much anxiety. With daily funeral ceremonies, the city mourned the killed.

On the night of March 6, the Russians launched another swarm of Shahed-131/136 kamikaze drones at Odesa and the surrounding region. The drones, organized in 10 groups, were intercepted by the air defense system. Thirty-eight of the 42 drones were successfully shot down by the Ukrainian air defense. Some drones were destroyed over the sea before they could reach Odesa.

Detection and interception are challenging due to the low altitude maintained over the sea, but the drones become more vulnerable as they approach the coast. The maneuvers of the drones in residential areas complicate the air defense operations, the head of the Odesa Regional Administration explained.

The debris caused damage to a gas pipeline, a recreational facility and residential buildings in the private sector in the Odesa region, but no casualties were reported.

The following morning, at 10:45 a.m., the Russian military attacked Odesa with a ballistic missile, resulting in casualties

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Black Women at Highest Risk for Pregnancy Deaths

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their pregnancy journeys. Some doulas even specialize in caring for people who have undergone abortions and those struggling with fertility.

Doulas enrolled as Medi-Cal providers have to complete CPR and HIPAA training.

Training to be a doula consists of a 16-hour training program on the topics of lactation support, childbirth education, foundations on the anatomy of pregnancy and childbirth, non-medical comfort measures, prenatal support, labor support techniques and developing community resources.

Fox became a doula in 2018 and provided free services for many years to practice before starting her own business. She has worked with about 25 women and their families throughout her career.

After the Medi-Cal benefit was announced, she said multiple healthcare networks reached out to her and she became a provider for health plans like Health Net and Health Plan of San Joaquin.

She now owns and operates The Divine Birth Academy in Stockton to help people become certified doulas, Medi-Cal providers and more.

Hope for Higher Wages

Fox said she, like many doulas, do the work because they love it, not for the money.

Because it's too expensive for clients to be charged by the hour, Fox offers a flat rate to people paying out of pocket. But due to the round-the-clock nature of doula work, the \$1,500 she charges isn't enough to pay her bills.

Doulas schedule regular appointments but are also on call and work during deliveries, which can sometimes take 24 hours or more.

Fortunately, Fox also works at Public Health Advocates, an organization dedicated to changing laws to create a healthier community in San Joaquin County. She works as an associate policy manager, building the framework for doulas to be trained and certified as lactation consultants for the region.

Because Medi-Cal benefits have been available for over a year, Fox hopes private insurance companies will pay doulas more now because AB 904 was passed.

"I would assume that (the rollout) would be very similar to (Medi-Cal's) because it is kind of like setting a foundation for what it looks like. I hope that they pay more," she said.

Doulas who enroll as Medi-Cal providers are eligible for compensation up to \$1,154 for perinatal visits and attending the delivery. As a member of the doulas' Medi-Cal benefit stakeholder committee, Fox said there is an ongoing discussion to raise the compensation to \$1,300 by next year.

"A very big challenge for pretty much every doula that's Medi-Cal certified is actually getting paid," Fox said. "When

it comes to the claims portion, we don't really have a whole lot of support."

In the Black doula community, Fox has noticed so many others struggling to get set up with Medi-Cal. She said they eventually end up giving out free services while waiting for a response to their claims.

"I know so many doulas right now that won't even sign up for Medi-Cal, because they think it's kind of a waste of time. Or, they rather just work harder to get people to pay out of pocket instead of waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting and just hoping that you get anything," she said.

In the Stockton/Modesto area, full service doula care can cost as high as \$2,500-\$3,350 without insurance.

Another Form of Protection

Because Black patients in America have a history of being ignored and dismissed by their healthcare providers, Black women have to make sure they're more educated about their health issues and learn how to advocate for themselves.

Fox said Black women in particular need extra advocacy in birthing spaces because of biases that lead to a general lack of cultural awareness.

She recalled a time when one of her clients passed out in the hospital bed during their first time giving birth. Her client's husband got scared at the sight of his wife unconscious and began calling for a doctor.

Unfortunately, instead of reassuring the man, the nurse reacted offensively and brought in another nurse for backup.

Fox calmed the man down by intervening and explaining to the nurses that his outburst was perfectly natural, considering how statistically dangerous childbirth and hospitals are for Black women.

For example, Sharon Washington-Barnes, a 31-year-old Black woman from Manteca, was encouraged to have her fallopian tubes surgically removed by two different obstetricians.

She and her husband have been trying to conceive their first child for the last three years. The doctors proposed the surgeries because of blockages in her tubes that have been the main issue during her fertility process.

Washington-Barnes was not shocked by the fact that her doctors wanted to render her infertile because she was facing issues getting pregnant.

Three aunts and her grandmother had been pressured to get premature hysterectomies. Because of their experiences, Washington-Barnes refused surgery both times.

She finally found an obstetrician gynecologist in Oakland who validated her choice to get a third doctor's opinion. Her new provider is making plans to use less invasive procedures. She is now looking for affordable, local doulas to help her on this journey.

The Importance of Connection

Washington-Barnes said the Valley needs more Black doulas not only for their work but also for their cultural significance. Doulas that look like her and understand the hurdles she faces as an African American woman make her feel safer.

"When you walk in and you see things that don't connect to you at all, and then the people don't look like you, what does that tell you? You shouldn't be here," she said.



Stockton-based holistic perinatal doula Khadija Fox (right) calms one of her clients during childbirth in a hospital room. Photo courtesy of Khadija Fox

"And then when the first recommendation is the removal of your reproductive organs, that really tells me that I shouldn't be here, and then that my child shouldn't be here. It just continues the unfortunate cycle."

A doula is another form of protection from the medical establishment's history of mistreatment of Black women, Washington-Barnes said.

"It's sad that you even have to be looking at it in the way of another form of protection versus just like another medical expert, sadly, but that's really what it is for Black women. It's another form of protection. It's another layer, somebody that may get in the way before things really take a turn."

Access to Services

There are public services aimed to support Black women during pregnancy in the Valley, but Fox and others say they're too few and far between.

The Black Infant Health (BIH) program within the San Joaquin Public Health Department is dedicated to addressing these issues. However, the program only has seven staff members, said Interim Coordinator Angela Egbuchulam.

BIH works case by case with mothers who come in, and even connects them with Fox when they are looking for more support in the form of a doula. Egbuchulam would like to see more doulas in the area so more women can be helped in a timely manner, as opposed to being placed on the waiting list.

Dr. Pooja Mittal, the chief health equity officer and advocate of the Doula Pilot Program for Health Net, echoed Egbuchulam's concerns.

"I believe that two of the largest hurdles in the space are the lack of a centralized directory for locating doulas and the challenges doulas face in terms of how many clients they're available to take on at a time," Mittal wrote in an e-mail.

"Because doulas provide individualized physical and emotional care for each client, it leaves them with limited availability."

Learn more about the doula services available to you by asking your health insurance provider about its coverage policy.

Vivienne Aguilar is the health equity reporter for the Central Valley Journalism Collaborative in collaboration with the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF). Contact her at vivienne@cvjcljournalism.org.

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Climate Change: Adaptation Partnership Workshop

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The first workshop, “Climate Change Adaptation and Peacebuilding,” was held Nov. 1–2, 2012, at the Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. The workshop featured in-depth consultations among a group of experts, policymakers and practitioners, as well as public sessions featuring African experts.

The primary goal of this collaboration in Washington, D.C., was to provide an opportunity for African scholars and practitioners to identify and debate both threats and opportunities presented by climate adaptation challenges. This initial workshop allowed leading African experts to engage with more than 30 U.S.-based experts from multiple climate change adaptation and mitigation, development, natural resources, peacebuilding, security and diplomacy communities.

This wide-ranging group worked better to understand one another’s priorities, objectives and needs and to begin working together collaboratively around climate change adaptation and peacebuilding efforts. Presentations and discussions focused on current research, policy interventions and gaps in knowledge.

Over three days, Oct. 14–16, 2013, a follow-up workshop in Ethiopia featured a greater variety of African perspectives. The workshop addressed the findings and deliberations of the Washington workshop. These two workshops identified practical and feasible ways forward for climate adaptation and peacebuilding across diverse institutions.

The workshops also helped experts identify concrete steps to support practical climate change adaptation efforts in fragile and conflict-affected countries, turning awareness into action. They built upon a detailed understanding of current policies and practices in climate adaptation, peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive approaches in conflict-affected countries and beyond.

The workshops accelerated the development of a community of practice around the issue of climate adaptation and peacebuilding, setting expectations and identifying opportunities for sustained activities around topics important to the community.

The outcomes of these two workshops demonstrated the need to identify gaps in the body of knowledge on conflict and climate change, develop new case studies for the emerging field and build an online network of resources and databases for scholars and practitioners working in the field.

In addition, the need to continue educating policymakers in Africa, the United States, Europe, Asia and beyond about the adaptation to climate change and peacebuilding, as well as the importance of the donor community in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts arising from climate change, was highlighted and recommended.

Another concern was moving the issue from awareness-raising to developing tangible outcomes that the community of practice could incorporate into its work on both a project and policy level. This was suggested at the first workshop, and several participants were keen to see it developed further.

Arranging international workshops with UN-Habitat, on such topics as soft risk management tools and energy efficiency tools for mainstream security, was highly recommended. Training U.S. diplomats and delegates involved in African security and climate change adaptation programs was also suggested.

The need to disseminate information widely for all end users, including climate change curriculum at primary, secondary and college levels, was strongly advised. Engaging stakeholders and end users separately and together will strengthen the success of the community of practice.

After a fruitful and interactive session, participants were ready to delve deeper into the specific tools and frameworks for conflict-sensitive programming and think about what that would look like for climate change adaptation policy and programs.

Countries that have pledged to reduce their emissions to levels that will keep global

warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius account for more than 67% of the world’s GDP.

President Biden pledged to work with Congress to quadruple U.S. support for developing countries—and enhance financing for adaptation efforts sixfold—by the end of 2024. In addition, he signed a historic piece of legislation that included the largest-ever climate commitment in U.S. history—\$269 billion to support the global development of sustainable energy technology.

He added, “We all know we are already in a climate crisis and don’t have much time left. This is a global game changer.”

According to Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin, “the Department of Defense (DOD) must tackle the existential threat of climate change to keep the nation secure.”

The DOD has made available several reports that detail its strategies for mitigating the effects of climate change, including the Department of Defense Climate Adaptation Plan. In addition, the Department of Defense Climate Risk Analysis, which was signed by the secretary in 2021, described how the strategic, operational and tactical environments of the Defense Department are being shaped by climate change.

Furthermore, the DOD recently declared that the planet’s changing climate significantly impacts the missions, plans and installations of the DOD, and has started to pose a severe risk to America’s service women and men and their families. The DOD is making climate change a top priority for national security and incorporating it into partner engagement programs and initiatives.

According to Rachel P. Ross, deputy chief sustainability officer and acting principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations and environment, many installations have climate, energy and resilience issues with their infrastructure that, if left unattended, could affect the continuity of operations.

Whether gradual or abrupt, climate stress can become a significant factor in nations already dealing with low levels of development, underdeveloped social service systems, and political and social instability. Understanding the nexus between climate change and security from the perspectives of development, defense and diplomacy is becoming increasingly crucial.

Climate change is particularly complicated from a geopolitical standpoint as it impacts many foreign policy issues, such as security, commerce, international health, humanitarian preparedness and response, migration and displacement, food security, economic development and human rights.

Conclusion

Africa has been the breadbasket of nearly every rising and dying empire for millennia, including the Persian, Greek and Roman. Africa’s resources are vital to the globe, notably to the West and the United States. It would be inconceivable to consider the consequences of leaving Africa to deal with the most challenging environmental issues on the planet.

Climate adaptation issues are inextricably linked to security and peacekeeping efforts globally. Aside from the difficulties brought about by climate change, Africa—and the globe at large—has not benefited enough from climate adaptation mechanisms. These factors underscore how important it is to address climate change and related concerns through mainstream adaptation.

Climate change will intensify conflict, and natural disasters obstruct development globally; therefore, immediate response is required. In addition to their constructive work toward a global agreement to manage climate change, governments worldwide are obligated to establish an enabling policy framework that addresses planning, management and service delivery functions for adaptation, thereby facilitating and supporting the efforts of local institutions and other actors.

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.

Unprecedented Assault: Russia Attacks Odesa

Continued from page 22

and injuries. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was visiting Odesa with the prime minister of Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

An air raid alarm was declared at 10:41 a.m., followed by a powerful explosion at 10:45 a.m., with the Air Force reporting the threat of ballistic weapons in the alerted areas. Explosions happened reportedly 100–500 meters from the officials, and they could not reach a shelter in time.

At a Baptist church, the shock wave went through the crowd of mourners gathered for the funeral of baby Timofei and his mother.

On March 11, Odesa residents were kept awake between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. by another Shaheed drone attack. The assault coincided with the Oscars ceremony in Los Angeles, where the Ukrainian documentary *20 Days in Mariupol* won the country’s first Oscar award. Attacks also happened in Kharkiv, Kherson and other regions at the same time. In Odesa, an infrastructure object was hit and an administrative building was damaged.

On the next night, March 12, another overnight drone attack was followed by an X-59 missile strike. The Ukrainian air defense shot down all the drones and missiles.

On March 13, Russia attempted to attack Odesa with two ballistic missiles. Both broke by the shore and fell, without causing damage.

On March 14, a Shaheed drone attack drove many people into shelters around dinner time, between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m.

On March 15, at 11 a.m.–11.45 am, the Russian Federation attacked Odesa with two 9M723 Iskander OTRK missiles from occupied Crimea, according to Ukraine’s Defense Forces of the South. The missiles targeted the resort area.

After the first attack, a fire started and the air filled with the smell of gas and smoke. A huge explosion crater filled with water after firefighters extinguished the fire. Nearby trees were uprooted and burned down.

Ambulances and fire-rescue vehicles, along with private cars, were destroyed by shrapnel and debris. The blast waves caused building damage, with walls and ceilings collapsing and glass shattering.

As the residents ran out to the streets after the blast and the first responders arrived at the scene, a second explosion followed, resulting in more casualties, including rescuers and ambulance workers.

This tactic is called a “double-tap” and is used by the Russian military consistently, specifically in the south of Ukraine, according to Natalia Humeniuk, the head of the Joint Coordination Press Center of the Southern Ukraine Defense Forces.

The attack led to the destruction of a three-story recreation center, private houses, a service station and a low-pressure gas pipeline. Twenty-one residents were killed, including first responders and the police; 73 others were injured, including State Emergency Service employees.

Many city officials were killed, including former deputy city mayor Serhii Tetyukhin, who took an active part in the efforts to inscribe the historical center of Odesa on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger. Having quit his position and joined the army to defend his country, he was killed by the very barbaric attacks he was trying to prevent from destroying his city.

March 16 was declared yet another mourning day in Odesa and the region.

Odesa and its port infrastructure continue to face ongoing missile and drone attacks from the Russian military. There is a pressing need for air defense to intercept ballistic and hypersonic missiles.

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



This residential building was destroyed on March 2. Photo by Zarina Zabrisky

Léanse esa Vaina Para que Aprendan

Continúa de página 27

decidí ponerlo en la frase inicial del libro”, le dijo el propio García Márquez al escritor Santiago Gamboa, para el prólogo de una reedición de la novela, el cual encontré en mi búsqueda para confirmar algunas frases y datos que sólo recordaba de memoria.

Gamboa establece que en Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada, “Las fronteras de la crónica periodística y de la literatura se disuelven y ningún dato queda suelto, nada de lo narrado aparece sin una previa justificación”.

Agrega además algo que ahora sabemos. García Márquez hace en esta novela una crónica periodística.

Yo no sabía eso a esa edad. Apenas me había enterado que el literato era también periodista. Hasta ese entonces yo sólo sabía que había dos cosas seguras en esta vida, además de la muerte: en algunos años tendría que pagar impuestos y que sería periodista.

Esa fue mi puerta de entrada a la obra de García Márquez. Luego seguí con El Coronel no Tiene Quien le Escriba; El Amor en Tiempos de Cólera; De Amor y Otros Demonios; Noticia de un Secuestro, entre otras. Pero sin duda la que más me marcó y la que le ganó el reconocimiento internacional fue Cien años de Soledad.

Me gusta leer historias que tienen que ver con los autores que disfruto. Suelo repasar material que sea en torno a ellos, como entrevistas, artículos, citas de su autoría o de otros autores, compañeros y amigos.

Así descubrí en su momento la entrañable amistad que tuvieron Márquez y Mario Vargas Llosa, otro Premio Nobel y representante del famoso boom latinoamericano junto al mismo Gabo, Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortázar, entre otros.

Gabo y Vargas Llosa después se distanciaron por problemas nunca aclarados y porque ideológicamente se fueron alejando uno del otro. Mientras que García Márquez se mantuvo como una figura de izquierda, Vargas Llosa se fue más por el lado libertario.

De la misma manera supe más sobre la vida y obra de García Márquez y sobre cómo terminó de escribir Cien años de Soledad en México luego de sufrir un bloqueo creativo.

En el artículo “La novela detrás de la novela”, publicado en la desaparecida revista colombiana Cambio en 2002, el propio autor relató detalles sobre el proceso al escribir su obra maestra.

Narra que fue durante un viaje a Acapulco durante un fin de semana con su esposa que se le ocurrió ese inicio tan emblemático.

“Muchos años después, frente al pelotón de fusilamiento, el coronel Aureliano Buendía había de recordar aquella tarde remota en que su padre lo llevó a conocer el hielo”.

Durante un tiempo, García Márquez estaba bloqueado sin encontrar inspiración para terminar su novela. Mientras, los problemas económicos ya eran algo graves. Su esposa Mercedes Barcha había arreglado con el arrendador para que les diera más tiempo para pagar los meses de renta que debían, segura que la novela les ayudaría a salir de ese problema. “Con su palabra me basta”, le habría dicho el casero.

Un día, antes de ese dichoso viaje a Acapulco, llegó Álvaro Mutis, amigo y editor, a la residencia de Gabo y Mercedes con un par de libros: Pedro Páramo y El Llano en Llamas, de Juan Rulfo.

Márquez cuenta que Mutis los arrojó a la mesa y le dijo: “¡Léase esa vaina para que aprenda!”

Acto seguido, el Gabo se enganchó con Rulfo y esa misma noche lo leyó sin parar. Él mismo ha reconocido que ese realismo mágico famoso en su obra es influencia de Rulfo y de su Pedro Páramo específicamente. Incluso cuenta que llegó a recitar de memoria el libro completo. Por citar sólo un paralelismo podemos destacar el parecido y la resonancia literaria que tienen tanto Comala, donde se desarrolla la obra de Rulfo, y Macondo, pueblo de la familia Buendía en Cien años de Soledad.

En 2003, Gabo escribiría y leería un texto en el aniversario número 50 de la publicación de El Llano en Llamas, donde dijo que “El escrutinio a fondo de la obra de Juan Rulfo me dio por fin el camino que buscaba para continuar mis libros”.

Tras reencontrar la inspiración, García Márquez terminó la novela en septiembre de 1966, tras 18 largos meses de trabajo sin parar.

“Desde entonces no me interrumpí un solo día, en una especie de sueño demoledor, hasta la línea final en que a Macondo se lo lleva el carajo”, habría dicho García Márquez según lo cita el crítico literario británico Gerald Martin, en su biografía de Gabo, Gabriel García Márquez, una Vida (2009).

Luego, junto a su esposa la llevaron a la oficina de correos en Ciudad de México para enviarla a la entonces famosa Editorial Sudamericana, con sede en Buenos Aires, Argentina. Sin embargo, sólo les alcanzaba el dinero para enviar la mitad de la obra y un mensaje a la casa editorial para que mandara dinero y poder remitir el resto, según algunas versiones.

Entre el dinero que envió la editorial y el que consiguieron tras empeñar algunos electrodomésticos en el Monte de Piedad, finalmente mandaron la novela completa, la cual fue publicada al siguiente año, en 1967 y el éxito fue rotundo. En las primeras semanas se vendieron 18 mil ejemplares solamente en Buenos Aires. Lo demás es historia.

Cien años de Soledad nos cuenta la historia de un siglo en la vida de la familia Buendía y las sucesivas generaciones en el pueblo ficticio de Macondo, fundado por el patriarca José Arcadio Buendía. Además de la soledad, los temas son diversos pero, si no la ha leído, sugiero que los descubra usted mismo.

La serie en Netflix será de varios capítulos pues García Márquez nunca accedió a vender los derechos para que se hiciera una película, ya que decía que un filme no le haría justicia a una obra tan extensa.

Cabe mencionar que el Instituto Nobel colocó a Cien años de Soledad entre los libros más importantes en la historia de la humanidad. Junto a El Quijote de Cervantes y Rayuela de Cortázar, son seguramente las obras en castellano más influyentes.

Así que, si me permiten, me atreveré a sugerirles algo para antes que se estrene la serie de Cien años de Soledad: vayan y léanse esa vaina, para que aprendan.

Miguel Ángel Báez es un periodista del Valle Central nacido en México. Él se graduó de CSU Bakersfield y fue editor del periódico Noticiero Semanal, de Porterville.

Central Valley Fuego Tiene Nuevo Coach

POR PETER MAIDEN

Central Valley Fuego jugó su primer partido en casa en el campo de fútbol de Fresno State el 16 de marzo. Su oponente, Union Omaha, que debió apreciar el clima templado aquí, ganó 2-1.

Este año Fuego tiene un nuevo entrenador, Jermaine Jones. Su padre es afroamericano y su madre es de origen alemán. Tuvo una brillante carrera en la Bundesliga alemana, la Premier League inglesa y la Major League Soccer estadounidense. Esta temporada con Fuego es su debut como técnico.

Ha habido un gran recambio con los jugadores de Fuego. Sólo reconocí a un jugador en el campo el 16 de marzo que había jugado con Fuego el año pasado: el mediocampista Mouhamed Dabo.

Debido a que Fresno State está instalando un sistema de emergencia en el estadio, solo había 1,000 asientos para los fanáticos. El partido estaba agotado.

Para obtener información sobre los próximos juegos de Fuego y comprar boletos, visite www.fuegofc.com.

Peter Maiden es el editor de fotografía de Community Alliance.



El delantero Moe Espinoza (centro), de Central Valley Fuego, juega casi pegado al delantero de Omaha, Aaron Gomez (derecha). Foto de Peter Maiden

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Marion Masada: Sobreviviente, Historiadora, Maestra

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A pesar de sus condiciones de encarcelamiento, la gente allí mantuvo su orgullo, su sentido de justicia social y la fortaleza para defenderse contra la autoridad.

Todo eso vendría después. Cuando llegó la familia Nakamura, se enfrentaron a la misma cruda realidad que se estaba desarrollando para los otros 120.000 estadounidenses de origen japonés que habían sido desarraigados de forma tan ruda e injusta de sus vidas anteriores. Ahora la familia tuvo que hacinarse en una habitación pequeña, como lo describe vívidamente Marion.

"Era solo una habitación en la que estaba toda nuestra familia: 25 pies por 25 pies con una bombilla. Eso es todo. Y luego los pisos, los pisos de madera, con espacio entre los listones de madera para que el pasto, ya sabes, se asome.

"No hubo ninguna separación. Entonces, tabicamos la habitación con láminas colgadas del techo. Estaban mamá y papá, y cinco de nosotros. Entonces estábamos abarrotados.

"Recuerdo haber dormido en el suelo porque los catres ocupaban demasiado espacio. Y de esta manera podríamos alinear a las niñas de un lado y a los niños del otro lado".

Pronto se adaptaron a su nueva normalidad y todos tuvieron que colaborar: "Mi madre y mi padre trabajaban en la cocina. Y nunca vi a mis hermanos desde el amanecer hasta el atardecer. Por la mañana se despertaban, se vestían, y se iban todo el día y también jugaban con sus amigos.

"Entonces mi madre tuvo un bebé, así que yo lavé toda la ropa de la familia. Yo recuerdo eso. Disfruté haciendo eso. Y luego mi hermana más joven ayudó a mi madre con el bebé".

Esa nueva normalidad incluía la anormalidad de la vida reglamentada en los campos. Las familias tuvieron que cambiar lo que comían tradicionalmente por comida estadounidense producida en masa. Marion recuerda no haber tenido nunca una comida familiar privada durante todo su encarcelamiento.

"Comías lo que te proporcionaba la cocina, sonaba una campana y todos nos poníamos en fila... Como, ¿cómo se llama? Ah, como en una cafetería. Tres comidas al día. Sí. Recuerdo que el desayuno consistía en cereal o panqueques. Y durante años y años", se rió, "ya no pude comer panqueques ni cereales fríos".

Con el tiempo, se crearon escuelas y Marion tiene recuerdos positivos de sus maestros, especialmente de su maestra de quinto grado, la Sra. Fox: "Era una maestra maravillosa. Y por la tarde nos leía cuentos.

"Ella dijo: 'Quiero darte un lema para vivir, y el lema es este: Sólo lo mejor de mí es lo suficientemente bueno'. Y lo recuerdo todos mis años".

Marion se tomó un poco de tiempo para sí misma entre las tareas escolares y laborales. Su inteligencia natural y su curiosidad la llevaron a los libros. "Yo leo. Las iglesias mandaban libros. Los misterios de Nancy Drew, [los] Bobbsey Twins y algunas historias de vaqueros, cualquier cosa que enviaran.

"Abrieron una biblioteca y había bibliotecarios japoneses. De ahí viene mi amor por la lectura. Y porque el tiempo libre para mí no siempre era conveniente con otros amigos".

Después de un tiempo, incluso se unió a las Girl Scouts del campamento.

Lamentablemente, una de las amistades de Marion le provocó un trauma en su vida. "Yo tenía [alrededor de] 11 años. Este hombre abusó de mí. Y quedé tan traumatizada que no salí nada de mi boca. Y no pude gritar. No pude decir nada. Era de noche.

"Su pequeña hija era amiga de mi hermana. Nos invitó a mi hermana y a mí a pasar la noche en su casa. Fue su padre quien abusó de mí. Oh, vaya, fue muy traumático. No tenía voz".

Esta experiencia la persiguió durante mucho tiempo en sueños y en la vida despierta. Años más tarde, en actos conmemorativos, Marion conoció a otras mujeres que fueron violadas en los campos. Fue la indignidad más desgarradora añadida a la experiencia general de la vida en prisión.

Al final de la guerra, Marion y su familia regresaron a California. Su madre consideró y rechazó una oferta para mudarse a Seabrook, Nueva Jersey, para trabajar en una fábrica de alimentos congelados y vivir allí en la ciudad de la empresa. Pero el lugar les recordaba demasiado a la vida en el campo de concentración que acababan de abandonar.

¿Dónde ir? Habían perdido todo lo que poseían antes de la guerra y Salinas todavía no era acogedor con los japoneses-estadounidenses.

"Regresamos a Salinas, pero nos dijeron 'no te queremos de regreso' y probablemente había jinetes a medianoche tratando de atraparte. Entonces mi madre dijo: "Vamos a ir a

Watsonville", que es el pueblo de al lado.

"Nos quedamos en la iglesia budista. Todos usábamos las iglesias como base temporal hasta que pudiéramos encontrar un lugar donde vivir y ganar suficiente dinero para comprar un automóvil que pudiera transportar a nuestra familia".

La familia encontró vivienda y trabajó en los campos frutales alrededor de San José. Para aliviar la carga de una familia de 10 personas que viven en una casa pequeña, Marion vivió con una familia caucásica durante un tiempo durante los fines de semana fuera del trabajo.

Durante la secundaria conoció a una chica italiana que la invitó a vivir con su familia. "Me amaban y me trataron maravillosamente. Me enseñó que no todos los caucásicos eran malos".

Marion trabajó como empleada doméstica durante la escuela secundaria y dos años de universidad, pero finalmente se mudó sola como una joven trabajadora a San Francisco. Sin embargo, los prejuicios aún persistían, como se enteró cuando un posible empleador le pidió que usara un nombre caucásico para un trabajo de telefonista.

"Él dijo: 'su nombre suena demasiado extraño'. Entonces le dije: 'ella es la Sra. Grant'. Cuando terminé esa conversación, estaba tan enojada que me dijera algo así. Eso no era aceptable. No tenía palabras para este hombre. Agarré mi bolso y me fui".

Aunque creció siendo budista, Marion se sintió atraída por la fe cristiana, que ha desempeñado un papel importante en su vida desde entonces. En los años posteriores a la guerra, trabajó en oficinas en San Francisco.

Salió con algunos jóvenes pero no consideró seriamente el matrimonio hasta que conoció a Saburo Masada. Era un estudiante de teología en San Francisco y nativo del Valle de San Joaquín, de Caruthers.

La modesta educación de Saburo en una granja de pasas fue como la vida de Marion antes de la guerra. También él se vio arrastrado a la vida en un campo de concentración cuando tenía 12 años. La familia Masada fue enviada al Centro de Reubicación de Guerra Jerome, donde su padre pronto murió de neumonía, lo que dejó a su madre sola para cuidar de sus siete hijos.

Saburo se graduó en el Seminario Teológico de San Francisco, se convirtió en ministro presbiteriano y se casó con Marion el 30 de septiembre de 1956. Sirvió en Watsonville; Ogden, Utah; y luego Stockton en un ministerio dedicado a la justicia social y la compasión.

Juntos criaron a tres hijas. Después de cuatro décadas en el ministerio, se jubiló y la pareja se mudó a Fresno. Eso comenzó un nuevo capítulo en sus vidas. Transformaron sus propias experiencias traumáticas de racismo duradero, pérdida de sus derechos como ciudadanos y encarcelamiento perjudicial en un poderoso instrumento educativo.

Marion enfatiza que ella y Saburo estaban decididos a enseñar a las nuevas generaciones sobre las cosas terribles que habían sucedido en el pasado. "Quiero que la gente aprenda que, aunque sucedan cosas malas, podemos sobrevivir y volvernos personas más fuertes y poder contar nuestras historias a pesar de todo lo que ha sucedido".

Otra faceta de su amabilidad se manifestó en las visitas regulares que Saburo y Marion hacían a una prisionera condenada a muerte, dándole un respiro para hablar con la gente y sentirse como un ser humano.

Saburo murió en 2020, pero Marion aún continúa. "Voy a la prisión y visito a esta mujer. Ella estaba condenada a muerte, y el abogado pudo sacarla de esa situación hace unos dos [o] tres años [y ahora está] trabajando para conseguir su liberación por compasión".

Marion y Saburo se convirtieron en una fuerza de la naturaleza al educar a generaciones de estadounidenses sobre lo que vivieron y el valor de conocer nuestra historia colectiva. Cruzaron el país haciendo presentaciones a miles de personas sobre el poder del amor y la compasión.

A su vez, han recibido una lluvia de elogios por sus numerosos y distinguidos logros. Marion, a sus 91 años, continúa enseñando e inspirando.

"Siento que, como persona que ha pasado por eso, necesito ser responsable de estas historias y difundirlas para contarlas a los estudiantes, porque son el futuro.

"Y necesitan saber que tienen voz. Necesitan saber que pueden hablar porque estamos en Estados Unidos donde podemos hablar.

"No tenemos que quemar edificios y matar gente para contar nuestras historias. Podemos simplemente hablar. Sólo tenemos que ser lo suficientemente valientes para hablar.

"Esto es Estados Unidos, donde tenemos libertad de expresión y necesitamos hacer uso de la voz que tenemos. De lo contrario, la historia se repetirá una y otra vez".

Vic Bedoian es un periodista independiente de radio y prensa que trabaja en temas de justicia ambiental y recursos naturales en el Valle de San Joaquín. Contáctelo en vicbedoian@gmail.com.

Léanse esa Vaina Para que Aprendan

POR MIGUEL ÁNGEL BÁEZ

Nació el 6 de marzo de 1928 en Aracataca, en el Caribe colombiano, y partió de este mundo a causa de una neumonía en abril de 2014, a los 87 años, en Ciudad de México. Ganó el Premio Nobel de Literatura en 1984 y sin duda su obra más trascendental es su novela Cien años de soledad.

Hablo del escritor y periodista colombiano Gabriel García Márquez, cuya obra será llevada a la pantalla de Netflix en este 2024, según anunciaron el año pasado.

Me sucede algo especial con García Márquez. Es, creo, el escritor que más he leído, sin que necesariamente sea mi favorito. Sin embargo, siempre me ha fascinado su capacidad para contar historias. Quizá sea eso lo que me atrajo del también llamado Gabo.

Facundo Cabral solía contar una anécdota de la mamá de García Márquez cuando éste ganó el Premio Nobel y los periodistas corrieron a buscarla para obtener sus impresiones. "Yo no sé nada de literatura, lo único que sé es que el Gabo tiene muy buena memoria porque todo lo que escribió se lo contaron".

La primera novela que leí de García Márquez fue Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada. Era parte de las obras que se leían en una clase de literatura avanzada en la preparatoria y que a su vez otorgaba unidades para la universidad.

Yo había entrado tarde a la clase de manera que para ponerme a la par de mis compañeros de grupo, además

de la lectura diaria, llevaba a casa libros que el resto ya había leído. Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada me duró una noche. Al día siguiente recuerdo haberle comentado a mi profesora: creo que nunca llegaré a escribir como este señor.

Por si no ha leído la novela en mención, le comparto el inicio.

"El día en que lo iban a matar, Santiago Nasar se levantó a las 5.30 de la mañana para esperar el buque en que llegaba el obispo".

Desde el inicio el autor nos presenta a uno de los protagonistas y nos revela un dato importante: lo van a matar. A mí, como joven e inexperto lector, descubrir esa manera de escribir que tenía García Márquez me fascinó y me atrapó para siempre.

Me sorprendía esa habilidad para iniciar contando lo que sucedería después y aún así seguir desplazando su pluma de un lado a otro, dando giros espacio-temporales incluso intercalando relatos con historias paralelas.

A eso habría que agregarle la dificultad gramatical que implica intercalar la conjugación de verbos en diferentes tiempos y seguir teniendo sentido sin descuidar la fluidez con la que se lee el relato. No soy un experto en literatura y habrá más de uno que pueda corregirme o que no le sorprenda el estilo de García Márquez. A mí me marcó desde adolescente, qué quiere que le diga.

Tal vez era algo común para cualquier escritor. No así para un chico de 16 o 17 años a quien dicha novela le despertó el interés y curiosidad por seguir leyendo y descubriendo más sobre la obra del Nobel de literatura.

"Lo que sucede es que yo no quise que el lector empezara por el final para ver si se cometía el crimen o no, así que

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LIBERTAD BAJO PALABRA



El escritor colombiano Gabriel García Márquez. Foto cortesía de The Commons

Es Hora de Ejercer el Derecho al Voto

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de avance democrático completo tal como lo vimos en el año 2000, en que fue simplemente un cambio de partido con políticas similares a las del PRI. Entonces, asumió la presidencia Vicente Fox Quesada, del Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN).

Las dos mujeres candidatas a la presidencia son la Doctora Claudia Sheinbaum Prado, del partido Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (MORENA) y Xóchitl Gálvez, de la alianza "Fuerza y Corazón por México", una coalición formada por el PRI, PAN y PRD. Hay un tercer candidato, a quien las encuestas le dan nulas posibilidades de ganar, Jorge Álvarez Máynez, del Movimiento Ciudadano (MC).

Si bien el triunfo de cualquiera de estas dos candidatas será histórico, este será un verdadero avance democrático según quién de estas dos mujeres sea elegida, ya que la agenda política de las candidatas, así como la trayectoria de ambas, es significativamente distinta.

La Doctora Claudia Sheinbaum Prado, científica y ex-jefa de gobierno de la Ciudad de México (2018-2023) propone la atención a las causas de la violencia que afecta a México, Consolidación de la Guardia Nacional, Fortalecimiento de la inteligencia e investigación, Reforma del poder judicial, aumento de los planes de apoyo social y becas de estudio, independencia energética del país, y más.

Por su parte, Xóchitl Gálvez, una empresaria que durante el gobierno de Vicente Fox fue una funcionaria pública que obtuvo jugosos contratos con el gobierno gracias a su puesto, representa un sistema político anquilosado, conservador y más de lo mismo. Por ejemplo, propone la construcción de una mega cárcel y no plantea el rompimiento de las desigualdades e inequidades económicas y sociales. Asimismo, propone el cierre de dos refineras con un propósito confuso y vouchers para escuelas privadas en lugar de fortalecer la educación pública mejorando las infraestructuras, elevando el sistema educativo y ofreciendo salarios más dignos a los maestros. También propone quitar el apoyo económico de manera selectiva a personas de la tercera edad, iniciativa que

implementó el actual presidente, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Para los y las ciudadanas mexicanas que radicamos en Fresno el hecho histórico de estas elecciones es que por primera vez podremos votar en las oficinas del Consulado de México. De esto me enteré en febrero de este año cuando fui a renovar mi credencial para votar. Como nunca antes y para mi gran sorpresa, la cónsul titular salió a dirigirse a quienes estábamos en la sala de espera a invitarnos a sacar la credencial de elector y anunciar que por primera vez habrá casillas electorales en las oficinas del consulado.

Este no es un acontecimiento casual sino el avance en una larga lucha por la defensa de los derechos políticos de los mexicanos que radicamos en el extranjero. Hay antecedentes de este movimiento desde al menos 1917, cuando inmigrantes mexicanos promovían boletas para votar por Venustiano Carranza.

Tuvieron que pasar casi cien años de esfuerzos organizativos de base, debates académicos y políticos para que esto se lograra. En el 2006 el gobierno de México finalmente reconoció los derechos políticos de los inmigrantes y estableció mecanismos legales para instaurar el voto de los ciudadanos mexicanos en el extranjero. Pero esos mecanismos no han sido del todo efectivo aunque podemos notar mejoras.

Este proceso ha tenido varios momentos. En 1988 vimos los primeros esfuerzos de cambio político con la candidatura del Ingeniero Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas a la presidencia por el Frente Democrático Nacional, una corriente opositora a las rancias políticas del PRI, de donde luego surgiría el Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD). En ese momento histórico un grupo de mexicanos nos organizamos para promover el derecho al voto de los ciudadanos buscando un cambio político en México.

Ante la falta de mecanismos para votar desde Fresno, un grupo de inmigrantes mexicanos nos organizamos para convocar a una votación simbólica en las elecciones de 1988. De este esfuerzo de base participamos ciudadanos independientes y líderes comunitarios como Antonio Cortés, Rufino Domínguez, Filemón López, Ángel Noriega, Samuel Orozco, y otros.

Sin más recursos que nuestra propia voluntad realizamos una amplia convocatoria a participar de esta elección simbólica que tuvo lugar fuera del consulado de México en Fresno en urnas que construimos. Para nuestra sorpresa, aproximadamente más de 300 ciudadanos y ciudadanas

mexicanos viajaron de Bakersfield, Merced, Madera y otras ciudades del valle de San Joaquín a depositar su voto simbólico y expresar su esperanza por un cambio en la historia política de México.

Los organizadores nos dimos a la tarea de contar los votos y hacer entrega de los resultados a la entonces Cónsul Titular, la Licenciada Diana Muñoz. Los resultados fueron notablemente en favor del ingeniero Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas—hubo solo un voto a favor del PRI—, a quien invitamos y recibimos en la ciudad de Fresno al año siguiente.

El derecho del voto de los mexicanos en el extranjero no se logró sin controversias. Según la revista electrónica La Verdad, en un debate sobre el tema en los 80s, el investigador Jorge Bustamante, entonces destacado académico en asuntos de migración, publicó un artículo en el que declara que los mexicanos en el extranjero no estábamos listos para el voto debido al bajo nivel de politización.

La persistencia de movimientos de base para ejercer los derechos políticos desde el extranjero ha mostrado lo contrario. La oposición a la participación de los inmigrantes en la vida política de sus países de origen argumenta injerencia en asuntos internos, falta de lealtad por el país de residencia, etc.

Los inmigrantes mexicanos salimos de nuestro país por diferentes razones, pero han sido principalmente razones políticas, económicas y geopolíticas las que han desplazado a un gran número de Mexicanos. Somos agentes político-benéficos, contribuimos a dos economías, dos culturas y dos sociedades.

Les invito a no perder su derecho a votar, el voto es único y secreto. Pueden elegir a la candidata de su preferencia. Pero para asegurar nuestra fuerza política ejerzamos un voto informado y no manipulado como ha ocurrido por décadas.

Nos vemos el 2 de junio en las afueras del consulado de México en Fresno.

Myrna Martínez Nateras es practicante de la educación popular y la investigación participativa. Ha dedicado su trabajo a la defensa de los derechos, autodeterminación y formación política de los inmigrantes y refugiados del Valle Central de California con especial énfasis en las mujeres y los jóvenes.

Estamos Unidos Contra el Odio

POR PERSONAL DE LA ALIANZA COMUNITARIA

Con el aumento de los crímenes de odio en Fresno y en todo el país, necesitamos que la comunidad se mantenga unida contra el odio. Sea parte de la solución y asista a la "Cumbre Unidos Contra el Odio" el 6 de abril a las 10 a. m. en Fresno City College, Forum Hall 101.

Únase a los estudiantes, los miembros de más de 20 grupos comunitarios que forman parte de la Coalición Stop the Hate y al Fiscal General de California, Rob Bonta, mientras nos solidarizamos con el objetivo de hacer de Fresno una ciudad más habitable.

Habrará talleres:

- Qué hacer si eres víctima de un delito
- Detener la campaña de la coalición del Odio
- Entrenamiento de espectadores
- Conoce tus derechos.



Resolución ¡Detengamos el Odio!

Nosotros (el nombre de la organización va aquí), nos comprometemos a hacer frente a todas las formas de odio, racismo, intolerancia e intimidación.

No nos quedaremos callados ante la intolerancia basada en raza, etnia, género, religión, capacidad, país de origen, estatus migratorio o cualquier otro factor.

Trabajaremos junto con nuestra comunidad para crear comunidades más seguras e inclusivas para todos.

Al hacer este compromiso hoy, prometemos:

- Aprender qué es un delito de odio.
- Educar a nuestras familias y amigos a identificar los delitos de odio, apoyar a las víctimas y reportar a la policía o a una organización especializada.
- Capacitar a nuestro personal en concientización y reconocimiento de los delitos de odio y crear un entorno seguro e incluyente que apoye la

igualdad y las buenas relaciones dentro y fuera del lugar de trabajo.

- Garantizar que las leyes sean eficaces para abordar los delitos de odio que puedan ocurrir en el lugar de trabajo, ya sea entre empleados, contra trabajadores o contra el público.
- Apoyar y crear actividades en la comunidad y en el trabajo que promuevan la diversidad, la inclusión, la amabilidad y las buenas relaciones.
- Ayudar a exhibir materiales visuales en áreas públicas que desapruében todas las formas de odio en nuestras comunidades y compartir esta información con otros a través de folletos, carteles y publicaciones en las redes sociales.
- Informar a la policía o enviar detalles al 559-600-CVAC si somos testigos, sufrimos o tomamos conocimiento de cualquier persona, organización o empresa que esté demostrando discurso de odio.
- Aliente a las víctimas que han experimentado un delito de odio a que lo denuncien a la policía o a una organización especializada y apóyelas para que comuniquen cualquier detalle siempre que sea posible.

UNIDOS CONTRA EL ODIO

SÁBADO, 6 DE ABRIL DE 2024

COLEGIO COMUNITARIO DE FRESNO
FORO SALA 101
10:00AM - 2:00PM

ORADOR PRINCIPAL:
ROB BONTA FISCAL GENERAL DE CA

TALLERES DE ENTRENAMIENTO:

QUÉ HACER SI ERES VÍCTIMA DE UN DELITO DE ODIO	DETENER LA CAMPAÑA DE LA COALICIÓN DE ODIO
ENTRENAMIENTO DE ESPECTADORES	¿CONOCE TUS DERECHOS!

CONFIRME ASISTENCIA:

INTERPRETACIÓN EN ESPAÑOL

ENTRETENIMIENTO Y CAMIONES DECORADA

BRADY, KFCF, Planned Parenthood, BAPAC, COMMUNITY ALLIANCE, Fresno City College Social Justice Center, PODER LATINO, THE FRESNO CENTER, CAIR

Este evento iniciará una campaña que promueve el tema Stop the Hate - Be the Love. En el evento habrá carteles disponibles para el jardín y calcomanías para los carros con ese mensaje. Además, se pedirá a todos que se comuniquen con grupos comunitarios, concejos municipales, juntas escolares, grupos religiosos y sindicatos para lograr que se apruebe la resolución (ver más abajo). Se necesita su ayuda para llegar a la mayor cantidad de personas posible con este mensaje.

Devolver las resoluciones adoptadas a mikerhodes@fresnoalliance.com

Habrará interpretación en español, entretenimiento cultural y camiones de comida donde podrás almorzar.

Este evento es posible gracias a una subvención de la Biblioteca Estatal de California en el marco de la iniciativa estatal Stop the Hate.

¡Apoye el periodismo independiente!
Alianza Comunitaria le trae cada mes una voz diferente de lo que ocurre en nuestra región.

ALIANZA

COMUNITARIA

LA VOZ DEL MOVIMIENTO PROGRESISTA DESDE 1996

Es Hora de Ejercer el Derecho al Voto

POR MYRNA MARTÍNEZ NATERAS

El 2024 será un año histórico para la democracia a nivel global. De acuerdo a la organización chequeando, este año será, por curiosa coincidencia, un año electoral para cerca de cien países que incluye Asia, África y Europa.

El hecho que marcará la historia electoral en México es que por primera vez una mujer ocupará el más alto mando del poder ejecutivo. Tener por primera vez a una mujer presidenta será un paso más en la historia política de México, un paso más para avanzar hacia una democracia más amplia que dio inicio en el año 2000 cuando por primera vez el Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) dejó la presidencia después de gobernar por 70 años consecutivos.

Al margen de lo significativo que México tenga por primera vez a una mujer presidenta, esto no es una garantía

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La Dra. Claudia Sheinbaum Prado, candidata de MORENA a la presidencia de México. Las elecciones tendrán lugar el 2 de junio. Foto cortesía The Commons

Marion Masada: Sobreviviente, Historiadora, Maestra

POR VIC BEDOIAN

Marion Masada es una sobreviviente de una de las acciones más trágicas y equivocadas de Estados Unidos. Mientras nos preparábamos para nuestra entrevista, ella me regañó amablemente. "Llámelo campo de concentración, por favor", aconsejó. Esto se produjo después de mi referencia casual al encarcelamiento de más de 120.000 ciudadanos japoneses en el lenguaje oficial de "internamiento".

Sabe por su propia vida y como historiadora que es una palabra demasiado suave para describir la experiencia. Ella no sólo sobrevivió en los años posteriores a la Segunda Guerra Mundial, sino que también prosperó. En parte, eso se debió a su fuerza interior y a la fuerza derivada de aquellos acontecimientos traumáticos.

"Tuve una infancia muy feliz porque mi padre era un hombre amante de la diversión", dijo. "Le gustaba llevar a los niños al circo y todas esas cosas divertidas que eran propias de los niños. Esta era una oportunidad para que mi madre descansara. Y eso funcionó bien".

Nacida como Marion Nakamura en Salinas, pasó sus primeros años en una de las regiones agrícolas más productivas del estado. Como otras familias japonesas americanas, eran una parte importante de la vida económica del Valle.

Marion recuerda que su padre "tenía mucho éxito en la agricultura. Cultivaba todo tipo de verduras y él mismo las comercializaba en las tiendas de comestibles. Y sus verduras estaban deliciosas, firmes y maravillosamente presentadas".

Como su padre no era ciudadano y no podía poseer tierras, alquiló las tierras de cultivo de una viuda. "Ella tenía una hermosa casa cerca de la carretera principal", señaló Marion. "Y luego nuestra casa estaba en algún lugar de atrás, una casa más pequeña".

"Recuerdo que mi padre me dijo cuando cumplí siete años que tenía que aprender a cocinar mientras mi madre y mi padre trabajaban en el campo. Mis tres hermanos mayores trabajaban con mis padres, así que alguien tenía que cocinar el arroz, lavarlo y cocinarlo".

Esa vida feliz cambió para siempre el 19 de febrero de 1942, con la Orden Ejecutiva 9066. Pronto, su familia fue conducida a los terrenos del rodeo de Salinas con miles de otros estadounidenses de origen japonés mientras se construían rápidamente 10 campos de concentración en los desiertos de Estados Unidos.

La madre de Marion se apresuró a preparar a la familia para mudarse, incluso cosiendo las bolsas de lona. Sólo les permitieron dos bolsas de lona para guardar todo lo que pudieran necesitar, sin saber dónde terminarían.

"Entonces, simplemente lo llenó de la manera más compacta que pudo para que tuviéramos lo que necesitábamos. Ella no sabía a dónde íbamos y si las cosas estarían disponibles para nosotros cuando las necesitáramos. Y entonces, ella trataba de pensar en todas estas cosas.

"Es sorprendente cómo pensaba en estas cosas, ya sabes, sin saber adónde íbamos, si el clima iba a ser cálido o frío".

Pronto, cargaron a la familia en trenes viejos y destartados y la enviaron de camino al complejo del campo de prisioneros en Poston, Arizona.

"El día que nos fuimos, mi mamá nos cargó a los niños con ropa; suéteres, blusas, chaquetas, abrigos, de todo. Y cuando llegamos a Arizona, hacía 120 grados. Viniendo de Salinas, que está cerca de Monterey, es tan frío como increíblemente caluroso".

ENCARCELAMIENTO DE JAPONESES



Marion Masada en su casa de Fresno. Foto de Peter Maiden

Ubicado en Arizona, a unos pocos kilómetros al otro lado de la frontera de California, cerca de la pequeña ciudad de Parker, en el desierto de Mojave, el Centro de Reubicación de Guerra se extendía a lo largo del río Colorado en un valle que formaba parte de la Reserva India del Río Colorado. Era el mayor de los 10 "centros de reubicación" del país, con 18.000 personas en tres campamentos separados entre sí por tres millas.

Según el archivo histórico mantenido por Densho.org, el campo de Poston también fue único en otros aspectos.

Tenía un personal profesional más diverso que incluía a muchos afroamericanos.

Hubo un malestar laboral considerable, incluida una huelga masiva y numerosas huelgas más pequeñas. A menudo, las disputas giraban en torno a las condiciones laborales y los magros salarios. Muchos trabajadores abandonaron sus trabajos en los campamentos para dedicarse a trabajos agrícolas en la zona.

Y estaba la política. Poston tenía el mayor número de resistentes al reclutamiento de cualquier campo de la nación, así como el mayor número de Nisei (nombre que se les da a la segunda generación de personas de origen japonés) admitidos cuando regresó el reclutamiento en 1944.

La cultura también prosperó allí. La gente practicaba una amplia variedad de artes y oficios. Se construyó un teatro al aire libre donde se exhibían obras de teatro y películas. Se publicaron dos revistas literarias en japonés que presentaban poesía y prosa creadas localmente.

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