

# A COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

**FREE!**

*The Voice of the Progressive Movement since 1996*

## “Privatized” health insurance kills and bankrupts

Stanley Thomas

“Privatized” health insurance kills, causes suffering, and bankrupts. Publicly financed health insurance heals.

America’s health insurance system is broken for two reasons: (1) it costs too much and (2) it provides too little. The key to curing the problem is public financing of health insurance, funded by fair and equitable taxation. This is exactly what SB840, “California Universal Health Care Act,” does.

Under this nation’s dysfunctional private, for-profit health insurance system, health insurance premium costs for employers and for private individuals increase relentlessly at double-digit rates (at several times the rate of inflation) every year. Tens of millions of Americans have no health insurance whatsoever; a significant proportion of these are children. Additionally, other tens of millions of Americans are seriously underinsured. Furthermore, untold millions are denied health insurance at any cost by the poorly-regulated, profit-centered private health insurance industry because they have “preexisting conditions.”

### Consequences

The consequences of America’s deeply flawed, “privatized” health insurance system are horrific for Americans. Our privatized health insurance industry kills people, bankrupts families, businesses and emergency rooms, creates untold suffering nationwide, and makes a significant contribution to civil unrest (strikes and near-strikes against school districts, hospitals, municipalities, manufacturers, and more).

\* 47 million Americans (7 million Californians) are uninsured.

\* 18,000 Americans per year (40 Californians per week) die prematurely because they have inadequate access to health care (NYT, 1/12/05);

\* More than half of all personal bankruptcies are the result of inadequate health insurance;

\* Emergency rooms (ERs) have an unfunded mandate to treat the uninsured. In the summer of 2005, the ERs of East Los Angeles and Northridge ER in the San Fernando Valley were bankrupted. These two bankruptcies brought to 65 the number of California ERs bankrupted since the mid-1990s. New hospitals are being built without ERs because of the financial hemorrhage they represent.

\* Uniquely among first-world nations, the U.S. depends on businesses to provide health insurance to the population. The burden of health insurance to businesses makes General Motors and Ford uncompetitive on the world market and threatens these businesses with bankruptcy. The cost of health insurance to their employees contributes to the bankruptcies of America’s airlines. Nationwide, businesses large and small are vulnerable to the same health insurance cost issue.

**Continued on page 3**



## Don't Miss 'SiCKO' Opening June 29, 2007

The words “health care” and “comedy” aren’t usually found in the same sentence, but in Academy Award winning filmmaker Michael Moore’s new movie ‘SiCKO,’ they go together hand in (rubber) glove.

Opening with profiles of several ordinary Americans whose lives have been disrupted, shattered, and—in some cases—ended by health care catastrophe, the film makes clear that the crisis doesn’t only affect the 47 million uninsured citizens—millions of others who dutifully pay their premiums often get strangled by bureaucratic red tape as well.

After detailing just how the system got into such a mess (the short answer: profits and Nixon), we are whisked around the world, visiting countries including Canada, Great Britain and France, where all citizens receive free medical benefits. Finally, Moore gathers a group of 9/11 heroes – rescue workers now suffering from debilitating illnesses who have been denied medical attention in the US. He takes them to a most expected place, and in addition to finally receiving care, they also engage in some unexpected diplomacy.

While Moore’s ‘SiCKO’ follows the trailblazing path of previous hit films, the Oscar-winning BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE and all-time box-office documentary champ FAHRENHEIT 9/11, it is also something very different for Michael Moore. ‘SiCKO’ is a straight-from-the-heart portrait of the crazy and sometimes cruel U.S. health care system, told from the vantage of everyday people faced with extraordinary and bizarre challenges in their quest for basic health coverage.

In the tradition of Mark Twain or Will Rogers, ‘SiCKO’ uses humor to tell these compelling stories, leading the audience to conclude that an alternative system is the only possible answer.

**JULY 2007**

**COMMUNITY ALLIANCE**

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

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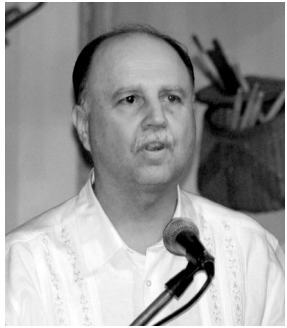
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## From the Editor

Last month, we reported that the Community Alliance newspaper was experiencing the worst financial crisis in its 10+ years of publishing. It looked like, for a moment, that the June 2007 issue would be our last. I'm very pleased to report that with the help of hundreds of supporters (see page 12 & 13) we have not only survived, but we are stronger than ever. Sometimes it takes a crisis to see who your friends are.

I'm humbled and honored by the support the progressive community has given to me and this newspaper. The dozens of letters, cards, and phone calls encouraging us to continue has touched my heart. And to think that I almost quit because I thought there was not enough support in this community to keep an alternative/independent newspaper alive. What a mistake that would have been!

Cindy Sheehan decided to step back from her leadership role in the anti-war movement at about the same time as this paper's financial crisis. Amy Goodman interviewed Cindy on Democracy Now! (which is heard on KFCF 88.1 FM) about her decision and I was struck by the similarities between her frustration and the problems we were having. Cindy said she gave everything she had to the movement to end the war in Iraq - unfortunately that meant that she spent very little time with her family, had no time for herself, and the roar of criticism of her work from the left was deafening. She just couldn't take it anymore.

What Cindy's experience tells me is that we have got to be more supportive of each other. We have to figure out ways to make the work of building a progressive movement sustainable so we don't burn people out. The response to the Community Alliance financial crisis is a wonderful example of this community pulling together to support a sustainable institution that is working for peace, social and economic justice. We got it right!

Now that we have some money in the bank and pledges for ongoing support, the next challenge is to figure out how to continue the momentum and stabilize the newspaper for the long haul. I don't know if you know this or not, but there are not very many local newspapers like ours around the country. The Community Alliance is unique because we

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1. Provide an outlet for investigative journalism that comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.
2. This paper prints stories that help to build a powerful progressive movement that will support social, environmental, and economic justice.
2. We support immigrant rights and a living wage for all workers.
3. This newspaper influences public policy on issues affecting the community.

Our uniqueness is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because it is always exciting to stand up for justice and defend the interests of the oppressed. It is a curse because standing up for the poor, working people, and the oppressed means we have some enemies. Our enemies tend to be those who benefit from the exploitation of the environment, immigrants, and workers in general. In other words - people with a lot of money. That is why it is so important for us to have been supported by so many individuals in this fund appeal. We realize that support is not going to come from Daddy Warbucks and big corporations. Our survival and growth will depend on the outrageous generosity of people like Chris, Dennis, and Carol who are contributing \$100 a month. Equally important are the dollars that come from those that have the least to give - like the prisoner who sent us \$5 and Valta, who lives on a fixed income, and sent us \$20.

While our short term survival is now guaranteed, we need to figure out how to keep going for the long haul. The struggle we are in is more like a marathon than a 50 yard dash. Should we build financial stability by getting more advertising? Pat, Evo, and Jemmy have offered to help organize musical events that could raise funds. That will help a lot! Some supporters suggest that we need to increase the number of subscribers we have, ask for more donations, write grants to foundations, or increase the number of monthly sustainers.

I think the answer is that we might need to do all of the above. In the end, it is clear that the most important asset this newspaper has is you our reader. As long as you have hope, as long as you believe that another world is possible, we will survive.

*Stir it up Wednesday*



**Pam Whalen**  
**1st Wednesday**  
**3:00pm 88.1 FM KFCF**

## Letter to the editor

Tuesday while waiting for the 41 bus two young ladies sat on either side of me reading the Community Alliance. They both mentioned how much they liked it. The most talkative young woman told me she "reads it all the time, you get more news here than is ever in The Fresno Bee." The least talkative young woman quickly agreed. The talkative girl mentioned that she read it to find out what was going on everywhere. She said The Bee just covered murder and criminal activity in Fresno and she felt they never told the good things than go on in Fresno like the Community Alliance does.

The less talkative one said it sure is too bad that this might be the last issue! I told them I was going to send in a contribution. . . I thought it was the best newspaper in Fresno.

Valta Pointer

## Quote of the Month

*"The job of the newspaper is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."*

*Finley Peter Dunne*

## Dances of Universal Peace

The Dances of Universal Peace are being held in Fresno at the First Congregational Church, 2131 N. Van Ness (south of Clinton) on the first Friday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m.

These dances are circle dances in which the participants hold hands as they do simple steps and chant to the accompaniment of a drum and wind or string instruments. At the beginning of each dance the leader teaches a simple chant and describes the steps and movement to be used. The dancers repeat the chant as they move around the circle. The words chanted are from many different faiths and cultures including Christian, Sufi, Hindu, and American Indian.

This is a wonderful way to feel the spiritual energy within ourselves with sound, light, and movement. We are drawn closer to our individual paths and beliefs as our heart center opens. The dance brings us to the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humanity. No special clothing is required. Beginners and people of all ages are welcome. A love offering or donation is requested. For more information call Ellen at (559) 250-3175.

# Vang Pao Case Highlights Hmong Community's Losses

By Mai Der Vang



The news on June 4 came as a shock to hundreds of Hmong in California's Central Valley. Ten Hmong men from California had been arrested for allegedly attempting to purchase arms to overthrow the Lao government.

Among these men was Vang Pao—a former general in the Laotian army and a Hmong war hero during the “Secret War.”

While the Vietnam War raged through Southeast Asia in the 1960s, the CIA recruited thousands of men from the Hmong hill tribes to battle communist forces in a covert guerrilla action that came to be called the “Secret War.” They were trained to collect intelligence, rescue downed American pilots, and sever the delivery of supplies along the Ho Chi Minh trail. More than 30,000 Hmong casualties resulted, along with continued genocidal attacks, leading to a huge exodus of refugees into Thailand. Hundreds of thousands of those refugees were resettled in the United States.

No one knows the true intentions of Vang Pao and his men, but I believe it was a desperate attempt to reclaim a lost homeland. Vang Pao maintained a low profile for years, but these recent allegations make me wonder whether he held onto a belief that he could return stability to a people who have had no land since the 1970s.

As a revered Hmong general, this was a burden and

responsibility he must have carried for decades, long after he and many other Hmong had settled into their new lives in the United States. I grew up with Vang Pao's portrait on my wall. Each year, on the first day of the Hmong New Year, my grandmother would wake us up early and urge us to put on our traditional Hmong clothing to salute and receive him.

Many Hmong held onto the impossible dream of one day returning to live at peace in the mountains of Laos. My mother often reminisces about her happy childhood there. She farmed with my grandparents, and was proud to raise her own animals. My mother recalls how the morning sunrises shimmered like gold against the lush green mountains. She says she was proud to be Hmong.

Since relocating to the United States, she has been treated for depression. Today, in her forties, she often sits quietly by herself, hardly speaking a word. She barely speaks English and relies on her children to translate. She refers to herself as “dumb,” and is so fearful of being targeted because of her race that she never opens her car window when she drives, no matter how hot inside the car.

The United States may have lost the Vietnam War, but the Hmong people lost everything. The lands and homes of our parents were destroyed. Many of those left behind in Laos fell victim to genocidal attacks from communist forces.

Now we learn the revered general has been arrested for allegedly trying to overthrow the Lao government. I find it a paradox that decades ago, the CIA trained, supported and instructed Hmong men to fight against the very people whom Vang Pao and his men are now being accused of trying to oust from power.

Vang Pao and his men have failed in their alleged attempt to overthrow the Lao government, but perhaps they will succeed in getting the rest of the world to take a second look at the current situation in Laos, and the atrocities being committed against many of its people.

According to Amnesty International, the Lao military “regularly attacks [Hmong] temporary encampments, killing and injuring them, perpetuating their life on the run.” Video footage and photographs of these atroci-

ties have been captured and distributed by undercover journalists and human rights advocates. Many Hmong, mostly women and children, have gone into hiding in the Laotian jungles; others have been raped and murdered. Packs of Hmong have come forth in desperation to surrender to the Lao government, because they have lost the will to keep running. No one knows what has happened to those who have surrendered. It pains me to know those suffering in Laos cling to the hope that Hmong in America will deliver them from persecution.

Here in Fresno, conversation among the Hmong community focuses on the recent arrests, and the history behind them. “It was our country, our land,” said one 46-year-old man who remained so fearful that he did not want to be identified by name. “And to think of all those in Laos today who are still dying because of that secret war that would have never started if the Americans didn't come into our country...America is afraid to admit what is happening in Laos today because of that past.”

A 22-year-old Hmong woman, who also declined to share her name, acknowledges that while many young people do not identify with Vang Pao, “if he gets put behind bars, there is a part of us Hmong who will be behind bars too.”

Because I believe in the right of every person to live at peace, I condemn and am saddened by the methods allegedly employed by Vang Pao and his men. But there is more to the story than an effort to buy arms. If people better understood the history and circumstances leading up to this event, they also would understand for what cause it was attempted. The word “Hmong” means “free,” and what these men stand accused of doing was a feeble attempt to recover that legacy, and a land we lost decades ago.

###

Pha Lo also contributed to this article.

Mai Der Vang is the American-born child of Hmong refugees. She works for New America Media as a youth media coordinator in Fresno.

## Health Insurance continued from page 1

### The fundamental cause

The fundamental cause lies in America's ideological obsession with the so-called “free market” and the “privatization” of government functions. The U.S. “privatizes” health insurance. In so doing, Uncle Sam avoids its responsibility to America's citizens and unjustly throws the monkey of health insurance onto the backs of the country's business and private individuals. Uncle Sam hands the keys to the henhouse to the fox, the poorly regulated health insurance industry. The private health insurance industry laughs all the way to the bank. The chickens at risk from the fox are the unemployed, the nation's school districts (FUSD locally), the nation's cities and counties, employer-insured employees (SEIU 790, for example), and more.

### Americans betrayed

The U.S. Constitution assumes that we Americans are “all in this together.” Under our Constitution, the government “provides for the General Welfare” and spends the common wealth for the common good. Through fair and equitable taxation, the Federal government provides for the national defense, protects our national interests worldwide with diplomats and embassies, provides for a common monetary system and currency, provides a well-oiled system of interstate commerce, provides an indispensable national infrastructure of roads, bridges, and dams, provides relief from natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and wildfires, and much more. However, Uncle Sam — unjustly and immorally — excludes the health care all of its citizens from the Common Good. States provide public K-12 education to all children, funded by fair and equitable taxation. Municipalities provide police and fire protection to all citizens, funded by fair and equitable taxation.

### Quality affordable health care for all

The health care goal of every first-world nation should be quality health care at an affordable cost for all residents. Twenty-one of the world's 22 first world nations succeed; America fails.

Unlike the U.S., every one of the other 21 first-world nations provides some form of government funding for



the health insurance of all of their citizens. As a consequence, their infant mortality rate is far lower than that of the U.S. (the US, at #42, scores lower than Cuba), and our blizzard of health care related bankruptcies are unheard of. Annual health fairs for the uninsured are, of course, nonexistent. The World Health Organization ranks the U.S. 37th in overall health performance; in the fairness of health care, we're 54th. The citizens of all these other countries enjoy greater longevity (we're #35) and the health care cost per capita is barely more than a third of ours (\$2,307 vs. \$6,280 in 2004).

California Senate Bill 840 was passed last August by both the state Assembly and Senate. The bill was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger. SB840 — “California Health Insurance Reliability Act” (Health Care for All) — provided publicly financed (single payer) health insurance for all Californians. It's an outrage that the citizenry, led by the media, didn't descend in droves upon Sacramento in protest.

Fortunately, Sen. Sheila Kuehl reintroduced SB840, as “California Universal Health Care Act,” on February 27. Community Alliance readers are urged to stay abreast of the bill's progress through the state legislature, keep your state representatives informed of your strong support for SB840, and, at the appropriate time, be very vocal to the Governor that you will not stand for another veto of this landmark legislation.

## Think Globally, Act Locally!

There will be a local Health Care forum in Fresno on August 6, 2007 sponsored by Health Care for All & California Alliance for Retired Americans. For more information contact Gene Roza at 559-905-3521 or e-mail: c21generoza@aol.com.

# Why I Want to Go to Cuba

by Gerry Bill

This July I will be traveling to Cuba as part of a humanitarian aid caravan organized by IFCO/Pastors for Peace. The caravan is coming through Fresno on July 7th, and I will join them at that point. There will be an event hosting the caravanistas that evening at Margaret Hudson's barn, 4247 N. Thorne in Fresno. There will be a potluck meal at 6, followed by a program at 7.

Why am I going to Cuba? In part I am going because the US government does not want me to go. I know that sounds like rather backwards reasoning, but please hear me out.

Ask yourself, "Why is it that the US government doesn't want US citizens to go to Cuba?" There could be many reasons, but I think one of the main reasons is that they don't want us to see Cuba for ourselves. Cuba represents another model for how to organize a society—one that contrasts sharply with the capitalistic model found in the US and in most of the rest of Latin America.

Quite literally, our government doesn't want us to know that another model is possible—or worse still, that Another World is Possible. It turns out that another

model is indeed possible, and it exists just ninety miles off the coast of Florida.

Of course the US does not want that model to succeed, and our government does everything in its power to try to sabotage the Cuban economy. The US has imposed an embargo on trade with Cuba since shortly after Castro came to power in 1959. The embargo tries to prevent most goods from reaching Cuba. The US uses its economic might to try to punish other countries from engaging in Cuban trade. Despite all this, the Cuban model survives.

## *Our government doesn't want us to know that another model is possible—or worse still, that Another World is Possible.*

I want to see this model for myself in its current 2007 manifestation. I went to Cuba once before, in 1994. That was in the midst of the so-called "special period" during which Cuba was transitioning away from dependence on the Soviet Union as its main trading partner. During the Soviet era, Cuba was able to send sugar to Russia in exchange for oil. That trade ended around 1991, and by 1994 there were fuel shortages and electrical blackouts because Cuba no longer had a good means of obtaining oil. That transitional time was very difficult for the Cuban people.

kinds of items. The most heartbreaking of these shortages is of medicines and medical equipment.

As you may know, Cuba has had a very good health care system for quite a while. The Cuban government has invested heavily in the training of doctors. In fact, it is now using that medical education system to train some Venezuelan doctors as a way of bartering for some of the oil it receives.

However, the continuing difficulty of obtaining some medical supplies through normal international trade routes has hindered Cuba's ability to take proper care of its citizens. This is an outrage. Our government is using medicine as a weapon to try to force another nation to change its government.

That is a tactic that inflicts unnecessary suffering on innocent children and adults.

So besides going to Cuba to learn more about how their model is working, I am also going for the purpose of openly challenging the immoral US blockade of vital goods needed in Cuba. Blockading a nation's access to food and medicine is not only immoral, it is also a violation of international law. So even though US law says my trip to Cuba will be illegal, both moral law and international law say it is the only responsible thing to do. In other words, this is an act of civil disobedience.



**Tony Bracamonte, Dakota Iyall, and Simone Whalen-Rhodes are also going to Cuba this summer. They are going with the Venceremos Brigade and plan to give presentations to schools and community groups about their experience.**

It is my understanding that things have changed quite a bit since I was last in Cuba. One reason is that a new trading partner has emerged. Venezuela has replaced the Soviet Union as the country willing to defy the US and supply Cuba with oil. I don't know all the ramifications of that arrangement, but I hope to learn something about it during my trip to Cuba this July.

While I don't yet know that much about the oil situation in Cuba, I do know the embargo is still causing shortages of some other

That explains why I am going to Cuba with Pastors for Peace—an organization that defies the US embargo by deliberately and openly bringing prohibited items into Cuba. The caravan I will be joining is the eighteenth US-Cuba Friendshipment sponsored by Pastors for Peace. The caravan will have 130 participants from across the country traveling along 14 routes through 47 states gathering aid items as they go. In each of the 125 host cities there will be events to promote public awareness about Cuba and the embargo. The program on July 7th in Margaret's barn is just such an event. Please join us. These public education events are every bit as important as the aid being delivered by the caravan, and we need your support.

For more information, contact Gerry Bill at 227-2133.

###

Gerry Bill is a Sociology and American Studies Instructor at Fresno City College, Treasurer of the Fresno Free College Foundation/KFCF, and Center Director of the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. He can be contacted by email at [gerry.bill@gmail.com](mailto:gerry.bill@gmail.com).

# Fresno Democrat Votes to Continue the War

By Bill Simon

[Editor's note: Representatives from Peace Fresno met with local Congressman and Democrat Jim Costa shortly after he voted to continue the war in Iraq. The article below is a report from that meeting.]

Peace Fresno's visit with Rep. Jim Costa on June 4 was discouraging to say the least. For me, the only positive point was learning from Wayne Warkentin that Costa voted against the Military Commissions Act. Also Costa made time for us, which is more than representatives Radanovich or Nunes did.

We did spend an hour or so with him. Twelve people showed up and he welcomed us all into his conference room. We started by presenting him with a copy of *Addicted To War*, copies of the "bring the troops home" petitions from January 27 when we demonstrated in support of the March on Washington, copies of the petitions from the Rally in the Valley in support of Lynn Woolsey's HR 508, and a copy of Peace Fresno's Call On Congress to immediately withdraw all troops from Iraq, to introduce articles of impeachment, to repeal the Military Commissions Act, to reform the USA Patriot Act, and to amend section 9528 of the No Child Left Behind Act which turned our high schools into recruiting tools for the military.

Unfortunately, Rep. Costa seemed to think that pleasantries and monologuing (on his part) were the order of the day.

We were not able to get him to even consider making a commitment to vote against further funding of the war



**Jim Grant makes the point to Costa (on left) that the U.S. war in Iraq is a moral issue that must end immediately. Photo by Ken Hudson.**

when it comes up again in September. We were not able to get him to understand that this war is a moral issue and not merely a political issue. And he strongly thought that we would have to have a very long presence in Iraq so that Iran and Syria would not get control.

When we claimed that the American people voted for a Democratic Congress last November to end the war, Costa said he was convinced that the Democrats were elected for many reasons. In his mind, the primary reason seemed to be Republican corruption. He said that the Democrats didn't so much win the election as the Republicans lost because of corruption.

He didn't seem particularly interested in the fact that No Child Left Behind turned our schools into military recruiters. He only talked about unfunded mandates

and pointed out that Head Start and such are positive.

If you would like to let him know that we need to end the war and bring ALL our troops home, or that the war is a moral issue, or that it is not our responsibility or right to control the Middle East, or whatever else you think, call his local office at 495-1620 or e-mail him through his House website: <http://www.costa.house.gov/>. If you are a constituent, make sure you mention that.

###

Bill Simon is the President of Peace Fresno. [www.peacefresno.org](http://www.peacefresno.org)



## The Honor of Being Called a “Jerk” By Pro-Nuker Patrick Moore

by Harvey Wasserman

Patrick Moore has called me a “jerk.” He may not be Queen Elizabeth, but it feels like being made Knight of the Realm.

Moore is a supporter of nuclear power. He is also an advocate for clear-cutting forests, genetically modified foods and a wide range of other corporate eco-assaults. The companies behind them fund Moore’s “consulting” agency, which appears to specialize in greenwashing. Moore’s mission also seems to include tagging the Greenpeace name onto things Greenpeace opposes. As a voting member of Greenpeace USA, my e-mail box is often filled with contemptuous messages about Moore’s latest outrage, and anger about his claim to be a Greenpeace founder. Many advocate ignoring him.

I’m not of that faith. Based on his appearances, too many people ask me why Greenpeace now “supports nuclear power.” It doesn’t. Its opposition to atomic reactors is as strong and clear as it was when Moore made his brief appearance on the organization’s staff list, decades ago.

Moore is quoted calling me a “jerk” in a long piece on the greenwashing of nukes that has graced the cover of the San Francisco Bay Guardian, for which I’ve written occasionally over the years. The piece correctly quotes me as advocating “Solartopia,” a world gone totally to renewables and efficiency by the year 2030. It is a world in which King CONG—the coal, oil, nukes and gas industry—has been vanquished, and the way cleared for green technologies that are cleaner, cheaper, safer, more reliable and more job-creating. Those would include wind, solar, bio-fuels, geothermal, ocean thermal, wave, current, tidal, trash gas and other forms of renewable generation, along with massively increased efficiency and a revival of mass transit.

My choice of the year 2030 for Solartopia works in tandem with a theory of “Thermageddon” put forth by the late Bob Hunter, who really was a founder of Greenpeace. Hunter called Moore an “eco-Judas.” Moore says Bob recanted.

But King CONG is now Patrick Moore’s employer. He advocates a “renaissance” for atomic power, a technology inseparable from the murderous melt-downs at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island, with fifty years of proven economic failure.

**Donald Trump has offered \$25 million for the Running Horse development in southwest Fresno. Do you think “The Donald” knows that mayor Autry and a group of investors want to put a nuclear power plant in the neighborhood? Another question is - why is it possible to build a PGA golf course and luxury homes in west Fresno and yet there is no general purpose public junior high school in the area. The residents of west Fresno have complained for years that their kids are bused all over town because building a junior high has not been a priority. Why is an 18 hole golf course, luxury homes, and a nuclear power plant more of a priority than children’s education?**

**The problem with busing west Fresno kids to other schools is that it makes it more difficult for them to get to and from school. If they miss the bus and their parents don’t have a car, they might miss a whole day of school. They have to start for school earlier than most children and they often times can’t stay at school to participate in extra curricular activities (because they would miss the bus home). When kids are bused across town and the parents don’t have a car, it is difficult to set up parent/teacher conferences. In short, it is an unfair burden for the children of west Fresno not to have a junior high.**

**Why is it possible to build Running Horse (the golf course and luxury homes) and/or a nuclear power plant, but not a school?**

In the half-century since the first commercial reactor opened at Shippingport, Pennsylvania, in 1957, there has been no solution to the storage of high level radioactive waste. Since the terror attacks of 9/11/2001, it is more obvious than ever that commercial reactors are pre-deployed weapons of nuclear mass destruction. The private insurance industry appears to agree, as none will independently underwrite the risk of a major reactor catastrophe, either by terror or error. Overall, the nuke power industry simply would not exist without gargantuan federal subsidies. The latest now involve huge proposed loan subsidies to drag Wall Street into a technology it would not otherwise touch.

None of this seems to bother Mr. Moore, whom I’ve never met. But I’d like to. Patrick, when you read this (and I’m sure you will), please accept my invitation to debate anywhere, anytime, with any format you choose, on any medium willing to host us. Think of it as a form of renewable energy generation.

Or as a “renaissance” of democracy. But above all, think of it as a trip to Solartopia, where nukes are banned along with fossil fuels and all other forms of waste, and there is a green-powered confluence of pollution-free prosperity.

The only greenwashing in such a world, Mr. Moore, will be with mint and aloe vera. I’ll bring you some of both.

###

Harvey Wasserman’s SOLARTOPIA! OUR GREEN-POWERED EARTH, A.D. 2030, is at [www.solartopia.org](http://www.solartopia.org). He is senior advisor to Greenpeace USA and the Nuclear Information & Resource Service, and writes regularly for [www.freepress.org](http://www.freepress.org), where this article first appeared.

## *No Nukes!*

**A proposal to build a nuclear power plant, next to the waste water treatment facility west of downtown Fresno, has been proposed by a group of businessmen in Fresno.**

**For more information about the proposal to put a nuclear power plant in Fresno, see:**

**<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2006/12/30/18342366.php>**

**To read why Sacramento shut their nuclear power plant down, see: [www.fresnoalliance.com/home/seco](http://www.fresnoalliance.com/home/seco)**

# "Unacceptable Material" A Convenient Excuse

By: Boston Woodard



In November 2006, I wrote a recriminatory article that was published in the Community Alliance, "The Ongoing Wave of Secrecy, Inside California's Sub constitutional Prison System."

The piece was written after claims by the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation (CDCR) that prisoners were responsible for the limited media access behind prison walls. My article detailed how prison officials, not prisoners, take advantage of the lack of full media access inside the CDCR covering up their ill deeds.

The article also delineates how the California Correctional Peace Officer's Association (CCPOA), the prison guard's union, sensationalizes events behind these prison walls to advance its agenda.

I mailed the article to editor Mike Rhodes for his review and consideration.

The article appeared in the December 2006 issue of the Community Alliance on page # 17. I received my (subscription) copy of the article in early December 2006. I tore out page #17 and sent it to my brother who resides in another state. My brother makes copies of my columns and sends them back to me through the "regular" incoming mail system here at Solano State Prison in Vacaville California. The copies are given to other prisoners who are interested in reading them. Some copies are given to prisoner advocacy groups to reference.

In a January 30, 2007 letter, my brother urged me to call him "as soon as possible." He wrote that the envelope he mailed containing the copies was returned to him. The envelope was rubber stamped with "UNACCEPTABLE MATERIAL" on the face of it. The envelope also had "REFUSED" stamped in several places. And if that were not enough, there was a rubber stamp of a finger, expressing in definite terms, to return the correspondence to my brother.

Prison protocol calls for prisoner mail to be monitored (read by staff) unless it qualifies as "confidential correspondence." Rules governing the operation of the CDCR as written in the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title #15, Section 3141, refers to Confidential Correspondence as mail sent to the following:

"1 All state and federal elected official. 2 All state and federal officials appointed by the governor or the President of the United States. 3 All city, county, state and federal officials having responsibility for the inmate's

present, prior or anticipated custody, parole or probation supervision. 4 County agencies regarding child custody proceedings, as clearly identified in the communication. 5 All state and federal judges and courts. 6 An attorney[s] at law listed with the state bar association. 7 The director [of corrections], chief deputy director, deputy directors, assistant directors, executive assistant to the director, and the chief of inmate appeals of the CDCR. 8 Legitimate legal service organizations including, but not limited to: the American Civil Liberties Union, the Prison Law Office, the Young Lawyers section of the American Bar Association, and the National Association of Criminal Defense lawyers."

Nowhere in the guidelines is it written that we as prisoners can write the media confidentially. My December 2007 article details the reason this legitimate practice by the media was ripped from the rules by prison officials.

For more than twenty five years, members of legitimate news outlets were allowed the benefit of confidential correspondence with prisoners in California. My December article explained how Department of Correction (DOC) officials lied to the public to eventually convince the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) to change the rules prohibiting reporters from having access to "specific" prisoners and to end the confidential corresponding between journalists and convicts.

Prisoners are now subjected to intimidation and punishment by prison authorities for simply exercising their First Amendment, Constitutional rights. I believe they are still taking measures to impede my ability to frame my observations in publications such as the Community Alliance and various Web Sites. The CDCR settled a First Amendment lawsuit with me eight years ago; WOODARD V. DUNCAN CV 4182. Maybe some of them should take a look at the settlement agreement from that lawsuit to refresh their memories regarding what they should not be doing.

In accordance with all the rules, my article contained nothing that would present a danger, or a threat of danger, to any person. The article did not reference religious, racial, gang information or activities. There is no mention of escape or weapons manufacturing in the article. No rules or policies were violated in writing or sending the article to a legitimate news publication; the Community Alliance.

The article was deemed "UNACCEPTABLE MATERIAL" by someone in Solano State Prison's mail room because of the veracious nature of its content. I was also told by a staff member that my "choice of words" in my articles is probably why my mail is disallowed or delayed at times. Another prison staff member said my descriptions of prison life are "acerbic lies."

The California Code of Regulations, Section 3135.(b) claims, "Correctional staff shall not challenge or confront the sender [prisoner] or receiver with such value judgements nor shall such value judgements be considered in any action affecting the correspondence..."

I will continue to define my surroundings in an honest attempt to inform the public of the whole story, the other side of the story they are entitled to from behind these prison walls. I will not be intimidated or allow my observations to be swept under the rug.

I filed an internal appeal (#CSP-S-07-O1025) against Solano State Prison's mail room personnel. The appeal requests that no further reprisals be leveled against me for my journalistic activities, and that they cease and desist in the mishandling of my correspondence immediately. Prison officials have been slow playing my appeal, dragging it out, violating all the time restraints and conveniently losing (the appeal), months after filing it, forcing me to re-file. These tactics are used all the time by "Inmate Appeals Coordinators" throughout the prison system, stalling appeals in hopes of intimidating prisoners to drop their complaints. Mine will not be dropped.

To date, Solano prison officials have not satisfied my appeal which remains active.

###

Boston Woodard is a prisoner/journalist serving his sentence in Solano State Prison. He wrote for the San Quentin News, the Soledad Star and edited The Communicator. The CDCR has shut down all prisoner written and published publications in an effort to silence the voice from within.

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Vacaville, CA. 95696 4000



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# Prisoners Speak Out about the Community Alliance

*The Community Alliance newspaper sends a free subscription to any prisoner who requests one. These are some of the letters we received from inmates during the month of June.*

I enjoy reading the interesting articles and all the information provided. I truly appreciate my subscription and you providing it to me free of charge. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication in putting together the Community Alliance. It is important to me personally to have outside sources available in order to keep in touch with the outside world. I have a few months short of 5 years left to do on my sentence then I will be part of society as a whole, once again, and in that token I firmly believe "knowledge is power." It is important to know what is going on. Thank you again.

Cheryl Campos Central California Women's Facility (State Prison) in Chowchilla  
###

I do wish to receive the Community Alliance newspaper. I think it is a very worthwhile paper covering many important issues we never find in mainstream media. You say the paper is mailed to me each month. It has been three months since I received one. I thought you had cancelled my subscription. I have NOT moved. Perhaps guards are just throwing them away so I can't have them? Please do not remove me from the list because of non-receipt. Now that I know you are sending it I will begin acknowledging receipt EACH MONTH. It is possible that a federal crime is being committed.

Kalima Aswod in Vacaville

Kalima also sent us an article "War on Islam Shifting Fronts" which can be read on Indymedia, by going to: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2006/11/16/18330448.php>. The letter from Kalima had been opened and re-sealed by the United States Postal Service.  
###

Thank you for sending me a copy of Community Alliance each month, for I have truly enjoyed each and every copy. There are often times, months go by, with the only mail that I receive is your newspaper...I always share your newspaper with any and all who would like to read it...I wish Community Alliance much continued success.

Imani Stitt in Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga  
###

I heard about your newspaper and I would appreciate it very much if you could add my name to your mailing list. Your help and consideration in this matter is greatly appreciated. Thanking you in advance.

Christopher Williams in Vacaville  
###

Thank you so much for sending the Community Alliance to me. I share it with at least 20 other guys and they enjoy it as much as I do. But probably for other reasons than I do. My favorite is Inside/Out by Sara Olson. Yes! Please do continue to send it to me.

From Louis Gonzales in the Calipatria State Prison  
###

First of all I want to thank you and everyone else who is involved in putting together your newspaper. I enjoy it immensely. I then pass it around to my friends and of course they all love it too. Sara Olson is a good friend of mine and she is the one who turned me on to your newspaper. I especially like her articles.

Renee Gonzales in the Central California Women's Facility (State Prison) in Chowchilla  
###

I enjoy reading the Community Alliance very much. I make it a point to share it with others in the row. Thank you so much!

M. McDermott in CCWF Chowchilla  
###

I would like to see a bit more on prisons, prisoners, and parole. For instance an interview with the Fresno regions parole supervisor might examine any rehabilitative actions the parole officers may have taken now under the CDCR'S new mission of rehabilitation? The interviewer could ask why it is necessary to revoke ones parole and send the prisoner back to state prison for a minor infraction of the conditions of parole, or is there a conflict of interest since parole agents are members of CCPOA and the prison population is a factor with the number of guards needed to staff the prisons? I'm sure your reporters could come up with more poignant questions in the area of public concern.

Steven Ainsworth in Represa, Ca  
###

I love your paper and want to stay on your mailing list. I share it with at least 3 to 5 people and encourage them to write and get on your mailing list. Thanks for all you do for us women in prison.

Caren Hill in the Central California Women's Facility (State Prison) in Chowchilla  
##

I enjoy reading the newspaper and be assured that I pass the paper to many others so they too can find out what is happening in the world. Are letters to the editor put in a special section? The few letters to the editor that I have read seemed to be stuck in a corner. I would like a larger area for editorial letters. Community Alliance is the only paper that I have ever read that does not limit what can be written by subject or length. Thank you for allowing me to have a subscription to your newspaper.

Theresa Ramirez in the Central California Women's Facility (State Prison) in Chowchilla  
###

The Community Alliance is a wonderful little paper. Please keep sending it. I have a great time reading it.

Debra Ely in the Central California Women's Facility (State Prison) in Chowchilla  
###

I get the Community Alliance on the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of each month. Considering this is a correctional facility that's a miracle!!! Can't figure the State's twisted sense of humor. This prison is entitled "Pleasant Valley State Prison." There's an oxymoron for you!!! Being a writer myself, I've come up with a great name - Hellwalkie. I wish to continue receiving the Alliance as I'm stuck in the state womb until 2030. And your paper keeps me informed about all the bullshit and hoey that is going on in society. Some of the articles help me to understand "suffering" isn't limited to the poor or incarcerated. It allows me to know struggling is superimposed on the human experience.

I wonder is there a lasting panacea for the planet? How does humanity co-exist with the other living things (plants and animals) without killing them and ourselves off due to the conditions stemming from global warming, the insatiable yearning for things or just plain old meanness, brutality, injustice, and greed. Capitalism and politics equals a war in Iraq that the government tries to dupe us into believing is a necessary means to thwart away terrorism. Yet whenever we impose our beliefs or values upon others, especially with violence, aren't we then also guilty of terrorism? But what do I know. I'm just a 49 year old

man of color, a product of the public school system. I have no degrees other than 3 prison numbers under my belt.

Bernardo Henderson in Pleasant Valley State Prison  
###

The paper is especially interesting for the info about poor and homeless (of which I have been both) and about prisons, prison policy, and prisoners. I circulate the paper here by donating it to the library for everyone to read. It is good reporting! Thanks again!

Michael Contreras Corcoran State Prison  
###

Your newspaper is very informational. It is important to know what is going on.

Cynthia Mathews in the Central California Women's Facility (State Prison) in Chowchilla  
###

I enjoy receiving the Community Alliance & share it with quite a few people. I assist in running the Honor Dorm Library. . . and donate all copies I receive to the library magazine table when I've finished reading them. Thank you,

Marcia Ramos in the Central California Women's Facility (State Prison) in Chowchilla  
###

My views and opinions are favorable. It is a fairly progressive publication based on region. After all, some of the most conservative and hateful views and laws have their root in the Central Valley. Three Strikes for an example. Further, the guys who murdered Mike Reynold's daughter were from Fresno or nearby. One of the guys who engaged in that despicable act has been in and out of prison? Yet, this disproportionate, grotesque law continues to cast a dark shadow across the communities of Color alone! The perverted act of two deranged, crystal smoking whites that served as a catalyst to committing genocide against people of Color? So, why are people of Color being given life sentences for petty theft and so on? Where is the justice in that?

Secondly, I think that you should consider a prison pen—pal program since I know a few scholarly brothers who would welcome corresponding with some progressive activists. It wouldn't hurt us to keep up on every manner of advancement: technological, social, metaphysical, political and otherwise. Nothing suffices like personal correspondences.

I am constantly reminded of the political luminaries who had prison as their base of operation: Malcolm X, George Jackson and currently Mumia. They, generally, came into possession of philosophy, Marxism, Existensialism etc. through viable outside contacts who aided them through their studies since prison can be an incubator for progressive political thought. You know the saw: fodder for change. Mike, I allow quite a few brothers to view the publications but none more "unschooled" than the Fresno natives themselves? It seems like a good place to start with the political education. I'd ask that you help me in getting a progressive pen—pal, please. This is a sign of the "mean—spirited, conservative vein" in the Central Valley. Some of us are worthy of your time.

Achilles Mason Williams in Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga

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JULY 2007 COMMUNITY ALLIANCE 8

# SF Mime Troupe Returns

By Camille Russell

The San Francisco Mime Troupe's play, "Making a Killing: Building a New Iraq," is coming to Fresno on Thursday, September 20, at 6:30 p.m. If you've never seen the Mime Troupe, you are in for a treat. The Mime Troupe is a professional theater company whose hilarious performances have been a summer tradition in the Bay Area since 1959. Each year they write a new satirical play to shine a light on controversial issues of the day. The actors will use dialogue, not silent mime, to tell a story of war profiteering on a grand scale.

Using the shorthand of theater and humor, Mime Troupe performances make politics palatable while reflecting absurd and painful truths. Imagine Doonesbury come to life and set to music. Check them out at [www.sfmt.org](http://www.sfmt.org).

To help the Mime Troupe reach its maximum audience, our community needs to support the performance and help publicize it. This year's Fresno venue will be the large, comfortable Roosevelt High School Theater. We are forming a committee to promote the event, manage ticket sales, and provide a potluck meal and housing for the troupe. Please contact Camille Russell to help: [camillerussell@softcom.net](mailto:camillerussell@softcom.net) (559) 276-2592



## Calling all Patriots

The 10th Annual 4th of July Celebration of our Diversity Brunch will be held Wednesday, July 4, 2007 from 9am – 1 pm at O'Neill Park on the CSUF campus (Barstow between Maple and Chestnut streets). This grand event representing the pluralism of Fresno that makes America great, features flags and entertainment from the variety of faith and cultural groups in the Fresno area. This year's brunch will be a Laotian Brunch. Join the Celebration of the Diversity of our Country on the 4th of July with the Interfaith Alliance of Central California. For further information call 435-2690

The public is invited to join Interfaith Groups for a Brunch, and celebrate with music, dance and entertainment from the variety of faith and cultural groups represented here in the Fresno Area. The celebration includes an opening Flag Ceremony, and entertainment representing the pluralism of Fresno that makes America great.

Suggested donation: \$5 for adults, \$3 for children under 12, with a maximum of \$15 per family. For tickets or further information, please call 224-4001. Tickets will be available at the brunch also.

Last year over 600 people enjoyed entertainment, Brunch, and friendship celebrating America's Pluralism.

Entertainment this year will include: Lion Dancers from John Cho's Kung Fu School, Fresno Gumyo Taiko Japanese Drummers, Classical Dance of India, Jazz Saxophonist, D.J. Shirley, Jr, Tocanto Duo, Bhangra Sikh Dancers, Terry and Katie Lewis sing Vintage Americana, Lorenzo Bassman and Stolen Thunder, Los Ninos de Aztlan Folklorica Dancers, and more!

For more information contact: Rev. Dave Schlicher, 435-2690, College Community Congregational Church

## A Council of Light

By Richard Stone

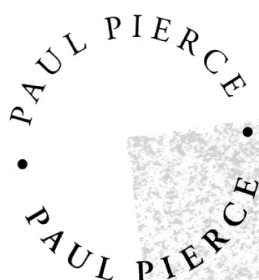
Several months ago James Fletcher solicited members for what he called "a council of light." He writes the following to express the philosophy and purpose of the group:

"We all want justice, correct? But how many of us stop to think about what justice really means? What does it mean to live in a safe, fair, friendly society and world? And how do we cope with injustice, particularly when it is so overwhelming? To sit and seek answers to these questions, we formed a council of light, like a think tank, with the sole purpose of illuminating these questions in the search for truth. So we think and discuss, but with the agreement that our pooled wisdom and knowledge must lead to direct action, however simple, that we might channel our creative passion into change for the better."

Since then James, Michael Black Bull and I (Richard Stone) have been meeting weekly at the Center for Nonviolence for exchange and exploration. We have now decided to follow a practice inspired by Gandhi's Experiments in Truth: each month we will select an aspect of living, educate ourselves about it, and make a conscious effort to change one habit related to justice in that area. We also hope to attract others of you to join us in this venture, and we will be posting the chosen area each month on the Center's page.

This month we are focusing on food: selection and consumption. We are not dictating what experiment each person will try, but we will list suggested places for action. Thus this month possibilities could include: abstaining from, or restricting, consumption of animal products; significantly increasing purchase of locally produced food, and utilizing farmers' markets; using organic products; reducing number of meals and/or portion size; purchasing products based on ethical treatment of animals (e.g., free-range chicken eggs) and fair trade practices.

Anyone making one such experiment in July (or any month thereafter) is welcome to write a brief report on what is learned and experienced, and submit it to us (to my attention at the Center, via mail or e-mail). We hope eventually to compile some kind of thematic anthology on trying to "live more justly" through informed action. We are looking not for success stories but for discoveries about habits, understanding, violence and injustice, sense of effectiveness or futility, serendipity in the course of action, and the like. Your participation will be valued!



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Will the San Joaquin valley attain the PM2.5 standards?

Air pollution officials at all levels of government believe that our area will attain the standards by 2015.

Is this another delay?

Yes, because the standard must be met by 2010, but nonattainment areas can ask for 5 more years beyond this date. However, unlike the ozone standard, there are no classifications that air district officials can use as a basis for further delays, like what happened with the 2007 Ozone Plan's bump-up of three levels from serious to extreme.

What would it take to CLEAR THE AIR in Fresno? Read Alvin Valeriano's column each month in the Community Alliance to find out.

## Deadly Particulates in the Air

By Alvin Valeriano

Ozone has been the air quality buzz word in the San Joaquin Valley for the past few months due to federal requirements to have a plan to reach attainment of the 8-hour ozone standard. Last month, the Community Alliance published a primer on ozone— explaining what it is, its health effects, the role of government agencies in mitigating its presence, how everyone can contribute to its control, and what is the most critical barrier that prevents our area from attaining the 8-hour standard. In the next few months, residents of the San Joaquin Valley will hear about another pollutant. It will be about PM2.5. It is considered in air pollution circles as more harmful, to put it mildly. In truth, it is deadlier: whereas ozone triggers the onset of asthma, PM2.5 can trigger cardiovascular attacks among a vulnerable group—the elderly and those with pre-existing heart problems.

Let's do another Q and A. However before doing so, keep the following in mind: let's not allow the fear that this information provokes paralyze us into inaction, and instead let it motivate us into stridently working towards a solution.

What is PM2.5?

PM2.5 stands for particulate matter 2.5 micrometers in size and smaller. A micrometer ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) is one-millionth of a meter;  $2.5\mu\text{m}$  is  $1/30^{\text{th}}$  the size of a human hair. PM2.5 that is found in the air consists of solid and liquid particles. Primary forms of PM2.5 are either those occurring naturally, such as dusts and salts, or produced from human activities, such as burning or combustion of fuels. Secondary forms come from chemical transformation of sulfur dioxides, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds, which are produced in nature or artificially by human activities.

How much of PM2.5 occurs naturally (background concentration) and how much is due to human activities?

In the western part of the U.S. PM2.5 levels above 1-4 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) are man-made (anthropogenic). This is relevant for policy considerations, since background levels include PM2.5 from natural causes and from places outside the U.S. (some estimates state that China, for example, starts one average-sized, coal-fired power plant every week to supply energy to its growing economy). This implies that particulate matter (PM) can be transported over long distances. Furthermore, this also implies that much of what appears as haze which obstructs our views of mountain vistas is due to PM.

What are the standards and where else, besides the San Joaquin Valley, is the PM2.5 standards exceeded?

PM2.5 standards set in 1997 are  $65\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  for the 24-hour duration and  $15\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  for the annual time frame. The San Joaquin Valley is within the 24-hour standard, but violates the annual standard as set in 1997 (there is a newer, more health protective standard, which is known as the 2006 standard). As of March 2007, the only other area in California designated as nonattainment for the federal PM2.5 standard is the South Coast (Los Angeles) air basin. For the U.S. as a whole, there are 208 counties populated by 88 million people that are nonattainment areas for the PM2.5 federal standards.

What are the health effects of exceeding PM2.5 standards?

According to the U.S. EPA fact sheets:

- Fine particles are easily inhaled deep into the lungs where they may accumulate, react, be cleared or absorbed.
- Scientific studies have linked particle pollution, especially fine particles, with a series of significant health problems, including: increased respiratory symptoms, such as irritation of the airways, coughing, or difficulty breathing, for example; decreased lung function; aggravated asthma; development of chronic bronchitis; irregular heartbeat; nonfatal heart attacks; and premature death in people with heart or lung disease. Particle pollution can cause coughing, wheezing, and decreased lung function even in otherwise healthy children and adults.
- Studies estimate that thousands of elderly people die prematurely each year from exposure to fine particles.
- According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children and infants are among the most susceptible to many air pollutants. Children have increased exposure compared with adults because of higher minute ventilation and higher levels of physical activity.

###

Alvin Valeriano, an agricultural engineering graduate of the University of the Philippines, worked in the planning section of the air district for 4 1/2 years and co-founded Fresno's Food Not Bombs in 1996. He can be reached at [alvin.valeriano@sbcglobal.net](mailto:alvin.valeriano@sbcglobal.net).

### What can we do?

Since PM2.5 is largely a winter problem (ozone pollution occurs mostly in summer), avoid wood burning, such as fireplace use, as best as possible. Retrofit fireplaces with EPA-certified inserts, and be sure to follow wood burning restrictions as announced by the air district through your local media.

As a long-term action, demand the most effective regulations for prescribed burning and diesel truck emissions. This can be done most effectively through your support for environmental advocates, such as the Central Valley Air Quality coalition.

## Poetry Corner

By Richard Stone

David Smith-Ferri came to Fresno last month with Kathy Kelly, to bring us home-truths about life in Iraq by reading poetry from his collection *Battlefield Without Borders*. He, and his publisher Haley's Publishing, have given us permission to reproduce some of the poetry, asking only that we note that sales of the book are being used to raise funds for Iraqi families, and information about it can be found at [www.battlefieldwithoutborders.org](http://www.battlefieldwithoutborders.org)

### Cindy Sheehan

July, 2006

Look at me, George.  
I'm the oncology lab report,  
the malignant truth metastasizing  
every time an American soldier is injured or killed.  
I'm in your lymph nodes, your bone marrow, your lungs.

Look at me, George.  
I'm the murky swamp you paddled into four years ago.  
I'm the eight-inch gash in your canoe,  
the crocodile stepping off the bank, sliding into water,  
disappearing beneath the surface.

Look at me, George.  
I'm the Joshua tree, gnarled and spiked,  
waving you into the Promised Land.  
I'm the bristlecone pine two miles above sea level,  
thriving on adversity: you can't outlast me.  
I'm the river you can't dam,  
the flood you can't check,  
the voice with ten thousand faces.

I'm the indelible blood on your hands, George.  
Take off your gloves, and look at me.

I'm the pursuer, and you're the prey.

### Iraqi Women Are Disappearing

June, 2006

War, like a greenhouse gas,  
raises temperatures in the Middle East,  
spawning monstrous storms, causing massive dislocations,  
and pushing species to the cliff-edge of extinction.

Women are always threatened during periods of war,  
but now, as war changes the climate in Iraq,  
women are endangered.

As the secular law's permafrost melts,  
a bog of religious fundamentalism spreads across the country.

Women are stoned for wearing makeup,  
murdered for teaching at a university,  
forced to stay indoors unless accompanied by a man  
and hidden behind scarves.

Texas oilmen and western neocons square their shoulders,  
"stay the course"  
and Iraqi women, once the most secure in the region,  
disappear—

under knives  
under ground,  
behind burqas.

# Will Fresno's Homeless People be put into a Concentration Camp? Is this the final solution?

By Mike Rhodes

Homeless people say they don't want to be put into a concentration camp located in the old industrial section south of downtown Fresno. Speaking before the Fresno City Council on June 19, Al Williams who is a homeless man in the Roeding Park area, said "you are trying to put people into a concentration camp. . . I'd rather be in jail than a concentration camp." Williams was referring to the city's plan to force all homeless people into a 30,000 square-foot lot that has no shade and is fenced in on all sides.

Williams is not the only homeless person concerned about the specter of being put into a concentration camp. Cynthia Greene, who lives in a homeless encampment on G and California street, told me that she would not be forced "into that concentration camp. They don't have any shade, it is all fenced in, and full of goat head thorns." Williams and Greene spoke up for their rights as the City Council debated a new city ordinance that would ban camping (without a permit) in the City of Fresno. The ordinance is targeting the thousands of homeless people (the latest estimate is that there are over 8,000 homeless people) in this community. If passed, this ordinance would add to other "quality of life" ordinances directed at the homeless. Those ordinances include one passed last year that makes it a crime to push a shopping cart and an earlier ordinance that makes it illegal to panhandle.

Becky Johnson, a homeless advocate in Santa Cruz, Ca says that local government has passed anti-camping ordinances there and that it has been a dismal failure. Johnson writes, "common sense tells us that if a man doesn't have \$40 for a motel room, then he can't afford a \$90 Camping citation either. Here in Santa Cruz our city writes nearly 6,000 camping citations a year and we STILL have a large homeless population. Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!"

Johnson continues "you can't solve homelessness thru fiat. Homelessness is the logical consequence of current economic and political policies over which the individual has little control. When a homeless person gets a citation for the "crime" of living out of doors because he can't afford to live indoors, this compounds his set of problems. He now is treated as a criminal by law enforcement, is deeper in debt, and in the best case scenario ( he serves his sentence/pays his fine) he now has a criminal record which is a further obstacle to obtaining housing and employment. In as many cases as not, these citations go to warrant, and the person ends up spending time in our county jail which is costly and completely non-productive."

According to Johnson "the 9th Circuit Court ruled in 2006 that citing people for sleeping or sheltering them-

selves at night in a situation in which insufficient shelter exists, constitutes 'cruel and inhuman punishment' and is forbidden constitutionally. Those cited under Fresno's new law might turn right around and sue the City for damages."

The proposed ordinance can be seen here: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/06/18/18428393.php> . The ordinance was recommended by a homeless task force headed by the Rev. Larry Arce. See earlier story - Holy War Against the Homeless here: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/04/20/18402635.php> . There are no homeless people on the "Homeless Task Force."

The stated goal of the task force is the establishment of a plot of land where the homeless can camp. This is a part of Fresno mayor Alan Autry's initiative to set up



This is the site of what some homeless people are calling a concentration camp.

a "free zone" where homeless people can go. See: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/04/17/18400746.php> . The mayor's pledged to establish an encampment where homeless people could go and be safe. This camp would have portable toilets, trash bins, running water, and a trailer from the County of Fresno that will provide social services.

Instead, what the homeless have received are more evictions (see: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/06/12/18427051.php> ), harassment, and ordinances criminalizing poverty. The 60 day (self imposed) deadline in which the mayor promised to set up this free zone has come and gone. With property owners in the area of the proposed encampment up in arms (see <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/06/13/18427207.php> ) about the location and the homeless themselves ambivalent if not down right hostile to the proposal, the mayor's plan and the Homeless Task Force seem destined for failure.

Big Sue, a homeless woman in downtown Fresno, told me that she thought the city is trying to push them as far south of Ventura Avenue as they can. This assessment was confirmed by city council member Jerry Duncan's call-in to local right wing talk show host Inga Barka's



Cynthia Green said "homelessness is created by the government, not by the people. It is created by corporations, business both large and small." As hard as life is on the street, Cynthia said she would not go to what she describes as a "concentration camp" being set up by the City of Fresno.

radio show last month. Duncan told Barka that the goal was to move the homeless people so they are not so visible in the downtown area and that once they establish this camp it will give them (the city) the ability to clean up illegal encampments elsewhere.

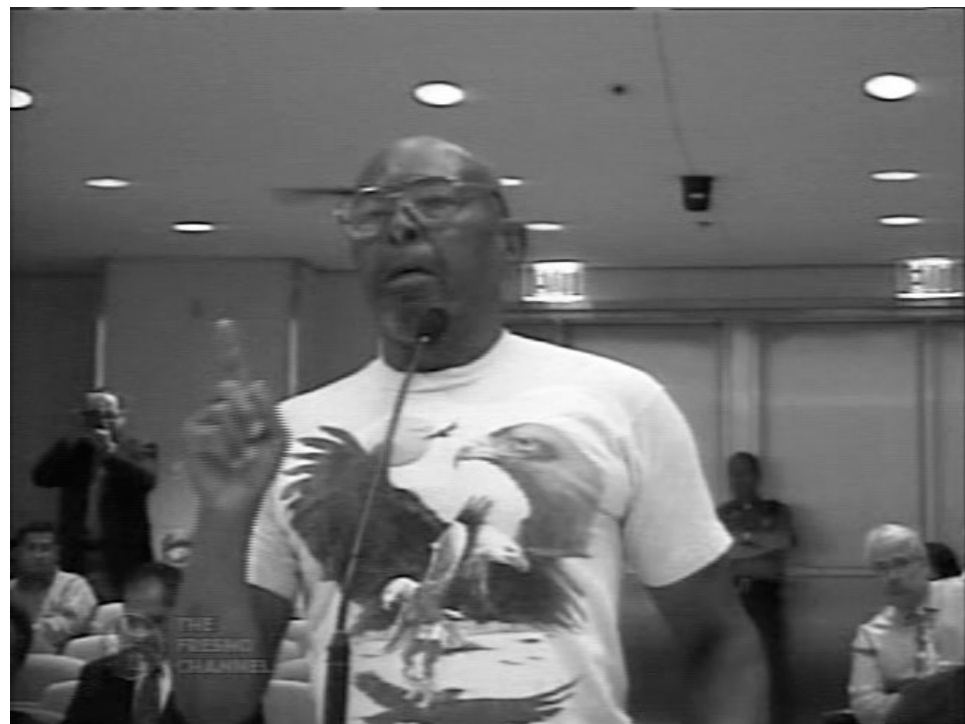
At the June 19 City Council meeting Duncan went one step further. He wondered out loud about whether the camping ordinance went far enough. He complained about people who give the homeless food and clothing. Duncan appeared to be seriously considering an ordinance that would ban people from feeding and clothing the homeless.

Can the City of Fresno successfully manage homeless people by forcing them onto a small plot of land in the industrial section of the city and passing increasingly repressive ordinances against them? Cynthia Greene speaking before the City Council said "if this ordinance is passed it will be challenged. It was challenged in Los Angeles and they had to back down because it is not good for the people." The homeless in Fresno will use whatever tools they have at their disposal to stop this cruel and inhumane treatment, stop the unconstitutional criminalization of poverty, and fight against their confinement in the proposed concentration camp.

For a list of articles and documents about the struggle for civil liberties for homeless people in Fresno, see: <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/homelessness.htm>

###  
Oxford University Dictionary:

Concentration Camp - concentration camp >noun a camp for detaining political prisoners, especially in Nazi Germany



Speaking before the Fresno City Council on June 19, Al Williams who is a homeless man in the Roeding Park area, said "you are trying to put people into a concentration camp. . . I'd rather be in jail than a concentration camp."

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# Word On The Street

by Wendy Russell

Sunlight sprinkles through the grapevines above shoppers and vendors alike, dappling everything with the light and dark colored spatters of a Claude Monet painting. Cool breezes caught by the abundant greenery protect us from the heat — cookin' at 101 degrees. Every time I come here to this patch of farm country smack in the heart of our big city, I marvel at the owner's early vision deciding years ago to build this huge airy wooden arbor, plant climbing greens of rose and grape and then waiting with every gardener's necessary patience to see what it would grow into.

'It' grew into this Farmer's Market, a few feet north of Blackstone and Shaw, packed with people buying fresh provisions of healthy produce, home-baked breads, whole bean coffees, fat sausages, local cheeses and honey. A musician sings and strums his guitar, an artist paints watercolors and a 'green thumb'ed man sells living herbs and plants.

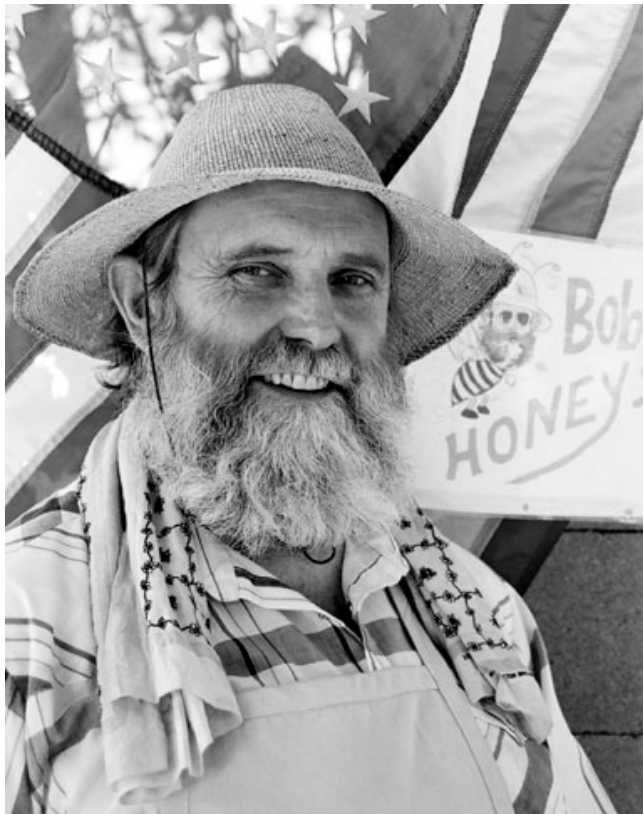
Let's ask this month's Question here:

*We celebrate the Fourth of July this month. What will a peace-loving patriot like yourself be doing this year? What do you like best about the USA in 2007?*

Our first words come from the man that sells the honey, BEE BOB, a veteran of two wars:

"I'm going to touch up the paint on my seven by fourteen foot American flag on my garage door and celebrate America the beautiful! And the best thing about America in 2007? Getting rid of President Bush! It's his last year!" His face becomes serious as he vehemently mutters in a lower voice, "What a piece of s#\*% he is!"

I walk away from Bee Bob while squeezing a 25 cent strawful of sweet honey into my mouth. Friends nod hello, strangers stare at the camera around my neck and we all carry multiple bags or boxes bulging with



**Bee Bob**

(mostly) organic produce, while snacking on samples of cheeses, plums, nectarines and raw milk.

I notice that the sprouts vendor, who also sells her own organic eggs and La Boulangerie Bakery's breads, has a break in the steady stream of customers so I stop her to ask MARIA ABUELAS this month's Question:

*We celebrate the Fourth of July this month. What will a peace-loving patriot like yourself be doing this year? What do you like best about the USA in 2007?*

"How am I creating peace? By using as little fossil fuels as possible and by living as simply as possible. By doing everything we can to get off the grid," but Maria, whom George 'Elfie' Ballis calls the 'Sprout Queen of the San Joaquin' — went on to explain a little, how in California, to get the solar rebates you must be hooked up to PG&E, and then Maria returned to her words, her own answer to our Question:

"My partner Peter and I are basically homesteading in the foothills. We are conscious of all the energy we use. We only make trips into town when we absolutely have to — think before you get into that car: do I really need to buy that, do that? And what I love about America



**Maria Abuelas**

are the people. Even though our government is so screwed up, the American people are awesome! The people are what make it great. One of these days we will have the country we deserve."

That got me all riled up: maybe we have the country we deserve, now. Bush and his cronies lie, cheat, steal, make war and get away with it! Why hasn't he been impeached? Why haven't they all been impeached? Distracting the people with sensationalism and decadence, the real news gets buried on page six while our boys in Iraq keep getting re-upped until they each find a buried bomb or suicide bomber and can't 'serve' no more. That national mass blindness astounds me... and I am weary of being astounded.

From afar I see, in the crowd by the flowers, an unassuming woman wearing something purple, her wise face radiating calm. Ahhhh, I sigh with 'the fullness thereof'; the perfect person at the right time to ask our Question!

*We celebrate the Fourth of July this month. What will a peace-loving patriot like yourself be doing this year? What do you like best about the USA in 2007?*

Artist MARGARET HUDSON smiles the best of smiles with her reply:

"I have field trips in my backyard where the children can work in clay. I stimulate them to be their best and to love our earth. We have a pond and they love to catch pollywogs and frogs. I make sculptures and paintings celebrating the Earth. I recycle and drive as little as possible."



**Margaret Hudson**

I ask Margaret "How many children?" as we walk towards Bee Bob, where two of her clay, forest creature sculptures rest on his table for sale. Happiness ebbs out from her, it seems, touching me, touching anyone around her. She answers, "Close to 100,000 children — I've been doing this for thirty years."

Bee Bob the honey man interrupts, "She promotes love to all the children." He picks up one of her clay creatures and shows me, 'Look, all her pieces are always smiling!' He gave her a sideways-buddy-hug with a big squeeze and told her, "The world loves you!" And to me he said, "She shows the children her heart!"

That's cool, I think to myself as I walk on; some fruits of her labors, there.

And this arbor we all do our shopping underneath of, has sure grown into something beautiful, from something once stark and plain erected in the dirt. And it's such a practical design for our Valley weather, useable all year round. That reminded me of the Underground Gardens and — again — I think of how clever and wise that other man, old Forestierre, was many years ago, when he carved cave-cool rooms and water-efficient gardens out of his worthless 'hard pan' land he had bought unseen in the New World. Two men — generations apart — worked with their landscape, the weather and innate natural earth science and created two types of structures that fit right in and do it naturally — so smart...

Oh sometimes I think my last name should be Wendy Rambles — not Russell! I spot two young people, one wearing an ecologically-themed T-shirt, to answer our Question next:

*We celebrate the Fourth of July this month. What will a peace-loving patriot like yourself be doing this year? What do you like best about the USA in 2007?*

NICK and MAIDA SPOHRER, married one year, answer



**Nick & Maida Spohrer**

together; "We planted fifteen trees in our yard!" Then Nick continued, "We moved here from Missouri. The Valley is notorious for its bad air and heat, but the trees will hopefully provide shade and oxygen. And we recycle. We put in a Lo-Flo Toilet — " Maida giggled, like he had said too much — but "That's what it takes," I said.

Maida answered to what she liked best about the USA right now:

"We think that people are beginning to rethink the way they consume energy and resources like water. It's a step in the right direction."

Me? On Fourth of July I think first of my mom. It's her birthday and our family's vocal histories state that the whole country helps celebrate it! And this 'peace loving patriot' is moving to Costa Rica in the next year — a country that gave up war, abolishing their army in 1948 — to live the *Pura Vida* (Pure Life)!

# Fresno Center for Nonviolence



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SIMPLICITY - JUSTICE - INCLUSIVENESS - NON-INJURY

## THE WELCH REPORT By Jack Welch M.D

### Distract and Disenfranchise

In 1980 when Ronald Reagan won the White House, conservative ideas appealed to many Americans. We were a middle-class nation. The inequalities and social injustices of the past, which gave liberalism its appeal seemed like ancient history. It was easy in that nation to convince many voters that Big Government was their enemy.

Since then, however, we have again become a deeply unequal society. Median income has risen only 17% since 1980 while the richest 0.1% of the population has seen a quadrupling of its income, with the gap between the rich and the middle class as wide now as it was in the 1920s when the New Deal was taking shape.

According to the Pew Research Center 59% of present-day workers believe that it is harder to earn a decent living today than it was 20 or 30 years ago. Even President Bush has acknowledged that "our dynamic economy is leaving working people behind."

Some Republicans are dedicated to tax cuts and privatization, but can the party respond to the public's real needs? The answer for a while was a combination of distraction and disenfranchisement.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were a massive distraction. The GOP could denounce the Democrats as "soft on terror." The other tool was disenfranchisement, i.e. finding ways to keep poor people, who tend to vote for the party that might do something about inequality, out of the voting booth. This seems to be what much of the politicization of the Justice Department was about. Several of the fired U.S. attorneys were under pressure to pursue allegations of voter fraud; former staff members of the Justice Department's civil rights division say they were repeatedly overruled when they objected to Republican actions.

The GOP's abuses of power weren't enough to win the 2006 elections. The Democrats, who spent most of the Clinton years trying to reassure rich people and corporations that they weren't really populists seem to be realizing times have changed.

"A week before the Republican candidates trooped to Palm Beach to declare their allegiance to tax cuts, the Democrats met to declare their commitment to universal health care, and its hard to see what the GOP can offer in response.

(Source: Paul Krugman, The New York Times 02 April 2007)

2007

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Frances Sivak

For her unstinting work and kindness on behalf of minorities as a teacher, organizer, advocate, and friend.



Dr. Marc Lasher

For service to the homeless providing free medical care every Saturday and for lending support and advocacy to the critical Needle Exchange program.



Sue Kern

For her hard work on behalf of the community; organizing such events as an evening with Cindy Sheehan and fundraisers for KFCF among others.



Fran Saunders & Berry Nishkian

Long time peace activists in both the U.S. and Canada. Photo was taken on their way to the International Peace Bureau's Conference in Helsinki in 2006.



Rosanna Spicer

For her role in guiding Sustainable Action of Fresno City College and the campaign to end the Coca Cola monopoly on the campus



Nick Clark

For his role in guiding Sustainable Action of Fresno City College and the campaign to end the Coca Cola monopoly on the campus



Teatro Immigrante

For their intrepid work to honor and reinvigorate the culture, history, and contributions of Mexicans, Chicanos, and Latinos, through music and theater of high excellence.

## Wag the Dog

A biting satire about truth, justice and other special effects. *Wag The Dog* examines the blurred lines between politics, the media, and show business.

Wednesday, July 11<sup>th</sup>  
7pm @ the FCNV/Potluck at 6:30 pm  
POPCORN PROVIDED!  
Discussion to follow evening showing.  
For more information call 23-PEACE

## Stir it Up

with Richard Stone and Michael Blackbull as they discuss *Experiments in Truth*.  
Wednesday, July 11th- 3 p.m. - KFCF 88.1 FM.

## Pastors for Peace

# Caravan to Cuba

Fresno has been chosen as one of 130 communities supporting a new U.S.-Cuba policy based on respect and non-aggression. The 18th Friendship Caravan will traverse fourteen separate routes cross-country, stopping in all 48 mainland states.

Hundreds of volunteers from the U.S., including the Center's own Gerry Bill will challenge the U.S. blockade and travel restrictions against Cuba at the U.S.-Mexico border on July 17th. They expect to collect 200 tons of humanitarian aid during a two-week caravan which will converge in McAllen, Texas before going on to Cuba. They will try to deliver school buses, computers, medicines, and medical supplies gathered in communities throughout the U.S.

Please join us. Learn about Cuba and what the U.S. government doesn't want you to know, connect with the activists who will be coming through Fresno, challenging the immoral US foreign policies against Cuba.

Saturday, July 7<sup>th</sup> - 6 pm

Margaret's Barn and Garden - 4247 N. Thorne

Cuban Potluck- Call Angela if you can help: 435-6383



# WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, PO Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

## Successful Yard Sale

MANY THANKS to those who donated and to those who shopped at our Yard Sale on May 12th. We added over \$800 to our budget, so we can continue with many planned activities. A great THANK YOU to Nancy Waidtlow for providing her yard and days of her time to organize the treasures. Special thanks to Jean Hays, Lynn Graham, Carol Bequette, Witney Grandi, Joan Poss, and Marilyn Byrne, all who put in extra hours to make our yard sale a success. It was truly a Building the Beloved Community activity, with members and friends supporting WILPF.

## STANDING WOMEN FOR PEACE AT WOODWARD PARK

The next day, May 13th, The Raging Grannies entertained WILPF members, their families and friends before joining in silence at 1 P.M. for children's rights and peace, participants in a world-wide peace movement organized by women in Ohio. (See [www.standingwomen.org](http://www.standingwomen.org) or [www.grandmotherbook.com](http://www.grandmotherbook.com) )

This is the message of Standing Women:

We are standing for the world's children and grandchildren, and for the seven generations beyond them. We dream of a world where all of our children have safe drinking water, clean air to breathe, and enough food to eat.

A world where they have access to a basic education to develop their minds and to healthcare to nurture their growing bodies.

A world where they have a warm, safe and loving place to call home.

A world where they don't live in fear of violence—in their home, in their neighborhood, in their school, in their world.

This is the world of which we dream.

This is the cause for which we stand.

## INTERNATIONAL WILPF CONGRESS IN BOLIVIA

Jean Hays will represent Fresno WILPF at the 29th International Congress in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, July 21 - 27. Jean participated in two World Social Forums — in Venezuela, 2006 and in Kenya, 2007 — and is eager to use her experience and to join women from around the world, united to build peace and generate change world-wide. In the last 15 years Bolivia, the poorest country in South America, has gone through a period of increased poverty and privatization of its resources such as water. With great courage and determination,



**Standing for Peace. On Mother's Day the Raging Grannies, in conjunction with a national movement, stood silently for (15 minutes) for World Peace. Before the silence the Grannies sang songs of peace. Photo by Mike Rhodes.**

Bolivians have caught the world's attention by contesting the exploitation of their water, resources and lands despite their economic difficulties. WILPF chose to hold the International Conference in Santa Cruz, Bolivia to support the newly elected progressive indigenous government and add needed money to the economy. Our adventurous Jean and other delegates must prepare to fly into the international airport near La Paz, which is 11,811 feet in altitude, and then transfer to Santa Cruz, which is at sea level. We await her report eagerly.

## SAY NO TO BOTTLED WATER

Water is a human right which is being taken away from communities in both the poorest and richest countries. The WILPF SAVE THE WATER CAMPAIGN encourages us to learn about the global water struggles in Bolivia, India, South Africa, as well as local concerns here in California. The cities of Modesto, Shasta, and Felton have organized recent grass-roots efforts to reclaim local rights to their water, unfortunately without much success.

(See the documentary from Bullfrog Films titled "THIRST" or "Capitalizing on Water", a short film available from [www.wilpf.org](http://www.wilpf.org) about Felton, CA, where citizens worked to reclaim local, public ownership of

their water from Arrowhead Water Company.)

These problems are partly a result of the Water Investment Act of 2002 passed by the US Congress, which makes federal funding for municipal water projects contingent on the local government considering selling its water systems to for-profit corporations. Most local jurisdictions lack the capital resources to fund improvement for water treatment and distribution facilities. These facilities are increasingly taxed by development pressures, more stringent quality standards and dwindling fresh water resources. The 2002 Water Investment Act puts considerable pressure on local communities in the US to privatize their water systems to fund these projects. So what can we do here in Fresno to help prevent the theft and privatization of water here and abroad? According to the American Water Works Association, one year's worth of bottled water sales in the US could finance 60% of the cost of upgrading drinking water systems nationwide. Do you know that over 95% of the cost of the bottled water you buy is the plastic bottle, label, lid and transportation? So DON'T BUY BOTTLED WATER! Make that commitment today. ( More information and resources at [www.wilpf.org](http://www.wilpf.org), [www.knowbottledwater.org](http://www.knowbottledwater.org), or [www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water) )

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# Betty Harmon Speaks out for Justice

By Betty Harmon

My name is Betty Harmon the daughter of (deceased) Lilly M Harmon, who after 2 ½ years of suffering silently to bring justice for my mother, is convinced that my mother was murdered by poison. The poisoning by arsenic was discovered by a prominent pathologist out of Lincoln, Nebraska, Dr Matthias Okoye, MD, JD.

*Please read my story, and tell me what you think. I have a mission today that no other individual in the City of Fresno or elsewhere for that matter, should have to go through what I went through in order to get the proper attention from law enforcement when a crime is reported and document proof is given.*

Is it because of my ethnicity, status, or was it the age of my mother that caused Det Henry Monreal to turn his back on this reported case. You be the judge.

On 12/23/2004, I notified FPD and FSD that a gross crime or crimes had been committed against my mother, who died on 12/06/2004 in Beverly Manor Nursing Facility. I told them I had a strong conviction that I knew who the person was who had committed these crimes. I reported that money was taken from my mother's bank account, with a debit card without my mother's knowledge. I had received my mother's bank statements and it showed months of debit transactions including a transaction the day after my mother's death.

I also stated that I had reason to believe that additional crimes had been committed and we needed a thorough investigation into this matter. Initially, I was shuffled back and forth between the departments. Interestingly enough, both departments agreed that the determining factor, who should oversee the case, was based on where the actual crime had been committed. In other words, the jurisdiction in where the crime had been committed should have placed enough substantial burden on the department that covered that jurisdiction to take appropriate action. It was clear, from the very beginning that the crimes, initially reported with documented proof had happened in the City of Fresno.

Additionally, both departments are mandated reporters and according to the California Welfare & Institutional Code 15630 elder abuse should be reported to appropriate agencies within 24 to 48 hours and if knowledge of such elder abuse is withheld, this is considered a crime punishable by law.

(1<sup>st</sup> Contact) on 12/28/2004 with Det Monreal he refused to take my reported crime.

After explaining to him all of the above, Monreal didn't do anything with the case. I was in shock. I didn't know city officials could act like that. I repeated again everything to let him know the seriousness of this crime and there was silence on the phone for a minute and he stated again there was nothing he could do. At this point I felt very humiliated and believe I was being discriminated against based on the status of livelihood, my race, and the age of my mother. Det Monreal acted so callous like it was so very easy to treat me that way, I got the impression that he operated like this on a regular basis.

I made contact with Fresno city council woman (Cynthia Sterling) through her employee Rev Ward on all that had transpired since 12/23/2004. Ms Sterling said that she knew Detective Henry Monreal and would discuss the complaint with him and I should expect a call the next day. I waited several days and no contact. I called Ms Sterling several times and there was no resolution. This Detective did not even respect the request of a City Council member.

After waiting weeks, I hired a private investigator Jeffrey Pearce of Fresno and gave him all the documents I

had given the FPD and FSD. Detective Henry Monreal, finally called me and acknowledged talking with Ms Sterling, he stated that he would take another look at the case based on Ms Sterling's request. I was surprised at this statement, but I willingly cooperated, hoping that he would perform his job now. Immediately I faxed over all documents I had obtained. The private investigator also sent over the information (indicating the suspects guilt) he had reported after speaking with suspect Theresa Centeno. I know Detective Henry Monreal received these items because Mr Pearce would not give me a copy until the copy was in Det Monreal's hands. Mr Pearce did not want to contaminate his investigation, he told me.

After several calls to Det Monreal, I finally spoke with him to confirm he had received the documents and he informed me he's taking a long 3 to 4 day weekend to move in his new home, he would be calling me when he returns the following week. It was Mr Pearce's opinion that Det Monreal at the very least would call the suspect in for questioning and then make an arrest. This never happened. Nothing ever happened.

I never heard from Det Monreal again. I was shocked that this Detective was just not taking this reported crime serious.

I made contact with my mother's friends here in the City of Fresno, and they advised me to call Rev Floyd Harris with National Network In Action, a Human Rights Organization. I did. I told Rev Harris everything that happened since 12/23/2004 and my concerns surrounding my mother's death. He immediately emailed several complaints to a sergeant Newton of the FPD, and forward these emails to me. One of Rev Harris

#20050114 on 07/27/2005 for further investigation into my allegations regarding the refusal and denial of my reported crime. Complaint pointed to Det Monreal's and Sgt Goertzen misconduct and inaction. I received a letter dated 10/07/2005 stating they received my complaint and investigation is ongoing. Later I received a call from Sgt Judy Luna in 9/2005 to set up an appointment for an interview. This interview where we discussed the complaint was taped. FIA responded 11/15/2005 and conclude that their employees Sgt Doug Goertzen and Det Henry Monreal conducted themselves without violations of their department rules and codes. The allegations that I presented to the FIAO were unfounded and unsustainable.

I disagree, the mission of the FPD posted on their website in 2005 in part states that "The mission of the Fresno police department is to provide a professional, effective, and timely response to crime and disorder, and to enhance traffic safety in our community" it also states "Department members who do not have the ability to assist citizens on a particular problem, will make every effort to guide them to appropriate available resource".

I believe that the FPD not only failed in any type of response but also discriminated against my deceased mother (Lilly M Harmon) and me because of age, race, and social status. Det Henry Monreal's statements were condescending, disrespectful, rude and clearly unapproachable when the case was being reported to him. Also, I later found out that Det H Monreal failed to inform me of any elder abuse unit that was in place within the FPD at the time.

FIAO mission statement also states "The mission of the Internal Affairs Unit is to investigate complaints from citizens or employees, evaluate and audit the degree of compliance with established policies and rules and assess citizen satisfaction with police service". "The staff officer's chain of command then examines the report to determine what corrective action should be taken". The FIAO is the guardian of the FPD reputation. It is clear in this case, that the direct conflict of interest needs to be addressed when the complaint is being investigated by the party whom the complaint is directed to. Furthermore, the accused officer's chain of command was all in the same unit, so how could this case have been investigated objectively.

The FIAO, in many cases doesn't even know about the lower level complaints unless the lower chain of command refers it to them, which happened in my case. This is why that for over 9 years now there are organizations in the community that are pleading for an IPA to be established, eliminating this conflict of objectivity.

Most recently, the Fresno County Grand Jury has recommended the IPA be established, and yet there are still individuals in high seats here in the City of Fresno, who are opposing this necessary function.

There is clearly a problem with the FPD, FSD, FIAO, system and the process in which citizens have a right to complain. The citizens in the City of Fresno are having their right's violated daily. I feel that the police department bases their response on their idea of worthiness and their selectiveness against people of age, race and or social status.

February 2005 I requested the California Department of Justice - BMFEA division to open case on behalf of my deceased mother (Lilly M Harmon) and forward all documents to them that was given to the local authorities. Lorena Andrada called me sometime in March 2005 told me they don't normally take on these kinds of cases.

I explained to Ms Andrada that I'm requesting their help because local officials refused and are ignoring all supporting documentation related to crime committed against my mother. She told me they would accept the case and would be assigning an investigator.



**The Rev. Floyd Harris and Betty Harmon want justice. They want to know why the police were going to let somebody get away with murder.**

emails stress that this case is a possible homicide case. Sgt Newton in one of his emails states that Rev Harris and I might be jumping to fast and he said he would be forwarding the complaint to Sgt Goertzen and Lt Buellimini.

Sgt Goertzen called me the following week and asked me to go over my problem. I did. Again I explained to him what had transpired since 12/23/2004. Sgt Goertzen was surprised that Det Monreal responded the way I explained. He questioned me after my explanation, a couple of times asking did he say that he couldn't or wouldn't. I repeated to Sgt Goertzen that Det Monreal said both. He told me after he reviewed the situation he would call me back. I never heard one word from him or anyone from the FPD or FSD after this.

I filed a complaint and claim on January 23, 2005 with the FPD and FSD because they refused to take the reported crime that I had given them with document proof to investigate. FPD responded 07/26/2005 as being unsustainable and rejected claim. FSD responded 06/23/2005 also rejecting the claim and unsustainable of wrong doing on the part of their department.

I also, filed a complaint with the Fresno Internal Affairs

Shortly, investigator Sal Rizzo contacted me and stated we would be in contact regularly until case is resolved. In a February 2005 letter I go into greater detail about my conviction that my mother had been overdosed by legal and or illegal drug/medication.

I believe my plea and the difficulty to get someone to listen to me regarding homicide against my mother originates from the original report to the local officials when they did not do their job. To my understanding since 1999 there is a mandate to report elder abuse over 60, at the very least Det Henry Monreal should have taken my crime report and acted on all documents that I provided him with. He did not, Sgt Goertzen did not and the FIAO upholds them in their action.

In May 2005 Sal Rizzo informed me Theresa Centeno was being charged with pc368, pc487, & pc484(these penal codes are about elder abuse, petty theft, and identity theft). He told me his investigation was over and he would be turning everything over to Fresno local DA – Tim Donavon. I spoke with Donavon regarding my belief and concerns that my mother had been poisoned several times. I provided medical records of pictures of my mother’s wounds and also notations in records that state there was suspicion of abuse. So far my belief and concerns of homicide by arsenic poisoning had not been addressed by local officials.

Theresa Centeno pleaded no contest to felony charges, and was sentenced on 01/04/06 for 3 months local jail time with 5 year probation.

November 2005 I requested the California Department of Justice – BMFEA division to reopen case again for the homicide of my mother (Lilly M Harmon) and to perform an autopsy.

March of 2006 I spoke with a Martha Supenor from the BMFEA and she informed me the investigation has been halted due to Fresno local coroner’s decision. I strongly, disagreed, I believe there was sufficient evidence in medical records/pictures to further investigate – based on pictures of wounds and notations of suspected abuse by medical personnel and recommendation to report this abuse to APS, suspicious activity surrounding mothers death, charges of financial abuse successfully brought against suspect (Theresa Centeno).

September 2006 I was successful in gathering monies by loan and borrowing from friends to perform autopsy on my mother (Lilly M Harmon) and it was scheduled 09/15/06.

March of 2007 I received from the Nebraska Forensic Medical Institute under the direction of Dr Matthias Okoye, confirmation of all my suspicion that my mother (Lilly M Harmon) died of arsenic poisoning acute/chronic recent before her death which is consistent to homicide.

I forward copies to both the Fresno local DA offices to Ben Castellanos and spoke with Martha Supenor from BMFEA.

It was told to me at this time that the Fresno local DA would handle this case. I waited approximately a week

***From top to bottom, bottom to top the Fresno Police Department (FPD), Fresno Sheriff Department (FSD), the Fresno Internal Affairs (FIA), Fresno District Attorney Office (FDAO), and the Fresno Coroner’s Office (FCO), have all failed to bring justice to this case!***

to speak with Mr Castellanos to ask what direction this case would be going and he informed me he didn’t know, they were trying to decide if the city or the county would take it. Back to start point again.

It wasn’t until the Fresno local media got involved 2 months later that Mr Castellanos called and told me the FPD would be taking over this case.

This is too much.

I truly believe that the FPD after all of this, their heart would not be in the place needed to find the Truth and Justice for my mother. After 2 ½ years, a case turned cold, Justice for my mother would be living proof of their discrimination and unfailing attitude on what they think and how they treat folks on this side of the tracks here in the City of Fresno.

Even now, according to the Fresno Bee Newspaper, the Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer, states “If in fact she was poisoned, did it occur over a period of time? Where did it happen?” Shame on FPD. They will hold out to the very end to acknowledge there has been a murder committed and that they refused to take an initial crime reported with supporting documents that was put on their desk.

This is an Outrage!!

It’s not as Chief Dyer states in Fresno Bee that it was poor communication that led to the break down. I want the City of Fresno to know the truth, and the truth is that Det Henry Monreal did not take my initial complaint seriously.

And as far as not sustained/ unfounded goes, remember these are all mandated reporters by Federal Law, required to report within 24 to 48 hours of any elder abuse.

So you tell me if the FPD is not responsible for turning this case into a cold case. I say they are directly responsible.

I have filed a complaint with the United States Department of Justice and praying for full Justice not just for my mother but for every other citizen in the City of Fresno. This should never happen Again.

I have requested the Attorney General of the State of California to take over this investigation.

May God continue to keep his most Powerful Hand over this situation Exposing the Truth. I ask for your Prayers in

this matter. God Bless

Peace.

Note: Rev Floyd Harris Jr, from the National Network In Action is spear heading A Lilly M Harmon Fund for Justice set up to defray the costs and relieve the burden of necessary legal actions that will be required to pursue this case to its fullest.

If any one wishes to donate for this cause, send checks to The Lilly M Harmon Fund for Justice/Betty Harmon.

To comment you may call, email, write:

**Betty Harmon**  
3310 W Beran Way  
Fresno, California 93706  
612-961-7651  
Email: [wichakpa18@yahoo.com](mailto:wichakpa18@yahoo.com)

**Rev. Floyd Harris, Jr**  
National Network In Action  
[www.nationalnetworkinaction.org](http://www.nationalnetworkinaction.org)  
P.O. Box 16127  
Fresno, California 93755-6127  
Ph 559 803 – 0286  
Email: [xyfloyd@aol.com](mailto:xyfloyd@aol.com)

**Central Valley  
Progressive  
Political Action Committee**

cvppac.org PO Box 5845, Fresno, CA 93755 559-435-7360

**ATTENTION PROGRESSIVES:**

**If you want to see a difference at City Hall, then come to our meeting on Saturday, July 14<sup>th</sup> from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. to hear organized labor’s plan to register thousands of new voters for next year’s elections.**

**Meet at the Fresno Center for Non-Violence  
1584 N. Van Ness Ave. (at McKinley) Fresno.**

**Call (559) 435-1992  
for more information.**

Fresno Filmworks Presents  
July 13, 2007  
**Offside**



**The Tower Theatre**

Tickets will be available at:  
The Tower Box Office, at the Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave.,  
& at Wine Styles in Fig Garden Village  
Admission \$10.00 - \$8.00 for Students & Seniors  
show times 5 pm & 8 pm

[www.filmworks.org](http://www.filmworks.org)

# PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## Saturday, June 30

7 PM

Jon Adams & Faith Petric, Queen of the SF folk music scene. Jon Adams, that interstate minstrel who sings "anything you can get away with at a campfire" performs with Faith Petric, Queen of the SF folk music scene. Jon describes Faith as performing "social open heart surgery"; she opens your heart to social injustices and dives right in. Jon describes his music as "connect the dots between O Brother! and Oh my God!" Friends and fellow performers since the mid 60's, together their repertoire can fill a Fort Knox of music with songs ranging from the outrageous to sweet lullabies.

Celebrate Faith's long productive life with us. She's 91 still singing and playing the guitar. Attached are two photos I took of her singing at The Mill in 2005. She gave a daily workshop on protest songs. Tickets: Donation: \$10 individual/ \$25 max for nuclear family.

Purchasing Tickets: Order Online or call Pat Wolk Wolk Folk Garden  
6661 N. Forkner  
Fresno CA 93704  
For information call: (559) 431-3653

## Tuesday, July 3

5:30 PM

The National Women's Political Caucus monthly meeting will be held at Toledo Mexican Restaurant @ 367 E. Shaw (Shaw and Fresno). Our speaker is Seanna Herring-Jensen, San Joaquin Valley Veterans. Topic relates to unique problems of military women returning from war.

## Wednesday, July 4

9 AM - 1 PM

4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration of our Diversity. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> annual celebration of our diversity brunch sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance of Central California. This event will be held at O'Neill Park, CSUF Campus (Barstow between Maple and Chestnut). Tickets for the event are \$5 (13 years old - adult), \$3/child (4 to 13 years old), and a maximum of \$15 per family. For tickets and information call 224-4001.

## Friday, July 6

5:15 PM

Cineculture & The Undercurrent present the film *Haiti, Beyond the Call* (USA, re: war veterans involved in humanitarian aid around the world). This film will be shown at the Peters Auditorium, which is the Leon P. Peters Auditorium on the west side of Save Mart at Woodrow and Shaw Aves. Enter through the entrance marked "Student Recreation Center." Cineculture Club promotes cultural awareness and addresses diversity issues through film and post-screening discussion. For more information contact the Cineculture Club advisor: Dr. Denni Blum [dblum@csufresno.edu](mailto:dblum@csufresno.edu) 278-0248 or The Undercurrent: Abid Yayha [abid.undercurrent@gmail.com](mailto:abid.undercurrent@gmail.com)

## Saturday, July 7

6 PM

PASTORS FOR PEACE - A Cuba aid caravan sponsored by Pastors for Peace will pass through Fresno. People may meet the caravanists and hear their stories at an open event being held in the barn at Margaret Hudson's house, 4247 N. Thorne in Fresno. There will be a potluck meal at 6 p.m. followed by a program at 7 p.m. The event is free, but a hat will be passed to raise money to defray the expenses of the caravan. For more details, contact the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 237-3223, or Gerry Bill at 227-2133.

## Wednesday, July 11

7 PM

Monthly Video Series at the Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness. For our summer fun, we will show the film "Wag the Dog." "When the president is caught in a sex scandal less than two weeks before the election, the White House spinmeister Conrad Brean (Robert de Niro) creates a phony war with the help of Hollywood producer Stanley Mottss (Dustin Hoffman). From acclaimed director Barry Levinson comes this biting look at American politics and its relationship with the media. There will be a potluck at 6:30, prior to the evening showing, and a discussion afterward. AND, WE WILL POP POPCORN! All are invited. FREE. For info call 237-3223 NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO NOONTIME SHOWING DURING SUMMER MONTHS, UNTIL SCHOOL RESUMES IN THE FALL.

## Friday, July 13

5 PM and 8 PM

Fresno Filmworks presents "Offside" at the Tower Theatre. This sweet comedy from Iranian director Jafar Panahi ("The Circle") follows a day in the life of a group of Iranian girls attempting to watch their team's World Cup qualifying match at the stadium in Tehran. In Farsi, with English subtitles. Tickets can be purchased at the Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., WineStyles in Fig Garden Village, and at the door, for \$10; \$8, for students and seniors. Tickets can also be purchased online through PayPal at [www.fresnofilmworks.org](http://www.fresnofilmworks.org). For more information call the FFW info line, 221-0755, or go to [www.fresnofilmworks.org](http://www.fresnofilmworks.org)

## Friday, July 13

6:30-8:30

The Reedley Peace Center will feature speaker: Jan Siemens, Human Resources Board of Mennonite Central Committee. will speak about MCC program that provides material resources to refugees in Iraq. This program will also provide opportunity to participate in this relief program

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on 'L' street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at [dfriesen0@gmail.com](mailto:dfriesen0@gmail.com)

## Saturday, July 14

3:30 PM

The Central Valley Progressive PAC hosts the General Meeting. If you want to see a difference at City Hall, then come to our meeting to hear organized labor's plan to register thousands of new voters for next year's elections. Meet at the Fresno Center for Non-Violence 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. (at McKinley) Fresno. Call (559) 435-1992 for more information.

## Sunday, July 15

Deadline for articles and calendar items to the August, 2007 Community Alliance newspaper. Send information to [AllianceEditor@Comcast.net](mailto:AllianceEditor@Comcast.net)

## Thursday, July 19

Open 6:30 Video 7:00 Discussion 8:30

PROGRESSIVE THURSDAY presents "The Power of Community" How Cuba Survived Peak Oil. This event is hosted by the Fresno County Green Party and is free, wheelchair accessible and open to anyone interested in progressive topics. Round Table Pizza 5763 N. First Street in Fresno [SW corner of First and Bullard]. Contact: Larry Mullen 559 227-0293. [www.fresnogreens.org](http://www.fresnogreens.org)

## July 20 - 21

Nonviolence Conference for K-12 Educators. The Metta Center for Nonviolence Education is holding its first Educators for Nonviolence conference for K - 12 teachers at UC Berkeley. For more information, see [www.EFNV.ORG](http://www.EFNV.ORG) or [www.METTACENTER.ORG](http://www.METTACENTER.ORG) or call (510) 548-5550.

## Friday, July 20

5:15 PM

Cineculture & The Undercurrent present the film *In This World* (UK, re: refugees and human smuggling). This film will be shown at the Peters Auditorium, which is the Leon P. Peters Auditorium on the west side of Save Mart at Woodrow and Shaw Aves. Enter through the entrance marked "Student Recreation Center." Cineculture Club promotes cultural awareness and addresses diversity issues through film and post-screening discussion. For more information contact the Cineculture Club advisor: Dr. Denni Blum [dblum@csufresno.edu](mailto:dblum@csufresno.edu) 278-0248 or The Undercurrent: Abid Yayha [abid.undercurrent@gmail.com](mailto:abid.undercurrent@gmail.com)

## Friday, July 27

5:15 PM

Cineculture & The Undercurrent present the film *Wetback: The Undocumented Documentary* (Latin American). This film will be shown at the Peters Auditorium, which is the Leon P. Peters Auditorium on the west side of Save Mart at Woodrow and Shaw Aves. Enter through the entrance marked "Student Recreation Center." Cineculture Club promotes cultural awareness and addresses diversity issues through film and post-screening discussion. For more information contact

the Cineculture Club advisor: Dr. Denni Blum [dblum@csufresno.edu](mailto:dblum@csufresno.edu) 278-0248 or The Undercurrent: Abid Yayha [abid.undercurrent@gmail.com](mailto:abid.undercurrent@gmail.com)

## Friday, August 3

5:15 PM

Cineculture & The Undercurrent present the film *Life + Debt* (Jamaica, re: effects of globalization on Jamaica). This film will be shown at the Peters Auditorium, which is the Leon P. Peters Auditorium on the west side of Save Mart at Woodrow and Shaw Aves. Enter through the entrance marked "Student Recreation Center." Cineculture Club promotes cultural awareness and addresses diversity issues through film and post-screening discussion. For more information contact the Cineculture Club advisor: Dr. Denni Blum [dblum@csufresno.edu](mailto:dblum@csufresno.edu) 278-0248 or The Undercurrent: Abid Yayha [abid.undercurrent@gmail.com](mailto:abid.undercurrent@gmail.com)

## Saturday, August 4

8 - 10 AM

Breastfeeding: First Step to a Healthy Life. The Babies First Breastfeeding Task Force invites the community, including health care providers, to participate in its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Breastfeeding Awareness Walk and Celebration at Woodward Park. Last year's Breastfeeding Awareness Walk drew over 300 participants and 32 community sponsors. It was a successful community event to support and promote the important health benefits of *breastfeeding* and a healthier community. For more information on how to register or help sponsor the walk, visit [www.fresnohumanservices.org/communityhealth](http://www.fresnohumanservices.org/communityhealth) or call Priscilla Newsome at 445-3307.

## ONGOING WEEKLY ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMS

### Every Sunday

3 - 4 PM

Sunday Food Not Bombs serves free food at Courthouse Park to anyone who is hungry. They start cooking at 1 PM and serve the food at 3 PM (meet at the Tulare side of the park). For more information see: <http://cafefresno.org/>

### Every Tuesday

6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Fresno River Zen group meets in Horsley Hall at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N. Millbrook, Fresno. This group welcomes all who wish to seek clarity, compassion, and harmony with oneself and the world through mindful meditation. Emphasis is on bringing peaceful actions from personal experience in meditation to healing the world. Teaching and practice in the spirit of the Suzuki Roshi Lineage is led by Grace Schireson, an ordained Zen priest. For more information, call Grace at (559) 877-2400 or email her at [grace@emptynestzendo.org](mailto:grace@emptynestzendo.org).

### Every Monday and Tuesday

7-9:30 PM

The St. Benedict Catholic Worker serves a meal to the homeless, working poor, and visitors and released inmates in front of Fresno County Jail (corner of Fresno and M streets). Volunteers are needed to help prepare and serve the meals. For more information contact Liza Apper at (559) 229-6410 or [lizaosb@aol.com](mailto:lizaosb@aol.com); or visit their Web site: [www.sbcw.org](http://www.sbcw.org)

### Every Tuesday

7 PM

Peace Fresno meets at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence at 1584 N Van Ness, south of McKinley. If you want to help stop Bush's endless war against the world, come to this meeting!

For an up-to-the-minute listing of all peace actions in the Fresno area, call the Fresno Center for Nonviolence at (559) 23PEACE (237-3223). For more information about Peace Fresno, call 487-2515 or visit their Web site at [www.peacefresno.org](http://www.peacefresno.org)

### Every Wednesday

7:30 AM

David Bacon's Labor Journal on KFCF 88.1 FM. David Bacon's experience as a union organizer and his worldwide contacts in the Labor community makes him uniquely qualified as a journalist specializing in issues and concerns of working people. He covers a broad range of labor news and issues locally, nationally and globally. See David's web site at <http://dbaon.igc.org>



# PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## Every Friday 7 PM

Reedley Peace Center holds its weekly peace meeting at the Fellowship Hall at Reedley's First Mennonite Church, 1208 L Street, Reedley. Programs vary, but the focus is always on peace issues: local, state, national, international. The contact is Carol Krehbiel: (559) 637-9098 or [ckrehbiel@earthlink.net](mailto:ckrehbiel@earthlink.net). The meeting is free, open to the public, and accessible to the handicapped.

## Every Saturday 1-2 PM

Food Not Bombs feeds the hungry near the Olive Ave entrance to Roeding Park. If you would like to help us prepare our meal, we meet every Saturday at Wesley United Methodist Church (1343 E. Barstow) at 10am. For more information see: <http://myspace.com/fresnofnb>

For more information on Food Not Bombs you can contact us at [fresnofnb@hotmail.com](mailto:fresnofnb@hotmail.com) or visit the official FNB website [www.foodnotbombs.net](http://www.foodnotbombs.net)

## Every Saturday 1 PM until the last patient is served

Medical clinic for the homeless, actively injecting drug users, and prostitutes. You can find them near Hughes and Olive Ave. Staffed by Dr. Marc Lasher and volunteers. Accepting financial donations. Contact: 266-0444.

## Every Saturday 1-3 PM

Fresno Free Bicycle Repair Clinic. Most Saturdays. Donations of bicycle parts, inner tubes, and blinky lights welcome. Volunteers needed to help with minor repairs. The bicycle clinic is near the Olive Ave entrance to Roeding Park, beside Food Not Bombs. For more info and to arrange donations, e-mail [fresnofreebikeclinic@yahoo.com](mailto:fresnofreebikeclinic@yahoo.com)

## ONGOING MONTHLY ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMS

### 1st Sunday of every month 1 - 3 PM

The South Valley Peace Center holds a demonstration for peace at Mooney and Walnut in Visalia.

### 3rd Sunday of every month 3 - 5 PM

World Meditation Day is observed to promote peace within oneself and harmony in the world. Held at 7319 N Fourth St, Fresno. Program includes guided meditation followed by discussion and light refreshments. Call Veena Kapoor, (559) 435-2212, for more information.

### 3rd Sunday of every month 1 PM

Humanists of the San Joaquin Valley welcomes guests and inquirers. For meeting information, visit their Web site at [www.fresno.humanists.net](http://www.fresno.humanists.net)

### 2nd Monday of every month 1 PM

The Living Wage Committee will meet at the SEIU 250 office, 1279 N Wishon. For further information see: [www.livingwage-fresno.org](http://www.livingwage-fresno.org)

### 3rd Tuesday of every month 7 PM

The Fresno Free College Foundation (owner and operator of KFCF 88.1 FM) Board of Directors meet at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N Millbrook, Fresno. The public is invited. For more information call (559) 233-2221, e-mail [kfcf@kfcf.org](mailto:kfcf@kfcf.org), or visit [www.kfcf.org](http://www.kfcf.org)

### 1st Wednesday of every month 12 Noon-1 PM

Women in Black- Silent Vigil at the Fresno County Courthouse entrance. Show your support for PEACE and for negotiated settlements of US current military actions! Meet downtown at the Fresno courthouse, and stand silently, advocating for PEACE. For more info, call 278-7140 or 225-2850.

### 1st Wednesday of every month 7 PM

The Fresno County Democratic Central Committee meetings are held in the State Building Assembly Room. The address is 2550 Mariposa Ave. Call Steve Haze,

Chair - 855-8844 [stevehaze@psnw.com](mailto:stevehaze@psnw.com) or Jay Hubbell, Secretary - 292-4905 / [jayhubbell@comcast.net](mailto:jayhubbell@comcast.net) for more information.

### 1st Wednesday of every month 7:30 PM

Conservation Committee of the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N Millbrook, Fresno.

### 2nd Wednesday of every month 6 PM for dinner and 7 PM for call to order

The Fresno Stonewall Democrats are reorganizing. New Location: Carrow's Restaurant 4280 N. Blackstone Avenue, Fresno (On the east side of Blackstone just north of Ashlan). Stonewall Democrats represent the interests of the LGBT community through the Democratic Party. Phone: Chuck Krugman for more information: (559) 266-9237 E-mail Chuck at: [ckrugman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ckrugman@sbcglobal.net) <http://www.mangen.com/stonewall/>

### 3rd Wednesday of every month 6:30 PM

Central California Criminal Justice Committee is meeting at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1564 North Van Ness (Southeast corner of McKinley and Van Ness).

### 1st Thursday of every month

ART HOP. For more information contact Maria Franco at [mfranco@fresnoarts.org](mailto:mfranco@fresnoarts.org) or call (559) 237- 9734.

### 2nd Thursday of every month 6:30 PM

Health Care for All Central California meets at the California School Employees Association, 2501 W Shaw #107 (SW corner of Shaw and Hughes, between Marks and West).

### 2nd Thursday of every month 7 PM

Fresno LGBTQ Social Group <http://www.gayfresno.com/social/> Carrow's Fresno 1484 E. Shaw Ave (one block south of Fashion Fair) Get together and hang out.

### 2nd Thursday of every month 7 PM

Monthly meeting of the Fresno County Green Party, County Council, at the California State Building in downtown Fresno. The address is 2550 Mariposa Ave., and is located between O and P streets and Fresno and Tulare. Enter through the main door along the pedestrian mall just off P Street. Call (559) 265-3647 or go to [www.cagreens.org/fresno](http://www.cagreens.org/fresno) for more information.

### 2nd Thursday of every month 7 PM

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom meeting, 1584 N Van Ness, south of McKinley. For more information contact JEAN HAYS [skyhorse3593@sbcglobal.net](mailto:skyhorse3593@sbcglobal.net)

### 3rd Thursday of every month

FresCAMP (Fresno Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides) meeting. For more information call (559) 227-6134.

### 3rd Thursday of every month 6-8 PM

Fresno County Bicycle Coalition, monthly meetings to provide a forum for bicyclists to organize, discuss common concerns, and influence public policy. If you are interested in helping Fresno County become more bike-friendly, you are invited to join this group. Please call (559) 444-2065 for more information.

### 1st Friday of every month 4:30-6:30 PM

Peace Fresno is at Shaw and Blackstone Avenues to protest the occupation of Iraq and other harmful domestic and foreign policies of the Bush administration. Peace Fresno advocates alternatives to war and social and environmental justice. For more information go to [www.peacefresno.org](http://www.peacefresno.org)

### 1st and 3rd Friday of every Month 6:30 PM

California Prison Moratorium Project members, volunteers, walk ins welcomed at both meetings. We meet

at 6pm at 1055 N Van Ness, Suite C. The 1st Friday of the month is dedicated to our local jail and prison "No New Cages" expansion plans. On the 3rd Friday we have a "Talking Circle" an indigenous style of community dialogue, join us. Both meetings begin at 6 until we are though or when you need to leave "Uncaging the Valley" is a mobilizing effort to unite the our communities about the runaway costs of incarceration. An anti prison conference is planned for the fall and we need your help planning. Your ideas and support are needed and welcomed. This is an effort of an exclusive valley wide coalition focused on this project. Potluck is encouraged but not required. Upcoming, speakers from the anti prison movement are being scheduled. Call Debbie Reyes at 559-266-5901 for more info.

### 1st Friday of every month 7-9 PM

Dances of Universal Peace. Sacred Circle Dances from Around the World at the First Congregational Church, Van Ness and Yale.

### 4th Friday of every month 5 - 6 PM

Street Heat on KFCF, 88.1 FM in Fresno. This is the Community Alliance radio show.

### 1st Saturday of every month 9 AM (breakfast)

### 9:30 AM (business meeting) 10 AM (program)

Kennedy Club of the San Joaquin Valley meets at Denny's Restaurant at Abby and Divisadero. Call (559) 360-4309 for more information.

### 1st Saturday of every month 3-5 PM

Women of Spirit—a gathering of women rediscovering their own spirituality and enabling others to do the same. You are invited to join the circle of women the first Saturday of each month, at 7319 N Fourth St, Fresno. Beginning and closing meditation, discussion and activity, light refreshments after closing. The event is free. Both men and women are welcome. Contact: Veena Kapoor, (559) 435-2212.

### 2nd Saturday of every month 9:30 AM

Fresno Center for Nonviolence monthly meeting at 1584 N. Van Ness, south of McKinley. For more information about the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, see their Web site [www.centerfornonviolence.org](http://www.centerfornonviolence.org) or call 559-23PEACE (237-3223).

### 2nd Saturday of every month 10 AM

The Black Political Council meets at King of Kings on Martin Luther King Blvd.

### 4th Saturday of Every Month 8 -10 AM

Tower Beautification Cleanup. Meet at the Olive/Wishon corner of the Chicken Pie Shop. Bring hat, gloves, broom or rakes and weed hoes, water. We supply orange vests, pick up bags, grabbers and extra tools. Why do we do this? To beautify our community and build empowerment through responsibility for our quality of life. Questions? Call Coordinator, Gay Amend, at 237-6716 Sponsored by the Tower Trust, Council Districts 1 and 3 and the City of Fresno Sanitation Department which provides supplies and insurance.



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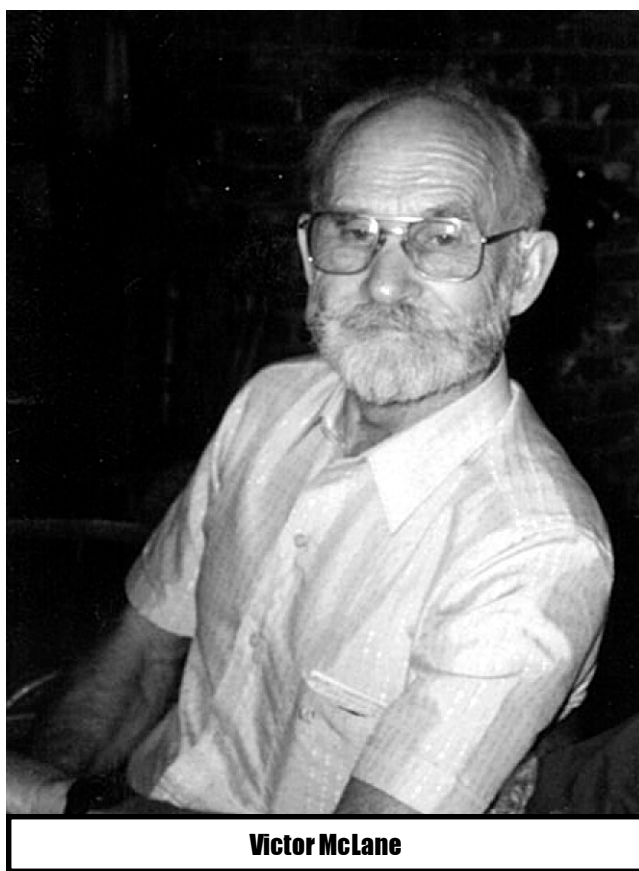
Victor McLane is an ordained Methodist minister who speaks reluctantly about God and the divinity of Jesus. "What I'm sure of," he says, "is the rightness of the Church's positions on social justice, and its opposition to war; and of Jesus' mission to bring good news to the oppressed."

Vic's own social activism is rooted in values learned on the family farm during the Depression. "We lived off the land, working together and earning self-worth through our work. We had no electricity and no non-essentials, but we learned from our mother's managerial skills and her commitment to keeping her obligations."

With the onset of World War II, Vic was forced to make important ethical decisions. Following the example of his older brother Bob ("he was the leader, a bit of a rebel"), Vic became a conscientious objector who also refused noncombatant service. Instead he was sent to a camp to do national service under civilian direction, mostly with the Forest Service. But when he was assigned to a make-work project that was demeaning, he wrote his own "walk-out papers," a letter explaining his departure and how to reach him. Some months later, the FBI came to Berkeley to arrest him (he told them where to meet him!), and he was sentenced to six months in jail. There he refused on principle to work. . . until they offered him the job of teaching English to his fellow inmates. "I couldn't refuse the chance to be useful." And that led to his first professional direction: upon his release, he returned to school to get a teaching credential. "How naive I was," Vic now reminisces, "to have no idea that my military record would prevent me from getting a credential." But it did.

After marrying Marsha (later to become a leading light in the Fresno branch of WILPF), Vic spent several years of his life occupied mostly by providing for a family of five children, working as a carpenter. But then a calling to the ministry — felt originally as a high-schooler — returned, and Vic earned ordination by correspondence.

Assigned in the mid-1960s to a post in Five Points, Vic



Victor McLane

confronted issues of segregation and injustice brought into evidence by the nascent Farmworkers' Movement. "I grew up amidst racial prejudice, even in my family. Finally I could see plainly that the approved antimilitarism of my youth was part of a larger movement for universal justice."

Before marriage, Marsha had been involved with the Quakers and the American Friends Service Committee, working with a project in Mexico aimed at establishing cross-national ties in the eventuality of a U.S. invasion of Mexico. (The populist president of Mexico was nationalizing Mexican oil, and talk of war had been in the air.) Many years later, with their children out on their own, Victor and Marsha accepted an AFSC assignment in Mexico City, related to the original program. The experience deepened Victor's awareness of the universal issues at stake.

Since returning north of the border and settling in Fresno, Vic has continued activism with the Quakers,

his Methodist church, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He is especially committed to draft counseling and anti-recruitment work. "But I have little patience with people who just complain and criticize. I look for hopeful, constructive programs to become involved with, like The Heifer Project" (which supplies poor people with "starter kits" for raising stock).

"A lot in the U.S. makes me crazy," he says. "We're addicted to a way of life that is self-indulgent and wasteful, and that leads inevitably to war. I'm especially disturbed by the lack of concern about the destruction of our environment, and I see little of value coming from the Democrats."

But Victor also searches out signs of hope and constructive change. "I greatly admire the work in Fresno of Mike Rhodes. He effectively takes on local issues like the attacks on the homeless." And just recently Victor adopted vegetarianism, based on the analysis of an Argentinian, Rabbi Schwartz, showing that meat production is an incredible misuse of land and energy resources. But when other things fail, Victor says, he can turn to a Brazilian source of hope, bossa nova. "The music touches my spirit and sentimentality. It cheers me up."

Even with the loss of his beloved Marsha, and the partial loss of memory and hearing that so often comes with age, Victor carries on the lessons of his childhood, encapsulated in two favorite writings: Matthew 23, verses 31-46; and the St Francis prayer which goes:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

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## Is Fresno a "Can Do" City?

By Ruth Gadebusch

It is vacation time bringing many more outsiders to our area, and what kind of an impression do we make on them? With all the trash lying about, I suspect it is one of an area with no pride.



Despite signs of fines for littering (When was a fine ever imposed?), one would suppose that our crop is growing trash. We have signs noting groups or businesses responsible for cleanup on portions of our freeways and we use miscreants working off their penalties picking up. Still, all too often, the view is one of failure of pride. We can do better.

Numerous containers for disposal are available and, of course, we could always take our own mess home. There is no excuse for dropping those cups and straws, the plastic lids, or the candy bar wrappers. We won't even talk about how disgusting are those who fail to take care of their animal waste properly. Where is our pride?

Oh yes, that trash at home, can't it be wrapped sufficiently to keep it from dropping all over when emptied? As for those special pickups for discards beyond the weekly allocation, do they really have to be put out days and days ahead?

All the landscaping of our homes and on the freeways cannot overcome the ugliness of overwhelming trash. Couldn't our railroads also do some cleanup as well as put in a few plants that require little water and maintenance? Even the train view of adjacent yards in the so-called "nice" part of town leave much to be desired.

We don't have to be a city denigrated by the rest of the state, the butt of jokes. Once the Fulton Mall was our pride and joy, but the planners allowed that to deteriorate by letting building go North. What is going to happen to Running Horse with all its promise for upgrading a section in need of attention? A downtown river or lake sounds exciting, but is it feasible when we face another year of drought? Instead, beautifying around our canals could let them serve a double purpose, at the same time making them safer.

Then, there is the hope of a fast train serving our valley. One could reach those big cities of the South and North as quick as flying with all the hassle of airports these days. It might even make air prices more reasonable.

Another possibility is state of the art public transportation which could generate the same kind of excitement as that of the Fulton Mall in its heyday. With the growing problems of fossil fuel and diminished driving capacity of an aging population, it is time - past time - to act on alternatives to private vehicles.

An added benefit of great public transportation would be cleaner air. Many years ago a study by Fresno Community Council (Remember that venerable organization and its guiding light, the late Nate Edwards?) warned us that our air had the potential for becoming as bad as Los Angeles. Well, that time has arrived, and our air board pushes back the time for doing something about it instead of tackling the problem forthwith. It is later than we think.

Practical and pie in the sky projects are wonderful to think of for the future, but we don't have to wait to change the image of Fresno. As individuals and groups, we can do much now. We have shown that we care by voting for taxes for road improvement (and a small portion for mass transportation), a cultural arts assessment (despite its troubles with the nay sayers), a library tax, school bonds and on and on. Surely we can do something as easy as having at least a modicum of cleanliness by keeping our trash where it belongs. Little things mean a lot.

After all these years, I still remember "TIPPY McCANN" in Providence, Rhode Island. That same city had holiday greetings in many languages on the lamp posts and that was before diversity was so much talked about. It just was. A city's reputation is made on such simple things.

With the philharmonic, museums with various cultural interests, the university (which really does have more than football and basketball), the underground gardens and ever so much more, we have much to brag about. Let us show our civic pride by keeping our trash in check, continuing to support our cultural institutions, and making our dreams come true. With more of us joining the already committed, we can be known as the "Can Do City."

###

Ruth Gadebusch was born and raised on a Georgia farm. In 1977 she was elected to the Board of Education of Fresno Unified School District and served for thirteen and a half years. She continues to be active in the community while serving as Vice-President of the Center for Civic Education (promoting responsible citizenship and democratic principles internationally) and writing for the Liberal Opinion, a weekly national newspaper.



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# Free Speech TV in Fresno

By Mike Rhodes

A local public access channel on the Comcast cable network would give a voice to the voiceless. With a public access channel a community group could let everyone know about what they are doing, what special events they have planned, or provide film footage of a guest speaker. An individual could produce a show about the homeless, why air pollution is bad (or good!), or anything else you could imagine. Amy Goodman and Democracy Now! could also be on the public access channel. Most communities the size of Fresno have a public access channel, but so far, Comcast has managed to keep us from enjoying the benefits of this service.

Public access channels are a part of the services cable companies provide to communities, because they use our public right of ways to deliver their product. The cable company, in Fresno's case - Comcast, must negotiate a franchise agreement to operate. Typically, this franchise agreement will provide for Public, Education, and Government, (PEG) channels. Most agreements also include a Community Media Center (CMC) and a 5% franchise fee that goes directly to the city.

Efforts to secure a new franchise agreement between the City of Fresno and Comcast have taken longer than anyone expected. The first indication that all was not well happened last year when politicians in Sacramento decided they wanted to take the franchise agreement negotiations out of the hands of local governments. They passed legislation that sets up a master agreement that will be used as a template between cable companies and local government entities. That in and of itself is not a bad thing - rather than cable companies having hundreds of contracts to negotiate, they just have the state franchise agreement to implement.

Sue Buske is the consultant for the City of Fresno who has been working on the local franchise agreement with Comcast for several years. Sue is the president of the Buske Group and a nationally known expert on cable franchise agreements. She also spent many hours with legislators last year to include language beneficial to communities that have, or might have some time in the future, PEG access channels.

Buske has been working together with Fresno assistant City Manager Bruce Rudd to secure a fair franchise agreement with Comcast. The preparations for and the negotiations themselves have been going on for years. When I asked for a comment last week about the status of the negotiations, Rudd said "Nothing has

really changed. Comcast is unwilling to provide PEG funding for ongoing operations." Buske says that local negotiations are moving slowly and that she would not be surprised if Fresno ends up, by default, with a state franchise agreement that would start on January 2, 2008. One thing is clear, Comcast is not motivated to make a deal with the City of Fresno if it would cost them more than the state franchise agreement. The City of Clovis, who has also hired Buske as a consultant, is waiting to see what happens in Fresno. They plan to ride the coattails of whatever agreement Comcast and the City of Fresno negotiate.

If we default to the state franchise agreement, which seems likely at this point, there will be funding for PEG access. 1% of the gross revenues that Comcast generates in this area will be used to fund PEG. Buske says that revenue stream will be about \$550,000 a year. The expectation is that this money will be used to support the CMC facility and PEG access channels. The CMC will provide training in video production techniques and will make the equipment (video cameras, digital editing equipment, studios, etc) available for all interested community members and organizations. Programs will be pre-recorded or produced live. The Education channel will be used by area schools and the Government channel will be used to broadcast the Board of Supervisor's, City Council, and other important government meetings.

The Community Media Access Collaborative (CMAC) was set up by a broad coalition of community, education, and government representatives to oversee the CMC and PEG access channels. Randy Reed is the chairperson of CMAC. Reed expects the City of Fresno and Clovis to recognize the CMAC as the group that will oversee the PEG access channels and CMC.

The CMAC will coordinate programming on the PEG channels and run the CMC, which is expected to be located at California State University - Fresno. The plan is to build the facility in the Kremen School of Education. Comcast is in the process of linking CSUF with the fiber optic connection so programming can originate from that location. The connectivity with CSUF was agreed to in the Fresno County/Comcast franchise agreement.

The Fresno County Office of Education, where Reed works, already has their own video media center and has several programs on ch 96. Every Tuesday you can see the Fresno City Council live on ch 96. The County of Fresno has plans to put the Board of Supervisors on live too. The vision of CMAC, and those who have been working to bring PEG access channels to Fresno, is to have one CMC that all three groups use for video production. The advantage of having a centralized CMC is that all the groups will pool the resources from the state franchise agreement to buy equipment. Rather

than each group buying expensive digital video cameras, they will be able to stretch their dollars by sharing resources.

Because of ambiguities in the state franchise agreement, there is some concern about what the money can be used for. One interpretation, that is primarily promoted by the cable industry, is that the funds can only be used for facilities or capital expenses. That would make it difficult to pay for the staff needed to run a CMC and coordinate PEG channels. But, Buske says the language in the legislation simply says that "purchases must be consistent with Federal Law."

According to Buske there are also significant non-compliance issues that need to be resolved with Comcast. The resolution of those issues could provide additional resources to fund PEG. Buske is optimistic that funding for PEG will be available in Fresno within a year, whether we are able to negotiate a local franchise agreement or if we default to the state deadline at the end of the year.

Speaking about the future of the PEG project, Randy Reed the chairperson of CMAC said "we're confident that PEG access will become a reality in the near future but there's still a considerable amount of effort and advocacy needed to get the job done. Now is the time for the community to come alongside CMAC for the final push to secure the funding and other resources needed to ensure the success of PEG in Fresno."

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# THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

AS THE PRIMARY SEASON BEGAN, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS JOSTLED FOR ATTENTION.

I'LL TORTURE TERRORISTS MORE BRUTALLY THAN JACK BAUER!

I'LL TORTURE THEM IN WAYS JACK BAUER NEVER EVEN THOUGHT OF!

I'LL TORTURE JACK BAUER!

NONE OF THEM SEEMED TO INSPIRE MUCH PASSION AMONG THE PARTY'S RANK-AND-FILE.

WHERE IS THE TRUE HEIR TO THE REAGAN MANTLE?

THESE CANDIDATES MAY BE GOOD COMMUNICATORS--

--BUT THEY ARE NOT GREAT COMMUNICATORS!

BUT THEN, OUT OF NOWHERE, A NEWCOMER ENTERED THE FRAY!

I'M A GUY IN A REAGAN MASK--

--AND I'M RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT!

REPUBLICANS WERE ECSTATIC!

HIS FIXED, UNWAVERING GRIN SIMPLY RADIATES OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY!

YES--BUT YOU CAN TELL BY HIS STEADY, UNBLINKING GAZE THAT HE'S NOT AFRAID TO CONFRONT EVILDOERS!

THE GUY IN A REAGAN MASK IS EXACTLY WHAT WE'VE BEEN PRAYING FOR!

HIS ENDLESS SUPPLY OF SNAPPY ONE-LINERS MADE HIM THE CLEAR WINNER OF THE DEBATES!

THIS IS CRAZY! YOU'RE JUST A GUY IN A MASK! WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT YOU!

OH, JOHN...THERE YOU GO AGAIN!

HA HA!

HA HA HA!

AND WHEN IT WAS TIME TO SELECT A RUNNING MATE, THERE WAS REALLY ONLY ONE OBVIOUS CHOICE...

--SO PLEASE WELCOME MY FUTURE VICE-PRESIDENT--

--ANOTHER GUY IN A REAGAN MASK!!

IT'S MORNING AGAIN IN AMERICA--AGAIN!

VOTE GUY IN REAGAN MASK

GUY IN A REAGAN MASK FOR PRESIDENT

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# THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

IT'S TIME ONCE AGAIN FOR OUR ROUNDTABLE OF VERY SERIOUS PUNDITS TO EXAMINE THE CONSEQUENTIAL ISSUES OF THE DAY!

OUR FIRST TOPIC--IS JOHN EDWARDS TOO MUCH OF A GIRLY-MAN TO BE ELECTED PRESIDENT?

FROM MY INFORMED PERSPECTIVE AS A WIDELY-READ NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST, HE DOES APPEAR TO BE EXCESSIVELY CONCERNED WITH HIS HAIR--

--IN A WAY THAT LEAVES HIM VULNERABLE TO MOCKERY IN WIDELY-READ NEWSPAPER COLUMNS!

I'D HAVE TO CONCUR WITH MY ESTEEMED COLLEAGUE! AS A KNOWLEDGABLE POLITICAL COMMENTATOR, IT WOULD BE MY SOBER, THOUGHTFUL CONCLUSION--

--THAT JOHN EDWARDS IS A SISSY BOY WHO LIKES FANCY HAIRCUTS!

IN MY EXPERT OPINION, AMERICANS DON'T WANT LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY AS THEIR PRESIDENT!

THANK YOU FOR THOSE VERY INFORMATIVE INSIGHTS, PANEL!

BEFORE WE MOVE ON, DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ON EDWARDS' ACTUAL POSITIONS ON THE ISSUES?

COUGH BRECK GIRL COUGH!

SNICKER!

HE FEELS PRETTY... OH SO PRETTY...

OKAY, THEN! OUR NEXT TOPIC OF VERY SERIOUS DISCUSSION--DOES HILLARY CLINTON HAVE PENIS ENVY?

IT COULD BECOME A REAL ISSUE--

--IF WE DECIDE TO MAKE IT ONE!

WHAT WOULD VOTERS DO WITHOUT US?

TO BE CONTINUED... FOR 19 MONTHS...

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# QUEER EYE

## Fresno Pride Continues to Grow!

by Dan Waterhouse

"Pride 2007 was brighter, prettier, larger, and more festive than ever before!"

That's how Fresno Rainbow Pride chairman and Community Link chief executive officer Jeffrey Robinson summed up this year's Pride Parade and Festival. The event was held on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, for the 17<sup>th</sup> year in Fresno's Tower District.

The parade was the largest ever, with approximately 50 entries. Floats and marching groups took around an hour to make their way down Olive Avenue through the heart of the Tower—the longest Pride parade ever.

This year's Grand Marshals were highlighted by Johnny Vera, who was elected Prom Queen by his peers at

Fresno's Roosevelt High School a few weeks before Pride. The Rough Rider cheerleaders and marching band wanted to join Vera in the parade, but weren't allowed to.

Fresno High's Cinthia Covarrubias, who was nominated as Prom King in April, also was selected as a Grand Marshal. She was unable to participate in the parade because of other, family, commitments.

Other Grand Marshals included Fresno State women's studies professor Melissa Knight; the president of the Golden State Bears, Bill Bassett—who has, for many years, worked helping the community; the Madera High Gay Straight Alliance club—who fought for four years to have the group officially recognized on campus; the Central Valley chapters of Marriage Equality USA; and Fresno native and acclaimed cabaret artist Kristopher McDowell.



**Johnny "Crystal" Vera is the first Transgender prom queen in the country. Vera was elected prom queen at Roosevelt High earlier this year. All photos by Mike Rhodes**



**The audience liked the condom headed volunteers from Planned Parenthood who threw condoms into the crowd.**

"Comcast, who has partnered with Community Link for the last five years," Robinson said, "reported that the crowd was thicker and more spread out along the parade route." The main spectator area, centered near Broadway along Olive, was jammed with people.

The post-parade festival grew in several ways again this year. The festival grounds were larger this year thanks to the Babylon Club and Veni Vidi Vici, both of whom provided the use of their parking lots. The number of booths grew again too—there were 65.

Attendance also increased dramatically. It's estimated that at least 1,500 people passed through the festival gates. Six years ago, the festival was small and sparsely attended.

Quite a few people commented that the vibe of the parade and the festival had returned to that of the early years. Folks who haven't at-

tended the event since Stonewall Pride and United Pride Coalition took it over have returned.

Community Link assumed responsibility for organizing the parade and festival six weeks before the 2003 event, after United Pride Coalition collapsed. Eleven happy critters went home with new owners at this year's Festival. The Central California SPCA and the HOPE Animal Foundation partnered this year. The SPCA brought their mobile adoption center and both groups provided information to festival goers. The SPCA says the 11 adoptions set a one-day record for their mobile unit. They currently plan to return next year.

Families First and Fresno County were handing out information on adoption and foster care. There is a desperate need for loving families to adopt and foster children who have had to be removed from their biological parents and can't be placed with relatives. Other booths included local churches, political organizations, service groups, and local businesses.

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