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Allensworth Combats Floodwaters, Big Ag and Railroad



Flooding on Road 56 going into Allensworth. Photo by Peter Maiden

BY VIC BEDOIAN

Overabundant flood waters from southern Sierra rivers have put some San Joaquin Valley communities in harm's way. One such community is the historic town of Allensworth in Tulare County. Residents are scrambling for protection from the increased flooding that will come in the spring and summer.

Meanwhile, the farmlands that inhabit what used to be Tulare Lake are filling with runoff. That too is expected to continue as mountain snows melt. But Allensworth residents are not only wrangling with nature but also contending with corporate greed and insensitivity.

Allensworth is notable as the first Black township in California. It was founded in 1908 by a group of men led by Colonel Allen Allensworth as a farming community and educational center like the prestigious historic Black Tuskegee Institute. The town's residents moved away as the water table sank and social discrimination rose.

Now the original site is a State Historic Park. Outside the park boundaries, the current residents of Allensworth are scrambling for survival. Their town's elevation is 213 feet, the same as Tulare Lake's shoreline before it was drained a century ago. It's a small town of about 600 people that's 97% Latino, mainly workers in the nearby fields and food processing plants. There are several African-American families living there as well.

Flooding from recent extreme rainstorms has led to the reemergence of what was the most expansive lake in the West, threatening Allensworth and neighboring Alpaugh.

Dezaraye Bagolayos is director of program development for the Allensworth Progressive Association. She cautions that the worst is yet to come, "We're just in the beginning of the flooding season now."

"We know that we're going to get a flood, and so we're likely going to see the lake come back, especially with that snowpack. Right now the water that's coming into the lake bed, that's not even snowpack water."

"This is just the abundance of rain and the releasing of water from the rivers and the reservoirs."

Allensworth is virtually surrounded by watercourses—the White River, Poso Creek and Deer Creek. The disaster scenario started in the middle of the night when an irrigation

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A Rent Control Movement Surges in Delano

BY MIGUEL ÁNGEL BÁEZ

The message Xochitl Rodríguez had for her Delano City Council members during the April 3 meeting was clear, strong and to the point: "I don't want to be 27 (years old) and still live with my mom."

Like Rodríguez, more and more people are having housing affordability challenges, due to either inflationary factors such as the increase in construction costs or directly to the shortage of homes.

According to a recent study by Habitat for Humanity, the United States has a deficit of 3.8 million homes, with the greatest supply shortages at low-income price points. The 2022 *State of the Nation's Housing Report* describes the deficit as a fundamental driver of affordability challenges.

Locally, the housing crisis greatly affects tenants living in rural towns in the Central Valley, in many cases with seasonal agricultural jobs and incomes that do not go hand in hand with the increase in costs of rents.



Xochitl Rodríguez had a clear message for Delano City Council members. Photo by Miguel Ángel Báez

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Clovis Fought the Law and the Law Won

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

"Clovis didn't get to be 70% white by accident," said Patience Milrod in 2019 when filing a lawsuit initiated by longtime housing and homeless advocate Dez Martinez against the City. Milrod continued, "If [the City] is going to zone in a way that only rich people can afford to live [there], they are zoning in a way that only white people can afford to live there."

At the time, Milrod was executive director for California Legal Services, and the lawsuit alleged that the City of Clovis was out of compliance with California housing element law.

Clovis was discriminating against lower-income families because its zoning practices were primarily focused on single-family homes. This was, in effect, pricing low-income families out of the market.

The lawsuit required the City to take additional action and make revisions to its general plan to accommodate more affordable housing.

Since 1969, California has required that all cities and counties plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in

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Allensworth

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PHOTOS BY PETER MAIDEN

ditch along Deer Creek was intentionally breached to let water head toward town instead of flooding an agricultural field. An emergency was declared. Shortly after that, the rain swollen White River flooded, and Poso Creek as well.

Bagolayos says town residents were scrambling to protect what they could, but didn't have the necessary resources available. "The thing is Allensworth and Alpaugh shouldn't have been flooding already.

"And so, we increasingly have growers in the lake bed who are doing everything that they can to save their own land and their own crops, but that water has to go somewhere.

"So it's going into the communities because the communities don't have the same kind of budgets as pistachio growers or other growers in the lake bed to be able to build up protections around the communities."

Tekoah Kadara is executive director of Allensworth Progressive Association. His relatives helped in the creation of the state park. He recalls the frightening events on the night of March 16, "Water was coming and nobody told us. Nobody told us they were letting water out of Lake Success. Nobody told us. We just find out 'okay, it's raining' and all of a sudden 'boom, we're flooding.'"

That fateful night it became clear to town folk that they were on their own. One local farmer offered to pump water onto his land instead of letting it flood the town. He was the exception. Another farmer cut the levee holding back Deer Creek, thus releasing floodwater toward Allensworth and Alpaugh.

Meanwhile, agricultural giant J.G. Boswell, who owns most of the land for miles around, used a road grader to block water from going into the Homeland Canal, instead letting it flow toward town. In doing so, water was prevented from heading toward the lowest part of the old Tulare Lake bed where the corporation's tomatoes were being planted.

Kings County supervisors were begging the unremorseful company to help staunch the floodwaters, but to little avail. That's not surprising as the agricultural empire reportedly owns and operates 132,000 acres of farmland in the county, giving it a whole lot of political influence.

Just as Allensworth residents were desperately trying to save their town, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway, with annual revenue in excess of \$25 billion, blocked the White River channel running parallel to its tracks. Instead of letting water continue flowing through the canal, BNSF blocked a culvert and directed the surging water into a hard left turn so that it would run through a gap under the tracks and instead erode the levee that was keeping the town from flooding.

Townspeople, including Kadara, were incredulous, "They don't want it to flood their tracks. But why would they allow it to go inside of a community?" That embankment was later bolstered when a Caltrans helicopter dropped huge sandbags where the riverbank was being eroded.

When contacted by the community, BNSF told residents to stay away from their property and focus on saving their individual homes instead of attempting to keep their town from flooding.

Later that night, people from town were piling rocks, plywood, anything they could muster to thwart water from another river canal from crossing under State Route 43 and into the main canal next to the railroad tracks.

Kadara recalls that "after we had done this, BNSF came out and they harassed a couple of the people that were out here, and then one of their contractors came out here and removed all the stuff that we had here."



Tekoah Kadara, executive director of the Allensworth Progressive Association, speaks at the Allensworth Community Center. Behind him are stacks of water bottles donated by the Red Cross.

What's worse, the company even sicced the sheriff on people working to save their town using rocks that belong to BNSF, a corporation worth an estimated \$200 billion. For Kadara, "It's mind-boggling. How, where is humanity? Where is humanity? This is an absolute emergency?"

Partly to blame for the crisis, Kadara says, was that the banks of those channels were weakened over the years by a lack of maintenance. That situation is currently being remedied, "Cal Fire and other agencies around the state are shoring up these levees. They're flying drones. They're looking for weak points, and they're taking care of some of this stuff."

Kings County has since taken action to prevent the cutting of levees that could do damage. Cal Fire and the Red Cross are actively helping residents.

State agencies, at first, were straining to help with the recovery from all the storm damage throughout the state. Bagolayos confirms that after a slow initial reaction the agencies are now onsite trying to figure out how to handle far more runoff in the Tulare Lake basin when the Sierra snow melts.



The library in Colonel Allensworth State Historical Park. The park could flood, depending on the level of snowmelt in the Sierras to the east.

"Karla Nemeth from DWR (California Department of Water Resources) was out at Colonel Allensworth Park and in the lake bed a couple days ago," says Bagolayos. "I think there are about 20 different DWR engineers that are now in the lake bed looking at ways to potentially protect the communities from that snowmelt.

"And so, we're working to reach out to all the local and state agencies that we can think of, and we're trying to work with folks and see how we can protect both Allensworth and Alpaugh come April, May, June and July."

Coast-to-coast headlines about a return of the legendary Tulare Lake cast shade on the reality of the Tulare Lake region today. It's a basin of large farms and small towns, engineered so that rivers are supposed to be diverted. Natural waterways like the White River flowing toward the old lake bed through the Allensworth area have been tamed into a network of arrow-straight channels that direct water toward surrounding farmlands.

This year's extreme rains have put that engineering to the test. Bagolayos asserts that despite the abundant water this year, the Tulare Lake of old has changed forever.



Huge sandbags were dropped by a Caltrans helicopter to keep this levee on the White River from being washed away by surging floodwaters.

"I see lots of opportunity for identifying locations within the lake bed to where these activities could potentially happen," notes Bagolayos, "but this cheering on of the entire lake coming back, it seems there's a lack of understanding about who it's affecting and who's paying the price, and whose lives are being interrupted because of all of this. So, I would like people to have a better understanding of the lake coming back."

Is the infrastructure to safely control the mega-flood flows expected in a few weeks up to the task? It presents a major hydrologic challenge to state agencies, reservoir operations and irrigation districts. That has Valley communities such as Allensworth concerned about the ability of those institutions to control flood waters or even to equitably decide where those floods will take place.

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

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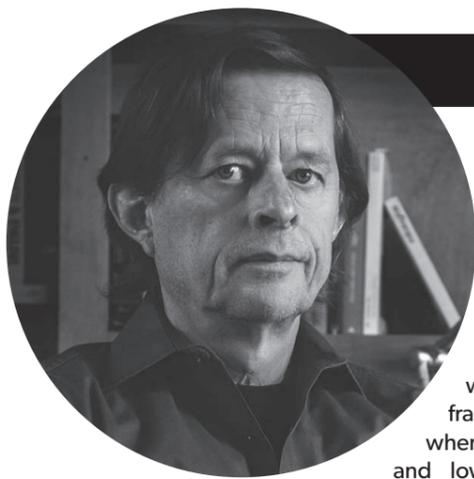
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FROM THE EDITOR

The Whim of Nature and Conservatives



The recent floods exposed a problem that nobody seems to want to talk about: the fragility of communities where workers, immigrants and low-income families live.

Pajaro in the Salinas Valley, and Planada and Allensworth in the San Joaquin Valley, suffered first the fury of the rains and then the mistakes of the bureaucracy.

Worse still, news reports indicate that at least one farmer diverted the flow of water so that it would not affect his crops resulting in the flooding of one of these towns (see our story on page 1).

Low-income workers and families are at the mercy not only of nature but also of those in power acting at will.

We see this daily with or without storms. For example, Fresno County's supervisors still refuse to accept the name change for the unincorporated

community now called Yokuts Valley and have sued the state to keep the old name, as the *Community Alliance* reported in its April issue.

This desperate, macho attitude will cost taxpayers several hundred thousand dollars. This expensive whim will not achieve its purpose nor will it change the course of the supervisors.

Conservatives talk about reducing government interference. For them, this means that they do not want laws and regulations that affect—however slightly—the operation of private entities. However, they want the reach of the government to impose their ideological whims and prevent the popular will, as is the case with the Fresno County supervisors.

In California, we see progress, albeit slower than expected, but progress at last. This is thanks to citizen participation, to the pressures and votes of the citizens.

We need this participation. We need it to grow and increase the pressure. We cannot let our state become Florida or Texas. Until next month.

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

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Racism Depends on Power to Thrive

BY PAULINA CRUZ

An African-American girl attending Wilson Middle School in Chowchilla in Madera County is trying her best to stand up against racism, but it seems those in power won't listen.

The father of the girl, who we will call Mary, has asked that their names be kept out of the article for their own safety.

Thirteen-year-old Mary has been physically, emotionally and verbally attacked by classmates, according to her father. The administration has done nothing to help her, seemingly ignoring and downplaying what has happened to her. Worst of all, this has been going on for years, without change in sight.

In November 2019, Mary was given a black eye, but the faculty declared that the student responsible for the injury had "probably" done it by accident, despite witness claims otherwise. The school did not allow Mary to see the nurse, and her parents were not notified. She was told it wasn't a black eye and was sent back to class, despite the swelling and purple on her face.

In October 2022, a classmate made several threats to her. These threats were reported to the school. Nothing was done. Mary was threatened by the same classmate four times from Oct. 7 to Oct. 12. The school claimed it had no time to investigate.

On Oct. 13, that classmate attacked Mary. On Oct. 14, the principal left a message with

Mary's parents claiming that the classmate had been removed from Mary's class. As of Oct. 17, the classmate was still in the class.

When Mary has attempted to defend herself, she has been punished by the school, even when pushing someone off and heading straight to the office. In October, she was given half a demerit for this reason. This half demerit was then used to block her from attending two school dances and a school carnival, despite needing a full demerit to be stopped from attending these events per the school flyers.

In December, she was given an additional demerit. However, when the family inquired about the reason they were not given an answer.

Unfortunately, the bullying and harassment did not end in 2022.

On Jan. 11 of this year, a classmate attacked her, damaging her personal property. A week later, this classmate stabbed Mary in the leg with a pencil four times. Fortunately, Mary was wearing jeans that prevented serious damage.

Did things get better in February? No. Not even a little bit, explained her father.

Her family was notified that even though Mary is an honor student, she would not be able to attend a field trip with the other honor students. They were told it was because of her two demerits, although she only has 1.5—one of which has not been explained.

Family and friends sent e-mails asking the faculty why this was happening and what could be done to remedy the situation. Evidently, the school administration was too busy to help or reply throughout the week of the trip.

On Feb. 7, Mary was verbally attacked with hateful language by a couple of classmates. They called her various names, including "a dumb bitch N-word." They actually said the word. She reported the incidents, and there were witnesses.

The family was later called by the school principal, who claimed that the school had conducted an investigation because students had said the N-word around this young Black girl.

"Around"? No. This word was used with the intent to hurt her, said her father. It didn't just slip out in a conversation unrelated to her.

How and why could this situation get so downplayed? And, most

important, as her father said, "How can you conduct a full investigation if you haven't talked to the victim?"

On March 22, during her sixth period, two girls who sat behind Mary called her names such as "Black ass" and "special ed." She turned around various times, telling them to stop and leave her alone.

Instead of supporting Mary, the teacher told her to stop "butting into" her classmates' conversation. He suggested that she either follow his instructions or go to the office. She elected to go to the office to report the incident to the vice principal, who turned out not to be on campus.

Instead, she was given lunch detention. There are sadly many more incidents of racism and discrimination this child and her family have endured thanks to classmates and faculty.

The family has tried endlessly to convey their concerns and have an honest conversation with Wilson Middle School faculty and the Chowchilla Elementary School District.

Endless phone calls and e-mails go unanswered. "We have tried everything to communicate with them, but they don't want to listen," shared her father.

Their demands for change have fallen on deaf ears.

When the family does get a response from faculty they are all too quickly dismissed. From being told that he has an intimidating "Black preacher voice" to being told that his daughter might just be lying because "kids do that sometimes," Mary's father has heard it all.

After reaching out to both the school and the school district many times, we received the following response: "Thank you for your inquiry. The District takes any discipline incident, allegations of racism, bullying or general harassment very seriously. We investigate each situation thoroughly. As needed, we counsel our students and follow our discipline policy. The school and district will not provide further comment."—Superintendent Douglas J. Collins

The family is exploring legal options.

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

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Letters to the Editor

Progressive Newspaper Influence

I feel really happy knowing that the *Community Alliance* newspaper is still around. I actually grew up in one of the smaller towns of the San Joaquin Valley (Dinuba) before I left the area in 2010 to go to college.

I remembered seeing and reading the newspaper a lot when my fellow LGBTQ friends and I would get to go to the Tower District in Fresno to meet folks in the community. And it was the newspaper that helped expose me to so much of the progressive politics in the San Joaquin Valley.

I really don't think I would have become as politically engaged as I currently am if it wasn't for the paper and the great articles y'all wrote and published.

I'm in Minnesota now, but my heart is still in the Valley in so many ways. Thank you again for all the work that you've done and continue to do.

Aaron

Re "Tale of Two Cities"

You know, I have been homeless for a very long time. And I'm not out here cause I want to, I am out here because of unfortunate reasons. And I had a job, a good job that I loved, but because I was trying to do the right thing [the] Fresno PD (Police Department) took everything I owned.

All my childhood memories, my dead grandmother's necklace, poetry that I wrote when I was 11 years old. Gone in the blink of an eye. My uniforms and work shoes. Gone.

I was supposed to go to work that very night. They took all of my food, my wallet with \$700 in it, my clothes [and] my shoes. And didn't give me one chance to get anything.

It has been a few weeks since they did this, and I lost my job because they took my clothes. I could not go buy more because they had my wallet. Now that I haven't eaten in a few days, I've about given up on everyone, even myself.

I've tried to get into one of those housing programs, and it would be my luck that I get no response from anyone. I'm tired. About to throw in my towel and surrender.

I'm usually not a quitter, but damn Fresno PD took my way of living, took all my everything. Is there something you can do with that? Cause I can no longer fight by myself.

April Stillwell

Re "Prison Gladiator Fights"

I have a family member locked up in Corcoran right now. He is from Southern California, and he tells his family that the Latino inmates from Southern California get treated differently from the Black inmates in Corcoran.

Latino inmates from Southern California are not able to get food from the prison for fear of cooks and staff putting things in their food such as razor blades or something else inedible. Black inmates have access to programs, and their food is not tampered with.

He was also locked up in Calipatria prison, and the guards there treated him inhumanely, the fan in his cell went out and they threatened him with disciplinary action for getting a wet towel and trying to cool himself.

The way that men are treated in prison is horrible, and I think that mass incarceration is a big problem in this country that needs to be solved.

Stephen

Re "Supervisors File Frivolous Lawsuit"

Thank goodness to Roman Rain Tree and Deb Haaland, our first Native American Secretary of the Interior, for finally making history and progressing American human culture past the "squaw" cunt period of American history.

Regardless of what locals say/do/want, it just is something that had to happen and it's so sad it's taken so long to accomplish.

I just don't understand people like the current supervisor of Yokuts Valley. What is their objection? How do they justify use of the word?

Don't you people, basically backward Republicans, understand the ugly inference and implication of this word? And if you do understand the severity of the word, what is your objection?

It's a misogynistic, racist American colloquialism that is not a word from any Native American indigenous group, but attributed to them. It's really a pioneer/Republican/white/genocidal NDN killin' term that is far past its prime and needs to be retired.

Don't hold back the future, because the future is here, and we, the rest of the world, are tired of you. If you don't like it, you should move back to the country your ancestors came from. May your god bless you.

Judith Parker

It will always be S— Valley. My ancestors were raised here, and my family has owned property here since 1920. My whole family graduated from S— Valley grammar school. I will always refer to this area as S— Valley.

Doug Williams

Regarding Yokuts Valley and the [Fresno County Board of Supervisors] (BOS) suing the state, the justification of "local control" is used by the supervisors. The actual situation is "coerced local control."

Had the supervisors selected a fair and equitable redistricting map, [Supervisor Buddy] Mendes almost certainly would not have been reelected in 2022. (In one equitable scenario, he would have had to challenge [Supervisor Brian] Pacheco to stay on the Board.)

Given that even the nominal Democrat Pacheco voted to oppose the lawsuit, we can reasonably assume that had there been three Democrats on the body the vote would have gone the other way. It probably wouldn't have come forward at all.

So, this initiative has nothing to do with local control. It has to do with depriving the locals of their right to legitimate representation.

The irony isn't lost on us. The BOS wasn't at all interested in local control regarding redistricting, where the public input was about 8 to 1 in favor of equitable maps.

Saul Ross

Selma

Re "Blooming Beginnings"

Love that you highlighted Latina farmers in the Valley. Great read!

Jessica Martinez

Provide feedback. E-mail editor@fresnoalliance.com.

Clovis Fought the Law

Continued from page 1

the community. California's local governments meet this requirement by adopting housing plans as part of their general plan. General plans serve as the local government's plan for land use and other elements.

California's housing element law acknowledges that, for the private market to adequately address the housing needs and demand of Californians, local governments must adopt plans and regulatory systems that provide opportunities for low-income housing.

In May 2021, Fresno County Superior Court Judge Kristi Kapetan ruled that the City of Clovis was not in compliance with these state housing laws.

Clovis was ordered to zone or rezone for 4,425 affordable housing units. The court found that the City discriminated against people based on income and race by not adequately zoning or planning affordable housing and therefore failed to comply with state housing law.

The City appealed Judge Kapetan's ruling to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals arguing that it had complied with state law.

On April 7, Justices Donald Franson, Jennifer Dethen and Thomas de Santos of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed Judge Kapetan's ruling to issue a writ of mandate compelling Clovis to adopt a housing plan that substantially complies with the law and to zone or rezone an adequate number of sites to accommodate the city's unmet share of regional housing needs allocation.

The ruling also stated that Clovis did not identify sufficient sites to accommodate lower-income housing allocation. The City of Clovis fought the law and lost. Now, the City must provide zoning for the development of low-income housing.

This court ruling is a precedent-setting ruling and a major victory for housing activists. "You want to cry from happiness and excitement. This is a huge, historical thing," said



Rezoning will now allow affordable housing to be built in Clovis. Photo courtesy of Upshot

Martinez. "I'm overjoyed about the number of people who will be able to reside in Clovis because of this."

Bob McCloskey is an advocate for the unhoused in Fresno. Contact him at bobmccloskey06@gmail.com.



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“Animals,” Gladiators and California Prisons

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

(Author's note: Talk to any incarcerated or formerly incarcerated person and they will tell you that prisoners in California jails and prisons are treated like animals. I can personally attest to this fact.

In 1969, at the age of 18, I was incarcerated at the L.A. County maximum security jail, Wayside Honor Rancho, while awaiting trial for a nonviolent offense. The nickname for Wayside Honor Rancho was “gladiator school.”

I recall that every time we would go to court, L.A. County Sheriff's Office jail guards would require us to strip naked and assemble in a 12x12 cell with about 30 other men. The purpose of this was to change from our prison blue uniforms into our court clothes (our street clothes).

Another purpose was to dehumanize all of us. Everyone felt like an animal during this process. We would often wait for long periods in this cage to receive our clothes after we stripped.

At Wayside, unsentenced prisoners were housed in 90 men's dormitories with convicted, sometimes violent felons, down from state prisons for trials and appeals. At one point, the man bunked above me admitted to murdering someone. I did not ask for details and, although polite, he kept to himself.

Another time, I was threatened and, in self-defense, was involved in a fight. The guards allowed the fight to continue for some time before turning the lights on to break it up. The same guards laughed about my broken nose the next morning. The guards at Wayside often degraded and taunted the incarcerated people there.

Inmates, even unsentenced inmates, were disciplined for rule infractions by being placed in a dark 8x8 room for hours or days at a time and fed kitchen scraps, known as a “jute ball,” and water. So, if an incarcerated person uses the term *animal*, I completely understand.)

Although most California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) prison guards might not be actively staging “gladiator” fights currently, it is well documented that it has happened in the past, even the recent past (see the March and April issues of the *Community Alliance* newspaper). A recent letter from an incarcerated person stated, after reading the March article, that “the writer appears to be shocked that these fights and torture [are] again happening. Well, from someone who has experienced it for many years as a targeted ‘animal’ (inmate), it never stopped.”

The issue historically and now is that the CDCR has issued guidelines on “programming” (programming means participating in rehabilitative programs) and policies that mix rival gang factions, also known as Security Threat Groups (STGs), in the same exercise yards or cell blocks, which often leads to fights and injuries between rival factions. In essence, these are “gladiator fights” caused by CDCR policies that must be rebuked and overturned.

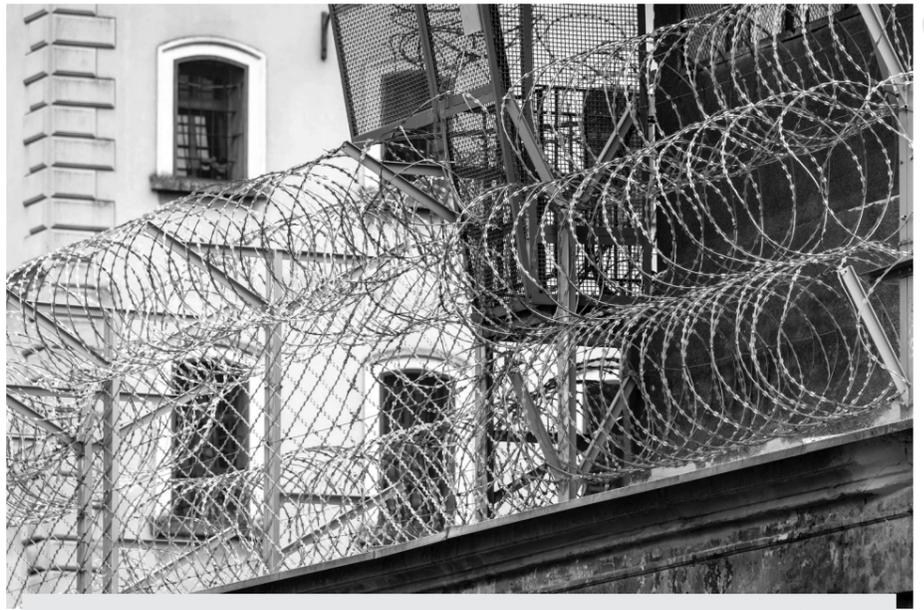
Governor Gavin Newsom could issue an order to change these policies and practices to a policy of bifurcating housing and exercise yards while still allowing rival inmates to program successfully. The current policy stops the successful programming of anyone involved in a fight or riot, regardless of the circumstances, because the inmate is placed on lockdown for an extended period with no programming services available.

The governor must have the courage to change a longstanding policy and practice. He must have the courage to challenge the system. It's an expensive system with excessive overtime and hazard pay costs when guards must respond to fights and riots between rival factions.

The same incarcerated person states in his letter that “when there is a riot, the guards get what they call hazard pay, and for those who stay over to deal with the incident they created, they also get overtime with hazard pay. When there is a peaceful programming yard or prison, they do not like that because none of them get any hazard and overtime pay.”

It's also costly to taxpayers when injured inmates involved in fights or riots must be medevaced by ambulance and helicopter to hospitals, many some distance away. Some documented inmate injuries have been so severe that they required transportation to outside hospitals.

It's a brutal and violent system spawned by the CDRC. It's a system that has created many confrontations between gangs that resulted in “gladiator” fights.



Prisoners in California jails and prisons are treated like animals. Photo by Pawel Czerwinski/Upshot

No matter your view on how prisoners should be treated, everyone should be opposed to this misuse of public dollars in a failed effort to control various factions in the prisons. Everyone should be opposed to the cost of increased sentencing when inmates are getting more time for fighting.

Again, the prison inmate's letter reiterates the opinion of many “inside” when he states that the guards “do not want to release any ‘animals,’ as it is their job security. The more inmates they have, the more they get paid; [fighting] will extend the stay of the ‘animal.’”

Everyone should be opposed to a system that injures and could kill incarcerated people because of their gang affiliation. A prison sentence should not be a death sentence. Unfortunately, the CDRC is doubling down on its policy, as you can see from a recent CDCR memorandum:

In 2022, CDCR announced it would begin to house all incarcerated people the same way, based on their case factors and programming needs, not on their Security Threat Group (STG) affiliation. This is consistent with CDCR's move toward a behavior-based system and aims to provide all incarcerated people the opportunity to participate in rehabilitative programs, promote prosocial behaviors and better prepare them for release. Unfortunately, integration has not been successful for all groups. CDCR convened a multidisciplinary workgroup to assess the integration and develop a plan specific to these individuals. In order to keep them and all staff and incarcerated people safe, effective March 17, 2023, CDCR began endorsing certain Level III and IV STG members to Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP), California State Prison, Corcoran (COR), and Pleasant Valley State Prison (PVSP), after careful consideration of their case factors and programming needs. All other Level II members will be endorsed to Non-Designated Programming Facilities (NDPF) statewide. The Department will continue to assess the integration of STG members statewide and will update all stakeholders as there are developments.

Respectfully, Krissi Khokhobashvili,
Chief Strategic Communications & External Affairs, CDCR

Although this memorandum states that the integration policy has not been successful among some groups, the policy reiterates that Level II STGs will be integrated. The policy claims it provides an opportunity to participate in rehabilitative programs and to promote prosocial behaviors. This policy ignores the reality that some Level II STGs are enemies that cannot program together because fights and riots will ensue.

It must be noted that the fights and riots we have documented occurred between Level II STGs. The policy seems to be in place to control gangs through inflicting injury and further punishment on some gang members. The policy will increase fights and riots between Level II STGs and is life-threatening to all incarcerated people in California prisons.

The policy also contradicts its stated intention to rehabilitate all incarcerated men when all men involved in a fight or riot are denied all programming opportunities. In addition, family members are denied visitation and phone calls indefinitely with men involved in a fight or riot.

And, as implemented, the policy appears to be in violation of the California Constitution and the U.S. Constitution as both prohibit cruel and unusual punishment. This policy seems to set the conditions for cruel, violent confrontations that result in injuries, some severe, and more punishment.

This reporter contacted both Khokhobashvili and Governor Newsom's office for information and comments about the new memo and the policies in place. They have not responded and have not responded to the two previous articles, which were forwarded to them.

Bob McCloskey is a reporter with the *Community Alliance* newspaper.

Take Action!

Contact Governor Gavin Newsom to demand that he take action to end the unconstitutional, ineffective, costly and brutal policy that, in effect, promotes violence in the form of “gladiator” fights in our state's prisons.

Leave a message at gov.ca.gov/contact/ or call 916-445-2841.

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Liberated Youth for Empowerment



In February, The Dolores Huerta Foundation's youth leadership program, Liberated Youth for Empowerment, also known as LYFE, kicked off its second year of programming for youth across the Central Valley in the counties of Fresno, Tulare, and Kern. The DHF LYFE program has 5 levels of leadership development and engagement all of which include three pathway focuses: Civic Engagement, New Media & Technology, and Transformational Arts.

Youth from each region are given the opportunity to choose what issues affecting their local communities they would like to advocate solutions for. Current campaigns selected by youth include Student Safety on Campus (Fresno), Supporting Unhoused Communities (Tulare), and Healthier, Culturally Relevant Meals in Schools (Kern). LYFE members use the pathways to elevate and move their campaigns. Through Civic Engagement, youth learn about how government and school boards operate, and about the impact they can have on policies and systems-changes in their communities by writing op-eds, providing public comment, gathering voter registrations, and organizing community members. Through New Media & Technology, youth are effectively using 21st-century skills to uplift events and community narratives through social media, digital animation, audio & video production, and podcasts. The Transformational Arts pathway supports LYFE members in learning from local artists how to use storytelling, zines, block printing, poetry, dance, and other mediums to bring awareness to their local campaigns.

We know that youth across the Central Valley live in some of the most marginalized and underserved communities. We know that young people today are experiencing never before seen levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Through the LYFE program, we also know young people find a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, and a journey to individual, family, and community wellness. We know change can be slow, but our local youth are determined to create change in their communities!

If you would like more information on our LYFE Program or if you are a local artist who would like to be connected to our program, please email mromero@doloreshuerta.org.

Have you already received P-EBT benefits or Pandemic EBT Emergency School Meals Program?

P-EBT is a pandemic benefit that provides food benefits to families with students (age 21 and under) who have temporarily lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to COVID-19, children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school will get additional meal benefits. P-EBT is a new, temporary food benefit to help families buy groceries because schools were closed.

Any family with a child in grades K-12 who is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals, including children who attend a school where meals are free to all students. P-EBT is for all students regardless of citizenship or immigration status. The only requirement is that a child must be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. All P-EBT benefits have been distributed since August 2021 but will be fully distributed by September 30, 2023.

Remember that P-EBT does not require registration or an application and will not affect other benefits you may be receiving or affect immigration. It will not make the review a public charge. Families who have not received a P-EBT card but have questions about their eligibility can call (877) 328-9677 Monday through Friday, 6 am-8 pm.

DHF Resource Centers



The Dolores Huerta Foundation has provided community resources since its inception. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for resources in our communities. For the past three years, DHF has hosted countless food banks distributing thousands of pounds of fresh fruit and food to communities most impacted. The Resource Center also provided information to community members about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, COVID-19 testing, and free vaccine clinics.

DHF will establish community-based centers in Bakersfield, Sanger, Arvin, Tulare, California City, and Palmdale in order to provide low-cost services, resources, and referrals to *Vecinos Unidos*®, youth, and community members. The centers will uphold DHF's values in the promotion of economic security, legal and civil rights, and self-empowerment.

The centers will allow the community members to gather, find resources, and create the change we wish to see within our communities. If you know anyone who would like to be part of this impactful project please contact the Resource Center Coordinator, Gabriela Fernandez at (661) 558-2052



It's Time to Get COVID-19 Boosted!

COVID-19 Vaccines and Booster doses are safe, effective, and free to all community members regardless of immigration status! As we fight this cold and flu season, protect your loved ones by getting your updated COVID-19 booster. The updated boosters protect against the original COVID-19 strain and new variants. All eligible people age 5 and older should receive an updated booster dose at least two months after their primary vaccine series completion. Eligible children 4 and younger should receive their Bivalent dose following two monovalent doses of their primary series.

Please wear a mask in public spaces, practice social distancing, & wash your hands. Together we can work towards better health and protect one another from COVID-19.

COVID-19 and Booster doses are available in many places, including healthcare providers, clinics, and local pharmacies. Californians can visit: MyTurn.ca.gov or call 833-422-4255, or visit Vaccines.gov to make an appointment or find a walk-in vaccine clinic near you.

All COVID-19 resources are from Vaccines.gov & Vaccinateall58.com

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

Fresnans Resist “Toxic” Highway Projects

BY VIC BEDOIAN

Residents of south Fresno have been inundated with massive industrial development in recent years. Now, community groups are suing the California Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration over the expansion of two freeway interchanges on Highway 99. They say the project will promote even more development and intensify environmental hazards for communities already burdened with some of the worst air quality in the state.

Amid the roar and rumble of 18-wheelers and construction equipment, two local civic organizations rallied residents last month to support their lawsuit against Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration. In the works is the construction of two major interchanges that would bring more trucks, more toxic air and more noise to an area already enveloped by warehouses and industries.

Edith Rico represented one of the litigants, Fresno Building Healthy Communities. “Residents in Calwa, Malaga and other communities have a message for Caltrans. You cannot use our communities as a toxic dumping ground for polluting industries.

“We are calling on Caltrans and the State of California to match their words with action. Stop polluting our neighborhoods and start investing in what residents want and need to thrive.”

Fresno residents are being assisted legally by Stanford University’s Environmental Law Clinic. Jacqueline Maldonado, a student there, says the highway project is part of a long history of discriminatory land-use and transportation practices, which have concentrated pollution in the low-income communities of Calwa and Malaga.

When State Route 99 was converted into a freeway here in the 1950s, it destroyed more than 20 blocks of housing and divided communities of color. Maldonado says that the current project shows the same aversion to environmental laws that protect the health and safety of local residents.

“The agencies have violated these laws in numerous respects,” says Maldonado. “They fail to consider increases in traffic and industrialization that the project will cause for the related air quality, odor, noise, public health and environmental impacts.

“They refuse even to recognize the existence of thousands of residents living near the interchanges or to consider the possibility that residents will be harmed.”

The explosive growth of warehouses up and down the San Joaquin Valley is also contributing to important drivers of climate change—rising greenhouse gas emissions and loss of biological diversity. Both of those factors are at play in the industrialization of south Fresno.



Jacqueline Maldonado of the Stanford Environmental Law Clinic is helping the effort for less pollution in the Calwa area. She spoke at an April 6 press conference. Photo by Peter Maiden

Last summer, Attorney General Rob Bonta held a meeting in Calwa assuring residents of frontline communities that he would fight for them. “We care deeply about environmental justice,” he said, “making sure that every person in every community, regardless of your zip code, your income, your race, your ethnicity, that you have access to clean water and clean air and a healthy and safe environment.”

Local activists expressed disappointment that Bonta has yet to weigh in on the projects bringing freeway expansion and more industrial development to their communities.

Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration prepared an environmental review of the project but concluded that there was no significant impact on the environment of the communities and declined to create a full environmental impact statement.

Stanford Environmental Law Clinic’s Stephanie Safdi explained the discrepancy in that analysis. “That discrepancy goes to the general issue here, which is that Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration had to do a detailed environmental review of all of the impacts of this project on the environment.

“Public health and community welfare and their review, in many respects, fell short. They didn’t consider traffic increases. They didn’t fully consider the air quality impact. They didn’t consider impacts on environmental justice communities.

“And the discrepancy between how they proceeded under the state and federal laws just showcases how much their review came up short.”

It’s not just the construction and expansion of two highway interchanges that has local residents worried. It’s also the plan for a new 3,000-acre industrial park nearby.

But Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration decided the combined impact of all that would not result in any “meaningful pollution.” Since then, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has weighed in, requesting that the state and federal highway agencies reevaluate their conclusion.

Laura Moreno heads Friends of Calwa, the other group suing the highway agencies. More industrial development, she emphasizes, does not provide the kind of infrastructure that at-risk communities such as Calwa and Malaga are crying out for.

“Give the community what they need on roads and lower-income housing,” says Moreno. “Friends of Calwa is reaching out to Caltrans to realize what we need, not what they want to give us.”

Caltrans has an equity policy that promises to engage local residents in development projects it proposes. Here, in part, are some of those pledges:

We will create a workforce at all levels that is representative of the communities we serve.

We will meaningfully engage communities most impacted by structural racism in the creation and implementation of the programs and projects that impact their daily lives by creating more transparent, inclusive, and ongoing consultation and collaboration processes.

We commit to combating the climate crisis and its disproportionate impact on frontline and vulnerable communities.

We will change how we plan, design, build and maintain our transportation investments to create a more resilient system that more equitably distributes the benefits and burdens to the current and future generations of Californians.

South Fresno residents are sending a message with this lawsuit that they are tired of waiting for those promises to be fulfilled. They will now rely on the courts to bridge the gap between what the state promises and what it delivers.

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



Calwa resident Rosa DePew speaks at an April 6 press conference against plans for development that would harm her community. Photo by Peter Maiden

Panfilo Cerrillo has lived here all his life. Growing up, he walked to school and rode his bike around the neighborhood. He’s witnessed the changes, slowly at first and now accelerated, regretting that his grandkids can’t do those things anymore.

“When I grew up out there, you could hear all the wildlife. You could see the wildlife. You could open up your front door and see the pheasants running away from the quail with all their little chicks running off.

“You know, it’s been about 10 or 12 years since I saw any of that. We used to see kit foxes out there. Those are now gone. And it’s all because of this development.”

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Last Chance CSU Fresno

BY KEVIN HALL

In a fall football classic more suited to a Netflix season finale than Election Day, Fresno State pigskin boosters fumbled their Measure E sales tax proposal and took a classic fall in November. But they're back for another season, and all that's missing is the film crew from Last Chance U, there to capture the exploitation and cynicism at work.

Despite a 53-47 drubbing at the polls in a game with only one team on the field—there was no organized opposition to the Bulldoggies' \$1.5 million campaign to fund a Fresno State Improvement Zone with a two-tenths of a cent sales tax for 20 years—team leader and sole campaign financier Richard Spencer & co. are now lining up for a Hail Mary pass with university president Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval going deep into the rhetoric zone with a retooled message for voters.

"We are appreciative of the continued support from the Friends of Fresno State Committee to help elevate the mission of Fresno State, which expands access to higher education for our Central Valley students and deeply promotes the economic and social well being of our Valley," Jiménez-Sandoval told *Fresno Bee* reporter Robert Kuwada in December following the embarrassing sack by voters.

Economic and social well-being through football fans' priorities? That's a formula for failure rightfully rejected, but the people behind the initiative, which promises local control of \$700 million in public works contracts over 20 years, want to run it by Fresno County voters again in the March 2024 primary while they might still need only 50% voter support to win (more below). So the rush is on.

"A lack of specificity is a part of (why the measure failed in November) and the two-thirds academics and one-third athletics, I don't think that message was really very well understood," losing campaign consultant Tim Orman told Kuwada.

Jiménez-Sandoval certainly prioritized the school's sports brand last July when the proposal suddenly emerged from behind closed doors. He told the *Bee's* Kuwada: "In thinking about that I really want to come up with a proper approach that's systematic and that's educated about how we move together and forward in a sustained manner that provides athletics with the proper stability it needs to sustain its momentum, not just in football, but in the other sports, as well."

"We were a powerhouse in basketball. What do we do with that? What do we do with baseball? We were national champions in baseball. What do we do with our women's sports? What do we do with the brand name that is Fresno State?"

A more important question: Who's in the Faustian huddle with Spencer, Orman and Jiménez-Sandoval calling for more concussion circuses and building contracts in exchange for local funding overseen by a body to be appointed by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors? These are not the leaders our region needs at this time, the most critical juncture in human history, according to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which issued its "final warning" the same day the men huddled at Spencer's office for a private meeting with local politicians.

As an education leader with a special responsibility for students' shared future, Jiménez-Sandoval needs to take a deeper look at that towering snowpack a few miles east of Fresno State and all it portends. Babes of the Anthropocene, today's college students have never known the "average" weather of the 20th century and are looking at an exponentially worse 21st.

As that deep white blanket melts away into devastating floods, a vast mountain landscape will emerge, blackened by major wildfires and increasingly left with ghost forests named for the conifers that can no longer regenerate due to our altered climate, now estimated to cover one-fifth of the entire Sierra Nevada range. Next, the wet winter will generate rapid growth of grasses and shrubs that following a hot summer will be like kindling in those tinder dry forests come autumn. And then come the fire and smoke, loss of sequestered carbon, destruction of the natural landscape and acceleration of the downward spiral.



Fresno State. Photo by Eduardo Stanley

OPINION & ANALYSIS

Good to Great for Fresno State!

Measure E Redux Project List as of March 22, 2023

1. Critical Facilities Renewal		
A. Fire Alarm Replacement		\$38,400,000
B. Campuswide HVAC Replacement		\$30,000,000
C. Elevator Replacement		\$13,500,000
D. Electrical Renewal		\$40,000,000
E. Plumbing Renewal		\$20,000,000
F. Exterior Building Systems Replacement		\$21,500,000
G. Deferred Maintenance Campuswide		\$80,000,000
Total Critical Facilities Renewal		\$243,400,000
2. Capital and Infrastructure Improvements		
A. ADA Upgrades		\$7,500,000
B. Health and Safety Upgrades		\$12,000,000
C. Telecommunications Infrastructure Upgrades		\$7,500,000
Total Capital and Infrastructure Improvements		\$27,000,000
3. Academic Projects		
A. Concert Hall (1,200 Seats)		\$45,000,000
B. Grosse Industrial Tech Modernization / Lab School		\$35,000,000
C. Lyles College of Engineering Expansion		\$60,000,000
D. New School of Nursing Building		\$60,000,000
E. Farm Laboratory Modernization		\$18,750,000
Total Academic Projects		\$218,750,000
4. Athletic Projects		
A. Stadium Modernization Phase 1		\$10,000,000
B. Stadium Modernization Phase 2		\$150,000,000
C. Duncan Athletic Center Facility Modernization		\$47,000,000
D. Ricchiuti Center for Academic Excellence Upgrades		\$500,000
E. Beiden Field Locker Room & Video Board		\$4,000,000
F. Margie Wright Women's Softball Stadium Scoreboard & FL Padding		\$800,000
G. Track/Soccer Stadium Locker Room & Scoreboard		\$3,500,000
H. Tennis Stadium Additional Seating & Scoreboard		\$1,250,000
I. SMC Men's & Women's Basketball and Volleyball Upgrades		\$5,500,000
Total Athletic Projects		\$222,550,000
5. Student Housing and Parking		
A. Affordable Student Housing Phase 2		\$60,000,000
B. Parking Lot Repairs/Solar Canopies		\$20,000,000
C. Parking Structure		\$10,000,000
Total Student Housing and Parking		\$90,000,000
6. Endowments		
A. Scholarships (Capital to stay intact for the life of the measure)		\$50,000,000
B. Maintenance (Capital to stay intact for the life of the measure)		\$50,000,000
Total Endowments		\$100,000,000
7. Current Total of All Projects		\$901,700,000

UN Secretary General António Guterres said after his March meeting, "This report is a clarion call to massively fast-track climate efforts by every country and every sector and on every timeframe. Our world needs climate action on all fronts: everything, everywhere, all at once." Not Fresno State. They've got the Pac-12 conference to aspire to.

One painful irony of the situation is that these closed-door planners are trying to exploit a valuable opening created by Fresno Building Healthy Community's successful parks ballot effort, Measure P. The grassroots, youth-inspired campaign created legal precedent for citizen-led ballot initiatives requiring only simple majority voter approval rather than two-thirds, which the state supreme court has said applies to sales tax measures placed on the ballot by elected officials.

Now there's an initiative on the March ballot to amend the state constitution to eliminate the 50% approval option. So Spencer and Orman, with Jiménez-Sandoval's willing participation, are driving to the March ballot goal line before the 50% threshold possibly disappears. They're very likely to win this time.

Having spent as much as \$1.5 million on what should have been an easy victory in 2022, Spencer is back for more. It's a relatively small investment as his company, Harris Construction, is one of the few Fresno outfits large enough to handle major construction jobs. Local educators rely so heavily on the builder that it led to the Fresno Unified School District leaseback construction scandal, an outgrowth of the Measure Q school bond of 2010 and accusations of "sweetheart deals," according to a 2015 *Fresno Bee* article. The issue is now before the state supreme court.

Go, 'Dogs.

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



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Building Coalitions and Stopping Hate Crimes

BY MIKE RHODES

PHOTOS BY PETER MAIDEN

With three successful Stop the Hate town halls completed, the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance and the *Community Alliance* newspaper are on track to have a fourth event, probably in Reedley, in the next few months. Each town hall has focused on different ways to empower communities that are struggling with right-wing extremism.

The recent town hall in Madera was notable for the cultural/dance presentation by the youth group Los Diablos, the broad coalition that organized it and the involvement of grassroots community members.

Madera Mayor Pro Tem Elsa Mejia was the emcee for the town hall. Pam Whalen, a founder of the *Community Alliance* newspaper and the primary coordinator of the Madera event, said that “the Fresno Center did a great job at the registration table and all-around logistical support. Baldwin Moy of the Madera County Coalition for Social Justice and Olga Loza with the Dolores Huerta Foundation provided strategic leadership for the event.”

Testimony from local resident Pam Grewel provided several examples of how racism and hate incidents impact the BIPOC community in everyday life. Grewel, who is Sikh, cited being denied entry to a hotel because of the color of her husband’s skin. She also referenced a gas purchase

STOP THE HATE



The Oaxaca cultural and dance group Los Diablos performed at the Stop the Hate town hall in Madera.



Sukaina Hussain, deputy executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations–Sacramento Valley/Central California, spoke during the Stop the Hate town hall in Fresno.

when the man behind the counter demanded to know her nationality. Grewel said, “Why, do I get a discount?” The man glared at her. She is a U.S. citizen.

Hate crimes often involve violence, like the recent incident in the Tower District when two young men were attacked, one of them being severely beaten because he is gay. See the January 2023 *Community Alliance* for details about that incident.

Moy led the discussion about organizing to stop the hate in Madera. Moy said that “when George Floyd was killed, the community came together and it was multicultural, multiethnic and, really, to me, in all the years I have been here, that was Madera’s finest moment.” This engagement with the audience led to multiple ideas and proposals for advancing Stop the Hate work.



Baldwin Moy is with the Madera County Coalition for Social Justice.

Joining us at the Madera town hall were representatives from the state Attorney General’s office, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Their presentations encouraged people to report hate crimes and incidents (see sidebar).

In Huron, the first Stop the Hate town hall, the issue was the institutional racism that has forced high school students to be bused to Coalinga. This unequal treatment has resulted in a higher dropout rate and a lower college entry level because students do not get the education needed—that is, no time to meet with teachers for help before or after school, too much time spent on buses in transit and no extracurricular activities. Organizing is under way to change this situation.

The second Stop the Hate town hall, which took place in Fresno, brought together several community groups. Dr. Daren Miller was the primary organizer of this event.

Miller said that “history has shown [that] every time people come together they can collectively change things for the future. This is true for both good and bad things.

“This Stop the Hate coalition, which is still growing, is the next iteration of long-term change in the Fresno area for good things. I am encouraging everybody to be on the ‘good’ side of change and join us.”

Patience Milrod, a local attorney and a member of the Jewish community, appreciated law enforcement taking this issue seriously but added that “one of the most important ways to protect ourselves and each other is through mutual support and solidarity.”

Sukaina Hussain, deputy executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations–Sacramento Valley/Central California, responding to a question from the audience about the need for groups to break out of their silos, said that “the key to our work is organizing our communities, and

If you are a hate crime victim, you should:

- Contact your local law enforcement agency right away.
- Get medical attention (if you need it).
- Write down the exact words that were said.
- Make notes about any other facts.
- Save all evidence (e.g., graffiti, egg shells, writing on victim’s vehicle). If safe, wait until law enforcement arrives and takes photos.
- Get the names, addresses, phone numbers, and emails of other victims and witnesses.
- Try to get a description from any eyewitnesses of the criminal or the vehicle.
- Contact community organizations in your area that respond to hate crimes.

What you and your community can do:

- Speak out against hate and intolerance.
- Have community rallies to support victims.
- Offer support and help to victims.
- Ask public officials to speak out against hate crimes.
- Establish a human relations commission or hate crime network that includes law enforcement, local government, schools, religious organizations and community organizations. Ask them to respond to hate crimes immediately when they happen and to promote prevention and awareness.

so I know all of our groups are building community power through organizing, which means being in relationship with each other.”

The community groups, elected officials and law enforcement coming together to confront hate crimes and incidents was a unifying theme at the Fresno and Madera town halls.

The plan is to have a fourth Stop the Hate town hall in eastern Fresno County, probably in Reedley.

This series of Stop the Hate town halls is organized by the *Community Alliance* newspaper and the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance and is made possible by a grant from the California State Library under the statewide Stop the Hate initiative.

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

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD. ENGAGE!

Alfonso Hernandez, Trabajadores and the Chicano Youth Center

BY STAN SANTOS

In 1977, Alfonso Hernandez, an idealistic social work graduate student at Fresno State, founded *Trabajadores de la Raza* San Joaquin Valley, or “Workers of the People.” *Trabajadores* established a multiservice model that would become known as the Chicano Youth Center (CYC), initially located in a converted three-bedroom house on Tulare Street near 7th Street in east Fresno.

Hernandez spoke proudly at the 2014 Chicano History Revisited event at the Sal Mosqueda Center of the period during his graduate studies in the 1970s. He recalled numerous walkouts and protests:

- 800 kids walked out of Madera High School due to the alleged battery of a student by two white administrators.
- 500 students walked out of Lincoln Elementary in Selma after a hyperactive kindergartener, Marcos Barrera, was placed in a padlocked cage at the back of the classroom. Soon, 2,300 kids would leave their classrooms to join the picket lines.
- In Coalinga, the children of farmworkers, mostly from Huron, protested the cancellation of ethnic studies classes. They set out on a trek from Coalinga to Huron, almost 20 miles, and gathered hundreds of supporters along the way.

It was the height of the movement for Chicano cultural and political consciousness, and Hernandez and *Trabajadores* were at the head or in the mix, encouraging new leaders.

He was also good at gang prevention and recalled that “the gang kids believed in me. I remember in ‘73 or ‘74 I took about 300 gang kids to the Fresno City Council. The chief of police said there are no gangs in Fresno. I said, ‘Yes there are, you just don’t want to admit it.’ At that time, [future Fresno police chief Jerry] Dyer was a sergeant. He was just looking.”

One evening, CYC staff was alarmed when an armed gang member went to talk to Hernandez. But he wasn’t there to do any harm; he said he wanted to get out of the gang and he came to us “because I knew they wouldn’t shoot me at the Chicano Youth Center.”

Trabajadores and the CYC increased their outreach, and the basketball tournaments and conferences drew thousands of youths from throughout Fresno County and the San Joaquin Valley. During that time, they planted the seeds and nurtured the growth of MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan), which spread to more than 50 Valley schools. They had more than 22 walkouts and inspired many future academicians, professionals and leaders from poor communities.

In 1994, California voters passed the racist Proposition 187, which barred non-citizens from receiving any form of publicly funded social services, including healthcare. In reaction, about 12 high schools walked out on their own. “And where did they come?” noted Hernandez. “They came to the Chicano Youth Center, because they knew that they could come there, that it was theirs, to have a voice.”

The CYC outgrew its small home and eventually moved to Dickey Playground on a 1.98-acre lot at Blackstone Avenue and Calaveras Street, with a wooden building referred to as the “barracks.” The CYC had up to 3,000 kids participating in their sports programs from 30–40 high schools

and the yearly Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. Hernandez noted that 80% of the leadership and the driving force were girls and young women, realizing their own leadership potential.

According to a 1997 United Way study, the neighborhood surrounding Dickey Playground, also known as Lowell Jefferson, had the lowest per capita and median household incomes of Fresno County, below West Fresno (Chandler Airport) and rural communities such as Huron and Orange Cove.

The primary service area had the highest dropout and juvenile crime rates, as well as teen pregnancies and persons in need of mental health services. These were the most underserved families of Fresno, a short distance from downtown and the centers of power for the city and county governments.

On March 11, 1999, Hernandez submitted an 87-page project application to the State of California, with data studies, project narratives, construction designs and appendices. On July 16, 1999, Hernandez signed a standard agreement with the State under which “the Department of the Youth Authority...enters into a contract with Chicano Youth Center...to work jointly on a project identified as Chicano Youth Center.”

The grant of \$1.725 million was combined with a separate grant from State Parks and Recreation for a total of \$3.65 million. This would fund Hernandez’s dream to combat poverty and despair with a 20,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility.

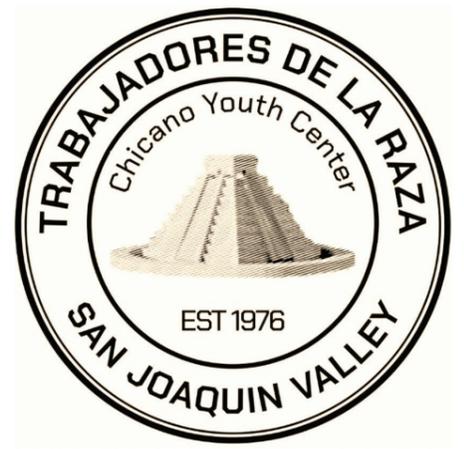
Manuel Hernandez, another passionate community advocate, established a youth science program that has become a nationally recognized model for the development of future engineers and explorers of nature and the universe.

Hernandez never deviated from his mission, which was to empower inner-city and rural families and youth to overcome the challenges of poverty and their disenfranchised status and to pursue education and professional careers. His vision was based on a nontraditional, multicultural, multiracial service model, blending traditional youth sports activities with a powerful philosophy of coexistence, justice and nonviolence.

The new CYC facility opened its doors in August 2009. It housed conference and recreation rooms, a professional recording studio, a library and a technology lab with Mac computers. But, more important, it was a safe place for neighborhood children to play, read, receive counseling and dream of their futures.

However, for Hernandez, and the families served by the CYC, the realization of their dreams would be short-lived. What was once a cooperative partnership with the City of Fresno became one of contention, discord and dispossession.

In 2009, the national economy was in deep crisis with a \$6 trillion national debt due to funding for the Middle East wars, Republican tax cuts and the Great



The symbol of the Chicano Youth Center

Recession. The Obama administration cut federal community development block grants, which were funds that could be applied creatively to attack the root causes of poverty. The CYC lost City support and staffing, and Hernandez was threatened with termination.

From 2009 to 2013, Hernandez began to suffer from poor health. In 2015, he passed away at the age of 64. Without a budget or commitment for support from the City of Fresno, the CYC fell into revocation of its nonprofit status.

Chicano Youth Center Today

Today, a new CYC Board of Directors is working to reinstate the nonprofit status and has a renewed commitment to serving the surrounding neighborhoods. There is a tenuous arrangement for occupancy of three cubicles, with access to the conference and recreation rooms based on typical rental agreements, like “any other member of the public.”

In a recent meeting to negotiate a renewed partnership with the Board of *Trabajadores de la Raza/Chicano Youth Center*, City Manager Georgeanne White declared abruptly, “The building is ours!” If it had not been for the intervention of City Council Member Miguel Arias, it would have been a *fait accompli*.

In 2014, Hernandez said that “there might be 5,000 Bulldog gang members in Fresno, and their extended families reach 25,000. In the next 10 years it’s probably going to be 50,000, because the City isn’t doing anything.”

Last year, Police Chief Paco Balderama held a press conference and acknowledged that Fresno had 20 or more active street gangs with an estimated 22,000–25,000 members.

Meanwhile, at the CYC, the Mac computers have been removed, the professional recording studio is an administrative office and the spirit of Alfonso Hernandez has left the building.

Stan Santos is an activist in the immigrant and labor community. Contact him at comworkeradvocate@gmail.com.

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TEHIPITE CHAPTER

Cemex Requests Extension of Mining Lease Along the San Joaquin River: 100-year Quarry Blasting Proposal Still to Come

By Brenda Markham

Cemex's application for a new conditional use permit to continue mining operations near the San Joaquin River is appalling. Our politicians and bureaucrats have their priorities mixed up. This application is to keep open their nearly depleted quarry, but Cemex's real goal is to obtain future County approval for a proposal to blast a 600-foot-deep pit into hard rock by the San Joaquin River. I thought we were in the process of restoring the river, including bringing back the salmon! This river has suffered enough already. We need protection, **not** destruction of the San Joaquin.

Common sense tells us there will be trouble for the nearby wildlife, let alone local residents having to put up with noise, traffic and pollution. What about the San Joaquin River Parkway? Is not this supposed to be part of the County's General Plan? The Parkway is designed to be a natural and recreational area, in harmony with the environment. Please, no more damage to the San Joaquin River.

This Cemex plan should cause concern, too, for all area residents, especially those in the vicinity of the River. Not only would this be an environmental catastrophe, but nearby residents would be affected: air pollution, noise from blasting, and traffic from hundreds of truck trips along Friant Road.

Marek Warszawski reports in the Feb. 26, 2023 Fresno Bee: "[This March], Fresno County's department of public works and planning circulated a 57-page conditional use permit application that would extend Cemex's aggregate mining operations for an additional four years. . . While this application proposes no changes to the mining methods currently being employed, it's clear the company hasn't given up on its horrible idea to blast and drill a 600-foot-deep pit near the San Joaquin [River]."

Cemex's legal counsel states that the reason behind its application for a 4-year project extension is delays in preparing the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Warszawski adds, "As I've written previously, Fresno County and the river that forms its northern border have been stuck in an abusive relationship for long enough. We take and take and take and leave nothing except irreparable scars." <https://www.fresnobee.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/marek-warszawski/article272562039.html#storylink=cpy>

Back in September, 2021, I contacted David Randall of the Fresno County Department of Planning and Land Use. My concern was to obtain the Draft EIR for the request of an extension of their mining lease along the San Joaquin River. I never did hear back from David Randall—and now I know why! Turns out, *they never did find that EIR.*

I'm concerned about Cemex's action, and also that of the Fresno County Supervisors, who failed

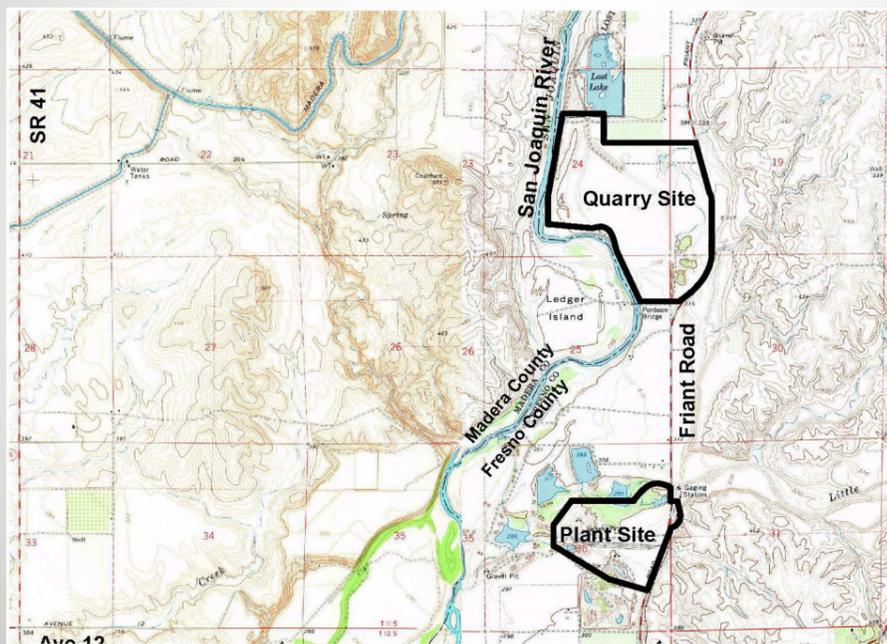
to inform the public of this application for a project extension, and also of its proposal to blast and drill a 600-foot-deep pit near the San Joaquin River. Sharon Weaver, Executive Director of the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, shares my concern: "On reviewing the documents that the County included in this latest CUP [Conditional Use Permit] extension request, it appears that Cemex is operating without an EIR at their current location. That's due to the fact that they have been operating there for more than 100 years – since before the [California] Environmental Quality Act or State Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) existed."

What I gather from this information is that Cemex was "grandfathered" in and didn't need to have an EIR. So, where do we go from here? We will not drop this issue — *Cemex needs to be held accountable.*

But, as Marek Warszawski concludes in his article, "*I don't expect our sprawl-addicted county supervisors to do the right thing on this matter — not without a massive public outcry.*"

TO GET INVOLVED in opposing the Cemex quarry expansion, contact Brenda Markham of the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter, in Fresno, at markhambrenda2@gmail.com, or Gary Lasky at 559-790-3495.

ABOUT THE PROJECT: PROJECT LOCATION MAP



Quarry Site CUPs: 367, 2032, 3063, 3093
Plant Site CUPs: 367, 2032, 2209, 3063, 3093



ON MUSHROOMS (and not missing the forest for the trees)

Prof. Alija Mujic
Fresno State Dept. of Biology

This in-person presentation will be held on **Thursday, May 18, 7:00 to 8:30 pm**, at the **Woodward Park Library**, 944 E. Perrin Ave, in Fresno. There is plenty of free parking, so feel free to invite your friends, students, and their friends.

COME LEARN about mushrooms and edible mushroom hunting in our local Sierra Nevada forests from Fresno State Biology professor Alija Mujic. Dr. Mujic studies how mycorrhizal fungi have a mutually beneficial relationship with trees.

"Every living system, every living thing, especially macroscopic organisms like ourselves, are utterly reliant upon the microbiology we've evolved with. You can't separate us, functionally, as organisms. People are generally interested in the forest, but the forest is so much more than just the trees. It is also all the microbes that support it, like the mushrooms. A healthy forest needs its microbes."

The professor and his students have started their own mushroom hunting club, the Fresno Mycology Society. "All mushrooms should be identified by an expert," he says. "Ideally, that expert should be you!"

Dr. Mujic has degrees in Computer Science and in Environmental Studies from UC Santa Cruz and a Ph.D. in Botany and Plant Pathology from Oregon State University. He and his students use molecular genetic techniques to study the interactions that govern the sharing of nutrients between fungi and plants, and how they communicate through the root connections that they make. He is currently interested in exploring the possibility of co-cropping pecan crops and gourmet edible truffles with local pecan farmers in the Valley.

The actual body of the fungal organism is a fine network of unicellular filaments running through the soil, called the mycelium. The mycelium is to a mushroom what an apple tree is to an apple.



How Agricultural Research Can Help Small Farmers

BY BRISSA REYES

Aidee Guzman, a Fresno County native, is an ecologist who is looking at how agricultural management affects fungi and carbon cycling to examine their relationship and effect on biodiversity. Her work involves collaborating with local farmers who have crop-diverse fields in the Central Valley—a region that is understudied in agricultural research.

Guzman grew up in the small town of Firebaugh, a major producer of tomatoes, located to the west of the San Joaquin River. Her parents were farmworkers who left their farm in Mexico to work in the United States.

“During the early part of the school year, you can smell all the tomatoes rotting from the nearby tomato factory, and I just feel like my whole life growing up was that. A whole lot of agriculture all around me...I just got this anger that hit me when I was young. I felt in my heart that things weren’t right where I grew up.”

From an early age she knew that she would study agriculture, however, at the time was unsure of the different routes available. She selected the University of Wisconsin-Madison for her undergraduate degree because she saw that it offered programs related to this work.

“I really struggled when I started college, trying to find my place in school,” Guzman says. “I wanted to study science, but I was unfortunately not very prepared. For some reason I hadn’t used a microscope until I got to college...”

“But then I went to my first class in botany. The professor showed this slide with all these different colorful potatoes, and I was just mind blown. She was talking about her work, and I was like ‘You can study that? Can you research that?’”

“It reminded me of where my family had grown up and all the colorful corn they grew...It was this really cool professor who was Chicano and a plant geneticist, and he said, ‘Come work in the lab!’ and I had never worked in a lab before. After that, I was just hooked. I could see myself in the sciences.”

Later, she would complete her Ph.D. at UC Berkeley in environmental science, policy and management. She mostly focuses on bees and fungi and their influence but always knew that she wanted to come back and work in the Central Valley.

When considering her graduate school project, she heard of immigrant farmers in the area who used to be farmworkers but started farms themselves.

“My parents left their farm [in Mexico]—their autonomy—to work for this industrial ag system [in America]. It felt so cool to see people who are like my parents take the land back.”

As an ecologist, she takes soil samples, extracts DNA and does other lab work. “You think a lot about bees moving across a landscape, or connectivity of patches and flowers in the landscape [as an ecologist]. Agriculture is such a big reminder that it’s influenced by humans and driven by the social-political structures in which humans exist.”

Now a published scholar in her field, Guzman says there is so much more to be done in agricultural research, specifically, how biodiversification affects ecosystem functions. Further investigating this space can allow for not only ecological benefits but also policy change that can help farmers maintain their land, she mentioned.



Some farmers are committed to moving toward soil regenerative practices such as Liset Garcia of Sweet Girl Farms in Reedley.
Photo by Eduardo Stanley

“That’s another issue too, why it’s so important to quantify and highlight this. To be able to capture and gain the benefits from the ecological practices on farms, they need to be there for a long time.”

“This is another space where I can see my work fit in. We can show that this is good and [that] we should create policies that can help these farmers create long-term land tenure.”

Guzman continues, “I believe farmers also need more resources and capital...We need more of these farmers that are already down” and who are committed to moving toward regenerative practices.

“A lot of the farmers are doing good stuff...I don’t have to teach them anything. I have the lab capabilities to quantify which fungi there are or do molecular work, but they are doing the work.”

The recent storms have delayed many local farmers’ harvests. Guzman is interested to see how the rain might affect her samples and is approaching the next season with curiosity.

“One thing I always think about is this dichotomy in which agriculture exists, like this tool for oppression and colonization,” she says. “At the same time, it is also a tool for culture and empowerment, and taking that back and having more pride in that has been important for me.”

Guzman is looking forward to staying in academia and continuing to mentor students from the Central Valley interested in ecology and their own community.

Brissa Reyes is a recent college graduate and a facilitator for the community-based project Block-by-Block Reading Circles. She is based in the greater Fresno area and loves music.



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Central Valley Fuego's First Home Game of the Season



Fuego's Victor Falck moves the ball downfield, pursued by Omaha's Luis Gil. Fuego was unable to score and took a 0-2 loss. Omaha scored in the last few minutes of the first half, then in the last few minutes of the second half, frustrating fans who had come out for the first home game of the season on the evening of April 8. Photo by Peter Maiden

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“The cellophant in the room”

BY STEVEN ROESCH

Walk into many Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) middle and high school classrooms on any given day, and you’ll spot several students using their phones—not in conjunction with their formal learning, but as a means of distancing themselves from that learning.

In a significant number of FUSD sites, the non-academic use of cell phones—along with earbuds, for many students—has become a new normal. The phenomenon is already entrenched in school culture, and it predates the rise of Covid.

One FUSD teacher calls this phenomenon “the cellophant in the room.”

To be sure, the FUSD’s official stance on this issue envisions a markedly different classroom atmosphere. Back in December 2002, the district adopted a policy that forbids students from using phones “in any way which invades another’s privacy, places another in a false light, is used to cheat on tests or other assignments...or which a reasonably prudent person would deem to be inappropriate.”

Checking social media, watching videos and the like during a class period would clearly be deemed “inappropriate.”

A revised version of this policy came into effect in March 2004. It stated that students “may possess portable communication devices on district property and at district-sponsored activities,” but admonished that they “must ensure that the device is turned off and out of sight during times of unauthorized use.” Unless they need their devices to be turned on for medical reasons, they’re required to keep them shut off during instructional time.

The discrepancy between these pronouncements and everyday reality in many classrooms could hardly be more blatant and more troubling.

An FUSD spokesperson said that these are the most recent district-wide guidelines regarding cell phone use. The FUSD, she stated, has given principals leeway in the approach that they choose to handle this touchy issue.

Given the seriousness and scope of the problem, however, it seems that a uniform and robustly enforced district-wide policy could help to get things back under control—as opposed to relying on the virtues and initiatives of individual principals.

Continuing to ignore the cellophant could well have serious and far-reaching consequences. Many educational professionals have grave concerns about this issue, as do many who have researched it closely.

One of them is Richard Freed, a clinical psychologist who wrote *Wired Child: Reclaiming Childhood in a Digital Age*. An *Atlantic Monthly* article quotes him as saying that “high levels of smartphone use by teens often have a detrimental effect on achievement, because teen phone use is dominated by entertainment, not learning, applications.”

Indeed, he argues that “it’s like giving kids equal access to cigarettes and candy.”

Failing to keep student phone use in check can negatively impact the ability to focus and inhibit progress in learning. It can also exacerbate the danger of digital addiction.

Enforcing limits on cell phone use during school time can have dramatic benefits.

An article in the *U.S. News and World Report* examined one middle school that imposed a complete ban on cell phones during the school day. The outcome: fewer incidents of cyberbullying or students using social media for harm.

According to the same article, fully 90% of principals surveyed in 2020 supported limiting phone use in middle and high schools.

The district’s 2004 policy statement spells out what should be done when infractions occur. If staff members or students see someone using a phone inappropriately on district property, they “should promptly report this information to the principal or designee.” Furthermore, those who violate the phone policy “will be subject to disciplinary action,” which might involve a parent/guardian conference, confiscation of the phone “and/or up to five days suspension.”

In the early 2000s, when the author was still a full-time instructor in the district, this approach was in fact being implemented at his site. Teachers were instructed to send students who were using their phones at the wrong time to the office, and the site administrators backed up teachers when they enforced this measure.

Nowadays, however, teachers at many sites can’t rely on that sort of consistent administration support.

Many of them have given up, one individual familiar with several FUSD schools said. They’ve responded to this new reality by ignoring the problem—by simply choosing not to make an issue of occasional or even fairly constant phone use.

Others have tried to use a gentle approach.

“I have some students who I approach ever so politely,” one teacher wrote to me, “and they just will not put their phones away. Their phones will be on the desktop and often in their hands.”

“They will ‘check’ their phones every few minutes and, if they think we are not doing something ‘important’...they will use their phones continuously...I still have several students in every class who will be on their phones no matter what I do.”

Others have tried a third route: incorporating phones into their lesson plans, drawing on apps like Quizlet. To the extent that these activities support learning, that’s an admirable strategy.



Students are using their phones as a means of distancing themselves from learning. Photo courtesy of The Commons

What remains, though, is the vexing problem of students who are regularly going digitally AWOL, turning instructional time into something quite different. If behavior like this isn’t consistently addressed with meaningful consequences, then it won’t go away.

Also facilitating nonacademic phone use is the lax enforcement of the dress code at some sites, which enables many students to keep their earbuds in all day, concealed underneath scarves or hoodies, for example.

Recently, the administration at Bullard High School attempted to tame the cellophant. Yondr locking pouches were issued to students, and they were instructed to place their phones inside the pouches at the start of the day and keep them there throughout the school day.

Enforcement of the new procedure has become spotty, with some staff members reportedly not holding students to the new standards.

Opinions as to the success of Bullard’s approach vary.

Some ways to circumvent the regulation have emerged. Students can carry a second phone to school, or they can simply keep their phones or other devices in their backpacks—which instructors aren’t allowed to search.

“The pouches have been a waste of money,” one Bullard student stated bluntly. Nothing has changed in his classes since the pouch policy was introduced.

On the other hand, it impressed some of the faculty.

One teacher concedes that some students are being less than forthcoming about their devices. He’s quick to add, however, that “I rarely see a phone out in class and that’s the issue we were really trying to solve. So it’s working in a sort of backward way.”

Crucial to learning, teachers are often told, is time on task, the time that learners actually devote to acquiring new knowledge and skills. Vital to navigate a tech world successfully is the ability to use devices reasonably and in moderation.

An updated district-wide policy, one that’s enforced consistently—as was the case several years ago—would facilitate student learning and cut down on problems such as cyberbullying and diminished attention spans. All educators who are serious about their professions want students to reach their potential; this type of policy would help to make that a reality.

Steven Roesch is a retired bilingual teacher who has lived in Fresno since 1985. Contact him at stevenroesch12@comcast.net.

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Peace & Social Justice Calendar

May 2023

Sponsored by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence

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

MON 01 **March for Immigration Reform** 3 p.m. rally/resource fair, 5:30 p.m. march. Courthouse Park, 1100 Van Ness Ave. "United We Make the Power." Food bank, entertainment, resources and PPE. Sponsor: May 1 Coalition. For more info, contact 559-776-6642 or 559-750-8076.

Democratic Women in Action 6 p.m. Marie Callender's Restaurant, 1781 E. Shaw Ave. For more info, contact 559-681-3140 or ggaston1234@aol.com or visit www.dwiafresno.org.

TUE 02 **National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC)** 5:30 p.m. Los Amigo's Restaurant, 5088 N. Blackstone Ave. Speaker: Dr. Blain Roberts, professor of history at Fresno State. Roberts is the author of *Pageants, Parlors and Pretty Women: Race and Beauty in the Twentieth-Century South* and, with Ethan J. Kytel, *Denmark Vesey's Garden*. For more info, contact 559-222-6212 or joanne@pbyoga.com.

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

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

Getting Started with CMAC 6 p.m. Suite 201, 1555 Van Ness Ave. Learn how the Community Media Access Collaborative (CMAC) can help you tell the stories that are important to you and your community. This pre-production workshop will teach you how to get a project started at CMAC. For more info, visit cmac.tv/workshops.

THU 04 **City of Fresno Local Housing Trust Fund and Matching Grant Program Community Workshops** Daytime option: noon-2 p.m. (tinyurl.com/LocalHousingTrustFund); Evening option: 6 p.m.-8 p.m. (tinyurl.com/LocalHousingTrustFund2). Interactive workshop to discuss 1) how a local housing trust fund could help the City of Fresno address housing needs, 2) the State of California Local Housing Trust Fund Matching Grant Program and 3) prioritizing potential programs for a City of Fresno local housing trust fund. For more info, contact hcdd@fresno.gov.

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

Fresno Pacific University ArtHop Opening Reception 5 p.m.-8 p.m. Ewert Art Gallery, Warkentine Culture & Arts Center, Fresno Pacific University, 1717 S. Chestnut Ave. Display of art student portfolios by studio art and graphic design majors. Exhibit continues through May 26. Free. For more info, contact 559-453-2088 or communications@fresno.edu.

Central Valley Matters Virtual Meet and Greet 5 p.m. Cuatro de Mayo: Winning Together. Learn about Central Valley Matters' plans for 2023. The leaders of returning partners—the Dolores Huerta Action Fund, the Delano Guardians, Valley Voices and the Central Valley Empowerment Alliance (CVEA)—will share what it is like to live and work in an area where the power structure does not reflect the local population or work to meet its needs, and how their grassroots organizations are improving this situation. For more info, contact centralvalleymatters@gmail.com.

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FRI 05 **CineCulture: Like Father Like Son** 5:15 p.m. Zoom discussion with Dr. Ed EmanuEl. Following an unexpected phone call, affluent architect Ryota Nonomiya and his wife, Midori, are told that their six-year-old son, Keita, was switched at birth and is not their biological child. Seeing Midori's devotion to Keita even after learning this distressing news, and observing the humble yet caring family who has raised their biological son for the last six years, Ryota begins to question his own values on fatherhood as he must choose between "nature" and "nurture," a decision that will change their lives forever. A link to view the film will be posted on the CineCulture website and listserv (available on Kanopy). For a link to join the Zoom discussion, e-mail mhusain@csufresno.edu by May 4.

SAT 06 **Kennedy Club of the San Joaquin Valley** 9 a.m. Marie Callender's Restaurant, 1781 E. Shaw Ave. For more info, contact 559-435-4043.

Getting Started with CMAC 10:30 a.m. Via Zoom. Learn how the Community Media Access Collaborative (CMAC) can help you tell the stories that are important to you and your community. This pre-production workshop will teach you how to get a project started at CMAC. For more info, visit cmac.tv/workshops.

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

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

Stonewall Democratic Club 6 p.m. Democratic Party HQ, 1033 U St. For more info, contact 559-709-8016 or conantm@aol.com.

Peace Fresno 7 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. In person/via Zoom. For more info, call 559-355-9717.

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

WED 10 **KFCF 88.1 FM: Stir It Up!** 3 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence radio show hosted by Josh Shurley. For more info, visit www.kfcf.org.

THU 11 **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)** 7 p.m. Online/In person, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. For more info, contact 559-360-8054 or taca_03@ymail.com.

FRI 12 **CineCulture: Kamli** 5:15 p.m. Zoom discussion with Sarmad Sultan Khoosat (director). This tale of love and cloaked secrets revolves around two women, Sakina and Hina, who live in a remote village in Pakistan and are bound together in a relationship through Saqlain, a man missing for eight years. Sakina's reluctance to accept that her brother is no longer with them and her rigid idea that their lives must continue in the same way forever conflicts with Hina's quiet discontent of an unfulfilled marriage with Saqlain and her loneliness as her youth flies by. View the film May 8-12 (link at cineculture.csufresno.edu). For a link to join the Zoom discussion, e-mail mhusain@csufresno.edu by May 11.

SAT 13 **Central Valley Progressive PAC** 3:30 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. For more info, contact 559-978-4504 or simone.rhodes@seiu521.org.

MON 15 **California Latina Democrats-Fresno** 6:30 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact chaircalatinadems@gmail.com.

TUE 16 **Central Valley Partnership** 5:30 p.m. Location TBD. For more info, contact 559-967-1940 or agrariandemcracy@gmail.com.

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

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

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

THU 18 **ArtHop Metropolitan/Fresno Metro Area** 5 p.m.-8 p.m. Museums, studios, galleries and other venues open their exhibits free to the public. For more info, visit [FACarthop](https://www.facebook.com/FACarthop) on Facebook.

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

Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter 7 p.m. Woodward Park Regional Library, 944 E. Perrin Ave. "On Mushrooms (and not missing the forest for the trees)" featuring Dr. Alija Mujic of Fresno State's Biology Department. Learn about mushrooms and edible mushroom hunting in local Sierra Nevada forests from Dr. Mujic, who studies how mycorrhizal fungi have a mutually beneficial relationship with trees. Free and open to the general public. To register in advance or for more info, visit sierraclub.org/tehipite.

SAT 20 **West Fresno Democratic Club** 9 a.m. Democratic Party HQ, 1033 U St. For more info, contact 559-930-4909 or westfresnodemclub@gmail.com.

Govern! Workshop on Board Service 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Carpenters Union Hall, 8130 W. Mineral King Ave., Visalia. A workshop on how to serve on local boards, councils and commissions. Sponsored by the Central Valley Partnership. For more info, contact 559-967-1940 or agrariandemcracy@gmail.com.

Fiesta de los Niños 6 p.m. (auction preview at 5:30 p.m.). The Grand on the Bluffs, 7855 N. Palm Ave. The 30th annual community fundraiser for Exceptional Parents Unlimited (EPU) will help fund the critical services provided to children and their families across 12 California counties. The EPU's mission is to guide and strengthen families and children with unique needs through early intervention and supportive services that cultivate hope and resilience. For tickets and more info, visit epuchildren.org/.

MON 22 **Fresno County Democratic Women's Club** 11:30 a.m. Marie Callender's Restaurant Garden Room, 1781 E. Shaw Ave. \$25/person. For more info, contact 559-905-1836 or patrbarr73@gmail.com.

TUE 23 **California Association of Retired Americans (CARA)** 10 a.m. SEIU Local 521, 5228 E. Pine Ave. For more info, contact 559-360-5955 or 559-704-8384.

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

WED 24 **KFCF 88.1 FM: Stir It Up!** 3 p.m. WILPF radio show hosted by Jean Hays. For more info visit www.kfcf.org.

FRI 26 **El Concilio de Fresno Noon**. Julia's Mexican Restaurant (Banquet Room), 2160 H St. For more info, contact 559-360-9797 or eddiev@elconciliodefresno.org.

SAT 27 **Half-Day Meditation Retreat** 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Universalist Unitarian Church of Fresno, 2672 E. Alluvial Ave. "Finding a Peaceful Heart" with Rev. Kinrei Basis of Berkeley Buddhist Priory. Meditation training and Dharma talks followed by a potluck. Register at <https://rb.gy/tOspk>. For more info, contact levy.michael3@gmail.com.

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

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Cuba, Victim of U.S. Terrorism

BY LENI VILLAGOMEZ REEVES

During the crime spree that marked Trump's last months in office, in between soliciting election fraud and encouraging violence and insurrection to prevent a legal transfer of power, Trump placed Cuba on the U.S. State Sponsors of Terrorism list. This adds to the difficulties for trade, financing and transactions already created by the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

The intent is to cause an economic collapse of Cuba. This is an act of war according to international law, which the United States routinely flouts, along with world opinion, which is overwhelmingly against these measures, as demonstrated yet again in last November's UN vote in which 182 countries voted against the blockade and only the United States and Israel voted in favor.

There's no evidence that Cuba has planned, supported, carried out or sponsored any acts of terrorism. The United States, on the other hand, clearly has planned, supported, carried out and sponsored many acts of terrorism against Cuba.

U.S. Anti-Cuba Terrorism

Too bad that the United States doesn't maintain a list of "States that are victims of U.S.-sponsored terrorism." Cuba would be in first place.

Most people have heard of the Bay of Pigs, which is called Playa Girón in Cuba. Sixty-two years ago in April, the United States attempted an invasion of Cuba; the attack on April 17 was by troops recruited, trained, armed and transported by the United States. The invasion was preceded (and followed) by numerous acts of terrorism, most notably when U.S. planes with fake Cuban Armed Forces markings bombed three airports.

Some might also remember Omega 7 and Eduardo Arocena, one of the only U.S.-sponsored anti-Cuba terrorists actually convicted of his crimes. He was convicted on 25 charges, which included murders and bombings.

Arocena might have gotten away with these violations if he had confined his crimes to the murder of Félix García Rodríguez, attaché of the Cuban diplomatic mission to the United Nations; bombing the Mexican consulates in New York and Miami; bombing the Venezuelan Consulate in New York City; and ordering Omega 7 partner Pedro Remon to kill Eulalio José Negrín, for the "crime" of negotiating with Cuba about an exchange of prisoners—Remon shot Negrín with a submachine gun, killing him in front of his 13-year-old son.

But Arocena also was responsible for a series of bombings in the New York area that injured bystanders and damaged homes, businesses and a church. The bombed sites included Avery Fisher Hall, Madison Square Garden, JFK Airport, the ticket office of Aeroflot and the Cuban Mission to the United Nations, so the FBI decided it had to do something.

In 1984, before the Federal Court in New York City, Arocena confessed: "The mission of the group headed by me was to obtain certain germs and introduce them into Cuba."

This was the hemorrhagic dengue fever epidemic that broke out at the end of May 1981 and affected some 344,203 people, causing the deaths of 158 people, including 101 children. At the peak of the epidemic, in early July, more than 10,000 cases per day were being reported. More than a third of the reported victims required hospitalization.

Arocena has stated that the CIA trained him in 1967 in bomb making and a variety of other warfare skills and tactics.

He was sentenced to consecutive sentences of life imprisonment and 35 years' imprisonment, but he was released in 2021, after 39 years.

In a recent speech to the United Nations, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla stated that "Cuba has been the victim of terrorist actions organized, financed and executed by the U.S. government or from U.S. territory, which has cost the lives of 3,478 Cubans and disabled 2,099."

Biological Warfare to Kill People

Other terrorist actions against Cuba have included biological warfare. Biological warfare research has been described as "public health in reverse." Certainly, Cuba has become known for excellent public health and medical internationalism. The United States has been more obsessed with the reverse.

Riley D. Housewright was a U.S. microbiologist who conducted research on biological warfare. He was appointed to Fort Detrick, the epicenter of biological warfare research, in the mid-1940s and became head of the Fort Detrick U.S. Biological Warfare Laboratory in 1956. He worked with the Pentagon to develop biological warfare agents for use against Cuba.

In the early 1960s, under Housewright's direction, the scientists at Fort Detrick developed a mix of Coxiella burnetii, the causative agent of Q fever; Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus; and staphylococcal enterotoxin B. This



A mural in Santa Clara, Cuba, depicting the U.S. attitude toward Cuba. Photo by Leni Villagomez Reeves

mixture of microorganisms and toxins was intended to kill lots of Cubans with little risk to American troops, who presumably would be invading Cuba, as these are relatively non-transmissible from person to person.

It was projected that this bioweapon would kill up to one percent of Cuba's population, which represents about 100,000 people. Thousands of gallons of this agent were produced at the Pine Bluff Arsenal, a biological agent plant intended to produce standardized biological warfare agents, first established in 1953.

All this was absolutely mainstream U.S. science; it was not seen as ethically dubious or morally or professionally questionable. In fact, when Housewright retired from Fort Detrick he became president of the American Society for Microbiology and a National Institute of Health Fellow.

Biological Warfare Version of Operation Paperclip

The Fort Detrick U.S. Biological Warfare Laboratory has an interesting history. Unit 731 was a covert biological and chemical warfare research-and-development unit of the Imperial Japanese Army that engaged in lethal human experimentation and biological weapons development in China during the Japanese invasion and World War II, with its main base in northern China. The unit is estimated to have killed 200,000–300,000 people.

While Unit 731 researchers arrested by Soviet forces were tried at the December 1949 Khabarovsk war crime trials, those captured by the United States were secretly given immunity in exchange for the data gathered during their human experiments. The United States covered up human experimentation and gave stipends to the perpetrators.

The Americans co-opted the researchers' bioweapons information and experience for use in their own biological warfare program, just as was done with Nazi German researchers in Operation Paperclip.

Biological Warfare, Offense versus Defense?

After biological weapons research was supposedly discontinued by Nixon in 1969–1972, Fort Detrick converted to "biowarfare defense projects." Many experts have pointed out that there is an extremely fine line between the two.

Both might include enhancing the virulence of pathogens and investigating optimal techniques to spread them through the air. Offensive research is distinguished from defensive only in intent rather than in reality.

The UN Biological Weapons Convention (BWC; which only bans offensive research) entered into force in 1975. The BWC lacked and continues to lack a mechanism for verifying compliance, which the United States opposes on the grounds that a binding inspection provision could breach the intellectual property of the biotechnology industry. In other words, the United States still does biological warfare research and development.

Biological Warfare Against Food Sources

Another key actor in the U.S. war against Cuba has been Plum Island/Lab 257, established by the U.S. Army, then transferred to the Department of Agriculture in 1954 and to the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, and currently becoming part of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility being built in Manhattan, Kan.

This facility was designed to conduct biological warfare against people indirectly, by attacking their food. Biological warfare against food plants and animals was meant to be used to starve civilian populations and force a country to submit.

One example of this warfare mode emerged when anti-Cuban operatives with CIA backing introduced African swine fever virus into Cuba in 1971. A U.S. intelligence source told the media (*Newsday*) that he was given the virus

in a sealed unmarked container at Fort Gulick, a U.S. Army base and CIA training facility in the Panama Canal Zone, and instructed to deliver it to a counter-revolutionary group, which stated they received it and transported it to Cuba.

The virus spread rapidly in Cuba, and half a million pigs had to be slaughtered and destroyed to control the epidemic. This is the only occasion in which this virus has been found in the Western Hemisphere. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization called this epidemic "the most alarming event of 1971."

Many other attacks on the Cuban food supply have been documented, including multiple biological attacks on the sugarcane crops, on citrus trees, on cattle, on poultry, on bees, on tobacco and on bananas.

Citrus trees in particular have been killed in huge numbers by various agents, and infectious agents persist so that attempts to replant trees have been futile. In 1995, a visiting U.S. scientist was discovered to be carrying vials of citrus tristeza virus in his camera case instead of a camera.

This is a huge lethal-to-trees RNA virus of the Closterovirus genus that is vectored through thrips and has led to the death of millions of citrus trees all over the world. It was intentionally introduced to the island of Cuba.

Bombing of Cubana Flight 455

Some of the terrorist actions organized by the United States against Cuba have been much more direct: bombings and killings. Remember Omega 7 and their bombs and murders? In 1976, they joined with other anti-Cuban groups such as Alpha 66 to form CORU.

For three months before the bombing of Flight 455, CORU waged a campaign of violence against Caribbean countries that had established links with Cuba. In July 1977, they tried to bomb a flight in Jamaica with a suitcase bomb that exploded shortly before it was loaded onto the plane.

Other bombings in the summer included a number of offices of airlines doing business with Cuba. Killings included the murder of a Cuban official in Mexico and two in Argentina; the assassination of Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C.; and an arson attack in Guyana.

On Oct. 6, 1976, they bombed Cubana Flight 455 killing all 78 souls on board, including 24 children, members of the Cuban youth fencing team returning from winning the gold medals at the Central American and Caribbean Championships in Barbados. Two time bombs were used.

Several CIA-linked Cuban exiles were implicated by the evidence, and CIA documents released in 2005 indicate that the agency "had concrete advance intelligence, as early as June 1976, on plans by Cuban exile terrorist groups to bomb a Cubana airliner."

Bush Pardons the Terrorist Posada Carriles

Hours after the Cubana Flight 455 explosion, Trinidad authorities arrested Freddy Lugo and Hernan Ricardo Lozano, two Venezuelan men who had boarded the plane in Trinidad and checked their baggage to Cuba, but who had exited the plane in Barbados and flown back to Trinidad.

Lugo and Lozano confessed and declared that they were acting under the orders of Luis Posada Carriles, a CIA operative. Their testimony, along with other evidence, implicated Posada and fellow CIA operative Orlando Bosch, an anti-Castro Cuban living in Venezuela.

The case was tried in Venezuela; Lugo and Lozano were each sentenced to 20 years, and Bosch did 11 years in prison. And Posada Carriles? He bribed prison authorities to allow his escape and fled to the United States, where George W. Bush granted him a full pardon.

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

Again! Again! Again!

BY RUTH GADEBUSCH

How many more shootings must we have before this nation comes to its senses? Actually, the question should be addressed to legislators, particularly those of Congress. Many polls indicate that the general population is in favor of various common-sense gun control measures, but the National Rifle Association seems to prevail with our elected legislators.

Yes, I know that guns do not act alone. A human is required just as with any other killing weapon. That seems to me to justify regulation on the handling and use, as well as on the availability, of weapons. All the more so when one considers the purpose of any weapon.

Yes, I've heard of the need to defend oneself but did it ever occur to the advocates for unlimited gun control that a bit of control in the availability and use of weapons would make defense less necessary? Furthermore, there are many other methods of defense.

Let me disavow that I am an uncontrolled "anti-gun nut." There is a place for them. Largely in military defense or even sport hunting. There is no place for military weapons under any conditions except military defense.

I digress. Let me return to my weapons experience that determined my gun attitude. I grew up on a farm in middle Georgia where guns were always in view and remain so today as the income of that land is now from hunting.

The farm guns were for defense from humans with less than honorable purposes, but much more often they were used on wild animals disturbing the domestic ones.

My widowed grandmother kept a pistol hanging high well out of reach of children on the headboard of her bed. She knew how to use it, and did occasionally. More than likely it would be the proverbial "fox in the henhouse." Yes, that saying does have a real basis of origin.

The men also hunted doves and quails in season—women seldom participated in the sport in that day and age. It was both recreation and food. Much as it might be difficult for city folks to appreciate that birds are delicious, and eating them is no different than other food fowl that we humans enjoy.

The beginning skill for use of guns was normally a .22-caliber rifle. My brothers learned from such, but as a female I only shot one once. A much more serious lesson in

guns came to me as a naval officer, when in training I had to shoot a .45-caliber revolver. That is when I learned that the kick of a gun as I had only heard of was real. What a shock! The U.S. Navy used them because little aim was required to do real damage.

As a naval officer, I had an experience that is both a human interest story and a lesson that we humans could learn about giving others, as unlike us as they might be, the benefit of the doubt.

Top secret messages had to be delivered by a commissioned officer from the San Francisco Naval Communications Station to smaller military operations in the area. Knowing that when my duty ended at 11 o'clock that night the oncoming group could hardly spare an officer gone for the time required to deliver a message to Port Chicago, I volunteered to take the message.

Accordingly, transportation was called and I took off with "a .45" on my hip. Upon arriving at the car, I started to get in the back seat when the driver, a hulking Black man, pointed to the front seat. Remember, I was 21 years old straight out of the segregated South, so this was somewhat strange as we usually sat in the back seat.

We chatted as we rode along instead of the sleep I had expected to get in the back seat. It did not take long to realize that we were both out of our comfort zones when he admitted that he was not going to have any woman with a gun—any kind, much less a .45—sitting at his back, and I likewise explained that I had intended to use the time to sleep.

How simple, how human that both of us had misjudged from our life experiences. I am so glad I had that lesson at an early age. I bet he too learned from the experience.

Back to the point of today's completely unreconciled gun love in this nation, I ask what it takes for common sense to find a place.

As this is written, another gun massacre occurred in our nation. In Louisville, Ky., this time. A bank, not a school, but is that really any less horrible?

Such events are so regular and so unreasonable that few of us could begin to remember just how terrible the numbers are in our country. No one has been able to wipe out mass shootings, but no other place on the planet has experienced the horror as we have.

There are ways to mitigate the problem if the members of Congress can consider

ONE WOMAN'S VIEW

how the world has changed since our Constitution was approved. I think we can safely say that not one man signing that document had any vision of the country, much less the world, of today. I cannot believe that they would object to some reasonable measures.

After all, the guns themselves are much stronger to say nothing of how we can predict some likelihood of misuse that could, at the very least when put into practice, prevent the near daily occurrences in the United States.

Most emphatically, there is no reason whatsoever for the automatic military weapon so often used in these multiple deaths to be in the hands of any civilian. We have strong statistics indicating that during the few years when such weapons were banned far fewer people met their death at the hands of those using the AR-15. What more do we need to convince us?

It is time, way past time, for sensible gun laws. What more does it take?

Note, not one word has been said about defunding police. Such utterings are ridiculous. Granted, there have been cases where police have been too quick to shoot to kill but recognize the conditions that they face every day. In the Louisville shooting, a young, just sworn in police officer was shot in the head. Does anyone really think that even if he survives, he, his family, friends, colleagues and medical caretakers will ever be the same?

The world will never be rid of weapons be they used for defense or ill intent, but we can make the world safer with common-sense regulations. It is impossible to remove all weapons from the nation, or those who cause trouble with them. but we certainly can manage them better. It is time to do so.

Ruth Gadebusch, a former naval officer, has spent 60 years as a community activist in Fresno including involvement with the PTA, the Women's Symphony League, the American Association of University Women, the Fresno Community Council, the National Women's Political Caucus, the YWCA and the First Congregational Church. She is an emeritus member of the board of the Center for Civic Education.



GOVERN!

A workshop on how to serve on local boards, councils and commissions

Saturday,
May 20, 2023
9am to 1pm

Carpenters Union Hall
8130 West Mineral King
Visalia, California



CENTRAL VALLEY
PARTNERSHIP

Rapid demographic change is spurring a transformation to the civic landscape of the San Joaquin Valley.

This governance training is designed to orient newly appointed or elected leaders to their roles on boards, councils and local commissions.

We particularly seek to support historically disenfranchised and underrepresented leaders including immigrants, farmworkers, women and girls, the LGBTQ+ community, union members, working class folks and people from racialized communities who face systems of exclusion and discrimination.

Workshop registration will open via email invitation and online portals.

Translation services will be provided and food served.

All are welcome to participate.

Coordinated by the Central Valley Partnership, Fresno-Madera-Tulare-Kings Central Labor Council, Dolores Huerta Foundation, Community Water Center and SEIU 521 among other partner organizations and labor unions

Fresno Center for Nonviolence May 2023



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Edited by
 Richard
 Gomez

To see a more colorful version of our page go to our website.

Nonviolence In the Kitchen by Gerry Bill.

"Decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future."

— [ancient Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) principle]

The Fresno Center
 for Nonviolence's
 31st Anniversary is
 coming soon.



Let us think together about the food we eat. How do the food choices we make affect not just ourselves, but the wellbeing of others—others nearby, others halfway around the world, and others in generations yet to come? Are we doing violence to others because of the ways we eat? We are learning more and more about the environmental impacts of ways that we, as humans, have chosen to feed ourselves. Like it or not, the scientific evidence continues to mount that animal agriculture is placing tremendous stress on our rather fragile planet. Raising animals on an industrial scale has all sorts of negative consequences. There are serious environmental impacts on our water, our air, our land, our climate, and on public health.

OUR WATER - Animal agriculture harms our water supply in two ways. First, animal agriculture consumes water at much higher rates than plant agriculture. Half of all water used in the US is used for animal agriculture. It takes 660 gallons to produce a 1/3-pound beef patty in a hamburger. A slice of bread uses only 11 gallons. All meats consume a lot of water. One pound of chicken uses 518 gallons. Most of the water is used to produce the animal feed.



Second, animal agriculture is a huge polluter of water. Runoff from animal manure contaminates surface water, affecting one third of the rivers in the US. That problem is exacerbated when agricultural land gets flooded (like in the SJ Valley right now!). The pesticides and fertilizers used to produce animal feed get into our ground water, which is a serious public health problem.

OUR AIR - The National Academy of Sciences recently published a study that found that 17,900 deaths in the US per year are linked to air pollution from animal agriculture. By way of comparison, 600 people were killed in mass shootings in 2022. I am not trying to minimize the importance of mass shootings, which many consider to be a serious public health issue. But shouldn't animal agriculture also be addressed as a serious public health issue? A surprisingly large amount of the air pollution is in the form of particulate matter, including the very damaging PM2.5. This is caused by gasses from animal feed and manure that produce particles capable of drifting hundreds of miles. You don't have to live next to a dairy to be at risk.

LAND USE - Half of the world's habitable land is used for agriculture, and a whopping 77% of that is used for animal agriculture. Most of that land use is to provide animal feed. This has become a major cause of deforestation worldwide. It turns out to be a very inefficient use of our land. If one looks at protein production, for example, only about 10% of the protein in the animal feed produced on that land is converted into protein in the animal products we consume. One way to look at that is that we are wasting 90% of the protein that is produced worldwide, while many people in the world go protein malnourished. Then there is the land where we raise our livestock, which is often severely damaged by the overwhelming concentration of animals on that piece of land. There is not enough land on the planet to produce these animal products in an environmentally friendly way. This is not a sustainable way of feeding the world.

OUR CLIMATE - The impacts of animal production on climate change have been well documented. The methane, nitrous oxide and O2 produced by animal agriculture are significant contributors to climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been increasing its focus on animal agriculture with each new report it produces. Animal agriculture produces about 15% of all greenhouse gas emissions, which is more than all transportation emissions combined, and more than all emissions from power generation. Our society has looked a lot at transportation and power generation as big contributors to climate change, but people are often reluctant to bring up the role of the food we eat. People often have strong emotional connections to the foods they eat, so they find it harder to change their eating habits than to change their transportation methods or power sources. If we are to care about the seventh generation, then reducing the severity of climate change should be at the top of our list, and animal products are a big part of the problem.

PUBLIC HEALTH - The health consequences to individuals of consuming certain animal products are well known—for example, the well-established connection between red meat consumption and colon cancer. However, my focus here is not on how we might be harming ourselves by what we eat. Rather, I want us to think about how our food choices might be harmful to the health of others. Unfortunately, animal agriculture has become a significant threat to public health. Besides the polluted water and polluted air affecting public health, there are the antibiotics. Antibiotics are used excessively in animal agriculture, and that creates a huge breeding ground for antibiotic-resistant pathogens. In the US, 80% of the antibiotics sold are used in animal agriculture. Even animals who are not sick in any way are given antibiotics, just to promote growth. Bacteria mutate on a regular basis, so antibiotic-resistant mutations are favored in an environment saturated with antibiotics. The new strains produced in this way are then transmitted to humans who encounter the animals or their manure, or to humans who have contact with the raw meat of the animals. Once in the human population, the new strains can be transmitted person to person. In 2015, the WHO warned the world that antibiotics in animal agriculture are an increasingly serious threat to global health.



The IPCC, the WHO, and numerous academic studies are all warning us that we need to do something about problems associated with the foods we eat. It is time we did more to address this problem. Personally, I have been completely vegan for 33 years. It does not seem to have harmed my health at all, which is contrary to the myth that humans need to consume animal products to be healthy. I am not a crusader for veganism.

I don't try to convert people to my way of eating. Nor am I a big fan of fake meat products, although I don't object to others using them. Perhaps that will help a bit, but it will not be enough. We need to find new ways to get more and more people to reduce their consumption of animal products. This will require cultural changes, more education on this topic, and perhaps even legislation.

I don't know all the answers. However, I do have a pretty good grasp of the extent of the problem.
 Sources available upon request.



Next show is Wednesday
 May 10th at 3pm

Stir it, UP!

KFCF 88.1 FM



Our radio show in May with our host Josh Shurley and guest to be announced. For more information call on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at (559) 237-3223 or check our website at www.centerfornonviolence.org.

Our radio show in April has our host Josh Shurley with his guest with Mike Wong from Veterans For Peace (the first few minutes got very garbled due to the bad connection, but it improved a few minutes in). The link to hear again is: <https://on.soundcloud.com/QvZCu>.

Our radio show in March has our host Josh Shurley with guest Bob McCloskey from the Alliance back on to provide a winter update on the humanitarian crisis we face with so many unhoused people who are homeless during this wet and cold weather. The takeaway: a right to housing is a must. To hear again go to: <https://on.soundcloud.com/ZVRZb>.



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

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

WORLD WATER DAY

No one had experienced a World Water Day (March 22) like this one in 2023 in a very long time! Standing on the patio of the San Joaquin River Conservancy headquarters just above the SJ River off Friant Road, the majesty of the swollen river was truly a sight to behold. Nothing stood in its way, and we were transformed as we watched this wonder of nature.



The flooding of the San Joaquin River on World Water Day. Photo by LVR

WILPF invited any environmental group and/or environmentalist to come and celebrate a day first introduced by the UN General Assembly in 1993. This year's theme: Accelerate Change.

Our Fresno WILPF Earth Democracy Committee, composed of Kyla Mitchell, Joan Poss, Kay Pitts and Jean Hays, was overjoyed to be able to have our event at the Conservancy headquarters after the original venue, Lost Lake Park, was closed due to flood damage.

Our sub-theme was: Water from an Indigenous Perspective. We began with Native American flute music by Lance Canales of the Yokuts Tribe. Then Dirk Charley, Dunlap Band of Mono Tribe, shared some of his life experiences and talked about water through the eyes of native peoples.

Then everyone was invited to do a 15-minute quiet walk near the river and return to the patio to draw a small picture and/or write words inspired by being near the river.

Next, we heard brief remarks from representatives of various environmental organizations, such as Rachel Clark, president of the Fresno Audubon Society.

Anita Lodge of Friends of the Gorge spoke of the struggle against the Temperance Flat Dam.

Ron Martin, representing the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club and Fresnans Against Fracking, spoke of the importance of water.

Walt Shubin, who has lived by the San Joaquin River all his life, spoke of its changes throughout the years: some for the better, and some for the benefit of money and power.

There was a good crowd. Each of us took something from this extraordinary experience that reminded us that WATER IS LIFE!

Our thanks to John Shelton and Cheryl Moxley of the San Joaquin River Conservancy and Alyssa Flores of the Sierra Resource Conservation District for making it possible to have our event at this extraordinary place!

—Jean Hays

NANCY HATCHER AND FRESNO BRANCH FEATURED AT APRIL 12 ONE-WILPF NATIONAL MEETING

I described our monthly radio broadcast, *Stir it Up*, as well as our having a full page in the local progressive newspaper, the *Community Alliance*, as two means by which our Fresno branch is promoting our work in the greater Fresno area.

I also briefly described our collaboration with other organizations in the Fresno area that share common goals of creating peace, social justice and individual liberties.

Then I discussed my volunteer work in other countries, which involves working directly with members of the local communities to build, rebuild and restore safe, durable and affordable housing in areas that have been devastated by hurricanes, earthquakes or simply grinding poverty.

I also described my work in Oaxaca, Mexico, in a program that now enables nearly 700 children to attend school who might otherwise be on the streets selling trinkets or working as unskilled, child laborers to help support their families.

—Nancy Hatcher

YOU'RE INVITED: FIRST OPEN HOUSE AND POTLUCK AT DAKOTA ECOGARDEN SINCE COVID

Saturday, May 6, 1 p.m.–4 p.m.

2231 W. Dakota Ave., Fresno

There is no charge, but please bring something yummy to share with others. Eating will come first, and there will be live music as well. Then we will introduce board members and residents who are present.

There will be testimonies from a few current or previous residents who would like to share their feelings about the DEG.

Next, we will hear from our special guest, Annalisa Perea, who is the new City Council member for our district (District 1). She has shown an interest in our project before and has visited our site on more than one occasion.

We will end with tours of our three Arthur Dyson–designed structures, the rest of the site and of the garden.

Please park out in front of DEG or next door in front of what used to be the police parking lot.

Unfortunately, no parking is allowed across the street. Please don't block anyone else's car or block the vehicle gate.

Please sign in and note if you'd like a call to answer questions or would like to volunteer to give us some help in some way.

—Nancy Waidtlow

VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES: WHAT DO MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND MALCOLM X HAVE IN COMMON?

What do Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X have in common with how they viewed the United States?

Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X are frequently seen as opposing forces in the struggle for civil rights and against white supremacy; King is often portrayed as a nonviolent insider, whereas Malcolm X is characterized as a by-any-means-necessary political renegade.

Nonetheless, it's impossible to tell the ongoing story of the movements for Black liberation without speaking of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King in the same breath.

Although Malcolm's name is widely recognized, his omission from school curricula and what has been referred to as his "radical" stance on Black liberation mean that many people have little to no understanding of who Malcolm X was, what he did and what he stood for.

Malcolm X was more than a mythic historical figure; he was a human being, the sum of many parts, whose views were constantly evolving before his life was tragically cut short.

Yet, when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that "I fear that I'm sending my people into a burning house," Dr. King seems to be dismissed by the political sectors with few willing to interpret what Dr. King was referencing.

Like Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the Honorable Minister Malcolm X was an orator of tremendous wit and power as well as an indefatigable and effective political organizer.

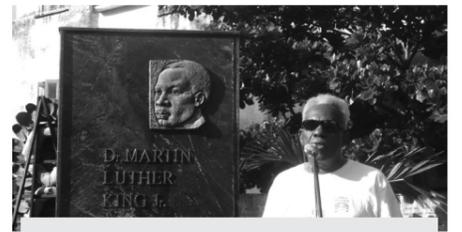
On a fateful and horrible 1965 day, he was murdered in cold blood, in front of his wife and children, while addressing a full house of more than 400 people, under the auspices of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, the non-religious political formation he founded after his split from Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam (called the "Black Muslims" in the U.S. media).

What is the difference between "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech (Malcolm X) and the "I Have a Dream" speech by Dr. King?

Both speeches emphasized the need for civil rights and the need for action to achieve them. However, "I Have a Dream" is more optimistic in its tone, emphasizing the need for hope and perseverance,



Two sides of the same monument in Havana, Cuba. In this image, el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz Malcolm X. Photo by LVR



On the other side of the monument, the image of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Photo by LVR

whereas "The Ballot or the Bullet" is more urgent and direct in its tone, emphasizing the need for immediate action.

So should we be celebrating Malcolm X's birthday in May? Unfortunately, our communities at large will not celebrate him or his birthday; rather, they will choose to be "politically correct" by not acknowledging Malcolm X's contribution to our Black communities. Yet, we pay homage regularly to Martin Luther King. Why is that?

I invite you to join us on the last Sunday of each month to discuss the "whys" and "how comes" of "Unpacking Racism and Understanding our Blind Spot(s)." After all, how can we unpack racism if we cannot acknowledge our own feelings and thoughts toward these two men who had some things in common, such as their fathers were ministers and their widows continued the vision and stood strong in light of their husband's assassination. In fact, these two men left their mark on this world, and we simply cannot talk about one without the other.

Pastors for Peace Caravan/el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz Malcolm X Birthday Celebration

Join us in person on May 15 for a special event at the Free AME Church Social Hall (806 Collins Ave., Fresno) at 6 p.m., where we will host and discuss the Pastors for Peace (P4P) Caravan for our upcoming Cuba trip in July and celebrate by acknowledging Bro Malcolm's contribution to both our Black communities and the liberation of all people, including his meeting with Fidel Castro, Cuba's long-standing president. We are inviting the Fresno community to this event.

Dr. King said that "an injustice to one is an injustice to all." "All means All."

For any questions, call 559-270-1023.

—Dr. Jean Kennedy, PsyD., OB/OD

Teresa at taca_03@gmail.com or Leni at lenivreeves@gmail.com.

STIR IT UP—WILPF KFCF 88.1 FM

May 24 (fourth Wednesday), 3 p.m. Jean Hays highlights people and events important to our WILPF community.

UNPACKING RACISM

May 28 (last Sunday), 6:30 p.m. With Dr. Jean Kennedy. To join and get a link, RSVP with your e-mail address to drjeankennedy@yahoo.com or text 559-270-1023.

WOMEN IN BLACK

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

YES! RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW! HERE'S HOW:

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

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

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

WILPF MEETING

May 11 (second Thursday), 7 p.m., online and in person at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. Watch your e-mail for an announcement with a link and a call-in number. For more information, contact

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Rent Control Movement

Continued from page 1

As is the case of Oralia Pérez, a 68-year-old retired woman, who said she pays \$1,000 for a room in a two-bedroom house. The \$840 she receives from her Social Security pension is not enough to cover her housing expenses, so she is forced to work five months a year in agriculture.

"I started paying \$900 and now I pay \$1,000, and they told me that in April I will pay more," Pérez told the Council. "We can't make it with that. It's not right, it's not fair."

Both the testimony of Rodríguez and Pérez and the participation of several others who attended the City Council meeting were the result of an organized movement that began years earlier during the Covid-19 pandemic.

More than 20 people, among them residents and young activists, voiced their concerns regarding the need for affordable housing and asked Delano officials to pass a rent stabilization ordinance proposed by the community through the organizing work of the Fair Housing Coalition.

"Some of you campaigned on supporting the issue (rent control). I hope that you honor that," said José Orellana, organizer and co-founder of LOUD for Tomorrow, before the Council members cast their vote.

LOUD for Tomorrow is a youth organization that is part of the Housing Justice Coalition, which includes groups such as Central Valley Empowerment Alliance (CVEA), Delano Guardians, Tenants Together and Unidad Popular Benito Juárez, among others.

According to Orellana, the average monthly cost for a two-bedroom apartment in Delano is \$1,468, difficult to afford not only for tenants with seasonal agricultural jobs but also for workers in other occupations.

Another resident, who said he works full-time for Amazon, shared his problems finding housing. With a monthly salary of \$2,500 and a family with seven children, he said he is not allowed in a two-bedroom house, which is what he can afford with his income.

A home with more rooms is out of reach for him. "Paying \$1,700 in rent is very hard for us; not even working more than 40 hours," he says. "I still don't qualify. With these prices, it is impossible."

Although the ordinance did not pass, with Council Member Liz Morris and Mayor Pro Tem Salvador Solorio-Ruiz voting against it, a housing study was approved instead. The study, proposed by Council Member Veronica Vasquez, will evaluate the costs and feasibility of implementing such a measure.

Vasquez, who has shown support for the ordinance, urged her fellow Council members to stop postponing the matter. "Why must we continue to put this on hold, why do we have to depend on other people?" Vasquez asked.

"I'm here now and ready to be part of the solution," she said, "Why be so resistant? The study is going to bring everyone to the table to come up with solutions."

Mayor Joe L. Alindajao was absent and Council Member Mario Nunes Jr. excused himself. Both are landlords, and Nunes did not take part in the discussions.

How It All Started

Pérez said that she had been following the news about the rent discussion for a couple of months before her participation in the Council meeting.

"I would watch in the news how they were talking about the Council and meetings; where are these meetings taking place, I want to go," Pérez said she would question herself.

"I was tired of seeing the rent going up and up and spending all the money on that."

One day, she found out that one of her neighbors, Gina Martinez, was a volunteer organizer for Delano Guardians, and Pérez was invited to attend their meetings. "I did have a little fear, to tell you the truth, but I was upset that rents are very expensive and houses are in poor condition," Pérez said, and added that in her current home she has access to a bathroom and a small kitchen. Her landlord charges her a flat fee for water but never shows her the original bill.

" Oftentimes [tenants] don't dare to report damages for fear of being evicted," said Anai Paniagua, a co-founder and organizer of LOUD for Tomorrow.

Although the youth organization has existed since 2018, as a fiscal project of the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CRPE), it was in 2020 when they went into full organizing around the housing issue.

According to Paniagua, after a series of unjust evictions due to the lack of employment generated by the Covid-19



Several activists and renters demanded rent control in Delano on April 3 during the regular City Council meeting. Photo by Miguel Ángel Báez

pandemic, they began to organize town meetings to find ways to help their community. "Technically we didn't have funding, we only had one staff member, but we realized other organizations were talking about the same subject."

This was how they approached Tenants Together, an organization that, according to Paniagua, "has provided us with valuable technical help and guidance."

Work in Fresno

"In Delano, they have been organizing around rent control for over a year. I was reached out [to] by the Central Valley Empowerment Alliance (CVEA), [so] we got the organizations together and formed the coalition," said Shar Thompson, Tenants Together's Central Valley regional coordinator.

"Our working people who work in the fields are paying more than 60% of their monthly income in rent," Thompson said. "Having to choose between housing or food makes it harder for people."

According to Thompson, Merced is currently the only city in the Central Valley with a rent control ordinance, although it is only for emergency situations.

The work being done in Delano, mainly with the involvement of young people, is inspiring, according to Thompson. "They inspire us to move forward and be more creative in organizing."

"In Fresno, we are further behind," she added. "We urge [Fresno City] Council members to put it on the agenda as they did in Delano. But none of our Council members believe a rent control ordinance should be imposed in Fresno."

According to Thompson, Fresno City Council members believe the issue is a matter of supply and demand and that a rent control ordinance would affect development and cause mom-and-pop landlords to go bankrupt and lose their homes. These are the same arguments that most opponents of rent control use.

"We believe rent control is one major piece to make cities more affordable to live in," Thompson said. "It also helps the community to put more money in renters' pockets, which they end up spending back in the local economy."

According to Tenants Together, about 54% of Fresno households are renter-occupied and the average price of an apartment in Fresno is \$1,400. Thompson said there are other groups in Fresno currently working on rent control campaigns.

Proposed Ordinance and Current Legislation

During the organizing process, Paniagua said they realized that the Delano City Council was not showing sufficient commitment to the community.

Although former Mayor Bryan Osorio had instructed City staff to draft a rent stabilization program back in December, the issue was not included in the City's general plan for 2030.

"The City Council did not engage with the community to look for solutions, it was as if they told us 'this is how things cannot be done,'" Paniagua said and added that no one was advocating during Delano's Council meetings.

"We got the ball rolling, and we want to hold [Council members] accountable," she said.

Currently, California has a state tenant protection law (AB 1482) that restricts rent increases to no more than 5%

plus inflation in any 12-month period, or 10%, whichever is lower.

The proposed ordinance in Delano would limit increases to 70% of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and restrict rent increases to no more than 3% in any five-year period.

The CPI is a monthly inflation indicator that measures the percentage change in the price of goods and services consumed by households within the country.

Other Arguments

The City Council members that voted against the rent control measure argued similar reasons as those exposed by some landlords who attended the meeting. Gabriel Rodriguez, a 60-year-old retiree, said he was a landlord "worried about the future" because he invested in rental properties to pay for his children's education.

Another landlord invited the community to work together and "to be careful with outside voices," he said in clear reference to the outside guidance Delano tenants are receiving from organizations. Both asked the Council to make the best decision.

Council Member Morris and Mayor Pro Tem Solorio-Ruiz defended their decision citing supply-and-demand reasons and said the measure would create costs to the City in consulting and legal fees as well as other administrative expenses. They also said the ordinance could cause an incremental increase in property taxes.

Both denied running on a rent-control campaign platform. "I didn't make such a promise, I don't know where you got that from," Morris said.

Solorio-Ortiz said that he spoke of the housing crisis during his campaign but made no promises on rent control. "This idea that I campaigned on rent control is not true," he said. "I campaigned to tackle the housing crisis. Other than that, we never heard of this (rent control) and no one brought this forward."

What's next?

Far from feeling defeated by the non-approval of the ordinance, the young activists and the coalition see the positive side. With the decision to conduct the housing study, the City's resources, such as City lawyers, will be involved in the drafting of a new proposal.

"We take the measure as a step forward," Paniagua said, "Our ancestors will be happy. We are drawing the blueprint on how to do it" she said in reference to the farmworker movement in the 1960s led by activist Cesar Chavez to obtain better working conditions that originated in Delano.

"We are learning as we go and want to set an example for other cities in the Valley," she said. Paniagua also mentioned the coalition is considering taking the measure to the polls and letting voters decide.

"What Vice-Mayor Solorio said denying what he promised during his campaign is a complete lie," says Arturo Rodríguez, organizing director of the CVEA. "He campaigned hard on this. But he should not forget that people still vote, and they can make sure he does not get elected again. It's just the way politics works in general."

Miguel Ángel Báez is a Mexican-born journalist from the Central Valley. He graduated from CSU Bakersfield and was editor of Noticiero Semanal, a weekly newspaper in Porterville.

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Marching for Women's Reproductive Rights

OCTOBER 4, 2021 BY COMMUNITY ALLIANCE



El periódico *Community Alliance* (*Alianza Comunitaria*) se publica mensualmente por San Joaquin Media Alliance, ubicada en 1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno, CA 93728. El periódico *Community Alliance* (*Alianza Comunitaria*) se distribuye gratis o por suscripción. Las suscripciones son de \$40 por año; \$60 por año para activistas; y \$15 para personas de bajos ingresos.

Alianza Comunitaria es una voz independiente para los trabajadores y grupos progresistas del Valle de San Joaquín. El objetivo de este periódico mensual es construir un poderoso movimiento progresista en apoyo a la justicia social, ambiental y económica; y también a los derechos de los inmigrantes y al de los trabajadores para lograr un salario justo. Buscamos exponer las injusticias políticas y sociales y conectar las diversas redes de activistas que trabajan en nuestra comunidad.

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El Racismo Depende del Poder Para Crecer

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En octubre de 2022, una compañera le hizo varias amenazas, estas amenazas fueron denunciadas en la escuela. No se hizo nada. Fue amenazada por la misma compañera de clase los días 7, 10, 11 y 12. La escuela afirmó que no habían tenido tiempo de investigar. El 13 de octubre esa compañera de clase la atacó. El 14 de octubre, el director dejó un mensaje afirmando que dicha compañera había sido removida de su clase. El 17 de octubre dicha compañera todavía estaba en la misma clase.

Cuando la niña intenta defenderse, la escuela la castiga, incluso cuando empuja a alguien y se dirige directamente a la oficina. En octubre le dieron media falta por este motivo. Luego, esta mitad se usó para impedir que asistiera a 2 bailes escolares y un carnaval escolar en octubre, a pesar de que se requiere una falta completa para no asistir a estos eventos, según las reglas de la escuela.

Sin embargo, en diciembre se le otorgó una falta adicional. Cuando la familia preguntó por el motivo, no se les dio una respuesta.

Desafortunadamente, los problemas no terminaron en 2022.

El 11 de enero de 2023, un compañero de clase la atacó, dañando su propiedad personal. Una semana después, este compañero de clase la apuñaló en la pierna con un lápiz cuatro veces. Afortunadamente, vestía jeans que evitaron daños graves.

¿Mejorarían las cosas en febrero? No. Ni siquiera un poco, según explica el padre de la niña.

La escuela notificó a su familia que, aunque era una estudiante de honor, no podría asistir a una excursión con los otros estudiantes de honor. Les dijeron que era por sus dos faltas, aunque solo tenía 1.5 (una de las cuales no fue explicada).

La familia y los amigos enviaron varios correos electrónicos preguntando a la escuela por qué sucedía esto y qué se podía hacer.

Evidentemente, la administración de la escuela estuvo demasiado ocupada como para ayudar o responder durante la semana del viaje.

El 7 de febrero, ella fue atacada verbalmente con lenguaje de odio por un par de compañeras de clase. La llamaron varios nombres, incluyendo: 'N' perra tonta (La palabra 'N' es un término despreciativo usado para nombrar a las personas negras). No hace falta decir que en realidad dijeron la palabra N completa. Ella denunció los incidentes con testigos. Más tarde, el director de la escuela llamó a la familia y afirmó que habían realizado una investigación porque los estudiantes habían dicho la palabra N alrededor de esta niña.

Comunidad Trans Bajo Ataques Tras Matanza en Nashville

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Señaló que existe un clima hostil en muchos estados, donde se están "demonizando" a las personas trans, a través de la legislación y la retórica. "Estos son ataques de la derecha, de personas desinformadas. Hay una sensación de retroceso".

Los niños en los "estados rojos" (el rojo es el color del Partido Republicano) están pasando por un momento particularmente difícil y hay pocos recursos disponibles para ellos, dijo.

Afirmación de género, en riesgo

Maasch habló de la necesidad de atención a la afirmación de género y señaló, por ejemplo, que no existe una cura para la disforia corporal; es decir, para el malestar o el trastorno que experimentan personas trans sobre la contradicción que existe entre su identidad de género y su género de asignación (nacimiento).

"Si no lo tratas, ahí es cuando te pones en peligro. Algunos niños se ponen mal cuando tratas de eliminar su género. Empiezan a perder la esperanza y se deprimen o sufren de ansiedad".

La atención de la afirmación de género está en peligro de extinción en 11 estados, entre los que se cuentan Iowa y Kentucky. Otros estados que prohíben el cuidado por afirmación de género para menores incluyen a Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Dakota del Sur, Tennessee y Utah.

El Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos de EE.UU. (HHS) define la atención de afirmación de género como un tratamiento centrado en el paciente que alinea los rasgos físicos externos con su identidad de género.

Maasch alentó a los niños que luchan con la identidad de género a apoyarse en voces calificadas y a comunicar su caso, por ejemplo, con su organización The Trevor Project, que tiene experiencia en la asistencia a jóvenes transgénero. Las personas de confianza, incluidos los hermanos mayores o una tía, también pueden ser una fuente de apoyo, agregó.

La violencia como respuesta

A pesar de las campañas de concientización, muchos jóvenes transgénero siguen siendo víctimas de violencia.

En junio pasado, un estudiante transgénero en Kalama, Washington, tuvo que ser hospitalizado luego de que fue pateado repetidamente por otro estudiante que usaba botas con punta de acero.

Un adolescente transgénero en Pompano Beach, Florida, denunció haber sido pateado, golpeado y escupido sin descanso dos veces. La primera vez fue cuando estaba en sexto grado.

En marzo, ocho estudiantes golpearon salvajemente a un estudiante

¿Alrededor? No. Esta palabra se usó hacia ella con la intención de lastimarla. No salió casualmente en una conversación no relacionada con ella.

¿Cómo y por qué esta situación puede ser tan minimizada?

Y lo más importante, como dijo su padre: "¿Cómo puedes realizar una investigación completa si no has hablado con la víctima?"

El 22 de marzo, durante su sexto periodo, dos chicas que estaban sentadas detrás de ella la llamaban por nombres como "culo negro" y "de necesidades especiales". Ella dio vuelta varias veces hacia ellas y les dijo que le pararan y la dejaran en paz. En lugar de apoyarla, el maestro le dijo que dejara de "involucrarse" en la conversación de sus compañeros de clase. Le sugirió que siguiera sus instrucciones o fuera a la oficina. Ella eligió ir a la oficina para reportar el incidente al subdirector que resultó no estar en el campus.

En cambio, se le dio detención durante el almuerzo.

Lamentablemente, hay muchos otros incidentes de racismo y discriminación que esta niña y su familia han soportado gracias a sus compañeros de clase y profesores.

La familia ha tratado incansablemente de transmitir sus preocupaciones y tener una conversación honesta con las autoridades de la Escuela Intermedia Wilson y el Distrito Escolar Primario de Chowchilla.

Llamadas telefónicas y correos electrónicos interminables que quedan sin respuesta. "Hemos intentado todo para comunicarnos con ellos, pero no quieren escuchar", compartió su padre.

Las demandas de cambio de actitud de la familia hacia la escuela han caído en oídos sordos.

Cuando la familia recibe una respuesta de la escuela, esta es rechazada inmediatamente. A su padre le dijeron desde que tiene una "voz de predicador negro", intimidante, hasta que su hija podría estar mintiendo porque "los niños hacen eso a veces". Los padres lo han escuchado todo.

Después de comunicarme con la escuela y el distrito escolar varias veces, recibí la siguiente respuesta:

"Gracias por su consulta. El Distrito toma muy en serio cualquier incidente de disciplina, alegaciones de racismo, intimidación o acoso general. Investigamos cada situación a fondo. Según sea necesario, asesoramos a nuestros estudiantes y seguimos nuestra política de disciplina. La escuela y el distrito no proporcionarán más comentarios." - Superintendente Douglas J. Collins

La familia está explorando opciones legales.

Paulina Cruz es una ex-becaria de Community Alliance. Ella es una inmigrante mexicana y actualmente está estudiando Antropología y Psicología en CSU Fresno. Paulina dedica su tiempo libre a escribir poesía y pintar.

transgénero en un autobús escolar de Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Stella Tice, de 22 años, quien creció en la zona rural de Klamath Falls, Oregon, cuenta su experiencia. Pasó gran parte de su joven vida tratando de adaptarse a las normas del género que le fue asignado al nacer.

"Siempre sentí que era diferente a los demás", dijo Tice a EMS. "Las primeras etapas de la disforia golpean fuerte, especialmente, durante la pubertad. No tenía ningún idioma ni conocimiento para expresarlo", aseveró. Stella asistía a la iglesia todos los domingos con su familia, así como a las reuniones de los miércoles con un grupo de jóvenes religiosos.

Aunque recuerda que fue intimidada en la escuela, nunca contó nada a los administradores de la secundaria y tampoco a sus padres. "Me incomodaba compartir mis sentimientos, porque me preocupaba ser ridiculizado por mis compañeros".

Hace 16 meses, con el apoyo de su pareja, Stella comenzó a hacer la transición a mujer. Decírselo a sus padres fue inicialmente duro. "Fue un comienzo difícil, pero definitivamente aprendieron mucho. Vengo de una familia muy unida. Y no querían perderme".

El hermano mayor de Stella resultó ser uno de sus más fuertes seguidores. "Donde sea que termines, tienes mi apoyo al 100 por ciento", me dijo.

Stella y su pareja viven en Eugene, Oregon, que tiene una gran comunidad LGBTQIA, por lo que la joven pudo acceder al apoyo que necesitaba durante su proceso de transición. Ahora, ella insta a los jóvenes trans a recurrir a distintas fuentes de apoyo, como los subreddits, streamers transgénero de Twitch o los creadores de contenido transgénero de TikTok, con el fin de tener un sentido de comunidad y respaldo.

"Sé que esto es un cliché, pero (así tu situación) mejorará e irá mejorando", dijo.

Sunita Sohrajy es editora asociada de Ethnic Media Services.

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Movimiento en Delano Para el Control de Rentas

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Aunque la propuesta no fue aprobada, ya que la Concejal Liz Morris y el Vice-alcalde Salvador Solorio-Ruiz votaron en contra, sí se aprobó un estudio municipal sobre la vivienda, el cual evaluará los costos y viabilidad de una medida como la que se propone, y que fue propuesto por la Concejal Verónica Vásquez.

Vásquez, quien ha mostrado apoyo a la propuesta, instó a sus compañeros a dejar de posponer el asunto. “¿Por qué seguir poniendo esto en espera, por qué tenemos que depender de otros?” cuestionó Vásquez. “Yo estoy lista para ser parte de la solución; nuestro propio estudio traerá a todo mundo a la mesa”, dijo antes de hacer la moción formal que fue secundada y aprobada por los otros concejales.

Cabe destacar que tanto el Alcalde de la ciudad, Joe L. Alindajao, como el Concejal Mario Nuñez no han tomado parte de las discusiones puesto que ambos son propietarios de casas de renta en Delano.

Cómo empezó todo

Un par de meses antes de su participación en la reunión de concilio, la señora Pérez dijo haber estado siguiendo las noticias donde se hablaba del tema de las rentas.

“Yo miraba en la tele que hablaban del concilio y de juntas; dónde se hacen esas juntas, quiero ir”, se preguntaba Pérez según narró en entrevista con este medio. “Yo ya estaba enfadada, la renta sube y sube y el dinero se va en eso”, dijo.

Un día, por casualidad se dio cuenta que una de sus vecinas, Gina Martínez, era organizadora voluntaria de Delano Guardians, quien la invitó a que asistiera a las reuniones. “Sí tenía un poco de miedo, la verdad, pero coraje de que las rentas estén muy caras y las casas en malas condiciones”, dijo Pérez, quien agregó que en su actual vivienda tiene acceso a un baño y una pequeña cocina. Su casero le cobra una tarifa fija por agua, pero nunca les muestra el recibo original del cobro.

“Muchas veces no se animan a reportar desperfectos por miedo a ser desalojados”, dijo Anai Paniagua, cofundadora de LOUD for Tomorrow.

Aunque la organización juvenil tomó forma desde 2018, como proyecto fiscalmente dependiente del Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CRPE), fue en el 2020 cuando entraron de lleno a organizar en torno al tema de la vivienda.

Según Paniagua, tras desalojos injustos por la falta de empleo que generó la pandemia de COVID-19, comenzaron a organizar reuniones comunitarias, en un esfuerzo por encontrar maneras de ayudar a su comunidad. “Técnicamente no teníamos financiación pero encontramos otras organizaciones que estaban hablando del mismo tema”.

Fue así como se acercaron a Tenants Together, organización que, según Paniagua, “Nos ha brindado una valiosa ayuda técnica y orientación”.

El trabajo en Fresno

“En Delano se vienen organizando en el tema de control de rentas por más de un año. A nosotros nos contactaron de CVEA, reunimos a las organizaciones y se formó la coalición”, dijo Shar Thompson, coordinadora regional del Valle Central de Tenants Together.

“Nuestra gente trabajadora que labora en el campo está pagando más del 60 por ciento de su ingreso mensual en renta”, dijo Thompson, “Tener que elegir entre vivienda o comida lo hace más difícil para las personas”.

De acuerdo a Thompson, actualmente Merced es la única ciudad en el Valle Central con una ordenanza de control de rentas, aunque es sólo para situaciones de emergencia.

El trabajo que se está haciendo en Delano, principalmente con la participación de jóvenes es inspirador, según Thompson. “Nos inspiran a seguir adelante y a ser más creativos al organizar”, dijo. “En Fresno estamos un poco atrasados, instamos a los miembros del concilio a ponerlo en la agenda como lo hicieron en Delano. Pero ninguno de nuestros concejales cree que una ordenanza de control de rentas debe ser impuesta en Fresno”, agregó.

De acuerdo a Thompson, los concejales de Fresno creen que el asunto es un tema de oferta y demanda y que una ordenanza de control de rentas afectaría el desarrollo inmobiliario y provocaría que dueños independientes puedan perder sus casas. Son los mismos argumentos que esgrime la mayoría de quienes se oponen al control de rentas.

“Nosotros creemos que el control de rentas es una parte importante que hace a las ciudades más asequibles para vivir y ayuda a los inquilinos a mantener más dinero en sus bolsillos, el cual terminan gastando en la economía local”, agregó Thompson.

Según cifras de Tenants Together, alrededor del 54 por ciento de residentes de Fresno, rentan el lugar donde viven y el precio promedio de un apartamento de dos habitaciones es de \$1.400. Thompson dijo que existen otros grupos en Fresno que están

La propuesta y la legislación actual

De acuerdo a Paniagua durante sus esfuerzos organizativos se encontraron con un Concejo Municipal poco comprometido con la comunidad.

Aun y cuando con el anterior alcalde Bryan Osorio se había logrado introducir la redacción de un programa de estabilización de rentas, el tema no figuraba en el plan general para el 2030.

“La Ciudad no se comprometía con la comunidad para encontrar soluciones, es como si nos dijeran ‘así es como no se pueden hacer las cosas’”, compartió Paniagua. No había quien abogara durante las juntas de concilio”.

“Hemos echado la bola a andar y queremos hacerlos (al Concilio) responsables”, dijo

Actualmente, existe una ley estatal de protección de inquilinos (AB 1482) que restringe los aumentos de alquiler a no más de 5 por ciento -más aumento de inflación o CPI- en cualquier periodo de 12 meses, o el 10 por ciento, lo que sea menor.

La ordenanza propuesta en Delano limitaría los incrementos a 70 por ciento del cambio porcentual de CPI y restringiría los aumentos en la renta a no más del 3 por ciento en cualquier periodo de 5 años.

El CPI es un informe mensual emitido por Estados Unidos, que indica el nivel de inflación y el nivel de gasto en bienes y servicios dentro del país.

Los otros argumentos

Los dos concejales que se mostraron en contra de la implementación de la medida argumentaron motivos como los expuestos por algunos propietarios que también se dieron cita en la reunión. Gabriel Rodríguez, jubilado de 60 años, dijo ser propietario “preocupado por el futuro” ya que invirtió en propiedades de renta para poder pagar la educación de sus hijos.

Otro casero invitó a la comunidad a trabajar unidos y tener cuidado con “las voces de afuera”, en clara referencia a la asesoría externa que tienen los inquilinos. Ambos pidieron a los concejales tomar la mejor decisión.

La concejal Morris y el vicealcalde Solorio-Ruiz argumentaron su voto en contra aludiendo razones de oferta y demanda y a que la medida generaría costos de implementación e incremento en impuestos. Ambos negaron haber hecho promesas durante su campaña. “Yo no hice tal promesa, no sé de dónde sacaron eso”, dijo Morris.



Una inquilina de Delano se presentó a la reunión en apoyo al control de rentas.
Foto de Miguel Ángel Báez

Por su parte Solorio-Ortiz dijo que en su campaña habló de “trabajar para controlar la crisis de vivienda y no sobre control de rentas”.

¿Qué Sigue?

Lejos de sentirse derrotados ante la no aprobación de la propuesta, la joven activista y la Coalición ven el lado positivo. Con la orden para realizar el estudio, los recursos de la ciudad, como los abogados, intervendrán en el proceso de redacción para una nueva propuesta.

“Tomamos la medida como un paso hacia adelante”, dijo Paniagua, “Nuestros ancestros estarán felices de que podamos poner la muestra de cómo hacerlo”, dijo en referencia al movimiento campesino de los años ‘60s, liderado por Cesar Chávez, el cual consiguió beneficios para los trabajadores agrícolas y cuya cuna fue precisamente la ciudad de Delano.

“Seguimos aprendiendo a medida que avanzamos y queremos poner el ejemplo para que más ciudades en el Valle también lo hagan”, expresó.

Dijo además que en caso de no tener éxito, la coalición considera llevar la medida a las urnas y dejar que los votantes decidan.

O como dijo Arturo Rodríguez, director de organizadores de CVEA, “Lo que dijo el vicealcalde Solorio negando lo que prometió en campaña es una absoluta mentira. Pero que no se olvide que la gente vota y si no cumples, el costo es no ser reelegido. Es la forma en que funciona la política”.

Miguel Ángel Báez es un periodista del Valle Central nacido en México. Él se graduó de CSU Bakersfield y fue editor del periódico Noticiero Semanal, de Porterville.

Primer Juego en Casa de Central Valley Fuego de la Temporada 2023



La pelota se hace pasar por la luna mientras navega sobre el poste de la portería del Central Valley Fuego en un juego contra Omaha. El portero de Fuego, Mitchell North, y el delantero Villian Bijev la vieron pasar. Omaha anotó en los últimos minutos de la primera mitad, luego en los últimos minutos de la segunda mitad, frustrando a los fanáticos que habían llegado para el primer partido en casa de la temporada, en la noche del 8 de abril. Foto de Peter Maiden

ALIANZA COMUNITARIA

LA VOZ DEL MOVIMIENTO PROGRESISTA DESDE 1996

Movimiento en Delano Para el Control de Rentas

POR MIGUEL ÁNGEL BÁEZ

El mensaje que la joven Xochitl Rodríguez llevó a los concejales de la ciudad de Delano el pasado 3 de abril fue claro, fuerte y conciso: "No quiero tener 27 (años) y vivir todavía con mi mamá".

Como Rodríguez, son cada vez más las personas que ven comprometido su futuro pero sobre todo su presente ante la falta de vivienda asequible, ya sea debido a factores inflacionarios como el aumento en los costos de construcción o directamente a la escasez de hogares.

De acuerdo a un reciente estudio de Habitat for Humanity, el país tiene un déficit de 3.8 millones de casas, especialmente en el rango de "precios accesibles para bajos ingresos". El informe, titulado "2022 State of the Nation's Housing report" califica el déficit como uno de los principales disparadores de los precios de las rentas.

Localmente, la crisis de vivienda afecta de sobremana a inquilinos que radican en poblados rurales del Valle Central, en muchos casos con empleos agrícolas temporales e ingresos que no van a la par con el incremento en las rentas.

Como es el caso de Oralía Pérez, una jubilada de 68 años, quien dijo pagar \$1,000 por la renta de una habitación en una casa de dos recámaras.

Los \$840 que recibe de su pensión del Seguro Social no son suficientes para cubrir sus gastos de vivienda, por lo que se ve obligada a trabajar cinco meses al año en las labores del campo.

"Empecé pagando \$900 y ahora pago \$1,000 y me dijeron que en abril voy a pagar más", dijo Pérez. "No se puede con eso. No está bien, no es justo".

Tanto el testimonio de la joven Rodríguez como el de la señora Pérez ante el Concilio, así como la participación de un numeroso grupo de personas en la citada reunión, es resultado de un movimiento que tuvo su origen durante la pandemia.

Las más de 20 personas entre residentes y jóvenes activistas, pidieron al concilio la aprobación de una propuesta de ordenanza de estabilización de renta, la cual surgió de la misma comunidad a través del trabajo organizativo de la *Coalición para la Vivienda Justa*.

"Algunos de ustedes hicieron promesas de campaña apoyando el tema (control de la renta). Espero que honren sus promesas", dijo José Orellana, organizador y cofundador de LOUD for Tomorrow, antes de que los concejales emitieran su voto.

LOUD for Tomorrow es una organización juvenil que forma parte de la coalición, la cual incluye a grupos como Central Valley Empowerment Alliance (CVEA), Delano Guardians, Tenants Together, Unidad Popular Benito Juárez, entre otras.

De acuerdo a Orellana el costo promedio mensual de un apartamento en Delano es de \$1.468, difícil de solventar para miles de residentes.



Jóvenes activistas en favor del control de la renta se expresaron el pasado 3 de abril en la reunión del Concilio de la Ciudad de Delano. Foto de Miguel Ángel Báez

Otra persona, quien dijo ser empleado de la empresa de Amazon, compartió su problemática para encontrar vivienda. Con un sueldo mensual de \$2.500 y una familia con siete hijos, dijo que no le admiten en una casa de sólo dos cuartos, que es lo que su sueldo le permite pagar. Un hogar con más habitaciones está fuera de su alcance. "Pagar \$1,700 de renta es muy difícil, ni trabajando más de 40 horas calificamos. Con estos precios es imposible", expresó.

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Comunidad Trans Bajo Ataques Tras Matanza en Nashville

POR SUNITA SOHRABJI, ETHNIC MEDIA SERVICES

Una vez que se conoció la noticia de que Audrey Hale era transgénero, la comunidad LGBTQIA teme ahora ser el blanco de ataques, en represalia.

Audrey Hale, de 28 años, quien al nacer fue registrada con género femenino y que luego se habría autoidentificado como hombre, mató a seis personas en la escuela Covenant de Nashville (Tennessee), entre ellas a tres estudiantes de 9 años, el 27 de marzo del 2023.

Susan Maasch, directora de Trans Youth Equality Foundation en Portland, Maine, dijo a Ethnic Media Services: "Ayer nos llamó un hombre que nos estaba gritando. '¿Qué vas a hacer con tus donaciones?, ¿los vas a usar para entrenar a niños para matar a niños cristianos?' Esto fue aterrador. Tenemos niños, familias y organizaciones que temen ser atacadas", indicó.

La activista contó que llamó al FBI para denunciar la llamada telefónica amenazante, pero no pudo pasar de una recepcionista. "Hablar con la Policía local, pero no estoy



Stella Tice, de 22 años, inició su transición hace poco más de un año y medio. Foto cortesía de Stella Tice/EMS

segura de qué saldrá de eso. Simplemente, no tenemos respuesta", lamentó.

El FBI y el Departamento de Justicia realizaron una sesión informativa esta semana con organizaciones que apoyan a los jóvenes transgénero, aconsejándoles cómo mantenerse a salvo durante un posible aumento de la violencia contra la comunidad.

"Este es un momento terrible, aterrador e intimidante para las personas transgénero y sus seres queridos", dijo Maasch. "El hecho de que la persona responsable del tiroteo en Nashville fuera transgénero será usado y abusado por políticos y otras personas".

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El Racismo Depende del Poder Para Crecer

POR PAULINA CRUZ

Una niña afroamericana que asiste a la escuela secundaria Wilson en Chowchilla, en el Condado de Madera, está haciendo todo lo posible para enfrentarse al racismo, pero parece que los que están en poder no le hacen caso.

El padre de esta niña ha pedido que sus nombres no se incluyan en el artículo por su propia seguridad.

Esta niña de 13 años ha sido agredida física, emocional y verbalmente por compañeros de clase. La administración no ha hecho nada para ayudarla, aparentemente ignorando y minimizando lo que le sucedió, según asegura su padre. Lo peor de todo esto ha estado sucediendo durante años, sin cambios a la vista.

En noviembre de 2019, le dejaron un ojo morado, pero la escuela declaró que el estudiante responsable de la lesión "probablemente" lo había hecho por accidente—a pesar de las afirmaciones de los testigos en sentido contrario. No le permitieron ver a la enfermera y sus padres no fueron notificados. Le dijeron que no era un ojo morado y la enviaron de regreso a clase, a pesar de la hinchazón y lo morado en su rostro.

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