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Making a Killing

The San Francisco Mime Troupe (SFMT) will be in Fresno on Thursday, September 20. This year's performance is packed with more song and dance than a Bush administration press conference! Mime, as defined by the SFMT is the exaggeration of everyday life in story and song - it is not the silent mime that some people associate with the word.

Making a Killing follows two army newspaper reporters assigned to write a puff piece on the construction of an American funded hospital in Iraq. But as the facts unravel, it soon becomes clear that there's corruption, death, music and mayhem lurking behind this benevolent seeming humanitarian project. Back in Washington, Dick and Condi are manipulating intelligence and in Iraq, a cabal of military-industrial-Neo-Con colluders will stop at nothing to hide the shocking truth!

Making a Killing is the follow-up to SFMT head playwright Michael Gene Sullivan's hit adaptation of George Orwell's 1984, directed by Oscar winning actor, Tim Robbins – the production of which has been touring nationally and internationally with LA-based theater company, Actor's Gang.

For event details, see page 25.

Hands that Forge History

A Recognition to the Traditions, Struggles and Contributions of Central Valley's immigrants
By: Sherry Rahmatian



The Pan Valley Institute will return the Tamejavi festival to Fresno this year for the fourth time, providing a place for all Central Valley communities to recognize, celebrate and learn about each other's cultural histories and traditions.

Tamejavi will take place on September 22nd, 2007 in Radio Park, adjacent to the Fresno Art Museum, 2233 N. First St. The day-long event will be free to the public, and will feature several diverse components which highlight the contributions of the Central Valley's immigrant groups. The hope and pur-

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**"Performing Indarapatra." Pinoy, Filipino Dance Group. Tamejavi 2006, Madera.
Photo by Tudor Stanley**

SEPTEMBER 2007

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The Silence of the Bombs

by Norman Solomon

Three years have passed since most Americans came to the conclusion that the Iraq war was a “mistake.” Reporting the results of a Gallup poll in June 2004, USA Today declared: “It is the first time since Vietnam that a majority of Americans has called a major deployment of U.S. forces a mistake.” And public opinion continued to move in an antiwar direction. But such trends easily coexist with a war effort becoming even more horrific.

In Washington, over the past 25 years, top masters of war have preened themselves in the glow of victory after military triumphs in Grenada, Panama, the 1991 Gulf War, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. During that time, with the exception of the current war in Iraq, the Pentagon’s major aggressive ventures have been cast in a light of virtue rewarded — in sync with the implicit belief that American might makes right.

“The problem after a war is with the victor,” longtime peace activist A. J. Muste observed several decades ago. “He thinks he has just proved that war and violence pay.”

The present situation has a different twist along the same lines. The Iraq war drags on, the United States is certainly not the victor — and the U.S. president, a fervent believer in war and violence, still has a lot to prove.

Faith that American might makes right is apt to be especially devout among those who command the world’s most powerful military — and have the option of trying to overcome wartime obstacles by unleashing even more lethal violence.

These days, there’s a lot of talk about seeking a political solution in Iraq — but the Bush administration and the military leaders who answer to the commander in chief are fundamentally engaged in a very different sort of project. Looking ahead, from the White House, the key goal is to seem to be winding down the U.S. war effort while actually reconfiguring massive violence to make it more effective.

Two sets of figures have paramount importance in mainline U.S. media and politics — the number of U.S. troops stationed in Iraq and the number of them dying there. Often taking cues from news media and many lawmakers on Capitol Hill, antiwar groups have tended to buy into the formula, emphasizing those numbers and denouncing them as intolerably high.

Meanwhile, the Iraqis killed by Americans don’t become much of an issue in the realms of U.S. media and politics. News coverage provides the latest tallies of Iraqis who die from “sectarian violence” and “terrorist attacks,” but the reportage rarely discusses how the U.S. occupation has been an ascending catalyst for that carnage. It’s even more rare for the coverage to focus on the magnitude of Iraqi deaths that are direct results of American firepower.

In the United States, many advocates of U.S. withdrawal from Iraq have focused on what the war has been doing to Americans. This approach may seem like political pragmatism and tactical wisdom, but in the long run it’s likely to play into the hands of White House strategists who will try to regain domestic political ground by reducing American losses while boosting the use of high-tech weaponry against Iraqi people.

Every night, I receive an email bulletin that’s called “U.S.

Air Force Print News.” It’s one of countless ways the Pentagon does continual outreach to journalists with messages that encourage favorable coverage of what the military is doing. Those messages are filled with stories about the bravery, compassion and towering stature of — in the words of retired Gen. Colin Powell a decade ago — “those wonderful men and women who do such a great job.”

But journalists receive just a trickle of limited information about the bombing runs undertaken by the U.S. military in Afghanistan and Iraq. The official sources have very little to say about what happens to people at the other end of the bombs. And, overall, U.S. media outlets don’t add much information about the human consequences.

In late May, an important challenge to those media patterns appeared on the website TomDispatch.com (and, in shorter form, in The Nation magazine). The in-depth article — titled “Did the U.S. Lie about Cluster Bomb Use in Iraq?” — went beyond probing the Pentagon’s extensive use of barbaric cluster bombs in Iraq since the spring of 2003. The piece, by journalist Nick Turse, also shined a bright light on fundamental aspects of a U.S. air war that has seldom seen any light of day in big American media outlets.

“Unfortunately, thanks to an utter lack of coverage by the mainstream media, what we don’t know about the air war in Iraq so far outweighs what we do know that anything but the most minimal picture of the nature of destruction from the air in that country simply can’t be painted,” Turse writes.

The article raises a key question: “Does the U.S. military keep the numbers of rockets and cannon rounds fired from its planes and helicopters secret because more Iraqi civilians have died due to their use than any other type of weaponry?”

Turse, an associate editor and research director of TomDispatch.com, has written for daily newspapers including the Los Angeles Times and the San Francisco Chronicle. His article pulls no punches about the press as he assesses huge gaps in media coverage of the Iraq air war funded by U.S. taxpayers.

Sadly, he observes, “media reports on the air war are so sparse, with reporting confined largely to reprinting U.S. military handouts and announcements of air strikes, that much of the air war in Iraq remains unknown — although the very fact of an occupying power regularly conducting air strikes in and near population centers should have raised a question or two.”

The available evidence is strong that the U.S. air war is escalating — with a surge of resulting casualties among Iraqi civilians. Their suffering and their deaths get very little coverage in the U.S. news

media. “Since the Bush administration’s invasion, the American air war has been given remarkably short shrift in the media,” Turse writes. And he cites “indications that the air war has taken an especially grievous toll on Iraqi children.”

The combination of deceptive officials in the U.S. government and an evasive U.S. press has been a disaster for the flow of information to the American public. “With the military unwilling to tell the truth — or say anything at all, in most cases — and unable to provide the stability necessary for [non-governmental organizations] to operate, it falls to the mainstream media, even at this late stage of the conflict, to begin ferreting out substantive information on the air war,” Turse points out. “It seems, however, that until reporters begin bypassing official U.S. military pronouncements and locating Iraqi sources, we will remain largely in the dark with little knowledge of what can only be described as the secret U.S. air war in Iraq.”

As the summer of 2007 gets underway, the demand to “bring the troops home” is necessary but insufficient. The numbers of Americans fighting and dying in Iraq are not a reliable measure of U.S. culpability in the continuing slaughter.

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The new documentary film “War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death,” based on Norman Solomon’s book of the same title, was released directly to DVD in mid-June. For information about the full-length movie, produced by the Media Education Foundation and narrated by Sean Penn, go to: www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org



Join us for an evening with
Norman Solomon
founder and director of the Institute for Public Accuracy and
senior advisor to the National Radio Project.
Sunday, September 9
Doors open at 5:30 PM with music by Armen Nalbandian
Dinner at 6 PM • Speaker at 7 PM

The Fresno Free College Foundation and KFCF 88.1 FM invite you to their annual banquet at Love & Garlic (5351 N. Diana Court, off Barstow, behind Trader Joe’s). Banquet Tickets: \$40 (advance reservations recommended). Speaker only: \$10/\$5 students with ID. For tickets or information call 233-2221.

Central Valley Progressive Political Action Committee

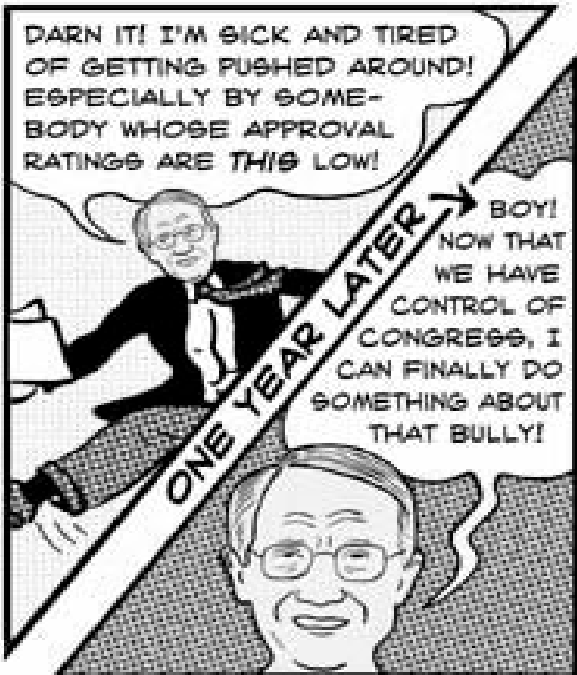
Saturday, September 8, 2007 3:30 p.m.

The September meeting of the Central Valley Progressive PAC at the Fresno Centrre for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. in Fresno will feature Fresno City Council President Henry T. Perea speaking on what the City and residents can do to make Fresno the solar energy capital of California. He will also address plans to bring mega-solar farms to Fresno County. More information is available at (559) 435-7360

PO Box 5845, Fresno, CA 93755 www.cvppac.org

THIS MODERN WORLD

BY TOM TOMORROW



TOM TOMORROW © 2007... www.thismodernworld.com

Peace Fresno: September Simmers

By Bill Simon

September is the month. We must convince our Congressional Representatives not to vote in September for another funding bill for the Iraq Invasion and Occupation. United for Peace and Justice, Troops Out Now, Moveon, Declaration for Peace, and many more groups are gearing up for September Actions to say no more funding. The more people who participate in anti-war activity, the better chance we have to end the war.

Peace Fresno invites you to join us at the Peace Corner: Shaw and Blackstone on Friday, September 7 from 4:30-6:30 pm to say No More War and No More Funding! In

one of the more exciting developments, Sacramento Peace Action has organized peace groups from every Congressional district in California to participate in "California Calling". Join Peace Fresno and this state-wide coalition to call your Congressional Representative and Senators between September 10 and September 13 to say "No More Funds for Occupation!"

The number for the House switchboard in Washington is: 202-224-3121. The direct phone numbers to your Representatives offices are: Radanovich: Washington 202-225-4540; Fresno 559-449-2490; Costa: Washington 202-225-3341; Fresno 559-495-1620; Nunes: Washington 202-225-2523; Clovis 559-323-5265; Visalia 559-733-3861; Cardoza: Washington 202-225-6131; Merced 209-383-4455; Modesto 209-527-1914. Senators: Boxer: Washington 202-224-3553; Fresno 497-5109; Feinstein: Washington 202-224-3841; Fresno 485-7430.

On September 18 Peace Fresno will hold its annual membership meeting and election of officers. All members are welcome to vote and to run for office. Everyone is welcome to be a member. On September 20, we are arranging a performance by the San Francisco Mime Troop at the Roosevelt High School Auditorium. For tickets, leave a message at Peace Fresno's voicemail: 487-2515 or go to www.peacefresno.org.

Friday, September 21, is the International Day of Peace. Join us in celebrating the Day of Peace at the Peace Corner: Blackstone and Shaw from 4:30-6:30 where we will demand a national policy of Peace not War.

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Bill Simon is the President of Peace Fresno



Sun Mt Chronicles
Peace • Justice • Big Mama



sunmt.org/aug6chron07.html

Great to challenge government



**Skip prez debates.
Watch machine debates.**

2008 being decided by vote machine hassles



Hiroshima memories call us to stake our future on mutual respect & peace
sunmt.org/aug11chron07.html

\$926 million LOCAL tax dollars spent on Iraq War SO FAR!

sunmt.org/aug18chron07.html

Freedom's first line of offense

Prying open government private "secrets"



sunmt.org/aug20chron07.html

Fresno Hospital Dumps Homeless Patient in Dirt Field

By Kelly Borkert

For over two weeks, Sherrie Williams, a 45 year old homeless resident of Fresno, spent her days and nights in downtown Fresno’s Community Regional Medical Center. Five days after being admitted in their Emergency Trauma Center due to extreme abdominal pain, she was moved briefly into a hospital room before being discharged into the custody of two homeless friends who were “mistaken” for a sister with a home to take her to. Their home being a pickup truck, she was left in the parking lot of a McDonald’s, where she fell over in her wheelchair and suffered further injury as her battered wheelchair dug into the left side of her rib cage.

Upon arrival, Jean Chipp, director of the Sleeping Bag Project for the homeless, and myself found Sherrie in a highly medicated state, her head lolling about in response to whatever drugs the hospital gave her before sending her “home”. The hospital worker who commented on her release two days later (shortly after denying any knowledge whatsoever) stated the couple who received her claimed to be her sister and family and had a home to take her to. While no evidence to the contrary exists, a pattern of behavior was emerging that suggested something more convenient than confused, in that the hospital may have called the couple to come and get her, and they were duped into doing the wrong thing for the sake of hospital policy.

Al and Sherrie have been married for nearly seven years, the last year and a half being totally homeless and without any form of income. Both have been regular participants in the Saturday Food Not Bombs meal servings at Roeding Park, and Al has been an active and longtime member of the group, which has served the homeless and low-income community in that area for 11 years. Sherrie has been wheelchair bound for several years due to severe physical conditions that could be corrected by surgery.

It is with that background that I approached Community Hospital with Al on Monday July 30th, Sherrie’s third day in the emergency room before the Wednesday evening discharge that left her at McDonald’s, disoriented, injured and untreated. We had just been to visit Pamela Kincaid at Community’s long term care facility in the old UMC facility at King’s Canyon and Cedar, where she was recovering from a very brutal beating on the 13th of July. Concerned for Pam’s security and safety, we had asked her, very deliberately, if she was content to be there. She assured us she was happy to be in from the heat, with protection from further violence common to the street life she lived. Realizing she had nothing to read, I retrieved three murder mystery paperbacks from my vehicle, and left her in the hands of Community staffers who had been instructed to restrict access and information regarding Pam’s whereabouts to a pre-approved list provided by her attorneys in the newly expanded class action lawsuit, “Pamela Kincaid v. the City of Fresno”. Following that reassuring visit to Pam, Al and I went to see Sherrie at Community Regional Medical Center’s Emergency Trauma unit. Still being given nothing but fluids, and not being able to get information about her treatment, we only hoped she was being prepared for surgery. Certainly, it was reassuring to see someone who needed medical care and had no system of support actually being cared for in both facilities. It appeared that the two homeless women I knew were in good hands Monday afternoon.

Early Wednesday morning I received an email stating Pam Kincaid had fallen four stories and was brain dead on life support. Too shocked to read much more than a few requests and a contact number, I placed a call and was out the door and on the way to the scene, stopping first to pick up Al. We both were on site and in Pam’s room by 8:30 AM. After an hour or so of asking questions and examining the scene, we left to see Sherrie who was still in Emergency. After five days, her husband still had no information about her treatment. Three word answers came quickly to every query- “I

don’t know.” Leaving the emergency ward, I dropped Al off and went home rather exhausted to pass along the disturbing details we found at UMC that morning. It was after 7 PM when I received Al’s phone call, and after seeing Sherrie’s condition, Jean and I went to Community to find someone to discuss the problem with. Not being relatives, we were unable to get more than a suggestion to readmit her to Emergency ASAP.

The next morning, Sherrie was readmitted to Emergency with a bleeding rectum and found her way into a hospital room the same day. Friday morning Al and I visited a much more coherent Sherrie to check on her progress, making sure she would not leave or allow them to discharge her.

It was around 3 PM when I realized my phone had been off since the hospital visit, and I had four voice mails, all from Sherrie trying to reach me and tell me she “had been discharged and was ready to go, so come pick me up”. A quick stop at the hospital before retrieving Al found a different Sherrie than the one that morning. Upbeat and happy to go, she seemed a mile re-



Sherri Williams in her room at Community Medical Center. Photo by Kelly Borkert.

moved from her earlier mood. After a few words with the nurse in charge, I left to get Al.

Upon our return we found Sherrie shivering violently and Al immediately refused to accept her in that condition. As I went outside to use my phone and seek some counsel, a nurse came in the room and asked the couple “what was wrong with her?” Al said she should be telling them, not asking.

A full week after her initial admission, Al still had no answers as to her condition or treatment. That entire week she was fed only intravenous fluids and given lemon flavored glycerine swabs to suck on. We decided to not only ask for a doctor, but to stand in front of the nurse’s station until we talked to someone who said something besides “I don’t know”. Ninety minutes later a doctor arrived, and explained that they could only treat her untreatable pancreatitis by not feeding solid foods, and she was an alcoholic. In other words, they held her for a week doing nothing for a condition that they could do nothing for, except of course, deprive her of solid foods and give her pain medications for the abdominal pains. When we asked what they intended to do about her more serious physical conditions, the doctor “didn’t know” anything about them. At this point she went into the room to examine Sherrie for the problems we described, and the nurse immediately came out and started talking to us, in sharp contrast to the silent treatment we received for two hours previous. Clearly, her condition was significant and unnoticed, or ignored, until we forced the issue. That night her doctor assured us a surgeon would see her Monday morning and she might go into the OR that night, or the following day.

Thus began the second week of her stay at Community Hospital. Saturday the hospital called the same couple to pick her up again. Knowing full well the consequences were too high to do something that foolish twice, she remained in her room. Sunday afternoon Sherrie called to let me know they planned to perform a colostomy procedure in two days. Monday morning, a “team of doctors” (a few UCSF medical students, her doctor and an instructor?) came through and explained some of the options they were considering, and it appeared surgery was truly imminent. She was finally being fed, Friday night they had put her on solid foods, contra-

dicting the regimen they had maintained for the entire previous week. In fact, throughout the second week of her stay, not only did she eat well and heartily, she had several surgeries proposed for “today, tonight, tomorrow, two days from now. We may send her up to San Francisco because we don’t have anyone good enough to do that sort of surgery.” Finally, on Friday afternoon, a surgeon who was willing to do the operation decided she needed to go three months sober before he could do anything.

The next day she was discharged again, and I hitched a ride to the hospital to see what could be done to stop her from being dumped. The doctor in charge was there and said she had been approved for “MSB” coverage and could get her prescriptions filled at UMC’s pharmacy after she left. Unfortunately neither of those things were correct, and if she had been discharged, it would have been without access to her pain relievers, or the coverage that had not been obtained yet. Additionally, they were unable to find an inpatient shelter or detox program to keep her safe and clean upon discharge. After a bit of trying, and clarifying the lack of prescription availability the doctor wrote orders keeping Sherrie in her room for the night.

Sunday morning the hospital seemed determined to remove Sherrie without regard to her lack of access to any safe environment to maintain the three month stretch of sobriety necessary to meet the surgeon’s requirements. The discharge planner quickly gave us a list of contact numbers to call and naturally none were serviceable until Monday morning, and not even then, as it turned out.

With no safe place for her to stay, no money for a motel, and no prospect for a shelter until the next day at best, we requested a hotel voucher for the night. The discharge planner refused, “No, no,” and we asked her to run the decision by her supervisors because we were certainly going to call a press conference on patient dumping the minute they decided not to provide a voucher.

After a long period of absence, the discharge planner returned with the top hospital supervisor, a Mr. Luca, who was “with the corporation for thirty years”, and had discussed this with legal counsel. Because they offered to send Sherrie to the Poverello House and the Rescue Mission, they were not liable for patient dumping. Al had made clear to the hospital staff those organizations were hostile parties in a lawsuit they were both involved in, and conflict of interest ruled out those locations, or any out of town shelters which Al would be unable to visit twice daily. Although Sherrie refused to go anywhere without Al, as long as Al could visit he had no problem with her being somewhere safe locally.

The notion of the Poverello House and Fresno Rescue Mission’s drug infested area being a safe place for recovery would be laughable, even without the twin issues of legal conflicts and personal safety. Pamela Kincaid was beaten downtown, and various statements including her own before she died, suggested it was in retaliation for the lawsuit. Ask any homeless person how the Rescue Mission cares for the safety and possessions of the homeless. Common sense refutes the wisdom of placing a woman with Morphine related prescriptions in the presence of dangerous addicts. The dangers and legitimate objections to dumping Sherrie in that area are not absolved by “I don’t know”.

As a result of the Hospital’s intransigence, a press conference was called. Three local TV stations arrived, and a reporter from the Fresno Bee. All appeared appalled by the story and explanation, which we tried to fairly provide. Why did they refuse to provide a motel voucher? Why were they unable or unwilling to communicate with Sherrie’s husband Al? What was the point of the promises made to initiate treatment throughout Sherri’s second week in their care? I call that “bad faith” and contrary to historical perceptions of the health care profession. The circumstances of Sherri’s prolonged non-treatment and untimely discharge were, I believe, a clear case of patient dumping and unwillingness to act in her best interests, on the part of Community Hospital.

Not one station nor the Bee ran the story, despite the numerous tie-ins to red hot homelessness and health care issues of the moment. Could the hospital adminis-

Continued on page 6

Food Not Bombs! Support the Group that Supports Fresno's Homeless

By Kelly Borkert

As we approach the third annual Fresno Food Not Bombs Fundraising Benefit (Sunday, September 16th at the Full Circle Brewery), the need for an article describing both the event and the group's activities reared its multiple heads once again. Like the mythical Hydra, when one dire need is met, others appear to challenge us. Readers of the Community Alliance are better informed than most about the struggles facing Fresno's homeless and lower income populations. Perhaps it is what they don't know that will hurt us?

The last two benefits were smashing successes. Not only did we raise twice the funds last year as before, all who attended surely had a great time, thanks to the highest quality of entertainment and the company of great Fresnans who were there sharing in the merriment.

Our gratitude towards the Full Circle Brewery, Blake Jones and the Trike Shop, Julia Dawn and the other brilliant musicians who have come forward in support, maintains a permanent place in our hearts and the lives of people who benefit from the meals served every Saturday at Roeding Park (1:00 PM just north of Storyland).

What does Food Not Bombs do every Saturday? The culmination of a weeks worth of donation collecting (Whole Foods, Farmer's Market, La Boulengerie, and Grandma's in the Tower) takes the form of a crew assembling at Wesley United Methodist Church between 9 AM and 1 PM. Quite a few tasks go into the doing. Cleaning produce, chopping for soup and salad, boiling beans that are soaked the night before, adding basic (and costly) ingredients to the soup stock, making rice, boiling tea and filling the water container, buying last minute supplies like onions, serving containers, ice, potatoes if the donations are short on soup ingredients (seasonal variations in availability make for a number of different soups over the year, all delicious!), preparing the salad dressing, cleaning up the mess we make afterwards (Gail, Elizabeth and Bobbie are the Bombs!) and making sure all the needed supplies are ready and packed to go out (That's Tom Machado's job. A huge hand for the indefatigable septuagenarian who brings a truckload of clothing to the park every Saturday, if you please). Other important components are the free wheeling discussions in the kitchen, the struggle over who picks the CD's for our music device, the camaraderie and tongue in cheek fun poking that passes the time so lightly. Without these joys it might seem like work. On occasion the number of available volunteers can dwindle to a few, but no matter the number, the deed is always done. Nearly twelve years after the first Saturday serving, a string of unbroken successes may be the most astonishing proof of what can be achieved by "regular people" doing the best they can, working together.

One reassuring asset to FNB operations is the ready response of the community to our financial needs. When given a chance to solicit donations, we do very well. Of course, we rely primarily on the donations of

Homeless continued from page 5

trators have the influence to scuttle such a story? I don't know.

Observing Sherrie and Pam's experiences at the hands of Community Hospital, it became clear to me that their deadly mistreatment was not unusual. Other people we met were having similar experiences, and when the taxi driver dropped Sherrie off near her dirt field home, he claimed to have picked up several other poor and homeless patients from Community that day and dropped them off downtown, on Motel Drive and elsewhere. It seems quite likely that their care and personal safety concerns may have been shortchanged in favor of quicker discharge.

Community Hospital is not providing the care homeless and uninsured patients need and deserve. Although the medical staff is bound to their employer's demands, they clearly do the best they can, as they are allowed, and without some regulatory oversight, they are simply unable to do the best they can for their patients. How they can get through that sort of stress inducing conflict without resorting to drug abuse themselves, I don't know.

So far the Salvation Army has not returned calls, and all other organizations have differing reasons why a woman with no source of income in a wheelchair who hasn't had a relapse in the last 72 hours can't be accepted into an inpatient detox program. Would hospital staff, caseworkers and administrators have known this in advance of dumping Sherrie repeatedly? That much seems absolutely certain.



Elegant and introspective local singer/songwriter Abigail Nolte.

ited number of volunteers are available. As we try to address the concern over future shortages of precious grease, we want to invite interested members of the community to see what it is all about, and hopefully there are bigger rewards in store for everyone who gets a closer look at FNB activities.

After a busy week of tragedy and triumph in the homeless community, at least one member has learned



Why was this homeless woman released from Community Medical Center and dropped off in a dirt field? Photo by Kelly Borkert.

Kelly Borkert is a volunteer with Food Not Bombs. He can be reached at kellyborkert@hotmail.com

tive" politicians into the mix and it becomes increasingly difficult to hold the poor responsible for their misfortune in Fresno. Given the chance, the city of Fresno has consistently refused to do the right thing by citizens most in need of understanding and relief. This situation has deteriorated over the last few years, as we all know.

What Food Not Bombs provides on Saturdays at Roeding Park, (and Sundays at the Courthouse Park, 3:30 PM) goes a long ways towards staving daily hunger for some. What you can do as an individual varies. If you can volunteer in addition to donating other resources, that precious grease will always be welcome. What you might learn from close hand experience can go even farther towards understanding the problems and realities facing Fresno's lowest income residents. And with understanding comes hope.

We certainly hope you will join us at the Full Circle Brewery September 16th, from 5-8 PM. The entertainment alone will be worth the trouble, the cause and purpose equally so. Mark your calendars and come prepared for a great time!

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Kelly Borkert is a volunteer with Food Not Bombs. He can be reached at kellyborkert@hotmail.com



The Trike Shop spent the summer touring their artsy-guitar-pop through northern England. You can see them perform at the Sunday, September 16 (5 - 8 PM) Food Not Bombs fund raiser at Full Circle Brewery, 620 F St. Downtown Fresno.

Did you know homeless people are people too? Normal people? Not entirely composed of societies' stereotypes, homeless and low income Fresnans are very good people, not so much more susceptible to drug and alcohol problems than you and I and those we all know.

food items from reliable sources, adding them to the bulk ingredients we purchase to provide a quality meal. Sincere thanks is extended to those who have done so much for us, they know full well who they are, though they may not fathom the depth of our appreciation. Although we quickly go through funds buying staple items and containers, somehow we manage to make it through all 52 weeks in a year, 11 years and counting, so far.

In light of these fantastic sources of strength, it seems petty to complain or suggest there might be more required, but the truth is, our biggest concern is the grease supply. Elbow grease is the true fuel of any volunteer effort. Although we always get through the meal prep and serving, it can be taxing when a lim-

things about the homeless that they definitely don't teach at school. For instance, did you know homeless people are people too? Normal people? Not entirely composed of societies' stereotypes, homeless and low income Fresnans are very good people, not so much more susceptible to drug and alcohol problems than you and I and those we all know. While mental illness and health disabilities sometimes seem an essential ingredient to homelessness, this is not nearly as significant as the economic and social burdens a corporatist, profit oriented society can inflict on single mothers, laid off or outsourced workers, veterans, almost anyone, really. Skyrocketing energy costs, child care, health care, predatory lending practices and uncontrolled rents play a big role in conditions of poverty and homelessness. Factor heartless, "conserva-

the police will come in and arrest one person who is dealing drugs and leave everyone else alone. She said, "All they would have to do is to come in here with a drug sniffing dog and it would be all over." She believed there had to be some kind of payoff going on so the police protected some dealers and arrested others.

A couple of months ago Rev. Floyd Harris was at the corner of G and Santa Clara streets talking to homeless people. He was surprised at how openly drugs were being bought and sold. He too questioned the motivation of the police to selectively enforce drug laws. The drug wars, as they play out in downtown Fresno, are making some people rich, other people vulnerable, and some people end up dead.

Pam Kincaid usually lived in very remote locations in the old industrial section of downtown Fresno (south of Ventura). She often lived with other people because that provides a homeless woman with some protection. Pam, like many homeless women, also had a dog.

It is notable how often Pam, and the encampments she lived in, were forced to move. Even after the preliminary injunction and victory in court, homeless people are endlessly harassed and told to "move on." The City of Fresno conducted one of their raids on homeless encampments on Santa Fe (just south of Ventura) in early July. Pam was living there at the time. This was the fourth or fifth time she had been forced to move in the last six months.

Pam ended up in an encampment on Mono, just east of R Street. On or about July 13, 2007, Pam and a friend (we will call him Mario — not his real name) started walking toward a store on Ventura. According to Mario, they saw a FPD patrol car cruise by, turn around and pull up beside them. This is not unusual if you are living on the street. The police are always stopping homeless people and asking them for their ID, running their names through the database, and seeing what comes up. It is like fishing. Every so often the police catch someone who is in violation of parole, has an outstanding warrant, or for some other reason is being looked for by law enforcement.

Cynthia Greene, who is homeless and another named plaintiff in the lawsuit against the City of Fresno, told me she was stopped four times on one day in mid July. Cynthia said, "I was out trying to collect cans for recycling and the police came up and asked me for my ID. I would get done with one stop and a few minutes later I'd get stopped again. This is unusual even for Fresno." Cynthia said she felt uncomfortable with all of the stops and was concerned that she was being targeted.

According to Mario, the police officer checked Pam and his ID and let them go. As they were leaving, a group of about six or seven people (at least one them has been identified to me as a drug dealer) walked by and went to the police car. Mario said that he looked back and saw the officer pointing at him and Pam while he talked to the group. Pam decided to stay at her encampment and Mario continued on to the store. Feeling something might be wrong, Mario returned (without going to the store) to see four of five women from the group savagely beating Pam.

Mario said, "Pam is on the ground and one of them has these boot heels, you know like these dress boots, you know what I'm talking about? With the big heels? And they are just..." (Mario jumps up and down as if stomping something on the ground.) According to Mario, they were saying, "Drop the suit, drop the suit, you're hurting us, you're hurting them, now we're hurting you."

Mario says that after he stopped the assault on Pam he tried to flag down a police patrol car. The first police vehicle that went by on R Street did not stop. Within 15 minutes another patrol car came by. This time the officer stopped and Mario explained what had happened. The officer left, saying he was going to find the perpetrators of the crime, but he never came back to follow up on the victim or write a report of the assault.

I talked to Jeff Cardinale, the Fresno Police Department Public Information Officer, about police involvement in this incident. Cardinale insisted that there is no record of any contact with Pam or Mario on R or Mono street.

Pam was admitted to Community Medical Center on July 13. The nurse who attended to Pam said she was black and blue from the waist up. "It was clear that Pam had been beaten," the nurse told me. The police report issued at the time she was admitted to CMC was more vague. The police report suggests that Pam had a bad sunburn, might have a mental illness, and did not want to press charges.

A man with extensive contacts in the homeless community confirmed, at least in part, the story of what hap-



Pamela Kincaid was the lead plaintiff in the homeless rights lawsuit against the City of Fresno. She died last month under suspicious circumstances.
Photo by Mike Rhodes

pened to Pam. He said three young women were bragging about how they had beaten Pam up. Fearing retaliation himself, he did not want to identify those involved.

I didn't find out that Pam was in the hospital until about a week after she was admitted. She was still black and blue and it did not look like she had a sunburn to me. She was clearly disoriented. Her attending physician, Dr. Ossia, told me that Pam did not know what city she was in or what year it was. He explained that she had sub dermal hematoma, which causes swelling inside the skull, and the pressure can cause the disorientation and delusions she was experiencing. He was cautiously optimistic that she would regain her memory.

After Pam was at CMC for over a week it was agreed that she needed to move to more long-term care. But without insurance or any resources the options were very limited. UMC was one of the only long-term care facilities that would take Pam. On the day before she transferred

to UMC, I talked to her nurse again. She told me that Pam was starting to remember what had happened and said that the attack had to do with the lawsuit against the City of Fresno.

She was put on the fourth floor of the long-term care facility at UMC. At about 1:30 AM on Wednesday, August 1, she went through the doors to a balcony and fell four floors to her death. The doors were supposed to have an alarm that would alert staff if they were opened and the staff knew that Pam was disoriented due to the attack. Something, we don't yet know what, went horribly wrong.

Several of Pam's friends saw her just before she died. Those that I talked to said she was doing better, she was not suicidal, and her nurse said her memory was starting to clear up. We are left with a lot of unanswered questions like:

- * If what Mario is saying is true, what did the police officer say to the group that attacked Pam?
- * Why did the police officer who Mario stopped not return to help Pam or write an incident report? Why does the police have no record of this contact?
- * Why did the police who talked to Pam at CMC not conclude that a crime had been committed and try to find out who attacked her?
- * What went wrong at UMC? How could a patient who is known to be disoriented walk onto a balcony, and fall from the fourth floor?
- * Why was a repairman working on the alarm system leading to the fourth floor balcony the morning after Pam fell?
- * Why does Fresno not have more shelters for homeless women?

Jeff Cardinale, with the FPD, told me they are not investigating either the beating incident or the suspicious circumstances of Pam's death. He suggested I talk with the sheriff's department. After being initially told by the sheriff's department that they did not have an active investigation either, I called back again. This time I was told that they are now investigating Pam's death.

Fresno mayor Alan Autry often talks about this town as being "A Tale of Two Cities." I can't help but wondering if the mayor had shown up at Community Medical Center, beaten nearly to death, would they have concluded that he was sunburned, delusional, and that no investigation was necessary? Maybe this is a tale of two cities - one where there is justice and fairness if you are well to do, but if you are poor (especially if you are a homeless woman) you can't even get the police to open an investigation after you have been beaten.

I demand justice for Pamela Kincaid. I applaud the Coroner who ordered an autopsy (we are still waiting for the results) and encourage the sheriff's department to conduct a vigorous investigation into the beating and suspicious circumstances of her death.

Pam was a hero. She stood up for her rights and the rights of all homeless people. As the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit against the City of Fresno, she sometimes became a lightning rod and vilified by those who would continue the system of bigotry and hatred against the homeless. Pam took pride in being a recognizable leader of an effort that will result in better conditions for Fresno's homeless. Being a part of the lawsuit was something Pam did, not for herself, but for all homeless people. It was, in part, that spirit of selflessness that made Pam such a wonderful person and a friend I will miss.

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

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SEPTEMBER 2007

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

Jail Song

by FA Hart

MONDAY NIGHT at the Fresno County Jail, January 2007, 6 PM: Standing at the curb is a bay gelding, on his back a man, classic Central California cowboy. Wind and sun-weathered skin; older, well-muscled, stringy physique, small cowboy hat.

He’s Ray, a lay minister who speaks enough Hmong to communicate in their own language with some of the Asian street gang members with whom he speaks, on horseback. He and I talk. I’m a former horseman myself, and my wife Bette and I still have our mare Dusty, retired like us, a family member. Ray has been doing his ministry for years. The horse is a good conversation starter with most people he meets. I give the horse a snack off my palm—Ray carries the snacks with him to give to people to feed to the horse.

I tell him it’s my first night volunteering with St. Benedict Catholic Worker (SBCW) of Fresno, offering free food and drinks to all comers every Monday and Tuesday evening. I’ve come early—serving goes from 7 to 9 or 9:30. I’m early to get the feel of the place, this world. M Street at Fresno, on the porch at the main entrance of the main Fresno County Jail.

(Some names in this article are changed to protect the privacy of the individuals referred to.)

The usual menu is an entree—one night meatloaf soup, other nights hot dogs—with dessert, sometimes salad, one or two drink choices. Cold weather, coffee or water. Warm weather, iced tea or water. Or pre-sweetened lemonade.

Our guests are Fresno’s homeless, who begin collecting on the steps and nearby, waiting with bland expectation, some smiling. We also serve the visitors and family members of Jail inmates, and some FCJ Correctional Officers, some civilian Sheriff’s Department employees, and some bail bondsmen, especially Lou from the bail bonds office across the street. I’ve talked so much with Lou over the six months since I started with SBCW that I now consider him a good friend. He and I swap family stories and thoughts on the events of the day. The FCJ porch is cracker barrel country, where strangers become friends.

We volunteers are a pleasantly mixed bag. Many seniors like myself; during the school year many students, this past semester a bevy of charming and dedicated young women from Fresno Pacific College who appear instantly like a flock of pretty birds in sweatshirts teleported in from some pleasant meadow. They charm the socks off the homeless men, chat with them warmly, chat with me and when they find out I’m a retired college professor we talk school talk. Their classes. What I taught.

The homeless are a revelation. Every American should meet the homeless. Every American who has the God-given good fortune to live in a house should study the lives of those who don’t.

I become friends over the weeks with one man who’s traveled enough that he knows a lot of towns in Ohio, where I grew up. He seems surprised that I want to hear his story. After I’ve seen him two or three times, every time he sees me he smiles, ruefully, pleased to see me, embarrassed that he’s still homeless. He says he has hopes. I have hopes for him, and suspend them because I want to relate to who he is now. Not what he and I hope can happen for him some day.

Another man talks to me with smiling intensity, explaining his complex, delusional ideas about how the world works, wanting to warn me of the world’s dangers. I listen, draw him out, eventually disagree with part of what he’s saying. He finds this disturbing, but does not reject my conversation, and on other evenings greets me. He’s a sweet and dis-

turbing person, disturbing because he suffers in a scary way. Like many in this world, he’s walking wounded.

Almost every night one group of the homeless, mostly males, seemingly a self-defined subculture, many with long stringy hair and long stringy beards, take their food and drink and instead of talking with us volunteers cluster together, sitting on the brick wall of a planter bed, sometimes silent, sometimes talking among themselves. The soft invisible self-created social barrier around them is obvious. I walk up to them one night and say to one, “My name’s Andy, brother. What’s yours?”

He looks sidelong up at me over his shoulder, and crows, “Andy Warhol!” I say, “I guess I do look a little like him, don’t I? But he’s better looking than I am.” The man in front of me looks away, still smiling, almost but not quite shaking his head wearily at the charity guy—me—trying to be friendly. Then I say, “Actually, I hope I’m better looking than him. He passed away some time ago.” The man looks back up at me curiously. I’m evidently real. But he’s not sure what I am.

These men and women—all the homeless, all the others at our serving—are our brothers and sisters. The homeless around town in Fresno are treated with terrible indifference, and sometimes outright hostility and aggression, by authorities and passersby, much too much of the time. They deserve better. They are touchingly grateful for SBCW’s presence among them.

The Jail visitors, family members and—later in the evening—the trickle of prisoners getting late release from lockup—are their own galaxy in this evening universe. They stay mostly separate from the homeless, and seem less eager to talk to us volunteers than the homeless are, though Karen, our leader, often seeks them out and talks with them if she’s not busy at the serving table.

Most nights we’re there these prisoners come out, at 9:00 or later, having been just processed out at the security desk in the lobby of the Jail. Some come out with no one there to meet them. Some come out to family members who have waited ten hours or longer because the Jail staff never know when a given prisoner due for release, will be released. Some come out and find no one to meet them because the person waiting for them has given up and left. All who come out have, after they’re released, no access to a free phone to call for someone to collect them. The prisoners don’t know when they’ll be released until after they’ve lost access to the Jail’s free phones.

The leader of our SBCW group, Liza, sometimes lets a released prisoner use her cell phone. All of us volunteers sometimes give change to released prisoners for phone calls or bus fare. Of course I myself would have no idea where to find a working pay phone, walking, from the corner of Fresno and M at 9:30 PM.

Conditions inside the Fresno County Jail, which I toured with a small group of citizens several weeks ago, are so crowded that the most common facial expression for prisoners as they pick up their belongings at the security desk when released is one of high anxiety, or anger. The rooms in which scores of prisoners spend most of their days milling about in red jump suits in spaces crowded with three tier bunk beds look like bus stations in Hell. Crowding to that degree produces anxiety, fear, anger, depression, sometimes despair, often conflict.

And Fresno County Jail is better run, with less bad conditions, than most state prisons in California and many county jails. Compared to the Los Angeles County Jail or many state prisons, the Fresno County Jail is summer camp. In the 1980s, Fresno Jail inmates called it the Fresno Hilton because it was so much less bad than many other facilities.

On the basis of what I know as I write this, Sheriff Margaret Mims is doing the best she can with inadequate funds to treat inmates in the Jail as humanely as possible. Some previous sheriffs—Hal McKinney was one—did their best also.

Unfortunately, as the Fresno County Board of Supervisors is currently demonstrating, they care less about the needs of inmates than they do about how much money we, the voters and citizens, allow them to spend. The Supervisors are, I think, both trapped by public reluctance to



Every Monday and Tuesday from 7–9:30 PM the St. Benedict Catholic Worker serves a meal to the homeless, working poor, and visitors and released inmates in front of Fresno County Jail (corner of Fresno and M streets). Volunteers are needed to help prepare and serve the meals. For more information contact Liza Apper at (559) 229–6410 or Lizaosb@aol.com; or visit their Web site: www.sbcw.org.

spend money on prisoner welfare, and also callously indifferent to the human needs of inmates.

Many years ago, a neighbor of mine told me he thought prison inmates were animals, and should be treated like animals. He made me so angry that I walked away without telling him my views on prison conditions. That kind of attitude is, I think, evil, in the theological sense of the word.

Unfortunately, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors cares less about the needs of the poor, the homeless, the mentally ill and the incarcerated than they do about the needs of law enforcement—as their recent cuts in public services at budget hearings make clear. And it is we the citizens of this county, state and nation who are to blame for that. The Board can’t spend money it doesn’t have.

Too many conservatives think less government is a universal ideal—as long as government provides terrific law enforcement with short emergency response times and jails for everyone who ever smoked a joint. And these conservatives want to have those services without having to pay for them themselves.

Too many liberals and progressives favor tax increases as long as the increase isn’t of our taxes. NOOMW (pronounced “noomoo”)—Not Out of My Wallet—is just as big a problem as NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard), and we liberals and progressives are frequently among the flagrantly guilty.

Everyone in this city, county, state and nation who is of voting age and fails to vote bears responsibility for misconduct and nonfeasance in our various governments.

When we get bad government, it is at least partly our own fault. Unfortunately, when we the voters and our elected leaders mess up, it is the weakest among us who suffer most. The children. The homeless. The poor. The lower middle class. The sick. And the incarcerated.

Inmates have souls, too, no matter what their crimes, no matter how necessary it is to lock them up.

We are, and should be, judged by how we treat the least among us.

My ways of thinking about corrections, poverty and homelessness are, I admit, somewhat moralistic. But think about it pragmatically. If you were locked up in desperately crowded, unhealthy, sometimes dangerous conditions, would those conditions make you want to rehabilitate? Or would being treated inhumanely make you want to be a smarter criminal and not get caught?

I know what I’d think. I’d be angry at whoever was responsible for conditions inside jails, and I’d want to do whatever it took, legal or not, to be less miserable than I was while doing time.

The only way the problems of the locked up, the poor, and the homeless will be dealt with appropriately is if we hold our leaders’ feet to the fire and tell them to do better.

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FA Hart is retired faculty from the English Department at California State University, Fresno.



The author of this article (on left) observes operations at the Fresno County Jail. Photo by Howard Watkins.

What path leads from the conservative life of a Republican-voting Episcopalian to that of a KFCF-listening, Unitarian-attending advocate for minority rights? Ask Robin Greiner, and get two very different answers.

One is that in crucial ways nothing has changed. “I grew up steeped in my parents’ beliefs in the Golden Rule, in being a good citizen and a tolerant human. I was the good student, the Boy Scout, nurtured by and embracing the society I lived in.”

But there is an “other hand” that Robin had simultaneously to deal with. “Early on I discovered I was different. In grade school I chose to take a tap dance class. There were a few other boys...but they didn’t actually like it, and they weren’t good at it. I had unwittingly found the world of the typical gay boy of the period—soon I found myself devoted to the current film goddesses and singing show tunes.”

While knowing that reticence about his unmasculine proclivities was necessary, there turned out to be minimal angst for Robin in coming into his own. He found an outlet for his grace and nimbleness in figure skating—an interest and ambition that led eventually to three U.S. pairs championships, a 4th place at the World’s and a 5th in the 1956 Olympics. One of his coaches also indoctrinated him to gay sexuality, and (after a first several-year relationship that failed) in a “Some Enchanted Evening” moment, he met his partner of now 40 years, Ellis Vance, literally across a crowded room at a party.

Robin’s seems to be something of a charmed life. In a path that would seem destined for upheaval as a gay man in 50’s America, he continued to move into



Ellis Vance and Robin Greiner

new situations and changed allegiances with relative ease. When Robin and Ellis began co-habiting, Robin was the director of the one funeral home in one of our small towns east of Fresno—a position of some prominence; and Ellis was just out of a marriage where his ex-wife was unable to keep the two children still at home. So there they were living above the funeral parlor, raising two children, in a town ruled by religious and social conservatism. And nothing untoward happened. “No one ever said a word to us, and even the kids had no incidents at school. It was amazing.”

Gradually—partly through association with Ellis’s

more-expansive horizons, and through meetings with all kinds of people in his work, through intelligent attention to the political news, and of course through exposure to homophobia, Robin became attuned to the facts of privilege and injustice in our society. “I realized not everyone had the stability and advantages of my upbringing, and I realized my fortune was not earned—it was in fact an obligation to be helpful, in accordance with the very teachings I was raised with. “

After Robin retired, and the couple moved to Fresno, he had time and opportunity to participate actively in several organizations like Planned Parenthood and the Central California Alliance (CCA), then mainly a social group for gay professionals. In part through the initiative of Robin and Ellis, CCA became much more political—bringing in controversial speakers, sponsoring scholarships, and becoming a vehicle for coming-out and city-wide visibility for the GLBT community. But Robin insists he never felt courageous or revolutionary—just more insistent on being seen for who he is; instead of settling for the relief of invisibility.

Through all this, Robin continued to be the good family man and citizen—co-raising two children to successful adulthood, caring for his widowed father until his very recent death, taking executive responsibility for civic organizations. “But now,” he says “it’s time for me.” Ellis still works a job that keeps him away from home a lot, so Robin has acquired a new dog and a piano. “The pain of aging is real, and my memory is very poor, but there is so much pleasure in my domestic life, long-lasting relationships, music and caring.”

For us who know Robin mostly as a reliable supporter of our causes and a quietly cheering presence in our social world, it is refreshing to learn from his “back story” that sometimes goodness does not only go unpunished but actually is rewarded.



QUEER EYE

AIDS Walk Fresno—Anti-Gays in Red Ribbon Clothing

by Dan Waterhouse

First, a Bubba Autry update. City officials finally met with residents of the area surrounding the bankrupt Running Horse development (in Southwest Fresno west of Chandler airfield) on August 9. According to a friend of mine who attended, Mayor Autry made the mistake of asking, “Who here is opposed to Running Horse?” She said virtually the entire room replied, “We are!”

By way of brief explanation, when mega millionaire shark Donald Trump was sniffing about town wanting to buy Running Horse for literally cents on the dollar, Bubba and his cohorts were falling over themselves trying to make “The Donald” happy. One key deal point was that Trump wanted the city to declare the area blighted so property could be taken by condemnation.

My friend says Autry, upon hearing the crowd’s answer, lost his “affability” and declared, “If we can’t get you out with eminent domain, we’ll use code enforcement” to get owners to sell.

What’s hidden behind the AIDS Walk Fresno curtain? Fresno’s anti-gay Cornerstone Church. In my June *Waterhouse Report* column in News Link, which hit the streets on June 15, I mentioned that Cornerstone took the event over last year, and that safe sex advocates were not allowed to hand out information or condoms at last year’s walk.

Almost two weeks after News Link hit the newsstands, an email went out from one of our local queer Webmasters to representatives of several community organizations asking for their thoughts or concerns. The webmaster commented that he had “pushed” the event with “no second thought at all” and “just because bigots support a

good thing doesn’t mean we shouldn’t support it as well. I’m sure a lot of Republicans support cancer research, lol (which is Web shorthand for laughing out loud)...kidding.”

The problem for the queer community can be simply stated: Cornerstone is not just a sponsor. They are the organizer, hiding behind the cover of the “Red Ribbon AIDS Project.” The only way to tell, when viewing the Walk’s website, that Cornerstone is involved is by the contact address: 1545 Fulton Street — which is where Cornerstone’s offices and service center are located.

The “Red Ribbon AIDS Project” is a ministry of the church, and is headed up by Cornerstone employee Daniel Mendoza, who also leads “Daniel’s Angels,” an “ex-gay” ministry linked to Cornerstone. He is also the Fresno area chapter leader of PFOX—Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays.

The Red Ribbon AIDS Project was founded by Mendoza in July 2003 and is supposed to provide “individuals, who have tested positive for HIV/AIDS in Fresno County with life sustaining services, peer counseling, prevention education as well as family support.” According to his on-line autobiography, Mendoza “found” Christ and renounced “his gay life” over three years ago because he “desperately needed assurance he would not go to hell.” He writes that he believes his God will remove the HIV from his blood as it has his cancer and hepatitis. “I still have a positive result of the HIV virus in my blood, but Jesus Christ specializes in blood.”

And, many long timers in the local HIV/AIDS community find the AIDS Project’s claim that AIDS

Walk Fresno is the first such event locally irritating, because it debases the memory of the long-lived Walk for Life. The Walk for Life was organized by the AIDS Consortium and was held at Woodward Park for many years on Mothers’ Day.

Some of the gay groups are discussing whether they want to participate now that the word is out. CCA *Connections* editor Jim Daggs sent out a warning to the membership in the July newsletter. He concluded his article with the following words: “The website for the event fails to disclose that Cornerstone is the REAL organizer behind the scenes. I suspect that they fear people would not support the event if their direct involvement and ‘Ex-Gay’ agenda were widely known. WELL THEY ARE RIGHT!... These types of fundamentalist organizations are not interested in you as gay, only as an ‘ex-gay’.”



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The Big Red Church

Women Demand Equality at CSUF

By Kathryn Forbes

Former Fresno State women’s volleyball coach Lindy Vivas’ \$5.85 million dollar court victory against Fresno State last month brought public attention to Title IX. The court found that Vivas was wrongfully terminated for her advocacy of gender equity in the university’s athletic department. Her attorney, Dan Siegel, argued throughout the trial that athletic department personnel were openly hostile about complying with the Federal mandates of Title IX despite past and ongoing investigations by the U.S. Department’s Office of Civil Rights into campus violations. What can the trial and its aftermath tell us about the history of Title IX compliance? What does it reveal about the prospects for achieving gender equity as the shape and scope of college athletics increasingly morphs from amateur competition to profit-driven entertainment?

Passed in 1972 and designed to ensure gender equity in all aspects of public education, the Federal civil rights legislation Title IX states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” It was a policy change that clearly reflected the social shifts brought about by the second wave feminist movement which encouraged women to counter sexist stereotypes, demanded wider opportunities for women, and helped women reclaim control of their bodies. The National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education characterizes Title IX as “the nation’s promise for ensuring that the talents of half its citizens — women — no longer would be constricted by discrimination.”

Prior to the passage of Title IX, some colleges and universities simply excluded women. Other institutions of higher education had quotas that restricted the number of women admitted and had higher admissions standards for women; some graduate programs required that women prove that they were serious about school and that they could balance the demands of family with their careers; and many campuses policed women by mandating that female students reside in dorms. Title IX made these obstacles to higher education illegal. As support for Title IX gained momentum, academic feminists were busy debunking myths about the inferior intellectual capacities of women, thereby encouraging women to take advantage of the educational opportunities afforded by Title IX. No longer was it acceptable to deny women entry into the male-dominated classrooms of science, math, and shop simply because of their gender. This is not to say that gender discrimination in various academic disciplines has been eliminated. Indeed, surveys of higher education show that women are still outnumbered as students and professors in the sciences, and qualitative studies document campus cultural climates that are hostile toward women. Yet, today more women than men go to college, in part thanks to Title IX.

There is no doubt that the passage of Title IX also led to the immense growth in female athletes: just prior to its passage, 1 in 9 women participated in organized sports; today that figure is 1 in 2.5. As scholar Mary Jo Kane contends, girls and young women today expect equal opportunity in sports: “In one generation, we’ve gone from girls hoping that there is a team, to hoping that they make the team.” Research is replete with the health and social benefits of sports to the girl’s development. We know that female athletes have better graduation rates and increased performance in science than their non-athlete counterparts. Girl athletes are less likely to become pregnant before completing their education, are less at risk for drug use while participating in sports, and less likely to have breast cancer in later years. From a socio-cultural perspective, Title IX also helped usher in dramatic shifts in the way our society defines femininity and womanhood. Female athletes are now cultural icons

who redefine femininity to include hard bodies and ferocious competitiveness. However, the rapid growth in the number of female athletes and the cultural acceptance of the muscular female form belie a contentious history of struggle over the appropriate place of women in sport and the equitable allocation of resources in school-sponsored athletics.

Shortly after its passage, efforts to limit the applicability of Title IX to athletics ensued.

In 1975, for instance, the U.S. Senate considered limiting the meaning of “education program or activity” to “curriculum or graduation requirement of the institutions,” thereby alleviating athletic departments from providing sport opportunities to girls and women. Although Congress ultimately defeated this legislative move, its proposal exemplifies the initial resistance to the application of Title IX to sports, forwarded by the NCAA which openly lamented that adding women’s sports would lead to decreased funding for football. In the years that followed, the courts and legislators developed both compliance guidelines, including the “three prong test,” and procedures for investigating alleged violations. As a result, attempts to preserve athletic dollars for male sports shifted from outright refusal to include women and girls in sports programs to creative manipulation of policy.

One way Title IX compliance can be illustrated is by improving the ratio of female athletes to male athletes. The spirit of Title IX would have schools increase the number of sports teams for women. What often happens, however, is that schools cut non-revenue generating male

treatment of women’s sports and female coaches. They argued that the women’s volleyball team should be relegated to playing in the North Gym, complete with leaky roof and inadequate court space, rather than playing in the state-of-the-art Save Mart Center because the volleyball team did not generate enough ticket sales to cover the expense of hosting a match in the Save Mart Center. The former athletic director testified to hiring a consultant to help develop a bulldog “brand” that could be controlled exclusively by the athletic department. As a result, women’s sports teams were forced to enter into uniform contracts with Nike (the provider of choice by the football team) despite the fact that the product line was inferior to their previous distributors.

While women’s teams scramble for budget allocations and equitable facilities, sports perceived to be revenue generating are given bloated budgets that they use on questionable expenses. For instance, it is the national norm for universities to put players up in hotel rooms the night before home games so that coaches can ensure that the players go to bed on time. The irony is that spending on football in Division I athletics, including Fresno State, has rapidly increased over the past decade even as these schools have cut men’s sports and even when the actual revenue from football fails to outpace spending.

Ultimately, as the associate director of the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, Welch Suggs, argues, the focus on revenue as a measure of a sport’s success leads athletic directors to treat Title IX as a “regulatory burden” rather than as a policy designed

to promote the full education of girls and women. Indeed, the Vivas trial illustrates the pervasive use of bureaucratic strategies of exclusion designed to both uphold the prominence of a handful of male sports and to normalize a divisive market ideology that turns university athletics into sports bars. Senator Dean Florez has proposed that Title IX be strengthened through more oversight on how universities comply with Title IX and through financial penalties for non-compliers.

To further strengthen Title IX, we need to figure out ways to restructure athletic department spending. Donna Lopiano of the Women’s Sports Foundation persuasively argues that just because “football and/or basketball teams bring in money at the gate doesn’t mean they have the right to spend it however they wish and to waste it. . . . Boards of

Regents and Boards of Trustees have a fiduciary responsibility to oversee these funds and ensure that these non-profit education institutions are fiscally responsible.” This may mean capping coaches’ salaries and, gasp, trusting that young adult football players can tuck themselves in at an appropriate hour the night before a home game.

These policy changes need to be accompanied by a broader cultural shift that lessens the impact of market ideology on our understandings of education and gender equity. Unfortunately, this task may prove more difficult. As noted by a number of scholars, market ideology now shapes not just athletics but also the curricular offerings and disciplinary decisions within academia. Faculty attest to the ways academic environments now are tightly managed market-driven sites in which decision-making procedures are cloaked in bureaucratic rationality. Indeed, the organizational culture on the academic side of campus fails to recognize its own functioning as discriminatory just as the athletic side does. This speaks to the need for coalitions across campus and community boundaries as we attempt to re-establish the primacy of the educational mission of college athletics and support gender equity for all women as promised by Title IX thirty-five years ago.

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Kathryn Forbes is an associate professor in the Women’s Studies Program at California State University, Fresno. Her current research examines the effects of Title IX on the cultural climate educational institutions, especially athletic departments. She is also a sports fan and a really bad marathon runner.



Jessica Albert, Lindy Vivas, and Dan Siegel. Jessica and Dan were Lindy’s attorneys in this case. It was Jessica Albert’s first trial. This photo was taken shortly after the verdict was read to the court room. Photo by Howard Watkins

sports. This strategy accomplishes little for women and breeds hostility toward Title IX, especially among the less attended male sports. An athletic director also might bloat the rosters of existing women’s teams to improve the ratio while failing to commit more coaching and facilities resources to the team. In 2004, for instance, Fresno State’s equestrian team was approximately 2.5 times larger than any other Division I equestrian team, and it constituted 30% of all female athletes at CSUF. Only a handful of the women actually competed.

When women’s teams are added, schools regularly look to providing the most athletic opportunities at the cheapest rate. Unfortunately, these additions do not always improve the opportunities for women and girls of color. Universities often boost female participation rates by adding soccer, golf, and lacrosse, all of which are dominated by white players who have more access to these sports than females of color. The director of the Black Women’s Sports Foundation, Tina Sloan Green, points to limited “green space” in urban high schools as one barrier to African American girls in these sports. As a result, the percentage of African American women participating in college athletics has increased very little over the past decade.

The success of Title IX in ushering in gender equity for all women in the college athletic arena has been further compromised by the spread of market ideology into athletic departments. This ideological stance shifts our understanding of school-sponsored sports from providing educational experiences to generating income. Indeed, witnesses for Fresno State in the Vivas trial unreflectively used this ideological stance to rationalize the inequitable

Your Mythology Ends Where My Body Begins

By Ruth Gadebusch



After all these years it still astounds me that an issue that never should have gotten out of the doctor’s office is such a political football. I refer to the abortion question.

One Republican candidate, the former mayor of New York City, professes choice but dances all over the place about it. Another, the former governor of Massachusetts, is

on again, off again, depending on the circumstances of the moment. At least the others are consistent though, I cannot understand what they think gives them the right to control a total stranger’s reproductive life. Abortion is sometimes necessary for a number of reasons. It is always regrettable, but always a personal decision — or at least, should be.

This issue should be peripheral, if in the political equation at all. It has spilled over into birth control and the use of stem cells for medical research, the promise of prevention or a cure for horrendous diseases. The fertilized eggs sit frozen waiting for possible use that will never come for the original purpose, leaving them to be destroyed..

As for birth control, what is it about the correlation of that and abortion they don’t understand? Granted, every abortion is not a failure of birth control, but unquestionably availability of contraceptives does reduce abortions.

Much of the political debate revolves around the issue of life, largely just when it begins or what is to be done when something goes terribly wrong. Terribly wrong can include life conceived by rape (which few would argue is anything but terribly wrong), a fetus doomed to great pain and unable to survive, or the mother’s health problems. All are matters of immense sadness

without adding a public spectacle. Most of all, those involved are due the respect of their privacy in making this daunting decision.

Those who would manage the life of all females have used gruesome language to their advantage, naming one procedure, which many doctors say is often the safest method, “partial birth abortion.” Legislators with no medical training succumb to pressure and dictate to the medical experts, thereby endangering women’s health. President Bush’s Supreme Court is no help, letting their personal opinions sway their legal rulings, upsetting long held principles. Interesting enough, these bodies comprised largely of males seldom seem to feel the necessity to legislate medical decisions regarding men!

Until the ability to basically control their reproductive life women were, without doubt, treated as second class citizens. It was the advent of birth control, long fought for by Margaret Sanger and others, but most especially that little pill, that allowed women to plan their lives: the number of children wanted and when. It allowed women to make contributions to the society that were not possible when having one child after another: “barefoot and pregnant down on the farm”, as the old expression goes.

Why can’t we put this matter back into the family where it belongs? Why can’t we agree that no one wants abortion but it is sometimes necessary? It’s called respect for others.

One of the more distressing aspects of this whole argument is the attitude largely predicated on the notion that women are having abortions thoughtlessly, that they must be protected from themselves with all sorts of draconian measures to assure that they appreciate the seriousness of what they are doing. Then there is the idea that if birth control, and worse yet abortion, is made available, women, and especially young girls, will become totally promiscuous. All such measures prevent women from being in charge of their own bodies.

Any religion has the right to demand of its own adherents whatever standards it chooses. None has the right to legislate them for others. This administration has catered to religions that strive to make all follow their rules. Thus, was the RU486 drug long withheld from

use in this country. Even the so called morning after pill which prevents fertilization, and is therefore not an abortifacient, was delayed by the Food and Drug Administration for 3 years before its approval with all manner of limitations.

Clinics that offer medical services including abortion have been forced to close in many areas thereby offering no choice. Likewise, women receiving government medical services are cut off, again leaving no choice.

Those of us who advocate choice are not encouraging women to have abortions. We only want it to be in the private realm recognizing the ability of women to make decisions affecting our own lives. The emphasis is on choice. The goal is to accept women as intelligent humans capable of managing our own lives.

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

**Planned Parenthood
Fresno Fulton Street Clinic
650 North Fulton
Fresno, CA 93728559-488-4900**

Hours:
Monday: 8:00am - 7:00pm
Tuesday: 8:00am - 7:00pm
Wednesday: 8:00am - 5:00pm
Thursday: 8:00am - 7:00pm
Friday: 8:00am - 5:00pm
Saturday: 8:00am - 5:00pm
Sunday: Closed

Play Sparks Global Movement to Improve Maternity Care

Using a theatre-for-social-change model, local communities organize worldwide

What do mothers want? What do mothers deserve? These and other tough questions are explored in *Birth*. Throughout September, more than 100 benefit performances of the critically acclaimed play by Karen Brody, *Birth*, will take center stage as part of Birth On Labor Day (BOLD), a global movement to make maternity care mother-friendly.

In the United States today, the rate of cesarean sections is 30.2 percent, more than 15 percent higher than the World Health Organization’s recommended figure for industrialized countries. Fresno is hovering around a 37% section rate. There are rampant VBAC (vaginal birth after cesarean) misconceptions: most women in the United States today who have had one c-section aren’t aware they can choose not to have another. We are in a global maternal mortality crisis; **one woman dies every minute from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes**. Only 2 percent of mothers in the U.S. receive care practices that promote normal birth and are endorsed by Lamaze International. The experiences of our wives, sisters, and daughters are reflected in these numbers and in the play, *Birth*.

Fresno’s production of *Birth* will take place the last weekend in September at the beautiful Tower Theatre in Fresno on September 28th and 29th at 8 p.m. After each performance of *Birth* there will be a BOLD Talkback, giving audience members the opportunity to discuss the play, their reactions, and their feelings about birth with local panelists from the community.

Similar to *The Vagina Monologues’* success around the world in its efforts to end violence against women, BOLD performances of Brody’s play, which have more than doubled in number since last year, are being performed in communities around the world as part of a movement

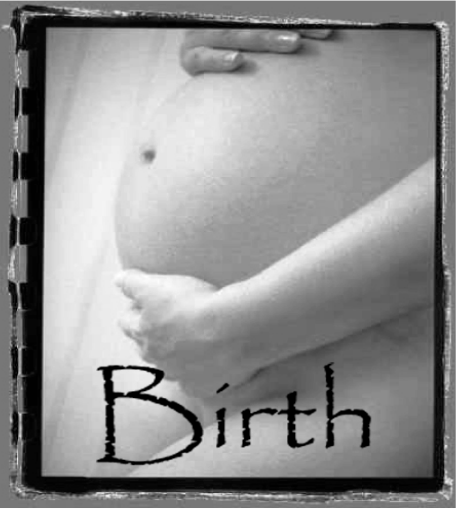
to improve birthing options and safety for mothers.

Created by a mother, BOLD founder, and playwright Karen Brody, *Birth* has been called “the naked truth about childbirth” by City Lights Theatre Company in San Jose, California. The story of eight women, *Birth* delivers a theatrical experience that melds the unbridled hilarity, the unexpected poignancy, and the tragic truth about power in maternity care today.

The cast represents the birthing spectrum from liberal, “My body rocks!”-bleating Amanda to strong-willed, no-nonsense Vanessa to career-driven Beth, violated Natalie and even angry, somewhat deflated Lisa. But at the cornerstone of each story lies personal choice. And Janet’s epidural, Jillian’s home birth, and Sandy’s cesarean section are all on display without judgment.

“Maternity care today simply isn’t mother-friendly,” Brody says. “In many communities, pregnant mothers are faced with few options that support low or no-intervention birth choices; in other communities, women feel they went with the standard medical care and were treated poorly. BOLD encourages all people attending performances to learn the truth about childbirth, understand where power lurks in their maternity care system and make informed birth choices.”

Brody adds, “Can a play improve maternity care? It not only can—it *is*.”



A play by Karen Brody.

Presented by Childbirth Resource Network and a concerned community.

***Birth* is a play based on over one hundred interviews Karen Brody conducted with mothers across America who gave birth from 2000 through 2004. It tells the true stories of 8 women painting a portrait of how women are giving birth in America today.**

Moving between first-person monologues, some dialogue, and the voices these women heard on the day they gave birth, *Birth* confronts, what City Lights Theater Company has called, "The naked truth about childbirth in America."



September 28th. & 29th. 2007.
Doors open at 7pm, show at 8pm. Join us after the show for a panel discussion about birth in Fresno!!

It’s time to start changing maternity care so it works for **mothers**. BOLD is leading the way. We hope you will BE BOLD and join us!

BOLD is a fundraising event for Childbirth Resource Network. **For more information on Childbirth Resource Network, go to childbirthresourcenetwork.org. For more information about BOLD, go to birthonlaborday.com.**

Progressive Environmentalists Debate Energy Proposal

[Editor’s introduction: Last month the Fresno City Council voted on a proposal to join the San Joaquin Valley Power Authority. There was a flurry of organizing by environmental groups to oppose the plan because it would put a natural gas burning power plant in Parlier. They argued that the plan would worsen an already bad air quality situation in the area. On the other hand, you had proponents of the proposal who pointed out that solar power would also be developed under the plan. Following are two opposing progressing views on this issue]

Fresno Declines to Harm Parlier

By Kevin Hall

An unusual coalition (for Fresno at least) of health advocates, environmentalists, labor unions and business interests joined together at City Hall last month to oppose Fresno joining the San Joaquin Valley Power Authority.

Drawn together by city council president Henry T. Perea, an ardent advocate for clean air and renewable energy, the ad hoc coalition succeeded in persuading a majority of the council to reject the proposal. Cynthia Sterling, Mike Dages and – brace yourselves – Jerry Duncan provided the votes needed.

Formed by the Kings River Conservation District under the Community Choice Aggregation Act (a good law enacted by former Governor Gray Davis at the height of the energy crisis), the Power Authority sought the right to become the exclusive provider of electricity to all Fresno residents. A well-executed community aggregation could be of tremendous benefit, particularly if it was dedicated exclusively to renewable energy sources.

Unfortunately, this was not that kind of proposal.

Keep in mind these are the same folks who recently put a highly polluting “peaker” power plant in Malaga. Let’s just say their concept of environmental justice is lacking. These fossil fuel lovers are apparently the kind of people who think global warming is great if it allows Chevron to drill for oil and natural gas beneath an ice-free Arctic ocean.

This time, the cart before the horse was a 500 megawatt, natural gas power plant near Parlier and only one-fourth of a mile from an elementary school. That’s a very big power plant, friends, very close to some very small people. And despite the fact it would be subject to the state’s strictest air pollution control requirements, the resulting emissions of toxic pollutants would have been nearly 200 tons per year.

Parlier is already a hot spot for air pollution with some of the highest levels of smog and frequency of dangerous days. This disregard for the health of the residents of an already impoverished area was an environmental injustice that had to be opposed.

Additionally, the estimated emissions of nearly 200 tons of air pollutants per year from such a plant would have fed directly into the “Fresno Eddy” – the circular wind pattern that traps and builds smog over Fresno and Clovis in the summer months – threatening the lives and directly harming the health of thousands of city residents.

Regionally, the San Joaquin Valley air basin has recently been reclassified to extreme non-attainment for ground level ozone over an 8-hour period, and both the local air district and California Air Resources Board have decided that they are unwilling to get the valley to attainment of the federal standards until 2024.

Suffice it to say you couldn’t think of a worse project in a worse place at a worse time.

Proponents suggested that the impacts of such a plant would have been mitigated sufficiently through the purchase of emission reduction credits (ERCs) within a 12- to 15-mile radius of the proposed site. However, in such a rural area there simply aren’t enough existing permitted sources with ERCs to sell to make such a promise, which of course was not provided in writing. Even if the ERCs were available, the concentration in the Parlier area of the formerly dispersed emissions and the plant’s times of peak emissions would have led to adverse health impacts impossible to mitigate against.

A slim majority of the Fresno City Council acted to protect the health and well being of our children, our seniors and all of our friends and neighbors. The epidemic of unnecessary suffering, disease and premature death due to air pollution’s impacts must be fought by every one of us, every day. It was such a day at City Hall.

(Kevin Hall is Air Quality Chair for the Sierra Club-Tehipite Chapter. He hosts Clearing the Air at 3 p.m. on the fourth Friday of every month on KFCF 88.1 FM).

A Healthy Debate?

By Mike Starry

On Saturday, August 11, I attended Governor Schwarzenegger’s “California Speaks” town hall meeting at the Fresno Convention Center to which I, a 59 year-old man, had been invited. It was publicized as a “An Experiment in Healthy Debate” on health care, including Senator Sheila Kuehl’s SB 840 proposal for health care similar to that presented in Michael Moore’s movie “Sicko.” Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger sent me a letter that included, “California Speaks will give you a unique opportunity to learn about the issues

and have your say about how we move forward,” and “Your thoughts and opinions matter, and I, along with other elected leaders, look forward to hearing what you have to say!”

Fortunately, during the last 17 years, I have had excellent insurance to cover my five surgeries and dozens of office visits. I saw this town-hall-style meeting as a great opportunity to encourage citizens to know about really good legislation that covered them all. Three minutes after I started distributing one page summaries of the benefits of SB 840, attendants told me to stop handing out information. Then a large man stood in my way and yelled, “Give me an example of one good

program that the government sponsored.” Another large man with no identification said, “Leave and I am calling the police.” He started describing me into a cell phone. I realized what was about to happen. I walked to the musician’s microphone and said, “I am being thrown out. Vote yes on SB 840.”

Two men picked me up in the air and carried me to the back door and dropped me on the ground. The police showed up and after they interviewed me for five minutes, they let me go home. As Blue Shield Foundation co-sponsored California Speaks, I do not think that their Experiment in Healthy Debate succeeded.

From the Greenhouse

by Franz Weinschenk

On Tuesday, July 31, by a vote of 4 to 3, the Fresno City Council voted NOT to join the San Joaquin Valley Power Authority. By doing so, we missed a great opportunity to get a little greener and save a lot of money.

So, what’s the San Joaquin Valley Power Authority anyway? Started by the Kings River Conservation District, the Authority is made up of over ten small cities (including Clovis, Sanger, and Selma) in Fresno, Tulare, and Kings Counties who have banded together to provide clean, inexpensive electricity for their residents. They wanted Fresno to join, but, alas, the Council said no.

The Power Authority is committed to putting together a portfolio of clean energy that meets California’s tough 20% renewable energy standards. This means that one-fifth of their electricity will come from renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, bio-mass, hydro, and perhaps geo-thermal. Furthermore, the Power Authority has promised to build a solar farm that will furnish enough electricity to power 20,800 homes. Their plans also include a natural gas power plant near Parlier.

What this means is that cities that are members of the Authority will have control over the planning, development, management, and oversight of their own power company. They themselves — not a planner or bureaucrat in some distant city — will have the final say as to what kinds of power sources are going to be purchased: solar, wind, bio-mass, hydro-electric, natural gas, coal, or nuclear. If something goes wrong with the production, product, or price, they won’t have to go to San Francisco or Sacramento to try to get it fixed, they just have to raise the issue at their own meetings right here on Jensen Avenue in Fresno. Joining the Authority would have given Fresno control over its power destiny, but now, because of the Council’s action, well, it’s back to good old PG & E for you and for me.

During the long, three-hour debate, one of the biggest points of contention had to do with the natural gas power plant that the Authority plans to build near Parlier. The current proposal calls for this plant to operate on an average emission rate of 825 pounds of carbon dioxide per megawatt hour. This is 25% cleaner than the 1,100 pounds allowed by California’s Public Utilities Commission. In addition the Authority is committed to developing emission credits in the vicinity of the plant that will offset the emissions from the plant itself so that the net air quality in the area of the plant will actually be cleaner than it is today!

Some Council members who voted against joining said they didn’t want the Parlier plant under any circumstances because it was gas powered. They never processed the fact that because of the enormous population growth in the Valley, whoever supplies Fresno’s power will have to build numerous power plants just to keep up with the demand. As things stand now, that will undoubtedly be PG & E, and as Council Member Westerlund pointed out, this is a company which is committed to making a profit for its shareholders. The Power Authority, on the other hand, is pledged to pass on those profits to its members in the form of reduced electricity rates. Question: Knowing that clean energy (like solar) is more expensive than dirty energy (like coal), which kind of power sources do you suppose PG & E will end up using?

True, the Power Authority’s plans were not perfect, but along with our friends in neighboring communities, had we joined, we would have had the opportunity of modifying them and greatly influencing future plans. Sorry, but that train has left the station.

Incidentally, just so you know, the three Council members who voted FOR JOINING the Power Authority were Calhoun, Westerlund, and Xiong.

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Franz Weinschenk has been a teacher and school administrator in Fresno for over fifty years. He can be contacted by email at franzie@scccd.org.



**The Fresno City Council - are they doing the right thing to protect the environment?
From left to right (in photo, not politically) - Brian Calhoun, Mike Dages, Cynthia Sterling, Larry Westerlund, Blong Xiong, Henry T Perea, and Jerry Duncan.**

Searching for the Key to Air Quality Solutions

By Alvin Valeriano

Once, a man found Mullah Nasruddin searching for something on the ground outside his house. On being asked, Nasruddin answered that he was looking for his key. The man joined in the search and in due course asked the mullah: “Where exactly did you drop it?” The mullah answered: “In my house.” “Then why are you looking here?” the man asked. “There is more light here than in my house,” replied Nasruddin.

Nasruddin, 13th century Sufi Muslim and mystic jester, used this teaching moment to remind us of the folly of looking for spiritual truths outside of ourselves. The story can also be a metaphor for the tendency to look elsewhere for root causes of air pollution, other than our individual choices that contribute to it. And more relevant to this article’s topic, Nasruddin’s search for the lost key at an unlikely location parallels the **local air district’s strategy to look elsewhere to curb pollution, rather than at the significant number of stationary sources under its jurisdiction.** In borrowing from the mullah’s playbook, humor can be the salve for this topic’s rather dry, unsexy appeal, compared with, say, Donald Trump’s investment teases to buy California’s most famous two-hole golf course located in Westside Fresno?

The 2007 Ozone Plan crafted by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (District) calculated that in year 2017, its efforts will reduce ozone-forming NOx emissions by 7.8 tons per day (TPD). According to state

inventories of summer-season NOx, in 2017 there are 105 TPD coming from stationary and area sources under District jurisdiction. The extent of District actions to fight ozone air pollution is reducing NOx emissions by 7.4% in 2017. In contrast, in 2017, 318 TPD of NOx can come from sources regulated by the state and the feds, of which 66 TPD are targeted for removal, a 21% NOx reduction.

In order to attain the 8-hour ozone standards, 2017 NOx emissions coming from District stationary/area sources and state/federal mobile sources must be reduced by 60%. This means that, for parity, the District must reduce NOx emissions from stationary and area sources in 2017 by 63 TPD. The District is only looking at 7.8 TPD of NOx reductions. Is this all that can be done? Apparently, the District believes that sources under its jurisdiction have been over-regulated, as Mr. Seyed Sadredin, the District’s Air Pollution Control Officer, has repeatedly said. Is this true? Let’s take a closer look.

Of the 105 TPD of NOx under its jurisdiction in 2017, the District’s 2007 Ozone Plan inventory accounted for only 45 TPD (adjusted down from 61 TPD, with ongoing reductions from current District rules). Missing is 60 TPD of NOx from District sources. Where are these NOx emissions? And what are these sources? The search is not too difficult to do, as it turns out. These missing NOx emissions come from area-wide sources which are relatively smaller units, unlike large combustion equipments permitted by the District as point sources. These sources are combustion equipments rated from .075 to 2 MM Btu/Hr, such as boilers, process heaters, and steam generators that are subject to District Rule 4308, which accounted for only 3.3 TPD out of the possible 39 TPD of NOx emissions. It also

includes dryers, ovens, and dehydrators that are rated below 5 MM Btu/Hr, which are not covered under District Rule 4309. All the District’s 2007 Ozone Plan could say about these sources is that future studies will be completed by 2011 to determine the feasibility of controlling NOx emissions.

Is there a need to study the feasibility of controlling NOx emissions from these sources? The fact is that technology to control NOx emissions from combustion of fuels, in the form of low-NOx burners, is already available. What is the problem, then? Are there doubts that these combustion equipments exist at all? Of course these devices exist. The District’s own area-source methodology calculates NOx emissions from these sources, described as operating in uncontrolled combustion mode and using fuel in amounts estimated by the California Energy Commission. Small boilers and “Other” combustion units can be found in manufacturing facilities, government facilities, general merchandise stores, restaurants, hotels, rooming houses and camps, cleaning service facilities, hospitals, educational institutions, religious organizations, and refineries. Compared with water heaters in new housing units, these clunkers emit more NOx pollutants.

Coming soon is a study that will describe how to reach attainment of the 8-Hour Ozone standards by 2017, seven years earlier than the dismal plan of clean air by 2024. These missing NOx emissions will be a prominent component of this study. It will show how to accomplish 63 TPD of NOx reductions from stationary and area sources under District jurisdiction, using currently available and achieved-in-practice technologies. The District should look inside its own house for the key to solving the Valley’s air quality problem.

California Speaks: We Want Single Payer

by Senator Sheila Kuehl

On August 11th, 2007, at the culminating and boisterous OneCareNow rally in Los Angeles, as well as eight coordinated “listening” events around the state, sponsored by Blue Shield and the California Endowment, among others, a random selection of thousands of Californians spoke out overwhelmingly in favor of major health care reform.

At the largest rally of the year, more than two thousand advocates, patients, nurses, doctors and universal health care fans gathered on the steps and lawns of the Los Angeles City Hall to excoriate a health care system that does nothing but devastate working families with systematic cancellations, denials and delays in care. This doesn’t promote health, it isn’t care, and it certainly isn’t a “system” — it’s traumatizing and often deadly for people who thought they would be given care, but, instead, got nothing but a tangle of insurance red tape. Convinced that single-payer universal health care is the only hope for fixing our broken health care system, they gathered to support SB 840 (Kuehl), the only truly universal health care plan proposed in legislation that is shown to contain costs, improve health care quality and allow Californians total choice of their doctors and hospitals.

Perhaps by design, on that same Saturday, health care foundations (including Blue Shield Foundation, Kaiser Family Foundation and the California Endowment) spent over \$4 million on an event originally spun as an exercise in “deliberative democracy”, but in reality was carefully structured to control discussion, in order to ask randomly selected participants to discuss and “vote” on their preferences for healthcare reform.

Naming the event CaliforniaSpeaks, organizers claimed the event would bring together thousands of Californians to discuss their perspectives on the current health reform proposals still under debate in Sacramento, yet the agenda was careful to exclude single payer from the discussion. Organizers of the event told us the reason that they didn’t include single payer was because the governor said he wouldn’t sign it.

Apparently when they said the event was designed to give Californians the chance to set the health care agenda, what they actually meant was that the event would be an opportunity for the people to jump in line with the Governor’s healthcare agenda. As is often the case, the people had a different idea — they did, in fact, jump; they jumped out of their seats demanding that single payer and SB 840 be included in the discussion, forcing the organizers to tack the issue on at the last



minute at the end of the day.

The fact that participants were forced, on their own accord, to demand the inclusion of single payer at the CaliforniaSpeaks events clearly indicates that the conventional political message, mostly propagated by the health insurance companies, has yet to understand that two decades worth of traumatized patients and families, along with an even higher consciousness of our failings set out in Michael Moore’s new film, “SiCKO”, has changed health reform politics forever.

Consider the overwhelming standing ovation that Steve Skvara received <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5SSyS5n6U4> at last Tuesday’s Democratic Presidential Debate when he asked, choking back tears, “What’s wrong with America?”, describing how his family lost their guaranteed retiree health coverage when the company who owed it to him filed for bankruptcy. Skvara’s story immediately resonated with millions of Americans across the nation, and he became an instant online celebrity. Why? Because he clearly illustrated our broken health care system and the abuses of corporate greed. Skavara’s story is one of thousands that are positioned to spark the simmering anger that a broad spectrum of Americans feel toward our insurance based non-system.

California families are becoming so hurt and so incensed at insurance company greed and abuse that they are increasingly willing, like nurse Cynthia Campbell’s husband, to pick up a megaphone and plead “Don’t Kill My Wife” in front of Blue Shield’s headquarters. And the transformation crosses the political spectrum. Art DeWerk, the Police Chief for the central valley town of Ceres, spoke out recently in favor of single payer as he described the helplessness he felt after his wife was unable to get timely access to routine medical care as she battled cancer.

These and other stories are found all too often in a health care system where the only competition is between insurance companies focused only on how much risk they can avoid, instead of the more appropriate competition between direct health care providers for quality service, driven by a single payer system that allows total patient choice of doctors and hospitals. And stories like those set out above, as well as others, even worse, will continue until we ditch the “system” that spends 30% of every health care dollar simply to weed out those of us who are sick enough to need our coverage and move to a real universal healthcare system that eliminates the middleman and returns decision making in healthcare to doctors and patients.

By the end of Saturday’s “listening” event, after everyone had discussed the intricacies of the incremental plans, single payer surprised the organizers by polling better than the others, with significantly more people saying they would support it under any condition. For those who supported a generic single payer system, but with conditions, SB 840 was, in fact, the only plan that actually met all the conditions set out by the discussants. For example, 53% of the participants statewide said they would support single payer if they could choose their own doctors and hospitals. SB 840 guarantees this. In contrast, both mandates which define the Governor’s policy paper and the Speaker of the Assembly’s bill, AB 8, received support by the discussants only if there were caps on costs and premiums. In fact, neither proposal currently includes this provision.

Both the rally in Los Angeles and CaliforniaSpeaks showed us that the people of California are way ahead of the Governor, as well as the Speaker, with regard to healthcare. At the end of the day, more participants felt that quality of care shouldn’t depend on how much money you have, that everyone should have access, and that greed should be kept out of the health care system.

Interestingly, and perhaps tellingly, later that same day, the Governor was quoted on a Fresno news station as saying he would sign SB 840 “as soon as we have the money for it”. Of course, the Lewin Report, studying the factors set out in the bill, has already shown how the plan will be funded.

But, whether the Governor’s pronouncement signals a serious shift in his thinking, it certainly acknowledges the political momentum that SB 840 has garnered. I welcome the conversation on funding, because we’ve got the money. SB 840 can easily be achieved with our current health care spending, personal, employer and state and federal. It would use the money wasted by the insurance companies on denying care to provide it, to all Californians, without co-pays or deductibles, for one affordable premium each year. What we need is the political will to catch up with the will of the people of California.

Further down the Drain

By Lloyd G. Carter

“Since pre-Columbian times, the Westlands area was known to be part of the uninhabitable Great California Desert.” From the history section of the Westlands Water District Website, www.westlandswater.org

For more than half a century, growers in the fabled Westlands Water District have been the “bad boys” of federal irrigation projects in the American West, ignoring residency and acreage requirements for taxpayer-subsidized water, getting Congress to change laws they didn’t like, seducing both Republicans and Democrats with a river of campaign contributions, and reaping more crop, water and power subsidies, tax breaks, and debt forgiveness than any other group of farmers in America.

Now they are poised to pull off the biggest coup in their controversial history. If they get what they are asking for, 260 billion gallons of publicly-owned water a year for 60 years, they will capture water worth anywhere from \$20 to \$40 billion - that’s billion with a B - with which they are free to farm tainted soils with, OR resell to urban interests at fantastic profit margins. At the current retail market price of \$500-600 an acre-foot in Southern California, the Westlands water could be worth \$2,000 an acre-foot by mid-century, when close to 60 million people may be crowded into California. The potential value of the water, which Westlands is free to use or sell as it wishes, staggers the imagination.

The catch? Westlands says it will solve a problem being caused by irrigation of their drainage-impaired, highly saline soils, which are contaminated with the toxic trace element selenium. They make this promise despite 52 years of federal research and hundreds of millions of dollars in studies that have failed to come up with a wildlife-safe, effective and affordable solution. It gets better. Westlands also wants forgiveness on a \$489 million capital construction costs debt it was supposed to have paid off years ago.

But first a little history. After pumping a huge aquifer dry on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley in less than 40 years, the patriarchal families of the West Side, the Giffens, the Harrises, the O’Neills, the Dieners, the Wolfsens and a few others, turned to a tire salesman named B.F. “Bernie” Sisk, also known as “Tex” because of his Texas roots. They bankrolled Sisk’s try for Congress and in 1955 he landed in the nation’s capitol. Sisk spent the next five years tirelessly promoting a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation project to bring Northern California water to western Fresno County.

In a speech on the floor of the House of Representatives in 1959, Sisk promised that if the San Luis Unit (which would have been the last major leg of the Central Valley Project begun in the 1930s) was built, there would be 6,000 family farmers on 100-acre ranches on the West Side and peace and prosperity would prevail. It was the first of many misrepresentations Westlands, or its supporters, would make over the next 58 years. Twenty-five years after Sisk’s promise, in 1984, there were still only 240 growers in Westlands and 40 of them, mostly from the original founding families, controlled over half the land and all the politics in the one-acre, one-vote district. Southern Pacific Railroad, Chevron, and cotton king J.G. Boswell were among the major Westlands landholders who influenced and directed district politics.

The late Paul S. Taylor, a University of California economics professor who was a well known critic of Reclamation policies in the mid-20th century wrote a 1964 article in which he quoted Alabama Congressman Oscar Underwood’s 1902 speech on the floor of Congress, the year the Reclamation program was created to protect and foster family farming:

“Federal reclamation began as a program to help ‘farm boys’ who ‘want farms of their own’ to obtain them ‘without being driven into the already overcrowded cities to seek employment.’”

Many of the “farm boys” from Westlands would eventually live in multi-million dollar mansions in North Fresno, on the San Joaquin River bluffs or toney Van



Pumping plant on the state aqueduct which carries water to Westlands. the state and federal pumping plants at Tracy, which pump water uphill from the Delta into the San Joaquin Valley, are the largest power users in the state. Photo by Lloyd Carter.

Ness Extension Avenue, 50 miles from their industrialized farming operations, in zip code 93711 that receives more farm subsidies than any other zip code in America.

The first thing West Side growers did after the water delivery project was approved in 1960 was to annex another 200,000 acres known as the West Plains Water Storage into the Westlands, a move a 1978 Congressional Task Force later concluded was illegal and unauthorized by Congress.

Ironically, much of the land in the West Plains district had been designated too salty and unsuitable for irrigation by Bureau engineers in the 1950s when designing the original San Luis project, which included the already mammoth Westlands District and a handful of other small irrigation districts immediately to the north.

These upslope West Plains lands, near the Coast Range along Interstate 5, would later clearly exacerbate salty and selenium-plagued groundwater problems on the low-lying farmland near the trough of the Valley, where the San Joaquin River runs.

In exchange for bringing cheap subsidized water to the West Side, Westlands growers had agreed to break up the huge estates, including the 106,000 acres owned by Southern Pacific, and the 100,000 acres owned by the Giffen family, after 10 years. The excess land provisions in Reclamation law provided that a husband and wife could own 320 acres but no more than that.

Of course, the Bureau of Reclamation had never enforced the residency requirement or the acreage limitation, which is what drew the wrath of Professor Taylor. When the mid-1970s rolled around, National Land for People, headed by George Ballis, sued to break up the huge ranches and actually give “farm boys” and farmworkers a chance to have ranches of their own. Fat chance. A celebrated 1977 San Francisco Examiner series titled “The Paper Farmers” chronicled how the big growers were evading the acreage limitations by, in some cases, adding the names of field hands and unborn children, to land deeds to in-

crease the amount of cheap water they were eligible to receive.

Westlands dragged its feet for several years in the National Land for People case, while the Bureau maintained the status quo on water deliveries, meaning big growers continued to get the cheap water for ranches which often exceeded 5,000 or 10,000 acres. Westlands also went to Congress and Rep. Tony Coelho, who had replaced his mentor Sisk in 1975. Coelho, who would become a powerhouse in the House before resigning in disgrace in a real estate scandal, helped engineer the so-called “Reclamation Reform Act” in 1982, which didn’t really “reform” anything but did legalize a lot of the crimes occurring over the acreage limitation. Coelho was aided by congressmen loyal to large growers in federal irrigation districts throughout the western states. The Reform Act eliminated the residency requirement and boosted the eligible acreage for the cheap water to 960 acres. It also created an even bigger loophole by allowing growers to get cheap water for lands they leased, rather than owned. The 5,000 to 10,000 acres operations continued to get the cheap water and Westlands remained firmly in the driver’s seat on state water issues.

Then in 1983-1984, the Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge debacle hit, when word leaked out that drainage water from Westlands, being evaporated in 1,280 acres of diked ponds at Kesterson, was poisoning fish, ducks, and shorebirds at the dual purpose “refuge.” Because of a subterranean clay layer underneath Westlands farmland, salty groundwater accumulated near the root zone. To protect crops the shallow groundwater had to be pumped out and sent somewhere else. The original plan was to funnel the salty drainage through the Delta to the Pacific Ocean. When Bay Area interests objected, Reclamation officials latched on to the risky idea of utilizing evaporation ponds at

Kesterson as a stop gap measure while they undertook studies to convince the State Water Resources Control Board the Westlands drainage would not harm the Delta. These studies revealed that over half of Westlands’ 605,000 acres was riddled with selenium, a trace element which is a micronutrient in very small doses but toxic in slightly higher amounts. Selenium had been

washing out of the Coast Range mountains for eons, accumulating in the soils of Westlands. Selenium’s toxicity to livestock was well known and Department of Agriculture studies in 1939 had actually detected elevated levels in Fresno County’s western foothills but



Picking romaine lettuce near Five Points. Photo by George “Elfie” Ballis.



Deformed bird embryo caused by selenium poisoning



The San Luis Drain canal in western Fresno County, which carried selenium-laced drain water from the Westlands Water District to Kesterson in the early 1980s. Much of the canal was closed in 1986. A larger portion of the \$80 million canal has not been maintained and has fallen into disrepair. The toxic salt buildup on the canal bottom was left in the canal and vegetation maintained by rainfall and seepage through the broken cement plates from adjacent irrigation has created a mini-habitat for wildlife which could be getting poisoned. Taxpayers foot the bill for this now unused linear toxic waste site. Photo by Lloyd Carter.

that information had been overlooked or ignored by Bureau officials eager to build the San Luis Unit.

Many federal scientists saw Kesterson coming although they did not know that it would be selenium that would cause Kesterson's Silent Spring. Despite the documented misgivings of field level biologists as early as 1962, the Department of Interior, parent agency of both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, had actually claimed in the late 1970s that the Westlands salty drainage would be good for the Kesterson wetlands. Amazingly, much of the tab for constructing the Kesterson facilities was written off the Westlands' government tab because it was considered a benefit to wildlife and the general public. The wetlands at the 5,900-acre Kesterson refuge adjacent to the San Joaquin River in Merced County were the wintering grounds for tens of thousand of migratory ducks supposedly protected by an international treaty, the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. High levels of selenium dissolved in the drainage water had moved into the Kesterson food chain, killing fish and birds and triggering grotesque deformities in wildlife.

On March 15, 1985, following a year of intensive media scrutiny, including a segment on CBS' "60 minutes" and front page stories in the New York Times and the Washington Post, Donald Hodel, Secretary of Interior under President Ronald Reagan, ordered the Kesterson ponds closed and irrigation water deliveries to Westlands shut off. Hodel said he would not violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

A delegation of Westlands officials and growers, including former California Secretary of State Bill Jones (Jones' family owned several thousand acres in Westlands), traveled to Washington to lobby Hodel to resume irrigation deliveries. In exchange for the Bureau to continue the flow of Northern California water to Westlands, the water district officials on April 3, 1985 signed an agreement in which they pledged to halt drainage flows to Kesterson. even though this would eventually make the unsolved drainage problem worse. In that 1985 agreement, Westlands also assumed any liability for lawsuits from individual Westlands growers.

In 1991, some growers in a 49,000-acre area of Westlands who had been draining to Kesterson filed suit against Westlands and the Bureau of Reclamation for damages caused when the drainage system was closed and plugged. The suit was placed on the back burner during the Clinton years, as Reclamation officials plodded along spending tens of millions of dollars on drainage studies despite a \$50 million, five-year investigation by a state-federal team which concluded the cheapest solution was to take the high selenium lands out of production and drastically reduce the amount of drainage produced.

When George W. Bush came to office, the growers who had filed the lawsuit a decade earlier began pushing it again. A career Justice Department attorney, Yoshinori H.T. Himel, representing the Department of Interior and the Bureau in the grower suit, filed a motion in August

of 2002 to get the suit dismissed.. Himel pointed out that Westlands, in the 1985 agreement, had agreed "to design, install, and operate alternative means for disposal of drain water in an efficient and environmentally sound manner."

Himel then noted that the 1985 Agreement "placed the obligation on Westlands [and its customers served by the drain] 'to design, install and operate alternative means for disposal of drain water from Westlands.'" Himel said alternative means included evaporation ponds, salt tolerant crops and recycling.

While Himel acknowledged it could be argued the 1985 agreement may not have required Westlands to assume responsibility for drainage for the entire San

Luis Unit (which included other smaller water districts) he said Westlands assumed, at the minimum, responsibility for solving the drainage problems of the 49,000 acres then draining to Kesterson.

Himel added "One thing the Agreement did alter, however, was Westlands' obligation to indemnify the United States for, among other things, 'losses, damages, claims and liabilities' arising from Westlands performance or non-performance of the Agreement. The language 'losses, damages, claims and liabilities' indicates money claims, such as Plaintiffs' money claims in this lawsuit . . . Westlands thus undertook at a minimum to indemnify the United States for lawsuits by those who might be dissatisfied with the results of Westlands' 'alternative means' for drainage."

Of course, we will never know what would have happened had the issue been decided by a jury or a judge. Bennett Raley, a Colorado attorney who represented irrigation districts and was appointed Assistant Secretary for Water and Science by his political friend Gale Norton in 2001, made sure that a trial on the merits did not happen. Raley, undoubtedly with the support of Norton and the White House, undercut Himel and other Justice Department career attorneys, agreeing to a \$139 million settlement in December of 2002, with most of the money coming from U.S. taxpayers, not Westlands. Raley, of course, gained fame in 2002 for allotting water from Oregon's Klamath River to irrigators rather than to endangered fish, leading to a massive salmon die-off. News reports indicated Vice President Dick Cheney masterminded this decision. It is unknown if Cheney or White House mastermind Karl Rove were consulted or involved in the decision to concede victory to the Westlands growers without a court fight.

Under the settlement, the federal government was to pay \$107 million to have the farmers' lawsuit dismissed. Westlands had to spend \$32 million to settle its part of the case, buy 34,000 acres of the plaintiff's salted up land and idle the acreage. "We weren't batting a thousand with this court," Raley claimed in an interview with the Sacramento Bee. "They were claiming that we had damaged them, damages in ex-

cess of \$400 million." Raley did not mention Westlands officials had signed the April 1985 agreement assuming liability for all such lawsuits or that his own government attorneys wanted to fight the growers suit.

Rep. George Miller and environmental activists howled at the settlement, which they warned would used as a precedent for the still unsolved drainage problem facing the district. Having done his dirty work, Raley returned to private practice representing water districts in December of 2004.

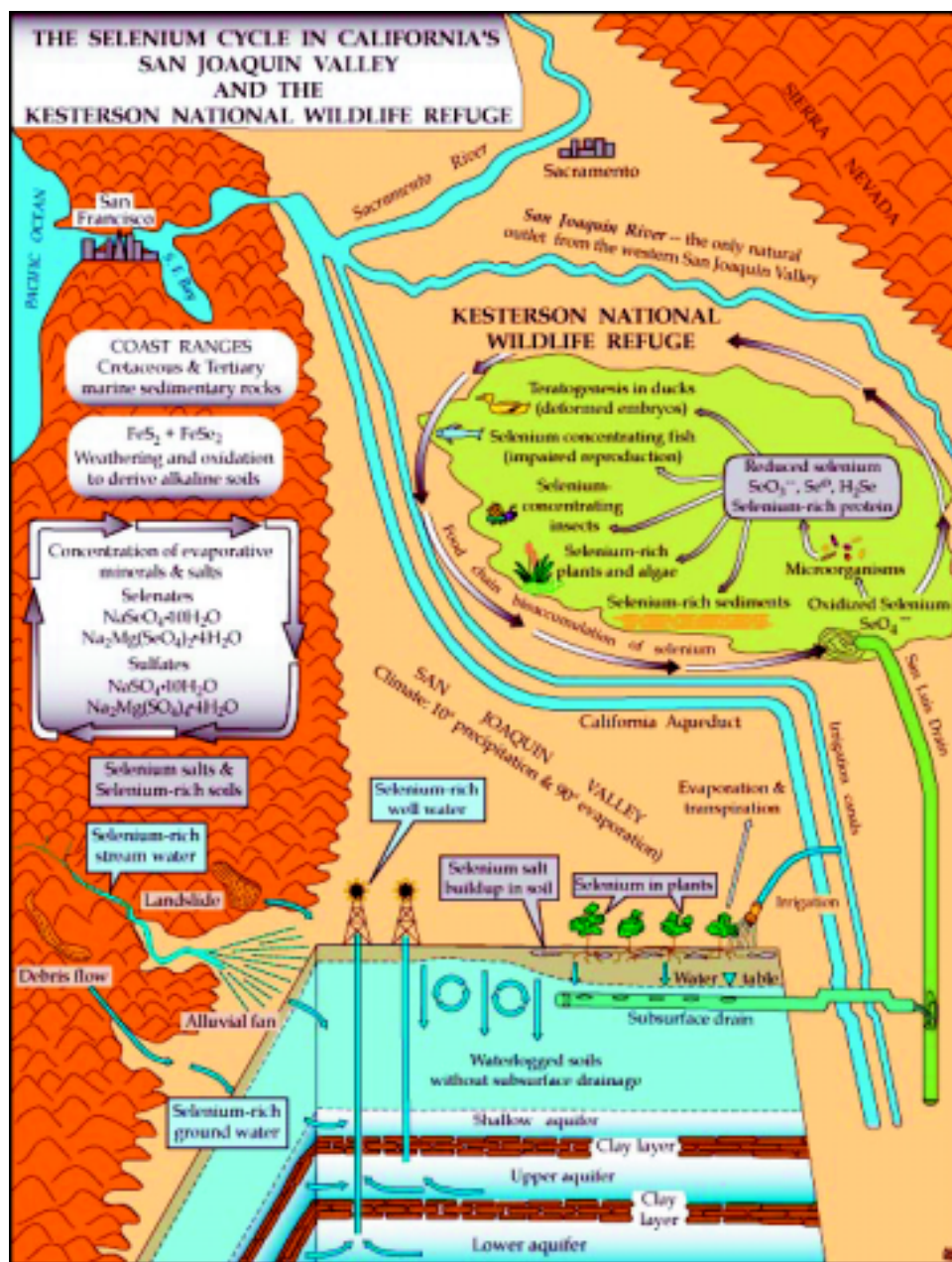
Over the next five years, Westlands worked on getting a new long-term water delivery contract and pressuring Reclamation to come up with a drainage solution because a district court, and then the federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal, had concluded Reclamation had a legal obligation to try and complete a drainage system for Westlands first authorized in the 1960 act of Congress authorizing construction of the San Luis Unit.

Westlands growers had a powerful ally in Jason Peltier, a native Californian and Deputy Secretary at Interior who was the Administration's point man on western water issues. Peltier claimed in news interviews he had nothing to do with decisions involving Westlands. However, Westlands recently hired Peltier at an undisclosed salary. A regional Bureau official, Susan Ramos, has also been hired by Westlands.

Which brings us to the present. Westlands general manager and general counsel Tom Birmingham is now pushing a "global" settlement to the outstanding lawsuits over the drainage dilemma and Westlands' desire for a long-term secure water supply. In recent closed door meetings with Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Valley congressmen Dennis Cardoza and Jim Costa (who represents the Westlands area), Natural Resources Defense Council attorney Hamilton Candee and a few others. The news media is not permitted to cover these talks while decisions are made involving billions of taxpayer dollars.

In the Central Valley Project, water supplies have always been distributed on a first in time, first in right priority system in which the oldest CVP irrigation districts would get the water they needed before Westlands, which was last in line, got its water. This has often meant drastically reduced supplies for Westlands. For example, during the 1987-1992 drought, Westlands, in 1990 and 1991, only got 25 percent of its annual contract amount of 1.15 million acre-feet (an acre-foot is 325,851 gallons). Westlands has tried repeatedly in court to get on the same footing as more senior water contractors but to no avail. The drainage crisis, widely misunderstood, has provided Westlands' growers an opening.

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A few months ago, Westlands announced it could solve the drainage dilemma for less than half of the \$2.6 billion Reclamation officials said it would cost to provide reverse osmosis, bio-remediation, recycling, and land buyouts. Birmingham said that in exchange for letting the Bureau off the hook in drainage, Westlands wanted the Bureau's extraordinarily valuable state water permit and operational control of the huge San Luis Reservoir near Los Banos. As anticipated, the audacious claim provoked a hostile response from Rep. Miller, Northern California interests and environmental groups statewide.

Birmingham abandoned that strategy amid a torrent of negative publicity and, in the first week of August, just prior to another secret meeting with Feinstein and some, but not all, interested parties, he came up with a revised, but still sketchy, proposal. In that proposal, Birmingham suggested that if the federal government would forgive about \$489 million off the amount Westlands owes for capital construction costs, and would exempt Westlands and other San Luis Unit water districts from acreage limitations and pricing provisions of federal law, Westlands would take over responsibility for the drainage mess. In addition, Westlands wants a 60-year contract with rights of renewal (federal law now prohibits federal water contract in excess of 25 years) and wants the Bureau to authorize transfer of title to various pumping plants, internal distribution systems, and the Coalinga Canal.

Westlands also agreed to enter into a "waiver/indemnity agreement" with the United States, which, of course, it had already done back on April 3, 1985, although no one seems to remember that.

Feinstein also seems unclear on the concept that even though the Bureau estimates it may take up to \$2.6 billion to produce a drainage program, Westlands is ultimately required under the 1960 legislation to pay for it, albeit over 40 or 50 years and interest free. Neither the district court decision nor the Ninth Circuit decision has ever held that Congress must appropriate money to build a drainage system or that Westlands would not have to pay for it.

Moreover, few people in Washington seem to be questioning why Westlands should get off the hook for the \$489 million still owed on the delivery system. If a man builds you a house and a plumbing system and fouls up the pipes underneath the bathroom, you don't get the house for free. You just get your plumbing fixed.

Following a meeting in her office on Aug.1, Senator Feinstein said of a potential agreement "the devil is in the details." Environmentalists fear she knows too few details of what would be a good deal for the American taxpayers and especially Californians, who are cutting back usage in urban areas while Westlands angles for enough water annually to meet the needs of a city of eight million people, or two cities the size of Los Angeles.

Consider this: If Westlands gets 800,000 acre-feet of water a year, which is what it would like, that translates to 260.68 billion gallons of water a year and 15.64 trillion gallons over the life of the proposed 60-year contract.

If you calculate the urban retail value of 800,000 acre-feet of water at a conservative \$500 an acre-foot (Rep. Grace Napolitano of Los Angeles, new chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources, says its \$600 an acre-foot in Southern California) you come up with \$400 million a year. Assuming the Westlands pays a generous \$100 an acre-foot (they will argue for, and probably get, a cheaper price) that means they will pay \$80 million for \$400 million worth of water in a given year. Over 60 years, \$400 million times 60 turns out to be \$24 billion worth of water for 400 or 500 growers, many of them connected by blood or marriage. Of course, in my example, they would pay for 20 percent of that water (\$100 an acre-foot) which means the retail value of that water delivered over the life of the contract, less what they paid for it, would be \$19.2 billion in lost value.

Actually, the numbers could be much higher. First of all, you can bet that the current urban price of water will be far higher in 60 years, when the western San Joaquin Valley may look like the San Fernando Valley. Water then may be worth \$2,000 an acre-foot or even more if climate change produces extended drought.

Although Westlands' Birmingham contends any guaranteed supply of water is strictly for farming in the district, there is no question it is legally permissible, thanks

to a 1992 change in Reclamation law, for Westlands to sell its water on the retail market to the highest bidder, i.e. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which has an insatiable thirst. Indeed, several San Joaquin Valley irrigation districts are already selling water to developers or urban interests and some individual Westlands growers have already offered to sell water to Metropolitan. They understand very well that water is the new cash crop.

Westlands' so-called solution to the drainage problem is to use sprinklers to disperse the tainted drainage water into the air, with the water evaporating and the salts and selenium falling back onto a gravel bed. The technology has never been tried other than on one California Department of Water Resources test plot that was less than the size of a city lot. Westlands officials have not explained how or where the millions of tons of salts that



Hoeing lettuce on a gigantic farm near Mendota. Photo by George "Elfie" Ballis.

would accumulate over the decades would be hauled for disposal or what would happen if their scheme did not work.

Environmentalists worry the drift of the salty spray from the sprinklers, especially in windy conditions which occur a lot in the Westlands, could damage surrounding fields or groundwater. And sprinklers would surely draw wildlife to the tainted water. The spray drift zone downwind would be more than two football fields long. If trees were planted for a drift barrier that would create a selenium-charged terrestrial environment. Huge amounts of land would be required for the amount of drainage Westlands generates.

So if Westlands' drainage scheme doesn't work the growers will simply idle the bad lands and keep the very valuable water which they can resell to the highest bidder under a 1992 law permitting such resale of subsidized irrigation water. Very convenient.

At Feinstein's Aug. 1 meeting with Birmingham and others, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientist Joseph Skorupa was not in attendance although Senator Feinstein asked for him to be there. Skorupa is an expert on the impacts of drainage water on wildlife, especially birds, and has been studying San Joaquin Valley drainage since the 1980s. Fish and Wildlife managers, under pressure from Bureau officials, told Sen. Feinstein that Skorupa was unable to attend the Washington meeting. According to sources at Interior, however, this was an outright lie and Skorupa was both willing, and able, to attend the Feinstein meeting. Ironically, the same day Skorupa was told he could not attend the Feinstein meeting, Fish and Wildlife Director Dale Hall was testifying before the House Natural Resources Committee Hearing regarding Interior's questionable scientific and policy decisions under the Endangered Species Act that "Science is the cornerstone of the Service's work; it is what guides the agency's decisions."

Of course, Hall also wrote a leniency letter to a federal judge on behalf of Steven Griles, a former Interior official convicted in the Jack Abramoff scandal.

More interestingly, Westlands growers have been showering campaign

donations on Feinstein for years, including nearly \$5,000 personally from Birmingham. No one knows how much. But they have a lot to gain if Feinstein buys off on their proposal and sponsors legislation.

According to the Environmental Working Group (EWG) website, in a recent year the largest 10 percent of the farms in the Central Valley Project - which stretches from Redding to Bakersfield - got 67 percent of the water, and of course, Westlands has the biggest CVP farms of all and uses the most water of any district. Twenty-seven large CVP farms, most in the Westlands, received water subsidies averaging in excess of \$1 million (i.e. the cost of replacement water). One Westlands farm, Woolf Enterprises, received more water by itself than 70 water districts in the CVP comprised of small farms for a subsidy worth up to \$4.2 million annual at retail market rates for water. EWG has also documented that CVP farmers get power subsidies to pump that Delta water uphill into the San Joaquin Valley at rates that are about 1/15th what the average citizen pays for the monthly electricity bill.

Fortunately, any deal the Westlands/Bush Administration cabal makes with Feinstein must run the gauntlet of a Democratic Congress that may not be as solicitous of the Westlands as Feinstein is. Rep. Miller and Rep. Napolitano promise to closely monitor any sweetheart water giveaway. California water groups are also mobilizing to fight the latest Westlands scheme.

The real question for Congress to ask is how much do American taxpayers owe the Westlands growers? Kesterson whistleblower Felix Smith, a retired Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, who first leaked to the media word of the selenium-caused bird deformities, has been writing about the Kesterson debacle for 25 years. He estimates the subsidy to the Westlands, per acre, is now well over \$6,600 per acre, far more than the land is worth.

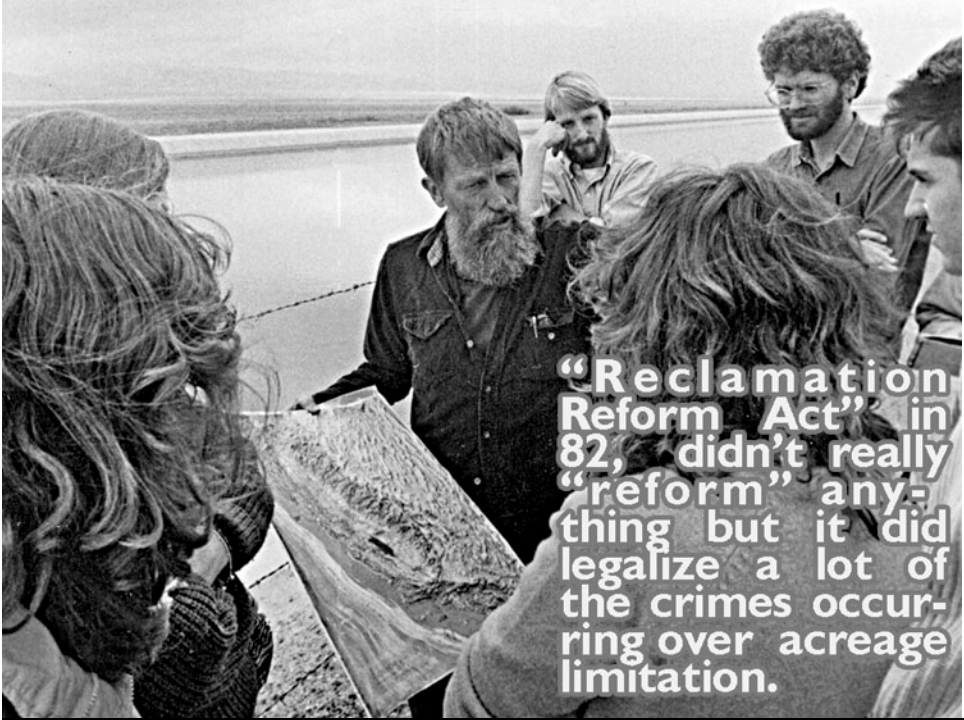
More worrisome is that if Westlands is guaranteed an enormous amount of water, it will increase the stress on a Delta that is already on the verge of ecological collapse due to overpumping by the State Water Project as well as the federal pumps..

However, Westlands' "farm boys" are hoping that public apathy and congressional confusion or ignorance will result in one more very big payday. Over 15 trillion gallons of water in the middle of a desert. Think of the riches. You won't be able to keep them down on the farm.

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If you want to protect your tax dollars and slow down the Westlands express you can go to, and sign the petition at www.thepetitionsite.com/1/no-more-secret-deals. The Planning and Conservation League is also adding information on the Westlands proposal to its website. It is your tax money and your public water supply that is being given away. The devil is indeed in the details. Stay informed.

Elfie shows water welfare at crime scene



For more information, see: Fairy Godfather of Westlands, Elfie fable of endless welfare: <http://www.sunmt.org/feb19chron01.html>

The Richest Land, glory & shame of California Agriculture, see clips from this landmark SunMt docu-poem: <http://www.sunmt.org/dis.html>

End the Blockade Against Cuba! Lift the Travel Restrictions Now

By Mike Rhodes

Fifty-eight members of the 38th Venceremos (“We Shall Overcome”) Brigade to Cuba defiantly returned to the United States Saturday, July 28. They marched across the “Peace Bridge” that links Fort Erie in Canada and Buffalo, New York. On the US side they were greeted by supporters and welcomed with a picnic. Three of the members of this year’s brigade are from Fresno (see the photo below).

Venceremos Brigade members go to Cuba each year to work with and learn from the revolutionary example of the Cuban people, where human needs are valued over corporate profits. This year, brigadistas worked weeding mango and guava fields. They also attended cultural events, learned about the history of Cuba, and made many new friends.

Vanessa Rhodes, one of this year’s brigade participants, said, “The Venceremos Brigade wants an end to the travel ban to Cuba, we want an end to the embargo, to stop Bush’s plan to further undermine Cuba, we demand freedom for the Cuban Five, and we want to encourage more people to people exchanges.”

The travel ban is an attempt by the US government to limit and stop citizens from going to Cuba and seeing that country for themselves. Venceremos Brigade members overtly challenge this travel ban by openly going to Cuba and returning as publicly as possible. There are a few exceptions to the travel ban for some scholarly work and other professional exchanges, but in general, US citizens are told they can’t travel to Cuba.

Those who challenge the travel ban are threatened with severe and somewhat vague legal sanctions. But, when the US interferes with Venceremos Brigade members’ travel to Cuba, their legal team is there to defend them. Venceremos Brigade attorneys are ready for any US legal challenges and expect to prevail because the travel ban is both illegal and unconstitutional.

The Venceremos Brigade is opposed to the economic embargo because it creates unnecessary hardships and suffering on the Cuban people. Not only does the US make direct trade with Cuba by American companies illegal, the economic embargo extends to other nations as well. For example, under the US embargo a foreign ship can’t stop in a Cuban port if they want to trade with the US.

The Bush plan, which Venceremos Brigade members vigorously oppose, would worsen the economic embargo and make it harder for US citizens to visit the island.

The Venceremos Brigade demands freedom for the Cuban Five. The story of the Cuban five is not told very often in the corporate media. These five Cubans were arrested several years ago and are now in jail for the



These Venceremos Brigade Members are walking across the Peace Bridge from Fort Erie, Canada, into the US. Both photos on this page by Mike Rhodes

crime of trying to stop terrorists from attacking Cuba. These brave men had come to the United States to uncover the plots of anti-Cuban terrorists. After some success in uncovering terrorist plots against their country, they provided information about these plans to the US government. Instead of arresting the terrorists, authorities arrested and jailed the Cuban Five.

Vanessa Rhodes, from Oakland, California, said brigade members met with the families of the Cuban Five. Vanessa said, “The terribly ironic thing about this case is that these five men were doing exactly what US government officials say they are trying to do — stop terrorism.” They are now in US prisons. The families of the Cuban Five, according to Vanessa, are working hard to build and strengthen the struggle to free their husbands, children, and brothers. For more information about the Cuban Five, see: <http://www.freethefive.org/>

The Venceremos Brigade has been organizing people to people exchanges with Cuba since 1969 as a means of showing solidarity with the Cuban Revolution by working side by side with Cuban workers. This year’s brigade members, the vast majority of them in their teens and twenties, experienced first hand what is going on in Cuba today.

Cody Iyall, one of the brigadistas from Fresno, said he enjoyed his free time in Havana and was particularly excited to run into a group of hip-hop musicians. There is an active hip-hop music scene in Cuba that seems to create the same generational gap as we have in the US. Older Cubans prefer more traditional music and many of the youth enjoy hip-hop, which they say can be just as revolutionary as folk or salsa music. Cody is a musician and this was his second trip to Cuba.

Several Brigadistas mentioned a children’s play as the highlight of their trip. *Cinderella*, which was performed to the background of Beatles music, was an opportunity for brigadistas to learn about theater and culture in Cuba.

While on the island brigade members were able to participate in the first graduation ceremony of US students from a Cuban medical school. All educational expenses were provided by the Cuban government to these students. The doctors will now return to the US to practice in poor and underserved

neighborhoods in their communities. For more information about this Free Medical School in Cuba, go to <http://www.ifconews.org/MedicalSchool/main.htm>

The Venceremos Brigade will begin organizing the 39th contingent to Cuba shortly. If you are interested in being a part of this historic experience, contact them at <http://www.venceremosbrigade.org/>

Cuba - then and Now

by Gerry Bill

(First in a two-part series)

Anyone from the US making an initial trip to Cuba is bound to have an eye opening experience, to put it mildly. The people in the US have been so miseducated about Cuba that their images of the island nation are generally way off the mark and bear little resemblance to reality.

A subsequent trip becomes an education in a different way. My trip to Cuba with Pastors for Peace in July of this year was my second trip there, the first one having been in 1994. That thirteen-year time span afforded me the opportunity to make some comparisons. I can report that conditions in Cuba have improved significantly during the interval. When I was there in 1994 it was during the so-called special period—the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Cuba had just lost its major trading partner which had accounted for about 80% of its trade.

In 1994 people in Cuba were saying that times were difficult, but that better days were ahead. Apparently the better days have arrived, at least to some degree. Economically speaking Cuba still has some distance to go to catch up with where it might have been absent the special period, but they certainly have come a long way already. The big life-style issues in Cuba during the special period were electricity, transportation, food and housing. Progress has been made on all of these fronts.

Electrical blackouts were common in Havana in 1994—we expected six to eight hours of blackout every day. On this trip we never lost electricity at all in Havana. We did make a visit to the interior province of Sancti Spiritus for a couple of days and experienced a loss of electricity there for a few hours. However, that was in the middle of a horrific thunder and lightning storm, conditions under which we might experience a similar power loss here in California.

Mass transit also seems improved. Buses are still crowded during rush hour, but not to the degree that they were in 1994. On my prior trip I used to see police



Three of these Venceremos Brigade members live in Fresno and the fourth grew up there. From Left - Right: Cody Iyall, Tony Bracamonte, Vanessa Rhodes, and Simone Whalen-Rhodes. Vanessa now lives in Oakland.

Continued on page 18

stationed at some bus stops. The police tried to bring some order to the chaos that ensued when a hundred people would try to get on a bus that only had room for 20 more people. That situation no longer obtains, and the police are gone from the bus stops. The old “camel” style buses (a semi-tractor pulling a large, bus-like trailer) are being phased out, and only a few are left. They have been replaced with modern buses similar to those you might see in Europe or Asia. For inter-city travel Cuba has just bought a very large fleet of buses from China that are quite modern, even luxurious. They are roomy, have upholstered reclining seats and air conditioning. We rode on these busses to Sanctis Spiritus and we saw lots more of them on the inter-city highways.

Food is still an issue in Cuba, but much less so than it was in 1994. Statistically speaking, per capita caloric intake is back up to about where it was before the special period. Indeed, my impression is that overall the people are better fed than they were in 1994. Cubans do receive food ration coupons that allow them to buy some food—about 30% of what they need—at subsidized prices. The remainder of food they buy is more expensive, and getting enough of it can be a struggle for

some families. However, this is a situation that is improving. While we were there it was announced that milk production was increasing and that subsidized milk was going to become more widely available.

The housing in general appears to be in better shape than it was thirteen years ago. Some of this may be cosmetic, so it is hard to tell for sure about other aspects of the housing. I can report that in 1994 paint was scarce, and a lot of buildings were in need of new paint. That is still the case, but noticeably less so. Paint is not as scarce a commodity any more, and a number of buildings had new paint jobs.

This increased availability of paint was also noticeable when it came to Cuba’s fleet of US-made cars from the 1950s. US cars were not exported to Cuba after 1959, but the Cubans have kept a lot of those fifty-year-old cars running. In 1994 almost all of them had faded paint and were generally run down. There are still some cars like that around, but a much larger percentage of them now have new paint jobs and appear to have been restored to something like their original condition. I also noticed that there were very few broken down cars parked in front of people’s houses anymore, although that had been common in 1994. The inoper-

able cars have largely disappeared, and the remaining cars are back in daily use. There are also a lot more new cars on the road in Cuba these days compared to thirteen years ago. Those cars are, of course, made in places like Europe or Asia, not the US. It is also worth noting that, for reasons of efficiency, a lot of the new cars run on diesel rather than on gasoline.

I would have to say that I was quite pleased with the progress that has been made in Cuba since my last visit. I expect to visit again in the future and hope to see even more progress. I am planning to go with Pastors for Peace again in 2008; is there anyone from Fresno who would like to join me?

Next Time: What I Learned about the Medical System in Cuba

###

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

Civil Liberties Threatened in Fresno

By Bill Simon

Last March a Board of Directors was elected, and the Greater Fresno Area Chapter of the ACLU of Northern California was inaugurated. Just in time. If any American’s civil liberties are threatened, civil liberty is threatened for all of us. We often read about domestic spying and torture on the national level. But there are several threats to civil liberty in Fresno including the River Park curfew for young people, the requirement for a permit and \$1 million insurance even for a student to make a film in Fresno, the requirement of a \$75 permit to register voters on the Fulton Mall, the situation of the homeless in Fresno, and the need for a police auditor due to charges of police brutality in some parts of Fresno.

River Park has become an important gathering place for young people, one of the few places they can safely go. There seem to be few reports of juvenile misdeeds at the Mall, although I do remember my daughter telling me someone put bubbles in a fountain a few years ago. Due to community outcry, this issue seems to be fading away, at least for the present. The new ACLU

chapter will continue to monitor the situation.

Just after it was announced that New York City was requiring a permit and insurance to film in New York, Fresno announced the same policy. I don’t know if it’s nice to be in the same league as New York, but it seems overly restrictive for student and amateur filmmakers to have to carry \$1 million insurance. Regulations for large film companies that might interfere with traffic is one thing, and the specifics of this new policy are still unclear. However, I saw a great short film by a Fresno State student at the Fresno Filmworks Festival that probably couldn’t have been made under this new policy.

When someone wanted to set up a card table to register voters on the downtown Fulton Mall, the City of Fresno told him he would have to obtain a permit at a cost of \$75 per day. Thanks to the work of Howard Watkins, the city has said it would wave the fee for the permit if the person registering voters was not being paid for his efforts. This is an improvement, but why is even a free permit required to register voters? It seems like the right to vote should include the right to register voters without hassle.

Recently Pam Kincaid was beaten and, while hospitalized, fell four floors to her death. There is no investigation of her beating or death. Pam was a homeless

woman who was one of the complainants in the suit against the City of Fresno. This death, as well as other local charges of police abuse, points out the need for independent auditing of the police department. The ACLU is one of several cosponsors for a forum at Fresno Pacific University on October 17 asking “Does Fresno need an Independent Police Auditor”. Please attend!

The new ACLU chapter will monitor these and other threats to our civil liberties. You are invited to our annual membership meeting at 6:30 pm on September 19 at Fresno City College in the Staff Dining Room (northwest part of campus). After a 6:30 business meeting to elect additional directors and report on current concerns, we will hold a 7:30 educational forum on Immigration Law, a topic of particular interest in the Central Valley.

###

Bill Simon has lived in Fresno with his wife, Nancy, and four children since 1981 and retired from PG&E last summer. When his children were young, Bill was active in Boy Scouts and church and school activities. Now that the nest is empty, he is finishing a year as president of Peace Fresno and starting a year as chair of the Fresno Area ACLU. Contact him at peacefresno@sbcglobal.net



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THE WELCH REPORT – Jack Welch M.D.

After the Bomb

The probability of a nuclear weapon going off in an American city is now greater than it was five years ago. Potential sources of bombs, of the fissile materials for making them, have proliferated in North Korea and Iran; Russia's arsenal remains insecure, and Pakistan's nuclear technology could go to terrorists. In the same period terrorism has surged into a mass global movement.

Former Senator Sam Nunn in 2005 asked a proactive question, "What would we wish we had done to prevent a nuclear weapon's going off in an American city" on the day after such an attack? Surely, it is time to consider such contingency planning.

"The scale of disaster would quickly overwhelm the most prepared city and state governments... The Federal government, led by the Department of Homeland Security, should plan to quickly step in and take full responsibility and devote all its resources to the crisis.

The Problem of Radiation

Only the Federal government could help the country deal with the problem of radiation, unique to nuclear terrorism. For those within a two mile wide circle around a Hiroshima-sized detonation (in most cities – the downtown area) little could be done. "People in this zone who were not killed by the blast, perhaps hundreds of thousands, would get radiation sickness, and many would die.

Those upwind from the blast could remain in their homes. For those downwind the best move would be to shelter in the basement for three days or so and only then leave the area. Radiation would be the most intense on the day after the bomb exploded, the amount dropping off day by day (one third as strong after three days, one fifth as strong after five days, and so on), Further, it must be remembered that the first nuclear bomb may well not be the last to be used.

The U.S. Government would be trying to trace the source of the bombs, the trial probably leading back to a government, especially one having a nuclear arsenal or an advanced nuclear power program.

The temptation could be to retaliate against that government, which could prove counter-productive. "It is important to continue to develop the ability to trace any bomb by analyzing its residues.

"Contingency plans for the day after a nuclear blast could demonstrate to Americans that all three branches of government can work in unison and under the Constitution to respond to the crisis and prevent further destruction."

Forceful efforts to prevent a nuclear attack may keep the day from coming, but it is important to formulate contingency plans that can save thousands of lives and billions of dollars, prevent panic and promote recovery. They also can help us preserve our constitutional government.

(Source: The New York Times Op-ed article, 12 June 07 by William J. Perry, professor at Stanford and Ashton B. Carter, professor at Harvard, members of the Clinton administration Defense Department)

Note: Dr. Welch will continue to write the Welch Report on an only occasional basis.

stir it up

with **Norman Solomon** who will be interviewed by the Center's Dan Yaseen

Wednesday, September 12th- 3 p.m. - KFCF 88.1 FM.

The FCNV is a Host Organization

to many non-profit groups in the Fresno community.
We provide a safe meeting place and media resources to the groups using our facility, including:

- Youth Link
- Project: Male
- Central California Institute
- CVPPAC
- Rondalla
- Peace Fresno
- WILPF
- FACTS
- CCCJC
- Community Alliance

Annual Book Sale

Saturday, October 6, 8-3.

Place: Parking lot, south-west corner Olive/Van Ness
Books, DVDs, CDs needed (also volunteers on 10/6)
Drop off at 1584 N. Van Ness M-F 11-3.

Second Wednesday Video Series

WAR MADE EASY

HOW PRESIDENTS AND PUNDITS KEEP SPINNING US TO DEATH

FEATURING NORMAN SOLOMON - NARRATED BY SEAN PENN

War Made Easy reaches into the Orwellian memory hole to expose a 50-year pattern of government deception and media spin that has dragged the United States into one war after another from Vietnam to Iraq. Narrated by actor and activist Sean Penn, the film exhumes remarkable archival footage of official distortion and exaggeration from LBJ to George W. Bush, revealing in stunning detail how the American news media have uncritically disseminated the pro-war messages of successive presidential administrations.

Wednesday, September 12th

Woodward Park Library – 7 P.M.

Doors open: 6:30

Details: Call 23-PEACE



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, PO Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing



New International WILPF officers. All photos this page by Jean Hays

Sept. 20, noon-1PM, Women in Black in the Free Speech area, CSUF

Dec. 8 - Northern Calif. WILPF Cluster, Berkeley, 10 AM-3 PM, Redwood Gardens

There was much excitement when the 29th International Congress of WILPF convened in Santa Cruz, Bolivia July 21-27. Women (and men) from more than 22 countries were welcomed by more than twenty members of the LIMPAL (Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y Libertad) who, under the supervision of Katia Patino, LIMPAL President, Bolivia, had worked tirelessly for several months to make this event happen.

Each day of the Congress was packed with workshops, discussion groups, and, if time permitted, a chance to exchange ideas. Such topics as a report on the Quito Ecuador Conference to Abolish Foreign Military Bases, a Cuba Report, and a discussion of a draft of a WILPF Manifesto to be formally presented at the 100th Anniversary Congress in The Hague in 2015. Of particular interest was the presentation: Resistance and Challenges: Bolivia, Latin American and the World. Paola Pena from Bolivia said that, after years of being excluded, now all people, including the indigenous have a voice and are part of the change that is sweeping South America. Women are a major part of that change. She pointed out that, in the last election she voted for the change, not the person.

Bolivia is working on a new Constitution. It is hoped that the deadline for completion of this project (Aug. 3) will be extended until Decemter to allow for thoughtful input, not rushed, hasty changes that will be later regretted. Current problems include money from natural resources, namely natural gas and oil, coming in but profits not being passed on to the people. By 2015 it is hoped that there will be no poverty and no hunger.

Tomasa Padrone, an Aymara woman, spoke of being born in a little village without schools. The men dominated and the women cooked. Now these indigenous women are organized and have a plan: Unity! Clarity !! Discernment!

Luz Baretto from Peru spoke of over 500 years of struggle in her country. The big problem is the distri-

bution of wealth. Ex-president Fugimori is hiding in Chile. He mutilated and sterilized many, indigenous women during his presidency and needs to be tried for his war crimes.

Marta Benavides, a WILPF Vice President from El Salvador, spoke of gangs in her country, as well as in Peru, who use mafia-like tactics to terrorize the population. An International Court needs to address this problem.

All speakers agreed that the Free Trade Agreement is blackmail. Fair trade is much-needed, as well as an end to the exploitation of Latin American labor abroad.

The last official act of the Congress was the election of new officers. Two co-presidents were elected; one from Sweden and one from Denmark. It is hoped that they will be sensitive to the needs and potential of the wonderful women of Latin America who are working so hard for positive change in the world.

At the conclusion of the Congress 14 WILPFers from the USA and Switzerland set out to see more of Bolivia as arranged by Global Exchange. The first stop was Cochabamba, an arid, polluted city between the water-rich Chapare and the altiplano. Here, Evo Morales first gained recognition for work with his union as well as the MAS party. At his home union hall a banner on the wall of the humble meeting room proclaims, "The People are the constituents for the refoundation of Bolivia." Despite the people's victory in stopping the privatization of water by Bechtel during the Water War of 2000, many parts of the city still either have no water, or must pay high rates. In the Serena section of town where 660 families of unemployed miners live, there is no running water, and, when the tank truck arrives to deliver it (at a high price) it also delivers gastrointestinal illnesses that come with the dirty water. The families hope to someday purchase a second-hand tank truck to deliver clean water to a storage facility they have built in their village but it will cost the equivalent of \$25,000 American. And so.....the water struggles continue.

WILPFers also visited the coca fields in the Chapare.

Leonita Zambrano, a powerful organizer and head of the Cooperative Community of Coca-Growing Peasant Women of the Chapare, pointed out that coca has always been a principal crop in Bolivia. It is used as medicinal tea, to combat altitude sickness, stomach problems, and as a stimulant, much like caffeine. Coca IS NOT cocaine. The chemicals used to make cocaine are imported from North America. The last stop on this information-packed trip was La Paz. Here, we added to our list of meetings with powerful women such as Domitila Barrios de Chungara from Cochabamba, Nobel Peace Prize semi-finalist 2006 (check out her autobiography, "Let Me Speak"). We met the feminists of Mujeres Creando, a strong organization that has a restaurant, child-care center, and women's shelter. Other meetings included those with Bolivian Senator Isabel Ortega, President, American Indigenous Parliament. and with Ana Maria Romero de Campero, Executive Director of UNIR, an organization that facilitates negotiation, conflict resolution, and deliberation.

La Paz is a city where large street demonstrations for social change are daily occurrences. The government of Evo Morales is one of great promise. Change doesn't happen overnight, and it is WILPF's hope that Bolivia will be yet another example of emerging South American countries where the wealth is shared by all the people in a truly participatory democracy. The women of these countries are a powerful catalyst for this change. Jean Hays skyhorse3593@sbcglobal.net



Leonita Zambrano, leader of the Cocoa Growers Cooperative.



The Serena community where there is no water.

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“**HORRIFIED**”
An Assemblyman’s Retort
By **Boston Woodard**



Prisoners pore over all the media they have access to in order to know what the public is being proffered regarding the ongoing crisis inside the (as a female, prisoner/journalist describes as) “California Department of Corrections [sic] & Rehabilitation [non-existent].”

The recent assignment of a three judge panel to consider capping the state’s grossly overcrowded prison population in California (174,989 prisoners) has spawned interesting responses from various politicos throughout the state. The most egregious response came from Assemblyman Todd Spitzer (R-Orange CA.), who blurted he was “horrified” that no attempt was made to “provide balance” to the panel. His response is no surprise as the ultra-conservative Spitzer leads the way in interfering with prisoner’s rights, rehabilitation and release using equivocacy in an effort to advance his own agenda. After U.S. Circuit Court Judge Stephen Reinhardt, an outspoken so-called “liberal,” was assigned to the panel by U.S. 9th Circuit Chief Judge Mary M. Schroeder to sit alongside federal judges Thelton Henderson and Lawrence Karlton, Spitzer’s rhetoric began to spew. Judge Reinhardt’s assignment to the panel was a devastating defeat to the conservative nut-case base. Right-wing demagogues lost this battle.

The three judge courts were developed as a component of the Prison Litigation Reform Act signed in 1996. This Act restricted the power of a single federal judge to order early prisoner releases from state prisons. Once the three judge panel is in operation, Henderson, Karlton and Reinhardt can order early prisoner releases if there had been an earlier finding of a constitutional violation, if the CDCR officials failed to repair it in a reasonable amount of time and if they found that overcrowding is the main cause of the problem.

Rumors abound inside the prison system as to what may or may not happen now that the three judge panel is official. Most prisoners know that this panel is not going to arbitrarily begin releasing convicts into the streets of California who haven’t earned the right to get out. Prisoners who have violent criminal histories, multiple repeat offenders and child-molester types WILL NOT be benefitting from any release that may occur as Spitzer would have the public believe.

Prison officials, the California Correctional Peace Officer’s Association (guard’s union - CCPOA) and politicians with hidden agendas love to spark fear into the public. They make up horror stories to advance their agendas and to ingratiate themselves with the public as some sort of heros when all along, it was them who allowed California’s prison system to go to hell. Only those prisoners with minor offenses, non-violent commitments and those subjected to bogus parole violations will be the one’s most likely to benefit from any release decision the panel makes.

Angry, self-serving, conservative nut-jobs like Todd Spitzer have, for now, crawled back into their mossy holes to conjure up some new, magical, misleading and meritless lies about prisoners to attack anything the three judge panel may order regarding capping the prison population or releasing prisoners. This method of laying the blame on convicts has worked great for decades, as it diverts the public’s attention away from the real reason there is a prison crisis.

Prisoners have no real way to defend themselves against being used as an excuse for the neglect, incompetence and overall malfeasance inherent among corrupt prison officials. What Spitzer and the “mainstream” media are not saying out loud is that the three judge panel is a FEDERAL TAKE—OVER of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

They will just have to deal with it! Judges Henderson, Karlton and Reinhardt are now, in reality, the new head of the CDCR, the shot callers, the men who will be making the decisions regarding the future of the entire prison system in California. Hopefully, the panel will order the state prison system back into some semblance of normalcy.

As of May 11, 2007, California’s prison population has bulged to 174,989 prisoners. Approximately 162,848 are male charges while 12,141 are female. This number is nearly double the design capacity for all California state prisons.

California’s Legislature enacted Assembly-Bill 900, a \$7.4 billion dollar bond measure (certificate issued by a government or a company promising to repay borrowed money at a fixed rate of interest). As if the state doesn’t have enough money woes already (and can’t even pass a budget on time), \$7.4 billion dollars for 53,000 new prison beds is insane knowing the three judge panel is probably going to lower the prisoner population by thousands. You would think the Todd Spitzer types are “horrified” about that. NOT!

In an order published July 23, 2007 by Judge Karlton as Senior Judge of the U.S. District Court, on the COLEMAN V. SCHWARZENEGGER civil case #CIV S-90-0520 LKK JFM P, he wrote:

“Review of the record before this court shows that, through AB-900, the State of California has responded to the prison overcrowding crisis with legislation that requires the construction of thousands of beds to increase the capacity of the prison system, development and staffing of rehabilitation programs to reduce recidivism, and transfer 8,000 inmates out of state. For the reasons discussed supra, none of these efforts will have any appreciable impact on the severely overcrowded prisons in California for at least two years, if then.”

A Special Master assigned by the federal court reported on May 31, 2007, “(o)ver the past 11-plus years, much has been achieved, and many of the achievements have succumbed to the inexorably rising tide of [prisoner] population, leaving behind growing frustration and despair.” The Special Master’s report went on to explain, “Given the almost twelve years that this case has been in its remedial phase, and given the constitutional considerations at stake, the direction in which the State has at present chosen to go by enacting AB-900 simply fails to address in any timely way relief from the overcrowding crisis and its attendant impact.”

Judge Karlton concluded with, “It is hereby ordered that plaintiffs’ November 13, 2006 motion to convene a three judge panel to limit the prison population is granted.”

There has been empirical evidence for decades that those in charge of the California prison system have turned a blind eye to corruption and mismanagement allowing it to continue with impunity.

The three judge panel, the federal takeover of the prison system, is California’s only real shot at fixing, arguably the largest occurrence of gross negligence and incompetence in state history. The three judge panel should be allowed to do what they do uninterrupted or distracted by colloquial, conservative frivolities by those who claim to be “horrified” by a solution for the prison crisis.

###

Boston Woodard is a prisoner/journalist serving his sentence in Solano State Prison and is not a life prisoner. Woodard has written for the San Quentin News, the Soledad Star and edited The Communicator.

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Poetry Corner

By Richard Stone

Dateline Chowchilla: poems from three inmates housed in our neighborhood correctional facility.

One of Us

by Sara Olson

She looks like she’s been here before—once, twice,
many many times;
That really beat, rough, ragged edge to her body
and her face,
A life on the streets where her honey lays on a
hard, punishing hand Or a fist.
And many missing teeth, always with the tooth-
starved mouth,
The lisp of toothlessness, gone in front, mark of a
hard life and a prison Dentist.
Sometimes a scar, a moon-like sliver of a scythe,
usually under an Eye.
She has an aggressive stance. She’s had to ask
questions all of her life.
No reticence. She can’t afford to be shy. It could
mean a job, a shelter,
A score.
All are important, though not necessarily in that
order. And that’s how
she came back again, caught in a politicized
turnstile
Of violation.
And a careless, caringless, compassionless citi-
zenry who think
They’ll never end up here, locked in among people
like her
And me.

The Tests of Life

by Joy Jordan

You have to learn how to deal
Deal with the trials, the hard time

Don’t allow no one to stop your flow of thinking
Always believe that you can control your action

It does get hard to deal but don’t allow anyone
to steal your joy, your peace of mind

Keep trying to do the right thing
Do what the good doctor ordered.

They Forgot About Us

by G. Kelly-Darden

We lifers were loved in our lives of freedom.
We had people knocking at our doors, calling us on
our phones.
There were endless attempts to communicate and
engage us in their lives.
We were wanted. We were needed.
Now we live with how they forgot about us. We
were good enough to pay taxes and other bills,
bills, bills.
We were needed.
We took them to the hospital, loaned them money,
and were a shoulder to cry on.
They helped to keep us from reaching our dreams
because we were catering to their needs.
But what about us?

We got that awful verdict, the few words that
changed our lives.
We lost our freedom, our dreams, and our loved
ones. We’ve watched as they exited our lives.
One by one.
We’ve listened to their lies.
Because we made a mistake, they forgot about us.

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, September 3
8 AM - 2 PM – Admission FREE
Imperial Dove Court’s annual Labor Day Yard sale, Blockbuster’s Parking Lot on Olive.

Thursday September 6 • 5 - 11 PM
Full Circle Brewing Co. Presents Art Hop Reception for Andrea Ferry “Caves” plus the music of Scats on the Sly. 620 F St. Downtown Fresno 559-264-6323
www.fullcirclebrewing.com

Friday, September 7 • 4:30-6:30 PM
Join Peace Fresno at the Peace Corner: Shaw and Blackstone. Tell your Congressional Representatives and Senators that there cannot be a September bill to continue funding the Iraq Invasion and Occupation.

Friday, September 7 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM
The Reedley Peace Center will presents Speakers: Leslie and Greg Soghoian, will show the documentary, The Promise of World Peace: A Baha’i Perspective, and then share about the Baha’i faith.

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

Saturday, September 8
First Annual National Youth Summit. TOPICS of concerns to be discussed at the Summit.
focus: school bullying, hate crimes & hate motivated incidents, harassment and socio-economic/cultural intolerance. This event will be held at the CSUF Satellite Union, 5241 N. Maple Ave in Fresno. For more information CALL (559) 664-2003 or (559) 474-6861.

Saturday, September 8 • 3:30 - 5:00 PM
The September meeting of the Central Valley Progressive PAC features Fresno City Council President Henry T. Perea speaking on what the City and residents can do to make Fresno the solar energy capital of California. He will also address plans to bring mega-solar farms to Fresno County. More information is available at 435-7360; www.cvppac.org

Saturday, September 8 • 7 PM
Contra Dance at the California Arts Academy (formerly Cynthia Merrill’s), 4750 N Blackstone Ave. For more information contact Evo Bluestein at evobluestein@gmail.com or see: <http://www.evobluestein.com/dancedata.html>

Sunday, September 9 • Doors open at 5:30 PM with music by Armen Nalbandian • Dinner at 6 PM • Speaker at 7 PM
The KFCF annual banquet at Love & Garlic (5351 N. Diana Court, off Barstow, behind Trader Joe’s). The featured speaker is Norman Solomon who is the founder and director of the Institute for Public Accuracy and senior advisor to the National Radio Project. Banquet Tickets: \$40 (advance reservations recommended). Speaker only: \$10/\$5 students with ID. For tickets or information call 233-2221.

Monday, September 10 through Thursday, September 13
Join nearly every peace group in California in Stage 3 of California Calling. Call your Congressional Representative and Senators to tell them no September funding bill for the Iraq Invasion and Occupation. Bring the Troops home now! The number for the House switchboard in Washington is: 202-224-3121.

The direct phone numbers to your Representatives offices are:
Radanovich: Washington 202-225-4540; Fresno 559-449-2490
Costa: Washington 202-225-3341; Fresno 559-495-1620
Nunes: Washington 202-225-2523; Clovis 559-323-5265; Visalia 559-733-3861
Cardoza: Washington 202-225-6131; Merced 209-383-4455; Modesto 209-527-1914
Senators:
Boxer: Washington 202-224-3553; Fresno 497-5109
Feinstein: Washington 202-224-3841; Fresno 485-7430

Wednesday, September 12 • 3 PM
The Fresno Center for Nonviolence “Stir it Up” radio show on KFCF 88,1 FM. Dan Yaseen will host interview with filmmaker Norman Solomon.

Wednesday, September 12 • 6:30 PM
Central California Criminal Justice Committee workshop to discuss *How to deal with the Complaint Process*. This event will take place at the McCardle Room, Fresno County Library (downtown).

Because there is no Independent Police Auditor, many people call the CCCJC for help in dealing with complaints against the police. This will be a workshop to go over some of the problems and possible approaches. We plan to have someone from Internal Affairs to explain what the process is as well as a legal advisor. A few members of Central California Criminal Justice Committee have already been handling these cases, but sometimes it becomes very heavy, so we need more people to help out.

For more information contact Ellie Bluestein ellieb28@sbcglobal.net

Wednesday, September 12 • 7:00 PM
Monthly Video Series. Norman Solomon’s “War Made Easy.” There will be a discussion after the film which will be shown at the Woodward Park Library, 944 E. Perrin Ave. For information, call 237-3223. NOTE: NOON SHOWS RESUME 10/10. All are welcome – FREE

Friday, September 14
1st Annual Latino Film Festival - Film Entry Criteria. The Fresno Art Museum in partnership with the Mexican Consulate of Fresno and other organizations has teamed up to launch the 1st Annual Latino Film Festival, the first of its kind in the Central Valley. The project is a continuing endeavor to address cultural awareness and exhibit the contemporary Latino influence and the vision in the medium of cinema to the community. For additional information, contact Diego Monterrubio at 441-4221 ext. 101 or diego@fresnoartmuseum.org

Friday, September 14 • 5 PM and 8 PM
Fresno Filmworks presents “Killer of Sheep” at the Tower Theatre. Charles Burnett’s gritty portrait of South Central Los Angeles is a landmark in African-American cinema. Declared a national treasure in 1990 by the Library of Congress, the film has been painstakingly restored for its long-awaited commercial release. Tickets can be purchased at the Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., WineStyles in Fig Garden Village, and at the door, for \$10; \$8, for students and seniors. Tickets can also be purchased online through PayPal at www.fresnofilmworks.org. For more information call the FFW info line, 221-0755, or go to www.fresnofilmworks.org

Friday, September 14 • 6:30 - 8:30 PM
The Reedley Peace Center will presents Speaker: Larry Mullen Topic: Instant Runoff Voting.

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

Saturday, September 15
Deadline for articles and calendar items to the October, 2007 Community Alliance newspaper. Send information to AllianceEditor@Comcast.net

Saturday, September 15 • 9 AM -12 Noon
Caring for the Earth: An Interfaith Forum on Climate Change. Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno, 2672 East Alluvial (between Chestnut and Willow). 8:30am - registration, 12pm - optional tour of the new LEED-certified church building. Learn about the theological positions on climate change held by different faith traditions. Find out what local congregations are doing about the environment and sustainable living. Brainstorm ways we can work together to care for our community and the earth. Co-sponsored by the Interfaith Social Justice Collaborative. and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno. For more info, contact Connie Young, 225-2547 or cyoungm@sbcglobal.net

Saturday, September 15 • 7:30 PM
The College Community Congregational Church Peace and Justice Committee will host a screening of the movie “War Made Easy: Presidents, Pundits & Spin”. The movie with discussion to follow will be in the church social hall at 5550 N. Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93710. Admission is free and refreshments will be served. For more information go to www.warmadeeasy.com or call the church office at 435-2690.

Sunday, September 16 • 5 - 8 PM
Food Not Bombs benefit at Full Circle Brewery 620 F St. Downtown Fresno 559-264-6323
www.fullcirclebrewing.com. \$10 donation/sliding scale. Live Music, Vegan Chili, fun, all ages welcome. 5:30 PM - Abigail Nolte, 6 PM - Blake Jones and the Trike Shop, 7 PM Tanjora Tribal Belly Dance.

Tuesday, September 18 • 7 PM
Peace Fresno will hold its annual membership meeting and election of officers at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, on Van Ness at McKinley across from City College. All members are welcome to vote and everyone is welcome to be a member.

Wednesday, September 19 • 6:30 PM
The Greater Fresno Area Chapter of the ACLU-NC will hold its annual membership meeting at Fresno City College in the Staff Dining Room behind the Cafeteria/Student Lounge. At 6:30 we will hold a business meeting with Committee reports and elections for additional board members. All are welcome for the entire meeting, but at 7:30 we encourage everyone to join us for an educational forum about Immigration Law. You will have the opportunity to join the ACLU and join the struggle to preserve Civil Liberties for all Americans and to address the issues facing us in Fresno.

Thursday, September 20 • 12 Noon - 1 PM
Women in Black vigil at CSUF in the Free Speech area on the speakers platform.

Thursday, September 20 • 6:30 PM
The San Francisco Mime Troop returns to Fresno. Topic of play: “War Profiteering.” Location: Roosevelt High School, 4250 E. Tulare in Fresno. Tickets: \$20.00. Low Income: \$10.00. Students: \$5.00. For Information call 237-3223 or see <http://www.sfmt.org/>. They will do an acting workshop for the drama students during the day and a performance of their play at night.

Thursday, September 20 • Open 6:30 • Video 7:00 • Discussion 8:30
Progressive Thursday presents 3 shorts: “The Fluoride Deception”, “Nutricide” & “Pesticides: From the Fields to Your Table.” These videos, brought to you by the Fresno County Green Party will be shown at Round Table Pizza, 5763 N. First Street, Fresno, CA [SW corner of First and Bullard]. This event is hosted by the Fresno County Green Party and is free, wheelchair accessible and open to anyone interested in progressive topics. Contact: Larry Mullen 559 227-0293 www.fresnogreens.org

Thursday September 20 • 7 - 8:30 PM
Indigenous music of the Americas through the voices of women - Wahlberg Recital Hall, CSU Fresno. A concert featuring performances by outstanding Mexican indigenous singers Martha Toledo and Rocío Prospero, featuring music as well as poetry, representing the indigenous cultures of Mexico.

Thursday September 20 • 8 PM
Full Circle Brewing Co. Presents Inner Ear Poetry Jam \$5.-cover 620 F St. Downtown Fresno 559-264-6323 www.fullcirclebrewing.com

Friday, September 21 • 4:30-6:30 PM
Join Peace Fresno at the Peace Corner: Shaw and Blackstone to mark the International Day of Peace and to insist that, as a country, we make Peace, not War! No more funding for the Iraq Invasion and Occupation.

Friday, September 21 • 5:15 PM
“Blossoms of Fire” a documentary directed and produced by Maureen Gosling will be shown at McLane 121, CSU Fresno. This documentary shows the women of Juchitan, Oaxaca Mexico as they run their own business, embroider their signature fiery blossoms on clothing and comment on inaccurately depicting them as a promiscuous matriarchy.

Saturday, September 22 • 11 AM - 8 PM
Tamejavi Festival at Radio Park and the Fresno Art Museum. A daylong event free to the public, a gathering to celebrate and experience the rich culture and traditions of California’s Central Valley through visual and performing arts. See pages 1 and 28 for more information.

Friday, September 28 and Saturday, September 29 • 8 PM
Birth, a play about improving maternity care will be performed at the Tower Theater in Fresno. See page 11 for more information.

Saturday, September 29 • 2 PM
Author David Masumoto will be at the Woodward Park Regional Library, 433-3135. Masumoto will read from his new book, *Heirlooms: Letters from a Peach Farmer*. Copies of his book will be available for purchase and signing.

Saturday September 29 • 8 PM
Full Circle Brewing Co. Presents Womens Night with the In-Flight Nymphs \$5.-cover 620 F St. Downtown Fresno 559-264-6323 www.fullcirclebrewing.com

Sunday, September 30 • 2 - 4 PM
Stop the Violence, Build a Culture of Peace. Musical and Floral Tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at the Peace Garden, California State University, Fresno. Contact Dr. Kapoor at 435-2212 for additional information and if you would like to participate in the program.

Tuesday, October 2
Candle Light Vigil for World Peace at Sunset, Peace Garden at CSU-Fresno. Contact Dr. Kapoor at 435-2212 for additional information and if you would like to participate in the program.

Wednesday, October 3 • 4 PM
“Circle for Justice and Peace” Members of various Peace & Justice organizations will discuss their ideas about that topic. Meeting at the office of Dr. Ali Rezapour MD, 6769 N. Fresno St., #204 – SW corner Fresno & Herndon. For Info: 353-3952

Saturday, October 6 • 8 AM - 3 PM
Fresno Center for Nonviolence FCNV Annual Book Sale, Parking Lot, SW Corner Olive & Van Ness. Start NOW sorting and donating your Books, Videos, DVDs & CDs. They will be sold for various prices. You may bring donations to the Center during open hours, M – F, 11:00 AM to 3 PM. For information call 237-3223. Also, volunteers needed on October 6.

Word On The Street

by Wendy Russell

Having the overactive mind of a storyteller, I imagine her - with tears turning into powerful determination - carefully taking off her black and white nun’s habit for the last time, folding it carefully, maybe whispering ‘forgive me’ to that man in heaven she had forever pledged her life to - and then tugging on army fatigues, arranging a heavy sash of artillery bullets across her chest, grabbing her rifle - and maybe her Bible? - to disappear into the jungle, giving over her new life to the Sandinista guerrilla movement.

That was back in the 1970’s. Today, in the real world out there, that nun-turned-rebel, Arianna Garnett, heads her country’s National Police Force with a humane and just hand and tops all polls as the most trusted and well-liked public figure in Nicaragua.

I was thinking of her going from nun’s habit to camouflage to business suit, as I watched talking heads on TV discuss whether a woman could *ever* win our country’s presidency. I know millions of other citizens are watching this with me and I sigh, hearing these fear-inducing sound bytes designed to influence and direct the populace. I sigh, thankful for my wider view of world news, because I know: many other countries are SO way *past* that! Lots of women run things out in the world! I know, because I get my news from the computer, the *Bee*, the *S.F. Chronicle*, the Sunday *New York Times*, *Community Alliance* and Costa Rica’s *Tico Times*. And I am an original, from-the-very-first-issue subscriber to *Mother Jones* magazine - from before it even had that name. Another slap with news-truth-awareness was the *Mexico City News*, where, in the late 1980’s, I happily discovered that *outside* the USA I was more often in the majority, not the minority, politically.

All this is leading you to this month’s Question: *What periodical, program or political activist inspires you to fight for a better world?*

I hit the street and head to the Peace Corner, knowing I would find activists fighting for a better world there. Held on the first Friday of every month from 4:30pm to 6:30 at the southeast corner of Shaw and Blackstone, Peace Fresno provides the signs that we carry, John and Val Maylone bring water to slake our thirst in the Fresno heat and our own (precious) activist-that-goes-and-goes-like-the-energizer-bunny, George Ballis, is here filming the events of this Friday’s protest. Here on the Peace Corner, as Fresnans drive by, some ignore us, other folks give us peace signs, thumbs up or honks in answer to our signs; ‘Honk For Peace,’ ‘Impeach,’ and ‘No Blood for Oil,’ but others flip us the finger, yell or ‘rev up’ their big truck engines at us. When those big trucks and SUVs squeal like that, I just don’t get it; I’m carrying a sign proclaiming ‘No Blood For Oil’ and your answer is to burn rubber, suck up gas and screech tires at me? Giggling, I wave my sign at opposing traffic. It’s fun to go to the Peace Corner and it really does help - even if it’s just for 20 minutes of sign carrying - because it shows Fresno that we do not all think the way Ray Appleton or Fox News says to.

Our first answer to the Question comes from ASHLIE LEWIS-MELOT: “I don’t read many local publications except for the Fresno Bee. The Peace Fresno website inspired me to attend the latest anti-war protest. I usually read Digg.com to keep up on current happenings around the nation and the world.”



Ashlie Lewis-Melot

The next words in answer to our Question come from 19 year old JOHN HANSEN:

“Obviously the *Community Alliance* encourages me to be



John Hansen

an activist. That’s where I get information about other groups and current events. I like reading about how activists help others. You don’t have to be Martin Luther King Jr. to help others out. You can be an activist just by helping others out whenever you get a chance to. There is a Catholic Church called ‘Holy Spirit’ that I go to every Saturday or Sunday. At every sermon Father Eric encourages us to help those that are less fortunate than ourselves. We shouldn’t help others just because God commands us to; we should do it because it’s the moral thing to do. Every Saturday that I can, I go help out the *Food Not Bombs* group that’s close to Fresno State {CSUF}. This group cooks and then serves food to the homeless at Roeding Park. This group really encourages me to help the people that are less fortunate. The people there are really nice. I easily get along with everyone because most of us are like-minded, with similar political views. I found out about this group from *Community Alliance*. Before, I knew that there must have been a group like this, but I just didn’t know where to go. A couple of months ago, I joined *Peace Fresno*. *Peace Fresno* is an anti-violence group. They promote peace and equality amongst everyone. Every first Friday of the month, we go to the Peace Corner to protest the war in Iraq. We hold up signs. We want the war to end now, not when Bush leaves office! Some people think that we are anti-American for protesting the war. But how are we anti-American when we want our solders to come home? We want them out of harm’s way! If we were anti-American, then we would support sending even more solders to Iraq so they could get blown up. We would also not want a pullout date. Instead, Peace Fresno wants President Bush to be held accountable for this war. We want him to be impeached and sent to prison. It amazes me that Congress wouldn’t impeach him. How could one president be impeached for lying about who he had sex with, and another president not be impeached, who’s responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths?”

We are directly on the corner and cars are turning right, just three feet away. Where these protesters stand, they can really see the faces of Fresno. JOHN HANSEN wears a T-shirt proclaiming, *Not My President!* and I can feel the conviction in his words as he continues;

“Surprisingly, the people who inspire me to be an activist the most, are the narrow-minded pro-war bigots! Their hatred makes me want to go out and help others. It’s my anger that I get from them that makes it worth it to help others and promote peace. Good people reinforce my beliefs about what I do. It’s the bad people who motivate me to do what I do.”

John’s words ring true and strong. Next to him on the street corner, men and women sing, “... last night I had the strangest dream, I never dreamed before, I dreamed the world had all agreed to put an end to war!”

At the previous months’ Peace Corner, I was holding up a ‘No Blood for Oil’ sign when a young man walked over from the nearby Bus Stop. “It’s not all just about oil, over there in Iraq” he said quietly. He had been a soldier stationed in Iraq and he told me how the local people there had thanked him for protecting them. I pointed out the lone man standing catty-corner us, across Shaw, holding up his own sign: “Freedom Is Not Free!” with his

bin of signs ready to be held by fellow protesters against - against us? And I showed him the church people on the other corner, the southwest corner, holding their own signs (signs that do NOT say, ‘What Would Jesus Do?’ like they should!). Here on three street corners we have Americans citizens exercising the rights that this young man had fought to give to Iraqi citizens. I had hoped the soldier would be waiting for the bus again this month, so as to get his answer to our Question:

What periodical, program or political activist inspires you to fight for a better world?

But it was not to be. Instead my attention was grabbed by a colorful flag sporting a big peace sign on it, so I snapped a photo of the flag bearer, handed him the card asking this month’s Question - not knowing then that time would have me sitting here now, without KEN HUDSON’s words and with my deadline past. He had been carrying his own lime green handmade sign, not Peace Fresno’s. I always see him actively being an activist fighting for a better world. So I am leaving his photo in. From the intelligent twinkle in his eye I bet he would have said something cool, like this from Che Guevara; “May we be capable of feeling whatever injustice is committed in any part of the world. It is the most beautiful quality of every revolutionary” or something inspirational, like this from Martin Luther King Jr., “Our



Ken Hudson

only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world, declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism and militarisms... We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace and justice throughout the world. If we do not act, then we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time, reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality and strength without sight. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter - but beautiful - struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons and daughters of God.” ... something like that.

Our next answer to this month’s Question; *What periodical, program or political activist inspires you to fight for a better world?* comes from 17 year old ADRIENNE McKAY:

“It’s difficult trying to figure out who or what inspires my activism, because I never really thought about it before. What it comes down to isn’t a positive influence, but rather a negative influence from the opposite direction. Basically, the people, groups, media sources, etcetera, that either support the war or portray it as a non-issue compel me to stand up against it! When I watch the local news broadcasts after a Peace Fresno protest as the reporters talk about the protesters instead of the war we are protesting, I find it frustrating. For me, activism is born mainly out of frustration.”

Around us, and over the noise of our busy street corner, floated classic songs of protest and activism, “...let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me...” so I asked one of those excellent singers, ERIC PARSONS, to answer this month’s Question next:

“I was going to snap off ‘KFCF and Community Alliance’ but as you hurried off, asking me to email my reply, you added that you hoped someone would mention George Ballis. So let me start by saying that his distinctive presence, with his camera, at peace and ecological gatherings so regularly, is to know that someone cares.

Continued on page 24



Adrienne McKay

Word continued from page 23

And, in that sense of ‘being there’ as an inspiration to activism, Ken and Camille and Dan and Vincent comes instantly to mind but there are perhaps 10 or 15 more, who also gladden my heart when I see them - again, standing in the name of Peace and Justice and Right. See, right now Dr. Kapoor came to mind before I could move on - and now Robin too - and so - in order not to tangle my mind in an attempt to not forget someone inspirational - I’ll end by saying that people who express their belief in peace and justice with their presence are inspirational. Having said that, and having noted KFCF and Community Alliance, I’ll add that I really miss Air America and the sense of humor that is so palliative for righteousness.”

Yes, I felt so respectful of our mission, that of being witnesses for peace while holding thought-provoking signs, that I did not want to use my hands to write down words while standing on the street - or to distract any of us from our purpose of protest, so for the first time, I collected these actual words by email and phone later, after our Friday Peace Corner. And one thing that readers should know; the first five or six people I ask each month’s Question are always the five or six people that end up in this column. I do not ask ten people the Question and then choose the most articulate. That’s what I just love about people; we all have something worthwhile to say! Our leaders might do better listening to the word on the street. And I bet the next president will listen - she is very smart, after all!



Eric Parsons

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**“The Fluoride Deception”, “Nutricide” &
“Pesticides: From the Fields to Your Table”**

Thursday, September 20, 2007
Open 6:30 Video 7:00 Discussion 8:30
Round Table Pizza
5763 N. First Street, Fresno, CA
[SW corner of First and Bullard]

This event is hosted by the Fresno County Green Party and is free, wheelchair accessible and open to anyone interested in progressive topics.
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Thursday, September 20th 6:30 PM

The San Francisco Mime Troupe's performance of
Making a Killing

will be performed at Roosevelt High School,
4250 E. Tulare in Fresno.

Tickets: \$20.00 • Low Income: \$10.00 • Students: \$5.00.
For Information call 237-3223 or see <http://www.sfmt.org/>

They will do an acting workshop for the drama students during the day and a performance of their play at night.



SF Mime Troupe and Fresno

By Camille Russell

In many ways, the San Francisco Mime Troupe is unique. It is Entertaining with a capital E, but also a non-profit theater company with a progressive political agenda. A SF Mime Troupe show is a rare treat for Fresno audiences.

Outside the Bay Area, the Mime Troupe depends on local supporters to promote, publicize, and sell tickets. They also need food, housing, and workers the day of the show.

Be a trouper for the NEVER SILENT SF Mime Troupe!

BEGINNING NOW

- Buy tickets
- Sell tickets
- Tell your friends
- Announce the show
- Hand out flyers
- Put up posters
- Volunteer for 9/20/07

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

- Unload the set (1:30 – 3:30 PM)
- Enjoy the show
- Pack the set (8:30 – 11:30 PM)
- Feed the Troupe
- House the Troupe

Volunteers, contact Camille at (559) 276-2592,
camillerussell@softcom.net.

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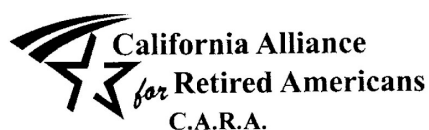
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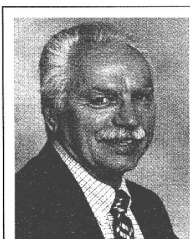


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Follow up on August's Front Page Story

By Mike Rhodes

Sherri Williams, the homeless woman who was arrested for trying to use the restroom at McDonald's (see the front page of the August Community Alliance newspaper), was given another citation last month. This one was for "loitering" on Olive Avenue, across the street from McDonald's. Her alleged crime was sitting in a wheelchair, on a public sidewalk, at a bus stop.

According to Sherri, she was waiting for her husband

Al so they could take a bus to north Fresno. Al arrived about 20 minutes after she was given the citation. "I was talking to a couple of friends when the police stopped me," Sherri said. She noticed the officer had been sitting in his patrol car as he watched the small group of friends for about an hour. "As soon as we started to leave he drove over and said he wanted to talk." Sherry told me the officer said "two buses went by and you didn't get on them."

Terry, one of the friends Sherri was talking to, told me "he went right after Sherri. We were all there but he just wanted to talk to her." Sherri was the only person cited. Officer Unruh, the same policeman who arrested her at McDonald's, issued this citation too. The citation notes that Sherri was in violation of "FMC 2-2808 (B)

Loiter @ Bus Shelter" and orders her to appear on October 17, 2007 at the Fresno County Courthouse. If this citation is upheld in court, talking to your friends on a public sidewalk, could be a misdemeanor.

Unruh's parting words, according to Sherri, were "this ought to make Al's day." I don't know if it made Al's day or not, but he did want me to inform readers of this newspaper about how homeless people are constantly harassed by one particular police officer. Sherri is featured in another article in this month paper - see page 5 for the story about her health care experience at Community Regional Medical Center.



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Hands continued from page 1

pose of Tamejavi is to build new relationships and understanding among immigrants and long-standing residents in the Valley who share a commitment to fostering civic participation and who seek public recognition of community diversity. Beginning with a blessing ceremony by the Native American community at 8:30 a.m., the day's events will commence from 10:00 a.m. with a parade concluding with a closing ceremony at 8 p.m.

The festival will include a vast array of events highlighting different aspects of the Central Valley's history. Such events include a history time tunnel, highlighting the major historical events which have influenced migration into the Central Valley, and contributed to building one of the most culturally diverse places in the world. The tunnel will reflect the great contributions of various cultural communities who have struggled (in similar ways) to adapt to new living conditions under pressures and with uncertainties.

Performances of music, dance, poetry and much more will highlight the artistic expressions of immigrant communities who wish to share their traditions onstage. Such acts will include members of the Mexican, Armenian, Iranian, and Hmong communities, among many others.

A film series will also be presented by Tamejavi, featuring several national and internationally-renowned films such as *El Violin*, directed by Francisco Vargas, as well as Hmong romantic comedy *Tou and Mai*. In addition the film series will feature *Divided We Fall*, a documentary following a Clovis native who journeys across America in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 to discover who counts as "one of us" in a world divided into "us" and "them."

Tamejavi will also include a cultural kitchen as well as cultural mall, showcasing another aspect of the contributions of immigrant communities in our Valley. Activities will also be available for children, as well as a series of *platicas* which allow members of our community to discuss relevant current issues as well as share their stories of migration and struggle.

In a world where our differences seem to divide us more

that bring us together, Tamejavi will educate members of our community about each other's similarities, so that we may use what we have learned to understand our neighbors in the Central Valley and around the world.

Established in 1998 as a project of the American Friends Service Committee, PVI's mission is to create a place where immigrants and refugees can gather to learn from each other and rebuild their world. By providing a safe and welcome space where people come together to talk, create, and learn as equals, PVI hopes to see California's Central Valley become a place where all people are respected, differences are embraced, and immigrants actively participate in civic life. PVI supports this process by facilitating popular education workshops and intercultural gatherings.

Tamejavi is sponsored in part by: The College of Arts and Humanities-CSUF, Center for Music of the Americas-CSUF, Central Valley Cultural Heritage Institute-CSUF, Music Department-CSUF, Spanish Program-CSUF, UC Merced, San Joaquin Valley Health Consortium, Mexicana Airlines and Telemundo.

Tamejavi is a word meaning "cultural market" whose origin is in the concept of "plaza" or place of exchange. It is derived from the Hmong and Lao *Taj laj Puam*, the Spanish *MErcado*, and the Mixtec *nunJAVI*.

Tamejavi Calendar of Events

Fundraiser:
COCINA Y CANTO
Sunday, September 16, 2007 • 1:00 – 6:00 pm
Private home, Selma, CA
A multi-sensory event at a private home including a lavish meal of traditional Zapotec food, followed by a special show of Zapotec culture and history featuring singing and storytelling by Martha Toledo

Concert:
INDIGENOUS MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS THROUGH THE VOICES OF WOMEN
Thursday September 20, 2007 • 7:00 – 8:30 pm
Wahlberg Recital Hall, CSU Fresno
A concert featuring performances by outstanding Mexican indigenous singers Martha Toledo and Rocío Prospero, featuring music as well as poetry, representing the indigenous cultures of Mexico

Documentary:
“BLOSSOMS OF FIRE” A DOCUMENTARY DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY MAUREEN GOSLING
Friday, September 21, 2007 • 5:15 p.m.
McLane 121, CSU Fresno
This documentary shows the women of Juchitan, Oaxaca Mexico as they run their own business, embroider their signature fiery blossoms on clothing and comment on inaccurately depicting them as a promiscuous matriarchy.

Tamejavi Festival
‘HANDS THAT FORGE HISTORY’
Saturday, September 22, 2007 • 11:00am to 8:00pm
Radio Park
On Saturday September 22nd, Tamejavi festival will take place in Fresno to celebrate the Central Valley's rich cultural history. The event will take place from 11:00am to 8:00pm at Radio Park, adjacent to the Fresno Art Museum, 2233 N. First St.

The festival's theme Hands that Forge History is an invitation to the general public to recognize the traditions and contributions of Central Valley's immigrants. Tamejavi is a day long event free to the public, a gathering to celebrate and experience the diverse traditions of the Central Valley's cultural communities through visual and performing arts. Through this cultural exchange and artistic expression in Tamejavi, the immigrants in the Central Valley join voices and create new bonds, thus forming a solid sense of community and establishing bases for more active civic participation.

“Marching with Our Traditions.” Tamejavi 2006 participants during a march through the streets of Madera before the festival. Photo by Tudor Stanley