

# stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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## John McCutcheon, Jan. 21 in Modesto

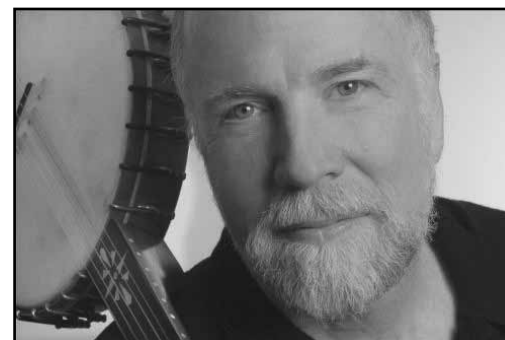
By DON MCMILLAN

Folk music icon and storyteller John McCutcheon presents a concert January 21, 2010 in Modesto. The six-time Grammy nominee's recent commitments include a starring role in *Immigrant*, an homage to labor champion and singer Joe Hill, with a script by McCutcheon's contemporary singer-songwriter Si Kahn. On the eve of the April 22, 2009 premiere, McCutcheon's electronic newsletter announced his project to record Hill's music, "doing for Joe Hill what Billy Bragg and Wilco did for Woody Guthrie, bringing him forward into the 21st Century."

Titling the musical, *Immigrant* highlights Joe Hill's background as an immigrant laborer and associates his struggle with present-day controversies about rights of immigrant laborers.

Another new development since McCutcheon last performed in Modesto is the release of a two-CD album, *Untold*. One of its two disks breaks new territory in the recording artist's prolific career as the first sweeping recorded presentation of his storytelling talent.

A benefit for the Modesto Peace/Life Center, this year's appearance builds on a relationship between the artist and Center



nurtured by his annual appearances here since 2002.

The concert will take place at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave. Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$23 at the door, \$5 for young people 17 and under. Tickets for groups of 10 or more are \$15 each. Tickets are available at the church, 523-1438 and at the Anderson Frame Shop and Gallery, 1323 J St., 579-9913.

As a sponsor of the concert you can receive tickets to the concert, your name in the program, reserved seating at the concert, and an invitation to a reception with John McCutcheon following the performance. Five levels of sponsorship are available:

Autoharp — \$40 **One** ticket, name in program, reception

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Piano — \$300 **Eight** tickets, name in program, reception

Hammer Dulcimer — \$500 **Sixteen** tickets, name in program, reception

For information on sponsorships call 572-1307, or email keith.werner@sbcglobal.net

## Willie Brown to speak at 16th MLK Commemoration

### Tommie Muhammad to receive Legacy Award

By JAMES COSTELLO

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision still uplifts and transforms countless people throughout the world. To keep that vision fresh and provocative locally, for the last fifteen years a committee of community groups including the Modesto Peace Life/Center, the City of Modesto, Modesto Junior College, and California State University, Stanislaus has offered our community an inspiring Martin Luther King Commemoration.

We invite you our 16th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration on Friday, January 22, 2010 at Modesto Junior College's Main Auditorium-Performing and Media Arts Center on East Campus at 7:00 P.M. The dynamic Willie Brown will be speak on "How Martin Helped Shape My Life." Mr. Brown has had an illustrious career serving over thirty years in the California State Assembly, fifteen years as its Speaker and, afterward, as the only African-



American mayor of San Francisco. The program will include There will be spoken word, Hip-Hop music, a video and a book-signing.

During the program, **Tommie Muhammad**, Modesto's former social services director, will be awarded the second annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Award for his dedicated service to the community and the citizens of Modesto. Sixteen years ago, Mr. Muhammad approached the Modesto Peace/Life Center with an idea — to create a remembrance for Reverend King in order to keep his vision alive. Our yearly commemoration was born.

Our keynote speaker, **Willie L. Brown, Jr.**, two-term Mayor of San Francisco, legendary Speaker of the California State Assembly, is widely regarded as the most influential African-American politician of the late twentieth century. He has been at the center of California politics, government, and civic life for an astonish-

COMMEMORATION. . . . continued p. 2

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# The higher education fiscal crisis protects the wealthy

By PETER PHILLIPS

Police are arresting and attacking student protesters on University of California (UC) campuses again. "Why did he beat me? I wasn't doing anything," screamed a young Cal Berkeley woman student over KPFA radio on Friday evening, November 20. Students are protesting the 32% increase in tuition imposed by the UC regents in a time of severe state deficits. The Board of Regents claims that they have no choice. Students will now have to pay over \$10,000 in tuition annually for a public university education that was free only a few decades ago.

The corporate media spins the tuition protests as if we are all suffering during the recession. For example, the *San Diego Union Tribune*, November 20, writes, "These students need a course in Reality 101. And the reality is that there is virtually no segment of American society that is not straining with the economic recession. With UC facing a \$535 million budget gap due to state cuts, the regents have to confront reality and make tough choices. So should students."

Yet, the reality is something quite different. Our current budget crisis in California and the rest of the country has been artificially created by cutting taxes on the wealthiest people and corporations. The corporate elites in the US, the top 1% who own close to half the wealth, are the beneficiaries of massive tax cuts over the past few decades. While at the same time working people are paying more through increased sales and use taxes and higher public college tuition.

The wealthy hide their money abroad. Rachel Keeler with Dollars & Sense reports that over the years, trillions of dollars in both corporate profits and personal wealth have migrated offshore in search of rock-bottom tax rates and the comfort of no questions asked. Offshore banks now harbor an estimated \$11.5 trillion in individual wealth alone, and were a significant contributing factor to the international economic downturn in 2008.

According to the California Budget Project, tax cuts enacted in California, since 1993, cost the state \$11.3 billion dollars annually. Had the state continued taxing corporations and the wealthy at rates equal to those fifteen years ago there

would not be a budget crisis in California. Even though a budget deficit was evident last year, California income tax laws were changed in February 2009, to provide corporations with even greater tax savings—equal to over \$2 billion per year. California is similar to the rest of the country where the wealthy and corporate elites enjoy economic protection through increased costs to working people.

Higher education has been cut in twenty-eight states in the 2009-10 school year and further, even more drastic cuts, are likely in the years ahead. California State University (CSU) system is planning to reduce enrollments by 40,000 students in the fall of 2010. The CSU Trustees have imposed steep tuition hikes and forced faculty and staff to take non-paid furlough days equal to 10% of salaries.

The students who are protesting tuition increases know they are being ripped off. They know that we are bailing out the rich with hundreds of billions dollars for Wall Street and massive budget cuts for the rest of us. The corporate media

doesn't explain to over-taxed working families how they are paying more while the rich sock it away.

The current economic crisis is a shock-and-awe process designed to undermine low-cost higher education, force labor concessions from working people and protect the wealthy. We need higher taxes on the corporations and the top 1%, combined with free public college education and tax breaks for working families. And, we must have a media that tells us the truth about inequality and wealth. A true economic stimulus increases spending from the bottom up not the top down.

Peter Phillips is a professor of sociology at Sonoma State University, President of Media Freedom Foundation, and recent past director of Project Censored.

Daily News at: <http://mediafreedom.pnn.com/5174-independent-news-sources>

Validated News & Research at: <http://www.mediafreedominternational.org/>

Project Censored: <http://www.projectcensored.org/>

## MLK Commemoration, Jan. 22

... from page 1

ing four decades. His career spans the American Presidency from Lyndon Johnson to George W. Bush, and he's worked with every California Governor from Pat Brown to Arnold Schwarzenegger. From civil rights to education reform, tax policy, economic development, health care, international trade, domestic partnerships, and affirmative action, he's left his imprimatur on every aspect of politics and public policy in the Golden State. Today, he heads the Willie L. Brown, Jr., Institute on Politics and Public Service, where he shares his knowledge and skills with a new generation of California leaders.

### The Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration

Over the years we have brought a stimulating array of powerful speakers to our community: Joseph Lowery of the SCLC; actors Greg Alan Williams, Edward James Olmos, Danny Glover, and Mike Farrell; Dr. King's daughter, the late Yolanda King; astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison; philosopher Cornel West; football coach Herman Boone; Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, Arun Gandhi, to name a few.

Our speakers bring Dr. King's philosophy of nonviolence into our contemporary reality by reflecting on their experiences and social commitments. They connect the past with the present to inspire us to act for a more just and peaceful future.

**The event is free so as many people as possible can attend. But our costs are considerable.** We depend solely on donations of money or services from our initial co-sponsors and from caring groups, businesses, and individuals like you. **Help us bring Willie Brown to our community?**

**ACTION: Attend our fundraiser at Chevy's, 1700 Standiford Ave. on Thursday, January 7, 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. Chevy's will donate 25% of food purchases to the MLK Commemoration! CUT OUT THE COUPON IN THIS ISSUE. And/OR make a tax-deductible check payable to "Modesto Peace Life Center-MLK," and send it to Jim Costello, 1849 Richard Way, Ceres, CA 95307-4504. The Peace Life Center is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.**

Our tax ID # is 94-2800825. Information: [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)

**Sponsors at press time:** City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department; (ASMJC); Modesto Junior College; Modesto Peace/Life Center; MJC Title V Grant; California State University, Stanislaus; Law Office of Failing, Rockwell, Kelly & Duarte; Ruben Villalobos, Trustee, Modesto City Schools; Modesto Irrigation District; College Avenue Congregational Church; MOSCE Federal Credit Union; Mike Zagaris, Paul Zagaris Real Estate, Inc.

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# Mr. President, War Is Not Peace

By **NORMAN SOLOMON**  
truthout | Op-Ed

Eloquence in Oslo cannot change the realities of war.

As President Obama neared the close of his Nobel address, he called for "the continued expansion of our moral imagination." Yet, his speech was tightly circumscribed by the policies that his oratory labored to justify.

Lofty rationales easily tell us that warfare is striving for the noble goal of peace. But the rationales scarcely intersect with actual war. The oratory sugarcoats the poisons, helping to kill hope in the name of it.

A few months ago, when I visited an Afghan office for women's empowerment, staffers took me to a pilot project in one of Kabul's poorest neighborhoods. There, women were learning small-scale business skills while also gaining personal strength and mutual support.

Two-dozen women, who ranged in age from early 20s to late 50s, talked with enthusiasm about the workshops. They were desperate to change their lives. When it was time to leave, I had a question: What should I tell people in the United States, if they ask what Afghan women want most of all?

After several women spoke, the translator summed up. "They all said that the first priority is peace."

In Afghanistan, after 30 years under the murderous twin shadows of poverty and war, the only lifeline is peace.

From President Obama, we hear that peace is the ultimate goal. But "peace" is a fixture on a strategic horizon that keeps moving as the military keeps marching.

Just a couple of days before Obama stepped to the podium in Oslo, the general running the US war effort in Afghanistan spoke to a Congressional committee in Washington about the

president's recent pledge to begin withdrawal of US troops in July 2011. "I don't believe that is a deadline at all," Stanley McChrystal said.

War is not peace. It never has been. It never will be.

Actual policy always, in the real world, profoundly trumps even the best rhetoric. And so, for instance, when President Obama's Nobel speech proclaimed that "America cannot act alone" and called for "standards that govern the use of force," the ringing declaration clashed with the announcement last month that he will not sign the international Mine Ban Treaty.

As Nobel Peace laureate Jody Williams pointed out, "Obama's position on land mines calls into question his expressed views on multilateralism, respect for international humanitarian law and disarmament. How can he, with total credibility, lead the world to nuclear disarmament when his own country won't give up even land mines?"

At the outset of his speech in Oslo, the president spoke of his "acute sense of the cost of armed conflict." Well, there's acute and then there's acute. I think of the people I met and saw in Kabul who are missing limbs, and the countless more whose lives have been shattered by war.

In the name of pragmatism, Obama spoke of "the world as it is" and threw a cloak of justification over the grisly escalation in Afghanistan by insisting that "war is sometimes necessary" - but generalities do nothing to mitigate the horrors of war being endured by others.

President Obama accepted the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize while delivering - to the world as it is - a pro-war speech. The context instantly turned the speech's insights into flackery for more war.

From <http://www.truthout.org/1210092>

**In Afghanistan, after  
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## News from John McCutcheon

From his newsletter

The winter winds are finding their way even into Georgia this week. Those last, stubborn tomatoes finally succumbed to our first killing frost. One or two miraculous roses, protected by an arbor of Rose of Sharon, still resound along the fence line. Collards promise impossible things yet in the winter garden. But inside it's the resuscitated furnace, the fireplace, and an extra quilt at night. My Wisconsin roots stir in recognition. Carmen's Cuban roots recoil in horror, "I haven't been warm since 1963!"

The New Year begins, as it has for three decades now, with my annual Left Coast Tour. I'll return to Charlottesville in early February and spend a chilly weekend in New England before heading to the late-summer climes of Australia for a quick two-week tour.

The most exciting news in my upcoming calendar is the impending arrival of Grandchild #1, Ruby Robison. The throne and scepter are being polished, spoilage is being prepared, songs are being written. There will be, no doubt, photos and gushing galore but I suspect that, when the little tyke arrives, you'll hear about it without the need for missive or microphone.

As we turn loose of this past year and contemplate a future populated with our children and their children's children, let us resolve to love without pretense or condition, forgive unexpectedly, be generous with our time and resources, and to strive to become the kind of people our grandchildren think we are.

John McCutcheon performs for the Modesto Peace/Life Center Thursday, January. 21, 2010 at 7 PM at the Modesto Church of the Brethren.

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# The true story about Climate Cover-Up: The Crusade to Deny Global Warming

By WORLD BUSINESS ACADEMY  
truthout | Op-Ed

Why have hopes faded for a binding agreement at the UN climate conference in Copenhagen that began this week? Why aren't the people of the world demanding that their national leaders act to avert the greatest environmental crisis the world has ever known?

High on the list of causes of this historic failure of political will is a cleverly orchestrated, well-funded campaign of junk science designed to mislead the public into believing there is a split in scientific opinion about climate change. For years, this misinformation campaign has been largely funded by the oil and coal industries, working under the guise of fake grassroots groups ("astroturf groups") and industry front groups with names designed to suggest that they represent the public interest.

The misinformation is working. Recent Harris and *Washington Post*-ABC polls show alarming drops in the percentage of the public that believes climate change is happening.

*Climate Cover-Up: The Crusade to Deny Global Warming* by James Hoggan with Richard Littlemore, is a brilliant exposé of this war on science. Hoggan is the co-founder of DeSmogBlog.com and Littlemore is the web site's lead writer. Their new book is a chilling description of greed, conflicts of interest and the oil and coal industries' shenanigans; it picks up where other books, like Ross Gelbspan's *The Heat Is On* (1997) and *Boiling Point* (2004), left off.

The collapse of the integrity of the public conversation about climate change is largely due to the failings of the mainstream media, whether due to inadvertence, understaffing, or, in certain outlets, an actual intent to misinform. Too many mainstream media reporters have given up investigative journalism in favor of purported "balanced" reporting that is really just disguised bias.

Reporters could choose to expose the phony scientific "experts" who cast themselves as "climate skeptics" to make money on the lecture circuits and TV talk shows. Instead, reporters choose the less-strenuous route of presenting a falsely "balanced" story with competing quotations, regardless of how fact-free one side is. For good reason, we recognize that the flat earth theory doesn't deserve equal time - it's just wrong; the world is round. When will journalists bring the same realism to climate change reporting?

*Climate Cover-Up* describes how University of California Professor Naomi Oreskes exhaustively researched peer-reviewed scientific journal articles on climate change published between 1993 and 2003 and found that of 928 articles, not a single one took exception with the fact that humans' releases of greenhouse gases were causing climate change. Yet between 1998 and 2002, fifty-three percent of climate change stories in four leading US newspapers - *The New York Times*,

*The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* - "quoted a scientist on 'one side' of the issue and a spokesperson on the other," according to an analysis by brothers Jules and Max Boykoff.

Mainstream media reporters' fondness for stories about apparent climate-science controversies, whether bogus or not, was satisfied by a deluge of material created and paid for the oil and coal industries, who were assisted by their hired-gun public relations firms. Industry groups' internal documents show that part of their strategy was to create and operate through "astroturf" groups rather than industry lobby groups - a tactic which made it easy to conceal who was funding the public campaigns run by the climate deniers ("climate skeptics" is too generous a term).

Rather than challenging the scientific consensus on climate change with a head-on attack through published articles subject to peer review, the climate deniers began a campaign of "science-by-petition," often involving signatures by fake climate experts (including academics and scientists who tried to portray themselves as experts outside their area of expertise) or fake signatures by real climate experts whose names had been added without their consent.

*Climate Cover-Up* tells dramatic stories about how phony climate experts and "junk scientists" succeed, helped by: (1) the fact that the "scientific debate" about climate change is now occurring largely outside of scientific institutions; (2) the "echo chamber" created by the "reverberating network of think tanks, blogs, and ideologically sympathetic mainstream media outlets that distribute and circulate contrarian information"; and (3) the talents and skills of those who lead the public relations push or ride the climate deniers' lecture circuit.

*Climate Cover-Up* exposes major climate-change denier phonies like Marc Morano, who led the Swift Boat campaign against presidential candidate John Kerry.

Hoggan and Littlemore aptly call the climate change cover-up "an intergenerational crime." Forget complaining about wimpy leadership at Copenhagen. In a variant of Gandhi's message, "We must become the change we want to see," Hoggan and Littlemore remind us, "You're the person who is going to have to start taking responsibility, not just for your own actions, but for the position of your government and the integrity of the public climate change conversation."

Climate change is getting worse much faster than predicted just a few years ago. Melting permafrost is releasing methane, a greenhouse gas 20 to 60 times more potent than carbon dioxide, creating a dangerous feedback loop. Our oceans have served as a vast carbon sink, but are now saturated with carbon and may be losing their ability to soak up more greenhouse gases. The carbon that they have already absorbed has harmed coral and other marine life, with repercussions up the food chain.

If you don't feel up to fighting the oil and coal industry's disinformation campaign, think about this: DeSmogBlog's Kevin Grandia reported in the *Huffington Post* in January 2009 that the frequency of climate denier material reported on the internet had at least doubled from the previous year.

Don't believe any of it? See the December 7 *New York Times* story, "Before Climate Meeting, a Revival of Skepticism." [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/07/science/earth/07climate.html?\\_r=1&hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/07/science/earth/07climate.html?_r=1&hp)

If you still don't feel up to fighting this battle, go read *Climate Wars* by Gwynne Dyer to see what's in store for us if we don't get this right.

Your future, your children, your choice.

About the Authors:

Madeleine Austin is vice president of the World Business Academy; editor of the World Business Academy's 2007 book, *Freedom from Mid-East Oil*, and a member of the Hawaii Energy Policy Forum

Rinaldo Brutoco, president of the World Business Academy, is an author on renewable energy, climate change and sustainable business strategies.

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# Rivers of Birds, Forests of Tules: Central Valley Nature & Culture in Season

By Lillian Vallee

## 62. Ants in the Sugar Bowl

I used to brag that I lived in the only county named after a California Indian leader and rebel, Stanislaus County, until one day a little voice said at the other end of the phone, “And what about Chief Marin?” Now I say I live in just one of two counties named after Indian leaders, and last Saturday I traveled from the county of Lakisamne Yokuts Estanislao to the county of Coast Miwok leader Chief Marin at the invitation of Elizabeth Barnet and Judith Lowry of West Marin Commons to speak in a series called “Illuminated Landscapes.” My task was to speak about the Central Valley and the talk was called “Singing Back the River, Singing Back the Lake: Reviving Central Valley Nature and Culture.” The series is cultivating dialogue between people and the landscapes they inhabit, but also between people inhabiting various landscapes in California. I was bringing news about the San Joaquin Plain and Tulare Basin to the Dance Palace in Pt. Reyes Station, and we laughed about building a Bolinas-Pt. Reyes-Inverness-Modesto Power Axis.

On my way to Marin County I stopped to say good-bye to my sister Barbara and her husband Peter who were leaving to spend the holidays in Denmark with his family. He told me about a shortcut to the Richmond Bridge. I never found the bridge using the shortcut, but I did find the ghetto heart of Richmond, which in the winter dark and driving rain resembled one tier of the Inferno: aggressive males on the prowl, hostile looks, and dimly lit corner bars spitting out wildly gesticulating customers. Having grown up in Detroit keeps me from judging impoverished neighborhoods too harshly, but I could not stop every hair on my body from standing bolt upright. There was danger and suffering in the air, and it probably did not help that I looked like Mrs. Claus with a sled full of Christmas presents my sister had given me for the rest of the family.

And I did what I always do when faced with uncertainty: I remembered poetry. “The dark blush of anger/the impolite reply/the loathing of foreigners/uphold the State/Roars at a touchdown/slums near the harbors/liquor for the poor/uphold the State.” So much of the joy and pleasure of the world disappears when one is surrounded by misery and degradation, but I did not have to leave the Valley to see it.

When preparing for the talk about the San Joaquin Valley,

I was directed to an article by Lloyd G. Carter, journalist turned attorney and champion of the San Joaquin River. His article is a brilliant and finely researched study of land use in the Westlands Water District, the biggest agricultural irrigation district in the entire country, and its link to “perpetual poverty.” Carter shows how in the “last few decades, well over a billion dollars in taxpayer aid has been provided to a few hundred growers” to farm substandard soils with mainly Latino labor living in poverty-stricken communities now enduring 41% unemployment, a percentage matched only by Latino children who actually graduate from the Fresno Unified School District. There is no high school inside the Westlands boundaries.

Where there should have been 6100 small family farms, there are a few dozen factory farming “dynasties,” so politically powerful they can exploit immigrant labor and degrade the environment (Kesterson, Tulare Lake) with impunity. Carter lays the responsibility for this state of affairs on federal irrigation and farm-subsidy policy in the San Luis Unit since the 1960s. Efforts to alter these policies have proven no match for the moneyed political clout of the dynasties.

Carter quotes Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* (1939): “Now farming became industry, and the owners followed Rome, although they did not know it. They imported slaves although they did not call them slaves.... And it came about that the owners no longer worked on their farms. They farmed on paper; and they forgot the land, the smell, the feel of it, and remembered only that they owned it....”

Let us compare this to the following passage from Carter’s article (2009): “Most Westlands growers live far from the bleak and industrialized farmlands of the district; many reside in an exclusive enclave of mansions in north Fresno, in the zip code 93711, which receives more federal farm subsidy money than any other zip code in America. And even the City of Fresno (with an urban area population nearly half a million), which has long prided itself as the capital of the nation’s most productive farm county (with a gross annual farm income of more than \$5.3 billion) was determined to be the poorest of America’s fifty largest cities, finishing even behind post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans in a 2005 study by the Brookings Institution.”

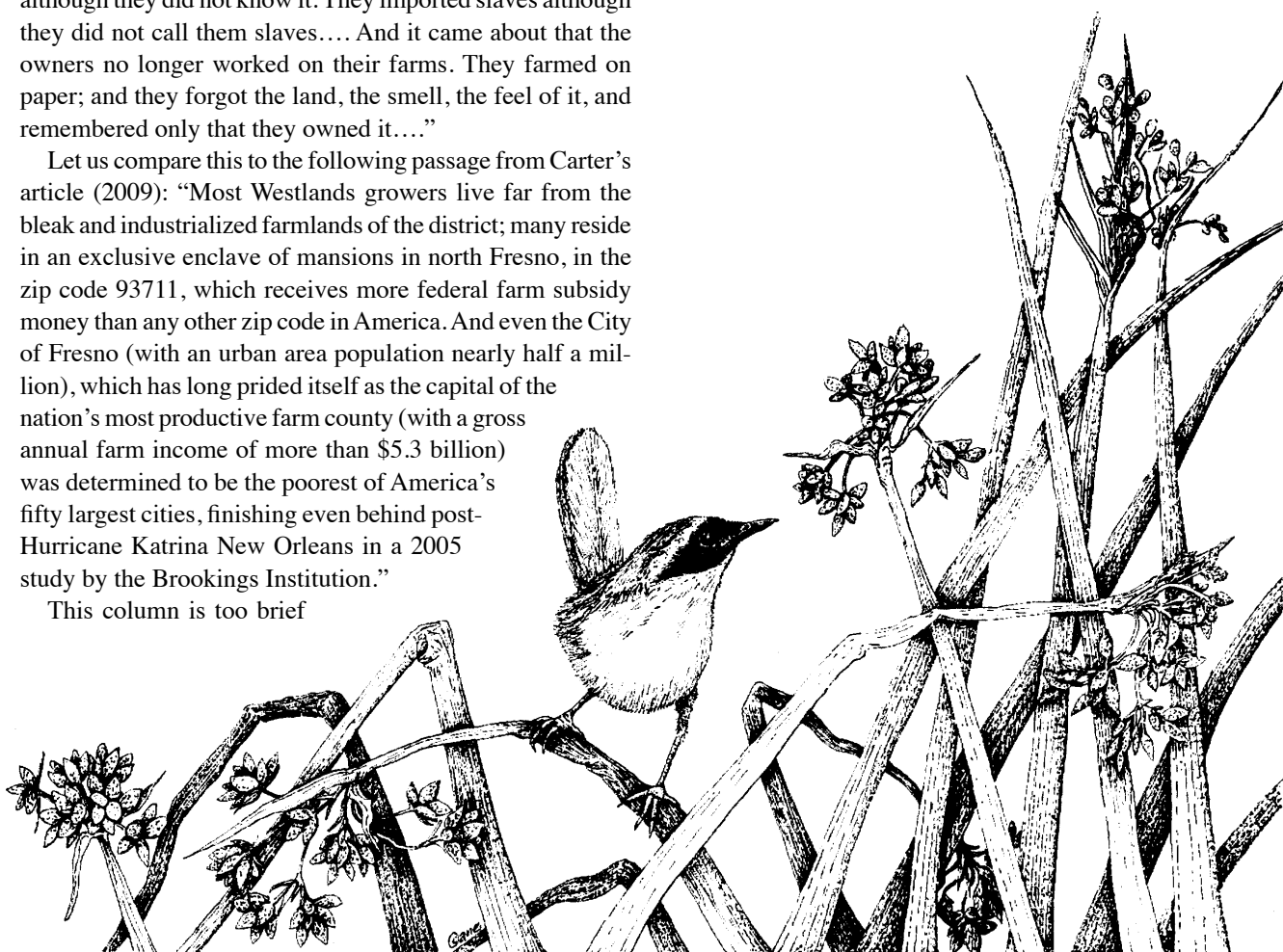
This column is too brief

to outline the meticulous research and breadth of Carter’s article, but its contents should be studied by every Central Valley resident because the growers are waging a public relations campaign blaming unemployment, grinding poverty and marginal lands going out of agricultural production on the shrinking water supply and on efforts to save fish and rivers (and the Delta from crashing). And they are using migrant laborers and their unemployed children to march for them.

I shared the Valley’s history, its beauty and its problems with an attentive audience in Pt. Reyes Station and found astute, interested listeners, aware that land and water policies affect all of us in California, no matter where we live.

On Sunday I returned home to find a handful of ants nestled in my sugar bowl. I observed with amazement that there was no stream of ants leading back to the hive, the way they have a habit of doing. The ants in the sugar bowl seemed to have forgotten about the rest and were lying around (belly up, I imagined) deadened by the excess of sweetness.

Sources: Lloyd G. Carter ([www.lloydgcarter.com](http://www.lloydgcarter.com)) “Reaping Riches in a Wretched Region: Subsidized Industrial Farming and Its Link to Perpetual Poverty”; verses are from Czeslaw Milosz’s “Three Talks on Civilization.”



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# Shining light on the roots of terrorism

By RAY MCGOVERN

Media commentary on the upcoming 9/11 trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has raised concern that state secrets may be divulged, including details about how the Bush administration used torture to extract evidence about al-Qaeda.

"I think that we're going to shine a light on something that a lot of people don't want to look at" is how American Civil Liberties Union attorney Denney LeBoeuf put it, according to *The New York Times* on Saturday.

No problem, says Attorney General Eric Holder, who claims to have "great confidence" that other evidence – apart from what may have been gleaned from the 183 times Sheikh Mohammed was waterboarded, for example – will suffice to convict him.

Maybe so, but what the Fawning Corporate Media (or FCM) have so far neglected is the likelihood that the testimony will be so public that they will have to break their studied silence about *why* Sheikh Mohammed and his associates say they orchestrated the attacks of 9/11.

For reasons that are painfully obvious, the FCM have done their best to ignore or bury the role that Israel's repression of the Palestinians has played in motivating the 9/11 attacks and other anti-Western terrorism.

It is not like there is no evidence on this key issue. Rather, it appears that the Israel-Palestine connection is pretty much kept off limits for discussion.

Yet, as Sheikh Mohammed and the other alleged 9/11 conspirators go to trial, the FCM's tacit but tight embargo will be under great strain. Eyes will have to be averted from the sensitive Israeli-Palestinian motive even more than from torture, which most Americans know about (and, God help us, are willing to explain away).

## The Bromides

To refresh our memories, let's recall the bromides we were fed by the likes of President George W. Bush about why the terrorists attacked on 9/11.

Rather than mentioning long-held grievances expressed by many Arabs – such as Western intrusion into their region, Washington's propping up of autocrats who enrich themselves in deals with multinational oil companies, and Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territory – Bush told the American people that "the terrorists hate our freedoms."

Former Vice President Dick Cheney reprised that feel-good theme in a speech to the American Enterprise Institute on May 21. Cheney said the terrorists hate "all the things that make us a force for good in the world — for liberty, for human rights, for the rational, peaceful resolution of differences."

Some observers might have found those qualities strange for Cheney to cite given his role in violating constitutional rights, torturing captives and spreading falsehoods to justify an aggressive war against Iraq.

But Cheney also slipped up in the speech, presumably because he had lost his best speechwriters upon leaving office.

He inadvertently acknowledged the Israeli albatross hanging around the neck of U.S. policy in the Middle East.

"They [terrorists] have never lacked for grievances against the United States. Our belief in freedom of speech and religion ... our belief in equal rights for women ... our support for Israel... — these are the true sources of resentment," Cheney said.

Yet "our support for Israel" is hardly ever included in these formulations, but Cheney at least got that part right.

Rarely in the FCM – and not even often on the Web – does one find Sheikh Mohammed's explanation for what motivated him to "mastermind" 9/11. Apparently, few pundits have made it as far as page 147 of the 9/11 Commission Report.

The drafters were at work on the report when they learned that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed had been captured. They knew that he earned a degree in mechanical engineering from North Carolina A&T in Greensboro in 1986, before going to Afghanistan to fight the Russian occupier.

And it seems their first assumption was that he suffered some major indignity at the hands of Americans in Greensboro. Thus the strange wording of one major finding on page 147 of the 9/11 Commission Report:

"By his own account, KSM's

animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experience there as a student, but rather from his violent disagreement with U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel."

Moreover, the footnote section reveals that KSM was not the only "mastermind" terrorist motivated by "U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel," although in the footnote the Commission dances around a specific reference to Israel, leaving it to the reader to infer that point from the context. Note the missing words in the footnote on page 488:

"On KSM's rationale for attacking the United States, see Intelligence report, interrogation of KSM, Sept. 5, 2003 (in this regard, KSM's statements echo those of Yousef, who delivered an extensive polemic against U.S. foreign policy at his January 1998 sentencing)," the footnote said.

Was Yousef, who happens to be Mohammed's nephew, perhaps upset about U.S. foreign policy favoring NATO expansion, or maybe toward Guam? Obviously, the unstated inference in the footnote was about Israel.

## The First Attack

The family connection between Yousef and Mohammed was not incidental, either. "Yousef's instant notoriety as the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing inspired KSM to become involved in planning attacks against the United States," the 9/11 Commission Report noted on page 147.

The 1993 World Trade Center bombing occurred on Feb. 26, 1993, when a car bomb was detonated below Tower One. The 1,500-pound urea nitrate-hydrogen gas-enhanced device was intended to knock the North Tower (Tower One)

into the South Tower, bringing both towers down and killing thousands of people.

It failed to accomplish that, but the bombing did kill six people and injured 1,042.

Motive? Ramzi Yousef spelled out his motive in a letter to *The New York Times* after the bombing:

"We declare our responsibility for the explosion on the mentioned building. This action was done in response for the American political, economical, and military support to Israel, the state of terrorism, and to the rest of the dictator countries in the region."

Yousef was captured in Pakistan in 1995, imprisoned in New York City, and held there until his trial. On Nov. 12, 1997, he was convicted of "seditious conspiracy" and was sentenced the following January to life without parole. He is held at the high-security Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado.

Regarding the touchy Israel connection, the 9/11 Commission stepped up to the plate in the "Recommendations" section of its final report, which was issued on July 22, 2004, but then bunted:

"America's policy choices have consequences. Right or wrong, it is simply a fact that American policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American actions in Iraq are dominant staples of popular commentary across the Arab and Muslim world. ... Neither Israel nor the new Iraq will be safer if worldwide Islamist terrorism grows stronger." (pp 376-377)

A more convincing swing at this issue was taken in an unclassified study published by the Pentagon-appointed U.S. Defense Science Board on Sept. 23, 2004, just two months later. The board stated:

"Muslims do not 'hate our freedom,' but rather, they hate our policies. The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the longstanding, even increasing support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan, and the Gulf States.

"Thus, when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy."

The report directly contradicted what Bush had been saying about "why they hate us," letting the elephant out of the bag and into the room, so to speak.

But, you say, you didn't hear much about that report either, despite 24-hour cable "news" networks and the "change-everything" importance of 9/11 in justifying U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq?

## Creative Editing

If you've read down this far, you will not be surprised that the FCM ignored the Defense Science Board findings for two months. On Nov. 24, 2004, *The New York Times*, erstwhile "newspaper of record," finally published a story on the report — but only after some highly instructive surgery.

Thom Shanker of the *Times* quoted the paragraph beginning with "Muslims do not 'hate our freedom'" (see above), but he or his editors deliberately cut out the following sentence about

continued next page . . .

... from previous page

what Muslims do object to, i.e., “what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights” and support for tyrannical regimes.

The *Times* did include the sentence that immediately followed the omitted one. In other words, it was not simply a matter of shortening the paragraph. Rather, the offending middle sentence fell victim to the “delete” key.

Similarly creative editing showed through the *Times*’ reporting in late October 2004 on a videotaped speech by Osama bin Laden. Almost six paragraphs of the story made it onto page one, but the *Times* saw to it that the key point bin Laden made at the beginning of his speech was relegated to paragraphs 23 to 25 at the very bottom of page nine.

Buried there was bin Laden’s assertion that the idea for 9/11 first germinated after “we witnessed the oppression and tyranny of the American-Israeli coalition against our people in Palestine and Lebanon.”

There is other evidence regarding the Israeli-Palestinian motive behind 9/11.

Though Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was not allowed to talk to the attorneys in the 2006 trial of 9/11 co-conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui, the judge did allow into the official record a statement by Mohammed on the “Purpose of the 9/11 Attacks,” which was drawn from “numerous written summaries of Sheikh Mohammed’s oral statements in response to extensive questioning.”

The following statement from Sheikh Mohammed appears on page 11 of Defense Trial Exhibit 941 from “United States v. Zacarias Moussaoui, Criminal No. 01-455-A”:

“Sheikh Mohammed said that the purpose of the attack on the Twin Towers was to ‘wake the American people up.’ Sheikh Mohammed said that if the target would have been strictly military or government, the American people would not focus on the atrocities that America is committing by supporting Israel against the Palestinian people and America’s self-serving foreign policy that corrupts Arab governments and leads to further exploitation of the Arab/Muslim peoples.”

Some recent articles about Mohammed’s upcoming trial also have mentioned the Israel-Palestine motive behind 9/11, though usually in passing and deep inside the stories. For instance, Sunday’s *New York Times* carries a front-page article giving a “portrait of 9/11 ‘Jackal,’” Mohammed.

But one has to read deep into the jump on page 26 to learn that the original plan for the 9/11 attacks envisioned Mohammed flying on one of 10 planes that were to be hijacked and that “he would be on the one plane not to crash, and after the plane landed would emerge and deliver a speech condemning American policy on Israel.”

## Revisionist View

Yet, the Fawning Corporate Media won’t stop performing its creative editing – or creative composition – to obscure this motive. Never mind what the 9/11 Commission Report said about Mohammed not being driven by resentments from his college days in North Carolina, the *Washington Post* offered

a revisionist view on that point on Aug. 30:

“KSM’s limited and negative experience in the United States — which included a brief jail stay because of unpaid bills — almost certainly helped propel him on his path to becoming a terrorist,” according to an intelligence summary, the *Post* reported. “He stated that his contact with Americans, while minimal, confirmed his view that the United States was a debauched and racist country.”

A telling revision perhaps extracted from one of Mohammed’s 183 waterboarding sessions – and certainly politically more convenient in that it obscured Mohammed’s other explanation implicating “U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel.”

But let’s look for a moment at the “debauched and racist” part. Could Mohammed be speaking some truth here – and not just about his college days of the 1980s?

Would the *Washington Post*’s editors be so supportive of the “war on terror” if captives from a more favored ethnic or religious group were stripped naked before members of the opposite sex, put in diapers, immobilized with shackles in stress positions for long periods, denied sleep and made to soil themselves?

In my view, racism comes very much into play here. If Mohammed and other detainees looked more like us, would it be so easy to demonize and waterboard them? [See, for example, Consortiumnews.com’s “Bush’s Interrogators Stressed Nudity.”]

## Unguarded Moments

At rare moments, however, hard truths about the 9/11 motivations slip out – although not in high-profile presidential speeches nor in *Washington Post* op-eds. For instance, at a public hearing in June 2004, 9/11 Commissioner Lee

Hamilton asked a panel of government experts, “What motivated them [the hijackers] to do it?”

The CIA analyst in the group is seen in some panic, directing his eyes toward the other panelists in the all-too-obvious hope that someone else will answer the politically loaded question. FBI Supervisory Special Agent James Fitzgerald rose to the occasion, saying:

“I believe they feel a sense of outrage against the United States. They

identify with the Palestinian problem; they identify with people who oppose oppressive regimes, and I believe they tend to focus their anger on the United States.”

For Hamilton and his colleagues that proved to be a politically incorrect answer. Ergo, you will not find that testimony in the 9/11 Commission Report. And notably absent from the report’s recommendations is any suggestion as to how one might address the question of Israeli treatment of Palestinians and U.S. support for it.

In their book *Without Precedent: The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission*, Chairmen Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton are unusually candid in admitting that this issue was so sensitive and contentious that they chose the course of least resistance.

Despite the findings of the Commission staff – and FBI Agent Fitzgerald – that the hijackers were *not* motivated by religious ideology, many of the Commissioners much

preferred attributing the attacks to Islam than to U.S. policy toward Israel.

Kean and Hamilton explain that those commissioners were dead set against identifying Israel as a major factor motivating the terrorists, because someone might get the idea that Washington should reassess its policy.

But it’s a legitimate and urgent question: Would a more determined commitment by the U.S. government to secure an independent state for the Palestinians and to alleviate their suffering undercut the appeal of al-Qaeda and other extremist groups to young people in the Muslim world?

Or put differently, why should ardent supporters of Israel in the U.S. Congress behave in such a way as to make the Muslim world view the United States as disinterested in the plight of the Palestinians and thus increase the danger of future attacks against the United States, as well as against Israel?

## The Goldstone Report

The rest of the world and most Americans opposed the Israeli strikes on Gaza last December and January that resulted in the killing of 1,400 Palestinians, with 13 Israelis also killed. And there was wide criticism of the silence not only of the Bush/Cheney administration, but also of President-elect Barack Obama.

The UN-authorized investigation by the widely respected South African jurist, Richard Goldstone, himself a Jew, pointed to war crimes by both Israel and Hamas, although the inquiry’s harshest criticism landed on Israel for the staggering civilian death toll.

This finding led Israel’s Likud government to activate its powerful U.S. lobby, which pressed the House of Representatives to denounce the Goldstone report, which the House did on a 344-36 vote.

In a wondrous display of pot-and-kettle, House members branded the Goldstone report “irredeemably biased.” Democratic House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer called the report “unbalanced and unfair and inaccurate.”

These so-called “friends of Israel” either don’t know or don’t care that this sort of resolution only makes matters worse regarding American attempts to defuse the explosive anger building across the Middle East. It is a gift to al-Qaeda.

This U.S. pandering to the Likud Lobby – and the implicit suggestion that the lives of 1,400 Palestinians don’t much matter – also is bad for the people of Israel. Indeed, it may prove suicidal, by delaying the geopolitical imperative for Israel to make peace with its Arab neighbors and thus avert some future catastrophe.

Closer to home, by further identifying itself with – and justifying – Israeli repression of the Palestinians, the United States helps breed more Khalid Sheikh Mohammads and Ramzi Yousefs, more young terrorists determined to make Washington and the American people pay a price.

It requires no logical leap to conclude that Likud-friendly lawmakers — the Steny Hoyers, the Howard Bermans, the Ileana Ros-Lehtinens of this world — could scarcely think up a better way to raise the threat level from terrorists who feed on festering sores like the calamity in Gaza.

Ray McGovern was an Army intelligence officer and CIA analyst for almost 30 years.

From <http://www.consortiumnews.com/2009/111509a.html>



## Calling all Vegetarians, Vegans, Wannabees

By KATHY HAYNES

Save yourself – by eating a healthy diet.

Save the planet – by eating lower on the food chain.

Save the animals – no more tolerance for factory farms or slaughtering animals for food when there are much kinder, gentler ways of putting food on your plate and in your belly.

Vegetarians/Vegans/Wannabees, join me for lunch at my house on Saturday, Jan 23, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to share food, conversation with like-minded people and have some fun sharing your favorite vegetarian anecdotes.

Also discuss where do we go from here? Monthly lunches/meetings? Possibly plan for information booths at health/pet/earth day fairs? Book/movie discussions? Dine at local restaurants en masse in order to promote more vegetarian selections? Dream of opening a vegetarian restaurant right here in Modesto? Tired of being a minority? Then let's do something about it.

Info: (209) 529-5360 or email Kathryn Haynes, kathy-haynes103@gmail.com

## Free Class: Winter Vegetable Gardening

By ANNE SCHELLMAN,  
Horticulture Program Representative  
Nutrition and Gardening Coordinator

The University of California Cooperative Extension will offer a class on how to plant bare root fruit trees, vegetables and berries. The class will be taught by horticulturist Anne Schellman.

Winter is a great time to begin a garden in Stanislaus County. Plants offered at nurseries in bare root form are less costly than at other times of the year. They are also easy to plant. In this class, Anne will instruct participants on how to prepare the soil, plant and care for their new garden.

Parents, Social Service Providers, Education and Community Service Providers are welcome to attend. RSVP quickly, because UCCE's gardening classes fill up fast!

Free raffle prizes sponsored by Morris Nursery, West Turf Nursery, The Greenery, Four Seasons and Scenic Nursery!

### WHERE

Stanislaus County Agricultural Center  
3800 Cornucopia Way, Modesto,  
Harvest Hall Rooms D&E

### WHEN

Thursday, January 7th, 2010, 6:00 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.

### HOW

Participants should RSVP by email or phone to  
Anne: aschellman@ucdavis.edu; 209-525-6824

For more information on University of California Cooperative Extension, visit: <http://ucanr.org>

## Voices from Hopenhagen

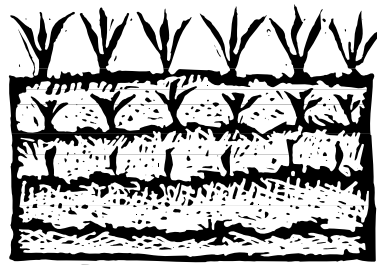
By PAUL SHAPIRO

Senior Director, Humane Society of the United States'  
factory farming campaign.

### Reducing our Global Food-Print

When we think about minimizing our contributions to climate change, we may consider switching our light bulbs, driving less, buying local, and more. These are all important and laudable ways to reduce our carbon footprint, but, as *Washington Post* columnist Ezra Klein notes, "There's no reason to ignore the impact of what we put on our plates."

In other words, changing these habits is no excuse for ignoring what's arguably the most important lifestyle choice we can make: reducing our food-print simply by eating lower on the food chain.



Estimates vary, but raising and killing animals for food is clearly among the top contributors to climate change. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization asserts that animal agriculture

generates 18 percent of the world's greenhouse gases—more than all transportation combined. A recent Worldwatch report even claims that the FAO report "vastly underestimate[s]" the size of the problem, and that the percentage is actually closer to half of all human-induced greenhouse gas emissions.

Regardless, the point is really the same: our near-insatiable

demand for meat, eggs, and dairy products is having a major effect on the planet, and each one of us can make a difference simply by eating fewer animals.

There's a misconception that the type of food we buy isn't as important as how far it traveled to get to our plates. Little could be further from the truth. There's no doubt that buying locally produced items is important, but Carnegie Mellon University researchers found that the average American would do more for the planet by going vegetarian just one day per week than by switching to a totally local diet.

Fortunately, choosing vegetarian options has never been easier. Today's range of plant-based meats is diverse, healthy, and delicious, and free recipes abound online.

So, as Copenhagen approaches, we should absolutely hold our governments accountable for the pledges they've made about making progress on global warming. But let's not forget that, as we point a finger outward and demand change from our elected officials, we've got four fingers pointed right back at ourselves. We don't need to wait for the governments of the world to act in order to begin addressing climate change every day—each time we sit down to eat.

As *New York Times* food writer Mark Bittman writes, "By reducing the amount of meat we eat, we can grow and kill fewer animals. That means less environmental damage, including climate change; fewer antibiotics in the water and food supplies; fewer pesticides and herbicides; reduced cruelty; and so on. It also means better health for you."

— Paul Shapiro is the senior director of the Humane Society of the United States' factory farming campaign. Follow him at <http://twitter.com/pshapiro>

Visit [www.Hopenhagen.org](http://www.Hopenhagen.org) for more information.

## Call for submissions: PENUMBRA: The Art & Literary Annual of CSU Stanislaus

### OUR 20<sup>th</sup> YEAR: Poetry – Short Fiction – Artwork – Photography

Deadline: Friday, February 26, 2010.

Submit one copy of artwork/photography (11" x 17" max or slides).

Submit two hard copies of written work with name, address, phone number and e-mail address on one copy only AND a CD containing each submission as a separate file saved in Rich Text Format (rtf). Include a brief biography (3 lines max). Written work and CD will not be returned.

Mail up to five submissions to: Rofiah Breen, English Dept., CSU Stanislaus, One University Circle, Turlock, CA 95382. (209) 483-9844 or email: [rofiah@gmail.com](mailto:rofiah@gmail.com)



**Modesto Homeopathy**  
**Elise Osner, C Hom**  
1015 12th St., Suite 4  
Modesto, CA 95350

209-527-4420  
209-988-7883  
[eosner@ainet.com](mailto:eosner@ainet.com)

LAW OFFICES OF  
**FRAILING, ROCKWELL & KELLY**

1600 G Street  
Suite 203

P.O. Box 0142  
Modesto, CA  
95353-0142

JOHN B. FRAILING  
DAVID N. ROCKWELL  
SHARON E. KELLY  
*Attorneys/Abogados*

(209) 521-2552  
FAX (209) 526-7898



## The Weaver

warp and weft of primary colours  
weave simple lines  
clean designs  
art at its safest.

while i dig in my bag  
searching for that  
shade between shades  
weighty heft of wool  
that adds a subtlety

weaving a tale  
creating colours  
when others don't suffice  
bleeding crimsonpurplegreen  
beating yellowblueblack  
old threads fade  
absorbed into story's fabric  
present

but not.

rich tapestry  
wall sized and growing  
needlework of bone  
woolen tattoo  
canvas of skin  
stretched, dried, shrunken  
worked and woven.

jlh  
2007

## Old Boots

Tough as old boots  
caked in pasture mud  
the kind that clumps  
with grass bits

A rip and tear  
slight poke where  
irrigation water seeps  
soaking cotton sock  
pruning toes

A chip in the red sole  
where barbed wire  
caught mid leap  
hanging on the heel  
tug-o-warring gravity

Tough old boots  
experienced  
worn  
ready  
...here.

jlh  
25 Feb 2007

## Courage

What compares to the courage of trees?

In discordant winter  
bare arms extend  
to the ether  
  
bow to string  
composes aria  
stripped instruments sing  
red notes climb  
umber staves

somnambulant song  
sotto voce  
lulls listeners  
deep into trance

nude of brown  
defiant dance  
under crystalline sky.

jlh  
17 February 2004

## Retrieval

Digging deep into threads of memory  
envelopes of the mind contain  
scraps of self  
put away for another day.

Tripping over boxes  
life spills on the attic floor  
I pick up the little girl who stepped on a  
nail  
and put her next to first kiss.

Pains of labor seep a stain  
while infant giggles warm the trunk  
lost puppies bound from the corner  
bringing his sock.

Shreds of tattered dreams litter the attic  
I piece them together  
realizing, reconstituted images lack appeal  
rending them further  
turning away...

I continue my search.

jlh  
7 April 09

## Page's Complaint

Kneeling  
Head bowed  
He weeps.

Spilled and broken  
Showing Nothing.

Spilling into the past  
Where tidy yards  
Boast full green trees  
That tickle the skies...

Mom could never tell  
If it was the sky laughing  
...Or me...

As I walk down dirt roads  
Studying stars  
Confidant by my side,

Cups fill.

Light from a shard catches my eye  
drags me back.

Overgrown and derelict  
The yard cradles broken trees  
Who can tell if it's the  
trees weeping  
...Or me...

Broken and bowed to earth  
split canopy  
Heightens loss....

As I kneel  
Head bowed  
And weep.

jlh  
20 july 2005 (dec 2009)

# Jennifer Hamilton

Jennifer Hamilton is a native of the Central Valley and has returned after living in Oregon, New Jersey, Michigan, and Scotland. She is a professor of English at Modesto Junior College, and her poetry has appeared locally in the Collisions II exhibit at The Photographer's Gallery. She sponsored four editions of a student creative writing journal, *Blackberry Winter*, and has written several critical articles. She volunteered with Manna International, a relief and development organization, spending time in Haiti. Since moving back to the Modesto area, she has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity and has given time to local schools.



## digging deeper

clods of soil story cling to shoots of the past  
she tugs and exposes  
in medias res  
a verse she didn't remember she knew

the grit of labour  
under early saturday sun  
a shed on the farm  
cows in cacophonous competition with the  
world around them  
bees orbit flowers  
a rake, a hoe in mid-swing  
and rows upon rows of trees

jh  
10 june 2006



## WE GET LETTERS



### Population discussion continues

We were pleased to see Ms. Farrar's letter in the December issue of *Connections* concerning our article, which was published in the November issue, entitled "Population, Choice, and Poverty." It was gratifying to have an experienced health care professional join the discussion of population issues. Because the Modesto Peace/Life Center is an organization that is working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment, and because of Ms. Farrar's letter, it is important to re-emphasize the scientific fact that *having a sustainable environment is impossible without population control*.

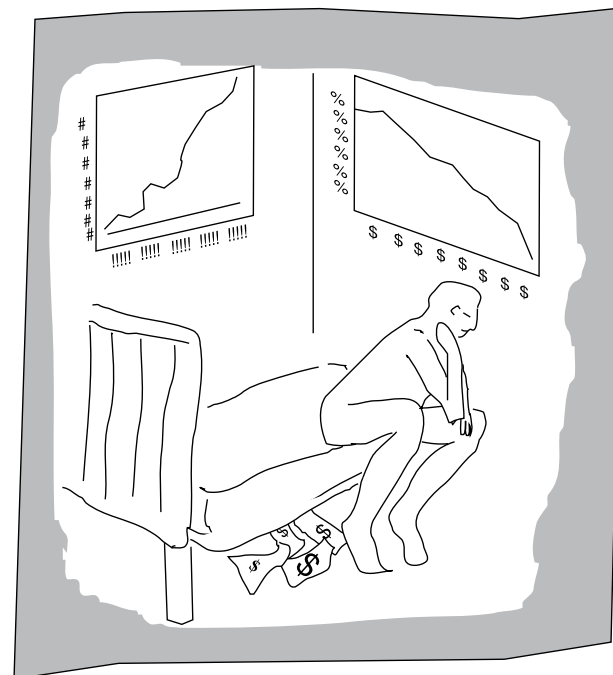
We thank Ms. Farrar for identifying several significant behaviors and belief systems, which are obstacles to achieving population control. Her numerous professional experiences with people affected by these behaviors and belief systems have made Ms. Farrar a valuable resource for population control issues. Consequently, we hope that in a future letter or article she provides readers with some insights that could be used to develop *humane* strategies to mitigate or overcome these obstacles to achieving population control.

Louis & Margaret DeMott-Feldman  
Modesto

Today, one in five Americans is unemployed, underemployed or just plain out of work. One in nine families can't make the minimum payment on their credit cards. One in eight mortgages is in default or foreclosure. One in eight Americans is on food stamps. More than 120,000 families are filing for bankruptcy every month. The economic crisis has wiped more than \$5 trillion from pensions and savings, has left family balance sheets upside down, and threatens to put ten million homeowners out on the street.

Elizabeth Warren

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elizabeth-warren/america-without-a-middle\\_b\\_377829.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elizabeth-warren/america-without-a-middle_b_377829.html)



The Thinker.


JBM © January 2010

#### In Memoriam

Alice Dora Caulkins Melugin

November 22, 1909 — December 10, 2009

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of Lesbians and Gays

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Helpline: 527-0776  
[www.pflagmodesto.org](http://www.pflagmodesto.org)

Visit the **Oakdale** satellite  
Meetings on

3rd Wednesdays from 7-9 pm  
"Golden Oaks" Conference Room  
Oak Valley Medical Building  
1425 West "H" St.  
[pflagoakdale@dishmail.net](mailto:pflagoakdale@dishmail.net)

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Photos and ADS should be submitted as high-resolution JPEG or TIFF files. Do NOT submit as pdf files if possible.

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# World's religious leaders mourn the Obama escalation in Afghanistan

By RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

Many of the world's religious leaders in attendance at the Parliament of World Religions taking place in Melbourne, Australia are in partial mourning for the dream of a new world that President Obama promised, and decisively torpedoed in his announcement of major escalation of military forces in Afghanistan. While the conference sessions have officially ignored current political developments, the hallways are filled with heated discussions of the widespread disillusionment with Obama.

For political activists, the issue of Afghan escalation is primarily framed in terms of Obama's failure to learn the lessons of Vietnam: one cannot win a war against a population that has

been fighting for many decades for its own independence. No matter what America's stated war aims, the people of Afghanistan perceive the American military presence as generating far more violence and destruction than they faced before the U.S. got involved.

For feminists anxious to protect the rights of women, the capitulation to Islamic fundamentalism in its treatment and denial of rights to women by the current Afghani government which

America is pledged to support undermines any picture of the US actually providing a long-term strategy that would defend women's rights.

And for working and poor people in the US who are told that serious health care reform would not only hurt the interests of the health insurance corporations and the medical profiteers (poor dears!) but also increase the deficit at a time when it must be reduced, the willingness to put hundreds of billions of dollars into war making with the deficit suddenly forgotten makes many wonder about distorted priorities once again.

For the religious leaders of the world assembled in Melbourne Australia for the Parliament, all these issues are quite salient. Yet what comes most directly to mind for many is the fundamental warp in the Obama Administration's understanding of what could actually succeed in providing homeland security.

One reason many global religious leaders celebrated the outcome of the 2008 election was the perception fostered by the Obama campaign that the new President really understood that militarism and the use of force to achieve American objectives should be relegated to the dustbin of history, at least until every non-violent strategy has been exhaustively tried. We believed we had heard a clear message that Obama recognized the need to end global poverty and the suffering it has generated as the first step that must be given time to work before military options are embraced.

That approach was given teeth by the vice chair of the Progressive Caucus of the House of Representatives, Keith Ellison, who has worked with the Network of Spiritual Progressives to develop a Domestic and Global Marshall Plan (DGMP). The DGMP would have the US take the leadership in bringing the advanced industrial societies of the world to commit 1-2% of their Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty to once and for all end global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education inadequate health care, and to repair the global environment.

It seemed obvious to religious leaders that the meltdown of the global economy and the obvious role played by the ethos of selfishness and materialism presented the new President with a once in a lifetime opportunity to remake the global economy in ways that would redistribute wealth to the poor, thereby generating the very consumer demands that could

rebuild the global marketplace by taking the monies that were not being spent and putting it in the hands of those whose immediate needs for food, clothing, housing and basic material needs would generate a global economic revival and end unemployment.

But the only way that could happen would be for the Obama Administration to have put its full energy behind a new approach to homeland security. Obama would have had to teach Americans that lasting security could come from generosity, whereas the strategy of domination of others had proved futile and a guaranteed loser.

Even when Obama started pouring trillions into the hands of Wall Street banks and investment firms there was still a hope in the religious world that he would remain faithful to the peace-oriented insights he had articulated during his campaign.


No wonder then that the global religious leaders convening in Melbourne are expressing dismay to each other. They have long known what Obama seems not yet to have absorbed in a serious way: that **the path to peace must be a path of peace**, and that *you cannot bomb and kill your way to security*. This simple insight is the one thing shared by most of the world's religious traditions, and it is to testify to the path of peace that thousands of religious leaders are assembled here to affirm a truth that Obama and the world must take seriously.

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3. Join the Network of Spiritual Progressives: [www.spiritualprogressives.org](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org)

Rabbi Michael Lerner is chair of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, editor of *Tikkun Magazine* [www.tikkun.org](http://www.tikkun.org), chair of the Network of Spiritual Progressives [www.spiritualprogressives.org](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org), and rabbi of Beyt Tikkun Synagogue in San Francisco, California. He is the author of 11 books, most recently *The Left Hand of God* (Harper San Francisco, 2006).

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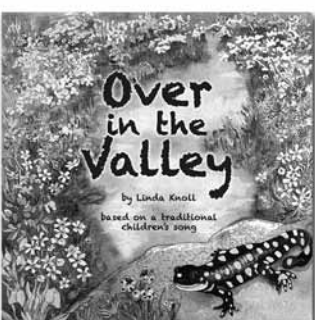
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