

Cornel West on MLK Jr.: Catastrophe and Revolution

By KRISTINA CHEW

Last August, just as the new Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial was to be unveiled on the National Mall and in the wake of the debt-ceiling debacle, philosopher Cornel West wrote a New York Times op-ed, "Dr. King Weeps From His Grave."* West excoriated President Barack Obama and his administration for failing to address this country's truly pressing issues of poverty and economic injustice:

The age of Obama has fallen tragically short of fulfilling King's prophetic legacy. Instead of articulating a radical democratic vision and fighting for homeowners, workers and poor people in the form of mortgage relief, jobs and investment in education, infrastructure and housing, the administration gave us bailouts for banks, record profits for Wall Street and giant budget cuts on the backs of the vulnerable.

In the absence of such a vision, of a "King-worthy narrative to reinvigorate poor and working people," West wrote that "right-wing populists" had seized the moment to push through tax cuts while advancing

"ridiculous claims" about how these would spur economic growth. He called for what King himself would have, for "revolution," for something other than the majestic marble monument created to honor King.

That monument was both lauded and criticized at its unveiling. Some five months later, a quotation carved in the marble is being changed. The inscription currently reads "I was a drum major for justice, peace and righteousness" and is a much-shortened version of King's words in a sermon known as the "Drum Major Instinct," in which he told his Atlanta congregation how he would like to be remembered at his funeral. Poet Maya Angelou said that the shortened version of the quote made King sound like an "arrogant twit." These are King's own words:

"Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter."

King made the speech in February 1968, two months before his assassination in Memphis, Tennessee. Looking at the com-

plete version, I'm hard-pressed to see how the shortened version — utterly lacking King's characteristic rolling cadences — could have been offered as a quotation. There can be no substitutes for his own powerful words.

An even more significant change has occurred in the past five months since West wrote that "King weeps from his grave." Back in August, this is how West described the revolution the needed to happen:

...a revolution in our priorities, a re-evaluation of our values, a reinvigoration of our public life and a fundamental transformation of our way of thinking and living that promotes a transfer of power from oligarchs and plutocrats to everyday people and ordinary citizens.

West's words now seem prophetic. A national sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo of rising inequality between the haves and the have-nots helped to fuel the Occupy protests that began last fall and continue even now in the cold of winter. The revolution that West spoke of has become real, not merely rhetoric.

The question remains, how to keep it real? How can we create real change in lives of the the 99 percent, while adhering to King's legacy of non-violent, peaceful protest in the name of social justice, economic justice and an equal place at the table for all?

Just over a week ago, I was fortunate to hear West speak. I was at an academic conference for professors of Classics, of the ancient Mediterranean world of the Greeks and Romans, in Philadelphia. Such a venue may seem like an unusual one to hear West — a political theologian who practices what he preaches — speak; it is the case that I (and he himself) were among the few persons of color at the conference. West had been invited to speak on a panel about "Race and Reception" in which two recent books were featured, one about African American writers and the classical tradition and the other entitled Afro-Greeks, on Anglophone Caribbean literature. West spoke about Socrates and about why he

Modesto Peace/Life Center Annual Meeting SATURDAY, FEB. 25, 2012 PEACE/LIFE CENTER 720 13th ST., MODESTO

8:30 AM

— Coffee and Conversation

9:00 AM

— Business Meeting:

- Financial Report
- Committee Reports
- Election of Board Members

— Discussion:

- Occupy group and our relationship
- Finances, fundraising, austerity, moving
- Action plans, ideas and strategies

12:30 PM

— Adjournment

Help make our community and world a more peaceful and equitable place. Please join us!

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"The juxtaposition between our national leaders and our local leaders has never been more stark. On a national level, we're paralyzed and polarized — and the chance, at least for the foreseeable future, that any innovative thinking or meaningful change will be coming out of Washington seems laughable. That's why I believe the solutions the country is so desperately looking for are going to come at the local level — from our mayors and engaged citizens working with their communities. It's our cities, not the nation's capital, that are the real idea factory of our country. It's from any house on your street not the House of Representatives where projects that will make your community a better place to live in are more likely to surface."

— Arianna Huffington,
January 17, 2012

"Playing For Change" to play in Santa Cruz

The ground-breaking group, Playing For Change, will perform at the Rio Theatre, 1205 Soquel Ave. in Santa Cruz, on Friday, March 9 at 8.00 p.m.

What began as a PBS documentary with the lofty goal of fostering hope and inspiration through music has now become a worldwide phenomenon. Inspired by the passion and energy of street musician Roger Ridley's rendition of "Stand by Me," Grammy award winning producer Mark Johnson set out across the globe on one of the most incredible journeys in modern music: Playing For Change.

Johnson traveled the world, recording and filming street musicians of different faiths, backgrounds, and ethnicities, then blended their contributions into one unified and moving performance. Many of these artists would never actually meet, but their talents and passion were brought together in song. The final product aired as a documentary on PBS called "Playing For Change: Peace Through Music" and went viral on YouTube, with PFC's "Stand By Me" video reaching well over 20 million views.

A collection of musicians from the documentary came together for a live performance at the 2009 SXSW festival as the Playing For Change Band. The group's fervent delivery of blues, gospel, reggae and Afropop led to an amazing run of sold out shows, moving audiences worldwide and earning them a remarkable debut on Billboard's Top 10 with Playing For Change - Songs Around The World.

PFC continues in their mission to inspire, connect, and bring peace through music.

Info: www.imnworld.com/playingforchange

Advance Tickets: \$15/\$18 at the door. Available online only at: www.ticketweb.com (all tickets subject to an additional 5% city tax). Map of the Rio Theatre's location at: <http://riotheatre.com/images/riomap.pdf>

Daniel Ellsberg to deliver 11th Annual Kelly Lecture

Daniel Ellsberg, nuclear strategy expert and whistleblower who leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971, will deliver the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's 11th Annual Frank K. Kelly Lecture on Humanity's Future in Santa Barbara on Thursday, February 23 at 7:00 p.m. at the Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St., Santa Barbara. The event is free and open to the public. The lecture is entitled "Nuclear Weapons and Humanity's Future."

Information: Visit <http://www.wagingpeace.org/menu/programs/public-events/frank-kelly-lecture/index.php>

If it's time for Valentines, it's time for Grace Lieberman and Friends

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

Grace Lieberman and Friends, Modesto's Valentine ambassadors, return to Sunday Afternoons at CBS 3 p.m. February 12 at 1705 Sherwood Ave., Modesto.

Grace, a California Arts Council outstanding arts director award winner, will be joined for this popular annual concert by Dr. Joseph Wiggett, music professor at California State University Stanislaus and artistic director for the Townsend Opera Players, as well as local musical luminaries Greg Pyatt, Michelle Richardson, Jacob Bronson, Aaron Gallington and Ashlyn Inman.

There is always room for a surprise guest or two, and of course, Grace's hand done Valentines and a yummy high tea intermission.

ACTION: Tickets (\$20 adults, \$15 students and seniors, \$7 children, \$5 discount per ticket for groups of 10 adults, students and/or seniors) are available by calling 571-6060. More at www.cbsmodesto.org/concerts about the 20th Anniversary Season series and more.



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Sierra Club and Audubon Society offer scholarships

By ELAINE GORMAN

The local Yokuts group of the Sierra Club and Stanislaus Audubon Society are offering two \$500.00 scholarships for fall 2012. High school seniors and continuing college students may apply. The Donna Durham Memorial Scholarship and the Bob Corey/Paul Illick Memorial Scholarship honor former members of the Sierra Club and Audubon Society.

These scholarships are offered to students currently working on a conservation or environmental project/activity, or have worked on one in the past, and who are also residents of Stanislaus County or attend school in Stanislaus County.

Besides submitting an application, qualified students must submit a short essay. Postmarked deadline for submissions is March 31, 2012.

Information is available through high school counseling offices, Modesto Junior College, UC Merced, or CSU Stanislaus. The applications will also be available on our website at <http://motherlode.sierraclub.org/yokuts>

30th Peace Camp/ Reunion June 22-24

Our 30th annual Peace Camp will take place Friday, June 22- Sunday, June 24, 2012 at Camp Peaceful Pines on Clark Fork Rd. off Hwy. 108, in the Sierras.

We especially invite past campers who attended when they were young and those who have not come for a while. Join us for the nature, community, good food, hiking, stars, creek and river, singing and campfire, talent show, yoga, recreation and workshops.

Registration forms can be printed out from www.stanislausconnections.org and mailed in.

stanislaus
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a suggested donation of \$25.00/yr.

Prison Project – Note Of Appreciation

“On behalf of the Inmate Family Council, I would like to extend thanks to all the fine people who helped make our holiday gift bag program for the ladies at the Central California’s Women’s Facility such a huge success. We appreciate all the help in the gathering of gift bag items for the more than 3000 inmates. I only wish that everyone could witness what joy these gifts bring to the women at CCWF. It makes a year of hard work worthwhile.

Thank you all so very much!”

Sheila Shaubach, Chair
Inmate Family Council

NOTE: Collecting items for the gift bags is a year-round effort. Please save travel/sample sizes of the following: soap, shampoo, conditioner, skin/body lotion, toothpaste and tissue. There’s also a need for adult size toothbrushes (individually wrapped), full size wood pencils with erasers, and unused greeting cards with envelopes. Bring items to the Modesto Peace/Life Center office, 720 13th St., Modesto. Before going to the Center, contact Shelly (521-6304), shellys833@aol.com. To donate in Merced, contact Dave Hetland, (388-1608).

Are you going to the Occupy Solidarity Social Forum?

By SHELLY SCRIBNER

On February 18th to 19th there will be an Occupy meeting with all Occupys invited to come to Olympia, Washington for the Occupy Solidarity Social Forum. It is a good chance to catch up, get ideas and meet the people who want a better U.S.A.

I know the people who are organizing the meeting. They continue to work for justice, not only here, but globally. They care, and to meet them you would know this.

If you are interested in going, I would like to know. There will be shuttles from the airport in Seattle, and there is a possibility of having some cars on AMTRAK.

The cost for registration is \$25.00 but no one will be turned away.

ACTION: Register at <http://occupyolympia.org/ossf-2012/>. Participants: Be prepared for tent camping or sleeping on church basement floors. Subject to funding availability, travel subsidies will be offered for participants from existing Occupations. You can contribute to the travel fund go to: http://afgj.org/?page_id=1777.

Contact Shelly Scribner at shellys833@aol.com

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Local artist scheduling school visits

Stanislaus County artist and teacher, Linda Knoll, is available for presentations of her popular children’s book, “Over in the Valley.” The presentation includes sharing her picture book, information about the book-making process, as well as the natural science that is featured in the story. Students learn about the habitats and animals of the San Joaquin Valley and get to create a watercolor painting during the 1-hour session. The presentation is most appropriate for students in Kinder to 3rd grade. Signed copies of the book will be available for purchase.

Knoll’s self-published picture book is an exquisitely illustrated snapshot of Valley wildlife. Linda adapted the story from the traditional song “Over in the Meadow,” handed down for generations by her family members. She modified the song to reflect species that are native to the San Joaquin Valley, and produced the watercolor illustrations.

Linda’s illustrations include the California Red Legged Frog, the San Joaquin Pocket Mouse, Bell’s Vireo, Rainbow

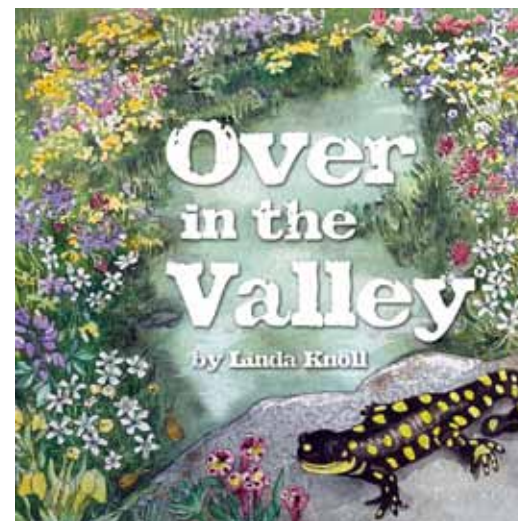
Trout, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Western Pond Turtle, Lange’s Metalmark Butterfly, and many other species. Many live in the unique habitats of the rivers, riparian forest and seasonal wetlands that are rapidly disappearing from the valley, or being altered for other purposes.

“Sometimes we forget how important all these creatures are to the environment,” Linda says. “All the way up and down the food chain, each plays an important role in the natural treasure that is the San Joaquin Valley.”

Linda is a traveling teacher for the Great Valley Museum, as well as a STARS artist for the Stanislaus Arts Council. She is a credentialed teacher and previously taught library information skills and art in local public schools. [ed. note: Linda is also the layout

editor for Stanislaus Connections.]

For information or to schedule a presentation, visit <http://web.me.com/llknoll>, phone Linda Knoll at 209-247-2626 or email llknoll@sbcglobal.net.



The future is now! Electric automobiles come to Modesto

By GEORGE BAKER

Think Green! Gasoline prices have topped \$4.00 in the recent past and some projections have them reaching near \$5.00 within the next year. President Obama, like every President since Nixon, has recognized the need for energy independence as a matter of national security. Yet, we continue to rely on foreign oil as our primary transportation fuel source. You can make a difference.

Industry projections are that by 2015, there will be over a million electric vehicles in the United States, and California will be leading the nation. You might expect that cities like San Francisco or Los Angeles would be the leaders in the environmental technology, but the Central Valley is staking its claim to a position of leadership as well.

DIY Electric Motors, Next Rides Automotive and EcoClassic Automobiles are carving out a position, alongside Mitsubishi Motors, Chevrolet and Nissan, in the Electric Automobile business, and taking it one step further.

Where Chevrolet, Mitsubishi and Nissan are happy to sell you their vehicles, DIY Electric is willing to teach you how to take the car you currently have and convert it into an electric. Next Rides will do the conversion for you, and EcoClassics will create a classic vehicle, suitable for inclusion in the next “Modesto Graffiti Cruise Parade,” for you.

These local businesses, owned and operated by local entrepreneur Louise Baker, with help from her son, Derek Baker, husband, George Baker, and long time electric car owner and teacher, Mike Parker, will begin conducting a series of classes about electric cars, motorcycles and bicycles. Mike Parker, the head program instructor, has been teaching these classes for 19 years.

The first class is a 1 day class on electric vehicle basics, the next is a three day option on the basics PLUS components and construction, and the final class is a 10 day, hands on workshop in which an electric vehicle will be built.

ACTION: More information: visit www.DIYElectricMotors.com or www.NextRides.com contact Derek Baker, 209-872-0092.



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Fitting it all in

JENIFER WEST

I didn't set out to grow most of our food. Or cook it from scratch. Or preserve it. It all just sort of evolved, out of a determination to take control of our food supply, save money and get out of a culinary rut. The goal, originally, was to accumulate a bit of food against "a rainy day." And when I realized that it would be extremely expensive to accomplish that by purchasing foods that someone else (namely the big food conglomerates) prepared for us, I started looking into other options, doing a little creative thinking.

I already knew how to can, at the level of salsa, pickles and jam. So I did some research, acquired some equipment, learned a little more, bought more equipment, put some seeds into the ground... The net result, three years later, is a larder stocked with foods I've put up myself, homemade bread and fresh-from-the-garden salad on the table, and a good supply of "shortcuts" (pressure cookers, home-canned sauces, an ever-expanding selection of "go to" recipes...) to streamline my efforts in the kitchen.

The ladies at work tease me about what I manage to accomplish. But I have a secret weapon – or, more accurately, a lack thereof: we don't own a television. Actually, I take that back – when we moved into our new house recently, the old 50-pound, foot-&-a-half-thick TV/VCR combination on which we used to watch our semi-annual movie didn't accompany us – we simply didn't have room for it. We already owned an inexpensive little DVD player, and I found a brand spankin' new, 32-inch LED flat screen for almost nothing at one of the big box stores. So now we can watch our very occasional DVD in vivid color – and the thing fits nicely behind one of the easy chairs in the living room, out of sight and out of the way until it's pressed into service.

In my humble opinion, the average person spends way too much time in front of "the tube" (interesting that we still call it that, long after the last television set with an actual picture tube rolled off the assembly line), and the results of that are insidious and pervasive. Most people, I suspect, are addicted to television. I can say that with conviction because of the shocked reaction we invariably get when folks find out we aren't glued to it every night: "How can you do that?!" and, "I can't even imagine life without tv!"; even more tellingly, "I wish I could do that!"; and, finally, "What do you do?"

The answer to the last question, of course, is easy: Cook dinner and enjoy it as a family, grind flour for bread, write, plan the next plantings for the garden (and, if the mood strikes, work in that same garden), research whatever topic is of interest at a given moment, walk the dogs, work on an art project, read, pet the cat, e-mail friends and family, work on a community service project, plan the next week's dinner menus...

To accomplish the latter, I use a loose combination of what-we-have-on-hand and whatever's-on-sale. If nothing in the Wednesday circular appeals, we always have something in the freezer, or the pantry, to fall back on. I make it a point to try to use up whatever's on hand and in danger of becoming a science project, and to do so in as many different ways as possible. For example, I dug up some potatoes on Christmas Eve. Not a huge crop, but enough that it was worth the effort it had taken, back in September, to put them into the ground. (Interestingly, when I've grown them in the spring, the tubers are always spread around the plant. This time, they were all

clinging closely to the central root, as if huddled against the cold.) And we still have a few buttercup squash, harvested from the vines that flourished all summer. So lately our dinner menus have included homemade potato chips, variations on a "pumpkin" soup theme, and a rainbow of the cutest little potatoes imaginable.

Because we're eating as much as possible from the yard, I've gradually drifted away from the confines of conventional thinking about meal components: protein, starch, maybe a veggie, & salad. These days, I tend to build meals around whatever's most abundantly on hand, or needs

to be used up, and so long as the day's meals collectively end up more or less balanced, it's all good. For example, I needed to use up the last of some fried chicken I'd made for our Christmas dinner (not exactly traditional Christmas fare maybe, but boneless, skinless chicken breasts were on sale, and I was in the mood to get out the cast iron...). So I went online for some inspiration, and ended up making tortilla soup. I might even have added a bit of cubed squash to it, if it had occurred to me. That's the key, I think – learning to loosen up from the conventional approach to cooking, and life in general, and making use of whatever presents itself.

Getting creative, in other words, which really does allow one to "fit it all in".

Gardeners note: It's not too late to start tomato, pepper and eggplant seeds – choose a location near a sunny window indoors. And you can still plant beets, carrots, peas, radishes, Swiss chard, shallots and potatoes. Happy Gardening!



"George Orwell had warned six decades ago that the corrosion of language goes hand in hand with the corruption of democracy. If he were around today, he would remind us that 'like the rattling of a stick inside a swill bucket,' this kind of propaganda engenders a 'protective stupidity' almost impossible for facts to penetrate. But you, my colleagues, can't give up. If you do, there's no chance any public memory of everyday truths - the tangible, touchable, palpable realities so vital to democracy - will survive. We would be left to the mercy of the agitated amnesiacs who 'make' their own reality, as one of them boasted at the time America invaded Iraq, in order to maintain their hold on the public mind and the levers of power."

Bill Moyers



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AL-KHALIL (HEBRON) REFLECTION: Welcoming the enemy

By MICHAEL MCRAY

"CPT! CPT! Come, come! The soldiers have a man!" Her voice startled me. Jean, Rosie, and I had been on afternoon patrol, but I had lagged behind to look at a few shops in Hebron's Old City. Though I did not know the woman requesting my presence, she knew who I was because of my red hat and gray vest bearing the Christian Peacemaker Team logo. I was alone, inexperienced in the field.

Four soldiers stood in a semicircle next to a wall. One was pointing a gun at a Palestinian man; another had the Palestinian's green identification (ID) card and was radioing his headquarters to check the ID. They do this from time to time—randomly check the IDs of passersby. As far as I can tell, no rationale exists for their method of choosing whom to check; the superior gives the command to check IDs, so they check IDs. For the soldiers, the agenda of the Palestinian or timeframe are not important. If a soldier wants to check an ID, then the Palestinian must stand there and wait. This man was not even crossing a checkpoint. He was walking through the Old City like everyone else.

"Why are you holding this man," I said to one of the soldiers in the middle. "What did he do?" No answer. "Why do you need to check his ID?" The soldier looked up at my eyes, with seeming disdain, but said nothing. I turned to the man pointing the gun at the detainee. "Why are you pointing a gun at him? What did he do?" Still no response.

I began photographing and videoing with shaking hands. I had never before confronted someone carrying an automatic

weapon, much less six people. After only a few minutes, however, the ID cleared, and the soldiers released the Palestinian.

Trailing them by only a few feet, I followed them as they walked in two lines, three to a line, and seemed to be practicing some kind of drill. Periodically, a couple would lift their rifles up, briefly taking aim at houses above, or down alleyways.

As they approached the end of the Old City, one of the soldiers in the back turned and quickly pointed the barrel of his weapon into an elderly man's shop. The store owner sat out in front, his head just beneath the level of the gun's barrel. He simply looked up at the soldiers passing his shop, bowed his head, lifted up his hand, palm upwards, and said, "Ahlan wasahlan (you are most welcome)." His response so caught me off guard I laughed out loud. Here was an Israeli soldier, a member of the military occupying this Palestinian man's land, who walked the streets of Hebron to protect the Jewish settlers who were illegally taking more and more land from this man and his people. In short, there walked his enemy.

And this Muslim man extended his hand in humble invitation. Resistance.



from page 1

Cornel West on MLK Jr.: Catastrophe and Revolution

himself turns often to the Greeks because they are a "people sensitive to catastrophe."

Catastrophe is a topic West has often spoken of and one that speaks powerfully to many of us in a time of economic downturn and political paralysis. In his August op-ed, West had written of the four catastrophes King himself had identified: militarism ("an imperial catastrophe that has produced a military-industrial complex and national security state"); materialism ("a spiritual catastrophe, promoted by a corporate media multiplex and a culture industry that have hardened the hearts of hard-core consumers"); racism ("a moral catastrophe, most graphically seen in the prison industrial complex and targeted police surveillance in black and brown ghettos rendered invisible in public discourse"); poverty ("an economic catastrophe, inseparable from the power of greedy oligarchs and avaricious plutocrats indifferent to the misery of poor children, elderly citizens and working people").

Certainly we are no near anything like a solution or even a partial remedy to any of these catastrophes. Yet, after re-reading West's words from back in August and after hearing him speak about what the ancient Greeks can still teach us, I felt both overwhelmed and hopeful. I could not help but think that, fifty years ago, the idea of him — an African American philosopher — speaking to a room full of scholarly erudites more used to learned exchanges about Egyptian papyri and the role of the military tribune in the late Roman Republic and now numbering among them some classicists of color — that such a scene would have been considered not simply inconceivable, but impossible and even absurd.

It goes without saying that there is much more to do to create a just and equal world for all individuals of all races, ethnicities, genders, religions, socio-economic classes, disabilities. In remembering Martin Luther King, Jr., perhaps a fitting way to honor his vision is to acknowledge how far the civil rights movement has come, even as we recognize how much we have to do to claw our way out of the catastrophes that face us now and to create a world in which the voices of "everyday and ordinary citizens" are heard and harkened to, in which King's words are not chiseled (incorrectly) into stone but enacted by us in the sometimes glorious, sometimes heartbreaking struggle of our daily lives.

* http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/26/opinion/martin-luther-king-jr-would-want-a-revolution-not-a-memorial.html?_r=1

Kristina Chew teaches ancient Greek, Latin and Classics at Saint Peter's College in New Jersey.

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10 reasons the U.S. is no longer the land of the free

By JONATHAN TURLEY

Below is today's column in the Sunday Washington Post. The column addresses how the continued rollbacks on civil liberties in the United States conflicts with the view of the country as the land of the free. If we are going to adopt Chinese legal principles, we should at least have the integrity to adopt one Chinese proverb: "The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their right names." We seem as a country to be in denial as to the implications of these laws and policies. Whether we are viewed as a free country with authoritarian inclinations or an authoritarian nation with free aspirations (or some other hybrid definition), we are clearly not what we once were.

Every year, the State Department issues reports on individual rights in other countries, monitoring the passage of restrictive laws and regulations around the world. Iran, for example, has been criticized for denying fair public trials and limiting privacy, while Russia has been taken to task for undermining due process. Other countries have been condemned for the use of secret evidence and torture.

Even as we pass judgment on countries we consider unfree, Americans remain confident that any definition of a free nation must include their own — the land of free. Yet, the laws and practices of the land should shake that confidence. In the decade since Sept. 11, 2001, this country has comprehensively reduced civil liberties in the name of an expanded security state. The most recent example of this was the National Defense Authorization Act, signed Dec. 31, which allows for the indefinite detention of citizens. At what point does the reduction of individual rights in our country change how we define ourselves?

While each new national security power Washington has embraced was controversial when enacted, they are often discussed in isolation. But they don't operate in isolation. They form a mosaic of powers under which our country could be considered, at least in part, authoritarian. Americans often proclaim our nation as a symbol of freedom to the world while dismissing nations such as Cuba and China as categorically unfree. Yet, objectively, we may be only half right. Those countries do lack basic individual rights such as due process, placing them outside any reasonable definition of "free," but the United States now has much more in common with such regimes than anyone may like to admit.

These countries also have constitutions that purport to guarantee freedoms and rights. But their governments have broad discretion in denying those rights and few real avenues

for challenges by citizens — precisely the problem with the new laws in this country.

The list of powers acquired by the U.S. government since 9/11 puts us in rather troubling company.

Assassination of U.S. citizens

President Obama has claimed, as President George W. Bush did before him, the right to order the killing of any citizen considered a terrorist or an abettor of terrorism. Last year, he approved the killing of U.S. citizen Anwar al-Awlaqi and another citizen under this claimed inherent authority. Last month, administration officials affirmed that power, stating that the president can order the assassination of any citizen whom he considers allied with terrorists. (Nations such as Nigeria, Iran and Syria have been routinely criticized for extrajudicial killings of enemies of the state.)

Indefinite detention

Under the law signed last month, terrorism suspects are to be held by the military; the president also has the authority to indefinitely detain citizens accused of terrorism. While Sen. Carl Levin insisted the bill followed existing law "whatever the law is," the Senate specifically rejected an amendment that would exempt citizens and the Administration has opposed efforts to challenge such authority in federal court. The Administration continues to claim the right to strip citizens of legal protections based on its sole discretion. (China recently codified a more limited detention law for its citizens, while countries such as Cambodia have been singled out by the United States for "prolonged detention.")

Arbitrary justice

The president now decides whether a person will receive a trial in the federal courts or in a military tribunal, a system that has been ridiculed around the world for lacking basic due process protections. Bush claimed this authority in 2001, and Obama has continued the practice. (Egypt and China have been denounced for maintaining separate military justice systems for selected defendants, including civilians.)

Warrantless searches

The president may now order warrantless surveillance, including a new capability to force companies and organizations to turn over information on citizens' finances, communications and associations. Bush acquired this sweeping power under the Patriot Act in 2001, and in 2011, Obama extended the power, including searches of everything from business documents to library records. The government can use "national security letters" to demand, without probable cause, that organizations turn over information on citizens — and order them not to reveal the disclosure to the affected party. (Saudi Arabia and Pakistan operate under laws that allow the government to engage in widespread discretionary surveillance.)

Secret evidence

The government now routinely uses secret evidence to detain individuals and employs secret evidence in federal and military courts. It also forces the dismissal of cases against the United States by simply filing declarations that the cases

would make the government reveal classified information that would harm national security — a claim made in a variety of privacy lawsuits and largely accepted by federal judges without question. Even legal opinions, cited as the basis for the government's actions under the Bush and Obama administrations, have been classified. This allows the government to claim secret legal arguments to support secret proceedings using secret evidence. In addition, some cases never make it to court at all. The federal courts routinely deny constitutional challenges to policies and programs under a narrow definition of standing to bring a case.

War crimes

The world clamored for prosecutions of those responsible for waterboarding terrorism suspects during the Bush administration, but the Obama administration said in 2009 that it would not allow CIA employees to be investigated or prosecuted for such actions. This gutted not just treaty obligations but the Nuremberg principles of international law. When courts in countries such as Spain moved to investigate Bush officials for war crimes, the Obama administration reportedly urged foreign officials not to allow such cases to proceed, despite the fact that the United States has long claimed the same authority with regard to alleged war criminals in other countries. (Various nations have resisted investigations of officials accused of war crimes and torture. Some, such as Serbia and Chile, eventually relented to comply with international law; countries that have denied independent investigations include Iran, Syria and China.)

Secret court

The government has increased its use of the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which has expanded its secret warrants to include individuals deemed to be aiding or abetting hostile foreign governments or organizations. In 2011, Obama renewed these powers, including allowing secret searches of individuals who are not part of an identifiable terrorist group. The administration has asserted the right to ignore congressional limits on such surveillance. (Pakistan places national security surveillance under the unchecked powers of the military or intelligence services.)

Immunity from judicial review

Like the Bush administration, the Obama administration has successfully pushed for immunity for companies that assist in warrantless surveillance of citizens, blocking the ability of citizens to challenge the violation of privacy. (Similarly, China has maintained sweeping immunity claims both inside and outside the country and routinely blocks lawsuits against private companies.)

Continual monitoring of citizens

The Obama administration has successfully defended its claim that it can use GPS devices to monitor every move of targeted citizens without securing any court order or review. It is not defending the power before the Supreme Court — a power described by Justice Anthony Kennedy as "Orwellian." (Saudi Arabia has installed massive public surveillance systems, while Cuba is notorious for active monitoring of selected citizens.)



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Extraordinary renditions

The government now has the ability to transfer both citizens and noncitizens to another country under a system known as extraordinary rendition, which has been denounced as using other countries, such as Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan, to torture suspects. The Obama administration says it is not continuing the abuses of this practice under Bush, but it insists on the unfettered right to order such transfers — including the possible transfer of U.S. citizens.

These new laws have come with an infusion of money into an expanded security system on the state and federal levels, including more public surveillance cameras, tens of thousands of security personnel and a massive expansion of a terrorist-chasing bureaucracy.

Some politicians shrug and say these increased powers are merely a response to the times we live in. Thus, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) could declare in an interview last spring without objection that “free speech is a great idea, but we’re in a war.” Of course, terrorism will never “surrender” and end this particular “war.”

Other politicians rationalize that, while such powers may exist, it really comes down to how they are used. This is a common response by liberals who cannot bring themselves to denounce Obama as they did Bush. Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), for instance, has insisted that Congress is not making any decision on indefinite detention: “That is a decision which we leave where it belongs — in the executive branch.”

And in a signing statement with the defense authorization bill, Obama said he does not intend to use the latest power to indefinitely imprison citizens. Yet, he still accepted the power as a sort of regretful autocrat.

An authoritarian nation is defined not just by the use of authoritarian powers, but by the ability to use them. If a president can take away your freedom or your life on his own authority, all rights become little more than a discretionary grant subject to executive will.

The framers lived under autocratic rule and understood this danger better than we do. James Madison famously warned that we needed a system that did not depend on the good intentions or motivations of our rulers: “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.”

Benjamin Franklin was more direct. In 1787, a Mrs. Powel confronted Franklin after the signing of the Constitution and asked, “Well, Doctor, what have we got — a republic or a monarchy?” His response was a bit chilling: “A republic, Madam, if you can keep it.”

Since 9/11, we have created the very government the framers feared: a government with sweeping and largely unchecked powers resting on the hope that they will be used wisely.

The indefinite-detention provision in the defense authorization bill seemed to many civil libertarians like a betrayal by Obama. While the president had promised to veto the law over that provision, Levin, a sponsor of the bill, disclosed on the Senate floor that it was in fact the White House that

approved the removal of any exception for citizens from indefinite detention.

Dishonesty from politicians is nothing new for Americans. The real question is whether we are lying to ourselves when we call this country the land of the free.

Jonathan Turley is the Shapiro professor of public interest law at George Washington University.

Washington Post (Sunday) January 15, 2012

From: <http://jonathanturley.org/2012/01/15/10-reasons-the-u-s-is-no-longer-the-land-of-the-free/>

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First they came for the communists,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist.

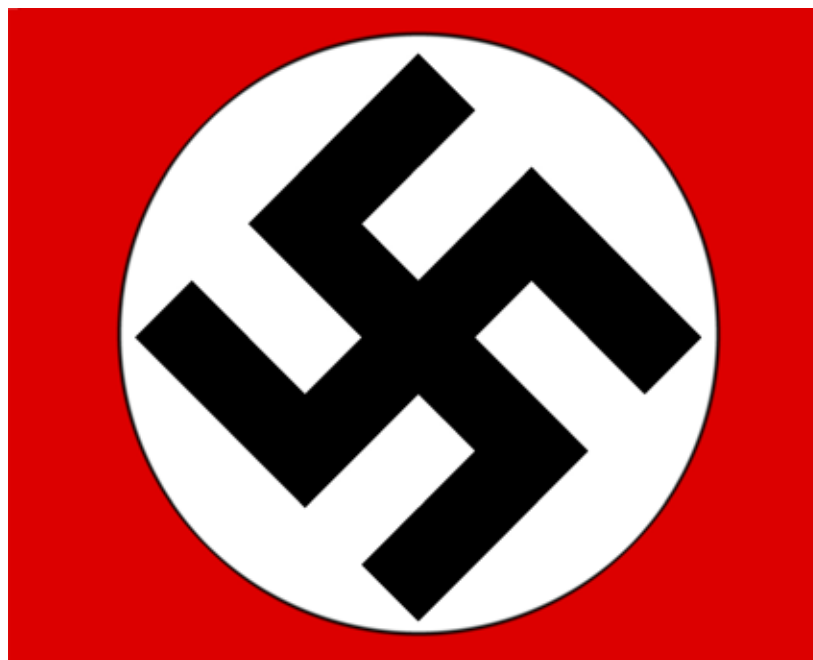
Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the Catholics,
and I didn't speak out because I was Protestant.

Then they came for me
and there was no one left to speak out for me.

— Martin Niemöller (1892–1984)



NDAA: Congress signed its own arrest warrants

From Naomi Wolf's Blog

Responding to the Senate's overwhelming passage of the 'Homeland Battlefield' bill, Ms. Wolf first published this piece on December 12, 2011. However, her argument took on new relevance over the weekend when President Obama used the media blackout of the holiday season to quietly sign the bill during a vacation in Hawaii. - JPS/RSN

I never thought I would have to write this: but - incredibly - Congress has now passed the National Defense Appropriations Act, with Amendment 1031, which allows for the military detention of American citizens. The amendment is so loosely worded that any American citizen could be held without due process. The language of this bill can be read to assure Americans that they can challenge their detention - but most people do not realize what this means: at Guantanamo and in other military prisons, one's lawyer's calls are monitored, witnesses for one's defense are not allowed to testify, and one can be forced into nudity and isolation. Incredibly, ninety-three Senators voted to support this bill and now most of Congress: a roster of names that will live in infamy in the history of our nation, and never be expunged from the dark column of the history books.

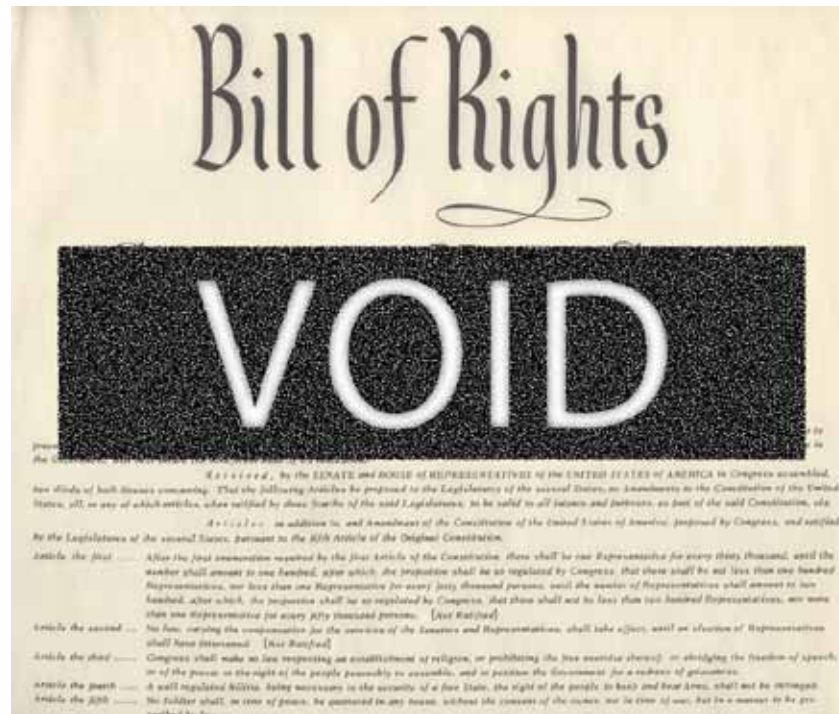
They may have supported this bill because - although it's hard to believe - they think the military will only arrest active members of Al Qaida; or maybe, less naively, they believe that 'at most', low-level dissenting figures, activists, or troublesome protesters might be subjected to military arrest. But they are forgetting something critical: history shows that those who signed this bill will soon be subject to arrest themselves.

Our leaders appear to be supporting this bill thinking that they will always be what they are now, in the fading light of a once-great democracy - those civilian leaders who safely and securely sit in freedom and DIRECT the military. In inhabiting this bubble, which their own actions are about to destroy, they are cocooned by an arrogance of power, placing their own security in jeopardy by their own hands, and ignoring history and its inevitable laws. The moment this bill becomes law, though Congress is accustomed, in a weak democracy, to being the ones who direct and control the military, the power roles will reverse: Congress will no longer be directing and in charge of the military: rather, the military will be directing and in charge of individual Congressional leaders, as well as in charge of everyone else - as any Parliamentarian in any society who handed this power over to the military can attest.

Perhaps Congress assumes that it will always only be 'they' who are targeted for arrest and military detention: but sadly, Parliamentary leaders are the first to face pressure, threats, arrest and even violence when the military obtains the power to make civilian arrests and hold civilians in military facilities

without due process. There is no exception to this rule. Just as I traveled the country four years ago warning against the introduction of torture and secret prisons - and confidently offering a hundred thousand dollar reward to anyone who could name a nation that allowed torture of the 'other' that did

'other.' Who was most at risk from assassination or arrest and torture, after show trials, in Stalin's Russia? Yes, journalists, editors and dissidents: but also physically endangered, and often arrested by militarized police and tortured or worse, were senior members of the Politburo who had fallen out of favor.



not eventually turn this abuse on its own citizens - (confident because I knew there was no such place) - so today I warn that one cannot name a nation that gave the military the power to make civilian arrests and hold citizens in military detention, that did not almost at once turn that power almost against members of that nation's own political ruling class. This makes sense - the obverse sense of a democracy, in which power protects you; political power endangers you in a militarized police state: the more powerful a political leader is, the more can be gained in a militarized police state by pressuring, threatening or even arresting him or her.

Mussolini, who created the modern template for fascism, was a duly elected official when he started to direct paramilitary forces against Italian citizens: yes, he sent the Blackshirts to beat up journalists, editors, and union leaders; but where did these militarized groups appear most dramatically and terrifyingly, snapping at last the fragile hold of Italian democracy? In the halls of the Italian Parliament. Whom did they physically attack and intimidate? Mussolini's former colleagues in Parliament - as they sat, just as our Congress is doing, peacefully deliberating and debating the laws. Whom did Hitler's Brownshirts arrest in the first wave of mass arrests in 1933? Yes, journalists, union leaders and editors; but they also targeted local and regional political leaders and dragged them off to secret prisons and to torture that the rest of society had turned a blind eye to when it had been directed at the

Is this intimidation and arrest by the military a vestige of the past? Hardly. We forget in America that all over the world there are militarized societies in which shells of democracy are propped up - in which Parliament meets regularly and elections are held, but the generals are really in charge, just as the Egyptian military is proposing with upcoming elections and the Constitution itself. That is exactly what will take place if Congress gives the power of arrest and detention to the military: and in those societies if a given political leader does not please the generals, he or she is in physical danger or subjected to military arrest. Whom did John Perkins, author of Confessions of an Economic Hit Man, say he was directed to intimidate and threaten when he worked as a 'jackal', putting pressure on the leadership in authoritarian countries? Latin American parliamentarians who were in the position to decide the laws that affected the well-being of his corporate clients. Who is under house arrest by the military in Myanmar? The political leader of the opposition to the military junta. Malalai Joya is

an Afghani parliamentarian who has run afoul of the military and has to sleep in a different venue every night - for her own safety. An on, and on, in police states - that is, countries with military detention of civilians - that America is about to join.

US Congresspeople and Senators may think that their power protects them from the treacherous wording of Amendments 1031 and 1032: but their arrogance is leading them to a blindness that is suicidal. The moment they sign this NDAA into law, history shows that they themselves and their staff are the most physically endangered by it. They will immediately become, not the masters of the great might of the United States military, but its subjects and even, if history is any guide - and every single outcome of ramping up police state powers, unfortunately, that I have warned for years that history points to, has come to pass - sadly but inevitably, its very first targets.

<http://naomiwolf.org/2011/12/how-congress-is-signing-its-own-arrest-warrants-in-the-ndaa-citizen-arrest-bill/>



ANGER

(In memory of our daughter Chandra Levy and all other victims of crime.)

ANGER oozing out of my vessels. My hands are tied.
Cannot create the forward movements for truth and justice.
Tell me nothing nothing but the heartbreak the whole heartbreak
in the law of man's menacing mercy.
I cry helpless in the work that needs to be done.
Oh so alone!
Who is MIRANDA anyhow?

HEARTBREAK BROKEN SOLITARY

I still sit...wait...wait in silence
for the checker pieces to move.
Are all the players that have been lost in this dark dense wave watching the pieces for what the next moves will be made?

MIRANDA

Missing Intern
Resting
Arbitrary
Nothingness
DEATH
ANGER

Anger like dander or danger. WATCH Out for lies or is it the manifestation of lice that eats upon the tree of life.
Caught, caught in the web, somewhere in the threads are the entanglements of the souls.
They implore: Let me go! Finish!
No! Just waiting like fish and the fisherman to be caught in the hook. Only to be let off and thrown back to the seas of sharks.

MIRANDA YOU HAVE THE RIGHT OF HEARTBREAK IN A COURT OF LAW.
MIRANDA YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO TRIAL BY A JURY.
MIRANDA YOU HAVE THE RIGHT FOR THAT TEN CENT CALL...OR DID THAT FALL to the inflationary mall...?

Ode to the American Dream

An Ode to the American Dream
It has run out of steam
Cashing into debts
So many pockets empty...so many tears

No new taxes was the mantra
The jobs and security melody
Never reaching a crescendo
America has now imploded

As we bring back our soldiers
Watch this failed American Dream unfold
Empty dreams and promises tell
A story I never thought would be told

The Zoo in My Back Yard

I want a Bush Hog to tie up in my back yard with a record telling him to go out and shop after two buildings and thousands of lives were lost. I want the Red and Blue Wilde Beasts to play out challenges in the mud pit of a cage with the WWF fighters tossing their words and promises in the back yard cage.

I want to have the Chaney Bird chirping for all the people that his flock doesn't feed.
Its a zoo land for the politicians; they get fed regularly...are housed in clean quarters...create a stimulus package for all their needs that might not have been met.
Beware of the lions and sharks in the menagerie of Politicians,
The Animals are always hungry and can never get enough.

THE BLOG

What comes first, the blogger or the blog?
The blog is hard wired to the blogger.
While the bloggic is only hard wired to the great blogger in the sky. How do we know where the blog ends and begins?
What are the margins and boundaries of Bloggerville?
Who intercepts the most important blogs of all?
Are they part of the blogger intellect...
B...L...O...G...G...I...N...G...into infinity.....?

SUE LEVY: A Poet From the Heart

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

Sue Levy, member of the MeterMaids women's poetry writing group, writes from the heart. Her very intense life experiences have taken her around the world and through more than one tragic personal experience, landing her in a place of spiritual and social generosity and insight. Creativity, horsemanship and community volunteerism have been her stock in trade.

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, she grew up in Arizona and New Mexico, and graduated from Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Art Education. As an art educator, she was the catalyst and founding member of Modesto's Yes You Can Children's Art Museum, taught art in elementary schools, at the JCC and Potters Co-op in Cleveland, with the Stanislaus Arts Council STARS program, and shared art classes at the Havasupi Reservation during her husband's, Dr. Robert Levy, community service medicine rotation with the Walapi.

An avid horsewoman and outdoors enthusiast, she has volunteered with Hold Your Horses as a lead walker for handicapped children and taught horseback riding at a local children's camp. Her long history of community outreach includes membership as a cadet in the Civil Air Patrol. She also worked in Cystic Fibrosis Research at the Rainbow Babies' and Children's Hospital in Cleveland. As an American Red Cross volunteer, she worked with the Disaster Assessment Team to assess flood property damage in Stanislaus County and with 9-11

and California earthquake victim disaster relief. She has been instrumental in the collection and distribution of clothing and food through Inter-Faith Ministries, has worked as an intake volunteer with the local food bank, and has spoken many times at Day of Respect on learning disabilities.

An extensive world traveler, she has traveled to every continent on the planet, and has authored an article about her month-long travels in Southern India for Connections. Here at home she hosted several international exchange students through the Cultural Homestay Institute.

A co-founder of Wings of Protection, an advocacy and support group for victims of missing people, she served as a victim advocate for ten years and has earned recognition from the California Police Officers Association and the Sund Carrington Foundation. Mary Anne Liebert, publisher of "Woman Based Gender in Medicine", honored her as key-

note speaker at a Conference for Woman Physicians in South Carolina where she was awarded The Criterion Award for her work to bring public attention to the plight of women threatened by violence and abuse. She was also a speaker for the National Crime Victim Law Institute last year in Portland, Oregon.

She has served on the board of Modesto Community Concert Association, as a volunteer for the Sunday Afternoons at CBS concert series, and with her son, Adam's, Eagle Scout work. She takes pride in being the mother of Adam and Chandra Levy and in her "two weiner [dogs], BaBa and Sammy."



Green tips for a green planet: Green Patriotism and Love

By **TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL**

This is the month to commemorate love and patriotism, and what better way than GREEN? How can we show our green love of country, self and Mother Earth? Let us count the ways...

Always respect yourself and others.

Make homemade Valentines.

Eat fresh and organic foods.

Reuse and recycle to make old fashioned valentines.

Integrate a new green habit into your world.

Carry reusable bags into stores and remember to use them.

Accept responsibility for greening your world.

Talk up green love and green patriotism.

Harbour kind and loving thoughts and actions.

Engender green habits in your children.

Buy locally, buy green.

Expect the best from yourself.

Allow time for green transportation.

Utter words of peace.

Tackle those paper and recycling piles.

Institute a green project at home or your kids' school.

Find time to dream.

Understand how you can live a green life.

Love being green.

Mulch your garden and yard.

Opt for green choices.

Take time to appreciate and nurture America the Beautiful.

Help with community gardens and other green projects.

Expect green activism of yourself.

Respect our Mother Earth's beauty and strive to keep her healthy.

Enjoy a walk or bike ride along the Virginia Corridor, Dry Creek or the Tuolumne River.

Arrange a wildflower or home garden Valentine bouquet.

Remember YOU, by yourself and in collaboration with others, CAN Make a Difference.

Travel to Eco-friendly places and learn how the locals nurture our world.

Help yourself and others by practicing green patriotism and green love.

Green Love your Mother Earth and America the Beautiful!



**MAKE A
Difference.**

Even in 2012...

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It was hard for your child to tell you, too
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Helpline

209-527-0776

Meetings:

1st & 3rd Tuesdays 7-9 PM

Emanuel Lutheran Church

324 College Ave., Modesto

info@pflagmodesto.org

3rd Wednesday 7-9 PM

1425 West "H" St., Oakdale

pflagoakdale@dishmail.net



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Music: a balm to the soul

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

All of us, regardless of our political leanings, social habits, or beliefs seek a sense of inner quietude. Peace of mind: a sense that we inhabit the world in a way that does not create intense or frequent conflict in our minds or with the people around us.

Some of us step out of our comfort zones and participate in efforts that we feel improve the world and spread our points of view. Doing good and achieving peace of mind at the same time. We participate in politics by walking precincts, making calls, writing editorials, and attending rallies. We champion social causes and donate time, talent, and money to efforts that improve the lives of people in our community who are less fortunate than we are.

Some of us ensconce ourselves in family and friends, preferring to manage a smaller sphere of influence. We focus on care for our children, take solace in deep friendships, and help our parents as we all grow older.

Some of us find peace of mind in worship or spiritual endeavors. We live a life of faith and service and we find peace in the idea that an absolute force for good in the world exists; that God forgives, protects, and redeems us.

Some of us delve deeply into work. Being important to our coworkers and colleagues or earning a significant income tells us in very concrete terms where we belong and how well we are performing. We seek out opportunities to prove ourselves to ourselves and to each other.



Some of us do all of these things concurrently. Some of us do all of them consecutively. Some of us do only one of these things, and we find ourselves in need of an outlet when that one, or those two, things fail to provide solace.

Such is music, a balm to the soul after a hard day at work. As William Congreve wrote in 1697,

*Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast
To soften rocks or bend a knotted oak.*

But for many of us, music is not just a song on the radio, a tune on the mp3 player, or a concert performance—it is an endeavor, an activity that presents us to the world, provides us access to new people, places, and new experiences.

Performing music increases a musician's peace of mind in at least three ways:



- 1) The act of playing music creates the sympathetic vibrations that reach the heart in a quicker and more direct way than simply speaking.
- 2) Performing a piece, a song, or a whole show provides the musician with a sense of satisfaction if the performance goes well.
- 3) Sending music into the world as part of a performance or even at a jam creates a sense of a shared experience between the musicians and the audience.

But even among musicians, peace of mind comes from different places and through different experiences. My friends, Tim Lechuga and Gary Vessel, achieve a musical serenity in different ways.

Tim uses music as both a direct path to spirituality and a means of communicating that spirituality to his audience. Indeed, the music itself uses lyrical chants and musical phrase repetition to allow the performer and the audience both achieve a state of mind that is open and relaxed: peaceful. But playing with him can be an exercise in control. I love that there are people in the audience whose outward appearance can best be described as “blissed out” and I want to go there too. But I can't. My job in Tim's band, MahaShakti, is to serve the music, so my satisfaction must come from the more conventional rewards.

Gary Vessel is perhaps one of the finest luthiers in America. He lives and works here in the Modesto area, and he plays

mandolin in a local Bluegrass band called Red Dog Ash. What interests me about making musical instruments is the sort of enhanced or doubled effect he must get from knowing not only that can he get peace of mind from playing music, but he can get it from building things that he and other people use to make music. The violins, cellos, and double basses Gary builds are played in symphony orchestras around the world. The mandolins Gary crafts are spread equally wide, or maybe more numerous. He has a hand, literally, in the music that people make and hear. This is on top of the fact that he plays a mandolin he built in the Bluegrass band he helped found.

The three of us, Tim, Gary, and I, like all of you, seek peace of mind. In our case (and maybe yours too) we seek it through music. Our success at achieving this inner peace contributes in a material way (as does everyone's) to a greater sense of peace in the community and in the world.

Tim and I have different spiritual beliefs, and I love Tim for the person he is, regardless. Gary and I have different political beliefs, and I love Gary for the person he is. I am not so sure I would be able to write or say the preceding two sentences were it not for the inner calm I feel when I play music (with or without them). And I'm pretty sure we would never have known each other were it not for the act of making music as a common endeavor.

Thus I write about my musical comings and goings in order to communicate the way I achieve a sense of peace. I write about making music because I want you to know that, among the myriad ways we can all contribute to a peaceful planet, I have found one that works for me. Maybe in knowing how it works for me (what it looks like when it's happening, where it takes me, and whom I meet) you can see how what you do works toward contributing to a peaceful world.

