



stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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Andrew Young inspires in Modesto

By **DAN ONORATO**

Amid the audience's eager applause, he ascended the stairs to the stage slowly. Then with determination in his aging pace, he approached the easy chair at center stage and faced the enthusiastic crowd that nearly packed the Modesto Junior College auditorium. He'd flown from Atlanta to give his keynote address for Modesto's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration. He was in no hurry to start. "How should I address him?" I'd asked his associate Sam Bacote after joining Jim Costello at the DoubleTree Hotel that afternoon to welcome this Civil Rights legend to Modesto. Sam chuckled, "He likes us to call him Granddaddy!" Yea, I thought, as I watched the 84 year old Ambassador Andrew Young make himself comfortable in what quickly looked like his favorite living room chair. From that moment on, he felt like a grandfather sharing his thoughts with younger people whose lives and future he cared about. And we, his audience—for an all too fleeting hour—we felt welcomed into his intimate conversation like eager students absorbing his stories and his wisdom.

Here are some highlights, not verbatim — "As I watched the pre-program video streaming quotations from Dr. King, I went back to the places and situations in which Martin said them. How pleased he'd be that in programs like this he's so alive in our lives. His words, his life, his sacrifice continue to inspire us. He died, yes, but death is not the end. We're still lifting his quotations and still trying to live by them."

Martin gave us a blue print. He went to Birmingham in 1963 because he'd been persuaded by Fred Shuttlesworth, an activist minister of that city, that he could make a difference. Five years later he agreed to go to

Memphis to march with garbage workers for a decent wage. He didn't want to be the priest or Levite who ignored the injured man on the side of the road. He sensed he could be killed, but he knew his death would mean a new level of freedom for all people. From 1955 when he accepted his role as spokesperson for the Civil Rights Movement till his death in 1968, he always had a word of hope and love that quelled our fears and stirred our faith. He had said often, "Give up love of wealth and the fear of death. We need the courage to stand up for a good cause." Then Young paused, intently gazing at us his listeners and aware of our current national realities, and asked, "What are you going to do about your own freedom?"

I have some concern about the widespread emotional reaction to Donald Trump's election. I understand people are angry and frustrated, but anger produces only stalemates. The 1963 Birmingham campaign was not successful mainly because of the reaction to the police use of attack dogs and fire hoses against us, but because we took time to write out and explain our understanding of the problems we faced as Black people and then to state clearly what we wanted to achieve. The power of our nonviolence was in our boycott of downtown businesses to bring about desegregation. For 90 days Black citizens refused to buy anything but food and medicine. We were determined not to finance our own oppression. We knew that if we could affect business profits, business owners come around to our reasoning. We learned that when you keep your mind clear and you stay cool, your mind is your most powerful weapon. We have to think through a complex problem and then simplify our explanation so everyone can understand. So don't get mad. Get smart!



About the election, we need to ask, what are the people, the Trump supporters, saying to us? We may not yet understand clearly. We need more time for clarity. But we have to challenge policies rooted in superficial thinking. A wall along the U.S. - Mexican border, for example. Half of our southern border faces the Caribbean. That proposal also involves a major change in our long-held espousal of welcoming immigrants and refugees. We must remember what Martin said in this regard: "Scientific and technological change has turned our world into a neighbor-

hood. Now we must develop the spiritual and moral capacity to turn that neighborhood into a brotherhood." Our times are calling us to think through issues in a new way.

When we think of slavery we think of people bound by metal chains. But in today's slavery, plastic enslaves us—plastic credit cards, more specifically, the debt they make it so easy for us to be enslaved by. People need to learn how to use them, to move from a credit score of 500 to 700. We must face the issue of poverty and how credit cards add to it. Student debt now amounts to 1.3 trillion dollars. We need debt-free education. That's why I promote community colleges. (Needless to say, on this last point, applause was animated.)

You ask what King would have us do? He would have us free ourselves from every

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MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER ANNUAL MEETING

**SATURDAY MARCH 11, 2017
720 13th ST., MODESTO**

8:30 AM — Coffee and Conversation

9:00 AM — Business Meeting:

- Financial Report
- Committee Reports
- Nomination of Board Members
- Discussion:
- Action plans, ideas and strategies

12:00 PM — Adjournment

For 47 years the Modesto Peace/Life Center has been a meeting place for people concerned about peace, justice, equality, a sustainable environment, education and working for a more peaceful community and world. Please join us!

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Exploring Whiteness & Showing Up For Racial Justice

Does the culture of Whiteness feel like a sickness in your soul? Do you wonder how white folks can more effectively do the work of fighting racism and oppression in our community? Then join Rev. Darcy Baxter and Rev. Wayne Bridegroom for Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), a national network of local groups dedicated to organizing white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability.

This group will initially focus on building relationships and developing an understanding of the "soul-sickness" of Whiteness. For more information, check out: <https://www.facebook.com/events/247655549018387/>

Exploring Whiteness & Showing Up For Racial Justice Meetings, Fourth Tuesday of the Month, 7:00 p.m., Central Grace Hmong Alliance Church, 918 Sierra Dr., Modesto.

To learn more about the national group Showing Up For Racial Justice, visit <http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/>. To learn more about Rev. Darcy, visit www.stanuu.org. To learn more about Rev. Wayne, check out: <http://www.modbee.com/latest-news/article3159985.html>



Modesto Peace/Life Center Film Series Presents "Makers: Women Who Make America"

Since March is Women's History month, we will be showing two episodes of "Makers: Women Who Make America" on Wednesday, March 15 at 6:30 p.m.

Please join us for this special event and bring your praise and celebration for accomplished and accomplishing women of all backgrounds.

Look forward to seeing you there!

Modesto Peace/Life Center, 720 13th St., Modesto.

More information: <http://www.makers.com/documentary/womenwhomakeamerica>



Come to the 35th annual Peace Camp, June 23-35

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's 35th annual Peace Camp in the Sierra will take place on June 23-25, 2017 at Camp Peaceful Pines on Clark Fork Rd. off Hwy 108. We'll enjoy a weekend of workshops, good food, hikes, campfires, singing, crafts, talent show, star walk, recreation, and stimulating people of all ages in a beautiful mountain setting. Families and individuals are welcome. Register early for a discount.

This year we will explore the theme of the **Creative Arts and Social Consciousness**. Artist and muralist **Barbara Carrasco** from Los Angeles will present a Saturday workshop. From *Ms. Magazine*: "Carrasco is a painter who has produced large-scale public murals and monumental banners for the United Farm Workers, yet is equally recognized for her diminutive ballpoint pen-and-ink drawings. True to her generation of artists, she visually navigates the struggles for social justice that informed her era, as well as the complexities of identity politics... While concerned with the plight of oppressed women, Carrasco has also celebrated strong

women, women who have changed the world, role models. Her 1999 homage to her friend, labor organizer and human rights activist Dolores Huerta, has become an iconic representation of perhaps the most important Chicana activist of our time... Carrasco has been fearless in her visual discourse on cultural and gender identity, activism, spirituality, religion and the female body. We can rest assured that her future work will continue to prod and entertain us with its thoughtful, articulate mix of aesthetics and politics."

Peace Camp is held at Camp Peaceful Pines, located on Clark Fork Road off Hwy. 108 in the Stanislaus National Forest and features kitchen and bathroom facilities, rustic cabins and platform tents and a cabin for those with special needs. Depending on the number of campers, cabins may be shared. Campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and other work.

The camp fee covers program, food and lodging for the weekend. Adults are \$75 before May 1, \$80 before June 5 and \$85 after June 5. Young people 18 and under are \$55 before May 1, \$60 before June 6 and \$65 after June 6. Ages 3 and under free. Minors under 18 need to be accompanied by an adult. Partial scholarships and day rates are also available. Donations for scholarships are appreciated. The camp opens with supper at 6:00pm on Friday and closes after the morning workshop on Sunday. Directions and other information will be provided to participants before camp.

Registration forms are available online at www.stanislaus-connections.org and www.peacelifecenter.org

Information: Ken Schroeder, 209-480-4576, kschroeder70@yahoo.com

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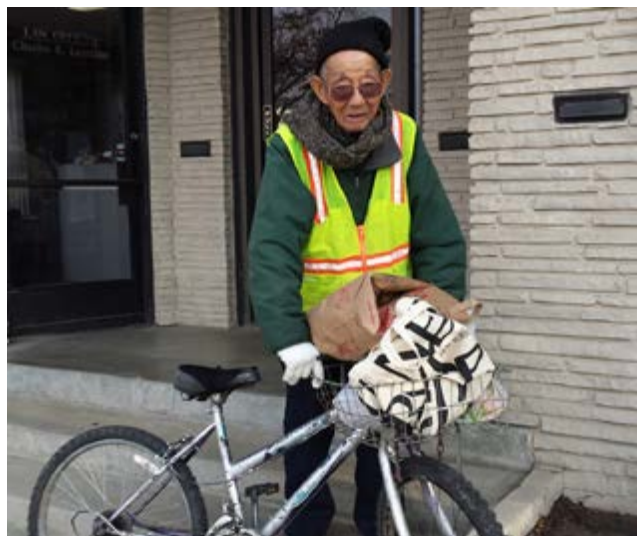
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At over 80 years old, Pat Noda is our oldest, dedicated *Stanislaus Connections* distributor. Won't you join him?

We need volunteer distributors to place our informative newspaper in places of business around Modesto and the County. If you know of a store that might be receptive to our publication where you could deliver copies each month, please contact Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org

A tale of refugees

"In 1938, Rufus Jones, George Walton, and Robert Yarnall followed a shared leading to Germany to meet with the German SS about releasing Jews. Because Friends had initiated a massive feeding program in Germany after World War I, they had reason to hope the Germans would believe in their good will.

The three men said they had come "to inquire in the most friendly manner whether there is anything we can do to promote life ... and to relieve suffering." After hearing their requests, the SS officers left the room to confer. The three Americans bowed their head "and entered upon a time of deep, quiet meditation and prayer" while they waited for the officers to return. Later they learned that their room had been bugged and their "silence" had confirmed the earnestness of their mission.

They were then told that they could proceed with their work of Jewish evacuation and that other Quaker representatives would be permitted to travel unhindered throughout Germany and Austria to implement their purpose. In the U.S., the entire mission was seen as a breakthrough... The Quakers received a grant to finance the work of a new team of Quakers to be sent to Germany, and plans were drafted for camp to house refugees receiving visas to the U.S. But the plans were never realized because American politicians decided not to accept the refugees."

From *Quakers & Nazis: Inner Light In Outer Darkness* by Hans A. Schmitt

Thoughts on how to live during the Trump administration

By ROB SCHAEFFER, PH.D.

As we emerge from the shock of the election, replete with future fear and past regret, these thoughts came: to broaden our perspective, to narrow our perspective, and to maintain our perspective – for me, associated with four of the prime traditional Lakota virtues.

Broaden our perspective (based on *wahwala*, humility)

Broaden our perspective to take in the Larger Picture of which the present catastrophe, while still catastrophic, is only one part. *Han Wanbli* (Eagle Vision) – It is Eagle who flies the highest, sees the furthest, views life from the widest perspective.

Dr. King: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

Hamlet: "There are more things in heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Integral philosopher Ken Wilber: There is an arrow to the evolution of consciousness, a direction – but it is not a straight line. There are advances from hope, retreats from fear. But hope "trumps" fear, so it is not a vicious circle but rather an upward spiral: like the smoke from *canupa wakan*, the sacred

pipe, which swirls around, sometimes upward, sometimes downward, but eventually rises.

Narrow our perspective (based on *wacautognaka*, generosity)

Narrow our perspective to open our eyes to life's immediacies – seeing the beauty and the suffering, the opportunity and the humor, which every day presents in every encounter.

Continue to walk the earth in a good way, to help others, to express kindness, remembering that everything counts – that in the highest and deepest sense each of us is at the center of the universe, each of us is of incomparable importance.

Remembering too that in the fullness of time, it is not determined who has the greatest impact on the world – she who helps, he who receives help, a conqueror of nations, the composer of an anonymous melody, a girl writing a diary while hiding from the Gestapo, or a swinger of birches.

The *I Ching*, classic Chinese "Book of Changes": "When there is a good Emperor, enjoy the moonlight and serve tea to strangers. When there is a bad Emperor, enjoy the moonlight and serve tea to strangers."

Maintain our perspective (based on *woohitika*, principled courage, and on *wowacintanka*, perseverance)

Maintain our perspective to not allow the victories of the opposition to breed discouragement. Resist autocracy, resist fascism, and start planning now for the next election.

Fight in a good way, following the principles of non-violence, but fight. Honor the French Resistance. Walk in the footsteps of all to whom has fallen the task of keeping the candle burning through even the longest and darkest night.

Respect the good intentions of those who say "heal the divide" and "come together," but do not follow them. Accommodation is folly with a psychopath who will lie in office as he has lied in his campaign. Fight skillfully, fight resolutely, fight non-violently, but fight.

Take heart that a majority of our fellow citizens and voters have said they believe there's climate change, they believe women should be paid the same as men, they want a debt-free college education, they don't want us invading countries, they want a raise in the minimum wage and they want a single-payer true universal health care system. Take heart that none of that has changed.

Let "We Shall Overcome" bring you peace at night, but let "Which Side Are You On" and "We Shall Not Be Moved" give you fortitude each morning.

Michael Moore has some guidelines at <https://www.facebook.com/mmflint/posts/10153913074756857>

Dr. Schaeffer is a clinical psychologist practicing in Modesto.

Film: Revolution: New Art For A New World

On March 8, The State Theatre is hosting a special screening of *Revolution: New Art for a New World* to celebrate and champion the role of artists in creating a better world. Several local human rights and arts organizations will have tables in the lobby for a reception starting at 6 and an after-event at 8:30 p.m. The organizations include Modesto Peace/Life Center, Modesto Art Museum, Progressive Voice, Modesto Stanislaus Poetry Center, and Modesto Artist Salon.

In light of the recent announcement that the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities may be eliminated, this film and the series of performing and fine arts films to follow are more important than ever in bringing awareness to the vital role the arts play in building, shaping and defining our culture.

Revolution, a film of exceptional insight and beauty, is being presented at select art houses and cultural institutions on the exact centennial of the start of the Russian Revolution in 1917. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Margy Kinmonth, *Revolution* is a bold and exciting feature documentary that draws on the collections of major Russian institutions, contributions from contemporary artists, curators and performers and personal testimony from the descendants of those involved. Above all, it brings the artists of the Russian Avant-Garde to life. Some of the works of art have been locked away for many years, so the documentary provides an exclusive look at works of Russian Avant-Garde art that many have never seen.

Reception 6:00 pm, Wed., March 8th, program starts at 7 p.m., post movie event, 8:30 p.m., \$10.

<http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/828>

Be informed!

Read the Valley Citizen at
<http://thevalleycitizen.com>

All Good Things Must End

By JENIFER WEST

It has been a privilege to contribute to *Stanislaus Connections* for the past several years. Being both a serious learner and a writer, the *Connections* has given me a wonderful outlet for whatever I happened to be learning/experiencing at a given time. Fortunately, much of that has fit neatly into the focus of this column; the editor was kind enough to include it even when it did not. I sincerely hope that something I've contributed, somewhere along the way, has helped someone else.

It is with mixed emotions that I write this final column. The good news is, my change of circumstance can serve as proof to anyone considering making a late-in-life career change that it is, in fact possible. And not only is it possible, with some soul searching, dedication, and effort, those of us who are, shall we say, wiser (read, 'old', LOL) can find or create the second careers in which we will, hopefully, find true fulfillment by doing what we love. I'm about to begin a second career, as a reporter for our local newspaper (not the *Modesto Bee*). It seems a good omen that my first assignment will be to cover a demonstration in support of peace, on the grounds of the oldest and most-loved building in town.

I leave the *Connections* at a time when its message of peace and living in harmony is more important than ever. Thank goodness for the Modesto Peace/Life Center, and the good work the folks there have done for many years. We plan to continue to support their efforts, and encourage you to encourage your children, and your grandchildren to do the same.

Ed. Note: We wish Jenifer well and will miss her wise and witty columns!

Science on Screen: FREE science education series: Reconstructing a Rabies Epidemic: Byte by Byte

Presented by Monica Borucki, PhD
and Jonathan Allen, PhD

The State Theatre and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) partner to bring a series of four, cutting-edge science presentations to Modesto's historic State Theatre. Students can spend, at no cost whatsoever, four afternoons learning from LLNL scientists plus each student will have an opportunity to earn extra classroom credits, receive LLNL swag, and help win \$500 to be used for equipment for their school's science program. Come and learn in a fun, entertaining and dynamic environment in which parents and teachers are also welcome to attend at no charge.

Film: Contagion (PG13 (2011), 1 Hr. 46 Min. (Digital) follows the rapid progress of a lethal airborne virus that kills within days. As the fast-moving epidemic grows, the worldwide medical community races to find a cure and control the panic that spreads faster than the virus itself. At the same time, ordinary people struggle to survive in a society coming apart. **Saturday, March 18, 2:30 p.m.**, <http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/833>

How The Other Half Banks, 2016, Mehrsa Baradaran

Book Review by Name Withheld

Towering, national, corporate banks were not always the dominant monoliths that they are today. But as 'big-banks' edged out their local, community-lending competitors, lower-income clients, whom they no longer banked, had nowhere to go but to a growing payday lending industry (Baradaran 8). Chronicling this history of banking, Mehrsa Baradaran's *How The Other Half Banks* begins by reviewing key founding-father concerns about federal banking and its relation to power and goes on to describe big banking's near-total abandonment of the non-rich, non-corporate public. She reviews current banking practices and suggests alternatives that may very well provide credit opportunities – opportunities to live and thrive – for all.

Banking, in her view, has long been bound up with morality, democracy, and opportunity. Importantly, Baradaran explains that the under-banking of the poor is, in part, bound up with a deep-seated but misguided moral conceit: that the 'poor' are unable to bank themselves, and they cannot handle or manage their finances, not to mention complex financial services (Baradaran 115, 119). Likewise, she shows how a landscape once covered by community banks concerned with the banking needs of its local inhabitants was eventually supplanted by that of a concentrated, centralized system of a few national banks. This trend was the direct result of increasingly-deregulated industrial and market forces, fierce cost-cutting competition, and decisions to systematically bank only debtors seen as lucrative (Baradaran 7, 53, 57, 64). This trend, enabled by financial deregulation, dried up easily-accessible credit sources for the hard-of-luck, and fueled the payday-lending industry, which has since unscrupulously and predatorily banked those abandoned by mainstream banks (Baradaran 8). She observes these unwinding and seemingly-irreversible trends as indicative of a troubling development in our democracy, one that strikes at its egalitarian tenets and especially the notion that, if we work hard, we may each have the resources necessary to live fulfilling lives. In the place of banks that have failed and neglected most of us, she suggests that we re-create a public option in banking, returning to the roots of what, in large part, gave rise to our democracy and the strength of America in general: the Post Office (Baradaran 9).

Postal Banking could bank those willfully abandoned by big banks and usuriously exploited by fringe lenders. This high-interest industry, while serving a market need, preys upon desperate citizens in complicated financial situations:

those grappling for the rescuing ropes of credit only find the entrapping chains of endless cycles of debt, exorbitant interest-payments and hidden fees (Baradaran 10). Given this reality, she urges us to consider Postal Banking as an alternative. Not only had it been a success in the United States in the earlier part of the century and had contributed to our victory in Europe; it is also widely practiced and popular around the world (Baradaran 9). Perhaps most importantly, however, is the fact that we already have the infrastructure to make it a reality, with postal outposts inhabiting even the most remote American corners (Baradaran 9, 205). As private for-profit banks and their payday-lending counterparts continue to abandon the public-at-large in spite of being funded and routinely rescued by it, Postal Banking might well provide a new path to social solvency and equality of access to credit.

Baradaran provides an interesting look into the history of debt in the particulars of the United States as well as a defense of those struggling in poverty, and reminds us of the importance of creating financial opportunity for all. Moreover, she provides us with a meticulously-argued case for why we must do so: it is incumbent upon us to put this idea into action, and what is at stake is the very financing of the American Dream (Baradaran 10).

If you are looking to get involved, visit Campaignforpostalbanking.org or the Campaign for Postal Banking webpage!

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Words

By SARA YAMASAKI

"My dad killed people like you," Bobby Jones yelled.

My five-year-old body twisted into a tight knot. Heat in my stomach travel up my chest and settled in my throat. I kept my head down, blinked hard, and watched the ground—one saddle shoe, then the other, moving me in measured slow motion to kindergarten.

I didn't know what it meant to be killed. Didn't know anyone who had died, hadn't seen death on television, and hadn't even lost a goldfish. But every day, Bobby waited at the bottom of the hill to taunt and follow me to school. As much as I wanted to run, I knew I'd get caught. Bobby was bigger and older than I was. So I listened to the calming sound of gravel underfoot and said nothing, my throat burning, my pace quickening.

Before school one day, my friend Peggy linked arms with me as we walked to school. "This" she said, holding up five fingers, "means we've been alive for five years."

"What's a year?" I asked.

She shrugged.

Later, I learned there were 365 days in a year, that in 1942 America and Japan were at war, that 120,000 Japanese Americans were put into concentration camps, and Bobby's dad really killed people like me.

But in 1960, as I walked to kindergarten, I didn't understand this. I just knew whenever I saw Bobby Jones, my throat burned and my voice disappeared.

"Bobby doesn't know any better," Mom said, pursing her lips and shaking her head. She handed me a freshly made rice ball wrapped in seaweed. As the steaming grains warmed my fingertips, she enveloped me in her arms whispering, "You are safe, Honey. Don't worry. You are safe."

She read me books about bullies, trying to help me get through my day. She taught me to say, "Sticks and stones

will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But they did.

I found the greatest consolation when my mother gave me a new word: "*Ig-nor-ant*." I'd never heard such a long, smart, and powerful word before. When I said it aloud, I breathed more easily. It meant that Bobby Jones didn't understand. He was mean because he hadn't learned any other way to be. Mom didn't tell me that we'd moved into a neighborhood after the covenant that restricted people of color was made illegal. She didn't mention that the previous owners of our house knocked on everyone's door on our street to ask if it would be okay if our family moved in, nor did she say that the new neighbors across Ballinger Way woke up one morning with a cross burning on their lawn.

Not long after learning my new word, I headed off to school with Peggy and braced myself as usual, seeing Bobby Jones waiting at the bottom of the hill. His body towered behind me, stepping on the heels of my shoes. We quickened our pace. But then I got the nerve and turned to face Bobby: "*Ig-nor-ant!* You are *ig-nor-ant*," I shouted into his sneer. "It means you don't understand. You haven't learned any other way!"

Shaking, I noticed this big word hit him with its multi-syllable zing. It was like saying, "Abracadabra," stunning him with its magical, grown up sound, his blue eyes wide, his mouth agape. I turned and walked—one step and then the other—my heart pounding, the rocks crunching, leaving Bobby further and further behind until we rounded the bend out of sight. Then I took off running, my legs flying, knowing Bobby couldn't catch me, knowing that this, at last, was my liberation from being killed: *words*.

I used this word more and more after that. When kids pulled the edges of their eyes into slants saying, "Ching-chong-chinaman. How do you see out of those tiny slits?" I'd say, "You're ignorant! You haven't been taught any other way to think!"

But day after day, year after year, ignorance prevailed with words like, "Go back where you came from!" "Slant eyes! "What's that stuff you're eating?"

I grew accustomed to grown ups asking, "Where did you come from?"

"I was born here."

"But, where did your parents' come from?"

"They were born here, too."

"But, where did your grandparents come from?"

Then I told them they came from Japan, a place neither my parents, nor I had ever visited. Pretty soon I got used to saying, "I was born here, my parents were born here, but my grandparents came from Japan." This became my adjusted way of listening and responding to my classmates, their parents, and my teachers.

Once when I was twelve years old, my sister and I went to the housewares department at the Bon Marche to look for an anniversary gift for our parents. I remember going to the cashier and asking if she could point me to a special platter for appetizers. We planned to make "Pigs in a Blanket" out of Bisquick and serve it on a new platter.

"Did you just come from China?" she asked.



I glared. "No, we were born here."

The cashier looked surprised and added, "I mean, did you just come from the chinaware department?"

Looking back, I understand my readiness to be defensive. Now, years later, I realize I am still afraid of be-

ing killed. Sometimes, without warning, a racist comment is hurled out-of-the-blue, "Go back where you came from!" For a split second, I am ready to run. But where would I go? America is where I'm from. It's where my parents were born. It's where my children were born. In the midst of this comment, I feel trapped, spinning in others' ignorance over and over again.

Comments like these jolt me out of my familiar life with family and friends, eating the foods we love, speaking together without concern. I notice the weariness on our eyes, patience thin in the midst of others' hate. We've all grown up afraid—our only crime being born who we are.

While raising my children, I remember hearing their classmates say similar words other kids used to say to me, "Where did you come from? How do you see out of those tiny slits?" When my daughter came home in tears one day, saying that her classmates made fun of the rice balls I'd put in her lunch, I was shocked. Her classmates were from well-educated, well-traveled families. Rice and toasted seaweed were not that uncommon.

We used to pick fresh seaweed at Alki Beach close to the water's edge. There the nori was cleaner, billowing up like jellyfish, their silkiness distinct to the touch. As people walked by, some asked if I had clams under the seaweed. I told them no, we ate the nori seasoned with soy sauce and sugar.

"Just don't pack that kind of food in her lunch," one mother said when I shared that my daughter was being teased.

I couldn't say a word after that.

Instead, I talked to my daughter's teachers, told them how hard it was for her to be taunted for eating the food she loved. I asked if I could show her class and their parents how to make rice balls by salting their wet palms, pressing the warm grains into a ball, and covering the soft rice in a blanket of seaweed. Very soon, almost every kid in class came to school with rice balls and nori.

Now twenty-five years later, I can find sushi at Safeway. I used to think it only took time to become comfortable with something different and not kill it off. But a few weeks ago, while my grown daughter was walking her dog near her apartment, a man watering his yard suddenly turned his hose on her, shouting, "Go back where you came from!"

Still wet and shaking, she sobbed into the phone, telling me how scared she was. I wanted to shout at this guy, "You are ignorant! You are hateful because you haven't been taught any other way!" But then I realized, I am only repeating the words I learned in kindergarten.

Sara Yamasaki is a recipient of the *Hedgebrook Writing Residency*, has published poetry, articles and essays, and is the founder of the Moving Words Writing Clinic. www.movingwordscclinic.com

<http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/words>

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The Solution To Homelessness

Division I - 1st Place

Stephanie LeQuia

Whitmore Charter School Kelly Hayes

The reasons people become or remain homeless are varied. Statistics show that homelessness is often caused by a tragic event in which the person or family is unequipped to deal with immediate financial costs. This causes them to lose their home and end up on the street. Events that lead to homelessness include, divorce, sudden illness, job loss. Most people do not have adequate savings to get through even a short period of time when a crisis happens. Often people do not have a sufficient support system that they can rely upon for help in a crisis. Also, studies show that of the total number of homeless people in the United States, approximately 1/2 of them suffer from mental health issues. For many people, their only choice is to move to the streets when such a crisis occurs.

Many communities through the United States have programs designed to deal with homelessness. A lot of these programs require the homeless to be willing to seek treatment for their issues or to get a job before they can qualify for services. It seems like this would be a good idea. Yet, newer studies that have taken place in several states, show that requiring people to seek treatment or get jobs before they can qualify for services that can help them, are going about it the wrong way. A ten year study was recently done in Utah. It is believed that their reduction of homelessness is due to a new program called "Housing First". The idea is that if people are provided a safe place to live and given stability in their lives, then they will be more successful in dealing with their other issues which originally cause homelessness. First the homeless are provided a home to live in. Then they are offered services to assist them to getting back on their feet. The studies show that homelessness has gone down by 72% in recent years because of this program.

In my community, I see homelessness all around me. My sister did a study as a college student in which she spent a spring break living on the streets of San Francisco in order to better connect with homeless people and understand their issues. What she learned is exactly what the studies show. Most

homeless people who do not have mental health issues, found themselves on the street because they were not equipped to deal with an immediate crisis. They lacked savings and family support. So it seems logical that support would help them get off the streets.

Since housing is the biggest issue, communities need to provide homeless people a safe place to live. I don't think it would be cost effective to build homes for all of the homeless people and try to keep up on the maintenance of individual homes. But, I do think they need a safe shelter. Something like a pavilion could be set up as a shelter. If you poured a cement slab foundation, with a sturdy roof and cement walls to section the pavilion into smaller family sized rooms to give personal privacy to people, you would have a safe shelter. It would put a roof over a family or individual's head at night and give them a place to stay each night. I think cement is a good material to be used. It would allow for the shelter to be hosed off periodically to keep it sanitary.

In studying homelessness, I can see that a shelter is not the only need. There is also a need for restroom facilities, showers, and a place to eat. All of these things should be provided in close proximity to the shelter so that people have access to provide for basic human needs. Studies in many states have shown that when people are provided with these things, especially near their living area, that they tend to use the services more effectively and it makes a big difference in ending their homelessness.

Medical care is often lacking for homeless people. Especially mental health services. Studies have shown that people often don't use the services that do exist simply because they must travel in order to obtain other services. Because of this difficulty, they often just don't seek out the services they need.

I propose that cities create communities where homeless people are given safe, but simple structures where they can live, and that they be provided with the other services they need within the same community where the housing is provided. This will allow for more people to have stable lives



and make it easier for them to seek treatment for mental health issues.

It seems like all of this would just be unrealistic given the costs of services, and shelters. However, one study in New York showed that the opposite is true. It is actually cheaper to provide people with stable housing, food, basic facilities, and health services than it is to maintain a homeless person who is not provided with these things. It can cost about \$20,000 to maintain one homeless person whose life is unstable, which leads them to bounce back and forth between the streets, the rehab, jail and hospital. The study in New York showed that the cost could be cut to \$8,000 per person per year when people are given basic housing, and provided with access to healthcare, food, facilities and even job training. The statistics show that more people provided with these things will get off of the streets and those who remain there will cost less to the city.

This solution requires a coordinated effort with state, county and city personnel to work closely together in an organized way to bring all of the needed resources to the homeless in a safe environment. The Utah Studies show that this will decrease homelessness and provide a stable environment for people to improve themselves and their own quality of life.

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Andrew Young inspires Modesto

... from page 1

kind of slavery that binds us. Here's a little known fact about Martin: he got a C in public speaking. So don't let other people grade you. That's part of getting yourself free.

My happiest memory of Martin was when he was clowning. To help us deal with our fear of death, he'd preach a mock funeral eulogy for us. He did it for all of us, and he'd imitate Richard Pryor in his joking. He always ended on the same note. After enumerating all our short comings to make it seem like we hardly had any chance of salvation, he'd clasped his hands together in a dramatic quivering and look heavenward, an almost forlorn plea on his face. And he'd pray slowly, "Lord, oh Looord, please, oh pleeeeease, Loooord, please let him enter in." And each time he did this, it felt new and we'd bust up in laughter, with Martin laughing the loudest.

You ask about Sanctuary Cities. None of us could live and

survive without grace and mercy. I remember addressing a group of judges, some of whom I'd placed on the bench. My main message to them was to temper justice with mercy. We must temper justice with mercy. I also recall an Andrews Sisters' song whose refrain I liked a lot, "You've got to accentuate the positive and latch onto the affirmative . . ." We thrive on hope. Trump has to work on this. Obama never lost hope. He inspired us to believe we could grow and learn. Trump has to work on this.

So, please remember, "Don't get mad. Get smart!"

ACTION: The annual MLK Commemoration is sponsored by the City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department, Modesto Junior College, the Associated Students of Modesto Junior College (ASMJC), the Modesto Peace/Life Center, and California State University, Stanislaus. The

Peace/Life Center's role since the beginning 23 years ago has been to organize and coordinate this event. Kay Barnes of the Center served as the organizing committee chair for years. For the last 10 years, Jim Costello has carried on that important role. If you'd like to contribute to next year's event, please send your tax-deductible donation, made payable to Modesto Peace/Life Center—MLK, to Jim Costello, 1849 Richard Way, Ceres, CA 95307-4504. Let us know if you have suggestions for future keynote speakers. Thank you.

The 2017 Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Committee: Wendy Byrd, Glen Carrington, James Costello, Brett Forray, Julie Fox, Linda Hoile, Jim Johnson, Ruby Kennedy, Ruth-Helen King, Bryan Justin Marks, Tommie Muhammad, Barbara Page, Wes Page, Dan Onorato, Monika Schortner, Michael Sundquist, Kelly Villalobos, Marianne Villalobos.

The 30th annual Peace Essay Contest is a project of the Modesto Peace/Life Center, 720 13th Street, Modesto, 529-5750, peaceessay@juno.com Co-sponsored by the Modesto Junior College Department of Literature and Language Arts. HM = Honorable Mention; SW = School Winner. School Winners are recognized for the top essay from a school that has submitted 10 or more essays in the Division

Division I (grades 11 & 12)

Award	Name	School	Teacher
1ST	Stephanie LeQuia	Whitmore Charter Sch	Kelly Hayes
2ND & SW	Courtney Covolo	Central Catholic HS	Trevor Guina
3RD & SW	Jun Lin Zhu	Grace Davis HS	Julie Beebe
HM & SW	Maira Aguilar	Ceres High Sch	Ben Middleton
HM	Madalyn Montoya	Grace Davis HS	Julie Beebe
HM	Makayla Thompson	Grace Davis HS	Julie Beebe
Finalist (1)	Mariana Anzar	Modesto High Sch	Heather Jacquemin
Finalist	Cynthia Aquino	Grace Davis HS	Julie Beebe
Finalist	Sandy Benge	Ceres High Sch	Ben Middleton
Finalist, SW	Wade Brennecke	Joseph A. Gregori HS	Joe Orlando
Finalist	Celeste Diaz	Grace Davis HS	Julie Beebe
Finalist	Avivyah Gray	Grace Davis HS	Julie Beebe
Finalist, SW	Mariah Guevara	Modesto High Sch	Heather Jacquemin
Finalist	Yvonne Khanishian	Ceres High Sch	Ben Middleton
Finalist	Krishma Malhotra	Ceres High Sch	Ben Middleton
Finalist	Juliah Middleton	Joseph A. Gregori HS	Joe Orlando
Finalist	Michelle Nunez	Central Catholic HS	Trevor Guina
Finalist (2)	Karla Ochoa	Modesto High Sch	Heather Jacquemin
Finalist	Jonathan Rontal	Modesto High Sch	Heather Jacquemin
Finalist (3)	Ashley Servin	Modesto High Sch	Heather Jacquemin
Finalist (4)	Karina Silva	Modesto High Sch	Heather Jacquemin
Finalist	Brianna Marie Zamora	Ceres High Sch	Ben Middleton

Partners: (1) with Servin, (2) with Silva, (3) with Anzar, (4) with Ochoa

Division II (grades 9 & 10)

Award	Name	School	Teacher
1ST & SW	Grace Parsons	Ceres High Sch	Tracy Pannell
2ND	Judah Sloan	Independent Home	Susan Janis
3RD	Ninweh Gorges	Ceres High Sch	Tracy Pannell
HM	Madeline Bettencourt	Modesto High Sch	Kerry Castellani
HM & SW	Anmolpreet Sangha	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
HM	Vanessa Ventura	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Connor Almanza	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Iris Arellano	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Kenyon Atkins	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Eduardo Barreto	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Javier Cuevas	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Jacob Davalos	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Shania Evans	Ceres High Sch	Tracy Pannell
Finalist	Abigail Hernandez	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Alfonso Hernandez	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Madeline Lopez	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Ryan Nunes	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Genesis Ochoa	Ceres High Sch	Tracy Pannell
Finalist	Daniela Sandoval	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal
Finalist	Clover Vanderheiden	Central Valley High	Kristen Casal

Division IV (grades 5 & 6)

Award	Name	School	Teacher
1ST	Jason Fritz	Hart Ransom Acad Chtr	Susan Janis
2ND	Owen Wood	Hart Ransom Acad Chtr	Susan Janis
3RD & SW	Nicholas Roman	Agnes M. Baptist Elem	Toni David
HM & SW	Noah Arnold	John Fremont Open Plan	Todd Brownell
HM	Noland Farnon	John Fremont Open Plan	Todd Brownell
HM	Kate Sink	Hart Ransom Acad Chtr	Susan Janis
Finalist	Liana Marron Arias	Don Pedro Elem Sch	Linda Scheller
Finalist, SW	Kyziah Ballesteros	Daniel J. Savage Middle	Sandra Forcade
Finalist	Madison Bradley	John Fremont Open Plan	Todd Brownell
Finalist, SW	Teresita Cabrera	Don Pedro Elem Sch	Linda Scheller
Finalist	Olive Cowdrey	John Fremont Open Plan	Todd Brownell
Finalist	Angela Guerrero	Agnes M. Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Hannah Leamy	John Fremont Elem Sch	Dorene Arnold
Finalist	Easton Lund	John Fremont Elem Sch	Dorene Arnold
Finalist	Nathalia Martinez	Agnes M. Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Baani Pannu	Agnes M. Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Isabel Rodas	Agnes M. Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Krishna Vyas	Agnes M. Baptist Elem	Johnna Robinson
Finalist	Ann Whang	Agnes M. Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Sabrina Zavalza	Don Pedro Elem Sch	Linda Scheller
SW	Megan E. Haubrich	Lakewood Elem Sch	C. Malekos-Quick

Division III (grades 7 & 8)

Award	Name	School	Teacher
1ST & SW	Aiden Hervey	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
2ND & SW	Hadynn Field	Turlock Junior HS	Denise Nulph
3RD	Averie Hardy	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
HM	Reza Banankhah	Private Writing Ins	Susan Janis
HM	Emily Swehla	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
HM & SW	Alyssa Turn	Prescott Senior Elem	Maia Tobin
Finalist	Nicolette Badal	Turlock Junior HS	Denise Nulph
Finalist	Mia Beachler	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
Finalist	Jolie Benedict	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
Finalist	Anastasia Collins	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
Finalist	Melissa Dickson	Oakdale Junior High	Dee Hawksworth
Finalist	Itxel Mendez Espinoza	Prescott Senior Elem	Megan MacDonald
Finalist	Dylan Fuller	Turlock Junior HS	Denise Nulph
Finalist	Joshua Halloran	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
Finalist, SW	Jimmy Homer	Oakdale Junior High	Dee Hawksworth
Finalist	Anthony Lopes	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
Finalist	Amber Ogden	Prescott Senior Elem	Megan MacDonald
Finalist	Avni Parmar	Prescott Senior Elem	Maia Tobin
Finalist, SW	Olyvia Perez Hoover	Great Valley Acad	Beverly Broedlow
Finalist	Stephen Romano	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
SW	Hannah Casiano	Mark Twain Jr High	Ann Griffith
SW	Matthew Morris	Sacred Heart Elem	Elaine Magni



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Biking: a Justice Practice, a Spiritual Practice

By **MICHAEL SCHIEFELBEIN, Pastor of College Avenue United Church of Christ**

I'm a fifty-nine-year-old with a full-time job, and I don't have a car. Here in Modesto, I rely on my bicycle to get where I have to go most of the time. My husband needs his car for work, and even when it's available to me, I rarely use it. (When traveling around the region, I use public transportation or catch a ride with others.)

Why do I bike instead of driving? It's not for the reasons some of my friends have assumed.

It's not because I can't drive. I drive very well. I keep one car length away from the car in front of me for every ten miles an hour I'm driving. I use my signal lights. And I have never caused an accident. I have been rear-ended once by a distracted driver, and side-swiped once by a Wells Fargo truck that couldn't stop in the rain, and clipped once by a car making too sharp a turn when I was stopped at a red light. But those accidents didn't deter me from driving. In fact, they make for great stories.

The reason I bike is not because I grew up in a crowded city where having a car would have been an inconvenience and a reason for little driving experience. I grew up in Topeka, Kansas: population 125,000. I started driving when I was sixteen, excited to have my license. And very excited in 1973 to have my first car, a 1964 Chevelle Malibu with electric windows. I drove it to school. I drove it to my job at Lee's Sandwich Shop. I even drove it to drive-in movies, where once the electric windows got stuck open when it started to rain. Another great story.

Nor do I bike because I don't enjoy the feeling of freedom and independence that comes with driving. Like many people, I have loved cranking up the music and sailing down the road, sometimes late at night on my way home from work. Sometimes all alone, driving cross country. I did that in my blue Ford Pinto during my college years. And later in my Honda Accord, in which I once gave a ride to the famous Civil War historian, Shelby Foote.

Why do I bike instead of driving? Because biking is a justice practice for me.

For all my desire to fit in, to enjoy the convenience and freedom and the delights of car ownership, I don't want to drive. Instead, I want to boycott a transportation system that pollutes the environment, not only with cars, but with more and more cars—many with single riders—a system which perpetuates more and more roads, rather than more and more forms of public transportation.

I want to protest a consumer lifestyle, which car culture and our culture in general encourage, without regard to how much of the world's oil we consume in the United States, without regard to our addiction to cars, and to vehicles much bigger than we actually need to get around.

I want to act in solidarity with the majority of the world's population, which cannot afford a car, which travels by foot or bicycle. I want to act in solidarity with those in my own community who cannot afford to own a car and who rely on public transportation.

Why do I bike instead of driving? Because biking is a spiritual practice for me.

Biking helps me commune with nature, live more simply, and get fresh air and exercise—good for the soul as well as the body. These are all spiritual practices.

But the most fundamental spiritual practice is the change of consciousness. To replace the ego's lens for seeing the world with the lens of the spirit. As a follower of the way of Jesus, I understand this transformation as moving from darkness to light, from death to resurrection—the themes of his teaching and life.

This means surrendering my sense of self-sufficiency, entitlement, and self-protection in order to cultivate a sense of connection to something bigger than myself. Riding a bike rather than driving a car helps me do this. In a car, encased in a metal-and-glass bubble, behind a powerful engine, I tend to feel that I am master of the road, in need of none of those other drivers. On a bike, I know I am dependent on the kindness of strangers in much bigger vehicles.

In a car, I feel impatient when traffic lights, traffic flow, and other drivers don't bend to my will. On a bike, it's hard to feel entitled since I'm the slowest, smallest vehicle on the road.

In a mighty car I easily succumb to the illusion that I'm invulnerable. Not so on a bike, where I'm constantly aware of the fragile nature of my humanity and my need for others. To bike is to practice growing in trust.

Why do I bike instead of driving? Because biking helps me connect spirituality and justice in my own life.

Replacing the ego's lens for seeing the world is essential for a just sharing of the world's resources, for just stewardship of the environment, for just treatment of people threatened with oppression, for peace based on justice rather than a "peace" like the *Pax Romana*, based on force.

"Let peace begin with me," the popular song proclaims. Riding my bike is a way to sing that song to myself and to the world around me. I invite you to it sing it with me by riding a bike as often as you can.

Or if you can't ride a bike, show your solidarity with me and other cyclists. Not by honking when you see us on the road—we get enough of that from irritated drivers. Show it by supporting the creation of bike lanes and bike racks. Show it by graciously sharing the road with us. Show it by offering us the occasional ride when rain or distance requires us to exchange our biking practice for another practice: the practice of gratitude!



IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Kathleen West


February 14, 1955 – February 22, 2017

Mark Zwick

December 22, 1927 – November 18, 2016



Kai Anthony of Project Hope and Peace Center president Leng Nou next to coats to be distributed to the homeless.



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I offer my heart to you

I offer my heart to you
 My fluttering and muttering and blubbering heart, to you
 To the sea of faces
 To the lake of faces
 My heart not only races, my heart
 Taking frequent paces
 Riding the smooth waves of snaps
 That feel like a small tsunami of claps
 Carrying me through ripples of relief
 I find myself craving your sands
 I find a home on your reef
 Getting in front of these eyes
 These rivers of eyes
 Feels as if my bones are set to chill, yet
 I feel this sweltering heat
 Rising in my cheeks
 And moments pass, and
 Moments fade, and
 Moments blur and bleed and
 These words keep trickling off
 My trembling and chapped lips, like
 A slow and steady leak, as I climb into
 This comfortable bed of silk sheets
 Of the confidence I seek, teeth
 Gnawing and gnashing
 At my fingernails 'til I reach the cuticle
 But the energy in here
 Creates something so musical
 That the lights are dancing on
 The brim of my glasses
 Lifting my voice above
 My eyelashes
 Tongue dry and sticky, so
 I take a large gulp of the applause
 Filling my cheeks that
 I've chewed raw
 I feel almost as if I am talking
 With God, but not the God
 You find in a temple or a church
 But the God you find in the
 Sherbet sunset on your way
 Home from work
 I thank you
 Again, I thank you
 For listening without lust, and Watching me combust, and
 Filling my hollow bones
 With stardust
 Feeling this instant connection Between me and the sea
 And, somehow I can swim When I can't even breathe
 I thank you
 I'm floating on your
 Flame turned waves
 My heart, for you
 I will always save
 So once again,
 Thanks

A Letter for the Better

Alexys Rushing
 2016
 Dear future daughter,
 Dear little sisters,
 Dear friends,
 Dear self,
 Being a woman can be such an exhausting blessing. Things
 can't always be so nice,
 sometimes it can get messy.
 And often times our lips, and our hips, and our
 unmanicured tips can feel like a curse
 But I want you to love the goddess that you're staring at
 and glaring at and constantly comparing to
 airbrushed advertisements telling us we must be flawless
 even in our ride home, in a hearse
 But I want you to love the light radiating from your eyes,
 your morning crusty eyes, your puffy red eyes,
 spent too long crying because the clothes they make for us
 with distracting designs,
 They just don't ever look right in your "size"
 And certainly, never last as long (or cost as low) as when
 you shop in the guys'.
 And I'm so sorry that in your life, you have to come to find
 that
 Your tits will elicit explicit tidbits from ignorant bigots that
 deny
 their gift of life and
 your right to give it
 And I'm so sorry that this world that we live in breeds hate
 for our women
 But you must not give in
 The fight's not between us to begin with
 The fight's not between us to begin with
 The fight's not between us to begin with
 Dear future daughters and little sisters,
 I ask you to be different
 I dare you to be different
 I need you to be different
 Dear fellow women,
 Dear friends,
 I implore you to find the fire inside of you
 Find the flame that can't be contained, to spark about a
 world of change
 Dear mothers and teachers,
 The only way we can turn this vicious cycle around, is if
 we burn it all down and
 Let fresh life sprout from the ashes of the women set up to
 fail before us as
 They passed the torch down
 Dear self,
 It can be too easy to fall into this pattern of thinking, but
 you must keep in mind
 It's the hate that we're shrinking
 So you must be brave, to fight against what the world has
 engraved in your brain
 It's as small of a fix as changing what you say, to brighten
 and lift a random person's day.
 Now tell yourself to,
 Learn to love the skin you're in, but
 Learn to love the skin you're not.

And tell yourself that,
 You are a Queen.
 Ruling fearlessly in the land that is yours
 Let your words provide shelter for all who will take it
 Let compassion be your weapon in all wars you must
 engage in
 Let the blood and the tears that we shed when we're down
 be the diamonds and rubies you wear in your crown
 Dear self,
 You're a warrior.
 Stand proud.
 You earned it, you are worth it
 Dear self, you are important.
 Dear fellow women,
 I stand with you
 Dear women of color,
 I stand with you
 Dear trans women,
 I stand with you
 Dear queer women,
 I stand with you
 Dear friends, and men,
 We stand together.



Poet: Alexys, (Lex) Rushing

Alexys, (Lex) Rushing, an aspiring poet and artist, has been doing original spoken word in Modesto for a little over a year since attending an open mic poetry gathering at the Queen Bean. She continues to read at Queen Bean and the Second Tuesday Poetry Readings at the Barkin' Dog. She is an activist, intersectional feminist, involved in Women's March Modesto and Writers Resist.

Alexys writes mostly narrations about the world as she knows it. She is just getting started as a voice in the community and would like to be a part of many more events related to human rights.



Green Tips for a Green Planet: The ethical/spiritual case for preserving and conserving on our home planet, EARTH

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

"The Earth does not belong to man [humanity]; Man [humanity] belongs to the Earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons [all beings] of the Earth. Man [Humanity] did not weave the web of life, he [humanity] is merely a stand in it. Whatever he [humanity] does to the web, he [humanity] does to himself [all beings, 2 legged, 4 legged, 6 and 8 legged, winged, finned, crawlers, slitherers, microscopic..., all beings]." Chief Seattle (Apocryphally attributed but wise nonetheless.)

These words echo injunctions from religious and ethical communities throughout recorded time. At a recent community gathering Rabbi Shalom Bochner of Congregation Beth Shalom and Reverend Darcy Baxter of Modesto's United Universalist Church shared the Jewish and UU approaches to spiritual environmentalism.

In his Ten Jewish Teachings on Judaism and the Environment (<http://www.greenfaith.org/religious-teachings/jewish-statements-on-the-environment/ten-jewish-teachings-on-judaism-and-the-environment>) Rabbi Lawrence Troster lists in teaching 9 that "Environmental Justice is a Jewish value." He goes on to explain that "The Torah [first five books of the Old Testament] has numerous laws which attempt to redress the power and economic imbalances in human society and Creation. Examples are the Sabbatical year [Exodus 23:11, Leviticus 25:2-5, Deuteronomy 15:1-4] and the Jubilee [Leviticus 25:8-24].

There is a whole program in the Torah for creating a balanced distribution of resources across society [Exodus 22:24-26, Leviticus 25:36-37, Deuteronomy 23:20-1, 24: 6, 10-13, 17]. This is an expression of the concept of *Tzadek*, which means righteousness, justice and equity. It is the value, which tried to correct the imbalances, which humans create in society and in the natural world. In the modern world globalization has strived to achieve the free movement of people, information, money, goods and services, but it can also create major disruptions in local cultures and environments. While globalization has created great wealth for millions of people, many millions more have been bypassed by its benefits, and it has had in some cases a negative impact upon the environment and human rights. The Jewish concept of *Tzadek* demands that we create a worldwide economy that is sustainable and that is equitable in the distribution of wealth and resources."

The ten teachings also talk against the wasteful consumption of anything, the extinction of species and causing undue pain to non-human creatures. Ultimately, Jewish law, *halakhah*, cautions that when we waste resources we are violating the commandment (*mitzvah*) of *Bal Tashchit*, ["Do not destroy"]. Deuteronomy 20:19-20

The teachings note that the Torah speaks to "an obligation to save human life", under what Jewish legal sources call *pikuach nefesh* based upon an interpretation of Leviticus 18:5. Jewish law forbids humans from knowingly harming

The Jewish concept of *Tzadek* demands that we create a worldwide economy that is sustainable and that is equitable in the distribution of wealth and resources."

themselves [Leviticus 19:28], and though "there are many lifesaving technologies that come from modern chemicals and materials"...in "the Jewish tradition, the Precautionary Principle can be seen as a modern form of the warning not to tamper too much with the boundaries of Creation."

They teachings also speak to the concept of the Sabbath as a way to engender sustainability by taking one day out of the week to limit the use of resources, rest and reflect inward, creating a closer connection to the Creation.

Henry Thoreau, one of the most well known Unitarian Universalist environmentalists, was called to take the concepts of Sabbath and the protection of and connection to the Creation as the ultimate focus for his daily life. In his essay, "*Walking*," he writes:

"I wish to speak a word for nature, for absolute Freedom and Wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and Culture merely civil, -- to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society...to make an extreme statement...for there are enough champions of civilization; the minister, and the school-committee, and every one of you will take care of that..."

I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits unless I spend four hours a day at least...sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields absolutely free from all worldly engagements... When sometimes I am reminded that the mechanics and shop keepers stay in the shops not only all the forenoon, but all the afternoon too, sitting with crossed legs, so many of them -- as if the legs were made to sit upon, and not to stand or walk upon -- I think that they deserve some credit for not having all committed suicide long ago.

I who cannot stay in my chamber for a single day without acquiring some rust, and when sometimes I have stolen forth for a walk at the eleventh hour of four o'clock in the afternoon...when the shades of night were already beginning to be mingled with the day-light -- have felt as if I had committed some sin to be stoned for, I confess that I am astonished at the power of endurance -- to say nothing of the moral insensibility of my neighbors who confine themselves to shops and offices the whole day...I know not what manner of stuff they are of -- sitting there...at three...in the afternoon, as if it were three...in the morning...When we walk we naturally go to the fields and woods; what would become of us if we walked only in a garden or a mall?"

Thoreau's words are punctuated by Ralph Waldo Emerson,

another great UU naturalist, in his work, "*Nature*":

"Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. Almost I fear I think how glad I am. In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period so ever of life is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and a sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees now how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, -- no disgrace, no calamity, [leaving me my eyes,] which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, -- my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into the infinite space, -- all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God."

From decades past Emerson writes a truth for all ages, "Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchers of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generation beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and a philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines today also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and law and worship..."

Humankind has been charged both ethically and spiritually with the "need to preserve our natural resources and generate new ones for future generations. The Talmud tells the story of the sage, Choni, who was walking along a road when he saw a man planting a carob tree.

Choni asked, 'How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?'

'Seventy years,' the man replied.

Choni then asked, 'Are you so healthy that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?'

The man answered, 'I found a fruitful world, because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planting for my children'."

"When we talk about Standing on the Side of Love, what's the inner work must we do? Sometimes we neglect to do the important work within to support the work we do in the wider world." (From the Modesto UU website.)

Doing Enough for Animals

By VASU MURTY

"The livestock population of the United States today consumes enough grain and soybeans to feed over five times the entire human population of the country."

"We feed these animals over 80% of the corn we grow, and over 95% of the oats. Less than half the harvested agricultural acreage in the United States is used to grow food for people. Most of it is used to grow livestock feed."

— John Robbins, *Diet for a New America*

"One man's meat is another man / woman / child's hunger."

This slogan is part of the "Enough" campaign, with its aim of reducing meat consumption. The campaign highlights the waste of resources involved in feeding grain to animals:

"Every minute eighteen children die from starvation, yet forty percent of the world's grain is fed to animals for meat."

Vegetarianism for a trial period is advocated to "help the hungry, improve the environment" and "stop untold animal suffering." Vegetarianism is also recommended on health grounds. *This campaign actually has the support of organized religion.*

Ronald J. Sider of Evangelicals for Social Action, in his 1977 book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, pointed out that 220 million Americans were eating enough food (largely because of the high consumption of grain fed to livestock) to feed over one billion people in the poorer countries.

The realization that meat is an unnecessary luxury, resulting in inequities in the world food supply has prompted religious leaders in different Christian denominations to call on their members to abstain from meat on certain days of the week. Paul Moore, Jr., the Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of New York, made such an appeal in a November, 1974 pastoral

letter calling for the observance of "meatless Wednesdays."

A similar appeal had previously been issued by Cardinal Cooke, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York. The Reverend Eugene Carson Blake, former head of the World Council of Churches and founder of Bread for the World, has encouraged everyone in his anti-hunger organization to abstain from eating meat on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

"Is this not the fast I have chosen? To loosen the chains of wickedness, to undo the bonds of oppression, and to let the oppressed go free? Is it not to share thy bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless? Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own."

—Isaiah 58:6-8

"Honourable men may disagree honourably about some details of human treatment of the non-human," wrote Stephen Clark in his 1977 book, *The Moral Status of Animals*, "but vegetarianism is now as necessary a pledge of moral devotion as was the refusal of emperor-worship in the early church."

According to Clark, eating animal flesh is "gluttony," and "Those who still eat flesh when they could do otherwise have no claim to be serious moralists."

"Clark's conclusion has real force and its power has yet to be sufficiently appreciated by fellow Christians," says the Reverend Andrew Linzey, author of *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*. "Far from seeing the possibility of widespread vegetarianism as a threat to Old Testament norms, Christians should rather welcome the fact that the Spirit is enabling us to make decisions so that we may more properly conform to the original Genesis picture of living in peace with creation."

Father Thomas Berry, a Catholic priest, author, and founder of the Riverdale Center of Religious Research in New York, wrote in 1987 that "Vegetarianism is a way of life that we should all move toward for economic survival, physical well-being, and spiritual integrity."

In 1992, members of Los Angeles' First Unitarian Church agreed to serve vegetarian meals at the church's weekly Sunday lunch. Their decision was made as a protest against animal cruelty and the environmental damage caused by the livestock industry.

The Reverend Marc Wessels, Executive Director of the International Network for Religion and Animals (INRA) made this observation on Earth Day 1990:

"It is a fact that no significant social reform has yet taken place in this country without the voice of the religious community being heard. The endeavors of the abolition of slavery; the women's suffrage movement; the emergence of the pacifist tradition during World War I; the struggles to support civil rights, labor unions, and migrant farm workers; and the anti-nuclear and peace movements have all succeeded in part because of the power and support of organized religion. Such authority and energy is required by individual Christians and the institutional church today if the liberation of animals is to become a reality."

Reach the author at vasumurti@aim.com

Modesto Peace/Life Center Events

- **March 1:** Vigil, McHenry and J St., 4-5 PM.
- **March 4:** Peace Center Open House, 10 AM.
- **March 11:** Peace Center Annual meeting, 8:30 to noon.
- **March 17:** Peace Essay Contest Awards Ceremony, Modesto Junior College West Campus, Mary Stuart Rogers Student Learning Center, 2201 Blue Gum Ave., 7 PM, free, awards and readings by winners. MC Sam Pierstorff, light refreshments.
- **April 22:** Earth Day booth, Graceada Park.
- **June 4:** Pancake Breakfast, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., 8• noon
- **June 23-25:** Peace Camp in the Sierra, Camp Peaceful Pines, Clark Fork Rd.

Other Community Events:

- **March 1:** *The Nine*, State Theater, 7PM, documents and honors the casualties of a broken system focusing on South 9th St. in Modesto. Followed by conversation with the filmmaker and producer.
- **March 2:** *Beginning Again: Syrian Refugees Settle in Modesto*, MJC Civic Engagement Series, 7 PM MJC East Campus Forum 110, film and discussion, free.
- **March 8 and 12:** *Revolution: New Art for a New World*, State Theater, celebrates the role of artists in creating a better world.
- **March 9:** *13th*, film examining the history of race, the criminal justice system, and mass incarceration, MJC Civic Engagement Series, 7-9 PM, MJC East Campus Forum 110, film and discussion, free.
- **March 16:** *Marginalized in America: A Continuing Conversation on criminalization of people of color*, Student Center Cafeteria, East Campus, MJC Civic Engagement Series, 7-9 PM.
- **April 4:** *1984*, State Theater, based on George Orwell's book, 7 PM, part of national event taking a stand for our most basic values of freedom of speech and respect for our fellow human beings
- **April 16:** *Before the Flood*, film with Leonardo DiCaprio traveling the globe discussing climate change with scientists and activists. MJC Civic Engagement Series, 7-9 PM, MJC East Campus, Forum 110, film and discussion, free.

See Calendar, page 12, for other events.

STANISLAUS ARTIST OPEN STUDIO

APRIL 22-23, 2017

Visit 36 studios, meet 55 artists!

Tour books available March 10:

- Mistlin Gallery
1015 J Street, Modesto
- Chartreuse Muse Art Gallery
10th Street, Modesto
- Carnegie Art Center
250 N. Broadway, Turlock
- Oakdale Chamber of Commerce
590 N. Yosemite, Oakdale

11 A.M. - 5 P.M.

\$10 admission
19 and under free

Stanislaus Artist Open Studio

Enter a drawing to win one of 7 works of art by tour participants!

stanislausAOS.wordpress.com / facebook: stanislausAOS / email: openstudio.stanislaus@gmail.com

Thank you to our sponsors: Mistlin Gallery, Chartreuse Muse, Carnegie Art Center, CSUS Art Space on Main, Modesto Convention and Visitors Bureau, Oakdale Tourism, Central Valley Business Journal and Napa Arts & Crafts



Look for
CONNECTIONS
online at:
<http://stanislausconnections.org/>



Help keep our readers informed.
We urge people participating in an event
to write about it and send their story to
Connections.

Stockton

PEACE AND JUSTICE NETWORK OF SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY (<http://www.pjnsjc.org>). Info: James Walsh, jwprod1956@clearwire.net

MARCH

MJC Spring Science Colloquium, Science Community Center, Room 115, West Campus, 3 pm - 4 p.m. Contact: Teri Curtis (209) 575-6775 curtist@mjc.edu. **Mar. 1: Richard Anderson**, MJC Biology Professor Emeritus, Earth's 6th Extinction... is Actually the 7th. **Mar. 8: TBA.** **Mar. 15: Elizabeth McInnes**, MJC Biology Professor, An Update on Climate Change. **Mar. 22: Debra Bolter**, Ph.D., MJC Anthropology Professor, What's new with Homo naledi and the Rising Star Cave, South Africa? **Mar. 29: Sarah E.J. Martin**, M.S., CCC-SLP, "Career Opportunities for Speech-Language Pathologist, Another High Demand Allied Health Profession." **Apr. 5: Teri Curtis**, MJC Biology Professor, Success Stories from California's Channel Islands. **Apr. 12: Earth Day Film** – Title TBA

MJC Positive People Speaker Series: presentations by local community members who overcame challenges to achieve their goals. Thursdays, 6 pm. Mary Stuart Rogers Student Learning Center, West Campus, 2201 Blue Gum Ave., Modesto. Campus parking is \$2. Info: (209) 575-6700. March 16: Tamara Mena, motivational speaker and spokesperson. April 6: The Honorable Rubén Villalobos, Stanislaus County Superior Court Judge.

Modesto Area Partners in Science (MAPS) free public programs. 7:30 p.m., MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall, Rm. 132. TBA.

1 WED: Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGIL: Unity. McHenry & J St., 4:00-5:00 pm.

1 WED: 15th Annual Day of Respect, Modesto High School. Sharon Froba, 209-521-7265; email sfroba@comcast.net for more information.

2 THURS: MJC Civic Engagement Project presents Beginning Again: Syria: Refugees Settle in Modesto. ABC World News with David Muir follows a Syrian refugee family on their journey from Syria, to Jordan, and finally to Modesto. See the episode, meet the family, hear from those involved in their resettlement. Join a discussion on a response to refugees in the community. 7- 9 PM, MJC East Campus, Forum 110, 435 College Ave. Free, all welcome.

4 SAT: Modesto Peace/Life Center Volunteer Info Day, 10 – 11 am. Learn about the Center & volunteer Opportunities.

11 SAT: Modesto Peace/Life Center Annual Meeting, 8:30 am to Noon. See front page.

15 WED: Film Night at the Center: "Makers: Women Who Make America" 6:30 pm. at the Modesto Peace/Life Center, 720 13th St., Modesto. Discussion follows.

17 FRI: Peace Essay Contest Awards ceremony, Mary Stuart Rogers Student Center, MJC West Campus, 2201 Blue Gum Ave., 7 pm.

18 SAT: Science on Screen: FREE science education series: Reconstructing a Rabies Epidemic: Byte by Byte. Plus film, Contagion. State Theatre, FREE. 2:30 pm. Visit <http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/833>

19 SUN: The Modesto Film Society presents *Funny Girl*. State Theatre, 1307 J. St., 2:00 pm. Visit <http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/728>

19 SUN: Sunday Afternoons at CBS celebrating its 25th Anniversary Season: Genticorum This Quebec group Genticorum has become a fixture on the international world, trad, folk, and Celtic music circuit. Their distinctive sound, sense of humor, and stage presence make them a supreme crowd pleaser. Tickets available at: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2775311>. All concerts held at 1705 Sherwood Ave. at 3 pm. Learn more at sundaysatcbs.com

LOOKING AHEAD

April 19: Film Night at the Center: *Dogtown Redemption*. 6:30 pm.

April 27: Film "Fun" Raiser for DKG Epsilon Nu Chapter. 5:30 pm doors open with Wine, Appetizers, and Raffle. Movie 7:00 pm. SOME LIKE IT HOT. State Theatre, 1307 J St., Modesto. Benefits: SCOE, MJC Scholarships, Library Books, Great Valley Museum. Donation: \$25.00. Tickets at the Door or email DKGMODESTO@gmail.com or contact Gloria, (209) 545-0883. <http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/846>

May 17: Film Night at the Center: *Modern Times*. 6:30 pm.

Sunday, June 4: Annual Modesto Peace/Life Center Pancake Breakfast, Modesto Church of the Brethren.

Friday-Sunday, June 23-25: Peace Camp in the Sierra, Camp Peaceful Pines, Clark Fork Rd.

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

Modesto Vineyard Christian Fellowship, 10:00 am at the MODSPOT, 1220 J St. Call or text 209-232-1932, email modestovineyard@gmail.com; All Welcome.

Weekly insight meditation and dharma talk, 9:00 am-10:15 am, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (in the UUFSC sanctuary). Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: insightmeditationcentralvalley@gmail.com

Food Addicts Anonymous In Recovery. Sundays 6:30 pm, 2467 Veneman Ave. Modesto. Info: Emily M., 209 480-8247.

MONDAYS

StanCounty Radical Mental Health: a peer facilitated support group open to people living with mental health issues. Mondays, 7 pm at the Modesto Peace/Life Center 720 13th St., Modesto. We strive to create a safe, non-judgmental space. Information: email stancountyrmh@gmail.com or contact Sue at 209-247-4659.

Walk With Me, a women's primary infertility support group and Bible study. 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm the first and third Mondays of each month (September only meeting 9/15/14 due to Labor Day). Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com or call 209.577.1604.

Silver & Gold Support Group 50+ years of age. Ongoing support group for mental health and wellness to meet the needs of the mature Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. Every Monday 3:00 - 4:00 pm. Community-Hope-Recovery, 305 Downey Ave. Modesto. Info: Monica O, Tiamonica64@gmail.com or Susan J, Susanthe poet@gmail.com

TUESDAYS

Exploring Whiteness & Showing Up For Racial Justice Meetings, Fourth Tuesday, monthly 7:00

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS: held THE FIRST WEDNESDAY of the month at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five points), (NOTE TIME), 4:00-5:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 529-5750.

MEDIA: Listen to local Valley Community Radio KQRP 104.9 FM, <http://www.kqrp.com>

PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING, FIRST Thursdays, 720 13th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750.

MEDIA COMMITTEE of Peace Life Center. Meetings TBA. Call John Lucas, 527-7634.

CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL MEETINGS: Info: 537-7818, jcostello@igc.org

PEACE/LIFE CENTER MODESTO, 720 13th St. Call 529-5750. We'll get back to you with current info on activities.

p.m., Central Grace Hmong Alliance Church, 918 Sierra Dr., Modesto. Info: <https://www.facebook.com/events/247655549018387/>

Pagan Family Social, third Tuesdays, Golden Corral, 3737 McHenry Ave, Modesto, 6:00 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

Ukulele class/play-a-long led by Lorrie Freitas 5 p.m. Beginners Lessons 6 p.m. Play Along in songbooks provided. Trinity Presbyterian Church, 1600 Carver, Modesto. Donation accepted. Info: 505-3216. www.funstrummers.com

Weekly insight meditation and dharma talk, 6:30 pm-8:30 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC parking lot). Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: insightmeditationcentralvalley@gmail.com

Adult Children Of Alcoholics, Every Tuesday, 7 pm at 1320 L St., (Christ Unity Baptist Church). Info: Jeff, 527-2469.

WEDNESDAYS

Ongoing meditation class based on Qi Gong Principals. Practice a 3 Step Guided Meditation Process I have been doing for over a decade. Fun and Easy. JOIN ME! Donations accepted but optional. Call 209.495.6608 or email Orlando Arreygue, CMT RYT, orlando@arreygue.com

Merced LGBT Community Center offers a variety of monthly meetings and written materials. Volunteers, on site Wed-Fri, offer support. Ph: 209-626-5551. Email: mercedboard@gaycentralvalley.org – 1744 G St. Suite H, Merced, CA. www.mercedlgbtcenter.org

Merced Full Spectrum meets the second Wednesday of every month, 6 p.m. 1744 G St., Suite H, Merced <http://www.lgbtmerced.org/> Merced Full Spectrum is a division of Gay Central Valley, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. <http://www.gaycentralvalley.org/>

Unity Tai Ji Qi Gong (A Journey Within) - First United Methodist Church Multipurpose Rm - 6 pm - Wednesdays - freewill offering. Michele, 209 602-3162.

Modesto Folk Dancers All levels welcome. Raube Hall, Ceres (call for address), 480-0387.

GLBT Questioning Teen Support Group (14-19 years old). 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, College Ave. Congregational Church, 1341 College Ave., Modesto. 7 – 9 pm. Safe, friendly, confidential. This is a secular, non-religious group. Info: call 524-0983.

TRANSGENDER SUPPORT GROUP, 2nd & 4th Wed., 7:30 to 9 pm. Info: (209) 338-0855. Email info@stanpride.org , or tgsupport@stanpride.org

MINDFUL MEDITATION: Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7 - 9 pm. Info: Anne, 521-6977.

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS GROUPS, 2nd Wed., 252 Magnolia, Manteca.

THURSDAYS

LGBTQA Collaborative Meetings 4th Thursdays. Agendas are the same for each meeting. Lunch meeting: Peer Recovery Art Center, 1222 J St, Modesto, Noon to 1:30 pm. Dinner meetings: Stanislaus BHRS – Redwood Room, 800 Scenic Dr., Modesto, CA 95354, 5:30 pm to 7 pm. Meeting dates: Sept. 29, Oct. 27, Nov. 17, Dec. 15: No meeting/ Winter Mixer. Dedicated to promoting well-being in the LGBTQA community. John Aguirre, jpamodesto@gmail.com 559-280-3864.

Green Team educational meetings the 3rd Thursday of each month, 10 to 11 am, Kirk Lindsey Center, 1020 10th St. Plaza, Suite 102, Modesto. www.StanislausGreenTeam.com

Third Thursday Art Walk, Downtown Modesto, downtown art galleries open – take a walk and check out the local art scene. 5-8 pm every third Thursday of the month. Info: 579-9913, <http://www.modestoartwalk.com>

A Buddhist Approach to Recovery from Addiction. Jana Lynn Community Rm., 500 N. 9th St., Modesto. Thursdays 6:30-8 pm. FREE (donations accepted). Info: email RefugeRecoveryModesto@gmail.com

The Book Group, First & third Thursdays. College Ave UCC Youth Bldg., Orangeburg & College Ave., 3:30 pm. Info: mzjurkovic@gmail.com

The Compassionate Friends, Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter. 2nd Thursday of the month. Contact: Joanna Rose-Murray, 209-484-8276, jrmcompassionate@gmail.com. <http://www.tcfmodesto-riverbankarea.org>

NAACP. King-Kennedy Center, 601 S M.L. King Dr., Modesto, 7 pm, 3rd Thursdays. 549-1991.

Valley Heartland Zen Group: every Thurs 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2310 Woodland Ave. Meditation. Newcomers welcome. Info: 535-6750 or <http://emptynestzendo.org>

Pagan Community Meeting, 1st Thursdays, Cafe Amore, 3025 McHenry Ave, Suite S., Modesto, 8 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

FRIDAYS

Funstrummer Ukulele Band every Friday, from 9:15 am until noon, Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto. Info: 505-3216; www.funstrummers.com

Latino Emergency Council (LEC) 3rd Fridays, 8:15 am, El Concilio, 1314 H St. Modesto. Info: Dale Butler, 522-8537.

VILLAGE DANCERS: Dances from Balkans, Europe, USA and more. Fridays, Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock. 7:30-9:30 pm, \$5 (students free). Info: call Judy, 209-480-0387.

SIERRA CLUB: Yokuts group. Regular meetings, third Friday, College Ave. Congregational Church, 7 pm. Info: 549-9155. Visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts> for info on hikes and events.

MUJERES LATINAS, last Friday, lunch meetings, Info: Cristina Villego, 549-1831.

HISPANIC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL, 1st & 3rd Fridays at 7:00 am, El Concilio, 1314 H St. Other meetings at Terrace Cafe, Double Tree Hotel. Info: Yamilet Valladolid, 523-2860.

SATURDAY

Citizens' Climate Lobby, Modesto Chapter, meets every first Saturday, 10:30 a.m., 937 Oxford Way, Modesto. Questions: Call Kathy, 523-5907.

So Easy ~ So Good: Vegetarian/Vegan/Wannabe Group. Potlucks, guest speakers, field trips, activist activities, movie nights, etc. Third Saturday of every month. Info: Kathy Haynes (209) 250-9961 or email kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com

SERRV: Saturdays, 10 - Noon and after church Sundays or by appointment. Call Mary, 522-6497 or 523-5178. Gifts from developing countries. Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland, Rm. #4, Modesto. nonprofit organization. <http://www.gaycentralvalley.org/>

DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS: Tenth of each month. Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.