

A Countdown to Change: A presence in Hyde Park January 1st to 19th (Dr. Martin Luther King Day), 2009

From Voices for Creative Nonviolence

Dear Friends,

In January, 2009, Barack Obama will be inaugurated as president of the United States. We earnestly hope his presidency will signal the dawning of long-needed progressive change in the United States. To help build popular momentum behind the progressive goals of President Obama's campaign, *we intend to maintain a 20-day presence, from January 1 to January 19, 2009, in Hyde Park, Chicago: Camp Hope: Countdown Toward Change.*

Every day from New Years' to Dr. Martin Luther King Day (1/1-1/19), whatever the winter has in store for us, we will set up at the intersection of E. Hyde Park Blvd. and S. Drexel Ave to congratulate Senator Obama as our new President-elect and recommit ourselves to progressive actions he promoted on his campaign trail. We are urging President elect Obama to take eight actions immediately upon being sworn

into office, and reminding ourselves that these are only eight early steps to more profound policy changes.

1. As Commander-in-Chief, issue an order directing the U.S. military to reduce the overall levels of U.S. military personnel deployed in Iraq by no fewer than 5,000 military personnel per month and to immediately cease offensive combat operations, with the ultimate objective of removing all military personnel from Iraq (other than those required for normal embassy missions) and the complete cessation of hostilities within Iraq.
2. Establish a commission to explore and develop policy proposals for full employment, living wage jobs and job training; 1) in light of the impact of unemployment, especially amongst Black, Latino and other young adults; and, 2) recognizing that unemployment and the prison-industrial complex are intrinsically race-based and connected in that the U.S. elects to imprison people of color rather

than create living wage employment opportunities.

3. Cease and desist in the execution of all raids and immediately suspend deportations until comprehensive immigration reform is completed. Support comprehensive immigration reform which promotes the reunification of families and provides legal status with a path to citizenship for the millions of persons who are currently undocumented; suspend all of the Bush administration's policies regarding border patrol until comprehensive immigration reform is completed
4. Take all nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert and begin negotiations with other leaders of nuclear weapon states to reduce and eliminate all nuclear weapons.
5. Close Guantanamo; eliminate military tribunals and accord, to detainees being held at Guantanamo and other

Countdown to Change . . continued p. 6

Never forget

By: MARC ASH, t r u t h o u t | Perspective

When they say to you that "mistakes were made," never believe that. Mistakes are always made, but mistakes did not lead us on the road to Baghdad. We were taken to Iraq by those who knew exactly, precisely what they were doing. Or believed so anyway.

Do not be persuaded to believe that "bad intelligence" was the problem and war was the unfortunate result. No one who made this war believed themselves what they told the nation. They knew quite well and they went anyway. And they took us with them.

When it is said that an "insurgent" has killed or been killed always ask who that was, and why. More often than not, it was someone who lived there, but would not live under foreign rule.

Do not be seduced into thinking of torture as harsh interrogation. The hour is late and we must confront the torturers among us.

If you are the slightest bit concerned that we have crushed freedom here and in other lands in the name of freedom, be more concerned. We have.

Never forget or let your children forget that it was all a lie, told with purpose.

Many of us believed that Vietnam was a catharsis, a moving beyond a point to which we could never return. It took only 28 years to get from Saigon to Baghdad. And we took the exact same road. Don't be too ashamed the trick we fell for was the same one Mark Twain warned of when he wrote, "Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor ..." "All you have to do ...," said Hermann Goering "... is tell them that they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

Never Forget continued p. 8

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John McCutcheon to perform in Modesto on Inauguration Day

By DON MCMILLAN

So you didn't get your hotel and limousine reservations made in time. Besides, you wondered if you could afford to offset the greenhouse gas emissions of a round trip flight to Washington. Take heart! You can celebrate (or mourn as your case may be?) right here in Modesto at a once-in-a-lifetime inauguration night event. That's right, folk legend John McCutcheon has chosen Modesto for a performance that night.

Local fans are thrilled. Said naturalist, Modesto Peace/Life Center Peace Camp organizer and elementary school teacher Tim Smart, "President-Elect Obama has been successful in opening people's eyes and hearts in part because of the grassroots efforts and emissaries he inspires in communities across our nation. John McCutcheon exemplifies this role. For years John has championed the ethic of unity, the power of people to do good, the dream of peace."

The Peace/Life Center does not endorse candidates. That doesn't prevent its supporters individually from joining campaigns they believe most likely to govern in favor of a better world. McCutcheon clearly favored Barack Obama's Presidential campaign. "Nothing prepared me ... for the gratuitous slurs leveled at community organizers by Rudy Giuliani and Sarah Palin" at the Republican Convention, McCutcheon wrote in his blog for October 30. "Palin demeaned the work that Barack Obama did for years in South Side Chicago by saying 'I guess a small town mayor is sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities.' Giuliani was at least honest enough to admit his own ignorance when he sneered, 'Community organizer...I don't even know what that is.'"

Further, at the top of McCutcheon's Post-Labor Day e-newsletter is an image of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. surveying throngs extending towards the Washington Monument. This photo's edges in the e-newsletter are serrated like a postage stamp, and it has the inscription "COMMUNITY ORGANIZER It's nothing compared to being a small-town mayor."

Lest anyone doubt McCutcheon's support of Obama, a version of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" performed to video clips and images of Barack and Michelle Obama and their supporters appeared on YouTube



(www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkfBfR_wEF0). McCutcheon produced it and sang two verses. Other artists who contributed include Maria Muldaur, Tom Paxton, and Willie Nelson. And the evening of the big regime change, he's scheduled to perform in Modesto.

The concert's intended to celebrate inclusiveness and community. "That John McCutcheon is coming to a traditionally conservative area, the Central Valley, to help spread the promise of a liberal presidency, is walking the talk of a new tide of togetherness," said Tim Smart.

Modesto Junior College photography teacher Doug Smith expects a convivial spirit at the event: "It will be a spirit of hope and of ... getting ready to work hard to support the change that we've all wanted." At the same time, he looks forward to some fun, an evening to "pull together the light-hearted side of the politics of the last year."

"This year's event amounts to a touch of the inaugural ball celebrated here in our own front yard. I encourage everyone to come, to be ready to sing, to expect to leave uplifted," said Tim Smart.

Six-time Grammy nominated folk musician John McCutcheon's 8th annual benefit concert for the Peace/Life Center will be Tuesday, January 20 at 7:00 p.m. at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave. Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$23 at the door and youth 17 and under are \$5. Groups of 10 or more are \$15 per person. Tickets can be purchased at the church, 523-1438 or at Anderson Custom Framing and Gallery, 1323 J St., 579-9913. Sponsorships are also available.

Early planning for Iraq march

By SHELLY SCRIBNER

A.N.S.W.E.R., the national and international organization which has planned many of the marches against the Iraq war, even before the war started, is planning the next march on Saturday, March 21, 2009, the date the war started 6 years ago.

What if the war ends? We could cancel all the marches here and internationally. We can hope and pray that we do not have to continually march. What a great idea if we could march to greet Peace.

The Modesto Peace/Life Center will keep you posted regarding our plans by publishing this information in Connections. There will be a march in San Francisco. We may do something here for those who would rather stay in Modesto.



The perfect holiday gift!

The Modesto Peace/Life Center has the perfect holiday gift — a tote bag with a graphic of the world surrounded by the word "peace" in 18 languages. The artwork was especially created by our own Peggy Castaneda! This large U.S. made bag is sturdy cotton canvas, sits upright, and is suitable for groceries.

Help stop the ecological disaster created by disposable plastic bags by changing to our reusable bag. Be green and spread a message of peace. Pick up one bag for \$8.00, or buy three for the bargain price of \$21.00!

To get your bag(s), call Ken Schroeder at 526-2303.

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Our wishes for you!

The editors of Stanislaus Connections and the Board of the Modesto Peace Life Center wish you happiness and peace during this holiday season and in the coming New Year, a year filled with hopeful promise.



MLK Commemoration hosts Robert Moses, noted activist, educator

By DAN ONORATO and JAMES COSTELLO

Dr. Robert Moses, noted Civil Rights activist, teacher, and founder of the Algebra Project will be the keynote speaker at our Fifteenth Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration on Saturday, January 17, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at the Main Auditorium-Performing Arts & Media Center on Modesto Junior College's East Campus. Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

Prior to Dr. Moses' MJC appearance, there will be an open reception for him at the King-Kennedy Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. There will also be a **special meeting with young people** there from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. All interested youth are invited to participate in this unique opportunity. These events are free to the public.

Inspired by lunch counter sit-ins, Robert Moses left a comfortable job teaching high school math in New York City in 1961 to work with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Mississippi. There, where black registration was the lowest of any southern state, he organized sharecroppers to register to vote. For three years his quiet strength, steady resolve, and unshaken courage inspired thousands to overcome the odds. His 1964 Mississippi Summer Project helped spark the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which finally assured all black Americans the right to vote. For many in the Civil Rights Movement, Moses was the most influential leader, after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

His commitment to social equality and active citizenship led in the 1980's to his starting The Algebra Project. Through this national effort, tens of thousands of poor inner city and rural students each year have improved their problem solving skills so they're better prepared for engagement in the economic mainstream. Today, Moses asserts, those who are disadvantaged need economic access, and that starts with math and science skills essential to a technological society.

Dr. Moses continues to teach and work at social change through education. He is the recipient of honorary doctoral degrees and honors, including the MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Award, the Heinz Award for the Human Condition, the Chase Smith Award for American Democracy, and the James Conant Bryant Award from the Education Commission of the States.

Join us to hear this legendary Civil Rights leader and educator share his experience and reflect on current challenges.

Although Martin Luther King, Jr. died nearly 40 years ago, his vision still uplifts and transforms countless people throughout the world. To keep that vision fresh and provoca-

tive locally, for the last fourteen years a committee of community groups—the Modesto Peace Life Center, the City of Modesto, Modesto Junior College, and California State University, Stanislaus—has offered our community an inspiring Martin Luther King Commemoration.

Over the years we have brought a stimulating array of powerful speakers to our community: ministers J. Alfred Smith of Oakland's Allen Temple Baptist Church and Joseph Lowery of the SCLC; actors Greg Alan Williams, Edward James Olmos, Danny Glover, and Mike Farrell; Dr. King's daughter, the late Yolanda King; astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison; philosopher Cornel West; Indian activist Russell Means; football coach Herman Boone; and non-violence advocate Arun Gandhi. We have also presented a panel of community leaders addressing local issues and organized study circles on racism.

Our speakers bring Rev. King's philosophy of nonviolence into our contemporary reality by reflecting on their experience and social commitments. They connect the past with the pres-

ent to inspire action for a more just and peaceful future.

So that our event can be open to all, we do not charge the public to attend. *We depend solely on a small city contribution and donations of money or services from caring groups and individuals in the community like you. We need your support.*

ACTION: Help us provide the community with this important remembrance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Make your check payable to the "Modesto Peace Life Center-MLK," c/o Jim Costello, 1849 Richard Way, Ceres, CA 95307. The Modesto Peace Life Center is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, tax ID # 94-2800825. For information, email jcostello@igc.org, or call 209.575.7990, or 209.577.5355.

Sponsors at press time: City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Dept.; King-Kennedy Memorial Center; Modesto Peace Life Center; Modesto Junior College; Yosemite Community College District; California State University, Stanislaus Office of Student Learning; Frailing, Rockwell & Kelly; *The Modesto Bee*.



Dear Supporter of the Modesto Peace/Life Center,

As we write this fundraising appeal in the days following Barack Obama's victory, we are elated and humbled. Our country has taken a huge step toward healing its racism. At the same time Obama and the country face immense challenges. Our planet is imperiled by global warming, vast pollution, and increasing competition over dwindling natural resources. The age of petroleum is nearing its end. In our plummeting economy people are losing their homes, jobs, and life savings, and increasing numbers have no medical insurance. And our foreign policy is mired in militaristic imperialism. The problems appear insurmountable, yet solve them we must, if our Earth and we are to survive. In this context of national, global, and planetary crisis, the Peace/Life Center continues its modest but important efforts to act locally, educate ourselves and our community, and promote nonviolent alternatives.

We've been busy this year. In January we sponsored our annual John McCutcheon music concert, and worked with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Committee to bring Arun Gandhi to Modesto. Our Peace Essay Contest engaged over 900 students in thoughtful writing, and our monthly peace vigils rallied support to end the Iraq War.

Our Summer Peace Camp offered over 80 adults and children a weekend in the beautiful Sierra Nevada to build or deepen friendships, share aspirations and ideas, and breathe clear mountain air. Our annual fundraisers that build community continue to thrive—the June Pancake Breakfast, the September potluck auction for our newspaper, and the October Harvest Gathering. In July, with the Modesto Church of the Brethren, we hosted Palestinian nonviolent peace activist and educator Mubarak Awad, and in October we brought Palestinian-American Mohammed Alatar to Modesto to present his latest film, "Jerusalem... the Eastside Story."

Meanwhile, the hard working staff of our monthly newspaper, *Stanislaus Connections*, continues to offer provocative and informative articles, and our dedicated Media Committee produces weekly programs on Cable Access TV and local broadcast Channel 14.

To continue our work, we need your help. If you can volunteer time, if you are interested in one of our projects, if you have organizational or computer skills, if you have suggestions, we need you.

We also need donations. Our yearly budget is approximately \$20,000. We are a non-profit, volunteer organization. All contributions go to promote our work on peace, justice, and a sustainable environment through nonviolence.

Thank you for being a part of this community. We appreciate any support you can give the Peace/Life Center. To paraphrase Gandhi in the spirit of Obama, our work together helps create the kind of change we all hope for.

Sincerely,

John Frailing

Shelly Scribner

Co-presidents

stanislaus
CONNECTIONS

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a suggested donation of \$25.00/yr.

Volunteer tree plantings will 'Mend the Bend'

The Tuolumne River Trust needs volunteers to help plant trees on the Big Bend Habitat Restoration Project along the Tuolumne River on Saturday, December 6th from 9:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Volunteers will take part in the habitat restoration and are needed to help plant acorns for oaks as well as other tree species.

For directions and more information, contact the Tuolumne River Trust at 236-0330 or karlha@tuolumne.org, or go online at www.tuolumne.org.

This restoration program is sponsored by the Tuolumne River Trust, East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, California Department of Water Resources, California Wildlife Conservation Board, Fish America Foundation, and NOAA Restoration Center's Community-based Restoration Program.

Onions in the garden

ANNE SCHELLMAN, Horticulture Associate, University of California Cooperative Extension

Each fall, home gardeners anxiously await the arrival of onion bunches at local nurseries and garden centers. I'm told requests for onion bunches can begin as early as September. As a rule, most nurseries in Stanislaus County will not have onion bunches until November. The availability of bunches depends upon weather and the schedule of the onion growers.

Onions belong to the genus *allium*, which also includes various crops used to season food. Onions were an important crop in ancient Egypt. The Bible even mentions that the Israelites who left Egypt to wander the desert complained bitterly about the lack of onion in their diet. Indeed, many a dish would be quite dull without the addition of this flavorful ingredient.

Onion Planting Requirements

Before planting onions in your home garden, it's essen-

tial to first understand their cultural requirements. Onions have shallow roots and need soil that is free of clods. They do poorly when weeds compete with them for water and nutrients.

Prepare your garden bed by mixing 1 ½" of compost into the soil. For gardeners with less than ideal soil, a 4" raised bed contained with wood slats or bender board is a good place to grow onions. Onions grown in compost enriched soil will not need additional fertilizer.

Onions can be grown using a variety of forms, including seed, set, transplant and bunches. Onion seed should be planted in rows ½" deep. Plant seeds ½" apart for green onions, and 5-6" apart for larger onions, or simply use the thinnings from onions planted closely together as green onions. Keep the ground moist until seedlings emerge. Tiny transplant onions have the same spacing requirements, and should be gently removed from their containers before planting.

Prior to planting onion sets, sort them into two piles: bulbs larger than a nickel and smaller than a nickel. The larger bulbs should be used to grow green onions, and the smaller ones left to develop into mature onions. Plant sets 1-2" apart and push them into the soil so the tip is barely showing. A publication on onions from the UC Davis Vegetable Research and Information Center states that sets are not a good method for the production of mature onions. Onions contained in sets are varieties not well adapted to California and frequently produce onions that bolt (go to seed) rather than forming a bulb.

Onion bunches contain about 50-100 transplants that are ready to be planted in your garden. Plant them 1 ½" deep and 4" apart. Grow them in rows 1 ½ to 2' apart.

Harvesting Onions

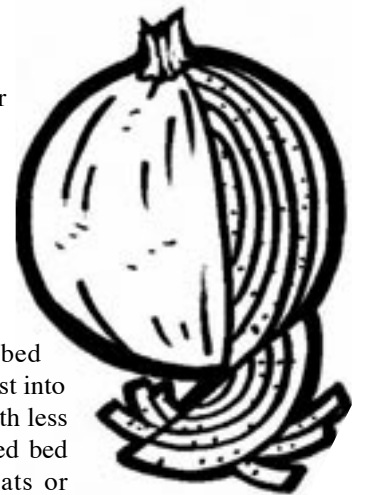
Stop irrigating onions when about 10% of the tops begin to fall over. Nutrients from the tops will continue to move into the bulb until the leaves turn brown. Onions can be left in the ground and used when needed. In fact, onions can be left in the ground and continuously harvested until all the tops are dry.

When harvesting, use a digging spade under the onions and gently push up through the soil until the onion roots are loose from the ground. Never pull the top of an onion to harvest it, as onions are easily bruised and should be treated with care. To dry the onions, brush the dirt off the bulbs and trim the roots. Leave them in a dry place, not touching, for about 2 weeks. Onions can be braided or the stems can be cut for storage.

Keep onions in a dark place with temperatures between 35-50°F. Red and white onions do not store for long periods of time, while yellow onions can be stored for months, because their skins are more resistant to diseases and insects.

For more information about growing onions, garlic, leeks and shallots, see "Alliums in Your Garden," available from the University of California Cooperative Extension Office at 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite A. The guide will also found at: http://cestanislaus.ucdavis.edu/Gardening/Gardening_Articles.htm

Reach the author at aschellman@ucdavis.edu



Yes! I want to help . . .

- Contact me about vigils or other local actions
- Put me on the phone tree/email alert list
- I can staff the Peace/Life Center 2 or 3 hours per week
- I'd like to be a part of the Media Committee
- I want to help with *Stanislaus Connections* in
 - mailing and distribution
 - editing
 - writing articles
- I want to participate in the monthly Song Circle gathering

I want to assist in one or more of the following ongoing projects:

- John McCutcheon Concert
- Peace Essay Contest
- Pancake Breakfast (first Sunday in June)
- Peace Camp (last weekend in June)
- Auction & Potluck for Connections (September)
- Harvest Gathering (October-November)

Add to the legacy of these nonviolent pioneers:

- Donations:**
- \$25 Kathy Kelly
 - \$50 Dorothy Day
 - \$100 Daniel & Philip Berrigan
 - \$250 Cesar Chavez
 - \$500 Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - \$1,000 Mahatma Gandhi

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

By Lillian Vallee

50. Gentle Monarch of Lilliputian Realms

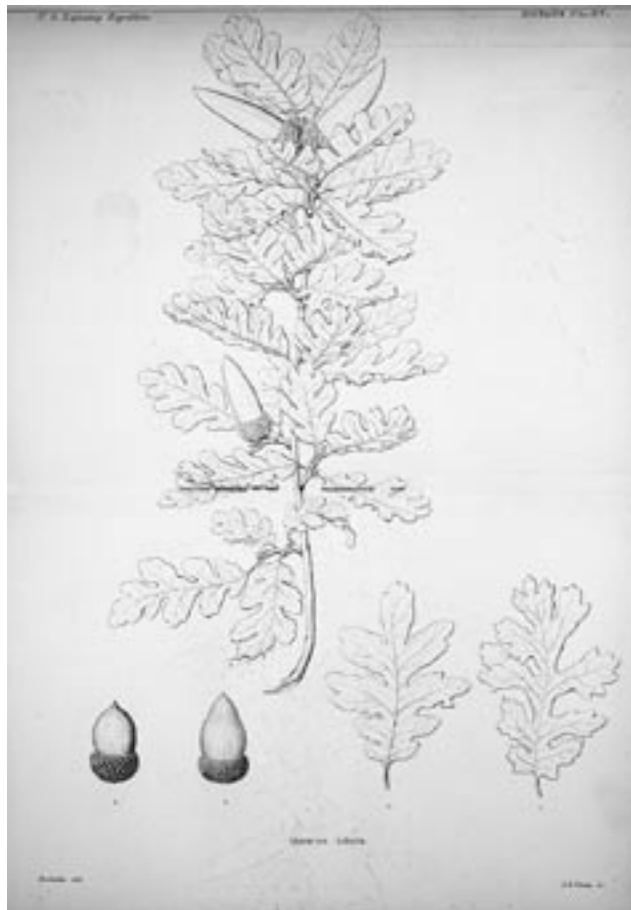
Recently I drove to Las Vegas through the rainwashed desert full of blooming rabbit brush. The air was clean and crisp and the views breathtaking as I descended from almost 5,000 feet towards the twinkling towers of the city. But it wasn't until the return trip through the stunning, oak-studded Tehachapis and Tejon Ranch that I realized I would not be able to live in a place without oaks.

And that is why in my fiftieth column, I return to the illustrious and inexhaustible subject of the first: the Valley Oak. I return to *Quercus lobata* — winter-deciduous white oak with the polite, deeply lobed leaves — because it is our totem tree, the one that defines the place we live in, the natural history we should know, and the community we should emulate. “The stately oak,” writes Alan Schoenherr, “was a major component of the savannahs and gallery forests that were formerly so widespread on deep soils throughout the Great Central Valley.” Legendary is the Kaweah River delta which once boasted 400 square miles of Valley Oak groves. “Throughout the season this Oak presents a gentle drama which evergreen trees do not offer,” writes Donald Culross Peattie with his usual lyricism, “the tender haze of color when leaves and catkins first appear, in the spring, the beauty of the long summer shade, which is not dim and stuffy like that in a dense growth of young Redwood, Douglastree and Laurel, but luminous and breezy — letting in the light but not the full heat of day.”

One of the houses I most admire in the La Loma neighborhood, on Coven Avenue, is built *around* a monarch oak. Whenever I walk in the area, I visit the old tree because I would like to understand its magnetism: why, when you look at this oak, does it obliterate everything else around it? Why does this tree have a presence, a vibration, a degree of *being* lacking in our other, more colorful street trees? Peattie writes, “...you take one look at an old specimen's great bole, its magnificent crown, the width and the depth of its pool of shade, and you realize that it is king in its class.” The bearing of the older oaks accounts for their inclusion among “chieftain” trees by the Celts and for the first half of the Latin binomial, *Quercus*, derived from the Celtic words *quer* and *cuez*, meaning “fine tree.”

The tree on Coven must be two hundred years old and its massive boughs rise and dip over the roof of the house and the sidewalk in front. Only the Valley Oak seems to do this kind of rising and dipping in old age, called the “weeping” stage, when the oak is between 100 and 300 years old. Steel cables tether the heavy branches to the oak's furrowed trunk, just in case.

The answer to the question of why the oak has such a hold on us may be in how intelligently and gracefully it *serves*. Like any good relative, the oak feeds us. Acorns were the primary food of all native Californians. “The human history of California,” we read in *Oaks of California*, “began in the shade of her native oaks.” Valley oaks produced crops that numbered in the millions of tons. While most food available to Valley Indians would have been available in the spring and summer, acorns were an autumn boon — rich in fat, protein,



carbohydrates, amino acids and vitamins A and C. Acorns were second only to salt as a trade item, and people were sometimes named after this food: Sweet Acorn or Striped Acorn and maybe even Plump or Bitter Acorn?

Every day I examine what my backyard oak releases onto the patio tiles — leaves, galls, acorns, gossamer, spiders, beetles, birds — and marvel at the oak's highly refined interactions with other plants and animals. The Valley oak is a model of community. From the whimsical circus of galls under its canopy to the symbiotic mycorrhizal networks in its roots, the oak teaches accommodation. Synecology, the branch of ecology dealing with these relationships, is still in its infancy, but gathering up the galls shed by my patio oak these past six months has taught me that tolerating gall inducers may be one of the most important contributions of oaks in our ecological niche.

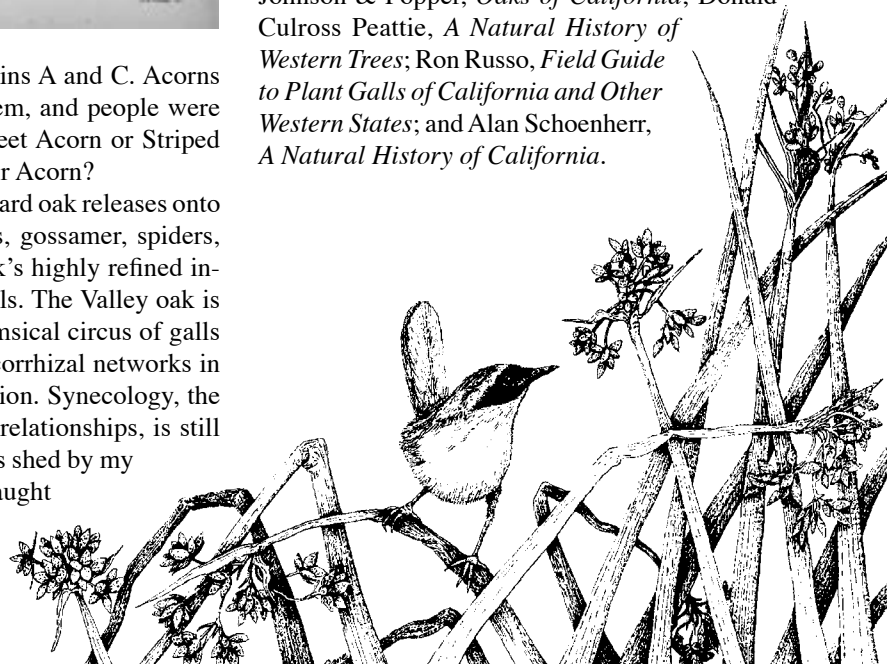
Here's what gall expert Ron Russo has to say about galls induced by mites, psyllids, aphids, thrips, moths, midges, fruit flies, and wasps:

The world of plant galls is a Lilliputian realm in which an organism, sometimes scarcely the size of a period on this page, can induce a plant to produce a swelling of a specific size, shape, and color. Some of these galls, especially those of cynipid wasps, are so flamboyant in design and color they would challenge the wildest of architectural dreams.... Part of the “magic” of this little known world is that plant galls are all around us: in forests, woodlands, marshlands, neighborhood parks, and even your garden.

I look out the kitchen window and see patio tiles alive with white- and golden-crowned sparrows feeding on gall larvae housed in colorful creations resembling spindles, cupcakes, sea urchins, donuts, pumpkins, etc. Uh-oh! I feel my delight turning into that mysterious fever of the gall enthusiast Russo warns against: “It only takes a dash of curiosity to explore, discover, and begin to understand the fascination of these strange creations, and, in so doing, the grand biodiversity of Earth itself.”

But be careful — not all your friends will enjoy a six a.m. phone call to share your latest gall discovery — even if it does look like a club lost by some tiny caveman living in your trees.

Sources: Robert F. Heizer & Albert B. Elsasser, *The Natural World of the California Indians*; Pavlik, Muick, Johnson & Popper, *Oaks of California*; Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of Western Trees*; Ron Russo, *Field Guide to Plant Galls of California and Other Western States*; and Alan Schoenherr, *A Natural History of California*.



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Opportunities for the first months of 2009

By JOE VOLK, Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

President-Elect Barack Obama and his administration will take office at a moment when hundreds of millions of people in the United States, and many more around the world, are eager for change and willing to work with him to achieve shared goals. The honeymoon here in Washington, throughout the United States, and around the globe will not last forever, however. These good feelings need to be acted on soon.

What do we at FCNL think is possible in the first few months of the new administration? As we look back at the election campaign and analyze the candidates' positions, campaigns, and parties, we see many openings for nonpartisan change. Even with these openings, we will be relying on your hard work lobbying at the grassroots and your financial support to help us mobilize the movement that can take advantage of the opportunities presented by a new administration.

The potential is there for change. For 65 years, FCNL has practiced hope by nurturing that kind of change potential. We are hopeful now because

- both major party candidates for president ran against the policies of the past eight years;
- both candidates spoke of the need to repair the image and role of the United States in the world;
- both parties recognized the importance of working for new international treaties on climate change and reducing the danger of nuclear war, and both candidates spoke out against wasteful military spending;
- more young people, more African Americans, and more Hispanics voted in this election than ever before, and millions of voters went to the polls for the first time; and
- both Obama and his former opponent, Sen. John McCain (AZ), have a history of working across party lines.

If the new administration and the new Congress work together, they can make real changes in the first few months of the next administration. Here are key opportunities for the president and Congress to open the doors to hope:

- Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the Senate. This treaty is a cornerstone of efforts to control the spread of nuclear weapons. Obama says he strongly supports ratifying the test ban treaty, but ratification requires a yes vote from 67 senators. Our lobbyists believe there are 58 votes now in the Senate in favor of ratification. The first nine months of the new Congress offer the best chance to get the additional

eight votes. Obama needs to signal now that passage of the CTBT is a priority by appointing someone at a high level to secure Senate ratification.

- Ban cluster bombs. Half the nations of the world, including nearly all of the NATO allies of the United States, will sign a treaty on December 3 banning these weapons. Even before taking office, Obama could declare his intention to sign the treaty and to work for Senate ratification. FCNL helped persuade Congress to ban cluster bomb exports and has been working to persuade both the new president and the new Congress to support a ban on these weapons. The best chance for action on this treaty will be early in the new administration, while the world is still focused on it.

- Renegotiate the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia. The treaty, which limits the number of nuclear warheads and other strategic weapons that each country can maintain, expires in December 2009. After he takes office, the president should propose a 12- or 18-month extension of the treaty to allow for more comprehensive negotiations toward further reducing the number of nuclear weapons in each country's stockpile.

- Ban torture, no exceptions. With the stroke of a pen on January 20, 2009, President Obama could end torture by all U.S. government agencies. We at FCNL will also be mobilizing congressional support for the repeal of the Military Commissions Act and the restoration of the full habeas corpus rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

- Start negotiations for a grand bargain in the Middle East. Obama has argued for a new, bipartisan U.S. policy in the Middle East. His administration should take a comprehensive approach that establishes a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and embraces negotiations with Iran on Iraq, on international safeguards against Iran's development of nuclear weapons, on initiatives to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflict, and on stabilizing Afghanistan. However, opposition to these negotiations and initiatives persists in Congress and must be turned around by presidential leadership and grassroots lobbying across the country.

- Invest in preventing war. The current financial crisis will put tremendous pressure on the president and Congress to reduce government spending. The president could embrace the call from House Financial Services Committee Chair Barney Frank (MA) for a 25 percent reduction in military spending and urge that these savings be invested in preventing future wars

through diplomacy, development assistance, and international engagement. He would still have sufficient money left over for green infrastructure initiatives at home to create jobs and reduce CO2 emissions.

- Bring our nation's checkbook back into balance. Too much attention in the current financial crisis has been focused on saving Wall Street, while people on Main Street continue to suffer. Congress will approve a new economic stimulus package sometime in the next four months. The new president and new Congress could use this legislation to invest in reducing income disparities in the United States, making new investments in reducing the number of people living in poverty.

- Address climate change. The governments of the world will meet in Copenhagen at the end of 2009 to take new steps to address climate change. What will the next U.S. president bring to the table to show the international community that his country is serious about reducing its greenhouse gas emissions? Will Congress and the president have made real progress by passing legislation to reduce climate change and helping those most harmed by climate change?

- Bring Native American health care into the 21st century. Both presidential candidates and both major political parties have called for new efforts to help Indian Country. In 2008 the Senate passed legislation that would dramatically improve health care for nearly 2 million Native Americans by bringing modern health care services such as hospice and mental health care to Indian Country. Unfortunately, the House has so far failed to act. Reauthorizing Indian health care programs should be on the 60-day agenda for the next president and the new Congress.

On Tuesday night, President-Elect Obama said, "This victory alone is not the change we seek - it is only the chance for us to make that change, and that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were. It cannot happen without you. So let us summon a new spirit of patriotism, of service and responsibility, where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves but each other."

We at FCNL look forward to working with President Obama on these opportunities. We will need your participation in FCNL, and we look forward to working with you in our common practice of hope.

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A Countdown to Change: A presence in Hyde Park

... from page 1

U.S. detention facilities, access to the U.S. court system. We ask that the President-elect reverse the Bush administration's advisory opinions regarding the permissibility of torture in extracting information from detainees and forbid all forms of torture by any and all US agencies and personnel.

6. Establish a commission to explore policy proposals which would provide universal health coverage and make recommendations that would cover all pre-existing conditions, provide no less coverage than what the Congressional health care plan provides, and provide health care to the greatest number of people.
7. Establish a 90-day moratorium on all housing foreclosures.
8. Submit the Kyoto Protocol to Congress for ratification, making a commitment to reduce emissions of greenhouse

gases that contribute to global warming.

As activists committed to nonviolence, several groups working for peaceful and just social change, both locally and nationally, have collaborated to launch Camp Hope. These groups include: Voices for Creative Nonviolence, the St. Louis-based Justice and Peace Shares, Pax Christi Springfield IL, AFSC, IL Coalition for Peace, Justice, and the Environment, Eighth Day Center for Justice, Kairos Chicago, North Suburban Peace Initiative, North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice, Hyde Parkers for Peace and Justice and the Peace Action Sub-committee of the First Unitarian Church of Chicago.

We now welcome wide participation in this effort.

In addition to our daily vigil, we will organize community workshops, forums, and town hall meetings on the above-mentioned policies and on nonviolent strategies for achieving

them. Peace and justice advocates who wish to visit Chicago to be part of Camp Hope will be warmly welcomed, whether for a single day or the duration of the encampment. We'll offer logistics help to the best of our abilities, but we do ask participants to anticipate covering their own expenses for housing, transportation and food.

The 2008 election energized countless Americans to organize anew for change. Now that the election is over, it will take continued outreach, organizing, and popular involvement - including sustained pressure on Congress - to enact the progressive changes that brought Americans to the polls to elect Barack Obama. We hope you'll consider joining our efforts in 2009.

Write to us at: contact@camphope2009.org or call 773-878-3815. Visit <http://www.camphope2009.org/>

Can Obama say no to nuclear weapons?

By J. SRI RAMAN, *truthout* | Perspective

A minor controversy among India's mandarins and in its media has ended, with US President-elect Barack Obama making a telephone call to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday morning. What deserved far greater notice than the details of the four-day-long controversy was its relation to one of the major world issues of our times - the menace of nuclear weapons.

The controversy raged on in newspaper columns and television studios about Obama calling up several heads of governments across continents, while he seemed to have pointedly ignored Singh. The omission rankled, particularly after the much-publicized, 20-minute call on November 8 to Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari. Independent and informed reports related this to a possibly new US stand under Obama on the nuclear issue.

Immediately after Obama's conversation with Zardari, red-faced officials of India's external affairs ministry claimed that the president-elect had called up only "the military allies" of the US - with one of them even adding that "we are happy not to figure in the league." The prime minister himself was quick to dissociate himself with such a posture. He hastened to tell the media that he had lacked the time for a leisurely chat that Obama had indeed wanted.

Singh added that Obama had sent him a letter instead, spelling out the future president's "approach" to India. The prime minister seized the occasion to stress his staunch commitment to the "strategic partnership" with the US, and reports were silent on the blushes of the bureaucrats who had offered a very different explanation.

The independent interpretation of the mystery of the missing call linked it to an earlier Obama letter in September. New Delhi chose to release it after Obama's historic election victory. The letter, said to laud US-India relations, was released presumably as an answer to local critics of Singh's gaffe in declaring India's deep love for Bush during the prime minister's Washington visit of September 26, at the height of Obama's long and hard poll campaign.

The release of the September letter, say knowledgeable sources, did not mend the matters. According to them, the New Delhi version of the letter omitted a crucial paragraph about the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which India had yet to sign. The US has signed the 12-year-old CTBT, but is yet to ratify it. Obama and the Democrats are committed to its ratification. Singh's omission from the president-elect's call list, say the sources, was Obama's response to the manipulated version of his missive.

What the Singh government has now publicized is Obama's expression of "firm support" for the US-India nuclear deal during his talk with the Prime minister. No further details of

the interaction on the issue were either discussed or divulged. While Obama had finally voted in the US Senate for the deal, his vote included an amendment making the deal conditional upon a presidential certification that the agreement would not be used to aid India in creating new nuclear weapons.

The Indian media had called this a "killer amendment," reading it as a crippling restriction on India's right to test nuclear weapons again. We must wait to see whether Obama's "firm support" of the deal will allow any future action by the US administration to address concerns articulated in the amendment and the reported allusion to the CTBT in the September communication.

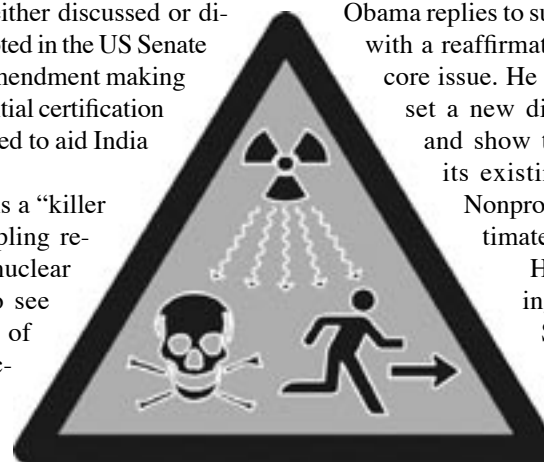
Obama, however, has to prepare to tackle three specific and larger nuclear issues to have come up in the post-election period. The first of these is about the Missile Defense Program, raised particularly in the context of the proposed missile deployment in Poland, on which the president-elect has indicated a preference for caution. The subject deserves separate treatment in a subsequent column.

The second issue relates to what Obama has called the "real 21st century threats" in this regard. To quote him: "The biggest nuclear security risk is not from a rogue state lashing out with ballistic missiles, but a terrorist smuggling a crude nuclear device across our borders. We spend more than \$10 billion a year on missile defense, but far too little on securing nuclear materials around the world and improving security (including detection) at our ports and borders."

The third issue to have cropped up is about the Bush-initiated proposal for production of a new generation of nuclear weapons. During his campaign, Obama said a clear no to the proposal. "I will not authorize the development of new nuclear weapons," he said in September. "And I will make the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons worldwide a central element of US nuclear policy."

He faces a challenge on this issue from US Defense Secretary Robert Gates. Speaking at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on November 7, Gates asked for new nuclear weapons and said the US could not maintain deterrence, reduce arms or modernize them without tests. He argued that the country ceased developing nuclear weapons in the 1980s and stopped producing nuclear munitions in the 1990s. With weapons developers and engineers gone, the US suffered a "brain drain" and the situation needed to be remedied, he added.

The world peace movement as a whole will hope that



Obama replies to such cunning and contrived arguments with a reaffirmation of his campaign promise on the core issue. He told the voters: "As president, I will set a new direction in nuclear weapons policy and show the world that America believes in its existing commitment under the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) to work to ultimately eliminate all nuclear weapons."

He added: "I fully support reaffirming this goal, as called for by George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn, as well as the specific steps they propose to move us in that direction." The first three of this formidable team held important positions in

both Republican and Democratic administrations, and the fourth has served as a front-ranking anti-nuclear-weapon campaigner. In a statement published on January 4, 2007, they said: "US leadership will be required to take the world to the next stage - to a solid consensus for reversing reliance on nuclear weapons globally as a vital contribution to preventing their proliferation into potentially dangerous hands, and ultimately ending them as a threat to the world."

Mere words cannot eliminate the most dangerous of mass-destruction weapons. Experts estimate that all the nuclear-weapon states together possess about 27,000 intact nuclear warheads, of which 97 percent are in US and Russian stockpiles. About 12,500 of these warheads are considered operational, with the balance in reserve or retired and awaiting dismantlement. The Pentagon, according to them, has custody of nearly 10,000 stockpiled warheads, of which 5,735 are considered active or operational. Russia, in their estimate, has 16,000 intact warheads, of which about 5,830 are considered operational.

In January 2007, the respected Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists thought it fit to warn that, despite the reduction of arsenals, especially since the end of the Cold War, the world had entered a "Second Nuclear Age marked by grave threats." Among the reasons it cited were: the continuing launch-ready status of at least 2,000 of the approximately 20,000 nuclear weapons in the US and Russian arsenals, the unsecured nuclear materials in Russia (which could fall into terrorist hands), and even "new pressure from climate change for expanded civilian nuclear power that could increase proliferation risks."

Obama has stated: "A world without nuclear weapons is profoundly in America's interest and the world's interest. It is our responsibility to make the commitment, and to do the hard work to make this vision a reality. That's what I've done as a senator and a candidate, and that's what I'll do as president."

Is such easy optimism warranted in a country and a world which an economic crisis alone may not suffice to liberate from the military-industrial complex? Time will tell. Meanwhile, it will be for the people of the US and the peace movement everywhere to hold Obama to his word, to pin the new president down to possibly the most historic of his promises.

A freelance journalist and a peace activist in India, J. Sri Raman is the author of "Flashpoint" (Common Courage Press, USA). He is a regular contributor to truthout.

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Censored news stories highlighted by academic research group

By PETER PHILLIPS

Media Accountability Day, October 1, was the annual release of the news stories that were not covered by the corporate-mainstream media in the US. The list, just announced by Project Censored at Sonoma State University in California, includes the twenty-five most important uncovered news stories of the year selected by over 200 academics.

Stories about the Iraq occupation lead the list. Unreported in the US corporate media is how over one million Iraqis have met violent deaths resulting from the 2003 US led invasion. According to a study conducted by the British polling group Opinion Research Business the human toll exceeded 900,000 as of August 2007. In addition, a United Nations Refugee Agency study found that five million Iraqis had been displaced by violence in their country.

Also ignored by mainstream media was the report of how three hundred Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans came forward in March of 2008 to recount the brutal impact of the ongoing occupations. The Winter Soldier hearings in Silver Spring, Maryland, organized by Iraq Veterans Against the War, presented multiple testimonies by veterans who witnessed or participated in atrocities against Iraqis or Afghans.

Independent media reported that the United States Federal Reserve shipped \$12 billion in US currency to Iraq at the beginning of the war of which at least \$9 billion went missing, but this story never saw the light of day in the US mainstream. Additionally, many anti-war activists will be surprised to learn that President Bush has signed two executive orders that would allow the US Treasury Department to seize the property of any person perceived to, directly or indirectly, pose a threat to US operations in the Middle East.

Also not reported in the US news is how the leaders of Canada, the US, and Mexico have been secretly meeting to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to form a militarized tri-national Homeland Security force and how more than 23,000 representatives of US private industry are working with the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to collect information on fellow Americans.

Coverage of how massive new US-backed military funding threatens peace and democracy in Latin America and that NATO officials are considering a first strike nuclear option was also missing from the corporate press.

Unreported news also includes the stories that the Justice Department believes it is legal for the president to secretly ignore previous executive orders anytime he wants, and the

FDA is complicit in allowing drug companies to make false, unsubstantiated, and misleading advertising claims.

Censored news stories also included why the No Child Left Behind program is a huge success for corporate profits, but have had little positive impact on public education. Children in juvenile detention centers in the US face conditions that involve sexual and physical abuse, and even death. And radioactive materials from nuclear weapons production sites are being dumped into public landfills, and being used as recycled metals.

Untold news includes CARE announcing last year that it was turning down \$45 million in food aid from the United States government because the procedures the US demands for handling the food actually increases starvation instead of relieving it.

Rounding out the Project Censored list is the news that the guest worker program in the United States victimizes immigrant workers and creates a new form of indentured servitude and that twenty-seven million slaves exist in the world today.

Censorship is a harsh term, but the shocking fact is that the corporate-mainstream media in the US was so busy entertaining us that these and many other important news stories became lost in a news system run amuck.

Peter Phillips is a professor of sociology at Sonoma State University and director of Project Censored. Censored 2009 was released October 1, 2008 by Seven Stories Press. Daily independent news (<http://mediafreedom.pnn.com/5174-independent-news-sources>) and a full on-line review of the most censored stories are available at: www.projectcensored.org

Never forget from page 1

It has worked in our country. Again.

At the end of any battle, the last man holding a sword is the judge. But Nuremberg forgot Dresden. Will we forget Abu Ghraib? Will the world forget what we have done? In the year 2001, we believed that it did not matter who won the presidential election. What do we believe now?

We have sacked Babylon. Only a fool would believe there will be no day of atonement.

We stand at the precipice of a new age of political pragmatism. Realists, making realistic decisions. Let it be listed among those things that are real the danger of ignoring the enormous crimes of these last eight years. Lest we come to ask for whom the bell tolls.

You can send comments to Truthout Executive Director Marc Ash at: director@truthout.org

MJC's International Club makes a difference

By BARBARA ST URBAIN

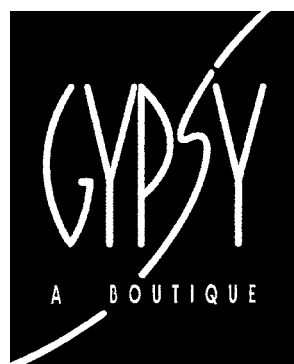
Students from all around the world come to Modesto Junior College to better their lives but a few dozen of those students have taken time out of their busy lives to better the lives of those around them. For the third consecutive year, the International Club has done just that.

While others were busy planning their costumes for the "big night," members of the International Club were busy knocking on doors, talking to friends and family and visiting MJC classrooms to "Trick or Treat for UNICEF." Their requests were small, "please give me the change from you pockets and purses, big bills aren't necessary, everyone can spare some change." The results were quite amazing. This small band of students collected over \$500 for this worthy cause. Children around the world will benefit from their generosity.

The good deeds of this group don't stop there. On December 5, the International Club will host the Third Annual Christmas Party for the consumers at United Cerebral Palsy (UCP). The consumers are 30-40 developmentally challenged adults who gather each day for a day of recreation at UCP. The students provide them with a very special day. One can't tell who enjoys it more, the students or the consumers. The smiles on all of their faces can't be hidden and the joy behind the smiles is unmistakable. Each certainly learns from the other. Students help the consumers make Christmas cards for loved ones and sing Christmas carols. Each consumer is given a small Christmas present and card from members of the club. Students dressed as "Ma" and "Pa" read the "Night Before Christmas." The festive time is enjoyed by one and all.

The International Club is truly special. Students who would normally be adversaries become friends and in this friendship beautiful things happen. We could all learn a lesson from these young people.

Reach the author at sturbainb@yosemite.cc.ca.us



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GOOD NEWS

Today I read the news,
Writ bold the masthead was,
Proclaiming that this day
All hatred fell away,
With no report of blues.

Today I read the news,
And 6-inch type rang out
That prejudice was tamed,
And no one had been maimed,
No one his life did lose.

Today I read the news,
And plain true prose appeared
To say no war was waged
And no suspicions raged
Among the Arabs and the Jews.

Today I read the news
That peace had come at last,
Erasing all our past
When evil reigned
And was enflamed
To quench the human muse.

Today I woke at ten,
And ran to read the news,
But then . . .
I saw the headlines roar
Once more of war
And pestilence and rage
On our whole worldly stage.

And now my foggy mind can see
That all this good news merely was
My wishful, dreaming reverie . . .

January 2003

INTERNET WARNING

The Net is wide,
It seeks to capture all
Whose will is weak,
Or whose sense of self needs
A shot of pseudo-science.

The Net is wide,
It lures the unsuspecting
Who see efficiency as good,
Yet really would not have it be
An end unto itself.

The Net is wide,
It promises communication
In a Web of new friends, bound together,
Yet never seen.

The Net is wide,
It offers Knowledge,
Fun times,
Business,
Therapy,
Shelter from a world too cruel to know
Directly.

And yet the cruelest turn of all
Is when you’ve found that
Screens and blips
And cyberspace
Is all you have:
You have no more
A human face!

January 1997

WINGS OVER THE
SAN JOAQUIN

It’s winter . . .
And all the winged creatures of the earth –
Or so it seems –
Have gathered
For a convention
In the feathered bosom
Of the San Joaquin.

The ornithic toastmaster tries to hold forth;
But his meager chirp is
Drowned out
By the din
Of his 10,000 comrades.

So rude they are,
All chattering at once . . .
Have they no instinct
For Creative Listening?
Have they no understanding
Of Solitude?

Yet we humans gape in awe
At the majesty of their multitude,
And forgive their turbulent talk,
As the ground
And the sky
Turn white with their wings.

January 2006

Peter Smith:
Long time
Modesto poet
and activist

I have been creating poetry at least since 1962. A number of my poems have been selected for the City of Modesto’s annual “Poet’s Corner” poetry anthology. They contain a good deal of social or political commentary, as I am often inspired to write because of social or political incidents of madness. In my younger days I read the poetry of Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlengetti, and Arthur Rimbaud.

I led a happy, sheltered childhood in Oregon, then, migrated to California in 1964, stumbling into the middle of “Berkeley in the Sixties.” In this environment I studied law for 3 years, witnessed, the Free Speech Movement, and saw Mario Savio dragged off the Greek Theater stage by campus police.

After Berkeley I spent time in Washington, D.C., and in the fall of 1967 my wife, Ann, and I attended the March on Washington, where hippies surrounded the Pentagon with the goal of infusing it with peaceful spirits.

After Washington I worked at the Federal Building in San Francisco where I observed Joan Baez hand out flowers at the draft-evasion trial of her then husband, David Harris, and as civil rights attorney Charles Garry addressed a crowd in Federal Plaza where dozens of African-American school children held up Mao’s Red Book and chanted, “Free Huey!” During the presidential campaign of 1968 between Nixon, Humphrey, and Wallace, I watched protesters bring a pig into City Hall Plaza as their alternate candidate. I photographed Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, each shortly before he was assassinated. Those were heady times.

In 1972 Ann and I became Modestans. Until recently, my law practice has absorbed most of my time, along with raising two sons. My primary “hobbies” have been theater, tennis, and world travel. My activist life in Modesto includes leading a campaign to overturn the Modesto City Council’s zoning change to allow development of College West, and one term as the President of GOAL (Growth: Orderly, Affordable, Livable). I have acted in several local plays and spent years on several boards of arts organizations, including two years as Chair of the Modesto Culture Commission.

Currently I’m cutting back on the law practice, engaging in mediation of civil disputes, traveling with Ann to visit our sons and grandchildren and explore other countries, and hoping to make time to write more poetry.



INTEGRATION

This is the story of yellow and green: Green grew up with no washing machine, The dirtiest fruit we have ever seen... In a world unclean...	Great books of laws the lemons passed, And all the limes were coolly gassed, And in great holes they were amassed, Then the earth shook forth with a terrible blast:
How do we know then that they are all right, No yellow hue, no mark of white.... They disappear in the midst of night, Out of mind and out of sight...	“Who the hell do you think you are? Lemon obese with a big cigar. I’ve watched you fruits from my kingdom star, But I never imagined you’d go this far.”
Do we trust in faith just because they’re fruit? In spite of the color, in spite of the root, Or look at them with intent to shoot? Is the question moot?	With that the voice from the heaven’s end Made it clear it was too late to mend: “Don’t tell me now how a lime was your friend! The Kingdom of Fruit is now at hand!”
Herds of green in the ghetto hum, They’ll blow us to hell or kingdom come... Convinced that we’re smart while they are dumb, We throw them a crumb.	With that the Pickers descended from air, And ripped the lemons with none to spare. Though lemon-lime was always hated, Yellow and green were now integrated!
Do you like our crumb, you uncouth lime? Your color’s green and you live in slime... What do you want from our world of gold? You’re getting too uppity, getting too bold.	The vat with its mixture was dumped in the sea... It washed on the shore and nurtured a tree. And somehow the yellow and green souffle’ Became the tree of egalite’

A mandate for spreading the wealth

By NORMAN SOLOMON, *truthout* | Perspective

Two days before he lost the election, John McCain summarized what had become the central message of his campaign: "Redistribute the wealth, spread the wealth around - we can't do that."

Oh, yes we can.

The 2008 presidential election became something of a referendum on "spreading the wealth."

"My attitude is that if the economy's good for folks from the bottom up, it's gonna be good for everybody," Barack Obama said on October 12, in a conversation with an Ohio resident named Joe. The candidate quickly added, "I think when you spread the wealth around, it's good for everybody."

McCain eagerly attacked the concept, most dramatically three days later during the last debate. While instantly creating the "Joe the Plumber" everyman myth, McCain sharpened the distinctions between the two tickets while the nation watched and listened. He charged, "The whole premise behind Senator Obama's plans are class warfare - let's spread the wealth around."

Obama has routinely reframed the issue in terms of fairness. "Exxon Mobil, which made \$12 billion, record profits, over the last several quarters," he replied during the final debate, "they can afford to pay a little more so that ordinary families who are hurting out there - they're trying to figure out how they're going to afford food, how they're going to save for their kids' college education, they need a break."

This fall, the candidates and their surrogates endlessly repeated such arguments. As much as anything else, the presidential campaign turned into a dispute over the wisdom of "spreading the wealth." Most voters were comfortable enough with the concept to send its leading advocate to the Oval Office.

In the process, the top of the GOP ticket recycled attacks on the principles of the New Deal. Like Franklin Roosevelt when he first ran for president in 1932, Barack Obama put forward economic prescriptions that were hardly radical. Yet, in the next few years, Obama's administration could accomplish great things - reminiscent of the New Deal, with its safety-net guarantees, (redistributive) progressive income tax, support for labor rights and its mammoth commitment to public works programs that created jobs. Today, we need green jobs that cure our economy and heal our environment.

Let's be clear: Despite their rhetoric, even McCain and

Palin know that spreading the wealth from greedy elites to the masses of people is quite popular in our country. That's why their campaign emphasized how Palin "stood up to the oil industry" in Alaska. She did it by imposing a windfall profits tax on big oil that put money into the hands of every man, woman and child in the state. If it's good for Alaska, why wouldn't it be good for America as a whole?

Obama and his activist base won a mandate for strong government action on behalf of economic fairness. But since election night, countless pundits and politicians have somberly warned the president-elect to govern from "the center." Presumably, such governance would preclude doing much to spread the wealth. Before that sort of conventional wisdom further hardens like political cement, national discussions should highlight options for moving toward a more egalitarian society.

Government policies in that direction would be a sharp reversal of what's been happening over the last few decades. No matter how you slice it, more of the economic pie has been going to fewer people.

"The top 1 percent of households received 22.9 percent of all pre-tax income in 2006, more than double what that figure was in the 1970s," the Working Group on Extreme Inequality reports. "This is the greatest concentration of income since 1928." And: "Between 1979 and 2006, the top 5 percent of American families saw their real incomes increase 87 percent. Over the same period, the lowest-income fifth saw zero increase in real income."

Current tax structures are steeply tilted to make the rich richer at the expense of others: "In the 2008 tax year, households in the bottom 20 percent will receive \$26 due to the Bush tax cuts. Households in the middle 20 percent will receive \$784. Households in the top 1 percent will receive \$50,495. And households in the top 0.1 percent will receive \$266,151."

We can reverse those trends. The time and opportunity have come to "spread the wealth."

When President Franklin Roosevelt heard pleas for bold steps to counter extreme economic inequality, he replied: "Go out and make me do it."

Barack Obama won the presidency after clearly saying that he wants to spread the wealth. Let's make him do it.

Norman Solomon, a national co-chair of Healthcare NOT Warfare, is the author of many books, including "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." He is on the advisory board of Progressive Democrats of America.

From <http://www.truthout.org/110608R>



Bailout, Bailout

Our government is giving 700 billion dollars to bail out Wall Street. And now auto companies want money also. Our tax monies are bailing out everyone except the right people. I would like to see our government give this money to the people of the United States. We need to bail out ourselves and this would be a fair bail out.

I really don't understand this democracy stuff we always hear about. Who is running the country?

Shelly Scribner
Modesto



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WATCH THIS SPACE FOR MORE NEWS

A post-election commentary

By JOHN MCCUTCHEON

Understand, I have no illusions about what lies ahead. Obama...and we...inherit formidable burdens. Two wars, an economy in tatters, years of constitutional ravaging to undo, habits of polarization to unlearn. But we are smarter, more resourceful, and more generous than we've been told. When the Towers went down on September 11th, Americans rose up. They lined up at blood banks, offering their blood... anything!...to help, even when it was clear by noon on that terrible day that there was no one to give blood to. Our grandparents rallied during World War Two, saving tires, bits of aluminum foil. They endured rationing, all in the name of defeating fascism. When the Exxon Valdez impaled itself on Bligh Reef in 1989, it was fisherman from surrounding communities who worked to contain the spill...three days before the government or Exxon showed up. Individuals and communities provided more immediate, substantive, and lasting aid to Katrina victims than FEMA. And we proved to ourselves and to the world last Tuesday that many of us are able to vote our hopes instead of our fears. We have the brains, the will, and the power. Now, perhaps, we have the belief.

The thing that buoys me the most about an Obama presidency is his experience as a community organizer. As such, he understands where real power...and real change...comes from. It is not those at the pyramid's pointy end that will make things happen. As inspirational a figure as Obama has proven to be, it is those of us at the broad base of that pyramid that will precipitate the changes needed to rebuild these Re-United States of America. So, *mazel tov* to all. Let's savor this moment and remember its promise. And then, let's make that promise real by righting this grand old ship once again.

"And to all those who have wondered if America's beacon still burns as bright, tonight we prove once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms nor the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity and unyielding hope."

One way to help save Darfur

Submitted by JAMES COSTELLO

One way to help save Darfur while purchasing a holiday gift is to buy *Instant Karma: The Amnesty International Campaign to Save Darfur*

Featuring songs by the iconic John Lennon newly recorded by some of today's biggest as well as emerging artists, *Instant Karma: The Campaign to Save Darfur* is a major benefit-album project.

In an effort to mobilize activism around this catastrophe, musicians unite to save lives. Some of the biggest artists in the world, along with today's emerging artists, all coming together for an unprecedented, brilliant collection of JOHN LENNON "covers."

Proceeds from the campaign go directly to support Amnesty International's urgent work on Darfur and other human rights crises worldwide.

ACTION: Visit <http://www.amazon.com> for information and purchase.

Israeli blockade worsens humanitarian crisis in Gaza, charges Amnesty International

From Amnesty International

Amnesty International urges the Israeli authorities to allow the immediate passage of humanitarian aid, medical supplies and fuel to the Gaza Strip, where the situation is nothing short of a disaster.

"Israel's latest tightening of its blockade has made an already dire humanitarian situation markedly worse. This is nothing short of collective punishment on Gaza's civilian population and it must stop immediately," said Philip Luther, deputy director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Program. Even the trickle of humanitarian aid previously allowed into Gaza, on which 80 percent of the population depends, has now been stopped for nine days by the Israeli army. The delivery of medical supplies and the industrial fuel donated by the European Union and needed to power Gaza's power plant has also been blocked. This has led to a blackout in large parts of Gaza.

Abu Khalil, a resident of Gaza City, told Amnesty International this week: "Today I went to look for bread in several bakeries but couldn't find any. There is no electricity, it's pitch dark. A few months ago we bought an electric cooker because cooking gas is difficult to find and very expensive, but now without electricity we can't even cook. We are sitting at home in the dark; the children don't know what to do with themselves. We can't do anything. Until when can we live like this?" Other residents of Gaza told the human rights organization that they could not even find candles in the market anymore and that the few people who have back generators in their homes and who still have fuel do not dare to use them because nobody knows until how long the blackout will last.

On Thursday, the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), the main U.N. aid agency that provides humanitarian assistance to approximately one million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, announced that its supplies had run out. At the same time, the Israeli authorities have been denying international journalists access to Gaza for a week. On Thursday, a convoy of European diplomats was refused entry as well. "Gaza is cut off from the outside world. Israel is seemingly not keen for the world to see the suffering that its blockade is causing to the one and a half million Palestinians who are virtually trapped there," Luther said.

The breakdown last week of a five-and-a-half-month ceasefire between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in Gaza has generated a renewed wave of violence. The killing of six Palestinian militants in Israeli air strikes and ground attacks on November 4 prompted a barrage of Palestinian rockets on nearby Israeli towns and villages. Five other Palestinian militants have been killed by Israeli forces and

others injured in recent days. Palestinian rocket attacks have continued. No Israeli casualties had been reported until earlier today, when one Israeli was lightly wounded by shrapnel in an attack on the Israeli city of Sderot. "This dangerous spate of attacks and counterattacks must be swiftly halted. Both sides know from past experience that their actions are putting the lives of civilian populations of Gaza and southern Israel at risk," said Luther. Prior to the ceasefire of June 19, 2008, some 420 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli forces, half of them unarmed civilians, including some 80 children, since the beginning of the year. In the same period, Palestinian armed groups killed 24 Israelis, 15 of them civilians, including four children. The five-and-a-half-month cease fire brought a welcome respite for the civilian population in Gaza and southern Israel from the daily attacks which had blighted their lives for the past eight years, during which some 4,750 Palestinians and 1,100 Israelis were killed. Most of the victims on both sides have been unarmed civilians, including some 900 Palestinian children and 120 Israeli children.

Amnesty International is a Nobel Peace Prize-winning grassroots activist organization with more than 2.2 million supporters, activists and volunteers in more than 150 countries campaigning for human rights worldwide. The organization investigates and exposes abuses, educates and mobilizes the public, and works to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied.

CONTACT: [Amnesty International USA](mailto:AmnestyInternationalUSA@spann@aiousa.org)
Jspann@aiousa.org

URL to article: <http://www.commondreams.org/newswire/2008/11/14-2>

Stanislaus **CONNECTIONS**, published by the Modesto Peace/Life Center, has promoted non-violent social change since 1971. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the center or editorial committee. **CONNECTIONS** encourages free speech to serve truth and build a more just, compassionate, peaceful and environmentally healthy community and world. We seek to enhance community concern, bridge interests of diverse groups. **CONNECTIONS'** editorial committee views peace as built on economic and social justice and equal access to the political process. We welcome pertinent signed articles - to 800 words - and letters with address, phone number. We edit for length, taste, error and libel. Deadline is 10th of the month. Send articles to Myrtle Osner, 1104 Wellesley, Modesto 95350, 522-4967, or email to osnerm@sbcglobal.net or Jim Costello jcostello@igc.org.

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

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

ACTIONS FOR PEACE • Sonora • Merced • Stockton • Modesto

TUOLUMNE COUNTY CITIZENS FOR PEACE: Courthouse Park, downtown Sonora. VIGIL, every Thursday, 6 p.m. Bring candle, sign. Regular meetings 1st and 3rd Thursdays, 7 p.m. Call (209) 532-3516 for location.

MERCED CANDLELIGHT PEACE VIGIL: every Friday, 4:30 to 5:30 pm, at M and 21st Sts, Merced. Contact: David Hetland, (209) 388-1608, dhetland2003@yahoo.com

PEACE AND JUSTICE NETWORK OF SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY: Info: John Morearty, 464-3326.

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER VIGILS: Monthly peace vigils are held THE FIRST FRIDAY of the month at McHenry Ave. and J St., (Five points), 4:00-5:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 529-5750.

PEACE LIFE CENTER MODESTO, OPEN EVERY WEDNESDAY: Noon to 2 pm. Come by for coffee or tea and just to chat or look at our book and magazine collection. Bring your own bag lunch; there may be films some days. 720 13th St. Call 529-5750, we'll get back to you with current info on activities.

DECEMBER, 2008

4 THURS: MJC Science Colloquium: Benoit Dayrat, Ph.D., UC Merced, Topic tba. All lectures on Thursdays, 1 - 1:50 pm, Forum 110, East Campus. Info: Dr. Richard Anderson andersonr@mjc.edu

6 SAT: Tree Planting: Big Bend Habitat Restoration Project, 9:30 am to 12:30 p.m. Directions and info: contact the Tuolumne River Trust, 236-0330 or karlha@tuolumne.org, or www.tuolumne.org. See article, this issue.

9 TUES: ACLU Freedom File Screening Discussion Mixer. Religious Freedom: The right of every American to practice his or her own religion, or no religion at all, is a fundamental freedom guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Introduction to people who fought back challenges to this essential civil liberty. 1905 Kienitz Ave, Modesto, 526-4854, 7 - 8:30 pm. <http://stanacu.org>

12 FRI: ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY POTLUCK and SONG CIRCLE. Home of Dan & Alice Onorato, 1532 Vernon, Modesto, 6 pm to 9 pm. Info: 526-5436.

13 SAT: THE ILL LIST 5: A POETRY SLAM INVITATIONAL, most prestigious, highly anticipated spoken-word event in the state. Performances by renowned artists and HBO Def Poets, battling through three rounds of original poetry for \$1,500 in cash prizes! Randomly selected judges from the audience. Audience encouraged to root for their favorite poets. This is a FREE-SPEECH event. Tickets: \$15.00 General Reserved, \$22.50 Middle Reserved, \$30.00 Premium Reserved. State Theatre doors open at 7 pm. Info: www.slamonrye.com

14 SUN: Alternative Christmas Fair, College Avenue Congregational United Church of Christ, 1341 College Ave. at Orangeburg, 11:15 am.

16 TUES: ACLU Board Meeting, 720 13th St., Modesto (Peace/Life Center), 7 - 8 pm. stanacu@earthlink.net

23 TUES: ACLU Freedom File Screening Discussion Mixer. America's "war on drugs" has not reduced drug abuse despite decades of massive spending. It has diverted resources, fostered racial profiling and led to the imprisonment of millions. 1905 Kienitz Ave, Modesto, 526-4854, 7 - 8:30 pm. <http://stanacu.org>

LOOKING AHEAD

Saturday, January 17, 2009: 15th Annual Martin Luther King Commemoration featuring teacher and civil rights activist, Robert Moses. MJC Auditorium, 7 pm.

Tuesday January 20, 2009, John McCutcheon, 6-time Grammy-nominated folk musician, in his 7th Annual Benefit Concert for the Modesto Peace/Life Center. Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., 7 pm.

Saturday, March 21, 2009: March to End the Iraq War.

ONGOING

Peace Center TV: News and interviews you won't find elsewhere. KAZV TV 14, Tues., 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm. And on Comcast Public Access TV Ch 26, Wed., 9:00 pm - 10 pm. Also: Listen to local Valley Community Radio X 106.1 FM, <http://www.kqrp.com>

CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL STAFF MEETINGS: Meets twice a month. New workers welcome. Call to confirm time and place. 522-4967.

NETWORK OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVES: Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto. Steering committee meetings (open to all), quarterly membership/program meetings, interest group meetings: dates to be arranged. Info: 577-0883 or robsch@fire2wire.com

GREAT VALLEY MUSEUM of Natural History: Classes for children. Museum exhibits and store open Tues. to Fri., 9 am to 4:30 pm. Info: 575-6196. Call for info about classes.

CENTRAL VALLEY ART ASSOCIATION AND MISTLIN GALLERY. Exhibits by local artists; poetry readings third Sat. 4 pm. 1015 J St., in Tenth St. Place. Open 10 to 5, Mon. Through Sat. 529-3369.

ANDERSON ART GALLERY: 1323 J. St., Modesto. Open M - F, 10 - 6, Sat., 10 - 4. New shows each month.

A.R.T.S. EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER: All things recycled free arts materials for teachers, scout leaders, child care, artists for their projects. Open M - F 8 to 4:30, 917 Oakdale Rd. Modesto, Media Center behind Ross Store. Volunteers needed. Info: 567-4516.

CENTRAL VALLEY DEMOCRATIC CLUB: Monthly meetings in Modesto, Patterson, and

Oakdale. For more information, visit <http://www.cvdemocrats.org> or call Neil Hudson at 847-0540.

CHILDRENS STORY HOURS: Stanislaus County Library: Modesto, Mondays, 10 & 11 am. Toddler Time, 11 am, Book babies (prior registration required). Tuesdays, 10:30 am and 6:30 pm. and Wednesdays 10:30 ad 11:30 am. Cuentos en espanol Thursdays 6:30 pm. All 12 Library branches have morning story hours. Call your branch for info.

CHILD HEALTH MOBILE SERVICES: Maddux Youth Center, 3rd & Sierra Dr., Modesto. Fourth Fridays, noon to 4:30 pm. Call for appointment, 525-6282.

RE-STORE: gently used and new quality materials, donations from local sources, a part of Habitat for Humanity, Kearney Ave across from Post Office, Modesto. Funds benefit homes built by Habitat in Stanislaus County for local income families.

STANISLAUS PRIDE CENTER: 201 Needham (Elmside of Great Valley Center), Modesto. Open 3:00 to 7:00 pm Wed. through Sat. Library, snacks, sodas, FREE DSL computer access. FREE HIV Testing and FREE counseling for those who cannot obtain full-cost services elsewhere. Info: Desiree Holden, Center Coordinator, 221-5252 or coordinator@stanpride.org

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

Central Valley Radical Mental Health Discussion Circles every 2nd Sun., 4 pm, Queen Bean, 14th & I St., Modesto.

THE 11TH STEP SANGHA, Buddhism & The 12 Steps. Every Sunday, 8 am. For location call 209-202-0612.

MONDAYS

YOGA WITH NEVA AND JOCELYN: 7 pm, Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland, Modesto. Info: 523-0155 or 524-3246.

TUESDAYS

PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING: first Tuesdays, 720 13th St., Modesto, 7:00 pm, 529-5750.

ACLU Local Chapter: Third Tues. of the month, 7 pm. at the Peace Center, 720 13th St., Modesto New members welcome. Info: <http://stanacu.org/> or stanacu@earthlink.net

PFLAG Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays support group. 7 pm, 527-0776. First and Third Tuesdays. Emanuel Lutheran Church, 324 College Ave., Modesto.

PFLAG Merced, First Tuesday, Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Park Way, Merced. 7 pm. Info: 341-2122.

PFLAG Sonora/Mother Lode, third Tuesdays of January, April, July, and October, 6:30 to 8 pm, Tuolumne County Library Community Room, 480 Greenley Rd., Sonora, Info: 533-1665. Info@pflagsonora.org, www.pflagsonora.org

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS: Every Tuesday, 7 pm at 1320 L St., (Christ Unity Baptist Church). Info: Jeff, 527-2469.

WEDNESDAYS

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

SLAM on RYE: poetry readings, 2nd Wed. each month except July. Poet sign-up 6:30 pm, readings 7:30 pm. \$5 admission. Prospect Theater, 520 Scenic Dr., Modesto. Info: Sam Pierstorff (pierstorffs@mjc.edu): www.slamonrye.com

BUDDHIST MEDITATION: Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7 - 9 pm. Info: Kathy, 480-5094 or Anne, 521-6977.

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

LATINO BAR ASSOC.: First Wed., Info: Ruben Villalobos, 529-1112.

THURSDAYS

MEDIA COMMITTEE of Peace Life Center, last Thursday of the month, 6 pm, Info: 765-3813.

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS GROUP: 4th Thurs., at Unity Church, 2467 Veneman, Modesto, Help for bereaved parents. Info: 522-7149.

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

ART GALLERY WALK: downtown Modesto, third Thurs., 6:30 to 8 pm. Info: Anderson Galleries, 579-9913.

VALLEY HEARTLAND ZEN GROUP: every Thurs 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2310 Woodland Ave. Meditation. Newcomers welcome. Info: 324-6930 or <http://emptynestzendo.org>

Association Of United Pagans (AUP) Community Planning Meeting: first Thursdays, 7 pm, 208 Rowland Ave. Modesto. Info: http://www.aupagans.org/modesto_locals or 209-579-7242

AUP Pagan Coffee Social: Second and fourth (and fifth if there is one) Thursdays, 7 pm, Queen Bean, 1126 14th St. Modesto. Info: www.aupagans.org/modesto_locals or 209-579-7242

AUP Family Night (alternating MOVIE, CRAFT and GAME Night): Third Thursdays, 7 pm, 208 Rowland Ave. Modesto. Info: www.aupagans.org/modesto_locals or 209-579-7242

PAGAN COFFEE NIGHT: First Thursdays, Queen Bean, 14th & K Sts., Modesto, 7 pm. Note: Not affiliated with AUP. Info: 569-0816.

PAGAN PIZZA NIGHT: Third Thursdays, Round Table Pizza, Century Plaza, Oakdale Rd., Modesto, 7 pm. Note: Not affiliated with AUP. Info: 569-0816.

FRIDAYS

SONG CIRCLE: A Peace/Life Center Activity. Second Friday of each month. All ages and voices welcome. Potluck supper, 6:30 pm, sing at 7:30 pm. Call 529-5750 for location. Free.

Modesto Jr. College **OBSERVATORY ASTRONOMY OPEN HOUSE** 8:30 to 9:30 pm. Behind annex to the museum. Public Welcome. FREE. First Fridays.

VILLAGE DANCERS: Every Wed, Raube Hall, Ceres; Fridays: Sylvan School, 2908 Coffee Rd., Modesto. 7:30 to 10 pm \$5.00 per night, students free. Info: 480-0387.

SIERRA CLUB: Yokuts group. Call for more info on hikes and special events. Visitors welcome. Regular meetings, third Friday, Modesto Police Dept. Community Rm. 7 pm. Info: 549-9155.

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

HISPANIC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL: Every Friday at 7:00 am, Terrace Cafe at Double Tree Hotel. Info: Balvino Irizarry, 575-1303.

SATURDAYS

OAK APPLE NATURE WALKS, every first Saturday of the month, 10 am. Meet at Kewin Park Playground, 401 Buena Vista at La Loma Ave., Modesto.

SERRV: Saturdays, 10 - Noon and after church Sundays or by appointment. Call Mary, 523-5178, or Lenore, 522-6497. Gifts from developing countries. Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland, Rm #4, Modesto.

DEADLINE to submit articles to

CONNECTIONS: Tenth of each month. Submit peace, justice and environmentally friendly event notices to P.O. Box 134, Modesto, CA 95353, or email to jcostello@igc.org. Free listings subject to space availability and editing. To access updated calendar items see <http://stanislaus.connections.org/calendar.htm>