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Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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Afghanistan's untold story

By RYAN CROKEN, t r u t h o u t | Book Review

America has many virtues; collective memory is not one of them. When history is invoked in the theater of the mass media, it generally appears as either sanitized nostalgia from our civic religion (something about the Founding Fathers), or as a one-sided flashback designed to give some oomph to some -ism (something about Hitler). Pandemic amnesia is a dangerous affliction for a democracy under any circumstances, but when it comes to our current - that is, our continuing - engagement with Afghanistan, the disorder may very well prove fatal.

Fortunately for us, there's still hope. History doesn't repeat itself; we repeat it, and we are only doomed to do so if we don't apprise ourselves of it. For this reason, I strongly recommend Elizabeth Gould and Paul Fitzgerald's new book, *Invisible History: Afghanistan's Untold Story*. Thirty years in the making, this deeply researched book is bursting with overlooked facts and unauthorized insights. Through their erudition, prescience and passion, Gould and Fitzgerald have provided us with an urgent and necessary history, one that pierces through the haze of misinformation that has, for far too long, obscured the guiding light of an authentic past.

The timeliness of this book cannot be overstated. As the US government, still without a clearly articulated strategy, calls for a heavily militarized escalation of forces into a conflict that cannot be resolved through military means, we would be well advised to arm ourselves with the wisdom of the historical record. As it now stands, President Obama is being led into the graveyard of empires by the same misguided philosophers of war that helped spawn this disaster in the first place. It's time for new, empowered, alternative voices to rise up from an informed American public and enter the fray.

Invisible History is divided into three main sections. The first section, which covers Afghanistan's history from antiquity to 1970, is a bit difficult to keep up with, as it traverses vast expanses of time at a whirlwind pace. Nevertheless, this section explores important historical movements and moments that are essential to understanding Afghanistan's modern condition: the drawing of the Durand Line; the Great Game; the drafting of a 1923 constitution that gave women the right to vote; Afghanistan's Hindu and Buddhist roots and the invasion attempts of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, the Arab armies, the British armies and about a dozen other major intruders.

AFGHANISTAN . . . . . .continued p. 8

The coffeehouse pediatrician

By HURRICANE DEAN

If anyone exemplifies our national need for single-payer healthcare it is Dr. Pierrette Mimi Poinsett. I first met Dr. Mimi a few months ago at a coffeehouse in Petaluma, California. It was easy to notice her warm smile. I immediately felt comfortable around her. So, I introduced myself. Her name tag simply said, "Mimi."

Over the months Mimi and I exchanged pleasantries as she continued to take my orders and serve me pastries. Occasionally, we talked about our lives. She told me she had a son and enjoyed writing. Then, just the other day, Mimi shared with me that she is a Board Certified Pediatrician.

How did an attractive, kind, soft spoken middle aged

PEDIATRICIAN . . . . . .continued p. 2

Remember Hiroshima — again!

Join us on Thursday, August 6 for our Annual Hiroshima Remembrance and potluck at Legion Park, Modesto at 6:30 p.m. Bring food and drinks to share as we converse and rededicate ourselves to reversing the efforts to rebuild and proliferate nuclear weapons. The evening will conclude with a candlelight vigil on the banks of the Tuolumne River.

It has been 64 years since the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, and certain world leaders, have not learned how immoral and dangerous these weapons are. The Modesto Peace Life Center and *Stanislaus Connections* will vigorously pursue this issue but we, and the peoples of the world, need your help and solidarity.

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The coffeehouse pediatrician

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woman with an MD in pediatric medicine end up working part time at a coffeehouse? I had to find out. Well, it turns out her son has, as Dr. Mimi says, "*special healthcare needs*." Needs that have apparently brought Dr. Mimi to the brink of financial ruin.

Here is a small except from an article, recently written about Dr. Mimi's plight, on *"The Wip -The Woman's International Perspective"* by Rose-Anne Clermont, *"The irony of Pierrette's troubles could be seen, from one viewpoint, as tragic: She's a pediatrician but got lost within the maze of the medical system once her son became ill; she once treated patients from low-income families on Medicaid, yet she eventually became dependent on such services herself; for 13 years, she was a homeowner, but then sold her house to relocate to a county that had better health and educational services for her son; she took a subprime loan, lost the second house and ended up sleeping at her friend's place; and ultimately, she resorted to seeking pantry services for food."* http://thewip.net/contributors

It is amazing how a woman that has worked so hard all her life to provide for her son, and the community at large, could become so economically devastated by the very medical system she was a part of. While the subprime loan meltdown acted as the final blow in throwing Dr. Mimi and her son effectively out on the street, it was the doctor's desperate attempts to give her only child the best medical attention available in the U.S. that created this dilemma in the first place.

A Harvard study done a few years back - often referenced by Obama and Biden - suggests over half of all bankruptcies are the result of medical bills. These findings have cause a bit of a stir with the rightwing. They point to other studies that break down the filings and come up with a different perspective. The debate usually turns on whether the medical bills and illness caused the bankruptcy or was just a part of the problem. The Annenberg Foundation's non-partisan fact-checking site, factcheck.org, compared the differing research to help clear up dispute.

"It's worth noting, though, that the figure from the Harvard study includes those who lost their jobs or significant income due to illness - even if they didn't cite mounting health care bills as a direct cause of their bankruptcy. … The study, published in the Feb. 2, 2005, issue of the journal Health Affairs, based its findings on surveys completed by 1,771 Americans in bankruptcy courts in 2001, financial information available in public court records and follow-up interviews with 931 of the respondents. It determined that 46.2 percent of bankruptcies were attributable to a major medical reason. Debtors cited at least one of the following specific causes: illness or injury (28.3 percent of respondents), uncovered medical bills exceeding $1,000 in the past two years (27 percent), loss of at least two weeks of work-related income because of illness (21.3 percent), or mortgaging a home to pay medical bills (2 percent). (A larger category - "any medical bankruptcy" - also covered those who cited addiction, or uncontrolled gambling, childbirth, or the death of a family member. Including that group brought the total percentage of "medical bankruptcies" up to 54.5.) http://www.factcheck.org

Essentially, the issue of the cause of over half, or just under half, of the bankruptcies in the U.S. are related, in one way or another, to medical bills or illness. For Dr. Mimi, she sacrificed her career as a pediatrician in order to take care of her son. Again, quoting from the *WIP* article we learn how her situation snowballed into bankruptcy;

Essentially, the issue of the cause of over half, or just under half, of the bankruptcies in the U.S. are related, in one way or another, to medical bills or illness.

"Her son, Joshua, was only nine when he was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. In less than three years, he was admitted five times to the hospital after having mental "blow outs," which resulted in him breaking Pierrette's nose and injuring her wrist. "Meltdowns," she says, "included trying to destroy my bifocals that I need to drive, hitting me and throwing all sorts of stuff around." Joshua also had suicidal thoughts.

"He was admitted to a child unit 65 miles away," Pierrette writes in her blog, "since there are none in my county. (He received) twelve days of stabilization and anger management in milieu of therapy and they added a diagnosis of Tourette's disorder." He has mega vocal and facial tics without the medication. I was told repeatedly by the staff that Joshua needs residential (in-patient) treatment" ….

With the demands of supporting her son alone, Pierrette lost one contract job after the next, sinking deeper and deeper into financial debt. "Employers aren't happy when I have to leave work because my son has been suspended or is having a medical crisis." And there you have it. In just a few years, Dr. Pierrette Mimi Poinsett, a successful middle aged single mother, who worked hard all her life, lost nearly all her wealth due to her son's illness and found herself sleeping on friends' couches and waiting in food lines at the local shelter. All because her child developed, "*special healthcare needs.*" The fact is, as a parent, Dr. Mimi has been doing everything she can to care for her only child. And, as a result, has sacrificed greatly.

Dr. Mimi is now financially impoverished and her son Joshua is finally receiving therapeutic behavioral services at home, therapy and case management through Sonoma county. Yet she provides his primary care. She also now works part time at the coffee house, because it offers part time employees flexible hours and healthcare benefits.

According to the World Health Organization, the U.S. ranks 37th in the world for healthcare and has the most expensive system in the world. In fact, in the U.S., if you or a loved one gets sick, we are the only nation in the industrial world that has a healthcare system that can bankrupt you. Even if you have healthcare insurance when first diagnosed, it does not guarantee your insurance agency will stick with you.

We all know insurance companies look for ways not to provide coverage. That is their business. And, once you have lost your job due to an illness, heaven help you. In the U.S., under a purely capitalist healthcare system, all your assets can be cleaned out before you become even eligible to the meager and often inaccessible socialized healthcare our state and national government currently provides. There are 36 other nations, with some sort of nationalized healthcare system that are doing a better job at providing care for all their citizens. And all of them, cost less than ours. http://www.photius.com/rankings/healthranks.html

Until we do away with the health insurance industry and adopt a single-payer (socialized) healthcare system, we will continue to see folks like Dr. Mimi serving cups of coffee and fresh pastries, all the while, not attending to sick children during a flu outbreak.

Dr. Mimi tells me that as a result of the limited work available, she has been unable to find a job at any of the local clinics. However, she seems always optimistic and confident her situation will soon improve. She tells me in an email, *"My plans are to transition out of traditional clinical medicine and focus on health advocacy writing as well as forming a support network for parents with children with special mental health and physical health needs."* In the mean time, it's nice to see at least the local coffeehouse is flexible with her hours and willing to provide her with some basic health insurance.

Reach the author, Dean Walker, at http://www.broowaha.com/join.php. From *BrooWaha*, the citizen newspaper network; http://www.broowaha.com/article.php?id=4801

Ed. Note: Dr. Mimi used to practice medicine in Modesto and was a board member of the Modesto Peace Life Center.

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Must-see documentary: Torturing Democracy

In a riveting and dramatic narrative, *Torturing Democracy* - a major documentary film, tells the inside story of how the U.S. government adopted torture as official policy in the aftermath of 9/11. With exclusive interviews, explosive documents and rare archival footage, Emmy and DuPont award-winning filmmaker Sherry Jones has crafted the definitive account of a deeply troubling chapter in recent American history.

Bill Moyers has said of *Torturing Democracy*, "This one will go into the record books for historians and teachers and others who look back to ask, 'What did we do?'"

One of the nation's most popular talk radio hosts, for example, had dismissed reports of torture for years. "And then," Gene Burns said on KGO-AM in San Francisco, "I saw *Torturing Democracy*. I'm afraid, now that I have seen what I have seen, that I was wrong. …I don't think I ever saw an organized, systematized review of what we did, and how we did it, as well presented as it was in this documentary. And it grieves me to say, as an American citizen, that I believe the leadership of our country is responsible for crimes against humanity."

The 90-minute film relies on the documentary record to connect the dots in an investigation of interrogations of prisoners in U.S. custody that became "at a minimum, cruel and inhuman treatment and, at worst, torture," in the words of the former general counsel of the United States Navy, Alberto Mora. Jones carefully presents the evidence that leads straight to the top of the chain of command - and so lays to rest the "rotten apple" defense for abusive interrogations at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and elsewhere.

Former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage describes being waterboarded during military training before he was sent to Vietnam. When producer Jones asked Mr. Armitage if he considered waterboarding to be torture, he answered, "Absolutely. No question." He added: "There is no question in my mind - there's no question in any reasonable human being, that this is torture. I'm ashamed we're even having this discussion."

The documentary traces how the secret U.S. military training program – "Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape" or SERE – became the basis for many of the harshest interrogation methods employed first by the CIA and subsequently by interrogators at Guantanamo and in Iraq. The tactics designed to "inoculate" elite American troops mirror tactics used by "a totalitarian, evil nation with complete disregard for human rights and the Geneva Conventions," according to Malcolm Nance, former SERE master trainer for the U.S. Navy.

Among the film's disclosures is a December 2002 document distributed at Guantanamo, "JTF GTMO 'SERE' Interrogation Standard Operating Procedure." When the document, which had not been made public, was quoted to Navy SERE trainer Nance, he reacted: "We have recreated our enemies' methods in Guantanamo! It will hurt us for decades to come. Our people will all be subjected to these tactics because we have authorized them for the world now. How it got to Guantanamo is a crime."

Also for the first time on camera, the former chief Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army, Major General Thomas Romig, reveals the inside story of a Pentagon task force set up by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld in early 2003. "He came in and gave us a pep talk. I thought it a little strange that we were getting a pep talk on something like this," Romig says. After being presented a list of interrogation tactics, some of which he described as torture, General Romig concludes that, "The commander in chief does not have the power to make that which is illegal under the law of war, legal."

Torturing Democracy also details the experiences of prisoners in U.S. custody, including Shafiq Rasul (detainee # 086), Moazzam Begg (detainee #558), and Bisher al-Rawi (detainee #906) in their own words. All were eventually released, with no charges filed against them and no reason given for their years in custody

The documentary's comprehensive website, www.torturingdemocracy.org , a collaboration with the National Security Archive at George Washington University, features the entire film available for web streaming, a timeline of key events, extended interviews, and the memos, legal opinions and other documents.

To order a DVD, visit http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/torturingdemocracy/info/dvd.html

To see Bill Moyers program featuring *Torturing Democracy*, visit http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/05292009/profile.html

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"It is not just the president who must preserve, protect and defend the Constitution. All of us must do so. But you cannot preserve what you do not revere; you cannot protect what you have not learned; you cannot defend what you do not know."

— U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy at Stanford University's 118th commencement, June 14, 2009.

Palestinians, Jews get better at acknowledging parallel but conflicting narratives

By LEN & LIBBY TRAUBMAN

In Beit Oren, west of Haifa, Israeli Jews and Palestinians lighted candles to honor the loss of family, friends, and countrymen at a two-day meeting that jointly marked Israel's Independence Day and the Palestinian Nakba, or catastrophe, in 1948.

For the seventh year, the event was deeply meaningful for the 230 Arabs and Jews who participated - more than any previous year. Fifty more participation applications had to be denied because the room on Mt. Carmel was at capacity.

There is no formal organization, but for official purposes sponsorship was under the NGO Beyond Words - http://www.beyondwords.org.il/

The all-volunteer planning team of 20 Arabs and Jews - larger than past years - began work in January, meeting about five hours during a weekend each month. "Sometimes it was not easy," wrote team participant Rami Ben-Moshe (Ram_BenM@netvision.net.il)

The first part of each meeting was dedicated to connecting at the heart - staying up to date with relationships and emotions related to war. As a result, the second part of meetings was sufficient to plan the event contents. Planners were divided into teams, with each responsible for a part, including the two-hour workshops. There were ten workshops of many kinds, mostly led by volunteers - usually two leaders per workshop, one Arab and one Jew.

Surrounded by a background of death in Gaza and southern Israel, the courageous team was met with much of criticism from their families and friends. One of the daunting challenges was to bring people to the event.

The unprecedented turnout has next year's planners considering two separate events with smaller numbers for excellence in relationships.

Read more at *The Christian Science Monitor* - April 29, 2009, http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0429/p06s14-wome.html

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Summer squash

By ANNE SCHELLMAN, Horticulture Program Representative, UCCE-Stanislaus County

Most people who plant a summer vegetable garden incorporate some type of summer squash. Summer squash are easy to grow as well as cook, and contain many healthy nutrients. This category of squash includes zucchini, straight and crook neck squash as well as the scallop or patty pan squash.

One type of squash that gardeners might not be familiar with is the winter squash. Winter squash is planted in the spring or summer and harvested in the fall. The name "winter squash" came from the fact that it can be 'cured' and saved for consumption in the winter.

Winter squash have more than double the nutrients of summer squash and are full of fiber, beta carotene, Vitamins 'C' and 'B', potassium, magnesium, calcium and iron.

Familiar winter squash that can be found in the supermarket include acorn, banana, butternut, spaghetti and Hubbard squash. Squash connoisseurs recommend tasting various types to see what you prefer, and then choosing the variety to plant.

Recently I purchased an acorn squash and followed the easy instructions that came with it. There was a sticker on it that read "cut squash in half and place face-down in a bowl with ¼ inch of water, then microwave it on high for 8 minutes". After cooking, I let the squash cool, scooped out the seeds and added a bit of salt and butter. The flavor was sweet and the texture creamy. I decided this was a squash I wanted to grow.

All squash and vegetables need organic matter in the soil, so mix compost into the soil before planting. Winter squash should be planted on small mounds at least 8 feet apart. Some winter squash are "bush" types, which need less space (2-4 feet) and are excellent for use in small yards. Plant 2-3 seeds per mound, and once the seedlings emerge and become healthy plants, thin to just one plant.

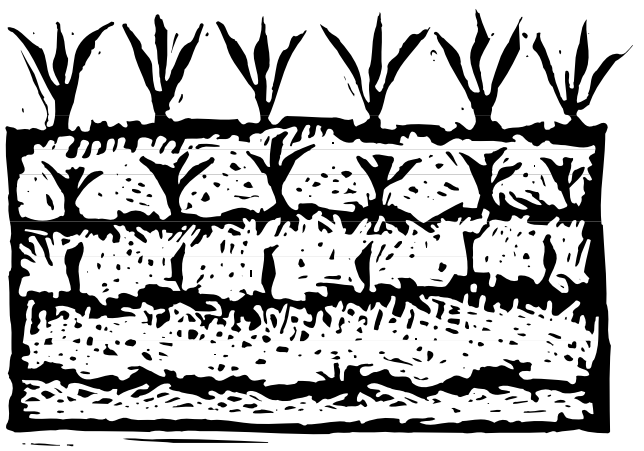
Winter squash need ample water, and should be deep watered using irrigation furrows. Deep watering consists of allowing irrigation water to soak into the soil to a depth of at least 4 feet. After watering, dig with a shovel to see how far the water penetrates. Sandy soil will dry quicker than clay soil and will need to be irrigated more frequently.

Although winter squash need deep water, their roots also need oxygen. Allow the soil to dry out between watering. When Central Valley temperatures reach 95-100°F, squash may need to be watered daily. Even adequately watered squash plants may wilt during the day at these temperatures, but this is only a temporary condition. Plants should return to normal by evening or the next morning.

Squash plants are monoecious, meaning they have both male and female flowers on the same plant. Pollen is transferred between the flowers by honeybees, although other flying insects do play a small part. Male flowers can be recognized by their long, slender stem, while female flowers have a small miniature fruit at the base of the flower.

When squash plants first bloom, many flowers will drop off. This is to be expected, as the first flowers are usually male and will not set fruit. When fruit begins to set, many of the small fruits will drop off, a normal thinning process done by the plant. If, however, no fruit sets, it may be a sign of another problem. For more information on disorders, pests and diseases of squash, see the link at the end of this article.

Harvest winter squash when the rind hardens and the skin takes on a dull cast. The skin should be hard enough that it can't be dented by a fingernail. If possible, allow squash to stay on the vine until the vine begins deteriorating. Harvest squash with a sharp knife, leaving a 2" stem on each fruit. Your harvest can be eaten immediately, or stored for later use. 'Cure' squash by leaving them in a dark place for 2-10 days at 80-85°F. Next, leave them in a dark place at 50-60°F. Acorns can be stored for 5-8 weeks; buttercup, butternut, delicata, kabocha, spaghetti and turban can be stored for 2-3 months; while banana and hubbard can last for up to 6 months.



Often gardeners worry that planting squash, melons, cucumbers and pumpkins in their garden will cause cross-pollination and result in an undesirable crop. Cross-pollination only affects the seeds of the crop being grown. Gardeners who save seeds to plant for the following year will need to review the species that can cross pollinate. A link to the University of Georgia at http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/L232.htm explains the process of pollination and what crops should not be planted together.

INFORMATION: Email the author at aschellman@ucdavis.edu, University of California Cooperative Extension, 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite A, Modesto, CA 95358, (209) 525-6800. Information on squash and other topics by the author can be found at http://cestanislaus.ucdavis.edu/Agriculture/Home_Garden_and_Ornamental_Horticulture.htm

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Humane Society Legislative Fund: advocating a more humane way of life for everyone

By LOUIS & MARGARET DEMOTT-FELDMAN

The least I can do is speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves. — Jane Goodall

In last month's issue of *Connections*, we provided information about HSLF, an organization that operates at the state and federal level to make the public aware of animal protection concerns, to back candidates for office, and to support animal welfare legislation.

Some of the HSLF-supported animal protection bills before U.S. Congress that were not mentioned in June's article are the:

- *Great Ape Protection Act H.R. 1326* (To phase out the use of chimpanzees in invasive research and to retire federally owned chimpanzees to sanctuary);
- *Puppy Uniform Protection Statute -to be introduced* (To require that large commercial breeders who sell puppies online and directly to the public be licensed, regulated, and inspected and to require exercise for dogs at all commercial facilities);
- *Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act H.R. 669* (To prevent the introduction and establishment in the U.S. of nonnative wildlife species that may hurt the economy, environment, human health, or native wildlife);
- *Wild Horses and Burros H.R. 1018* (To restore the prohibition on the slaughter and commercial sale of wild free-roaming horses and burros). If these or any other pieces of animal protection legislation interest you, consider following HSLF's recommendations below for creating a more humane community.

1. Call your U.S. Senators at 202-224-3121 and ask them to support and co-sponsor animal legislation now pending in Congress.
2. Call your U.S. Representative at 202-224-3121 and ask him or her to support and co-sponsor animal legislation now pending in Congress.
3. Join HSLF's Humane Action Network at www.hslf.org or call 202-676-2314. Ask five of your friends to join, too!
4. Don't forget to register to vote, if you haven't already done so. You may register online at http://www.fabnit.com/nvra-update-09-12-06.pdf.
5. Find out how your legislators voted on animal protection issues. Get a copy of the Humane Scorecard by calling 202-676-2314 or visiting their website at www.hslf.org.

ACTION: Contact HSLF at 519 C Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20002. Show that you're willing to become involved and serve as a voice for the voiceless in an effort to make a more humane way of life for everyone. (Monetary contributions to HSLF are not tax deductible because it is, officially, a lobbying organization.)

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

By Lillian Vallee

57. Lonewis

On a recent family hiking trip along Burney Creek in northern California, my sister-in-law Bonnie and I found fresh oak apple galls on Black Oaks (*Quercus kelloggii*) and squeezed the juice from the rosy green apples onto our sunburned skin. I had read that oak gall juice was once used as an eye and tooth wash, but I did not know whether the wash was from fresh juice or from an infusion of dried galls. Our skin became very soft, probably because of the tannic acid in the oak apples, and I began to think of all the ways oak tannins had been used to "tan" or cure hides, just as we were doing.

A person interested in the human uses of native plants in the Great Central Valley, or a person enchanted by a vista here may turn to the records of the people who first used or saw them. The knowledge we extract from books, however, feels partial, not directly transmitted by the people who first acquired and passed it person to person, the most effective form of learning.

In preparing for a readers' theater play about Lakisamne Yokuts leader Estanislao, I turn to Frank Latta's *Handbook of Yokuts Indians*, first published in 1949, to get a better sense of Indian life in the southern half of the Great Valley. Scholars estimate there were at least 35,000 Yokuts (about sixty tribes) in the Delta, San Joaquin Plain, Tulare Basin and the areas ringing three hundred miles of Yokuts range. "No large section of California is so little known ethnographically as the lower or northern San Joaquin valley," writes William Wallace. The tribes (from Stockton to Bakersfield) spoke divergent dialects of "at least partial intelligibility" to one another. In his 1948 preface to Latta's book, Alfred Kroeber describes the Yokuts as "a tall, well built people of open outlook…frank, upstanding, casual and unceremonious, optimistic and friendly, fond of laughter, not given to cares of property or too much worry about tomorrow; and they lived in direct simple relation to their land and world, to its animals, spirits, and gods, and to one another." Some of this spirit is reflected in their songs celebrating Tulare Lake, seeds, hand games, river crossings, bears hunting, fish charms, or dust devils.

Kroeber goes on to describe Latta's handbook as "not only meticulous, but remarkably reliable." Kroeber concluded his introduction with the statement that the volume "should be a source of pride to the patriotism of the San Joaquin Valley and a basis for its local history, as it surely is a contribution toward the general, comparative study of the cultures of the races of mankind."

Even though Latta's scholarship has been updated by others, one can not help but admire the sense of urgency with which he recorded and presented the people's stories as well as the love and respect radiating from the handbook. Latta found the Yokuts simply "the most interesting race of man ever to inhabit this earth; and…the most interesting race of people that ever will live on this earth." He lamented the rapid disappearance of the Yokuts as "a serious loss to the history and the social and economic development of the San Joaquin Valley."

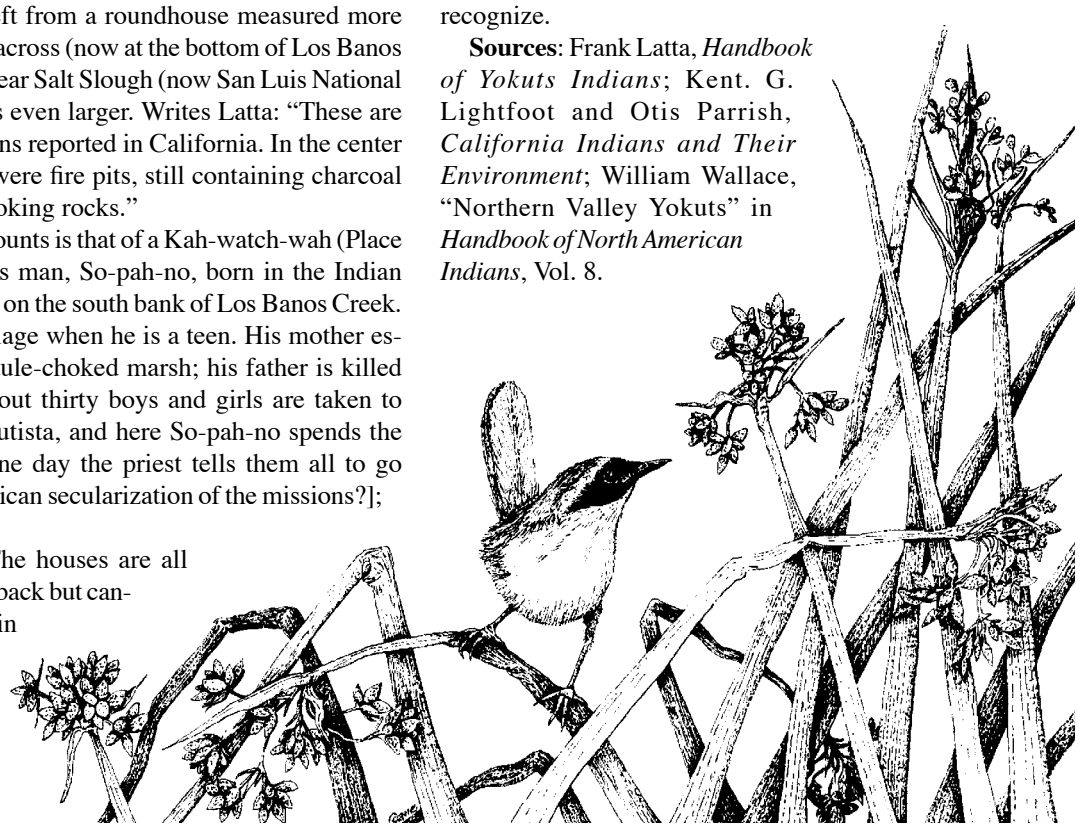
Latta was born on Orestimba Creek and lived on the west side of Stanislaus County for thirty years. He studied the evidence left behind in abandoned village sites of westside Yokuts, gone by 1790 because of Spanish raids on villages. The few survivors fell to pestilence in 1833. One of the saucer shaped depressions left from a roundhouse measured more than ninety-three feet across (now at the bottom of Los Banos Reservoir). Another, near Salt Slough (now San Luis National Wildlife Refuge), was even larger. Writes Latta: "These are the largest such remains reported in California. In the center of these depressions were fire pits, still containing charcoal and heat-shattered cooking rocks."

One story Latta recounts is that of a Kah-watch-wah (Place of Grass Nuts) Yokuts man, So-pah-no, born in the Indian village of Kah-to-mah on the south bank of Los Banos Creek. Spaniards raid his village when he is a teen. His mother escapes by hiding in a tule-choked marsh; his father is killed by the Spaniards. About thirty boys and girls are taken to Mission San Juan Bautista, and here So-pah-no spends the next twenty years. One day the priest tells them all to go home [during the Mexican secularization of the missions?]; So-pah-no returns.

No one is there. The houses are all burned. He is on horseback but cannot find anyone within a fifteen-mile radius. He spots Indians spearing salmon on the San Joaquin River. They speak a language he recognizes as the language of his mother and father. They tell him all have died. He is invited to live with another Yokuts group. The chiefs of two Yokuts tribes decide they should go back to Kah-to-mah to do a dance ceremony (called *lonewis*) for the dead. About twenty people go, including the Dumna and Tucuyu Yokuts chiefs. They stay a week and hold a dance ceremony for the dead, but the Mexicans make trouble for them because they fear the Indians intend to steal their cattle or hurt someone. The Kah-watch-wah man never returns to his village site on Los Banos Creek and lives out his days with the Dumna until he sees the first train cross the San Joaquin on a trestle bridge. He is convinced the train will plunge into the river. He dies the next day.

When we reflect on current issues of immigrants and language, it is wise to remember both Spanish and English are foreign languages here, in the land of the Kah-watch-wah or Nopchinchi, Chulamni, Lakisamni, and Chawchila, to mention just a few. And maybe some of the ancestors are still hoping to hear songs and dances in a language they will recognize.

Sources: Frank Latta, *Handbook of Yokuts Indians*; Kent. G. Lightfoot and Otis Parrish, *California Indians and Their Environment*; William Wallace, "Northern Valley Yokuts" in *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 8.



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A new way

By DAVID SMITH-FERRI, truthout | Perspective

Amman, Jordan - Recently, in an article by Kim Gamel, the Associated Press reported that the government of Iraq "has recorded 87,215 of its citizens killed since 2005 in violence ranging from catastrophic bombings to execution-style slayings …" Based on an "in-depth review of available evidence" from "hospital sources and media reports," the AP concluded that more than 110,600 Iraqis have died as a result of violence since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

As intended, it is the numbers that jump out at us off the page, but here in Amman, Jordan, where I spend my days talking with Iraqi refugees who have fled their country, it isn't numbers that stand out, but individual people, their stories, their histories, their hopes.

The numbers, in fact, can obscure more than they reveal. They fool us into thinking that the impact of six years of war and occupation can be held in the palm of a hand, characterized in a single sentence, grasped in an instant. They fool us into thinking the consequences can be "managed" and "controlled." Let's be clear: the losses for Iraqis are incalculable. We should face this and recognize that the losses from war are always too deep, too personal to measure, too large to manage or control. To think otherwise is to be open to the cost-benefit arguments in favor of the next war.

Numbers, too, are the subject of argument and controversy, which further distract us from what matters: the people. The Iraqis we are meeting in Amman are living with deep personal tragedy, which sometimes concerns the deaths of loved ones: the loss of a sister, brother, child, parent, someone who was close enough to be not only a part of their daily life but also a part of their identity.

Consider Abu Abbas, whose sister was killed in a car bombing. Consider Muna, whose parents, four brothers and her one-year-old child were killed in a US missile attack. Consider Najlaa, whose father died two years ago. For each of these people, the loss is fresh, the wound isn't healed. "We were a big family, and our father was the world to us," Najlaa says. "He taught me so many things. Every month when we were children, we'd go and buy a sheep and bring it home. I loved that sheep. I would jump on it and ride it," Najlaa says, her eyes bright with joy. "Of course, we would butcher the sheep. That's what it was for. And my father made us help. We would help catch the blood, help with the skinning and cutting and cleaning. And then we'd have a big meal. Everyone together. That sheep would give us meat for a whole month."

> What does the future hold, she asks, when there are hundreds of thousands of widows, and when so many children have lost one or both parents?

Najlaa's father was a talented man, an artist, a carpenter, a scholar, a political activist. "He taught me how to view the world and to care about it/every creature. He taught me that no problem is so big that I can't look at it and think about what I can do and then do it."

Najlaa's father, a member of the Communist Party and a human rights advocate, was arrested and imprisoned during the Saddam Hussein regime. "They made the prisoners line up for torture. As he waited in line, my father could hear the screams of other prisoners ahead of him. And as the line progressed, as he moved toward the front of the line for his turn, he would be quietly talking to the other people in line, finding out what had been done to them, and then later he'd write it up. He was documenting the abuses."

"And he was so much fun to be with. Telling stories and making jokes. Even during the hardest times, he kept our spirits up, and we felt strong being with him."

Najlaa's father is gone now, taken from her by a war she didn't ask for, a war, need we be reminded, that began with a premeditated and unprovoked invasion of a sovereign country. Living in the US for the last seven years, listening first to arguments in favor of an invasion of Iraq and afterward to "news" from the battlefield, one could actually forget that Iraq is a sovereign country. A country with a history, a country whose present is dominated by that invasion and the events that flowed from it. A country whose people are concerned about its future.

We met recently in Amman with an Iraqi historian and human rights advocate who is back-and-forth to Baghdad. Noor (not her real name) began by saying, "Look, we all know the humanitarian crisis in Iraq is comprehensive." Meaning, the human systems - education, health care, employment, social services, the arts - and the civilian infrastructure - water and sewage treatment, electricity - are degraded and broken. "The streets may be 'calmer,'" she continued, "but when there is no electricity, no clean water, no employment, we know there is no security."

What does the future hold, she asks, when there are hundreds of thousands of widows, and when so many children have lost one or both parents? What does the future hold when so many of the skilled professionals have fled or been killed? "If things improve, we might see some of the older professionals returning, but the younger ones, the ones with new families, the ones with energy and a spirit for building a future? I'm afraid they'll never return."

We meet these young professionals here in Amman. They come from all backgrounds: Sunni, Shia, Christian, Mandaean. They are smart, capable and good. They are proficient in 21st century technologies. They are exactly the people Iraq needs to reconstitute itself. These are the entrepreneurs, the scholars, the lawyers, the inventors, the artists. These are the country's future leaders.

But the young professionals we are meeting have no plans to return to Iraq. They want to live in a country where they can build a future. Yasmin, a biologist and the mother of a six-month-old child, explains "When you are in Iraq, you accommodate to the violence and all the problems. But once you have left, you can't go back." It's also true that Yasmin's husband was kidnapped in Iraq. His business was taken over, and he faces a death threat in Iraq. All of which, of course, color the prospect of returning.

> These Iraqis have offered relationships based on trust, mutuality, respect. Armed with nothing but their decency, their goodwill and their wits, they have made common cause with us. Contrast this with the belligerent, threatening, violent behavior of the US government, which conflates foreign policy with military action.

Noor's concerns for Iraq and Iraqis go deep. She is concerned that the Iraq she loves is disappearing. "Iraqis aren't passing on their arts and their history. These are people with a rich culture, and they are in danger of forgetting who they are." Many of the master artists have fled or been killed. In Iraq, artists have little support for their work in a country shattered by violence and political upheaval, in a country whose middle and upper classes have fled, in an economy that is in tatters. Making a point we have heard from other Iraqis in Amman, she says "Iraqis are more and more concerned about making money, and how you make it doesn't matter."

In the face of all this, what can be done? Well, Iraqis give us more than a clue by the way they treat us, by the genuine hospitality and friendship they offer. There are families I've

A NEW WAY .....continued p. 11

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Helpline: 527-0776
www.pflagmodesto.org
Visit the Oakdale satellite
Meetings on
3rd Wednesdays from 7-9 pm
"Golden Oaks" Conference Room
Oak Valley Medical Building
1425 West "H" St.
pflagoakdale@dishmail.net

War is sin

By CHRIS HEDGES

The crisis faced by combat veterans returning from war is not simply a profound struggle with trauma and alienation. It is often, for those who can slice through the suffering to self-awareness, an existential crisis. War exposes the lies we tell ourselves about ourselves. It rips open the hypocrisy of our religions and secular institutions. Those who return from war have learned something which is often incomprehensible to those who have stayed home. We are not a virtuous nation. God and fate have not blessed us above others. Victory is not assured. War is neither glorious nor noble. And we carry within us the capacity for evil we ascribe to those we fight.

Those who return to speak this truth, such as members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, are our contemporary prophets. But like all prophets they are condemned and ignored for their courage. They struggle, in a culture awash in lies, to tell what few have the fortitude to digest. They know that what we are taught in school, in worship, by the press, through the entertainment industry and at home, that the melding of the state's rhetoric with the rhetoric of religion, is empty and false.

The words these prophets speak are painful. We, as a nation, prefer to listen to those who speak from the patriotic script. We prefer to hear ourselves exalted. If veterans speak of terrible wounds visible and invisible, of lies told to make them kill, of evil committed in our name, we fill our ears with wax. Not our boys, we say, not them, bred in our homes, endowed with goodness and decency. For if it is easy for them to murder, what about us? And so it is simpler and more comfortable not to hear. We do not listen to the angry words that cascade forth from their lips, wishing only that they would calm down, be reasonable, get some help, and go away. We, the deformed, brand our prophets as madmen. We cast them into the desert. And this is why so many veterans are estranged and enraged. This is why so many succumb to suicide or addictions.

War comes wrapped in patriotic slogans, calls for sacrifice, honor and heroism and promises of glory. It comes wrapped in the claims of divine providence. It is what a grateful nation asks of its children. It is what is right and just. It is waged to make the nation and the world a better place, to cleanse evil. War is touted as the ultimate test of manhood, where the young can find out what they are made of. War, from a distance, seems noble. It gives us comrades and power and a chance to play a small bit in the great drama of history. It promises to give us an identity as a warrior, a patriot, as long as we go along with the myth, the one the war-makers need to wage wars and the defense contractors need to increase their profits.

But up close war is a soulless void. War is about barbarity, perversion and pain, an unchecked orgy of death. Human decency and tenderness are crushed. Those who make war work overtime to reduce love to smut, and all human beings become objects, pawns to use or kill. The noise, the stench, the fear, the scenes of eviscerated bodies and bloated corpses, the cries of the wounded, all combine to spin those in combat into another universe. In this moral void, naively blessed by secular and religious institutions at home, the hypocrisy of our social conventions, our strict adherence to moral precepts, come unglued. War, for all its horror, has the power to strip away the trivial and the banal, the empty chatter and foolish obsessions that fill our days. It lets us see, although the cost is tremendous.

But up close war is a soulless void. War is about barbarity, perversion and pain, an unchecked orgy of death. Human decency and tenderness are crushed.

The Rev. William P. Mahedy, who was a Catholic chaplain in Vietnam, tells of a soldier, a former altar boy, in his book *Out of the Night: The Spiritual Journey of Vietnam Vets*, who says to him: "Hey, Chaplain … how come it's a sin to hop into bed with a mama-san but it's okay to blow away gooks out in the bush?"

But in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the enemy is elusive and rarely seen, murder occurs far more often than killing.

"Consider the question that he and I were forced to confront on that day in a jungle clearing," Mahedy writes. "How is it that a Christian can, with a clear conscience, spend a year in a war zone killing people and yet place his soul in jeopardy by spending a few minutes with a prostitute? If the New Testament prohibitions of sexual misconduct are to be stringently interpreted, why, then, are Jesus' injunctions against violence not binding in the same way? In other words, what does the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' really mean?"

Military chaplains, a majority of whom are evangelical Christians, defend the life of the unborn, tout America as a Christian nation and eagerly bless the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as holy crusades. The hollowness of their morality, the staggering disconnect between the values they claim to promote, is ripped open in war.

There is a difference between killing someone who is trying to kill you and taking the life of someone who does not have the power to harm you. The first is killing. The second is murder. But in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the enemy is elusive and rarely seen, murder occurs far more often than killing. Families are massacred in airstrikes. Children are gunned down in blistering suppressing fire laid down in neighborhoods after an improvised explosive device goes off near a convoy. Artillery shells obliterate homes. And no one stops to look. The dead and maimed are left behind.

The utter failure of nearly all our religious institutions-whose texts are unequivocal about murder-to address the essence of war has rendered them useless. These institutions have little or nothing to say in wartime because the god they worship is a false god, one that promises victory to those who obey the law and believe in the manifest destiny of the nation.

We all have the capacity to commit evil. It takes little to unleash it. For those of us who have been to war this is the awful knowledge that is hardest to digest, the knowledge that the line between the victims and the victimizers is razor-thin, that human beings find a perverse delight in destruction and death, and that few can resist the pull. At best, most of us become silent accomplices.

Wars may have to be fought to ensure survival, but they are always tragic. They always bring to the surface the worst elements of any society, those who have a penchant for violence and a lust for absolute power. They turn the moral order upside down. It was the criminal class that first organized the defense of Sarajevo. When these goons were not manning roadblocks to hold off the besieging Bosnian Serb army they were looting, raping and killing the Serb residents in the city. And those politicians who speak of war as an instrument of power, those who wage war but do not know its reality, those powerful statesmen-the Henry Kissingers, Robert McNamaras, Donald Rumsfelds, the Dick Cheneys-those who treat war as part of the great game of nations, are as amoral as the religious stooges who assist them. And when the wars are over what they have to say to us in their thick memoirs about war is also hollow, vacant and useless.

"In theological terms, war is sin," writes Mahedy. "This has nothing to do with whether a particular war is justified or whether isolated incidents in a soldier's war were right or wrong. The point is that war as a human enterprise is a matter of sin. It is a form of hatred for one's fellow human beings. It produces alienation from others and nihilism, and it ultimately represents a turning away from God."

The young soldiers and Marines do not plan or organize the war. They do not seek to justify it or explain its causes. They are taught to believe. The symbols of the nation and religion are interwoven. The will of God becomes the will of the nation. This trust is forever shattered for many in war. Soldiers in combat see the myth used to send them to war implode. They see that war is not clean or neat or noble, but venal and frightening. They see into war's essence, which is death.

War is always about betrayal. It is about betrayal of the young by the old, of cynics by idealists, and of soldiers and Marines by politicians. Society's institutions, including our religious institutions, which mold us into compliant citizens, are unmasked. This betrayal is so deep that many never find their way back to faith in the nation or in any god. They nurse a self-destructive anger and resentment, understandable and justified, but also crippling. Ask a combat veteran struggling to piece his or her life together about God and watch the raw vitriol and pain pour out. They have seen into the corrupt heart of America, into the emptiness of its most sacred institutions, into our staggering hypocrisy, and those of us who refuse to heed their words become complicit in the evil they denounce.

Chris Hedges, who spent nearly two decades as a war correspondent for *The New York Times* and other newspapers, is the author of *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, due out in July. His *Truthdig* column appears every Monday.

Monday 01 June 2009, http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/20090601_war_is_sin/

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Afghanistan's untold story

. . . from page 1

The second section of *Invisible History* limits its focus to the years between 1970 and 2001. Many readers will find this section more immediately relevant to current events, as it deals almost exclusively with the prelude, battle and aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan war and the shadowed (yet starring) role that the United States played in this tragedy. This is a shameful chapter in US history, and one that remains largely unread. Gould and Fitzgerald provide an almost play-by-play account of the behind-the-scenes machinations of the political figures that helped to orchestrate this most ambitious and expensive of covert operations, whereby the CIA funneled billions of dollars through Pakistan's primary intelligence agency to recruit, arm and indoctrinate the fractious and fanatical militia forces collectively referred to as "the mujahedin."

Working in concert with Saudi financiers and ideologues like Osama bin Laden, and driven by the myopic zealotry of American Cold War hawks, the United States used Afghanistan as a sacrificial arena to, in the words of Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, "give the Soviets their Vietnam." In what would later reveal itself to be the most tragic of ironies in our nation's history, the United States amassed and dispatched an army of international jihadists (we called them "freedom fighters" back then) to storm into Afghanistan and bleed the Russians to death.

Already on the brink of implosion, the USSR collapsed soon after the conflict. But along with its demise came one of the most unfathomable humanitarian catastrophes in modern history. One million Afghans were killed during the war. Five million fled to neighboring countries. Two million were internally displaced. The nation's infrastructure was reduced to rot and rubble, and the landscape was scarred and pockmarked with landmines, many of which still claim victims today. In addition to the dead, over four million Afghans were horribly maimed or disabled.

But this was just the beginning of Afghanistan's nightmare. After the Soviet collapse, a "victorious" United States abandoned the country it had just helped turn into a haven for violent extremism. America's sole objective had been achieved, and it foolishly believed that it had no real strategic interest in a stable Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the mujahedin forces - steroidal with US-supplied military technologies - fought against the Afghan government, and then against one another, until the Taliban finally rolled into Kabul and took power. The Taliban, brainwashed in Pakistani madrassas indirectly constructed with US tax dollars, had more in common with the virulent pan-Islamism of al-Qaeda than with Afghanistan's traditionally moderate society. They brought a brutal, medieval agenda to Afghanistan, and provided sanctuary to a non-native terrorism that would eventually find its way back to American shores.

In this manner, the development and rise of the Taliban was a direct consequence of America's intentional destabilization and radicalization of Afghanistan. Yet, despite the shock-value and enormous pertinence of this story, it remains in the margins of our national narrative, even after the events of 9/11. This gaping hole in our national consciousness, aside from being unfaithful to the past, has set us on a course for disaster in the future. As Sima Wali, Afghan refugee and author of the book's introduction, writes, "the void of accurate historical information on the origin of [the Taliban] has resulted in a succession of dangerous, counterproductive policy initiatives from Washington. The consequences of these initiatives have negated any chance for a successful restoration of an Afghan republic, opened Afghanistan to cross-border raids from Pakistan while at the same time providing a platform for the resurgence of Taliban."

With this is mind, we turn to the third and final section of the book, in which Gould and Fitzgerald highlight the dramatic failures of the war in Afghanistan from 2001 onwards, and then offer prescriptions for an acceptable resolution to the conflict. Not surprisingly, what we have been doing wrong is often the opposite of what we could be doing right. Here are a few of the authors' central recommendations to President Obama:

1. Stop bombing innocent civilians. It's unconscionable, and it makes terrorists out of the people whose support we need.
2. Stop destroying the poppy harvest. This also alienates Afghan civilians, as many of their lives depend on the sale of poppies. Create financial incentives for farmers to grow other crops, and consider purchasing the rest of the poppies for the legal manufacture of pain relief medications, of which there is currently a worldwide shortage.
3. Get serious about reconstruction efforts and the effective deployment of desperately needed humanitarian aid. Gould and Fitzgerald interviewed an aid worker in Afghanistan who said that the US would have been more successful if we had just flown over the countryside and dumped money out of the window. Afghanistan needs schools and streets to function. Apportion more money for these purposes and less for weapons. Fire corrupt and inept private contractors.
4. Bring fresh voices to the table. There are some disturbingly familiar faces in President Obama's circle of advisers. The very same people who led the crusade to arm terrorists and destabilize Afghanistan 30 years ago should not be in charge of disarming terrorists and stabilizing Afghanistan today. Ditch the coterie of failed thinkers who - through their hegemonic delusions and addiction to war - have led us to this ledge.
5. Realize that what is good for the people of Afghanistan is also good for the people of the United States. As Gould and Fitzgerald explain: "Cosmopolitan and friendly, [Afghans] are beautiful, funny, proud and smart. Think of them that way and how they can be helped to make the country safe again." All actions should emanate from an understanding of this basic principle.

Finally, after delineating about a half dozen other concrete proposals, the authors call on us to do some deep thinking about our post-9/11 national identity. September 11 did not signal the beginning of a new world; it merely reminded us, savagely, that we live in the real one, which is an interconnected one, where nation affects nation, and where past affects present and future. The authors attune us to this connection because it is only at this locus that we can have a mature and fruitful conversation - free from hysteria and faux-patriotism - about who we are, who we've been and who we want to become.

Invisible History shows us that we now have an opportunity to transform ourselves through an honest confrontation with our past: a confrontation that would lead us to reorient our national policies around the tabernacle of our professed moral values. If we choose to ignore this opportunity, and once again turn a blind eye to history and its lessons, then we may find ourselves in grave danger, not just from the threat of terrorist attacks, but from falling victim to the same folly that has toppled empires throughout history. The authors conclude their book with a word of warning: "If our government has no other purpose than to serve the fantasies of its own defense intellectuals in their desire to create new ways of making endless war, then we are in serious trouble and, like the Soviet Union, Afghanistan will be our final test."

More information about the book at **www.invisiblehistory.com**

Ryan Croken's essays and book reviews have appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer, Z Magazine*, and *Religion Dispatches*, among others. Reach him at ryan.croken@gmail.com

Edited. Full article at **http://www.truthout.org/053109Y**

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Twenty-four Words

Dog kingdom

Old-fashioned
Tapping

Spaghetti

Chaos
Confusion,
War,
Anger,
Fighting

One thousand
answers,
Zero solutions

Parachute
writer

Word
devil

Discover the
Popcorn before popcorn

Spooky
without dumb
Ravens

Twenty eight
Ninety twent
Ampersand
&
and

wise
fiend,
wise
friend,
wise
R

— Sam Kara, age 11

A GATHERING OF VOICES

Shadow of a Shine

No exit to life
No murky peace
No scar, no shadow

I dream the sun and magenta waffle.
I dream the face or a whisper.
I dream the moment to shine.
I dream the enchanted robin.

I dream the light.
I knew no greedy fear.
I knew no magic.
I didn't know you.
Now I see. I see. I see.
I see sun. I see peace.
I see good. I see friends.
I see the source.

I am the sun.
I am the whisper.
I am the shadow.
I have the moment.

I come from light.
I come from one.
I am the sun.
I am the undiscovered.
I want to be me.
I want to be the shadow of a shine.

— Kerry Young, age 10

O, Hail the Mighty Jungle

I am dark
I am in the shadows
I am content
I will be content
I come with life
For I am the mighty jungle
O, hail the mighty jungle
Dark, dark,
Washed in heat
I, overflowing with life
I, the jungle
The jungle
For I am the mighty jungle
O, hail the mighty jungle
Dark, dark,
I am the den of the tiger
I am the tree of the monkey
The sea of the alligator
The nest of the toucan
The skies of Christ
For I am the mighty jungle
O, hail the mighty jungle

— Tess Kara, age 8

Kerry Young

Sam and Tess Kara

The Kara and Young Poets

The Kara and Young children have been playing, and occasionally homeschooling, together ever since their mothers tumbled into a deep and satisfying friendship five years ago. The poems on this page came from a surge of poetry writing energy that grew out of Susan Wooldridge's poetry workshop at the Stanislaus County Library.

We were fascinated to note how abundantly the creative juices flowed as soon as it became clear that there was no wrong way to write a poem.

Erin Young (age 15) is no longer homeschooling. She is in the IB program at Modesto High and an avid classical guitarist. Kerry Young (age 10) is a happy-go-lucky homeschooler who loves to play fiddle. Sam Kara (age 12) also schools through Hickman Charter Home School and is an accomplished piano player. Tess Kara (age 8) has been writing poetry for many years and even won a competition several years ago when she was younger. She is a budding harp player.

The Mine of Lilies

I come from the mine of lilies,
who first drained the will of a billion trillion stars.
Stars,
the voices and icy skull of immaculate mirrors.
I forget the eel of mind's undying wounds,
staring violence in the stone grave at twilight.
The song of fate singing like a ribbon of vacant undiscoverable voices.
I remember the silent humanity gory fuzz shutting the gate on the gondola of immeasurable magic and angels.
I watch will crumble to dust drained of gestures.
'Tis the silent realm of unexisting statues.
To the sky the heroic lady shine merely stares me in the eye,
the skeleton of nature knocking the stone dead vacant eyes of humanity into the luminescent fog of its own mind.
I wonder that we fall to the mine and ponder do we exist or do we haunt the undiscoverable wonders,
merely the crumbs of a devoured biscuit.

— Erin Young, age 15

On Fred Herman

Having been acquainted with Fred Herman for a number of years, I never realized he and his family fled the Nazis. That was a wonderful article. I had a Stockton friend who escaped the death camps; she carried a Jewish I.D. tattoo on her arm until the day she died.

Also, thank you for your articles on humane farming and ending animal cruelty. People need to know about the insufferable lives so many animals endure every day of their short and tortured existence.

Carol Benson
Modesto

Peace Camp for Kids at the Modesto Church of the Brethren

By RUSS MATTESON

Peace Camp will engage children ages 3 through grade 8 in a week of exploring Things That Make for Peace.

During the week campers will explore words for peace from different lands, the importance of having peace within, with creation, in our community, and around the world. The Bible will be a primary source for learning as well as ideas from other world religions and non-violence skills that combined together provide valuable tools to help one learn to be a peacemaker. Games, snacks, crafts, dance, meditation and music will also help us engage peace.

Dates: Sunday, July 12 – Thursday, 16, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

To register, visit **www.modcob.org** or call 523-1438. Cost $10 includes a t-shirt & all supplies.

Join us in learning about "things that make for peace."

Choice in community

The strongest asset any community has is "choice." Choice can create peace, justice, and a better environment for all. With the election of our first black president, a bad economy, and a faltering housing market, communities are changing either for better or for worse. Our community needs to look at how it can create a better one. Choice starts from the ground up. Once we have created a great place to live within our own districts, we can expand our efforts to our state and then, eventually, to the nation. Creating peace, though difficult, can be accomplished if people are willing to put forth the effort. Choice is in all of us.

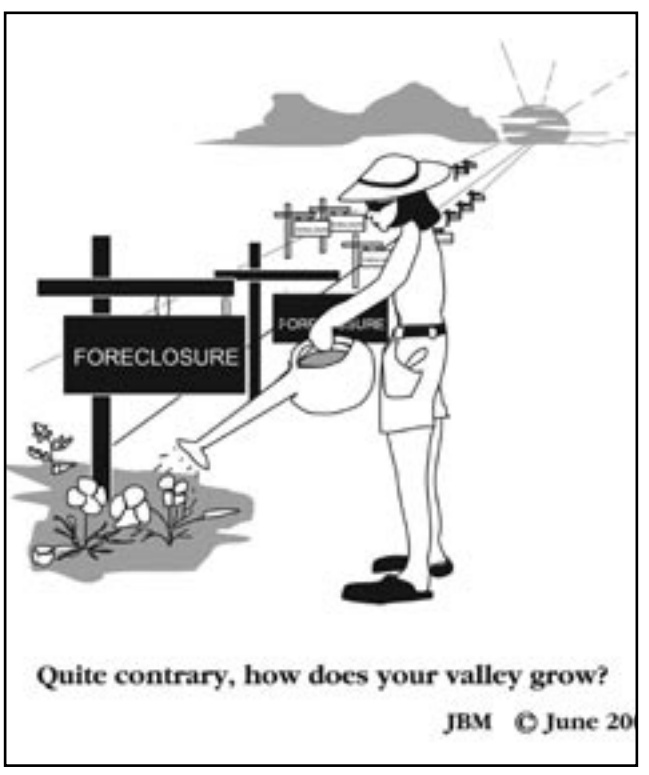
Living in Modesto, California, the issue of illegal immigration is becoming more prominent. The choices we make to deport these migrants may not always be the right one. We have the choice to accept that they are becoming a greater part of our economy and day-to-day lives. The choice to learn their language and, for them, to learn ours, is very important in our need to create a better place to live. Peaceful coexistence comes at a price, but it's worth it to look at each other as people trying to live peacefully together. Some may not like the choice of having them live here but we can understand our symbiotic relationship and lively peacefully together, choosing to help one another. Justice is choosing to do the right thing wherever we live. We choose to segregate criminals in a jail system. Many uneducated find themselves in nowhere jobs. Some of the poor survive off the taxpayers, or roam the streets. The fact that we have criminals, the uneducated, or the poor among us does not mean that we should deprive them of justice or due process.

A community is as only strong as its leaders. Yet, a strong community is built with a strong foundation, its children. We all try to justify our own lives by what we choose to do with them. Yet, we can look at our own community leaders and influence them by working for what we believe is right.

We all start off thinking we can change the world when we are young, but, along the way, our views change. We find out how the real world chooses to tell us how we should run our lives. If we choose to change our lives, our community is a good place to start. Reduce crime through education. Break the cycle of poverty that consumes the poor. Each of us can choose to break any cycle in which we find ourselves. Education is a great place to start choosing how we can help our community effectively become whole. Change will not happen if we all only look out for our own interests.

Stop and think about the choices you make that affect everyone around you, even if you have never met them. Choices can make or break us. It's up to you and me and our community to bring us together, united for the greater good. Choosing to help a person cross the street, or to help a person in need, can make for a simpler, easier day to day life. Choices can bring us together by different paths. Our good choices now, can teach our children and influence our leaders, and help create a stronger community and a better future.

Kris Price
Modesto



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The Middle East conflict: A reply to Ken Kohler

By DAN ONORATO

In the May issue of Connections Ken Kohler criticizes Sandy Tolan's insightful April article as "heavily biased against Israel." I want to address the bias in the eye of the beholder.

Ken's conclusion that religious beliefs are the cause of the violence and bloodshed is not accurate. The fundamental issue is land and who controls it. The Zionist slogan to persuade European Jews to emigrate to Palestine in the early 1900's is telling: "A people for a land in a land without people." It didn't matter that the land did have people, 90% of whom were Palestinian Arabs. The Zionists wanted a land in which Jews, so often persecuted in Europe, would always be the ruling power. Palestine was the land of their ancient ancestors, and it helped their cause to point to the promise Yahweh makes in the Jewish Bible that the land would be theirs forever. Today the ultra-nationalist Orthodox Israelis use that same rationale to justify continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank. But religion is not at the heart of the conflict. Israel wants more land so it can continue to be a homeland for all Jews, a place whose culture is rooted in their souls. Both Judaism and Islam in their essential teachings are hospitable and tolerant of other religions. The fanaticism of certain groups distorts rather than reflects the heart of these great faiths.

Ken asserts that the Palestinians "are not and never have been interested in a two-state solution." Rather, "they want the destruction of the state of Israel." These are glaring, sweeping generalizations. Just because the powerfully intimidating right-wing Israel lobby, the American-Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC), repeats these extremist ideas constantly doesn't mean they're true. In 1988 Yasser Arafat made a monumental concession to Israeli demands when he formally accepted the State of Israel and backed the two-state solution whose boundary—called the Green Line—would conform with UN resolutions giving Palestinians 22% of the land. The problem has been that Israel, ever since the 1967 war, has been expanding beyond the Green Line deep into the West Bank, defying UN resolutions. What's left for the Palestinians is 13% of the land cut into small Bantustans by roads under Israeli military control and subject to hundreds of checkpoints. Given the lack of resolve by the U.S. and the international community to make Israel follow UN resolutions and international law, and the failure of Mahmoud Abbas to challenge Israeli domination, is it any surprise that Palestinians feel increasingly desperate and that many support the defiance of Hamas? Israel's adamance in disregarding international law makes Hamas more appealing. It has to be added that Ismail Haniyeh, leader of Hamas in Gaza, has said he would accept the State of Israel if a just peace agreement with Israel, based on international law, were approved by the Palestinian people. But Israel simply dismisses such initiatives.

Ken claims that Israel maintains its occupation of the West Bank for security purposes. This is the official justification for Israel's separation barrier. But Israel's best known human rights organization, B'Tselem, while agreeing that Israel, like any nation, has a right to safeguard its security, criticizes Israel for building its wall deep into the West Bank. If security is Israel's goal, B'Tselem argues, then build the barrier on the internationally accepted Green Line. The reality is transparent. Ignoring World Court rulings, Israel wants to annex as much land as possible to create facts on the ground that are irreversible in any future negotiations over land rights with the Palestinians.

Claims of security are often used to rationalize oppression. In the name of security, Israel subjects all Palestinians to the daily harassment of checkpoints that keep people waiting for hours, and prevent them sometimes from getting to work, to the hospital, to the home of relatives. In addition to the ubiquitous checkpoints, the frequent roadblocks and city closures, the difficulty of getting permits to enter Jerusalem, and the constant threat and outrage of home demolitions cause daily frustration, humiliation, resentment, and hatred. The underlying end is not to enhance security so much as to pressure Palestinians to leave their land.

Many analysts regard resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as crucial to creating a new and more constructive role for the U.S. in the Mideast. Essential to this process is a policy that eschews the one-sidedness of the past and looks squarely and honestly at the narratives, suffering, and needs of both sides. No longer can the U.S. unconditionally grant Israel 3 billion dollars a year that helps fund Israeli settlements and acts of aggression like its Gaza blockade and invasion. No longer can every criticism of Israel facilely branded as anti-Semitic go uncontested. No longer can the U.S. refuse to talk with Hamas. As Nelson Mandela said, "Talking with one's enemy can turn him into a partner." Perhaps in taking these positive steps the U.S will be trusted enough to assist the Palestinians in establishing a united leadership committed to ending its violence against Israel. And perhaps this change will help the Israelis feel safe enough to accept an agreement that honors international law and enables both peoples to live side by side in peace.

ACTION: For specific actions that will advance peace, see Rabbi Michael Lerner's thoughtful suggestions at the Tikkun website under "Current Thinking": www.tikkun.org

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A new way

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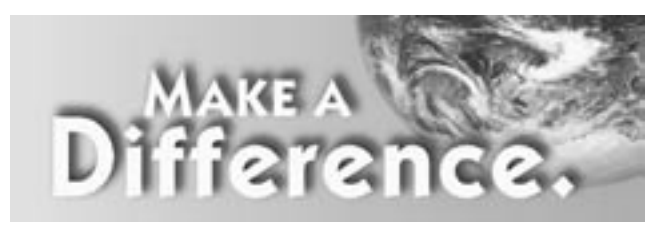
met for the first time here in Amman whose homes I will be welcome in for the rest of my life. These Iraqis have offered relationships based on trust, mutuality, respect. Armed with nothing but their decency, their goodwill and their wits, they have made common cause with us. Contrast this with the belligerent, threatening, violent behavior of the US government, which conflates foreign policy with military action.

What can the American government do? It can do more than adjust timetables for troop withdrawal. It can stop acting in ways that divide Iraqi society and commit itself to supporting an inclusive political process. On her recent visit to the region, Hillary Clinton told Iraqis, "We won't abandon you." But ordinary Iraqis, wary of US promises and intentions, already sense they've been forgotten, and given US actions in Iraq and in the region, actions that divide rather than unite, they have many reasons to be concerned. If Clinton's words are going to have any power to move Iraqis, they will have to be followed by US actions that demonstrate both respect for Iraq's sovereignty and a genuine, long-term commitment to support Iraqis in their efforts to achieve a future of peace.

It could take a lesson from Noor. She will start a center for artists in Amman. "There are very fine Iraqi artists here who are masters and who have agreed to teach and mentor young Iraqis. We will have ceramicists, metal workers, weavers. It can be done." And she will initiate a program for orphans outside Baghdad. Following her lead, the US government could shift money away from military programs toward repair of Iraq's rotting oil industry, the basis of its moribund economy. It could redirect money away from military programs toward support for social services, education, and health care delivery, recognizing that a strong and independent civil society is the bulwark of democracy. It could learn a new way.

David Smith-Ferri is a member of **Voices for Creative Nonviolence** and **Direct Aid Iraq**, and the author of *Battlefield Without Borders*. Pick up a copy of David's book at the Modesto Peace Life Center, or by contacting Ken Schroeder, 526-2303.



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