

Green Tips for a Green Planet: COME TO EARTHDAY!

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

REDUCE, REUSE, then recycle

We might think of April and springtime as an environmental new year. Beautiful springtime blossoms and the greening of our surrounding countryside bring into focus nature's ongoing renewal process. Along with that awareness comes the reminder that we humans are part of that process and partners in the ongoing creation. We are the recipients and appointed caretakers of all that has been provided here on our home, planet earth.

Earth Day was established in 1990 as an inspirational environmental celebration and call to responsible global stewardship. This month we have the opportunity to think globally and act locally at the annual Earth Day in the Park Festival, Saturday April 20 from 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM in Graceada Park, Needham & Sycamore Sts. in Modesto.

"Green" education is the focus: learn how to further reduce your carbon footprint at the Earth Day event.

Folks! Take the first step at reducing emissions by biking to the park where your bike may be locked up at the pool area free of charge.

Admission is free. Music and entertainment continues throughout the day, envi-



ronmental information and samples will be available and local vendors will offer Festival foods and treats.

The event is stroller and family friendly, and handicap accessible. Picnic Area. Carnival-type games and rides are typically set up near the playground.

Have fun at the Earth Day celebration as you gather ideas and inspiration for making a difference at home and in the world.

Visit us at the Modesto Peace/Life Center booth!

Happy Environmental
New Year!

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Living Under Drones

From the Stanford International Human Rights & Conflict Resolution Clinic

In the United States, the dominant narrative about the use of drones in Pakistan is of a surgically precise and effective tool that makes the US safer by enabling "targeted killing" of terrorists, with minimal downsides or collateral impacts.

This narrative is false.

Following nine months of intensive research—including two investigations in Pakistan, more than 130 interviews with victims, witnesses, and experts, and review of thousands of pages of documentation and media reporting—this report presents evidence of the damaging and counterproductive effects of current US drone strike policies. Based on extensive interviews with Pakistanis living in the regions directly affected, as well as humanitarian and medical workers, this report provides new and firsthand testimony about the negative impacts US policies are having on the civilians living under drones.

Real threats to US security and to Pakistani civilians exist in the Pakistani border areas now targeted by drones. It is crucial that the US be able to protect itself from terrorist threats, and that the great harm caused by terrorists to Pakistani civilians be addressed. However, in light of significant evidence of harmful impacts to Pakistani civilians and to US interests, current policies to address terrorism through targeted killings and drone strikes must be carefully re-evaluated.

It is essential that public debate about US policies take the negative effects of current policies into account.

First, while civilian casualties are rarely acknowledged by the US government, there is significant evidence that US drone strikes have injured and killed civilians. In public statements, the US states that there have been

"no" or "single digit" civilian casualties." It is difficult to obtain data on strike casualties because of US efforts to shield the drone program from democratic accountability, compounded by the obstacles to independent investigation of strikes in North Waziristan. The best currently available public aggregate data on drone strikes are provided by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ), an independent journalist organization. TBIJ reports that from June 2004 through mid-September 2012, available data indicate that drone strikes killed 2,562-3,325 people in Pakistan, of whom 474-881 were civilians, including 176 children. TBIJ reports that these strikes also injured an additional 1,228-1,362 individuals. Where media accounts do report civilian casualties, rarely is any information provided about the victims or the communities they leave behind. This report includes the harrowing narratives of many survivors, witnesses, and family members who provided evidence of civilian injuries and deaths in drone strikes to our research team. It also presents detailed accounts of three separate strikes, for which there is evidence of civilian deaths and injuries, including a March 2011 strike on a meeting of tribal elders that killed some 40 individuals.

Second, US drone strike policies cause considerable and under-accounted-for harm to the daily lives of ordinary civilians, beyond death and physical injury. Drones hover twenty-four hours a day over communities in northwest Pakistan, striking homes, vehicles, and public spaces without warning. Their presence terrorizes men, women, and children, giving rise to anxiety and psychological trauma among civilian communities. Those living under drones have to face the constant worry that a deadly strike may be fired at any moment, and the knowledge that they are powerless to protect themselves. These fears have affected behavior. The US practice of striking one area multiple times, and evidence that it has killed rescuers, makes both community members and humanitarian

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Great Valley Acoustic Series features Mark Lemaire and Twilight

By CINDY VAN EMPEL

Mark Lemaire and Twilight will be featured at Great Valley Acoustic Music Series on Friday, April 19 (8:00 p.m., \$10 donation). at the Central Grace Community Church, 918 Sierra Dr. (first street next to Modesto High School).

Mark has been writing songs and playing the coffeehouses in Boston and Cambridge since high school and moved to California in 1985 to continue his career. His unique guitar style is highlighted on instrumental guitar pieces and is used to ornament his songs. Four years ago, Mark added Cindy van Empel's harmonies to his songs, performing as Mark Lemaire and Twilight. Their first CD together, "Home Isn't Home," features unusual guitar and tight harmonies and adds to Mark's discography, which includes "Rubato" and "Practice Makes Perfect."

Mark has opened for Maria Muldaur at the legendary Sweetwater in Mill Valley, and for Steve Seskin and Even Dozen Jug Band founder and folk icon Stefan Grossman at the Freight and Salvage in Berkeley, and has more recently shared the stage with Michael Manring and Calaveras.

Listen to selections from "Home" here <http://www.marklemaire.com/home.html#homeisnthome>

Peace Camp: fun, relaxation, clean air, good conversation

By KEN SCHROEDER

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's 31st annual Peace Camp will be June 28-30, 2013 at Camp Peaceful Pines in the Sierras. Workshops, recreation, campfires and good conversation await us.

This year's camp will feature a workshop on privilege coordinated by Rob Brittain. Privilege is the unearned advantage that people have because of their gender, race, class, religion, place of origin, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Privilege may be unacknowledged or denied by the members of more powerful groups in a society. Openly addressing this issue helps to end oppression and move towards justice.

At the 6,200-foot elevation in the Stanislaus National Forest near the Clark Fork on the Stanislaus River, Camp Peaceful Pines is located about 25 miles above Pinecrest off Hwy. 108. Surrounded by tall peaks, the camp is set in the forest and has a creek running through it. Sunrise Rock, with

views of the river valley, is a short hike from camp.

The camp features kitchen and bathroom facilities, rustic cabins and platform tents and a cabin for those with special needs. Depending on the number of campers, cabins may be shared. Campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and other work. Families and individuals are welcome.

The \$80 fee covers program, food and lodging for the weekend. Young people are \$60. Early registration, by June 2nd, entitles registrants to a \$10.00 per person discount. Partial scholarships and day rates are also available. Registration forms are available at www.stanislausconnections.org where they can be printed and mailed.

Campers may arrive any time after 2:00pm on Friday. The camp opens with supper at 6pm on Friday and closes at noon on Sunday. Directions and other information will be mailed to participants before camp. Information: Ken Schroeder, 209-569-0321.

Nicaragua Delegation: Climate Change, Water, and Sustainability

June 10 - 21, 2013, \$950 (excluding airfare)

Nicaragua has one of the world's great stores of 'sweet' water. However it is also one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. In recent decades it has seen its rivers begin to dry up and its farmers to lose crops to searing droughts, tremendous storms and devastating floods. It has seen its rivers polluted by industrial farming and maquiladora sweatshops. Yet, since the return of the Sandinistas to government in 2007, it is also a country with a growing consciousness of its environmental treasures and that its future depends on developing a consciousness of its dependence on water and sustainable practices.

This delegation will be led by long-time Nicaragua resident Paul Baker-Hernandez, former Managua Coordinator of the Nicaragua Network and well-known environmental and peace activist.

For More Information/Application: Nicaragua Network/Alliance for Global Justice, Chuck@AFGJ.org, 202-544-9355 x1; www.nicanet.org or <http://AFGJ.org>

Attention All Peace Camp Lovers!

By PEGGY CASTANEDA

Camp Peaceful Pines, where Peace Camp is held every year, is holding a fundraiser on Saturday April 27th from noon to 3:00 p.m. at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto. There will be great food, good conversation, a presentation of happenings at Camp, and a silent auction. Don't miss out on this opportunity to help maintain and improve the buildings and grounds at this wonderful mountain retreat. We need YOU to help support Camp!

ACTION: Call Peggy Castaneda with questions or donations for the silent auction: 521-1525.



stanislaus CONNECTIONS

is published monthly except in August by the Modesto Peace/Life Center
720 13th St., Modesto, CA 95354.

Open by appointment.

Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,
Modesto, CA 95353
209-529-5750.

CONNECTIONS is available for a suggested donation of \$25.00/yr.



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The priorities of Occupy Modesto

Submitted by MICHAEL Ž. JURKOVIC

Though Occupy Wall Street began with much enthusiasm on September 17, 2011, the overall movement appears to have either faded completely, gone dormant, or has been neglected by the mainstream press. Though polls show the Occupy Movement has been regarded more positively than the Tea Party, Occupy struggles now, in 2013, to be understood. Occupy remains difficult to define and, in many people's eyes, never had a clear or coherent message. Whatever the perception of Occupy, it does continue in scattered groups. Occupy Modesto began in October 2011 as a joint venture between many people and groups but has since shrunken down to a fairly small, but solid core group.

In January 2013, the members of Occupy Modesto decided to create a "2013 priorities" goal. The following document was created. It does not try to address the history of Occupy or Occupy Modesto. There are numerous books about the larger movement, but no written history of Occupy Modesto.

Occupy Modesto

Occupy Modesto in Modesto, California is part of the larger grassroots movement that began in September 2011 known as Occupy Wall Street. Occupy Modesto began in October 2011 and continues to encourage and act for change. Like the Occupy Movement itself, Occupy Modesto does not reflect any single ideology; Occupy Modesto is a grassroots movement responsive to the specific needs of Modesto that adheres to the adage "think globally, act locally."

Occupy Modesto is committed to peaceful, non-violent

reform and action. We do not take responsibility for the actions of any individual. Occupy Modesto currently meets at the Modesto Peace/Life Center, Fridays from 4-6pm. This reflects winter hours and will change when daylight savings time ends.

Occupy Modesto has 2 main tenets: (1) to educate the general public about the economic and political crisis locally, nationally, and globally; (2) to bring about successful reform here in our locally community and elsewhere.

More specifically, Occupy Modesto has working groups to act on the needs of the community. The current working groups are:

Foreclosure: Dedicated to helping homeowners struggling with foreclosure fraud. Note: No one in the Foreclosure work group claims to be a professional financial advisor or realtor. The work group is designed to offer any reasonable or needed help and support to fight foreclosure fraud. This group is also dedicated to educating the greater public about general foreclosure problems.

Bank Action: Dedicated to spreading knowledge about the mega-banks and providing practical solutions to combat their aggressive policies. They organize regular, peaceful, non-violent protests where they distribute appropriate literature. They meet regularly to discuss innovative ways to educate the public and encourage them to action.

Book Group: Designed to provide education about the financial crisis as well as pose practical solutions to help create a sustainable economy and political structure. This

**WE
ARE THE
99%**

THAT WILL NO LONGER TOLERATE
the GREED and CORRUPTION of the

working group does not meet at the Peace/Life Center.

Occupy Modesto is responsive to the needs of its members and the community. Any constructive input is welcome. Occupy Modesto seeks to be reflective of community needs and to act upon ways to reduce income inequality and create a sustainable environment. We welcome all in the community to participate.

Meeting Times:

General Assembly: Fridays, 4-6pm at Peace/Life Center
Foreclosure: every other Monday at Peace/Life Center, 4pm
Bank Action: every other Monday at Peace/Life Center, 4pm
Book Group: 1st and 3rd Thursday of each Month at College Avenue UCC church in Youth Building at 3:30pm

Contact information:

email: occupy-modesto-ca@yahoogroups.com

Website: <http://www.occupymodestoca.org/>

Twitter: change4modesto and OccupyModestoCa

Facebook: Occupy Modesto

The Peace/Life Center is located at 720 13th St # D, Modesto, CA 95354

College Avenue Congregational Church is located at 1341 College Ave, Modesto, CA 95350

A World without Nuclear Weapons

By VALERIE PLAME WILSON, Reader Supported News

Twenty-five years ago, President Reagan laid out a vision for a world without nuclear weapons, and in his first term President Obama boldly picked up that mantle - most famously in his 2009 speech in Prague, where he announced America's commitment to eliminate all nuclear weapons globally. There is now a unique opportunity for President Obama, in his second term, to follow through on that commitment and set the world's course to global zero. He can do this by pursuing further reductions to the United States' and Russia's massive Cold War arsenals and bringing other key countries to the table for the first multilateral nuclear arms negotiations in history.

This week, Global Zero - the international movement for the elimination of nuclear weapons - is launching a global campaign urging President Obama to do just that. And we are calling on him to make a major announcement about this on April 5, 2013 - the fourth anniversary of his historic Prague speech.

As part of this campaign, we are rolling out a short video narrated by my fellow Global Zero leader Michael Douglas, which is being promoted by a host of celebrities, organizations and students on social media and that we hope the president will watch.

In addition to the video, the campaign includes a letter to the president from approximately 75 former prime ministers, foreign and defense ministers and military commanders;

an official declaration recently adopted by the European Parliament in support of Global Zero's step-by-step plan to eliminate nuclear weapons; and a grassroots petition appealing directly to the president (see <http://www.globalzero.org/demand-zero/sign-the-petition>).

We believe that President Obama wants to make good on his commitment to seek a world without nuclear weapons and elevate it to be a legacy issue of his presidency - but he is facing a host of other pressing problems in the world and he needs to hear urgent support for eliminating nuclear weapons.

The Global Zero movement is supported by hundreds of respected national security and military leaders from around the world who understand that nuclear weapons do not address today's security threats - and a powerful grassroots movement that's led by the world's first post-Cold War generation, which rejects absolutely the 20th century idea of basing national security on the threat of mass destruction.

Years from now, when the last nuclear bomb is dismantled, it will be because people all over the world had the courage to demand zero - and a safer world for their children, their grandchildren and all generations to come. Please join this critical campaign at www.globalzero.org and join us as we call on President Obama to set the world's course to zero.

Together, we can make history.

From <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/424-national-security/16328-a-world-without-nuclear-weapons>

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Modesto Chapter
Parents, Families, and
Friends of Lesbians
and Gays

Still putting things by

By JENIFER WEST

Seems like more people are thinking about taking control of the food they eat, these days. I've spoken to a number of folks who are either planting for the first time, or expanding, a backyard garden. One family I'm acquainted with has taken it a step further and has purchased a cow and some chickens and is determinedly consuming only things they produce themselves on their land. With all of this comes renewed interest in, as the old-fashioned phrase goes, "putting things by." For previous generations, putting things by meant survival, and it's a pretty good idea these days, as well. It will save you money, improve the quality of food on your table, and reduce your carbon footprint in the process!

Before I dive into the various ways to put things by, here are some tips that'll make your culinary life easier: Onions, peppers, and garlic can all be prepped ahead and frozen. Spread chopped onions and peppers on plastic-wrapped cookie sheets & freeze, then put into (separate) freezer bags. Double-bag to keep them fresh; note what's in each bag. Mince the garlic with a little oil and form into logs on a cookie sheet lined with plastic wrap. Freeze, then wrap the logs and put into freezer bags. To use, grab handfuls of onions or peppers; break off chunks of garlic. Also, freeze leftover lemon, tomato, or fruit juice in regular ice trays. Measure first, so you'll know how much is in each cube. Pop out of the trays and store in a large freezer bag. Note what it is and how much is in each cube on the bag. Tomato paste can also be measured by tablespoons, put on a cookie sheet and frozen.

Dehydration is an ancient food storage method and can be done with equipment as simple as homemade screens and the sun, or as sophisticated as an electrically-powered machine. I prefer the end results from a machine, so bought a new Nesco dehydrator. Love the speed of the new one (a Nesco), but the



doughnut-shaped trays are a little hard to work with. Still, I can dehydrate as much food as I can manage at a time, at record speed. Vacuum packing is a great way to store dry goods, and with a FoodSaver, it can easily be done at home. Tip: Get the attachments that let you seal both regular- and wide-mouth canning jars. (If you get the canister set, you can use any recycled glass jar, but I find canning jars easier to deal with.) Buy things in bulk, and repack them in quantities your family can use. (Wahoo – save \$\$\$, stock up on things you use – and reduce your carbon footprint in the bargain!) Amazon sells heavy-duty bags at a reasonable price. Anything you'd have to refrigerate after opening needs to be refrigerated after you repack and reseal it. Use lids from things you've home-canned, if you do – they'll seal better than new ones. Though our family is small, I even buy things like mayonnaise in bulk, and repack into smaller jars. A canning funnel keeps the tops of the jars clean, ensuring a good seal. The vacuum-packed jars keep in the fridge long enough that we virtually never lose anything. You can do this with other perishables, too – always refrigerate after you reseal them. You can vacuum-pack dried fruit (e.g., raisins), too. I've also done chocolate chips, nuts, etc. There is a question, though, about safety of foods with more than 3% moisture. As with anything, when in doubt, check with an expert.

If you're feeling a little more ambitious, you can learn to can – remember those jars of fruit in Grandma's cupboard?

Homemade jam, pickled veggies, most fruits, and certain other things can safely be canned in a water bath canner. As with any new adventure, you'll need good reference material. "The Ball Book", originally published by the folks who made Ball canning jars, is considered the ultimate canning handbook. You can also contact the folks at the UC Cooperative Extension or, if you're lucky, trade a few hours of yard work or a car wash for a lesson or two.

If you really get serious, consider investing in a pressure canner. It is an investment, but will expand your canning (and money-saving) options dramatically. You can use it to can soups, home-cooked beans, sauces, and even meat. Having those items ready after a long day's work can save many a drive-through trip. As always, follow approved guidelines and recipes.



Finally, a grain mill is a good idea for anyone interested in putting a little food by. Most whole grains (except brown rice) will store almost indefinitely at room temperature (provided you keep critters out). Grains are more compact than flour, so you can store more in a

smaller space. And, freshly ground flour not only tastes better, it's better for you!!

With the bounty of summer coming up quick, now's a great time to get ready to "put things by!"

First Place Winner ~ Division II, Peace Essay Contest

Krupa Modi

Modesto High School ~ Mr. Chiavetta

Education: The Key to Peace

Dear President-Elect:

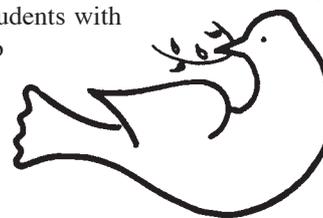
Mahatma Gandhi once said, "If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children." Education is such a fundamental part of every child's life. Unfortunately, in these modern times, a proper education is a necessity that is becoming scarcer to come by. Improving education in America is the key to peace. Through education, children become more aware of the world around them and are able to make more informed choices. As the future of America, it is important that our children learn the significance of an education. By hiring more teachers, supporting career placement programs, and investing in educational programs, the children of America will become well-informed citizens, capable of taking action toward non-violence and peace.

One way to support American education is to provide schools with committed teachers. A student's success in school can truly depend on the dedication of his or her teacher. Hiring teachers will provide students with more opportunities to be inspired and to be motivated. Increasing the number of teachers available will also help to decrease class sizes, enabling children to receive a more personalized and hands-on education. Although some may argue that the hiring of more teachers will cost more, it is a very worthy investment. By giving children the chance to learn from someone who is genuinely passionate about the subject he teaches, these children may be inspired to pursue that subject. Dedicated teachers motivate their students to reach for goals they never knew they could achieve and to follow dreams until they are achieved. Providing more inspiring teachers will ensure that children not only stay in school, but enjoy it too. By hiring more teachers who are committed to their profession, we can ensure that our children will have the best education possible. With a strong education comes informed decisions, and a step toward a more peaceful world.

As the world changes, the jobs offered in America change

as well. For this reason, career placement programs are essential. Vocational schools can offer students training for jobs that will be available when it is time for them to join the workforce. Additionally, teaching relevant and practical subjects and providing real-world applications to each skill learned will also assist students in preparing themselves for their ever-changing futures. Introducing children to jobs that they may have in the future will also motivate them and challenge them to reach higher potential. The advancement of these vocational programs will help students find jobs and avoid unemployment in their adult lives. Some may be against these career placement programs if they are not completely successful. However, providing even one child with the motivation and the tools they need to fulfill their dreams is enough to change the world, make a difference, and create peace.

Another method of advancing American education is to invest in educational and extra-curricular programs. Through art and music programs, students are able to express themselves and find their inner talents. Increased funding for school clubs and organizations will help children find their passion



Bosnian Grand Mufti's message to Pope Francis

By SHEIKH MUSTAFA CERIC

Amman – The election of Argentine Pope Francis, the 266th Bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic Church, deserves both our congratulations and our reflection for the future of Muslim-Christian coexistence and dialogue.

As a survivor of genocide at the end of 20th century in Bosnia, I am very interested in the policy of the Vatican and the message of the Holy See, which speaks for the Catholic Church. While the political influence of the Vatican might be limited to public diplomacy, the spiritual influence has great significance for millions of Christians around the world. Consequently, the pope has always had a great impact on global peace and security.

Pope Francis may find in his two immediate predecessors important lessons that could guide his future relations with Muslims.

Pope John Paul II was a good communicator and supporter of interfaith dialogue. His relationship with the Muslim world was respectful and promising. For example, he spoke against the four year siege of Sarajevo every Sunday from St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Pope John Paul's message, "Never again war. Never again hatred and intolerance," has been well received by all people. When he visited Sarajevo in April 1997, the late Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic called Pope John Paul II "one of the most influential men of the 20th century."

While relations with Muslims were strained in an unfortunate way with Pope Benedict XVI's remarks about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad at the University of Regensburg in 2005, his subsequent apology rekindled dialogue.

The ensuing dialogue began with the A Common Word

Initiative, launched by 138 Muslim scholars and academics. On 13 October 2007, these Muslim scholars released an open letter entitled "A Common Word between Us and You" to Christians worldwide, inviting them to seek common ground with Muslims based on the love of One God and neighbour. Every major Muslim-majority country in the world was represented, and Christian leaders worldwide responded positively to this initiative.

This led to the establishment of the Catholic-Muslim Forum. Two summits have been held so far. The first one took place at the Vatican in 2008, where Pope Benedict XVI met all the participants and the second one in Jordan in 2011. Relations were also strengthened through the pilgrimage Pope Benedict XVI made to Jesus's baptism site in Jordan and his visit to the King Hussein Mosque during the same trip in 2010.

Pope Francis' statement on dialogue, published in his 2011 book *On Heaven and Earth* says, "Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It assumes that there is room in the heart for each individual's point of view and opinion. To dialogue entails a cordial reception, not a condemnation. In order to dialogue it is necessary to know how to lower defences, open the doors of one's house, and offer human warmth."

With this in mind, I hope that Pope Francis has inherited the best of both of his predecessors: the openness and good will of Pope John Paul II towards Muslims, and the willingness of Pope Benedict XVI to continue dialogue and strengthen relations with Muslims worldwide.

Indeed, I hope that Pope Francis will renew the Catholic-

Muslim Forum with new energy and commitment to the spirit of the A Common Word Initiative which Pope Benedict XVI helped begin. With such work, I am hopeful for my two grandchildren that they may live in peace in Bosnia without fear of religiously motivated violence.

With strong interfaith relations, there are three areas of common human concern that Pope Francis might make important in his pontificate. First is the issue of poverty, which should have an appeal to our human and religious conscience. Second is the issue of climate change due to global pollution caused by human negligence and greed. And third is the issue of nuclear threats that could lead to human self-destruction.

These issues are global in nature and local in action. Regardless of our faith, culture, race, nationality and ideology, we are in the same boat of global collapse or salvation. Therefore, we need to build our ark with peace, dialogue and mutual respect.

I hope that Pope Francis will do what he can to work with Muslims and others in order to build an ark that will save this common humanity of ours.

May God bless us all to be friends to one another. We all take different paths in life, but no matter where we go, we take a little of each other everywhere. Friends are God's way of caring for us.

* Sheikh Mustafa Ceric is the Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia-Herzegovina and currently serves as President of the World Bosniak Congress. He was the 2003 co-recipient of the UNESCO Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize.

Source: Common Ground News Service (CGNews), 26 March 2013, www.commongroundnews.org

Living Under Drones

workers afraid or unwilling to assist injured victims. Some community members shy away from gathering in groups, including important tribal dispute-resolution bodies, out of fear that they may attract the attention of drone operators. Some parents choose to keep their children home, and children injured or traumatized by strikes have dropped out of school. Waziris told our researchers that the strikes have undermined cultural and religious practices related to burial, and made family members afraid to attend funerals. In addition, families who lost loved ones or their homes in drone strikes now struggle to support themselves.

Third, publicly available evidence that the strikes have made the US safer overall is ambiguous at best. The strikes have certainly killed alleged combatants and disrupted armed actor networks. However, serious concerns about the efficacy and counter-productive nature of drone strikes have been raised. The number of "high-level" targets killed as a percentage of total casualties is extremely low—estimated at just 2%. Furthermore, evidence suggests that US strikes have facilitated recruitment to violent non-state armed groups, and motivated further violent attacks. As the New York Times has reported, "drones have replaced Guantanamo as the recruiting tool of choice for militants." Drone strikes have also soured many Pakistanis on cooperation with the US and undermined US-Pakistani relations. One major study shows that 74% of Pakistanis now consider the US an enemy.

from page 1

Fourth, current US targeted killings and drone strike practices undermine respect for the rule of law and international legal protections and may set dangerous precedents. This report casts doubt on the legality of strikes on individuals or groups not linked to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and who do not pose imminent threats to the US. The US government's failure to ensure basic transparency and accountability in its targeted killing policies, to provide necessary details about its targeted killing program, or adequately to set out the legal factors involved in decisions to strike hinders necessary democratic debate about a key aspect of US foreign and national security policy. US practices may also facilitate recourse to lethal force around the globe by establishing dangerous precedents for other governments. As drone manufacturers and officials successfully reduce export control barriers, and as more countries develop lethal drone technologies, these risks increase.

In light of these concerns, this report recommends that the US conduct a fundamental re-evaluation of current targeted killing practices, taking into account all available evidence, the concerns of various stakeholders, and the short and long-term costs and benefits. A significant rethinking of current US targeted killing and drone strike policies is long overdue. US policy-makers, and the American public, cannot continue to ignore evidence of the civilian harm and counter-productive impacts of US targeted killings and drone strikes in Pakistan.

This report also supports and reiterates the calls consistently made by rights groups and others for legality, accountability, and transparency in US drone strike policies:

- The US should fulfill its international obligations with respect to accountability and transparency, and ensure proper democratic debate about key policies. The US should:
- Release the US Department of Justice memoranda outlining the legal basis for US targeted killing in Pakistan;
- Make public critical information concerning US drone strike policies, including as previously and repeatedly requested by various groups and officials: the targeting criteria for so-called "signature" strikes; the mechanisms in place to ensure that targeting complies with international law; which laws are being applied; the nature of investigations into civilian death and injury; and mechanisms in place to track, analyze and publicly recognize civilian casualties;
- Ensure independent investigations into drone strike deaths, consistent with the call made by Ben Emmerson, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism in August 2012;
- In conjunction with robust investigations and, where ap-

How to finish off the NRA

By MICHAEL MOORE, Open Mike

The year was 1955. Emmett Till was a young African American boy from Chicago visiting relatives in Mississippi. One day Emmett was seen “flirting” with a white woman in town, and for that he was mutilated and murdered at the age of fourteen. He was found with part of a cotton gin tied around his neck with a string of barbed wire. His killers, two white men, had shot him in the head before they dumped him in the river.

Emmett Till’s body was found and returned to Chicago. To the shock of many, his mother insisted on an open casket at his funeral so that the public could see what happens to a little boy’s body when bigots decide he is less than human. She wanted photographers to take pictures of her mutilated son and freely publish them. More than 10,000 mourners came to the funeral home, and the photo of Emmett Till appeared in newspapers and magazines across the nation.

“I just wanted the world to see,” she said. “I just wanted the world to see.”

The world did see, and nothing was ever the same again for the white supremacists of the United States of America. Because of Emmett Till, because of that shocking photograph of this little dead boy, just a few months later, “the revolt officially began on December 1, 1955” (from *Eyes on the Prize*) when Rosa Parks decided not to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. The historic bus boycott began and, with the images of Emmett Till still fresh in the minds of many Americans, there was no turning back.

In March of 1965, the police of Selma, Alabama, brutally beat, hosed and tear-gassed a group of African Americans for simply trying to cross a bridge during a protest march. The nation was shocked by images of blacks viciously maimed and injured. So, too, was the President. Just *one week* later, Lyndon Johnson called for a gathering of the U.S. Congress and he went and stood before them in joint session and told them to pass a

bill he was introducing that night - the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And, just five months later, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law.

In March, 1968, U.S. soldiers massacred 500 civilians at My Lai in Vietnam. A year and a half later, the world finally saw the photographs - of mounds of dead peasants covered in blood, a terrified toddler seconds before he was gunned down, and a woman with her brains literally blown out of her head. (These photos would join other Vietnam War photos, including a naked girl burned by napalm running down the road, and a South Vietnamese general walking up to a handcuffed suspect, taking out his handgun, and blowing the guy’s brains out on the NBC Nightly News.)

With this avalanche of horrid images, the American public turned against the Vietnam War. Our realization of what we were capable of rattled us so deeply it became very hard for future presidents (until George W. Bush) to outright invade a sovereign nation and go to war there for a decade.

Bush was able to pull it off because his handlers, Masters Cheney and Rumsfeld, knew that the most important thing to do from the get-go was to control the images of the war, to guarantee that nothing like a My Lai-style photograph ever appeared in the U.S. press.

And that is why you never see a picture any more of the kind of death and destruction that might make you get up off your couch and run out of the house screaming bloody murder at those responsible for these atrocities.

That is why now, after the children’s massacre in Newtown, the absolute last thing the National Rifle Association wants out there in the public domain is ANY images of what happened that tragic day.

But I have a prediction. I believe someone in Newtown, Connecticut - a grieving parent, an upset law enforcement officer, a citizen who has seen enough of this carnage in our country - somebody, someday soon, is going to leak the crime scene photos of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre. And when the American people see what bullets from an assault rifle fired at close range do to a little child’s body, that’s the day the jig will be up for the NRA. It will be the day the debate on gun control will come to an end. There will be nothing left to argue over. It will just be over. And every sane American will demand action.

Of course, there will be a sanctimonious hue and cry from the pundits who will decry the publication of these gruesome pictures. Those who do publish or post them will be called “shameful” and “disgraceful” and “sick.” *How could a media outlet be so insensitive to the families of the dead children!* Someone will then start a boycott of the magazine or website that publishes them.

But this will be a false outrage.

Because the real truth is this: We do not want to be confronted with what the actual results of a violent society looks like. Of what a society that starts illegal wars, that executes criminals (or supposed criminals), that strikes or beats one of its women every 15 seconds, and shoots 30 of its own citizens every single day looks like. Oh, no, please - DO NOT MAKE US LOOK AT THAT!

Because if we were to seriously look at the 20 slaughtered children - I mean really look at them, with their bodies blown apart, many of them so unrecognizable the only way their parents could identify them was by the clothes they were wearing - what would be our excuse not to act? Now. Right now. This very instant! How on earth could anyone not spring into action the very next moment after seeing the bullet-riddled bodies of these little boys and girls?

We don’t know exactly what those Newtown photographs show. But I want you - yes, *you*, the person reading this right now - to think about what we *do* know:

the absolute last thing the National Rifle Association wants out there in the public domain is ANY images of what happened that tragic day.

The six-year and seven-year-old children killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School were each hit up to eleven times by a Bushmaster AR-15 semi-automatic rifle. The muzzle velocity of a rifle like the AR-15 is about three times that of a

handgun. And because the kinetic energy of a bullet equals one-half of the bullet’s mass multiplied by its velocity squared, the potential destructive power of a bullet fired from a rifle is about nine times more than that of a similar bullet fired from a handgun.

Nine times more. I spoke to Dr. Victor Weedn, chairman of the Department of Forensic Sciences at George Washington University, who told me that chest x-rays of a person shot with a rifle will often look like

a “snowstorm” because their bones will have been shattered into fragments. This happens not just because of the bullet’s direct impact, but because each bullet sends a shock wave through the body’s soft organs - one so powerful it can break bones even when the bullet didn’t hit them. A video here shows what the shock wave looks like in the “ballistic gelatin” used by experts to simulate human tissue. (Would Gabby Giffords have survived if shot by a rifle rather than a Glock pistol? Probably not, says Dr. Weedn; the shock wave would have damaged the most critical parts of her brain.)

As horrifying as this is, there’s more; much more. Dr. Cyril Wecht, past president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, told me this:

The kind of ammunition used by the Newtown killer would have produced very extensive, severe and mutilating injuries of the head and face in these small victims. Depending on the number of shots striking a child’s head, substantial portions of the head would be literally blasted away. The underlying brain tissue would be extensively lacerated with portions of hemorrhagic brain tissue protruding through the fractured calvarium and basilar skull, some of which would remain on portions of the face...actual physical identification of each child would have been extremely difficult, and in many instances impossible, even by the parents of any particular child.

We also know this, according to Dr. Wecht:

In one case, the parents have commented publicly upon the damage to their child, reporting that his chin and left hand were missing. Most probably, this child had brought his hand up to his face in shock and for protection and had the hand blasted away along with the lower part of his face.

Veronique Pozner, the mother of Noah, the six-year-old boy described by Dr. Wecht, insisted that the Governor of Connecticut look at Noah in an open casket. “I needed it to be real to him,” she said. The Governor wept.

The pictures showing all this exist right now, somewhere in the police and medical examiner’s files in Connecticut. And as of right now, we’ve somehow all decided together that we don’t need to look, that in some way we’re okay with what’s in those pictures (after all, over 2,600 Americans have been

The historic bus boycott began and, with the images of Emmett Till still fresh in the minds of many Americans, there was no turning back.

The price of our freedom

By GEORGE LAKOFF, Reader Supported News

“Are we prepared to say that such violence visited on our children year after year after year is somehow the price of our freedom?”

— Barack Obama, Newtown Address, December 16, 2012

That sentence, uttered by President Obama in his Newtown Address, may turn out to be a turning point in American history. The president, in one sentence, turned the beautiful faces of the 20 first-grade children murdered brutally by assault weapons into the moral measure of our nation. Conservatives have argued that guns = freedom, and that there should be no limit on such freedom. The president trumped their argument: The price of not protecting the nations’ children is too high. Permitting the mass murder of our children is not freedom.

It comes as a shock at a certain point where you realize no matter how much you love these kids, you can’t do it by yourself. That this job of keeping our children safe and teaching them well is something we can only do together, with the help of friends and neighbors, the help of a community, and the help of a nation.

And in that way we come to realize that we bear responsibility for every child, because we’re counting on everybody else to help look after ours; that we’re all parents; that they are all our children.

This is our first task, caring for our children. It’s our first job. If we don’t get that right, we don’t get anything right. That’s how, as a society, we will be judged.

Democracy, as the president has said, begins with the

people taking care of one another responsibly, importantly through government as an instrument of freedom. That how we get our public schools, our roads, our sewers, our patent office, our scientific research, our energy, communication and transportation systems, our food safety, our protectors, and all the rest that we need to be free in our private lives. It is a truth: the private depends on the public. We, all together, constitute the public. Unless we take care of one another and one another’s children, we can’t get democracy — and freedom — right.

The gun lobby rests on conservative ideology: Democracy supposedly gives each of us individually the “liberty” to seek our own self-interests with no responsibility for the interests or well-being of anyone else. After and Obama’s Newtown Address, the whole idea of such “liberty” makes no sense.

The time is ripe to end the conservative grip over nearly half of America. That starts with an all-out effort to put in place responsible gun safety laws. Total registration, just like with cars. An end to automatic and semi-automatic weapons. And an end to blaming massacres on crazies. Gun massacres require guns that can massacre. Eliminate them.

The president set just the right tone. We’re in this together. We bear joint responsibility for one another and all our children. If you accept this, really accept it, you can’t keep conservative ideology, not just on guns, but on anything.

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An Apology to Senator Robert Portman of Ohio

Because you changed your position on gay marriage
Only after you found out your son was gay,
I am sorry for briefly wishing you had

another son with no health insurance,
and another with PTSD, and a daughter
battered by her husband, and another raped,

in need of an abortion, and a black son,
and an immigrant son, and a poor son,
and a grandchild at Sandy Hook.

- Taylor Mali, <http://taylormali.com/blog/>

Peace Essay Winner from page 5

and learn more about what they love, while surrounded by students and staff who are equally as passionate. Investing in educational programs will enable students to delve deeper into their interests and become more informed, as well as teach them how to communicate. Some may find this a waste of money in case these programs are not implemented properly. However, by providing any type of support or funding, students’ educations are being enriched, no matter how much or how little. Extra-curricular programs allow students to diversify themselves and explore many other fields. By being opened up to these different types of programs, students are able to take part a wide variety of experiences, and become a more worldly citizen.

An education is vital to any student who wishes to succeed. By providing for our children with a well-rounded education, we can ensure that they will be well-informed and prepared for whatever the future may have in store. With dedicated teachers, students will be motivated to reach their dreams. With career placement programs, they can find the path to achieving these dreams. With educational and extra-curricular programs, they will learn the skills needed to pursue their dreams. Providing for our children’s education means that not only will they be successful, but they will be informed and prepared to face the future and make the decisions that will lead America into the next generation. With the proper education, American children will learn to make the right choices and solve the problems that face the world nonviolently and peacefully. With the proper education invested in our children, peace is possible.

How to finish off the NRA from page 6

killed by guns since Newtown) - just as long as we don’t have to look at the pictures ourselves.

But I am telling you now, that moment will come with the Newtown photos - and you will have to look. You will have to look at who and what we are, and what we’ve allowed to happen. At the end of World War II, General Eisenhower ordered that thousands of German civilians be forced to march through the concentration camps so they could witness what was happening just down the road from them during the years that they turned their gaze away, or didn’t ask, or didn’t do anything to stop the murder of millions.

We’ve done nothing since Columbine - *nothing* - and as a result there have been over 30 other mass shootings since then. Our inaction means that we are all, on some level, responsible - and therefore, because of our burying our heads in the sand, we must be forced to look at the 20 dead children at Sandy Hook Elementary.

The people we’ve voted for since Columbine - with the exception of Michael Bloomberg - almost none of them, Democrat or Republican, dared to speak out against the NRA before Newtown - and yet we, the people, continued to vote for them. And for that we are responsible, and that is why we



must look at the 20 dead children.

Most of us continue to say we “support the Second Amendment” as if it were written by God (or we’re just afraid of being seen as anti-American). But this amendment was written by the same white men who thought a Negro was only 3/5 human. We’ve done nothing to revise or repeal this - and that makes us responsible, and that is why we must look at the pictures of the 20 dead children laying with what’s left of their bodies on the classroom floor in Newtown, Connecticut.

And while you’re looking at the heinous photographs, try saying those words out loud: “I support the Second Amendment!” Something, I’m guessing, won’t feel right.

Yes, someday a Sandy Hook mother - or a Columbine mother, or an Aurora mother, or a mother from massacres yet to come - will say, like the mother of Emmett Till, “I just want the world to see.” And then nothing about guns in this country will ever be the same again.

Pack your bags, NRA - you’re about to be shown the door. Because we refuse to let another child die in this manner. Got it? I hope so.

All you can do now is hope no one releases those photos.

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California Unions' "Silver Linings Playbook"

By STEVE SMITH, California Labor Federation

Last week's annual national union membership numbers were eye-opening, and well, pretty depressing. The relentless attacks on unions nationwide have caused overall union density to drop to a startlingly low 11.3%. The share of union members as part of the workforce is the lowest it's been in 97 years. That's not just bad news for unions, that's really bad news for everyone.

According to the Center for American Progress:

Without the counterbalance of workers united together in unions, the middle class withers because the economy and politics tend to be dominated by the rich and powerful, which in turn leads to an even greater flow of money in our economy to the top of the income scale.

Sound familiar?

But despite last week's bad news on a national level, there were silver linings. Not the least of which is the trend here in California.

Unions in California are growing. That's right, growing.

Last year, California union membership grew by more than 110,000 members and actually increased overall density to 17.2%. And that all happened while California's economy, which now leads the nation in job growth, has been expanding.

So what's going right in California? On today's *New York Times* Economix blog, reporter Steven Greenhouse provides some answers.

But some union leaders saw some important silver linings in the gloomy report — especially the surprisingly strong growth in labor's ranks in California. The bureau reported a jump of 110,000 in the number of union members in California, to 2.49 million (meaning that in the 49 other states, the overall loss was 508,000 members).

"There is a significant organizing consciousness among unions in California that I haven't seen in other parts of the country," said Kent Wong, director of the Labor Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. "And a major factor in California's success is there has been a very aggressive attempt on the part of many unions to organizing immigrant workers."

If you dig deep into the Bureau of Labor Statistics union membership report, you'll find that among Latinos, both union membership and density grew last year.

LA Times reporter Alana Semuels notes that immigrant workers, who often find themselves on the lower rung of the income scale, have a powerful motivation to join together with a collective voice in the workplace.

Workers fed up with years of stagnant wages may be motivated to join a union for financial reasons. Last year, union members made \$943 a week, on average, while non-union members made \$742, according to the BLS.

Truth is, a union card is still one of the best pathways a worker has to a middle class life. And California's unions are at the leading edge of a national movement to give a voice to immigrant workers.

Last year, California union membership grew by more than 110,000 members

From the *New York Times*:

In California, there are vigorous campaigns to unionize car-wash workers, recycling workers and the truck drivers who transport freight to and from the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. And in recent years, labor unions have organized about 200,000 home care aides in California.

Immigrants account for a high percentage of workers in those groups.

"The Latino population is growing in California," said Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation, the federation of the state's unions. "Latinos and other immigrants are more prone to join unions. A lot of Latinos developed a historic sense of economic and social justice in their home countries."

While immigrants are an important reason for the union membership growth, they're not the only one. The state's unions have also been aggressive in giving a collective voice to nurses, home care workers and others in the growing health care industry. And all California unions have committed to a union organizing Renaissance to bring new younger workers into the Labor Movement.

The other important ingredient in the success of California

unions is one that can't be overstated: political organizing. While unions in Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana saw their numbers decline precipitously as a result of politically motivated attacks by Republican governors, California has a Democratic governor and a pro-worker supermajority in the legislature, thanks to a sophisticated Labor-backed political operation that's engaging millions of voters to stand up for working people's values.

From the *New York Times*:

"I think we're on the cutting edge of what unions are doing in the United States," Mr. Pulaski said. In other words, he says, California unions have put together a silver linings playbook that unions in other states can learn from.

Labor is poised to turn the tide nationally. The demographics favor it. And organizing — both workplace and political — are on the upswing. While this year's report underscores the urgency in rebuilding the Labor Movement, by no means does it sound the death knell for unions. In fact, here in California, we're charting a new path to build more power for working people.

From the *LA Times*:

Demographic shifts can be only positive for unions in the next few years, said Harley Shaiken, a labor professor at UC Berkeley. Labor has built new alliances and is going into a new, proactive phase, he said.

"Reports of labor's death have been greatly exaggerated," he said.

From http://www.calaborfed.org/index.php/site/page/california_unions_silver_linings_playbook



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POET: Katherine Hastings

Katherine Hastings is the author of *Cloud Fire* (Spuyten Duyvil NYC, 2012) and several chapbooks. The Executive Director of the non-profit WordTemple, Hastings hosts *WordTemple* on NPR affiliate KRCB FM, and curates the WordTemple Poetry Series in Sonoma County, CA. She has also been a guest poet at the Second Tuesday Poetry Readings at Modesto's Barkin' Dog.

In 2011, in response to the planned permanent closure of 70 California State Parks due to a budget crisis, Hastings put out a call to poets for poems inspired by State parks and published the anthology *What Redwoods Know — Poems from California State Parks*. Poets in the anthology include Francisco X. Alarcon, David Beckman, Janine Canan, Ed Coletti, Iris Jamahl-Dunkle, Katherine Hastings, Jodi Hottel, Paula Koneazny, Gail Larrick, Hannah Maggiora, Phyllis Meshulam, Lee Slonimsky and Robert Sward.

Readings took place in Sebastopol, San Francisco, in the House of Happy Walls in Jack London State Park (Glen Ellen), Santa Cruz, Sacramento and Windsor, CA. All proceeds from book sales were donated to the California State Parks Foundation to support their efforts in keeping State parks open.

For more information, visit www.wordtemple.com

Haiku Clouds

Inside the blue eye
clouds like the ocean, the wind
Lone, pale survivors

Soft tremulous light
A winged shape's rapid keel —
White, star-bright gesture

Lawny spring mountain
Moonlike blooms breathe high above
ever-changing notes

See the shattered mast
crouched in the sky's agony?
Flap of ribboned sails?

Sometimes a shroud draped
over the rocks of despair
mirrors the dark night

The white plumed womb
births soft showers into air
One swan's liquid wing

All day the clouds sing
under a sun like summer
a song high and vast

Sky's purest children
form moonlike blooms overhead,
fetch myriad dreams

Ode to the Moo Cow

O Moo Cow
ankles stuck in the muck
of winter, your pink milkies

the opposite of tufa —
over the green sea of grass,
over the clover depths

and expectant naked trees,
a two-wheeler trips in the sky
puffs a vapor trail over

the mating tail of a great white crane
To be born a bird
or a small plane in flight

or you, dear Moo,
is to know there is no labor
in being beautiful

Beneath the whistling sun
you travel through full peace,
over the land all our sight can reach,

those unending images of bog-meadow,
buttercup-gilded hills, green elegance
of earth's wide heart and release
and you eating it up

Summer at the Winter Table

for Gretchen —

Just a trickle
tickling through
A fade of moss, but silent still

Black-and-clear winged
damselfly
butterfly
ferns longing for spring

The same tree lies collapsed
across the stream,
up the hill,
over the path
its mid-life caught
in a crutch of boughs

Windless,
breathless
afternoon

Birds small as thumbs
conference in the bays
Even in flight
each feathered body
an anchor to earth

Do you hear those whistles of
love from space?
They are calling you
if only we can let go

I want to become pure Love
you said
Yes
Go

(stay)
Go
Wrap us fleetingly
then fly

There is so much freedom there
from bones

Breathing

Jack London State Park

This is where it is done. Beneath the canopy of trees above and the many songbirds we've not had time to learn the names of by their chips and trills, here where bees effervesce in gold light, water still spilling on the rocks, and inside the softly carpeted fairy ring

where braided shadows of redwoods drape nests of mice, voles. Breath comes more softly standing at the picket fence of graves — London under the red rock, fresh ashes poured in a mound nearby. (We wondered if that's desecration or a human right.) It comes

deeper in the garden of rosemary, lavender, and quicker at the cottage when we realize the woodpeckers will win in the end with no one to mend the walls. Dear Jack: I like peeking in the windows to see your desk, your books, your sleeping porch and Charmian's

where you were brought to die, but mostly I like to walk the land left to us. Is there anything you can do from where you are? Be a hero. Send a ship or a good dog. Think Wolf House. Happy House. This restful, delicious house of air. We breathe here better than almost anywhere, distressed.



WE GET
LETTERS



A fundamental requirement for change: citizen participation

By MICHAEL Ž. JURKOVIC

“We are the ninety-nine percent!” said San Francisco County Supervisor John Avalos. That statement was met with great applause which helped capture the spirit of the day. The occasion was a demonstration, held February 17th, 2013, against the Keystone Pipeline. The demonstration was organized by Credo Mobile and featured over 90 organizations, but the message was clear –we need change. Avalos echoed the Occupy Movement to discuss environmental change, which will only come with systemic change. In all, it was estimated that 4,000 people were in attendance. Organizers and the *San Francisco Chronicle* touted it as perhaps the largest and most significant environmental demonstration to date.

The Keystone Pipeline has disastrous implications and yet has not received much national attention. The rationale of the Pipeline is best summarized as “drill baby, drill.” This sentiment is also noticeable amongst individuals in the Modesto Community; these individuals believe America needs oil, regardless of political or environment costs. The Pipeline is riddled with environmental costs.

The demonstration had a specific point. Although the Keystone Pipeline would originate Canada, President Obama has the deciding power to implement or kill the Pipeline. Based on Mr. Obama’s rhetoric, the obvious decision would be to stop it. Yet Mr. Obama has been silent. The event organizers, Credo Mobile, have been instrumental in drawing attention to this issue. The organizations and speakers were very diverse and included high school students, union leaders, minority groups such as Native Americans; scientific groups (such as the Union of Concern Scientists); various religious groups (such as Mennonites and Presbyterians); Occupy; etc.

While this was a day of hope and excitement, doubt settled in within days after. My optimism was challenged by the reality in the Central Valley. On Tuesday February 19th, Modesto held a special City Council and Planning Commission public meeting for a presentation by Valley Vision Stanislaus. The purpose of this meeting was to seek public input about how to obtain and allocate federal funding for transportation issues and land use. Though Stanislaus County is home to some of the richest agricultural land in the nation, the majority of those in attendance had a clear message: pave over the farmland; expand the roads; build more houses. In sum, land use and preservation was not a priority; attracting business was their goal.

Early on, it was made clear that this federal program was initiated under Republican President Nixon. Some community members, unfortunately, did not hear this and stood up to speak about this horrific, invasive, tax wasting program implemented by President Obama. Even after the explanation that the program started over forty years ago, President Obama was blamed for the desire of the federal government to help out metropolitan areas. Several confirmed Tea Party members lambasted the misappropriation of taxes and blamed Modesto Mayor Marsh for recklessly spending our tax money. As Mr. Marsh very tactfully reminded these individuals, the

IRS – a federal institution – receives our tax dollars, not Mr. Marsh as was claimed. This divide between reality and perception is astonishing.

Unfortunately, there is a larger problem which takes us back to where this article began. When pressed about methodology and community assessment of their efforts, Valley Vision Stanislaus indicated that in a county with approximately half a million individuals, only about 5,000 have responded, and they do not expect more participation. This paltry number, Valley Vision Stanislaus assured us, was fairly typical for other projects and communities. For the record, there were about 40 people at the meeting. Many of these people were actually repeat attenders. If Valley Vision Stanislaus’ projection is correct, the percentage of participation is clear. While an San Francisco County Supervisor happily proclaimed to be part of the 99%, the reality is the 99% of Stanislaus County either do not know about Valley Vision Stanislaus, or have yet to voice their opinions.

Is the policy of more roads, more houses truly prudent? When Modesto pursued this in years prior, what results did it yield? Isn’t the “more roads, more houses” policy what contributed to the financial bubble? Isn’t that how Stanislaus County got into this mess? What about the low education rates in the valley? The high unemployment? The high percentage of foreclosures? A few community members did note the empty shopping centers, the potholes in the roads, the empty houses, etc. But it didn’t seem to matter.

In 2007, the British periodical, *The Economist*, featured the Central Valley. It voiced many of the same complaints and criticisms outlined above. *The Economist* ended with the lament that the necessary changes didn’t seem to be anywhere on the horizon for the Valley. It has proven prophetic. The very same policies which spurred the meltdown and economic collapse continue. Change will only come when these short-sighted policies change.

While over 4,000 people gathered in SF on February 17th to discuss broad sweeping changes for a sustainable future and environment, only 40 people gathered in Modesto on February 19th to argue that we maintain the course. When will change come to the Valley? If you can’t make a meeting, you can still let your voice be heard: www.valleyvisionstanislaus.com

Drone attacks immoral

The predator drone attacks being carried out by President Obama’s Administration are immoral, illegal, contrary to our values, and make us less safe, by fueling hatred of Americans.

An authoritative study of these drone attacks, recently released in September, 2012 by Stanford University and New York University researchers, has found that between 1500 to 2500 civilians have been killed by these attacks. It also found, that only 2% of the people killed were connected to terrorism, which means 49 out of 50 of the victims of these attacks were civilians!

In Northern Pakistan, where the majority of these drone attacks take place, the traumatic effects of the strikes go far beyond fatalities. According to the report, they have psychologically battered the population which lives under the daily threat of annihilation from the air. People in these areas live under constant terror of being hit by drones that fly overhead 24 hours a day. This is ruining the local economy because people are afraid to go outside.

These lethal drone attacks are a direct violation of several articles of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, which United States and 190 other nations are signatory’s. How can our nation continue to violate international law and treaties, and expect other nations to honor their commitment to them.

Our nation needs to live up to our values and principles. We need to show that we are a nation that respects humanity, justice, and the rule of law.

John G. Lucas
Modesto

Living Under Drones from page 5

appropriate, prosecutions, establish compensation programs for civilians harmed by US strikes in Pakistan.

- The US should fulfill its international humanitarian and human rights law obligations with respect to the use of force, including by not using lethal force against individuals who are not members of armed groups with whom the US is in an armed conflict, or otherwise against individuals not posing an imminent threat to life. This includes not double-striking targets as first responders arrive.
- Journalists and media outlets should cease the common practice of referring simply to “militant” deaths, without further explanation. All reporting of government accounts of “militant” deaths should include acknowledgment that the US government counts all adult males killed by strikes as “militants,” absent exonerating evidence. Media accounts relying on anonymous government sources should also highlight the fact of their single-source information and of the past record of false government reports.

Read the full report with footnotes at: <http://www.livingunderdrones.org>

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On a lighter note: Roundabouts

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

Roundabouts. I know Modesto is beginning to use them on the north side of town. Here's how they get used in the UK. Don't forget to reverse lefts and rights for use in the US.

1) Most roundabouts in the UK have two approach lanes and two internal lanes. Use the left-side approach lane for an immediate left turns and passing straight across the roundabout. Use the right-side approach lane for making a right turn ($\frac{3}{4}$ of the way around the roundabout).

2) Signal your intension as you approach the exit you will use. Change lanes after crossing the exit you are not using and before using the exit you want unless there are two exit lanes.

3) As you enter the roundabout, look to the right for on-coming traffic. It has the right-of-way.

4) Stopping before entering a roundabout is not necessary if the way is clear.

5) It is wise to know which exit you want before entering the roundabout. Last second decisions could cause a collision.

Personally, I find roundabouts a bit too complicated for the job they do. If traffic is light, it's nice not to have to stop at a 4-way (or more) intersection. But if traffic is heavy these things have a tendency to make it worse. A decent US style traffic light system would improve traffic conditions here in Cambridge during commute times. Some roundabouts are so busy they have traffic lights built into them, which obviates the need for a roundabout.

I have also discovered that roundabouts made navigating Cambridge, at first, more difficult. When you approach a 4-way stop and make a right turn, the return trip will be the opposite, a left turn. But using a roundabout, you make the $\frac{3}{4}$ trip for a right turn. The return trip will force you to make a $\frac{1}{4}$ trip around the roundabout for a left turn. Unless you are used to thinking in terms of 270 degree turns and 90 degree turns, it gets difficult to simply retrace your path.

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Perplexing subtleties of racist definition

By DANIEL NESTLERODE, Great Britain correspondent, Stanislaus Connections

Racism has a slightly different definition in Great Britain than it does in the United States. This can lead to some deep questions.

You may have heard about efforts by professional soccer/football leagues in Europe to address the issue of racism in the sport both between players and between fans and players. At issue has been the use of deeply derogatory language on the field and from the stands. Racist fans have also been known to throw the odd projectile at opposing players. In England the whole sport has an image problem. But sporting organizations are not the only institutions addressing the issue of racism.

Schools in England have policies against racism, and this is where the subtle difference between the American definition of racism and the European one is most apparent. The concept of racism extends beyond the definition used in the United States. Of course, schools here in England view the use of epithets directed at descendants of African immigrants and south Asian immigrants as racist. But included in the functional definition are comments regarding a person's nationality, even if those comments are not race specific and lack an epithet. In short, a student could be disciplined for an act of racism by saying to any immigrant, "Go back to your own country."

"Race" is a purely fabricated concept. All humans share more than 99% of their basic genetic material, and humans share 96% of their basic genetic material with chimpanzees. Further, statistically speaking, there can be greater variation in skin tone, eye shape, and hair texture between members of

a race than there is between members of two difference races. So the word, race, becomes a short hand term for general physical appearance, cultural heritage, social practice, and --according to European practical definitions-- nationality. These are characteristics that have been proven to account for zero difference between the mental, moral, or physical ability potential of two or more individuals.

Knowing this, and knowing some of the history of the concept of racism, my mind occasionally reels at the use of the term here in England. I have heard someone say, "I like Mexican, Italian, Chinese, and Thai foods. I like all kinds of food. I'm not racist." When I hear something like this, I start an internal dialog. I begin to wonder, is a preference for --or distaste for-- the preparation of meat, vegetables, and fruit a possible application of the concept of racism or is she simply being flippant?

It goes further. If the answer to the above question is "Yes," does that broadly expanded definition trivialize the concept racism? Or... Is it possible that such a broad definition could serve to reduce the problem of racism? If you use racism as a reason to punish a non-immigrant child for saying to an immigrant child, "Go back to your own country," does that ameliorate the problem of racism or does it create more resentment in the offender by treating the incident with more gravity than it deserves?

On the other hand, does the American definition of racism, devoid of nationality and soaked in ethnicity, create an unhealthy undercurrent of fear with regard to differences that can be better explained by social and cultural factors rather than ethnic origin? In other words, do Americans fear the charge of racism so much that we fail to examine our differences?

Which is the more serviceable definition for the UK? Would the American definition help to create a more just society than the current UK definition?

As you can no doubt see, I have no answers to these questions. Getting at answers would require more expertise in sociology, psychology, and their respective research methods. At the moment this final realization occurs to me, my attention snaps back to the moment where my friends and I are attempting to decide what restaurant we would like to go to for dinner.

Still maybe someone should ask them in a more than rhetorical way.



So what will our \$29,000,000.00 bridge look like?

Julia B Mensinger © April 2013



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