

# Angry Neighbors Protest Proposed Tiny Homes for Homeless



Jessica Hill addresses public concerns at Church of the Brethren, Modesto, 28 March, 2024

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

“This is the democratic process,” said Modesto City Councilmember Chris Ricci to a restive crowd of well over a hundred people at Modesto’s Church of the Brethren near the conclusion of a March 29 community meeting to discuss a proposal to locate a tiny home village on church grounds.

Located in a west Modesto neighborhood of well-kept single-family homes, the church has plenty of open ground for dozens of tiny homes but neighbors were nearly unanimous in opposition. Objections included some people angry at what they characterized as giveaways to lazy people, but the overwhelming sentiment was, “We don’t want it here.”

Citing concerns for their children and fears that crime would rise throughout the neighborhood, home and business owners were not interested in discussing the church’s plans to work with Family Promise to provide transitional housing for families experiencing temporary homelessness due to material factors like rising rents, evictions, lost jobs and emergency expenses for health care.

Many citizens were well aware that sufficient traditional housing options for California’s growing homeless population are years away. They were skeptical of claims

that residents of the tiny home village would be relocated to traditional housing after regaining stability and security while living in tiny houses.

The fact is that there are magnitudes of difference between people who have recently become homeless for the first time and the chronically homeless. In many cases, homelessness is temporary and people emerge from it with new jobs and a return to traditional housing. They often need only a few weeks or months to regain employment and self-sufficiency.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness describes the chronically homeless as people who have been homeless for over a year, “while struggling with a disabling condition such as serious mental illness, substance use disorder or physical disability.” Chronic homelessness requires different systems of care and management tactics than services for those who are only recently and temporarily homeless.

While these distinctions are well known among homeless advocates and those who’ve spent years working with people experiencing homelessness, the general public tends to see homeless people as an undifferentiated mass of thieves and addicts. This is in large part due to failures at the state

and local level to educate the broader public about the material factors involved in homelessness, especially the harsh realities about broken systems of health care and housing shortages. While most people are aware that a large percentage of homeless people are mentally ill, that knowledge doesn’t make placing homeless people in their neighborhoods an attractive option, even when the goal is to rescue families suffering from temporary hardships while treating the mentally ill at other locations.

While Jessica Hill, Modesto’s Director of Community and Economic Development, did her best to allay residents’ concerns about crime, garbage and people “who do things normal people don’t do,” the overwhelming consensus was

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NASA/Joel Kowsky

## Celebrate the 2024 Solar Eclipse

Bring your family, friends, and neighbors to a once-in-a-generation event.

The Stanislaus County Library, located at 1500 I St., Modesto, hosts two events to Celebrate the 2024 Solar Eclipse. On **Saturday, April 6th**, in the Library Auditorium, a Solar System Ambassador will talk about the eclipse, "Nature's Awesome Spectacle," and hand out official NASA Solar Eclipse glasses and other goodies.

On **Monday, April 8th**, the day of the eclipse, an Eclipse Watch Party, one of thousands happening across the USA, will take place on the Library's lawn on the 16<sup>th</sup> Street side.

The Modesto Children's Museum and the library will have many fun activities for adults and children from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Free solar eclipse glasses will be available. Remember, Looking directly at the sun without special glasses can cause permanent eye damage.

California is one of the 49 states that will have a **partial solar eclipse**. In Modesto, the eclipse will obscure the sun by only 36.84% beginning at 10:14:03 a.m., reaching the maximum point at 11:14:59 a.m., and ending at 12:19:00 p.m., for a total time of 2 hours, 4 minutes, and 57 seconds.

## 39th Annual Peace Camp is Here! June 21-23, 2024

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's 39th Annual Peace Camp in the Sierras will take place on June 21-23, 2024. Spend a weekend in nature building community and working toward peace, justice, and a sustainable environment through nonviolent action. You'll enjoy workshops, good food, singing, crafts, a talent show, recreation, and stimulating people of all ages in a beautiful mountain setting.

**About Peace Camp:** Peace Camp officially opens with supper at 6:00 pm on Friday and closes after breakfast and the morning gathering on Sunday. The camp is run by volunteers and campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and other work around the camp, including assisting with recreational activities and programming. Families and individuals of all ages are welcome. Minors under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Camp rates and registration dates will be announced soon! The camp fee covers the program, food and lodging for the weekend. Partial scholarships and day rates are also available. Donations for scholarships are appreciated.

If you are interested in volunteering or want to be added to the Peace Camp 2024 Interest list to get the latest updates, please visit [peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp](http://peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp).

**About Camp Peaceful Pines:** Peace Camp is held at Camp Peaceful Pines, on Clark Fork Road off Hwy. 108 in the Stanislaus National Forest. The Camp features a



kitchen/mess hall, bathroom facilities with showers, rustic cabins, and platform tents. A cabin with special needs may be requested. Depending on the number of campers, cabins may be shared.

In 2018, the Donnell Fire burned much of the surrounding area but the Camp itself remains intact and is still a place of beauty and tranquility surrounded by Mother Nature's continuing restoration. Directions and other information will be provided to participants before camp.

Registration will open soon. Once maximum capacity is reached, a waitlist will be available for others to enroll. For more information on registration, please visit: [peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp](http://peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp), or contact Megan Parravano, at 209-497-7220, [meganparravano@gmail.com](mailto:meganparravano@gmail.com)

## SAVE THE DATE: Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team Rescheduled to May 18

The league champion Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team, sponsored by the NBA Golden State Warriors, will visit Modesto for a KCPB Community Radio 95.5 FM fundraising event.

This one-of-a-kind audience-interactive event will take place on **Saturday, May 18, 2024**, at the Modesto Junior College Gymnasium, 435 College Avenue, Modesto. More information in the May issue of *Connections*.



## Modesto Science Colloquium Spring Semester 2024

Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 pm, MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free and Open to the Public. Check our website for updates, live, and recorded talks: <https://www.mjc.edu/instruction/sme/colloquium.php>

**April 3:** Sarah Davis, Instructional Support Specialist – Life Sciences & Adjunct Professor of Biology, MJC. *Miles of Reptiles: Exploring the Mojave Desert by Way of Zzyzx*. A discussion of Mojave Desert reptiles, graduate school fieldwork, and what's really at the end of Zzyzx Rd. (Hint: It's not a ghost town!).

**April 17:** **Treating Patients with Substance Use Disorder in Our Community: A Panel Discussion.** Andrea Silva, M.D., Addiction Medical Specialist, Stanislaus County Health Services. Join us for a dynamic panel discussion as expert clinicians and harm reductionists will share insights, evidence-based strategies, and community-focused approaches to address the challenges of substance use disorder within our local community.



The Modesto Area Partners in Science (MAPS) lecture series fosters science education in our community for youths through adults. Once a month during the academic year, MAPS offers stimulating free science programming, bringing educators and local citizens into contact with scientists and mind-expanding ideas.

Presentations will be held LIVE in the MJC West Campus Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 p.m. unless noted otherwise.\*

**Fri., April 5: David Hagerman. Extreme Science with the Science Wizard.** \*MJC West Campus Student Center. In this highly acclaimed extreme science show for people of all ages, Hagerman leads your students on a wild journey through different fields of science. This show will tickle your funny bone and educate at the same time. <https://www.schoolscienceassemblies.com/>. **Fri., April 26: Chelsey Juarez, Fresno State Anthropology Forensic Scientist.** Analyzing remains to estimate things like age, sex, stature, and ancestry and to investigate the type and timing of traumatic injuries <https://campusnews.fresnostate.edu/june-20-2023/forensic-anthropology-lab-helps-authorities-identify-skeletal-remains>

MAPS receives funding and support from Modesto Junior College, MJC Foundation, Stanislaus County Office of Education, Modesto Teachers Association, Great Valley Museum. To make a fully tax-deductible donation in support of MAPS, click [here](#) and select Modesto Area Partners in Science (MAPS) under "My donation is for..."

### IN MEMORIAM

**Paul Roman Neumann**

September 29, 1937 - February 18, 2024

**Doris Lesta Scanlon**

July 4, 1930 - January 23, 2014

**John Lee Kitchell, PA**

September 25, 1951 - February 15, 2024

# How Homelessness has Enabled Cruelty

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

We're no longer stunned or dismayed. We've become so habituated to California's vast sprawl of homelessness that encampments along the freeways, bodies on the sidewalks, and human debris everywhere arouse no more concern than a speed bump or fire hydrant. The objectification of human beings in distress has become a norm for almost all of us. Homeless people have become inanimate parts of the daily landscape.

Ronald Reagan began what became a long period of mischaracterization over forty years ago, when he said of homeless people, "...one problem that we've had, even in the best of times, and that is the people who are sleeping on the grates, the homeless who are homeless, you might say, by choice."

Reagan knew better. As Governor of California from 1967 to 1975, he had presided over reduced funding for mental institutions. As President of the United States, he pushed for repeal of the Mental Health Systems Act (MHSA), which provided money for community mental health systems of care and social support services.

Over the years since the Reagan administrations, homeless numbers have waxed and waned. One consistent trend has been the high numbers of mentally ill among California's homeless population — the people who came into the streets when funding dried up for services while housing prices skyrocketed.

In 2023, a study of homelessness by the University of California at San Francisco found that,

"82% of people experiencing homelessness said they had a mental health condition or substance use challenge in their lifetime. And 66% said they were currently experiencing mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, hallucinations, or trouble remembering things."

By definition, mentally ill people are sick, and, most often, incapable of consistent rational behavior. Many suffer from anosognosia, a condition that prevents them from recognizing they are ill. Blaming homelessness on people who "choose" to be homeless when they are mentally ill is like blaming a passenger for driving the bus into a ditch.



Nonetheless, homeless people are routinely characterized as "choosing" homelessness.

In a similar vein, drugs are commonly cited as the "cause" of homelessness, despite contrary evidence. Per capita drug use in several states is much higher than in California and homelessness in those states is much lower; those same states have far fewer housing shortages and lower rents than California.

Disabled people in California often receive under a thousand dollars a month. Rents throughout the state are much higher, even for a single room in a motel. A significant percentage of homeless people are physically disabled and trying to live on disability incomes. Those low incomes keep them out of housing of any kind.

Courts have ruled that inhumane laws and ordinances for homeless people amount to "cruel and unusual" punishment for obvious reasons. Punishing the sick and disabled by

refusing them even a place to lie down and rest is a clear violation of the most fundamental rule of humanity: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Nonetheless, throughout the state, including Valley cities like Fresno, Modesto and Turlock, sweeps of homeless camps and isolated campers are routine. In Modesto, anyone sleeping in a park or on public space of any kind will likely be forced to move along. Elderly, disabled, mentally ill — it doesn't matter.

Given the number of studies that show large percentages of the homeless population are mentally or physically ill, disabled, elderly or traumatized, most would agree that penalizing these people for "crimes of existence" like sleeping is cruel. Nonetheless, sweeps and rousts remain California's most common tactic for managing homelessness throughout the state.

Cruelty to any living thing is a transgression against nature. Cruelty to human beings is an especially pernicious sin because humanity — the better part of human nature — is always precarious and endangered. When we punish the ill and disabled by denying them a place to rest or sleep, we set civilization on a reverse path toward cruel indifference.

Homelessness is a humanitarian crisis not only because it subjects the ill and infirm to dire stress and unrelenting punishment, but also because it enables casual and indifferent cruelty through habituation and objectification. We've gotten so used to human suffering we no longer comprehend it, even when it's directly in front of our eyes.



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**Connections** is published monthly except in August by the Modesto Peace/Life Center  
829 13<sup>th</sup> St., Modesto, CA 95354  
Open by appointment.  
Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,  
Modesto, CA 95353  
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# Discover the Cosumnes River Treasure

By **ELAINE GORMAN**

When Motherlode Chapter outings leader Martin asked me to help co-lead a group of Sierra Club hikers at the Cosumnes River Preserve, I was a bit hesitant. Since my teaching days, herding 25+ people around isn't something I normally look forward to doing. But the Cosumnes River Preserve is such a unique area that includes wintering migrant birds, diverse habitats, and hiking trails, that I agreed.

The Cosumnes River is the last undammed river flowing from the Sierra Nevada into the Great Central Valley. This preserve is owned and managed by several private, non-profit, and government agencies including The Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited. It contains over 50,000 acres. Cosumnes is a Miwok word meaning "people of the salmon."

Jeanne, Diane and I met the crowd on Desmond Road to look for Sandhill Cranes. We scanned the wetlands with our binos and spotted hundreds of White-fronted and Canada geese. The cranes did not cooperate, so we headed over to the Visitor Center (VC) parking area to start our hike. The VC has a nice display of wildlife and natural history, and it's a good place to pick up a trail map. As the trail is flat, hiking poles were left in the car.

After introductions, a few safety comments, and a brief discussion of Valley Oaks, we headed over the bridge to the River Walk Trail. We took the counter clockwise loop to check out birds in the marsh area east of the VC. Several



species of ducks were spotted — Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Cinnamon Teal — along with Coots, Great Blue Herons, and Common Egrets. We noticed critter (beaver? river otter?) trails traversing our path, going from marsh to slough.

After about a mile, we entered the riparian forest of Valley Oak and Cottonwood. Trail signs and maps point the way forward. Large red mushrooms grew out of the thick layer of fallen leaves. With the oak leaves gone, the oak galls were prominent, and we had a discussion about the creation of these larval nurseries for wasps. At one point, deer were spotted at the edge of thick vegetation. SSSHHHHHH....

We crossed under the railroad tracks and entered the



grasslands. A flock of Western Bluebirds was spotted perched in a tree. Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks flew above us. We took a short snack break at a tule marsh, with most of us relaxing under the massive boughs of a granddaddy Valley Oak. A group of Mallards paddled in the marsh. One of the hikers picked up an oak leaf and observed the spiky leaf galls that were attached, again created as a wasp nursery.

As we headed back toward the railroad tracks, Jeanne spotted a 5-inch-long bright red crawdad in the grass along the trail. What was this critter doing out of the water? We noticed that there was something under the tail — a huge batch of baby crawdads!!! Fantastically creepy and weird!!! One of the brave hikers picked up the crawmom and moved her near the water.

We now walked along the edge of the large marsh again and spotted Say's Phoebe, Black-necked Stilts, and more ducks. We even heard a few squeaking Sandhill Cranes flying overhead. When we reached the Wetlands Walk Trail junction, a few of our hikers peeled off. The rest of us

walked over to the Boardwalk Trail. The boardwalk extends into the marsh and has benches and an observation platform at the end. We identified Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Dowitcher, and Red-winged Blackbirds.

We headed back to the parking lot, completing our approximately 6-mile loop. We thanked Martin for leading this interesting excursion into our Central Valley ecosystem. I was glad to be a part of this outing, it was a beautiful winter day in our beloved Central Valley.

Note: As this is a wildlife preserve, dogs are not allowed. Bring water. Vault toilets are located at the parking areas. Free parking. <https://www.cosumnes.org/>

**Getting there**—It's about 60 miles, and it takes 1 hour to drive. Head north on Highway 99. Take the Highway 4 cutover through Stockton to Highway 5 north. Go about 21 miles, and take exit 493 to Walnut Grove Rd./Thornton Rd. Turn left at Thornton Rd. After you cross the Mokelumne River, the road turns into Franklin Road. After about a mile, the parking lot for the VC will be on the right.

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# Bridging Communities: A Collective Commitment to the Tuolumne River



**By: HILARY MOAK, Tuolumne River Trust  
Central Valley Program Director**

Winding through the heart of Modesto, the Tuolumne River stretches for 149 miles, forging a path from the Sierra Nevada to the San Francisco Bay Area via the Central Valley, linking diverse communities along its course. The Tuolumne River travels through a wide variety of landscapes and ecosystems, providing critical riparian habitat for the dwindling Chinook Salmon population, irrigating vital agricultural fields, and serving as a source of drinking water for millions of people in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Tuolumne River is a treasure for us here in the Central Valley, and the Tuolumne River Trust (TRT) is on a mission to create a culture of care to protect this resource for present and future generations.

TRT's Central Valley team, in partnership with communities along the riverbank, has been cultivating this stewardship ethos since the early 2000s to build a relationship between the river and the people through education, recreation, and advocacy. We seek a healthy and vibrant river that is teeming with fish and wildlife, safe for drinking and recreational activities like fishing and swimming, and accessible for river sports such as rafting and kayaking while serving as a sanctuary for our children and grandchildren.

A cornerstone of fostering this stewardship is educating the community about the Tuolumne River's significance, not just for the environment, but also for their everyday lives. Our staff works closely with Modesto City Schools Expanded Learning program, to provide environmental education focused on the Tuolumne watershed, how water quality impacts a river, and the Chinook Salmon life cycle to 4th-6th grade students.

Throughout a school year, an average of 540 students



will participate in our classroom-based environmental education programs. We also attend community outreach events to share this critical environmental education with the broader public, connecting people near and far to the Tuolumne River.

We champion experiential learning through free and bilingual (English and Spanish) activities. Through community paddles, family bike rides, and nature walks for all ages and experience levels, our recreational activities connect people with nature and the Tuolumne River in an immersive way. TRT staff provides all equipment and supplies needed to participate, and all activities are free to families. This removes any financial barriers that may prevent youth and families from being able to access our programs. We also work to coordinate transportation or host activities in walkable locations so participants do not have to travel far distances.

By creating safe, accessible, and comfortable experiences for our participants outdoors, we are laying the foundation

for a budding relationship between our participants and the natural world, especially with the Tuolumne River. Our inclusive program activities, designed for families, facilitate a bonding experience that spans generations—from grandparents to parents and children—creating cherished memories and bonds beyond the activities themselves. This marks the beginning of a deeply rooted culture of care and stewardship.

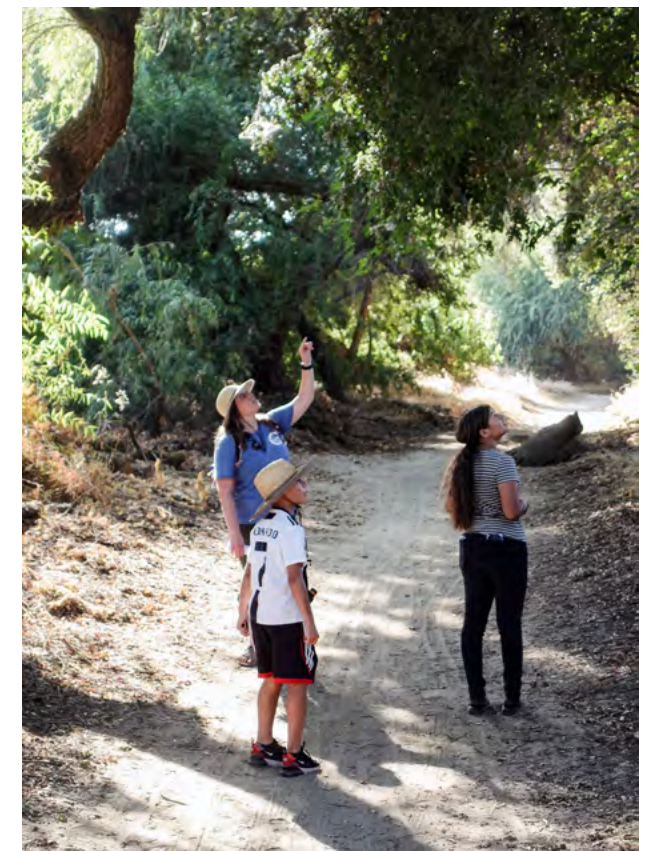
Mobilizing their care into action, youth and adults have come together to form a Park

Coalition aimed at ensuring fair access to parks for everyone. TRT staff host bilingual civic engagement workshops for youth and adults to learn about our local city and county governments, ways for the community (youth and adults) to participate in the public process, and the importance of policy change.

Leading the charge is the youth-driven ACT Modesto Park Equity Project, which calls for fair improvements to James Marshall Park and Robertson Road Park in West Modesto's riverside area. This dedicated group of high school students has engaged directly with Mayor Sue Zwahlen and other elected council members, educating them on the data it has collected for the project, advocating for change, and for the adoption of the Park Equity Resolution.

Our goal is to have Modesto City Council adopt the Park Equity Resolution, committing to equitable approaches when improving park spaces. Improving park spaces in our most impacted communities is critical to building thriving communities, establishing connections with nature, and caring for the Tuolumne River. By investing in our future stewards, we are investing in a thriving future and a thriving river.

Join the movement to care for the Tuolumne. Visit <https://www.tuolumne.org/>



# A Conversation About MoCag with James Costello

By TOM PORTWOOD

As this winter's often heavy rains repeatedly drenched numerous streets and alleyways here in the city of Modesto, I ran across the inevitable evidence – when I ventured out, usually in the aftermath of a downpour - of the toll those storms were taking on the most vulnerable among us, i.e., our unhoused neighbors who are at the mercy of the high winds, the cold rain, and the clinging chill of their own soaked clothes. When going out to catch the bus one day, I spied a soggy green sweater piled in a heap by the bench. A few days later, following another storm, I ran across a sleeping bag - still drying out - at the corner of Bowen & McHenry - - abandoned, no doubt, because it had become too uncomfortable and heavy with soggy for its owner to keep hauling from one sleeping spot to the next. Another time, it was a couple of mismatched shoes with several stray socks stuffed in them. These aren't bits of garbage so much, as little reminders that many people in our city are existing at a very difficult level indeed.

And in a February 29<sup>th</sup> article published in *Cal Matters*, Marisa Kendall pointedly writes of just how dangerous survival out on the streets has become:

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“For many people, living on the streets of California is a death sentence. That’s according to a recent study that took the first deep look into mortality rates in homeless communities throughout the country. It found the death rate more than tripled between 2011 and 2020. The findings make it clear that, at the same time, the number of homeless Californians is soaring; it’s also becoming more dangerous to be homeless. And it means the stakes are sky-high when it comes to state and local efforts to combat the crisis: People’s lives are on the line. The number of Californians 55 and older who sought homelessness services soared 84% between 2017 and 2021.

The Modesto Citizen’s Action Group (MoCag) was formed just about a year ago by a group of concerned local citizens who, collectively, had provided a great deal of care, attention, and support to the multifaceted issues of homelessness in our community over an extended length of time. Many members of MoCag know the individuals and families who are the faces of the unhoused in Modesto – our neighbors – people who not only respect them in return but who have earned their trust and their friendship as well.

So, the other day, I caught up with James Costello, who



was one of MoCag’s founding members, to find out what MoCag has been doing recently and what plans it has for the near future.

**Q. Please describe MoCag’s original goal, and what actions it took in 2023 as an advocate for the unhoused in our community.**

**James Costello:** MoCAG was created to address a certain portion of the homeless population in Modesto and, ultimately, hopefully, around the County. It is true that the City of Modesto and Stanislaus County have done a great deal for various populations of the homeless, but there’s one group that MoCag wanted to focus on – those are the homeless individuals who are in the streets, parks, and doorways who camp pretty much anywhere they can

find – along roadways, freeways.

Following a great deal of research, MoCag came up with a plan to get people off the street and into transitional housing, which might include tents, pallet shelters, or other types of shelter. The whole idea is to create a space where an individual can safely store his or her belongings and pets, and rest because it is hard to sleep on the streets. Homeless people are continually being rousted by law enforcement, having their documents stolen, their tents destroyed. We discussed our plan with all the members of the City Council and with each of the members of the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors. We went into detail about the plan and what we would like to see happen.

Since it is mainly a City of Modesto problem, we have consistently addressed the City Council. We have presented almost every rational plan that could be thought of to try and deal with the problem for this particular population of the unhoused. However, the City Council did not really accept our recommendation. Three of the City Council members were on board and created their own plan to help move people from the streets to a transitional shelter. Their plan was rejected in a 4-3 vote by the City Council in October 2023.

**Q. In the wake of that vote, how did MoCag react, and what are its current plans?**

**James Costello:** We at MoCag are very disconcerted about this because we presented viable ways to solve this problem, as did the three Councilmembers, Bavaro, Ricci, and Alvarez. However, the City Council, at this point, has decided not to address that population of homelessness, even though many other cities in California are doing so. The city





of Manteca is one example. They have established a pallet shelter home, with services, security, and other things that homeless people need. And it's apparently working well.

So, currently, the members of MoCag have realized that we must take another approach. We don't want to just sit idly by and not try to do anything. We have recently met with a Councilmember, and we are trying to work through the private sector, and we are creating a plan to do that. We will be contacting councilmembers and supervisors about how this might be done. That's a work in progress, and something that we are very hopeful will gain traction.

One idea is to find land in Modesto – private land or government-owned land – that might be used to establish where shelters or pallets might be placed. The other part of this idea is to focus on particular groups. Rather than having a one-size-fits-all approach, there are various subdivisions of this population. Say pallets for families, for example.

**Q. Briefly describe Bridge Housing, and how the City of Modesto is involved in a program to fund building units of it here in our community.**

**James Costello:** One of the aspects that the City of Modesto is pursuing is called Bridge Housing whereby land owned by private entities (such as churches) can be used to

temporarily house certain people who are homeless. As an example, the Modesto Church of the Brethren has applied to be a Bridge Housing provider for families with children. The City of Modesto has allocated \$3 million for the Bridge Housing initiative. Other agencies and churches may also be applying for these dollars. The city has committed to purchasing shelters and doing infrastructure work on the various properties that receive the funding. But Bridge Housing is not designed to address the population that MoCag has dedicated its efforts to assisting – the chronic, severely homeless. These individuals are not really suitable for Bridge Housing.

**Q. Please describe why seeking a shelter – say at the Berberian or Mission Gospel – isn't possible for some unshoused individuals:**

**James Costello:** It's true that there are shelters for the people who live on the street. However, some people can't live in the shelters. They've been afraid, or they are not psychologically capable of living in a group situation. Many of the homeless are psychologically scarred by the experience of being homeless and needing to go into survival mode. If you stay homeless for a long time, then your entire outlook on life changes. Some homeless people

who get into a house don't sleep in the bed; they sleep on the floor – they need to be re-acclimated to learn how to live in a house. And they need other psychological services as well. That doesn't count the ones who are drug addicted. Homeless people often sleep in the daytime because it's safer to sleep during the day – at nighttime, you – and particularly women – are subject to attack, rape, robbery, beatings, whatever. It's a horrible way to live and carries a lot of trauma with it. That idea seems to get lost in the City Council's evaluation of the problem. There are some people who just *can't* go to shelters. The City has a program to help people with those issues. It's called *Camp to Home*. It's got lots of components to it that – and, if it works – *should* be successful. However, one of the things we've found, by talking to people who *actually* deal with homelessness on the street is that to get services there are often bureaucratic impediments for people along the way.

**Q. Does MoCag have any other goals the group is currently working on?**

**James Costello:** Yes. Another of our goals is to call for a partnership between the City and the County. The City of Modesto has some funding available through Measure H. However, the County has a lot of money that they could use for these purposes in conjunction with the City of Modesto. That's the whole idea of getting them together and seeing what we can come up with.

**Q. Please briefly describe why you think MoCag remains so committed to helping in this cause...in effect, to helping our neighbors in their time of need?**

**James Costello:** First, I think the people sitting on the City Council are good people. They have done a good deal for the homeless in our community. They mean well, but there's a wall they won't cross to build an action to help this group – the hundreds who, at this very moment, are enduring another night of cold temperatures. Before long, though, the summer will be upon us - with its searing heat – and still nothing has been built for those fighting to survive on the street. We at MoCag will continue to advocate and fight for those individuals, many of whom we know by name and face – for, too often, their voices remain unheard in this city, their dangerous plight left to fester and only worsen with each passing day.

## Neighbors Protest Tiny Homes continued from page 1



**Chris Ricci with constituents, 28 March, 2024. Former Modesto City Councilmember Bruce Frohman is at right** against locating tiny homes anywhere nearby, and most especially not on church grounds.

The Modesto City Council approved the “bridge housing” concept on November 7 of last year, after rejecting a proposal by three councilmembers to establish permitted campsites for homeless people. Now, the city will have to figure out where to establish the tiny home communities they've chosen as a chief remedy for rising numbers of homeless people throughout the city. The cost per tiny home unit has been estimated at \$75,000. The city has budgeted \$3 million for the bridge housing project. Homeless numbers in Modesto have been estimated to be somewhere between 450 and 750 individuals.

Councilmember Chris Ricci listened closely to constituents after the meeting ended. He learned the “democratic process” thus far indicates that the City of Modesto has a long way to go before establishing tiny home villages anywhere near local homeowners and businesses.

## Hola Community!

This month I want to share my thoughts about love. Yes, I know February has long past us, but love is constant and available when we are able to step outside our “titles and egos.”

I love my community, our community. Born in the hoods of Modesto and raised throughout the County, Hughson, Turlock, Oakdale, Empire. Let me define what community means to me. It’s the mothers in the Airport Neighborhood, West Modesto, South Modesto who I have had the privilege of getting paid to share space with. I’ve gotten to be their champion, ally and most importantly, their friend.

I am a privileged American whose cultural roots are tied to the struggle of my Mexican-born parents. I am a child of poverty, physical violence, and endless suffering, yet I still stand, scarred and bruised, fighting for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for our children and families living in Stanislaus County.



At times, I ask myself, “Is this really what your purpose is? Can you just stop this empathetic heart from beating?!”

My purpose is to break barriers for and by el barrio. But why? It is because of the immense emotional pain I continue to work through as an adult child of poverty. It’s a rough road that I do not wish on anyone, even my biggest critics. That’s the reason I am not a martyr nor a hero, just a brown kid who grew up here and found that each time fear sets in, it is an opportunity to choose courage for our Comunidad.

Always with heart and love (con corazón)

Karla Arias

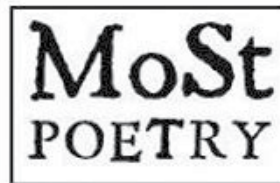


## 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Aileen Jaffa Young Poets Contest

By LYNN M. HANSEN, Contest Chair: National League of American Pen Women & MoSt Poetry Center

*Co-sponsored by MoSt (Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center) and the National League of American Penwomen (NLAPW), Modesto chapter.*

This contest is offered to encourage young writers throughout Stanislaus County and to remember poet Aileen Jaffa, the founding President of the Poets of the San Joaquin and member of the Modesto Branch of the National League of American Pen Women.



Modesto-Stanislaus  
Poetry Center

## Poets & Writers

### Cider Press Review Seeks Submissions

Cider Press Review, a journal of contemporary poetry, seeks to discover and publish the best of new poetry written in English—writing that showcases craft and substance, poetry that has something to say and says it beautifully. CPR actively seeks new original work and English translations from established and emerging poets. We especially encourage submissions from female writers, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ identifying, and/or otherwise from communities traditionally underrepresented in U.S. literary magazines and journals. Our only criterion is excellence.

The editors read submissions of individual poems from February 15 to May 31 each year, and full manuscripts (in conjunction with the CPR Annual Book Award and Editors Prize) between September 1 and November 30 and again between April 1 and June 30 each calendar year. Short reviews of full-length poetry collections are considered year-round.

See [CPR Book Award Guidelines](#) and [Journal Submission Guidelines](#) <https://ciderpressreview.com/bookaward/>



**Eligibility and Deadline:** Any student enrolled in a Stanislaus County school, grades K through 12, is eligible to submit up to 3 entries, at \$1 per entry. Each entry, except for typing, must be the original creative work of the student, although parents or teachers may provide encouragement. Postmark deadline for submissions is **April 5, 2024**. Mail submissions to **MoSt Poetry, P.O. Box 578940, Modesto, CA 95357**. Find the entry form at <https://www.mostpoetry.org/contests/jaffa>. Information: [info@mostpoetry.org](mailto:info@mostpoetry.org)

The current president of the NLAPW Modesto chapter will present the awards, and the winning poems will be read at an Awards Ceremony at 2 P.M. on Sunday, May 11, 2024, at the Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock.

## Cinco de Mayo Climate Resource Fair!

Valley Improvements Project (VIP) is excited to share with you an awesome opportunity to involve young people in our upcoming 5 de Mayo Climate Resource Fair on May 4, 2024, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. at El Rematito in Ceres, CA.

**Here is a bit about the resource fair:** This event, organized by our organization and South Modesto Business United (SMBU), aims to address climate change and promote sustainability. It highlights our joint commitment to community engagement and provides valuable resources to the Latino community. With over 2000 attendees expected, this collaboration promises a significant impact.

### Event Theme: Honor the Past and Protect the Future.

**Youth Engagement:** We have issued a call to educators and young leaders to engage young people in creating artwork, composing poetry, or designing infographics that capture their vision for a sustainable future. We hope this will encourage youth to delve into themes such as sustainability, pollution, and activism, infusing their cultural backgrounds into their creations and sharing their unique perspectives. By blending elements of their heritage with the environment, they can create impactful pieces.

Additionally, we are excited to introduce the Environmental Justice (EJ) Lotería Card concept, a creative and engaging way to delve into environmental issues affecting our communities. Students can submit their EJ Lotería cards for consideration to enter our deck of 52 images, each representing a unique aspect of environmental justice. Event participants will have a chance to play the final EJ Lotería on the day of our event.

Simply email your artwork to [info@vip209.org](mailto:info@vip209.org) or send it via mail to PO Box 4214, Modesto, CA 95352, no later than April 19th.





## Krystle Lisek: Poet, Photographer, Artist

Krystle Lisek is a multi-faceted artist from Modesto whose creative journey is one of resilience and creative expression. Her passion for poetry, photography, and art is fueled by her lived experience and observations of the world around her.

Krystle began her poetic journey in junior high allowing herself to pour her heart onto the pages of her notebooks. However, after being discouraged by one of her foster mothers who found her poetry too dark, she withdrew from any creative pursuits for many years.

In 2019, while taking a photography class at Modesto Junior College, Krystle discovered she wasn't just a photographer but a visual artist. When one of her instructors encouraged her to share her art, it sparked a newfound confidence leading her to embrace photography as her primary medium. Krystle's artistic evolution led to her role as the gallery coordinator for the Mistlin Gallery. There, she found herself reconnecting with the poet inside her, nurturing the parts of herself she had forgotten.

Krystle's involvement with the Mistlin Gallery opened doors for her with other artistic groups. In late 2023, she was invited to join the Metermaids poetry group. The monthly meetings have become a place for her to explore her passion for poetry in a supportive environment.

Today, Krystle continues her self-expression, giving voice to her visual art through the pairings of poetry. In this artistic synergy, she finds solace and the empowerment to continue creating. *A Gathering of Voices* is pleased to share some of her fine work in this issue of *Stanislaus Connections*.

### Nature's Embrace

This is what I long for  
A world so dark,  
So green,  
So fresh,  
With rain clouds overhead.  
Where I can breathe in its riches and dance,  
Rolling in emerald fields,  
Cold and damp,  
Embraced by nature,  
At peace,  
At last.

### Sustainable Earth: Our Precarious Balance

Production is our destruction,  
Without it, how do we function?  
Sustainable Earth,  
How do we measure humanity's worth?  
Intelligent creatures,  
Opposable features,  
How do we sustain this world instead of hurt,  
Before we're lying low beneath the dirt.

### Threads of Peace

Peace,  
A novel idea.  
A desire deep within our hearts.  
Where do we find it?  
How do we start?  
Better yet,  
How did we lose it along the way?

I remember a time that I felt peace,  
When I was very young.  
It felt like being wrapped in a warm hug,  
It felt like love.  
It felt like falling asleep in my grandma's arms,  
Long before the war that we call life had really begun.  
It was before I knew how deep the cruelty of man could go.

Now that I've been a soldier of this war,  
How do I find my way back to where I belong?  
Now that grandma's and grandpa's and home  
are long gone,  
When memories of peace seem like fairy tales  
to your heart,  
How do we bring them to life?  
How do we start?

Maybe it's time to let go  
Of trying to make real those memories we hold.  
Cultivating peace is not a selfish task.  
So in creating it for others,  
We might find the answers to the questions we've asked.  
If we wrap those we meet  
In a blanket of love,  
Knitted with understanding,  
For every diverse thread,  
Weaving out those insecurities.  
There is beauty in our colors,  
Peace through unity.  
Love, our one true security.

### Justice is a Lady

Iustitia,  
Lady of justice,  
If everything was under your view,  
I could breathe,  
I wouldn't feel reluctant,

I could exist without feeling blue.  
Iustitia,  
Lady of justice,  
The Libra inside me needs you.  
I want to be  
Clear and in focus,  
I want to feel the world is too.

Iustitia,  
Lady of Justice,  
It is feminine to rule.  
Bring peace,  
This is your purpose, incumbent.  
The world needs you.

Iustitia,  
Lady of justice.

### Pronoia

The world's been against you  
For far too long.  
Peace is all but forgotten,  
But paranoia won't take you far.  
Running in circles, just spinning your wheels,  
Exhausts the soul,  
It has no appeal.  
It's time for a change,  
A time for peace to reign.  
Let's flip the script,  
Turn the world on its axis,  
Give yourself the justice  
That your inner child is demanding.

Pronoia shows the world anew.  
Look through its lens  
As your perception is adjusted  
to more than a rosy view.  
The peace of mind  
To make every situation  
Work for you.

Pronoia,  
It is the idea that the world  
is turning in your favor.  
Karma and justice intertwined,  
Evolving until you are,  
Leaving anxiety behind.

It's living here in the now,  
Dodging obstacles, parkour.  
It's when the trash takes itself out  
And we are able to thrive.  
Peace through perception,  
Justice comes in time.  
Pronoia.

# Great Programs on KCBP 95.5 fm, The Voice of the Valley

Streaming on [www.kcbpradio.org](http://www.kcbpradio.org)

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

**Confetti Park** - Music, stories New Orleans style, Saturdays at 8:00 am; & Sunday's 12:30 pm.

**The Children's Hour** - Sundays 3:00 pm.

## SCIENCE

**Radio Ecoshoek** – the latest scientific information on Climate Change – Saturdays, 9:00 am.

**Explorations** – Science explained with Dr. Michio Kaku - 9:00 am Sundays.

**Big Picture Science** - 1:00 pm Sundays.

**Planetary Radio** – 2:30 pm Sundays.

**Got Science** – 4:00 pm Sundays

## PROGRAMS

**Ukraine 2.4.2** - a collaboration between Anne Levine, WOMR, the Pacifica Network, and Kraina FM, a 26-city radio network in Ukraine that arranges weekly cutting-edge and exclusive interviews with key people in Ukraine – Thursdays, 10:00 am.

**Beethoven to Bernstein** - Classical music ranging from Beethoven to Bernstein. Big hits from well-renown composers - Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Ravel, Copland - and many more, mostly in the form of orchestral, chamber, and piano music - Saturdays, 10:00 pm.

**The Not Old – Better Show** - fascinating, high-energy program of big-name guests, inspiring role models, interesting topics, with entertaining host and former

Modestan, Paul Vogelzang – Fridays, 2:00 pm, Saturdays, 12:30 pm.

**Down on the Farm** - topics important for our San Joaquin agriculture with Madera organic farmer Tom Willey - Saturdays, 6 am

**Sounds Irish** Music from County Wicklow - Saturdays, 7:00 pm.

**Various musical programs during the noon hour:** *Oldies, Old Piano, and International.*

**Dead Air** - Hear the Grateful Dead with Cory Daniels. Fridays, 6 pm; Saturdays, 3 pm.

**Attitude with Arne Arnesen** – 3:00 pm. Political and social issues.

**Sojourner Truth** - 4:00 pm – Tuesdays. Interviews and panels focus on issues that affect people of color.

**Democracy Now!** - 7:00 am, Monday thru Friday. Reporting by veteran journalists Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez.

**Flashpoint Magazine** - 10:00 pm, Monday thru Friday. Politics, social issues, from KQED's Dennis Bernstein.

**Alternative Radio** – 4:00 pm, Mondays. Interviews with prominent political and social people.

**Julian Taylor's Jukebox** – 4:00 pm, Thursdays and Fridays. Eclectic, contemporary music.

**Nuestra Música** – 4:00 pm, Tuesdays. Eclectic, Latin-flavored music with a beat!

## LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

**Triumphant Tuesdays** – Noon, Tuesdays. Inspirational thoughts & music with Catrice.

**Sports Talk Modesto** - Join Jay Freeda and Jimmie Menezes. Snappy banter to catch

up on everything happening in the sports world. – Thursdays, 5 pm.

**Vib'n with the West Modesto Collaborative** - Jasmine Corena and Likhi Rivas. Engage, Educate, and Advocate on behalf of the West Modesto Community. Showcases Voices of the West Modesto Community – Wednesdays, 7 pm.

**AREA 5150 UFO RADIO** – Spooky music & sounds out of this world, Friday night, 11:00 pm.

**Cyber Stallion: Bucks Stallion's Radio Transmission Emporium** – Cyber Acoustic Music - Saturdays, 12:00 am, Wednesdays, 5:00 p.m.

**I-On-Modesto** - John Griffin interviews local people who reveal their inspiring stories. Mondays & Fridays, 10 am and Wednesdays at 9 pm.

**Arts of the San Joaquin Valley** with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - Mondays, 8:00 pm; Tuesdays, 9:00 am &

Wednesdays, 8:00 pm. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp> and on Spotify

**Women of the Valley** with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - 8:00 pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays, 9:00 am. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbpwotv> and on Spotify.

**Modesto Sound** - California Audio Roots Project (CARP) – Tuesdays 5:30 pm, Wednesdays 11:30 am, & Sundays 11:00 am & 4:30 pm.

**Sunday Cruisin'** with your host, DeeJay Rig! Oldies hits from 1959 to 1999 – Sundays, 5:00 p.m.

**Faithful Fridays** – inspirational music and thoughts with Catrice – Fridays, 7:00 p.m.

**Why Not Nice?** - Showcases unique music from unique cultures and thinkers worldwide, focusing on world/academic/jazz and roots music – Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

**Mars Radio – Hip-Hop Show** - Music, interviews from local & regional artists - Fridays, 8:00 pm. A new, second show plays on Saturday nights at 8:00 pm, with a third at 8:00 pm Sundays.

**Modesto Area Music Awards (MAMA)** with Middagh Goodwin – Mondays 5:00 pm; Fridays 9:00 pm & Saturdays 6:00 pm.

**Freak Radio** with Christian E. Boyett, 6 pm Thursdays. Replays Saturdays, 9 pm & Tuesdays 11 pm.

**This is SKA** with Middagh Goodwin - Tuesdays, 9 pm; Fridays, 11 pm; Sundays, 5 am to 7 am.

**I'll Take You There** - A musical journey with Modesto's El Comandante - Saturday, 5:00 pm; Sundays, 9:00 pm.

**Penny Bloods** – Fun, Victorian melodrama radio plays, often performed by local actors, written by Arnold Anthony Schmidt, CSU, Stanislaus. As scheduled.

PSAs in English and Spanish produced by the West Modesto Community Collaborative.

LISTEN TO OUR MUSIC PLAYLISTS AT SPINITRON <https://spinitron.com/KCBP/calendar>

Find a complete programming schedule on our website, [www.kcbpradio.org](http://www.kcbpradio.org)

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY RADIO STATION: Donate here: <https://kcbpradio.org/donate/> Please consider a recurring monthly donation.



## Be informed!

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

# GET INVOLVED: the Stanislaus County Pesticides Safety Network

## From the Valley Improvement Projects (VIP)

Stanislaus County Pesticides Safety Network (SPSN). A network composed of individuals from organizations, and community members across Stanislaus County who are concerned about pesticide use and safety in the immediate community we live in and/or serve.

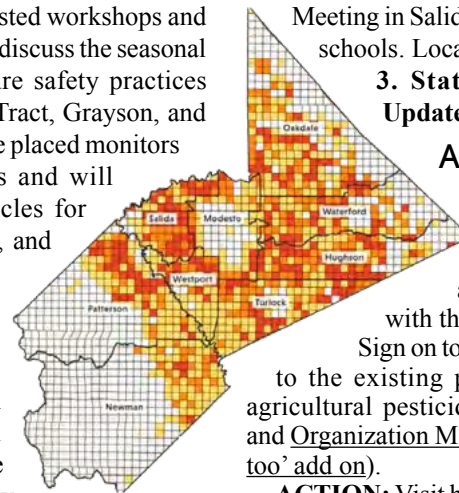
SPSN meets once a month to give local, regional, and statewide updates on these issues. We meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, and we alternate meetings from at our office or in community spaces. Due to some venue availability limitations, this month we will be switching sites with next month; hosting the Salida Community meeting in April.

## Agenda

### 1. High Levels of Fumigant Pesticides Found In our Air

On the last week of February, we hosted workshops and invited the Department of Pesticides to discuss the seasonal pesticide study and pesticide exposure safety practices and how to report, to Monterey Park Tract, Grayson, and Hughson communities where they have placed monitors that will collect air quality samples and will look for fumigant gas remnant particles for the fumigant pesticides 1,3-D, MITC, and Chloropicrin.

**2. Agricultural Pesticide Exposure Near Schools - 2 reported incidents in the last 2 years.** Continuing to investigate The Great Valley and Modesto Christian schools pesticide drift incidents with the Ag Commissioner. There will be a School Pesticides Exposure Safety



Meeting in Salida on Wednesday, April 17th, near these schools. Location TBD

### 3. State Pesticide Notification System Updates

#### Action Items

If you know anyone who attends, works, lives near these schools, or might be interested in learning more about pesticide safety, please share this with them

Sign on to support common-sense improvements to the existing protections for kids at school from agricultural pesticide exposure! ([Organization Sign-On](#) and [Organization Member: have a PAN/CPR lobbyist 'Me too' add on](#)).

**ACTION:** Visit <https://valleyimprovementprojects.org/>

# Gender Wage Gap Persists in 2023: Women are Paid Roughly 22% Less Than Men on Average

## From the Economic Policy Institute

March 12 was Equal Pay Day, a reminder that there is still a significant pay gap between men and women in our country. The date represents how far into 2024 women would have to work on top of the hours they worked in 2023 simply to match what men were paid in 2023. Women were paid 21.8% less on average than men in 2023, after controlling for race and ethnicity, education, age, and geographic division.

**Economic  
Policy  
Institute**

There has been little progress in narrowing this gender wage gap over the past three decades. While the pay gap declined between 1979 and 1994—due to men's stagnant wages, not a tremendous increase in women's wages—it has remained mostly flat since then.

**Little to no progress in closing the gender wage gap in three decades. The gender wage persists across the wage distribution**

The experience of men and women across the wage distribution differs considerably, but the gender wage gap persists no matter how it's measured. Women are paid less than men as a result of occupational segregation, devaluation of women's work, societal norms, and discrimination, all of which took root well before women entered the labor market.

The wage gap is smallest among lower-wage workers, in part due to the minimum wage creating a wage floor. At the 10th percentile, women are paid \$1.86 less an hour, or 12.8% less than men, while at the middle the wage gap is \$3.87 an hour, or 14.9%. These low- and middle-wage gaps translate into annual earnings gaps of over \$3,800 and \$8,000, respectively, for a full-time worker. The 90th percentile is the highest wage category we can compare due to issues with topcoding in the data, which make it difficult to measure wages at the top of the distribution, particularly for men. Women are paid \$14.74 less an hour, or 22.6% less, than men at the 90th percentile. That would translate into an

annual earnings gap of over \$30,000 for a full-time worker.

The gender wage gap persists at all parts of the wage distribution.

### Women are paid less than men at every education level

Despite gains in educational attainment over the last five decades, women still face a significant wage gap. Among workers, women are more likely to graduate from college than men, and are more likely to receive a graduate degree than men. Even so, women are paid less than men at every education level.

Among workers who have only a high school diploma, women are paid 21.3% less than men. Among workers who have a college degree, women are paid 26.8% less than men. That gap of \$13.52 on an hourly basis translates to roughly \$28,000 less annual earnings for a full-time worker. Women with an advanced degree also experience a significant the wage gap, at 25.2% in 2023. What's very stark from the data is that women with advanced degrees are paid less per hour, on average, than men with college degrees. Men with a college degree only are paid \$50.37 per hour on average compared with \$48.21 for women with an advanced degree.

### Black and Hispanic women experience the largest wage gaps

If the overall gender pay gap isn't enough cause for alarm, the wage gaps for Black and Hispanic women relative to white men are even larger due to compounded discrimination and occupational segregation based on both gender and race/ethnicity.

White women and AAPI women are paid 83.1% and 90.3%, respectively, of what non-Hispanic white men are paid at the middle. Black women are paid only 69.8% of white men's wages at the middle, a gap of \$8.65 on an hourly basis which translates to roughly \$18,000 less annual earnings for a full-time worker. For Hispanic women, the gap is even larger at the middle: Hispanic women are paid only 64.6% of white men's wages, an hourly wage gap of \$10.15. For a full-time worker, that gap is over \$21,000 a year.

### Black and Hispanic women experience the largest pay gaps.

Women's hourly wages as a share of white men's and their per hour wage penalties, by race and ethnicity, 2023

These pay gaps are even larger when examining average hourly wages for all workers instead of just the average for middle-wage workers because of the disproportionate share of highly paid workers who are white men, which pulls up their average. Using the average measure, Black and Hispanic women are paid 63.4% and 58.3%, respectively, of white men's wages, an hourly wage gap of \$14.80 for Black women and \$16.90 for Hispanic women. Even when controlling for age, education, and geographic division, Black and Hispanic women are both paid about 68% of white men's wages. In other words, very little of the observed difference in pay is explained by differences in education, experience, or regional economic conditions.

### Policymakers must pursue a range of options to close the gender pay gap

There is no silver bullet to solving pay equity, but rather a menu of policy options that can close not only the gender pay gap but also gaps by race and ethnicity. These include requiring federal reporting of pay by gender, race, and ethnicity; prohibiting employers from asking about pay history; requiring employers to post pay bands when hiring; and adequately staffing and funding the Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission and other agencies charged with enforcement of nondiscrimination laws.

We also need policies that lift wages for most workers while also reducing gender and racial/ethnic pay gaps, such as running the economy at full employment, raising the federal minimum wage, and protecting and strengthening workers' rights to bargain collectively for higher wages and benefits.

Note: to see the graphs and references for this report, visit [https://www.epi.org/blog/gender-wage-gap-persists-in-2023-women-are-paid-roughly-22-less-than-men-on-average/?mc\\_cid=78d9c8a164&mc\\_eid=1c650e6f80](https://www.epi.org/blog/gender-wage-gap-persists-in-2023-women-are-paid-roughly-22-less-than-men-on-average/?mc_cid=78d9c8a164&mc_eid=1c650e6f80)

