STANISLAUS
connections
A MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER publication
Working for peace, justice and a sustainable future
JANUARY 2026
VOLUME XXXIV, NO. 5

Celebrate Family, Friends, and Community at the John McCutcheon Concert!

By Ken Schroeder

In our challenging and stressful times, it is good to be together and inspired. We invite you to see folk music legend and six-time Grammy nominee John McCutcheon perform in concert for the Modesto Peace/Life Center on **Monday, January 12, at 7:00 p.m. at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Avenue**.

John's music addresses issues of injustice and inhumanity and celebrates the bonds of family, friends, and community. This will be John's 24th appearance in Modesto. His concert annually has brought us together in our yearning for a better world.

In-person tickets available at Intrinsic Elements (1214 J St., Modesto 209--409-8510) by cash or check for $30, or at the door for $35. Price for those 30 years old and younger is $10.

Please consider becoming a sponsor. You will receive tickets to the concert, your name in the program, and reserved seating. Five levels of sponsorship are available:

You may buy your sponsorship here on Eventbrite: mccutcheonmodesto2026.eventbrite.com. Or send your sponsorship donation check to the Modesto Peace/Life Center, PO Box 134, Modesto, CA 95354. Please write "concert sponsor" in the note on the check.

For more info, contact Ken Schroeder at kschroeder70@yahoo.com or 209-480-4576. Let Ken know if you would like a dedication to appear in the program (such as "In Honor of" or "In Memory of")

Autoharp $50 One ticket,
Guitar $100 Two tickets,
Banjo $175 Four tickets,
Piano $300 Eight tickets,
Hammer Dulcimer $500 Fifteen tickets.

Come & Hear Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz!

Author, Educator, Producer
Daughter of Malcom X

SATURDAY, February 7, 2026

32nd Annual
Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration

MLK Legacy Award

Performing Arts & Media Center
Modesto Junior College, East Campus
435 College Ave., Modesto

- 6:00 p.m. - Doors Open
- 7:00 p.m. - Free program

— Sponsors —

City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Dept.; Modesto Junior College; Modesto Peace/Life Center; California State University, Stanislaus; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Turlock Teachers Assoc.; California Teachers Assoc. *Sponsors needed!* Contact Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org to co-sponsor.

INSIDE CONNECTIONS

READERS! Sign-up for our e-edition!

Get the latest e-edition of Stanislaus Connections delivered right into your email box!

Can enlarge text to read more easily! Print out if desired!

To sign-up, send your email address to Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org

If you do not have Adobe Reader, download it free from Adobe.

IN MEMORIAM

Gladys Williams

February 4, 1947 – November 27, 2025

In today's fast-paced world, having an educator who embodies the true spirit of service is a cherished gift. Gladys Williams stood out as a paragon of dedication, commitment, and empathy, seamlessly blending her role as an educator and long-term civil rights activist with that of a community servant. Her unwavering passion fostered a nurturing environment that not only empowered students and adults but also enriched the entire community. She used her institutional knowledge and 35 years of experience as an elementary school teacher, plus 15 years as a retired sub, to prepare young minds to become productive citizens.

Beyond the classroom, Mrs. Williams was a former 10-year president of the Modesto/Stanislaus NAACP where she continued to advocate for social justice and human rights. She's spearheaded numerous signature programs such as Black graduation ceremonies, Not In Our Town Campaigns, parent support groups, and activities for seniors and students with disabilities.

While being a member of the Modesto Teachers Association, California Teachers Association, Stanislaus Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, and National Education Association throughout her 30-year tenure, she always fought for equity-themed initiatives for marginalized communities. Her colleagues describe her as being masterful at bringing people into the fold. She was admired throughout Stanislaus County for her fierce resistance to racism, prejudice, and intolerance, and served on a Resolutions Committee to successfully get a Congressional apology for slavery.

Mrs. Williams embodied the essence of what it means to be both an educator and a community servant. Her profound impact is not only felt in the classroom but across the broader community, where her efforts to inspire, engage, uplift, and serve have made a difference. Her work serves as an example of the impact that one dedicated individual can make, showing that education, when coupled with a genuine commitment to service, has the power to transform lives and build a brighter, more connected future for all.

In February 2025, Gladys Williams was presented with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Award by NAACP President Wendy Byrd. The above remarks are edited from that presentation.

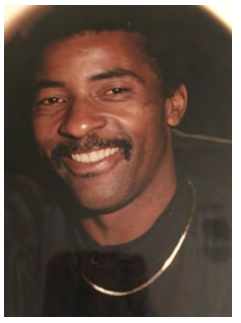
A Celebration of Life will be held in February. Send cards to 1909 Ellison Dr., Modesto, CA 95355. You can also donate to the NAACP-Modesto/Stanislaus in her memory. Information: (916) 340-4646.

IN MEMORIAM

Derek Tyronne Taylor

July 23, 1956 - December 4, 2025

Derek Tyronne "Doc" Taylor, lovingly known as "Doc" passed away on December 4, 2025, at St. Joseph's Hospital in Stockton, California, at the age of 69. A longtime resident of Modesto, California, Derek was a man whose presence, work ethic, and generosity left a lasting mark on everyone who knew him.



Born on July 23, 1956, in Oakland, California, Derek was the son of the late Robert Taylor and Lee Audris Freeman. He graduated from Castlemont High School in Oakland and later attended Laney College where he continued to develop the entrepreneurial drive that would define much of his life.

Derek had a true passion for business and creativity. He was widely known for his automotive detailing company, The Detail Doctors, and for his beloved barbecue restaurant, Doc's Pit Stop-places where his pride, craftsmanship, and love for serving others were always on full display. Whether perfecting a vehicle or slow-cooking barbecue, Doc poured heart and soul into everything he did.

In addition to his business pursuits, Derek aspired to be a musician in his younger years. Growing up, he played the trumpet, saxophone, and piano, and music remained a meaningful part of his life and self-expression.

Raised as a Jehovah's Witness, Derek carried those beliefs with him throughout his life, even as his path evolved. His faith shaped his values, his respect for others, and his deep love for family.

Derek "Doc" Taylor will be remembered for his strength, humor, dedication, and the way he brought people together around family, food, music, and shared moments.

"His life was well lived, his love well given, and though his earthly journey has ended, the music of his life will continue in the hearts of all who knew and loved him."

Note: Over the years, our MLK Committee has held multiple meetings at Doc's Pit Stop, enjoying "Doc's" wonderful food and fine hospitality. Fried catfish and BBQ tri-tip come to mind!

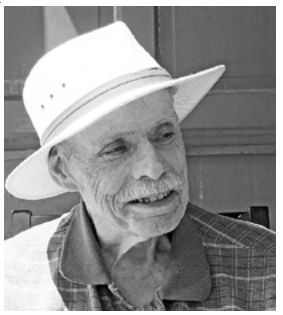
MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER
Working for peace, justice and a sustainable future

Connections is published monthly except in August by the Modesto Peace/Life Center
829 13th St., Modesto, CA 95354
Open by appointment.
Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,
Modesto, CA 95353
209-529-5750 / stanislausconnections.org

"You've Got to be Carefully Taught"

By Tom Portwood

As I am writing at my computer, a bit of sunlight can be seen splashing across the rooftops of the carports in the parking lot of my apartment complex. It is mid-December and the Great Central Valley has endured nearly a month-long siege of what meteorologists are terming "radiation fog," or sometimes simply "low-hanging clouds." Whatever you may call this long spell of thick grey soupy skies, the weather has been pretty dispiriting as Modesto works its way through the holiday season.



The bleak grey weather we've been experiencing lately eerily mirrors this tumultuous year of 2025 as it trudges to a thudding, dismaying end, with the President of the United States mocking a beloved American filmmaker and artist only hours after he and his wife were murdered.

This shouldn't surprise anyone who's keeping watch on this administration's cruel and callous policies and behaviors; its heartless, frequently brutal treatment of immigrants by armed, masked cowards; its cavalier shrug of the shoulders to breaking faith with the Geneva Convention and the Law of the Sea as it blows up tiny boats out of the waters without providing proof of wrongdoing or any semblance of due process.

Here in the Central Valley, a post-Thanksgiving birthday party for a little girl ended tragically for many families in Stockton when gun violence took the lives of three children and one young adult. Then, just two weeks later, there was the horrific massacre of 15 people attending the Hanukkah celebration on Sydney, Australia's famed Bondi Beach, and the mass shooting at Brown University.

For many years I thought that the 1960s were the most divisive, violent decade that I had lived through – on the surface, the U.S. was doing well economically, but the war in Vietnam was tearing us apart, as was the shameful sin of racial injustice and inequality which erupted like a volcano dormant from the time of the Civil War in the anniversary years of its centennial. Some things changed for the better due to the protests and actions of good people standing shoulder to shoulder as they sought newer, more just paths to the future. But some things didn't change, and many injustices were left to fester unaddressed.

Now, sixty years on, I believe that during the past ten or fifteen years we've become even more divided than we were in the sixties, more encamped in separate worldviews. In so many ways, it goes beyond politics and beyond borders. It speaks to a loss of connection between people, human being to human being. I recall that almost 31 years ago, the tragic bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City sparked a brief nationwide questioning about the presence of hate in this country. "How could such a thing have happened in America?" people asked themselves – an American vet inflicting mass murder on his fellow citizens, on innocent children? These were some of the questions being asked at the time, but then the page was quickly turned to something else.

Sadly, hate crimes across the country continue to take their tragic toll on the most vulnerable among us. In 2024, hate crimes were reported most often in the following categories: Religious, Racist/xenophobic, LGBTQ. In that year alone, there were 13,683 hate crimes reported in the U.S. (FBI).

All too often, Americans take the easy way out and blame "the other," "the outsider," "the immigrant," "the odd duck." The grizzled Army vet living on the streets who's down on his luck, looking just to survive another cold night. Easy targets for abuse. Hate. It can start in childhood, arriving as gifts from parents like family heirlooms. As the old Rodgers and Hammerstein song lyric states so pointedly:

You've got to be taught from year to year,
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear—
You've got to be carefully taught!

But here's the thing – if you take the time to get to know any of the folks I just mentioned, you'll likely be surprised to find out just how much they have contributed to a neighborhood, or a community – to our country, or continue to do so. We are all connected, all interwoven in a vast fabric that only adds strength to our communities. When we dehumanize one another or think of each other in abstract ways, our grasp on basic humanity begins to loosen rather quickly. The racially motivated lynchings in the Deep South and elsewhere in this nation less than a century ago are ample testament to that.

We must always stand up against the purveyors of hate - in all its forms. We should never just sit idly by on the sidelines as spectators when we see an injustice taking place. Elie Wiesel once said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference."

In the midst of all the chaos and terror of that dark day on Bondi Beach, it became clear that several bystanders or attendees of the Festival of Lights ran toward the gunfire, one shielding children, and another brave soul, disarming one of the gunmen. Selflessly, courageously, they put themselves in harm's way when they saw others being slaughtered before their eyes. Tragically, three of these heroes were killed. But they stood up for their families, their neighbors, their community, for humanity writ large. Anne Frank said it best - "It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."

Get (A) Round

By Elaine Gorman

During a break between winter storms, I planned a hike at Round Valley Regional Preserve. With a drenching downpour just 2 days ago, I knew that MUD would be a major concern. Be Warned!

As we left Modesto, Charlene, Diane, and I entered the fog zone in waning morning commute traffic. When we arrived in Tracy, the fog had dissipated, replaced by scattered clouds and blue skies. Mt. Diablo and North Peak made their appearances.

A few minutes after we arrived at Round Valley, Paul showed up. There were only a couple of other vehicles in the parking lot. As the temperature was forecast to be warm-ish (for mid-February), I left most of my outer layers in the car. We grabbed our hiking poles and daypacks and headed to the kiosk for park brochures. We checked out our route — a 7.5-mile figure 8 clockwise loop, with about 750 feet of elevation gain. Rangers had posted a sign to warn hikers about poisonous mushrooms. No foraging for us!

Round Valley is contiguous with Morgan Territory Regional Preserve, Los Vaqueros watershed, and is near to Mt. Diablo State Park. All four parks have a similar aspect of chaparral, grasslands, oak woodlands, and plenty of up-and-down. Hiking in these areas can be done year-round and provides seasonal changes of scenery. On this day, the hills were green, and the trees were bare, with the exception of new growth on the California buckeyes.

We crossed Marsh Creek on a substantial bridge. In the springtime, this creek is full of Western Toadlets. At the "T" intersection, we turned left on the Hardy Canyon Trail that paralleled the creek. Beautiful riparian sycamores grow near the creek, their sinuous branches reaching for the blue sky.

We immediately met some of the resident bovines, who were happy to ignore us and kept chomping. After a bit, the trail veers right/south and heads up canyon. There is a junction, but a sign cautions us to stay left. This is the beginning of the only challenging climb of the hike, and we paused periodically to catch our breath and admire the pastoral landscape. In places, the trail was pretty churned up by cow hooves, and we had to watch out for slippery cow pies.

After a couple of miles, we broke out of the canyon and into the full sun. Jackets were peeled off. After one last steep pitch, we reached the saddle. A group of rocks are to the left/south, and it is worth a short detour to walk over to check out the views. The brushy slopes of Morgan Territory are ahead, to the west, and Mt. Diablo is northwest.

We began our descent and completed the last mile of the Hardy Canyon Trail quickly. We turned left/south on the Miwok Trail. The level portion of the hike started. We passed by old remnants of farming equipment. Before this

land was sold to the East Bay Regional Park District in 1988, the Murphy family had a large ranching and farming operation here, beginning in the late 19th century.

In the bare oaks along a small stream, we watched and listened to woodpeckers, blackbirds, Scrub Jays, and Black Phoebes. After about a mile, we reached a shaded area with a couple of picnic tables and enjoyed a short break.

We continued on the Miwok Trail and, about 1/4 mile later, reached the Murphy Meadow Trail junction and turned right. All junctions are well marked. (If you want to check out the Los Vaqueros Watershed, turn left, and in about 1/4 mile, you will come to a gate and information about trails.)

About 4/10 mile from the junction, we arrived at the Round Valley Group Camp. Contact the park for camping/backpacking information. We continued on the Murphy Meadow loop.

We passed a small stream that sounded like it was full of noisy frogs. Occasionally, we saw small tree frogs hopping on the ground. We wondered if and how these tiny creatures produced such a loud, raucous sound. Additional decrepit farm equipment rested under the trees. Suddenly, several coyotes began to howl and sing. We were serenaded for several minutes.

We crossed another bridge and rejoined the Miwok Trail.

This last 1.5-mile-long segment has a bit of uphill before the final descent, which returned us to our vehicles. A lone coyote was walking through the abandoned vineyard to the left. Traffic from Marsh Creek Rd. invaded our thoughts as we approached the parking area. We made a futile attempt to scrape off the mud from our shoes before we loaded up and headed home. https://www.ebparks.org/parks/round-valley

Getting there — 50-mile drive from downtown Modesto, 55-minute drive. Drive north on Highway 99. Go west on Highway 120, then continue on Highway 205. In Tracy, take the Naglee Rd. exit. Turn left at the light (Naglee Rd.). After about 1/2 mile, turn right at Grant Line Rd. After about a mile, turn right at Byron Rd. After about 10 miles, turn left at Camino Diablo. This will merge onto Marsh Creek Rd. In about 1.5 miles, turn left into the parking lot.

"Our Grand Machine has at length begun to work. I pray God bless us and guide its operations. If any form of government is capable of making a nation happy, ours, I think, bids fair for producing that effect. But, after all, much depends upon the people who are to be governed. Our new Constitution is now established. Everything seems to promise it will be durable, but in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes."

— Benjamin Franklin

The 10 Steps to Autocracy and Authoritarianism and to Freedom and Power

The 10 Steps campaign is a nationwide mobilization and education effort led by voting rights activist Stacy Abrams to give Americans the framework to understand what's happening to our democracy, and the tools to fight back. Sign up at https://10stepscampaign.org/

The 10 Steps to Autocracy and Authoritarianism

These steps don't happen in order—they occur simultaneously to overwhelm and confuse opposition. Recognize them. Resist them. Reverse them.

1. Win the Last Fair Election: Autocrats often come to power through democratic means—then ensure it's the last truly free election.

2. Expand Executive Power: Push executive authority beyond legal boundaries, testing what the system will tolerate.

3. Capture the Other Branches: Co-opt Congress and neutralize the judiciary, eliminating checks and balances.

4. Gut the Civil Service: Fire competent, nonpartisan civil servants who might resist illegal orders.

5. Install Loyalists: Replace qualified officials with loyalists to weaponize government agencies.

6. Attack the Media: Discredit independent journalism and replace it with state propaganda.

7. Scapegoat Vulnerable Communities: Blame minorities, immigrants, and marginalized groups for national problems and demonize DEI.

8. Destroy Support Systems: Dismantle institutions that protect rights—legal aid, universities, advocacy groups.

9. Normalize Violence: Militarize law enforcement and foment state-sanctioned or private violence to silence dissent.

10. End Democracy Itself: Disrupt election systems and restrict who can vote so no meaningful opposition ever wins again.

The 10 Steps to Freedom and Power

Defeating authoritarianism isn't a cinematic moment – it's thousands of individual, community, and institutional actions that are stronger and more consistent than those who would oppress us. You don't need to be an expert. You don't need permission. You just need to start. Start where you are. With what you have. Among those you know.

Together, we can build something stronger than fear. We build a better democracy. We build freedom. We build power.

1. Commit: Understand what's happening – not simply the headlines but the effects of policies on you and your community. Our strength lies in our numbers - join in.

2. Share: Stay informed and share the facts on social media, in group chats, and in your circles - not just why you care but how you're taking action. Remember, others feel this way too.

3. Organize: Create a group of friends, family and allies who want to work towards a common goal. Pick your issue. That's it. That's organizing.

4. Mobilize: Once you've organized, do something. Share banned books. Help immigrants. Join a tenants union. Host public events and regular conversations. It's not about size but movement.

5. Litigate: You don't have to be an attorney to be part of litigation. If you or someone you know has been harmed, be a plaintiff or a witness. If you are in the legal field, volunteer to help vulnerable populations.

6. Disrupt: Don't be part of their system of disinformation and compliance. Protest. Then do more. Like film violations of civil rights or hand out "Know Your Rights" cards in occupied cities. Block propaganda and call it out.

7. Deny: Refuse to be complicit in how authoritarians strip us of our language, engagement and connections. Create community, practice non-violent civil disobedience, and boycott groups that are hurting us.

8. Engage: Work with your elected officials to introduce policies and proactive legislation, especially at the state & local levels. Do it yourself if the rules allow it - start ballot initiatives, public petitions, and more.

9. Elect: Federal elections are crucial, but we cannot forget that harm can come at every level of government. So can change - we must give people something to believe in again. Participate in your local elections for city council, county commission, state legislature, judicial — every single one.

10. Demand: It's not enough to just reclaim what we had. We must demand more and build a better government. Be clear about what we deserve - from our allies and from those who would destroy democracy. Don't meekly ask for what we think we can get. Declare what kind of country we intend to build. Then get to work.

Stanislaus Connections welcomes a new voice

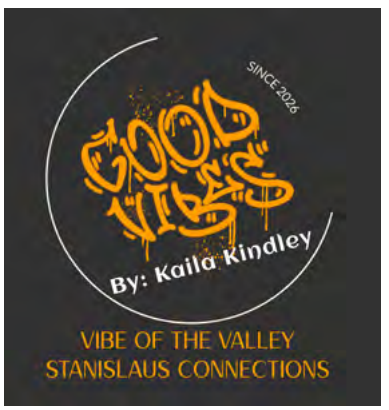
By Kaila D'Sa

Stanislaus Connections welcomes a new voice to its pages—measured, melodic, and unmistakably tuned to the heartbeat of the Central Valley.

Hello, my name is Kaila D'Sa. In February 2026, I will be joining as a monthly columnist dedicated to exploring the living, breathing ecosystem of music, art, and theatre that animates Modesto and its surrounding communities.

Capturing not just what's happening, but why it matters — why a pop-up gallery hums with possibility, why a local stage production lingers long after curtain call, why a late-night set in a converted warehouse feels like a small revolution. The column will map the Valley's creative pulse with precision and reverence, honoring the traditions that built our cultural backbone while spotlighting the innovators reshaping it in real time: Modesto Junior College, The Queen Bean, Local Film Competitions, The State Theatre, and local Radio such as KCBP 95.5 FM.

With each installment, I aim to elevate the conversation around our local arts economy, contextualizing its growth, its struggles, and its quiet triumphs. Think of it as cultural due diligence, delivered with wit and warmth, grounded in the belief that the Valley's creative output deserves serious attention—and a little applause. In a region often spoken about, rather than listened to, we can begin to create our own narrative and a stronger foundation of creative talent.



Whether you discover my work while flipping pages at a neighborhood newsstand or during a coffee break email scroll, the experience will be the same: informed, engaging, and unmistakably local. *Stanislaus Connections* is proudly available throughout Modesto, serving as a shared table where stories of our region are gathered and passed along, and online at https://stanislausconnections.org/

My column will expand that table, inviting artists, audiences, and the culturally curious into a broader dialogue about what the Valley creates and consumes. This perspective balances optimism with realism, celebrating momentum while asking the necessary questions—about access, sustainability, and legacy. It will be a forward-looking column with old-school values: show up, pay attention, tell the truth. We're confident this column will resonate with longtime residents and newcomers alike, offering a reliable compass through the Valley's evolving creative landscape.

In short, this is a column with rhythm, rooted in place, and ready to play. The Vibe of the Valley.

Next Month: I Celebrate the Life of Saxophonist John R. Handy.

Contact: Kaila D'Sa Kindley, Managing Director: 11Eleven Media & Art Design. Email: kailakindley@gmail.com

Amplifying Our Community Through Music and Mentorship

By Jullian Sekona

Happy New Year! January is a time for fresh starts, setting bold new goals, and embracing new opportunities. At Modesto Sound, our non-profit mission is to empower local youth by providing hands-on job training, professional recording studio experience, and mentorship through the power of music and sound arts.

As we kick off 2026, we are energized and ready to amplify our commitment to the community. We are thrilled to introduce a few of the dedicated, talented individuals who volunteer their time, expertise, and passion to guide our organization this year: members of our Board of Directors.

Our board members are the dedicated leaders who ensure Modesto Sound continues to thrive, providing essential programs like our Summer Recording Arts Music Camp which prepares young people for careers in the music and sound industries.

We're excited to shine a spotlight on both returning members and the wonderful new faces joining our leadership team, who will help us reach new heights in the year ahead!

Board Member Spotlight: The Leaders Amplifying Our Mission

Here, we introduce each member, sharing a bit about their professional background, what drew them to Modesto Sound.

Brenda Francis:

Brenda Francis started Modesto Sound in 2005 after earning a degree in Art & Entertainment Management and a Master's in Business Administration. She remains an active member of the organization's Board of Directors while teaching audio technology classes. Over her career, Brenda has worked as an Audio Engineer at Modesto Sound, where she recorded over 500 artists and produced hundreds of radio shows. Her roles have also included Treasurer of the Modesto Symphony, Manager of the Brubeck Jazz Music Camp, and Professor of Audio Technology at the University of the Pacific.

She worked at E. & J. Gallo Winery in marketing and accounting for ten years while taking evening classes at Modesto Junior College. After her time at Gallo, she attended school full time in Stockton, where she took a recording class, along with another at MJC. With a lifelong love of music, Brenda decided to open a recording studio focused on teens. The students were eager to intern and perform, and those experiences led to the founding of the nonprofit Modesto Sound.

Brenda's grandparents brought her to Modesto, where they had few relatives nearby, and she enjoyed spending time with them. After they passed on, she moved to Idaho to help another elderly relative. That move brought her to Idaho, but she continues to visit relatives in Modesto and looks forward to staying connected and involved with Modesto Sound. It always makes her smile to be the Founder, knowing teens really love music and that it helps everyone.

Mitchell Dill:

Mitchell Dill is the Executive Director of Modesto Sound and the owner of Dill Live Music. He has been a musician and sound engineer for over 15 years, a journey that began at age 15 when he first started recording songs with Modesto Sound. After successfully launching his own business in 2024, Mitchell was honored to step into the Executive Director role in 2025. His mission is to advance music throughout Modesto, Stanislaus County, and the broader Central Valley by empowering artists of all ages and walks of life to express themselves through music and sound.

Janet Seay:

In her professional life, Janet Seay teaches private music lessons, a practice she has maintained for 35 years. She instructs students in piano, voice, guitar, drums, music theory, band instruments, and some strings. Janet served as the Executive Director at Modesto Sound from 2015 to 2024, where her duties included all administrative tasks, hosting four seasons of California Audio Roots Project (CARP) podcasts, and running the organization's summer camps. She continues to serve Modesto Sound as the Treasurer and a dedicated board member.

Jennifer Waters, PhD, MA, ATR, LPCC, LMHC

Jen is a Registered Art Therapist, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (CA), and Licensed Mental Health Counselor (MA). Jen received her Ph.D. in Psychology with a specialization in Creativity, Innovation, and Leadership at Saybrook University in 2025. She received her M.A. in Expressive Therapies in 2012 from Lesley University and has had 15 years of professional experience providing arts-based interventions in community mental health settings. She offers clinical counseling, workshops, and training services that highlight the use of the creative process. In her private practice, Jen works with children, teens, and adults on issues related to life transitions, grief and loss, relationships, self-care, creativity development, mindfulness, trauma, depression, anxiety, chronic pain, gender, sexuality, racial trauma, and adoption. Jen is a member of the Board of Directors for Modesto Sound. She also plays tenor saxophone and is a vocalist in her band, Horizon Point.

Jordan Waters, MA, APCC:

Jordan received his M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with a specialization in Music Therapy from Lesley University in 2022. He is currently obtaining his MT-BC (Music Therapist - Board Certified) credential. Jordan has had 10 years of mental health experience. His interest in music therapy began while he was working with hospitalized adults in an inpatient psychiatric setting. Jordan then transitioned to working with children and adolescents as a student assistance specialist, providing social and emotional support to youth in schools. He has also provided music therapy to patients at a local hospice, and facilitated group and individual therapy in a community-based clinic. He is currently a mental health clinician at Center for Human Services in the school-based program. Jordan is a member of the Board of Directors for Modesto Sound. He also plays guitar and is a vocalist in his band, Horizon Point.

Brandon Jamal Blair:

Brandon is the Marketing Director of Modesto Sound and currently serves as the President of the Board of Directors. He began working with Modesto Sound in 2023 as the Public Service Announcement producer for the California Audio Roots Project (CARP) and completed his Audio Technician 1 Certification through Modesto Sound. He was formerly on-air talent with iHeart Media. Brandon's position will be supported by CAC funding, and he will be the Outreach & Publicity Coordinator for the program.

Jullian Sekona:

Jullian Sekona is an attorney at law with Hugo Parker, LLP, based in San Francisco, CA. She is a dedicated advocate for the arts and music, demonstrated by her co-ownership of TK Moa Music, a music production company based in Oakland, CA, which she operates alongside her husband, Tavake "TK" Moa. Jullian Sekona joined Modesto Sound in 2025 as a passionate member of the Board of Directors, lending her legal and business expertise to support the nonprofit's mission.

Get Involved and Help Us Amplify Our 2026 Goals

The combined energy and commitment of our board members ensure that Modesto Sound remains a creative, safe, and professional space for youth development in our community. Their diverse backgrounds, from education and business to the arts and technology, will be instrumental as we pursue ambitious new goals for the year ahead.

As you look forward to new opportunities in this fresh year, we invite you, the community, to join us in supporting these goals. Whether through volunteering your time, making a New Year's mission donation, or utilizing our professional sound services, your support is essential. By getting involved, you help us continue to empower the next generation of artists, engineers, and community leaders to achieve their own 2026 aspirations.

Ready to make some noise with us this year?

For more information on how you can help us achieve our mission in the new year, visit our website at www.modestosound.org or call us at (209) 573-0533.

Metta's Nonviolence Studies Program for 2026

Nourish the nonviolent worldview and practice the skills of nonviolence

Our 2026 Nonviolence Studies Program is a 12-month experiential program designed to help participants deepen their understanding and practice of nonviolence—from the inner life to global systems.

Each month introduces a new theme that builds upon the previous, weaving together philosophy, science, communication skills, and creative action. Participants engage in study, dialogue, reflection, and community-based projects that prepare them to bring nonviolence into every dimension of life.

12 Months of Nonviolence Study and Practice

Two Tracks:

1. Apply for your Certificate in Nonviolence Studies: Available for those who complete all twelve months of study.

OR

2. Non-certificate path: Join for any month-long course throughout the year.

How the Program Works

This program is built around community, reflection, and action.

Each month introduces a central theme, explored through readings, guided journaling, group dialogue, and practical application.

Small Group Learning

Participants meet in small groups each month. These circles provide space for mutual support, deeper exploration, and accountability in practicing nonviolence together.

Weekly Rhythm

Each week, participants receive:

- Readings and learning materials related to the week's focus.
- A journaling prompt for personal reflection.
- An invitation to a live discussion session (weekly or bi-weekly) to explore insights and challenges together.

This rhythm allows time for steady engagement—learning, reflecting, and applying nonviolence throughout the month.

Practice and Application

Every month, participants are encouraged to bring nonviolence into action in ways both small and significant. That may mean:

- Experimenting with new communication tools,
- Using restorative approaches to conflict,
- Joining or starting a community initiative, or
- Practicing compassion and presence in daily interactions.

By the end of the year, participants will have integrated nonviolence not only as a philosophy, but as a living, evolving practice that shapes both self and society.

Registration for January 2026 is now open. Secure your spot today.

Why Join Our Nonviolence Studies Program in 2026?

1. Deepen your understanding of nonviolence—personally and politically.

This program isn't just about learning what nonviolence is, but how it works—within ourselves, our relationships, our communities, and our systems. You'll explore nonviolence as a transformative power that reshapes how we think, communicate, organize, and build the future.

2. Learn within a living community of practice.

You won't go through this journey alone. Each participant is part of a small group that meets monthly to reflect, dialogue, and support one another. You'll form real connections with people committed to exploring what nonviolence looks like in everyday life—from conflict resolution and community healing to social transformation.

3. Experience learning that integrates head, heart, and hands.

Every month brings a new theme, a new lens, and a new invitation to act. Readings, journaling, and dialogue sessions are complemented by real-world practice—small or large steps you take to apply what you're learning. It's a holistic education that blends intellectual depth, emotional awareness, and concrete action.

4. Join a lineage of wisdom and innovation.

Metta's work grows from decades of scholarship and activism, and this program honors that lineage while engaging new horizons—science, ecology, feminism, restorative justice, technology, and more. It's both rooted and relevant: a space for timeless principles to meet the needs of today's world.

5. Cultivate the inner strength and clarity needed for change.

In an age of polarization and burnout, nonviolence offers a path of resilience. Through guided reflection and group dialogue, you'll learn practices that strengthen your inner grounding—turning anxiety, anger, or despair into creative energy for peace and justice.

6. Contribute to building the next story.

Each participant is invited to envision and design a small personal or community project that embodies nonviolence. Whether it's in education, environmental work, art, media, or local organizing, your ideas become part of a larger ecosystem of change. Together, we're shaping a new story—one grounded in care, cooperation, and courage.

Registration now open for January 2026. Space is limited.

Registration and Support: Nonviolence Studies 2026 is part of the Metta Center's mission to help people practice nonviolence more safely and more effectively. We offer this year-long program in a spirit of generosity and community support—keeping it open and accessible while sustaining our teachers and materials through donations.

Suggested Contribution

We invite participants to make a donation to join the program at a level that feels meaningful and possible for you. If you're able, please consider contributing in the range of $25–$100 per month, or a one-time annual gift of your choice. No one will ever be turned away for lack of funds—your presence, commitment, and care are what make this learning community thrive.

How Your Donation Helps

Your generosity supports:

- Facilitator stipends and guest teachers
- Development of study materials, readings, and community discussions
- Scholarships for participants with limited financial means
- The ongoing sustainability of Metta's educational and peacebuilding programs

You can make your contribution securely at: www.mettacenter.org/donate. Your generosity keeps this work alive and growing—nurturing a world built on compassion, cooperation, and courage. Thank you for sharing this path with us.

The Metta Center: https://www.mettacenter.org/

The Christmas Truce of 1914

How a moment of ceasefire revealed a deeper truth about human nature.

On Christmas Eve in 1914, roughly five months after the start of World War I, a series of spontaneous ceasefires arose along the trenches. Soldiers who only hours before had been labeled "enemies" sought one another out as friends and equals—sharing gifts, playing soccer (football), singing songs, and burying their dead. This moment, depicted in the 2005 film *Joyeux Noël*, tells a noble story about human nature that should give us pause whenever we remember it: no matter the depth of dehumanization and propaganda used to turn people into enemies, our humanity is always just beneath the surface, waiting for a chance to be seen.

Sadly, when word of these moments of unity across divides spread, they were seen as a threat to the goals of the war. Those in power worked hard to ensure that conditions for such fraternization were no longer possible.

This, too, should give us pause. History reminds us how easily fear and division can take root, turning neighbors into enemies for purposes that serve neither peace nor our shared humanity.

In this season marked by many holy days and traditions, and as the world so deeply needs rest, we offer our prayers and work toward a global ceasefire—for an end to all violence everywhere. May humanity take a collective breath and remember who we really are.

We are body, mind, and spirit.

We are deeply interconnected.

We are one human family, learning again and again to see beyond the illusion of separation.

May the spirit of our shared humanity shine brightly. May there be stillness—a truly silent night—where violence ceases, even if only for a moment. A silence that heals hearts and reminds us of what is possible.

With love and care,

Stephanie

for the Metta Center Team https://www.mettacenter.org/

Trans Chimera

The words the actions
are of a hardened heart
of a modern-day Pharaoh
who knows not who he is

Lies and misinformation are his truth
So many put their trust in his words
turn a blind eye to who he is
Find themselves cast out
jobless for no apparent reason

Loyalty and good deeds transformed
Into meaningless vessels
are cast upon the crash of a roiling sea
no grace from a tidal ebb and flow

Each soul enters with
free choice and free will
The choice is a chimera between
Courage and fear

We of the NOT United States
have the choice
Let us choose Hope
Let us choose Democracy

Let us choose the path
of freedom
the path of justice
and the pursuit
of happiness for all

– Tina Arnopole Driskill, April 7, 2025, MM

Miracles in Hope

The thing about miracles,
Is they're fickle,
Weirdly prejudical,
And oddly vein.

Why are they mostly,
Only small,
Not grandiose or boasting,
Drunk on their own image.

Why can a bee,
Make nectar into honey,
But leave,
Estranged daughters away,
Addicted homeless,
Children forgotten,
Son's fatherless and still in pain.

Why does the your old truck still run,
And your the rent,

Eventually,
Get paid,

But there's still wars,
Deportations,
And forests destroyed.

Why does a stranger
Buy a stranded kid some gas,
Turn that foe to friend,
And watch a weed flower grow?
But a husband and son,
Are horribly lost,
To relentless disfigurement and disease.

Why does a small pill,
Calm a fluttering broken heart,
But a women in Missouri,
Can't get help to abort,
An baby,
Already dead in her womb.

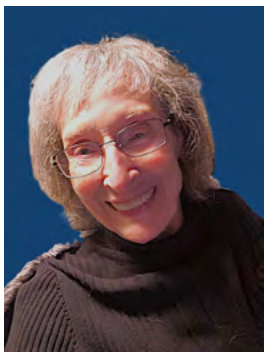
Why when you feel the most lonely,
A simple compliment,
A kind word
Restores a flicker of hope,
For in that moment,
All is,
Not lost.

Why does that hope,
Become an intangible miracle,
Through a whipering echo,
In your mind
Keeping the grief a bit at bay
And allows you enough breath,
To get through another day.

– Kim Watson

Cleo Griffith: One Of Our Valley's Poetic Treasures

Cleo Griffith has been widely published in journals such as *Main Street Rag, Straylight,* and *Westward Quarterly*. She has been on the editorial board of *Song of the San Joaquin* since it began in 2003. She lives with her cats, Amber and Mister, and an assortment of barn swallows, lizards, scrub jays, and other creatures among the artist-rich environment of the California Central Valley. Her first book, *The Yellow Dress*, was published in September 2025. *A Gathering of Voices* is very honored that Cleo is sharing several of her poems in this issue of *Stanislaus Connections*.



You are the Light

Breathe sun and moonlight
into all your quarter-hours,
all your split seconds, your lapses.

Don't give in to those grays
that try to down your rainbows,
those darkenings that threaten.

It's a teasing demon who brings dark,
dark when the sun is out, dark when
you are vivid, but at the same time
it is you, so remember you have control.

Hold joy and light and disperse them,
for as you do those very delights multiply,
hold back that inner blackness,
we know it is there, we know it is weak,
we conquer as we accomplish acceptance,
through perseverance.

You have seen it, felt it, made those very steps,
you are the rainbow, as am I, we are light.

Views from my Window

Cat looks out the window.
Woman (me) looks out.
His ears are perked, alert.
My heart is alert, open.

The familiar soothes me.
From here I can go anywhere,
anywhere in time in memory
and imagination through those wispy white clouds
beyond the pale baby-blue atmosphere called sky.

I have never felt tethered to this solid we call earth, but like a visitor, tourist,
ready to lift away again when I wish.
I have not wished to, yet,
so much to see and enjoy,
so much to hear,
so many of everything,
so many everybodies!

Cat looks out the window.
Woman (me) looks upon paradise.

When Seasons Won't Matter

What would I choose, if I indeed could,

as my time of leave-taking from this widowhood,

would it be spring, with flowers to come,

or would fall better suit, when they all turn undone?

When could I bear to enter that sleep

which lifts me away from all I would keep?

As hard as it seems, I think I will find,

more beauty, more knowledge than that left behind.

I'll be part of something bright and sublime,

with everything known, and nothing of time.

Notes from an Old Gal

Now am I well into
octogenarianism,
oh so close to
nonagenarianism,
hoping to reach
centenarianism.
(Even though spellcheck
is screaming in red.)

My mind feels ripe
but not yet rotted,
my heart is loving
but not besotted,
I value time
as the seasons spin
value the present,
the moment I'm in,
I praise the sun
at each new day,
guy-with-scythe
stay away,
not yet am I ready
to leave this earth,
too engrossed in its
dramas and mirth.
Give me more time
I'll make it worthwhile,
document history
with flair and wry style!

Life-Lines

Along the sea that swells

in phosphorescence

small creatures of the night world reappear,

content, quite able to reconcile their life-lines

along the sand, beneath that moon, those stars,

none of which they notice, unlucky tiny beasts

that cannot dream of rising with the mist,

who cannot ride the breath of world's exhaust

and never wish to vacate their assignment.

Or is it myself unlucky,

dreaming useless dreams

over a midnight cup of café con leche

alone?

We Claim You, World

Whatever the sunset says to you
revere it now, today's review,
not a promise for the advance,
not the tune for tomorrow's dance,

in flaming orange and calm gray cloud
each setting is its unique shroud
not claiming any future plan
it has no message beyond for man.

What nature's winds and changes bring,
no reason that you sleep or sing
but we so often tie these whims
to our own destiny - our limbs

do dance about in springtime glee
or revel in cold wintery spree,
believe that nature's wayward twists
are tied to our own mental wisps

of beauty, and we claim the world
and all its treasures, bold, unfurled,
forgetting pasts we never saw,
fire and ice, death and thaw.

Forgive us, earth, our history's shorter,
forgets you are older than this quarter,
each pleasure seems for us intended,
for you it is only life extended.

Easy, Sure

It's easy to block the world,
disconnect from the news.
Just cut out your heart
leave your mind behind,
and run
away.

A GATHERING OF VOICES

Great Programs on KCBP 95.5 FM Community Radio

The Voice of the Valley

Full-power station Broadcasting North to Lodi, East to the Sierras, South to Merced

Streaming on www.kcbpradio.org

A Project of the non-profit Modesto Peace/Life Center

An affiliate of the Pacifica Network

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. And Mondays at 4:00 p.m.

SCIENCE

Radio Ecoshock – 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.

PROGRAMS

Encouragementology - the practice of instilling hope, provides positive alternatives to some of life's challenges. Sundays 8:00 am.

Food Sleuth - Dietitian Melinda Hemmelgarn helps listeners "think beyond their plates," connecting the dots between food, health, and agriculture to uncover the truth about food. Wednesdays at 8 a.m., Saturdays at 6 a.m.

Moccasin Tracks - in Solidarity with Traditional Original Peoples, prioritizes the voices of the original peoples and the issues confronting them today, including the decolonization of our minds, workplaces, and institutions. Includes contemporary and traditional music from Native artists, news, views, and interviews. Tuesdays at 8:00 am.

The Ralph Nader Hour: Citizen advocate Ralph Nader and guests discuss topics important for consumers and our nation on Saturdays at 4 p.m.

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-renowned 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.

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.

Alternative Radio - 4:00 pm – Tuesdays. Interviews by David Barsamian focusing on national and international issues.

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

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

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

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

Sprouts — Mondays at 7:00 pm and Sundays at 7:00 am. Produced in collaboration with community radio stations and independent producers, featuring radio productions of national interest. Coordinated and distributed by Pacifica Radio.

LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

Youth in The Loop. Modesto High student Rudra Patel interviews prominent local people about their lives and professions. Wednesday, 6:00 pm.

The Well-Being of the Community, Your Family, and You 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm Tuesdays.

Live, Bilingual in Spanish & English. Hosted by Jose Higareda-Lopez and Nico Torres.

Rockin' with MJC – One-hour music shows by Modesto Junior College students. 1:00 a.m. Saturdays, 2:00 p.m. Saturdays, 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays.

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.

Vibn with the West Modesto Collaborative -Hosted by Likhi Rivas and Oscar Vasquez. Engage, Educate, and Advocate on behalf of the West Modesto Community Collaborative. Showcases Voices of the West Modesto Community – Wednesdays, 7 pm.

AREA 5150 UFO RADIO – Old radio shows, music & sounds out of this world, Friday nights, 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. Interviews on the theme of social justice.

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

Faithful Fridays – inspirational Black Gospel 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.

Bars 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. Boyatt, 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/

Find a complete programming schedule on our website, www.kcbpradio.org

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

Stanislaus County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services and KCBP 95.5 FM "The Voice of The Valley"

Presents A Live Bi-lingual Program: "THE WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY, YOUR FAMILY AND YOU"

TUESDAYS 5:00 to 7:00 PM

Those In Power Are Terrified Of Peace

To build a powerful movement for peace and justice, ordinary people must first understand that we are in an emergency.

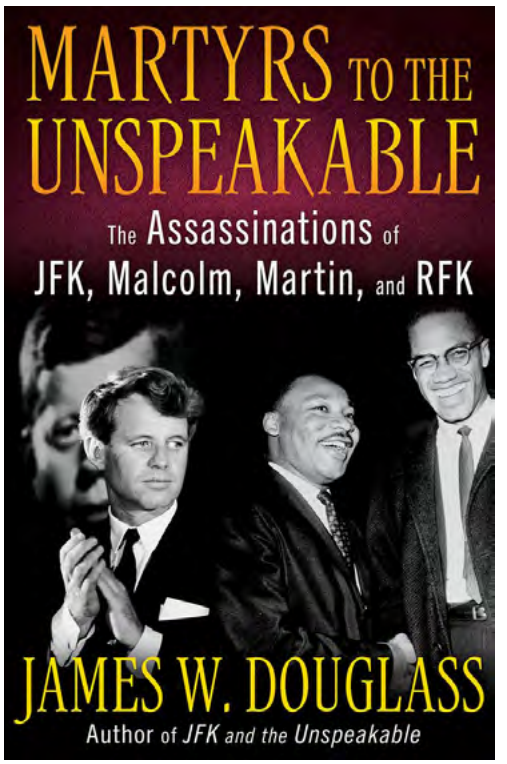
By Michael Nagler

Sometime in the mid-1950s, a dramatic version of "The Diary of Anne Frank" was performed in Berlin. When the curtain went up, nobody moved. The audience was stunned. It was too soon after the event. The horror of Nazism had ended, but signs of it could still be seen everywhere. For most Germans, the wound was too raw.

When I was in Heidelberg some 40 years later, I attended a reading by novelist Jakov Lind, who had hid out and barely escaped detection as a Jew in the Netherlands and even Germany itself right through the war. His talk was all about literature and he never mentioned his harrowing experience (which I appreciated), but at the end of it one of the German students, prodded him, "Tell us how it was under *those* Germans (unter *den* Deutchen)." As I recall, Lind didn't take the bait; but what stood out for me was that student's attempt, perfectly understandable and perfectly legitimate, to radically disassociate himself and his generation from the still fairly recent atrocities.

There are elements of this situation that may be useful for us today. After all, if we are perfectly truthful, we have some atrocities of our own. I'm thinking not so much of the climate situation, which receives most attention, but of the revelations in a recent book by my friend Jim Douglass, "Martyrs to the Unspeakable," about the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcom X. Summing up his recent interview with Douglass about the book, Robert Ellsberg concluded that the four brutal assassinations were done, "to strike down those whose message of peace and justice threatened the national security state."

I would say that even "justice" is secondary. King, for example, did a great deal for racial justice, but he was not killed until one year to the day after he gave his powerful speech denouncing the Vietnam war at Riverside Church in New York. JFK likewise was most probably killed because of his famous overture of respect and cooperation with Khrushchev (imagine what that cooperation could have done for the world!).



And in a lighter, but still quite cogent vein we might consider the satirical "Report From Iron Mountain" by Leonard Lewing in 1967, depicting the "threat" of peace to the prevailing order — i.e. the national security state. This book was protected from being taken too seriously by fantasy and humor. It's a time-honored method: think of the fables from Aesop to la Fontaine. But it makes the very serious point that everything from our economy to the sense of meaning for many people depends on war. The elite who control the present order, be they in government, the military, or indeed in crime, are terrified of peace.

Place in juxtaposition to this dark fact the observation of St. Augustine in "The City of God," where he wrote that "even on the level of earthly and temporal values, nothing that we can talk about, long for, or finally get, it's so desirable, so welcome, so good as peace… Peace is so universally loved that its very name falls sweetly on the ear."

We thus find ourselves being in the grip of a group of people who are driving civilization in the exact opposite direction of our deepest longing. They are able to wield power far out of proportion to their small number by controlling the narrative that controls the thinking of the majority. Hence, they are controlling our destiny; as the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, a text from ancient India, declares, "as our thought is, so is our deed; as our deed is, so is our destiny, whether good or ill."

If all is not lost, it is because, as William Cullen Bryant said, "truth crushed to earth will rise again." That is, there is an inherent power in truth that will come out at some point, even if we've done our best to conceal it. And of course, men acting against their own best interest are far more vulnerable than they may appear. In Shakespeare's "King Lear," the villainous Edmund says, "Where I could not be honest, I never yet was valiant." This tension is, in fact, showing up in a phenomenon for which we have now a name and scientific evidence: "moral injury," the internal harm we cause to ourselves when we harm others.

And perhaps therein lies the profound secret: there are no "others." To convince ordinary people of this profound truth would take a complete change of paradigm. Such a sea-change is not impossible; it has happened before, and I recommend that we find ways to do this, while at the same time implementing more short-term, practical measures to raise the human image and human understanding so that such atrocities become less and less thinkable.

After all, we will be drawing upon the fundamental reality of our very nature, identified by Augustine and mobilized, in our own time, by Gandhi. We know that people can rise up in large numbers in the face of emergencies, and not just to protest but to rebuild, to help others even at some risk to themselves (see Rebecca Solnit's book "A Paradise Made in Hell"). The question is: How do we make people aware that we're in an emergency?

I maintain, paradoxically, that we can do so by making us aware of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human being. In our part of the state, billboards appeared not long ago with pictures of U.S. vessels bristling with cannons and the slogan, "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Those Who Would Threaten It." In other words, forget happiness. I say, No! Seize happiness — but know that it doesn't come from inflicting suffering but from relieving it, not from alienating but uniting. In other words, from knowing what it is to be a human being.

Michael Nagler is Professor Emeritus of Classics and Comparative Literature at UC, Berkeley, where he co-founded the Peace and Conflict Studies Program. He is also the founder of the Metta Center for Nonviolence and author of the award-winning Search for a Nonviolent Future. His latest book is "The Third Harmony: Nonviolence & the New Story of Human Nature."

calendar

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

JANUARY 2026

MAPS - Modesto Area Partners in Science: Free MJC science programs on Fridays in MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall, Rm 132, 7:30 pm. **January 23: Water Woes to Smoky Air: Climate Change and the Central Valley**. Dr. Emily Williams, UC Merced. The Central Valley has faced a series of environmental challenges, from multi-year droughts and the 2023 floods that devastated communities to impacts from wildfires in neighboring regions. Dr. Williams will explore how climate change contributed to these impacts and present projections for what to expect over the next couple of decades.

Modesto Science Colloquium: Resumes in the spring.

The Prospect Theatre: 25/26 season has continuing offerings. Visit https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2024-2025-season/

7 WED: PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:00 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom and in person.

12 MON: John McCutcheon Concert. 7:00 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto.TICKETS AVAILABLE at Eventbrite. See article, p.1.

13 TUES: VIGIL: DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:00-5:00 pm. Info: Call the Center at 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

25 SUN: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society present ***Wings***, 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. https://thestate.org/films/wings-012026/

27 TUES VIGIL: DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), NEW TIME 4:00-5:00 pm. Info: Call the Center at 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

LOOKING AHEAD

February 7: 32nd Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration with Ilyasah Shabazz, Daughter of Malcom X.

Peace Essay & Art Contest Awards. TBA.

June 12-14: MPLC's Annual Peace Camp.

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

Unity of Modesto meets in person every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. at 2467 Veneman, Modesto. Information: 209-578-5433.

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

IMCV Weekly Insight Meditation and Dharma Talk, 8:45 am - 10:15 am, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely; donations welcome. All are welcome. For more information, please email charlie@imcv.org. Our mailing address is IMCV, P.O. Box 579564, Modesto, CA 95357.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County meets in person and on Zoom every Sunday at 10:30 am at 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto. Info: 209-788-3720; www.stanuu.org

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

MONDAYS

CENTRAL VALLEY DEMOCRATIC CLUB, 3rd Monday of the month, except November and December, 7:00 to 8:30 PM. McHenry Bowl, 3700 McHenry Ave., Modesto. Info: Contact contact@centralvalleydemocraticclub.com

The Compassionate Friends, Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter is meeting by Zoom on the second Mondays at 7:00pm. Bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are invited to participate in this support group for families whose children have died at any age, from any cause. Call 209-622-6786 or email for details: tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com; https://www.modestoriverbanktcf.org/

Suicide Loss Support Group: Friends for Survival meets every third Monday at 7 pm. Details: Norm Andrews 209-345-0601, nandrews6863@charter.net.

TUESDAYS

Climate Action Justice Network-Stanislaus meets the first Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Link- https://tinyurl.com/CJAN-FirstTuesday

Attention Veterans: Join us for **Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet** at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am

NAACP Meeting. King-Kennedy Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto, 3rd Tuesday @ 6:30 pm. 209-645-1909; For ZOOM link, visit https://www.naacpmodestostanislaus.org/ email: naacp.branch1048@gmail.com

Exploring Whiteness & Showing Up for Racial Justice Meetings, Fourth Tuesday, monthly 7:00 p.m., Central Grace Hmong Alliance Church, 918 Sierra Dr., Modesto. Info: https://www.facebook.com/events/247655549018387/

WEDNESDAYS

Retired Public Employees Association. All seniors welcome! Meetings every third Wednesday. Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave. 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. Call (209) 324-2060. Pay $8.00 and order from the menu.

The Almond Blossom Sangha meets on Wednesdays, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm, Zoom, and sometimes hybrid, for meditation and Dharma discussions. Call Anne at 209-404-4835 for more information.

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

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

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

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Modesto Peace/Life Center **VIGILS: held 2ND AND 4TH TUESDAYS** of the month at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:00 - 5:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 209-529-5750.

MEDIA: Listen to **KCBP 95.5 FM** Community Radio, the "Voice of the Valley" also streaming at http://www.KCBPradio.org

PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING, FIRST Wednesdays, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:00 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom and in person. Email Jim Costello for login information, jcostello@igc.org

PEACE/LIFE CENTER MODESTO, 829 13th St. Call 529-5750. We'll get back to you with current info on activities.

THURSDAYS

Attention Veterans: Join us for **Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet** at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am

IMCV Grupo de Meditación en Español, cada semana 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (edificio trasero al final del estacionamiento este de UUFSC). Ofrecido libremente, las donaciones son bienvenidas. Info: Contacto Vanessa, 209-408-6172.

LGBTQ+ Collaborative Meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of the month, unless noted. Evening meeting, 1pm to 2 pm, Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St., Suite 2, Modesto, CA. Information: John Aguirre at cell/text - (559) 280-3864/ e-mail: jpamodesto@gmail.com

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

3rd Thursday Art Walk, downtown Modesto, third Thursdays, 5 to 8 pm. stroll to art displays and galleries. Info: https://visitmodesto.com/arts-entertainment/#art-walk

VALLEY HEARTLAND ZEN GROUP: every Thurs 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2310 Woodland Ave. Meditation. Newcomers welcome. Info: 535-6750 or http://emptynestzendo.org

FRIDAYS

Friday 7:30-9:30 pm (Sept thru May) **International Folk Dancing** with Village Dancers, Carnegie Art Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock $7. No experience or partner needed. 209-480-0387 for info.

Ukulele On Funstrummer Fridays: Every Friday morning from 9 am to 10:30 am Play Along Easy Songs from the Funstrummers Songbooks of over 500 songs. Funstrummers Performing Band Practice from 10 to noon and afternoon gig. Unitarian Church, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto, 209-505-3216 for details. Donations accepted. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mej3gD0ZD40&list=LLB8Yl9zZg660qHCXGoC6ojQ&index=1

SIERRA CLUB: Yokuts group. Regular meetings, third Friday, Office of Valley Imporvement Projects, 1224 K St. Modesto., 6:45 pm. Info: 209-632-5473. Visit http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts for info on hikes and events.

SATURDAY

Free Community Drum Circle every third Saturday, 11 am to 12:30 pm, Gallo Center for the Arts, 10th & I St., Modesto. No experience or drums necessary to participate. All levels welcome. https://drum-love.com/

Divine Feminine Gathering. Join us for a time of ritual, song and conversation as women come together to celebrate one another and the Divine among us and within us. 3rd Saturday of the month, 3:30-5:00 p.m. Stockton, CA. Contact Rev. Erin King, 209-815-0763, orkingenne@gmail.com

StanCountyClubs.com was recently created to foster a stronger sense of community in Stanislaus County and the surrounding areas, by helping individuals connect with clubs and groups that align with their interests. Visit to find out more!

CALPRIDE STANISLAUS

Peer Support Groups
Hosted at CalPride Stanislaus
111 Modesto Ave., Modesto, CA 95354
209-408-8848
https://www.facebook.com/CalPrideStanislaus/

Transcendence: Every Friday, 2:00 pm-3:00 pm. A peer support group for transgender individuals ages 18 and older, providing a safe and judgment-free space to connect and share experiences.

Senior Gay Men's Group: Every Thursday,1:00 pm. Senior Gay Men's Group is a space to connect, share, and build community. For individuals aged 55+.

Writing Group: Every Friday, 3:30 pm-5:00 pm, This group provides an affirming and confidential queer space to craft poetry and short stories. For individuals aged 18+.

Folx Group: 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. An inclusive LGBTQ+ peer support group for individuals ages 25 to 45, providing a welcoming space to connect, share experiences, and build community. Hosted at CalPride Stanislaus, 111 Modesto Ave., Modesto, CA 95354.

Dreams & Solutions, 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of the month, 11:00 am-12:00 pm. A supportive space for those navigating challenges with drugs and alcohol to connect, share, and heal together. For individuals aged 18+.

We Thrive: Every Wednesday of the month, 3:30 pm-5:00 pm. A space to explore your journey through art, connect with others, and create in a welcoming and supportive environment. This group is for individuals aged 18+.

Heart to Heart: First Tuesday of the month, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. A supportive, peer-led group dedicated to exploring and nurturing healthy, respectful relationships within the LGBTQ+ community. For individuals aged 18+.

Strength in Solidarity: Third Tuesday of the month, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. A safe and supportive space for sexual assault survivors to connect, share experiences, and find healing. For individuals aged 18+.

Closet Abierto: First and Last Thursday of the month, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. A welcoming and affirming space for LGBTQ+ Latinx individuals to share experiences, find support, and build connections. For individuals aged 18+.

Queer Karaoke Night: Last Friday of Every Month: 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. Sing along to your favorite tunes with your friends at CalPride! For individuals aged 18+.