

The Modesto Peace/Life Center invites you to

**A Harvest Gathering  
 To Honor  
 Middagh Goodwin &  
 Linda Scheller**

**Friday, November 4  
 4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.**

at the home of  
**John Frailing  
 & Maria Arevalo  
 1125 Edgebrook Dr.  
 Modesto**

Enjoy:  
**Delicious Hors  
 d'oeuvres, Good Wines  
 Special Coffees  
 and Teas**

**Donations to the Modesto  
 Peace/Life Center  
 Appreciated**

**Casual attire**

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

Among several pieces of encouraging news Peter Drekmeier brought the Stanislaus County Water Advisory Committee during his October 26 visit to Modesto was the scientific consensus that it's still going to rain in the northern San Joaquin Valley. In fact, said Drekmeier, according to the best science we have, it's probably going to rain just as much as it always has. The catch is that the realities of climate change mean it's going to rain less often and, when it does rain, it's going to rain much harder.

Drekmeier, a Palo Alto resident, is Policy Director for the Tuolumne River Trust. He's sometimes found himself at odds with local farmers about the needs of salmon versus the needs of almond orchards, but he found a receptive audience when he spoke about the value of collaboration versus the costs of conflict.

San Francisco and Bay Area counties' claims on their Tuolumne River water rights have conflicted with the needs of Valley farmers and residents for decades. During a short Power Point presentation, Drekmeier argued that it would benefit all parties, whether Bay Area residents or local farmers, if we could better control the flood and drought events which have become more common as climate change accelerates. There is widespread agreement among meteorologists, hydrologists, and geologists that more storage is a prime necessity for sustainable water use in the near future.

Whereas dams and reservoirs have been the traditional options for water storage and flood control in the past, there's a growing consensus that groundwater recharge represents a far better choice for the onrushing needs brought about by climate change. Even if it weren't forced upon Valley residents by requirements stemming from the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of

## Are Valley Foothills the Water Bank of the Future?

2014, groundwater recharge and storage make especially good sense in Stanislaus County, where the eastern foothills feature soils uniquely suited for banking groundwater.

The black sands of the Mehrten Formation, a geologic feature of the east side of the Sacramento and northern San Joaquin Valleys, are highly permeable. In Stanislaus County, those black sands once held the last truly viable aquifer in the San Joaquin Valley, at least until thousands of acres of new orchards began tapping the groundwater reserves. Today, the aquifer is declining rapidly.

Citing statistics that show the City of San Francisco has reduced water usage from 293 million gallons per day thirty years ago to under 200 million gallons per day over the last eight years, Drekmeier suggested that the water gained from San Francisco's conservation efforts could benefit both Bay Area and Stanislaus County residents. The benefits to both regions would come from recharging Stanislaus County groundwater reserves. The

goal would be a sustainable water balance that would enable farming while providing an emergency "bank" of water for San Francisco residents during times of extreme drought.

Groundwater recharge and banking have already been explored on a small scale at various locations throughout the Valley. Given the proximity of the Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers to Stanislaus County's eastern foothills, the opportunity for banking water in the Merhten Formation's black sands during heavy rain events could offer tremendous benefits to fish, farmers, and urban and rural residents.

One major benefit would be greater control over the flows biologists say are necessary for sustainable salmon populations. Greater control in general would also benefit farmers, who would be able to count on more consistent water allocations from year to year.

Drekmeier suggested that collaboration between Stanislaus County and the City of San Francisco would offer both regions greater water security as climate change presents new and pressing threats from floods and drought.

"We're all in this together," he said, as nodding heads around the room suggested a growing consensus that shared plans for banking water could promise a sustainable future where there's enough for everyone, when and where it's needed.



**INSIDE CONNECTIONS**

LOCAL .....2  
 HOMELESSNESS .....3  
 COMMUNITY OF OAKS .....4  
 RETHINKING THANKSGIVING .....5  
 WAR IS EVIL .....6

GHOSTS OF WAR .....7  
 MAKING OF A POET .....8  
 GATHERING OF VOICES .....9  
 KCBP SCHEDULE .....10  
 A COMMON DESTINY .....11

**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](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)

If you do not have Adobe Reader, download it free from <http://www.adobe.com/downloads/>

## Summary of Positions Taken in Favor and Against a Selection of Ballot Propositions

There are a large number of ballot propositions on the ballot in California for this election ending on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Here is a summary of positions taken in favor and against a selection of propositions.

Organizations listed: LWVCA- League of Women Voters CA, CTA- California Teachers Association, CFL- California Federation of Labor, CA ACLU- California American Civil Liberties Union, CEV- California Environment Voters.

	Proposition	LWV CA	CFL	CA Dem	CA Repub	Sierra Club	ACLU CA	CTA	CA EV	Equality CA
1	Right to reproductive freedom	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
26	Allows sports gambling at tribal casinos and at horse racetracks				N					
27	Allows online sports gambling outside tribal lands			N	N			N		
28	Funding for art & music education in public schools		Y	Y				Y		Y
29	Requirements for kidney dialysis centers		Y	Y	N					
30	Tax on incomes over \$2 million to fund zero-emission vehicles and wildfire prevention			Y	N			N		
31	Maintain ban on flavored tobacco products	Y	Y	Y	N	Y		Y	Y	Y

## Senior Law Project Receives Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Grant

*New program provides no-cost legal services to older adults in Stanislaus and Merced Counties*

The Senior Law Project (SLP), headquartered in Modesto, California, has received a grant from the California State Bar that will enable the SLP to provide no-cost legal services to older adults facing mortgage foreclosure.



SLP's Foreclosure Prevention Program (FPP) is headed by Modesto attorney Lisa Battista, who brings 30 years of broad-based litigation experience and a recent focus on helping low-income residents with housing-related problems.

"Home ownership provides residents with long-term financial, mental and physical security, allows families to build intergenerational wealth, and helps to stabilize communities," says Battista. "Our goal is to help low-income and vulnerable seniors to overcome legal and financial challenges and remain in their homes."

The FPP is accepting clients now. Clients must be aged 60 or older and based in Stanislaus or Merced Counties. All our

services are provided at no cost. Services include:

- Reviewing contracts and reverse mortgage applications.
- Advising seniors of their legal rights.
- Helping to identify options for loan repayment or modification.
- Assisting seniors in obtaining financial assistance.
- Negotiating with loan servicers, government entities, and tax authorities; and
- Litigation.

Our priority is serving low-income seniors, seniors who are socially isolated, those with limited English language fluency, communities of color, and seniors who have been targeted by scams.

FPP staff are available to make informational presentations to groups of all sizes about foreclosure prevention options in Stanislaus and Merced Counties. Seniors who are or might be facing foreclosure are invited.

**For information call (209) 577-3814.**

Senior Advocacy Network/Senior Law Project, A non-profit corporation, 821 13th St., Suite A Modesto, CA 95354

### SAVE THE DATES!

**NOV. 13: Alternative Christmas Gift Fair**, College Avenue United Church of Christ, 1341 College Ave., 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Modesto Peace/Life Center table, SERRV International items, more.

**JAN. 10: John McCutcheon Returns in January:** Six-time Grammy-nominated folk musician John McCutcheon returns to Modesto on Tuesday, January 10 for a benefit concert for the Modesto Peace/Life Center. The concert will begin at 7 p.m. at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto. John has visited Modesto regularly since 2002. His concert has been called "the best thing about January in Modesto." More details next issue.

## Voting and Candidate Information from the League of Women Voters

Visit [VotersEdge.org](https://www.votersedge.org).



## League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County Meet and Learn

Topic: "The Community's Collection - It's Your Public Library"

**Where:** Via Zoom.

**When:** Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.

Sarah Dentan, the Stanislaus County Librarian, will discuss the ins and outs of the Public Library's collections: it's more than books, it's bigger than us, and there are laws, policies, and procedures related to selecting, evaluating, and removing materials.

After the presentation, there will be a Q&A. For a Zoom link, RSVP by November 9<sup>th</sup> to [StanislausLWV@gmail.com](mailto:StanislausLWV@gmail.com).

## Upcoming MAPS programs

**MAPS offers free, informative, and engaging community science programs.** Approximately monthly on Fridays in MJC West Campus Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 pm (also at 4 pm on 9/30/22).

**Friday, Nov. 18:** Nick Stong, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Manager of Public Programs. **The Amazing Life of the Western Monarch Butterfly.** A MAPS, GVM and SCOE production. \*A second presentation at 4 pm might be added. An art contest for K-16 students will be held prior to this event. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nick-stong-40a61587>



**Friday, Dec. 9:** Dr. Jim DeKloe, Professor of Biological Sciences and Biotechnology, serves as the director and founder of the Industrial Biotechnology program at Solano College. **Microbes, Medicine, and Money: Biomanufacturing in the 21st Century.** An introduction to the field of biomanufacturing, a description of the national state of training in biotechnology and biomanufacturing, <http://www.solano.edu/biotech/educators.html>

MAPS is grateful to MJC, the MJC Foundation, SCOE, the Modesto Teachers Assn. (MTA) and the Great Valley Museum (GVM) for generous support.

# Collaborate, Don't Criminalize: How Communities Can Effectively and Humanely Address Homelessness

By **JEFF OLIVET, Executive Director, United States Inter-agency Council on Homelessness**

Criminalizing homelessness is becoming more common. While laws that criminalize homelessness have long been in existence, recent years have witnessed many states and communities across the United States enacting laws that fine and arrest people for doing activities in public that are otherwise legal in the setting of a home: sleeping, sitting, eating, drinking.

These policies are ineffective, expensive, and **actually worsen** the tragedy of homelessness. There is a better way to respond to this crisis.

Mayors and other local officials are under pressure to do something, anything. With severe shortages of affordable housing, funding that is insufficient to meet the need, and a pandemic that has stretched already strained systems, many communities are understandably struggling with how to address homelessness. **But blaming, criminalizing, and moving people from streets to jails does not solve homelessness or fix the systems that created it.**

Most states (48) now outlaw daily survival activities, such as sleeping, eating, sitting, or living in their car. In the last 15 years, there has been a **50% rise** in so-called camping bans that make it illegal for certain people to sleep in public spaces; nearly three-fourths (72%) of cities now have such a ban, and **these laws are becoming tougher.**

But these discriminatory laws are not effective. Some laws punish people with up to \$5,000 fines they cannot afford and

with jail time that puts jobs in jeopardy and sends people back out to the streets, where their new criminal records will only make it harder to find housing and jobs. Some of these laws even threaten to withhold state funds from local governments and nonprofits if camping bans are not enforced. They put governments at risk of expensive civil-rights lawsuits and distract from implementing programs and strategies that are both **effective and cost-effective**. Such programs include Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing First, which **treat homelessness as a housing and health crisis—not a problem for the criminal justice system** to solve.

**Criminalizing homelessness is expensive.** It can cost **three times more** to enforce anti-homeless laws than to find housing for people who don't have it. Criminalization is a waste of time for police officers who should be getting guns off the street—not moving people around them. Criminalization fills jails up with people who are more likely to be **victims** of violent crime than perpetrators and with people who need treatment (which jails are not equipped to provide) for mental and substance use disorders. And, most importantly, **criminalization does not reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness.** It breaks connections people had made with providers trying to help and exacerbates homelessness and the conditions that lead to it—such as health problems and racial disparities.

Every year, well over a million people experience homelessness in the United States, and for the first time ever, more individuals experiencing homelessness are living outside on the streets or in their cars than staying in shelters. People simply have nowhere else to go. **Housing is too expensive, and there are not enough shelter beds.** In **no U.S. state** can someone work full-time for minimum wage and still afford rent for a modest two-bedroom apartment. For every 100 extremely low-income renters, **only 36** affordable units are available. Where are the others supposed to live? Many shelters are full. Some have requirements that ban people if they are not sober. Other shelters force people to part with belongings, pets, or significant others if they want to sleep indoors.

**There is a better way to respond to homelessness**—one that results in fewer tents, more people in homes, and more cost savings—and it starts with collaboration, not criminalization.

Homelessness is a public health and housing crisis, and the response should be driven by solutions that ensure housing

and wraparound support—from health care, including mental and substance use treatment, to job training and education. This requires constant communication across agencies, sectors, and jurisdictions. It also needs elected officials, businesses, the faith community, and the people experiencing homelessness to be involved in policymaking.

There is no quick or one-size-fits-all solution to homelessness, but best practices have emerged. After studying community responses and collaborating with federal agencies, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness created **7 principles for addressing encampments**—the most visible form of homelessness that has intensified the pressure to criminalize. If a community takes the time and makes the investments to implement these principles, more people will be able to move off the streets and into homes.

At the core of these principles is the need to **connect people as rapidly as possible to housing**—or low-barrier shelter if permanent housing is not immediately available. By embracing Housing First—instead of locking people up for struggling to survive—one city **saved** \$2.4 million and housed 1,000 people in a single year. **But while housing is the immediate solution, it is not the only solution.** To truly solve homelessness, we must provide people with the voluntary supports they need *and* want, including mental health care and substance use treatment.

Homelessness is not and should not be a partisan issue. It exists in all communities—regardless of how the people in them vote. President George W. Bush embraced Housing First, **spurring** a 30% decline in chronic homelessness from 2005 to 2007, and both Republican and Democratic mayors participated in the Obama administration's challenge to end veteran homelessness. When we came together across party lines, we cut veteran homelessness in half. There is no time for division or finger-pointing.

Recognizing the urgency of this crisis, the Biden-Harris administration has released **unprecedented funding to help communities** respond to homelessness. President Biden doubled the homeless services budget. The American Rescue Plan's **emergency housing vouchers** quickly moved more than 70,000 people into housing—and **leasing faster** than any previous HUD voucher. **HOME-ARP funds** can be used to convert hundreds of vacant hotels and motels into affordable housing or shelter. **State and Local Fiscal Recovery funds** are **building more affordable housing**, and the White House **released a plan** to close the gap in the housing supply in five years. President Biden also ordered police to find alternatives to arrest and incarceration, and the administration announced a **first-of-its-kind package of funding** specifically for unsheltered and rural homelessness. These important initiatives serve as a down payment on the work of ending homelessness once and for all.

**Not having a home is a tragedy — not a crime. Let's treat it as such.**

## MJC Science Colloquium Fall 2022 Schedule

Wednesdays 3:15 - 4:15 pm

In-person in Science Community Center, Room 115, West Campus.

**Nov. 09:** Tom Crain, NASA Ambassador. *Here Comes the Sun.* The Sun's origin, its longevity on the main sequence of stellar life, and what will be a very dramatic ending will be discussed. Breathtaking photos and videos from telescope observatories focused on the Sun, providing us with 24/7 coverage of what is happening, will be included.



**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 13<sup>th</sup> St., Modesto, CA 95354

Open by appointment.

Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,

Modesto, CA 95355

209-529-5750

**MRB** MICHAEL R. BAUDLER

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

mb@modestocpas.com

**Michael R. Baudler, CPA**

TELEPHONE  
(209) 575-2653 ext 303

FACSIMILE  
(209) 575-0629

1120 14TH STREET, SUITE 2  
MODESTO, CALIFORNIA 95354

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

## 83. The Kindness of Oaks

By LILLIAN VALLEE

On an old comforter folded in half on the patio tiles are hundreds of Valley Oak acorns drying before being cracked and shelled, then ground into meal and leached. I was inattentive and put them into a plastic bushel basket before drying them, so some of the acorns not already under attack by acorn weevils are moldy and will have to be composted. Acorns are a perishable food with a good shelf life if they are processed in keeping with old-world practices of harvesting, processing, and storing protectively before other hungry creatures find them.

The delicious scent of ground acorn, redolent of fruit and nut at the same time, means autumn. The bounty of nutritious acorns I count as a form of tree wealth bestowed by my oaks is the continuation of a cultural affinity with a very long history. The more I learn about oaks and how they reveal the Central Valley landscape, the more I become an advocate for the presence of oaks not just in our gardens and parks, but also as teachers in our schoolyards. An oak curriculum lasts a lifetime. Interactions with oaks daily, weekly, or seasonally provide experiential knowledge of a model natural community featuring food webs, species diversity, inter-species workings, soil health, lichen beneficence, gall magic, fungal networks above and below ground, and the singular value of aging and decaying veteran trees.

In the middle of the September heat wave, when I looked at my semi-dormant native plant garden, what I saw was the industry of scrub jays. Every pot and bare patch of soil with a little cover or scrub had eruptions of oak seedlings—Valley Oak, Interior Live Oak, Scrub Oak. While almost every non-native plant was barely surviving on an artificial lung of irrigation, the oak seedlings, with a few lobed or spiny leaves, were asking: why not us? We know about drought; we know about floods—how about letting us be not just trees that will give you food and shade, but shrubs, protective prickly scrub in hedgerows. Everything about oaks that can be an annoyance—the 700,000 leaves produced by one mature oak; the drifts of jumping ball galls crunching underfoot; the litter of twigs, catkins, oak apples; the dripping exudate; the spider tents and ant processions; the dusting of pollen and explosions of mushrooms; ubiquity of

seedlings, and, of course, the bounty of hundreds of pounds of acorns—is how the oldest denizens of the Central Valley reveal the intricacy of the landscape we inhabit.

Many of the observations I have been making in my quarter-acre yard full of oaks are explained with greater wisdom in a beautifully illuminating book by Isabella Tree titled *Wilding: Returning Nature to Our Farm*. She and her husband were trying to figure out how to save a farm (intensively managed in wartime and post-war England) that was losing money and accruing debt. Modern farming practices had mandated removal of hedgerows and the oaks that grew in them, heavy fertilizer and pesticide/herbicide use, and the plowing up of even marginal plots. The heritage oaks left standing were ignored and not regenerating.

The couple brought in a British oak expert, Ted Green, to advise them about the 550-year-old Knepp oak on their estate. Green felt the disappearance of ancient oaks, “hotbeds of biodiversity,” was catastrophic. What they learned from him about the value of the oldest trees astounded them: “Our decision to protect the park oaks would, within a matter of years, begin to change everything.” The book tells the full story of what becomes the *rewilding* (“restoration by letting go”) of a farm, utterly fascinating in its details. Tree’s account confirms that oaks are the essential trees in a landscape and need to be accommodated and championed. Many important insights in Tree’s book concern the value and care of the oldest oaks; the importance of scrub and thorny hedgerows as nurseries for oak saplings; and the various fungal associates of oaks, below and above ground, at various ages.

According to the experts, a white oak (*Quercus robur* in Great Britain) can grow for 300 years, rest for another 300, and then spend the last 300 “gracefully declining” (in England there are 118 oaks 900 years or older).

By this measure our La Loma schoolyard oak is a mere teenager at 230. Green explains that even though the oak may have reached its optimum mass by mid-life, it is always “shifting, balancing its weight, responding to its environment and growth of vegetation around it—only at a pace that humans can barely register.” The sloping branches grow to balance, support, reduce wind resistance and damage. “As it grows old a tree

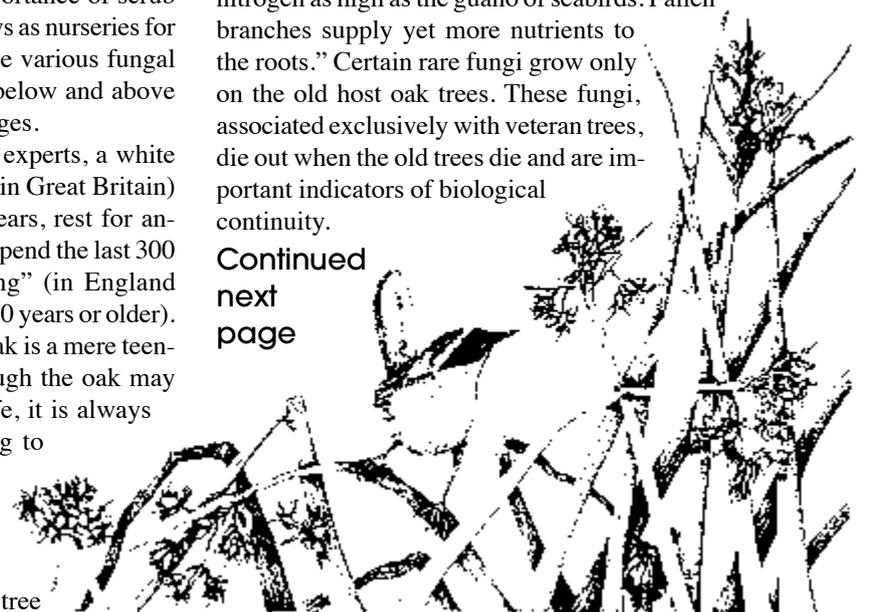
sometimes lowers its branches towards the ground, for stability, like an old man using a walking stick,” explains Green. “To the modern eye this self-buttressing tendency is considered a weakness and the walking stick—the lowering branch—is generally removed. We deny the tree its ability to grow old, to gain character, to be itself.”

The strong case made for very old oaks as complex ecosystems is followed by accounts of encouraging a landscape that would also support oak regeneration (a serious concern in California as well). Oaks need light and space and in more open settings (woodland-pastures, grassland-savannas) they have “six times the leaf cover of woodland trees, 360 degrees of niches and cover for wildlife.” Young oaks, however, are subject to predation. In England on the Knepp estate, prickly hedgerows were allowed to return to protect young trees from browsing and damage (“The thorn is the mother of the oak.”). This thorny scrub also provided safe nesting and insect habitat for birds and their offspring.

Tree also devotes a significant portion of her first chapter to explaining (with a little help from Suzanne Simard) the role of underground mycorrhizal fungi active in nutrient exchange and as chemical warning systems against diseases and predation: “By acting as a communications network—even between plants of different species—mycorrhizae alert plants and trees to the threat of pathogens, and to predation by insects and herbivores. They can even stimulate the release of chemicals from the tissues of a tree to attract predators for the particular pest assailing it. And they can alert trees to provide intensive care for ailing individuals or vulnerable offspring, supplying them with a boost of nutrients as though plugging them into an intravenous drip.”

Ted Green emphasized the importance of dying and dead oaks: “it is only when it begins to retract and hollow with age that the oak really comes into its own as an ecosystem. As the heartwood rots down, the slow release of nutrients gives the trunk a new lease of life. The droppings of bats and birds roosting inside the hollow tree provide additional fertilizer. Bat guano, indeed, contains levels of phosphate and nitrogen as high as the guano of seabirds. Fallen branches supply yet more nutrients to the roots.” Certain rare fungi grow only on the old host oak trees. These fungi, associated exclusively with veteran trees, die out when the old trees die and are important indicators of biological continuity.

Continued  
next  
page



## Rethinking Thanksgiving Celebrations: Native Perspectives on Thanksgiving

From the [National Museum of the American Indian](#)

For many students, Thanksgiving is a time to express gratitude and be with family. Teachers often include fun activities related to the holiday in their classrooms. When teaching about Thanksgiving, it is important not to misrepresent Native American cultures. Native traditions have developed over thousands of years and are distinct and complex. They are also specific to each individual tribe. Projects and crafts that attempt to adapt or copy Native traditions tend to perpetuate stereotypes of Native Americans. For example, we discourage adopting “Native” costumes into your classroom. Instead, incorporate Native knowledge into your lesson plans with the provided resources below. Celebrate the vibrancy of Native cultures through Native American art, literature, and foods while you celebrate Thanksgiving.

Native perspectives are especially important to include when teaching the history of the “First Thanksgiving.” Giving thanks is a longstanding and central tradition among most Native groups that is still practiced today. The First Thanksgiving is often portrayed as a friendly harvest festival where Pilgrims and generic, nameless “Indians” came together to eat and give thanks. In reality, the assembly of the Wampanoag Peoples and the English settlers in 1621 had much more to do with political alliances, diplomacy, and a pursuit of peace.

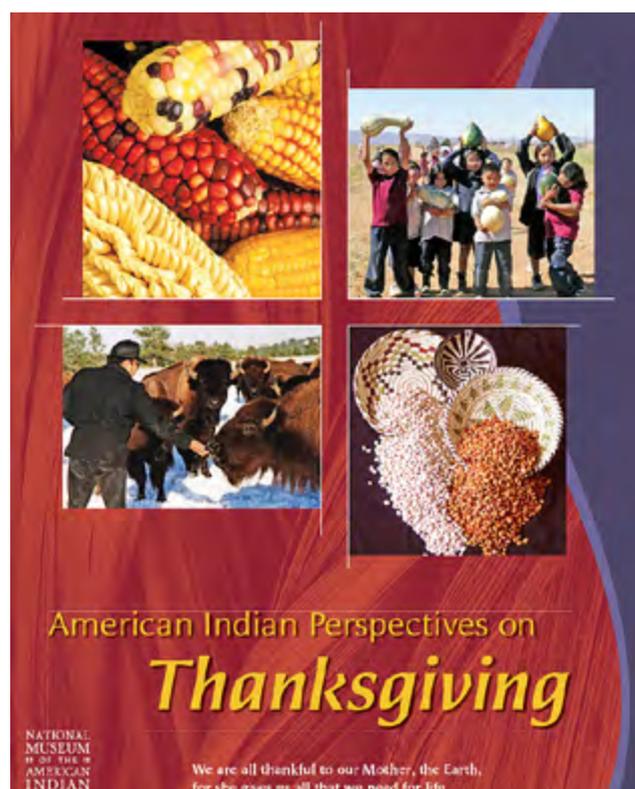
The Wampanoag Peoples had a long political history dealing with other Native Nations before the English arrived. The Wampanoag shared their land, food, and knowledge of the environment with the English. Without help from the Wampanoag, the English would not have had the successful

### Community of Oaks continued

At a time when many are demanding allegiance to a variety of hatreds, it is good to live in a community of oaks which have modeled a more nourishing way of being for thousands of years. Give food, shelter, and accommodate as much life as you can is the lesson derived from this ancient relative celebrated every November 1, California Oak Day.

**Sources:** Pavlik, Muick, Johnson, & Popper, *Oaks of California*; Suzanne Simard, *Mother Oak*; Douglas W. Tallamy: *The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees*; and Isabella Tree, *Wilding: Returning Nature to Our Farm*.

harvest that led to the First Thanksgiving. However, cooperation was short-lived, as the English continued to attack and encroach upon Wampanoag lands in spite of their agreements. Interactions with Europeans and Americans brought accelerated and often devastating changes to American Indian cultures. As with all lessons that discuss Native American culture and history, it is important to include accurate details, be tribally specific, and practice cultural sensitivity when teaching about Thanksgiving. Just as they were before the English arrived, Native Americans like the Wampanoag Peoples are dynamic and active participants in all aspects of society.



## Be informed!

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

## Why Racism?

By SHEILA D. LANDRE

Racism is a white invention, and white supremacy an unfounded delusion. I can't think of any truly admirable qualities of human beings—beauty, intelligence, creativity, generosity, bravery, endurance, compassion—which are inherently tied to one's skin color whatever it may be.

People with power, whether it be financial, physical, religious, gendered, or imagined, will subordinate others they have deemed weaker and less worthy. Or simply less capable of resisting. They will usurp privilege where it does not naturally occur. They will threaten those they have labeled sub-human with death or physical deprivation. They will break their spirits and declare themselves supreme.

Throughout history the dynamic has been like this: The powerful take advantage of the weak. And if the powerless are not weak enough, those with power will endeavor to strip them of whatever strength they may have left. The Egyptian Pyramids or China's Great Wall did not construct themselves. Thousands died; their lives sacrificed to the dominant overlords who enslaved them. What some call “civilization” was not a charitable enterprise for the benefit of the common people

At some point, white Christian Europeans set out in their little wooden sailing ships to explore the planet. They stumbled upon land they did not expect to find, inhabited by people they did not understand or respect. Something in their corrupted souls or their warped philosophy told them they had the right, even the obligation, to take whatever these people had and keep it for themselves. Their misguided sense of superiority and unearned power made them think they had the right to destroy, deprive, enslave, and humiliate these native people in their own land. There was nothing to stop them. These white explorers knew they could profit from their power. They began to conquer and colonize.

These white Christian Europeans discovered they could enrich themselves from the enslavement and deportation of native African people. Men of commerce profited from “selling” human beings to be used as free labor in countries in the Western Hemisphere and elsewhere. As in any world conflict, it is necessary to dehumanize those you plan to conquer and subjugate. And so, the great myth was born that the color of one's skin determines one's worthiness and black skin put a person at the very bottom.

Having darker skin, the white people said, meant that you were little more than an animal, incapable of human feeling or intelligent thought or action. Once you were taken from your home and transported across an ocean, sold into slavery, how were you to fight back? The white slaveholders did all that they could in word and deed to keep you under their power, working for their advancement and never for your own. Freedom was not an option.

In the twenty-first century we are still dealing with the residual muck of that mythical racial hierarchy. It was never true. It is not true now. Skin color has nothing—NOTHING—to do with the value of a human life. It is not an indicator of intelligence, talent, beauty, strength of character, emotional stability, or potential for personal success.

And yet there are groups of people laboring under this

continued page 6

Subscribe for 2023!

**StArt**  
Stanislaus Art Magazine

a bilingual Arts Magazine for Kids and Families  
Subscribe at [lindaknollart.com](http://lindaknollart.com)

# Writing on War and Living in a World from Hell

By CHRIS HEDGES

As this century began, I was writing *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, my reflections on two decades as a war correspondent, 15 of them with the *New York Times*, in Central America, the Middle East, Africa, Bosnia, and Kosovo. I worked in a small, sparsely furnished studio apartment on First Avenue in New York City. The room had a desk, chair, futon, and a couple of bookshelves — not enough to accommodate my extensive library, leaving piles of books stacked against the wall. The single window overlooked a back alley.

The super, who lived in the first-floor apartment, smoked prodigious amounts of weed, leaving the grimy lobby stinking of pot. When he found out I was writing a book, he suggested I chronicle *his* moment of glory during the six days of clashes known as the *Stonewall Riots*, triggered by a 1969 police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay club in Greenwich Village. He claimed he had thrown a trash can through the front window of a police cruiser.

It was a solitary life, broken by periodic visits to a small antique bookstore in the neighborhood that had a copy of the 1910-1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the last edition published for scholars. I couldn't afford it, but the owner generously let me read entries from those 29 volumes written by the likes of Algernon Charles Swinburne, John Muir, T.H. Huxley, and Bertrand Russell. The entry for *Catullus*, several of whose poems I could recite from memory in Latin, read: "The greatest lyric poet of Rome." I loved the certainty of that judgment — one that scholars today would not, I suspect, make, much less print.

There were days when I could not write. I would sit in despair, overcome by emotion, unable to cope with a sense of loss, of hurt, and the hundreds of violent images I carry within me. Writing about war was not cathartic. It was painful. I was forced to unwrap memories carefully swaddled in the cotton wool of forgetfulness. The advance on the book was modest: \$25,000. Neither the publisher nor I expected many people to read it, especially with such an ungainly title. I wrote out of a sense of obligation, a belief that, given my deep familiarity with the culture of war, I should set it down. But I vowed, once done, never to willfully dredge up those memories again.

## Why Racism? from page 5

persistent delusion that whiteness means supremacy. Look at them. Did you ever see people less "supreme" in their appearance and actions? Anyone less "Christian" in their expression of a love for humanity? Anyone more afraid that they cannot hold their place in the world if other people have a place as well?

A racial hierarchy was a false invention based on greed and the desire for power. White Supremacy is a relic, an antiquated construct that is kept alive by artificial means — lies, self-deception, and the insidious propaganda of self-described "White Supremacists": Christian Nationalists, Neo-Nazis, Proud Boys, and Fascists by these and other names, who don't have enough substance or integrity to feel that their lives matter in any significant way.

They need to get over that. For God's sake. For the sake of the human race.

To the publisher's surprise, the book exploded. Hundreds of thousands of copies were eventually sold. Big publishers, dollar signs in their eyes, dangled significant offers for another book on war. But I refused. I didn't want to dilute what I had written or go through that experience again. I did not want to be ghettoized into writing about war for the rest of my life. I was done. To this day, I'm still unable to reread it.

## The Open Wound of War

Yet it's not true that I fled war. I fled *my* wars but would continue to write about other people's wars. I know the wounds and scars. I know what's often hidden. I know the anguish and guilt. It's strangely comforting to be with others maimed by war. We don't need words to communicate. Silence is enough.

I wanted to reach teenagers, the fodder of wars and the target of recruiters. I doubted many would read *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. I embarked on a text that would pose, and then answer, the most basic questions about war — all from military, medical, tactical, and psychological studies of combat. I operated on the assumption that the simplest and most obvious questions rarely get answered like: What happens to my body if I'm killed?

I hired a team of researchers, mostly graduate students at Columbia University's School of Journalism, and, in 2003, we produced an inexpensive paperback — I fought the price down to \$11 by giving away any future royalties — called *What Every Person Should Know About War*.

I worked closely on the book with Jack Wheeler, who had graduated from West Point in 1966 and then served in Vietnam, where 30 members of his class were killed. (Rick Atkinson's *The Long Gray Line: The American Journey of West Point's Class of 1966* is the story of Jack's class.) Jack went on to Yale Law School after he left the military and became a presidential aide to Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush, while chairing the drive to build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

He struggled with what he called "the open wound of Vietnam" and severe depression. He was last seen on December 30, 2010, disoriented and wandering the streets of Wilmington, Delaware. The next day, his body was discovered as it was dumped from a garbage truck into the Cherry Island Landfill. The Delaware state medical examiner's office said the cause of death was assault and "blunt force trauma." Police ruled his death a homicide, a murder that would never be solved. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

The idea for the book came from the work of Harold Roland Shapiro, a New York lawyer who, while representing a veteran disabled in World War I, investigated that conflict, discovering a huge disparity between its reality and the public perception of it. His book was, however, difficult to

find. I had to get a copy from the Library of Congress. The medical descriptions of wounds, Shapiro wrote, rendered "all that I had read and heard previously as being either fiction, isolated reminiscence, vague generalization or deliberate propaganda." He published his book, *What Every Young Man Should Know About War*, in 1937. Fearing it might inhibit recruitment, he agreed to remove it from circulation at the start of World War II. It never went back into print.

The military is remarkably good at studying itself (although such studies aren't easy to obtain). It knows how to use operant conditioning — the same techniques used to train a dog — to turn young men and women into efficient

killers. It skillfully *employs* the tools of science, technology, and psychology to increase the lethal force of combat units. It also knows how to sell war as adventure, as well as the true route to manhood, comradeship, and maturity.

The callous indifference to life, including the lives of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, leapt off the pages of the official documents. For example, the response to the question "What will happen if I am exposed to nuclear radiation but do not die immediately?" was answered in a passage from the Office of the Surgeon General's *Textbook of Military Medicine* that read, in part:

Fatally irradiated soldiers should receive every possible palliative treatment, including narcotics, to prolong their utility and alleviate their physical and psychological distress. Depending on the amount of fatal radiation, such

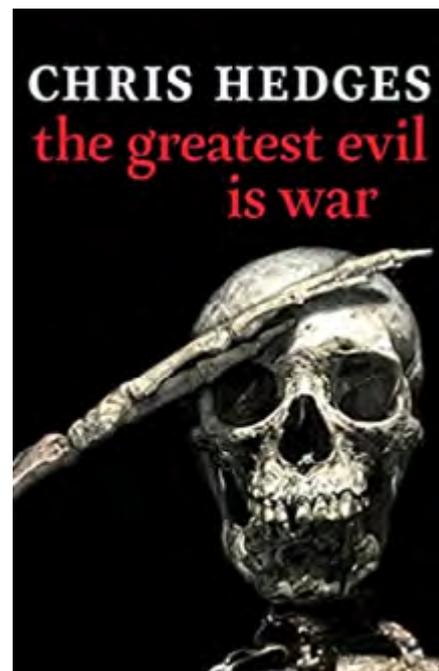
soldiers may have several weeks to live and to devote to the cause. Commanders and medical personnel should be familiar with estimating survival time based on onset of vomiting. Physicians should be prepared to give medications to alleviate diarrhea, and to prevent infection and other sequelae of radiation sickness in order to allow the soldier to serve as long as possible. The soldier must be allowed to make the full contribution to the war effort. He will already have made the ultimate sacrifice. He deserves a chance to strike back, and to do so while experiencing as little discomfort as possible.

Our book, as I hoped, turned up on Quaker anti-recruitment tables in high schools.

## "I Am Sullied"

I was disgusted by the simplistic, often mendacious coverage of our post-9/11 war in Iraq, a country I had covered as the Middle East bureau chief for the *New York Times*. In 2007, I went to work with reporter Laila Al-Arian on a long investigative article in the *Nation*, "*The Other War: Iraq Veterans Bear Witness*," that ended up in an expanded version as another book on war, *Collateral Damage: America's War Against Iraqi Civilians*.

We spent hundreds of hours interviewing 50 American combat veterans of Iraq about atrocities they had witnessed or participated in. It was a damning indictment of the U.S.



occupation with accounts of terrorizing and abusive house raids, withering suppressing fire routinely laid down in civilian areas to protect American convoys, indiscriminate shooting from patrols, the large kill radius of detonations and air strikes in populated areas, and the slaughter of whole families who approached military checkpoints too closely or too quickly. The reporting made headlines in newspapers across Europe but was largely ignored in the U.S., where the press was generally unwilling to confront the feel-good narrative about “liberating” the people of Iraq.

For the book’s epigraph, we used a June 4, 2005, suicide note left by Colonel Theodore “Ted” Westhusing for his commanders in Iraq. Westhusing (whom I was later told had read and recommended *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*) was the honor captain of his 1983 West Point class. He shot himself in the head with his 9mm Beretta service revolver. His suicide note — think of it as an epitaph for the global war on terror — read in part:

Thanks for telling me it was a good day until I briefed you. [Redacted name] — You are only interested in your career and provide no support to your staff — no msn [mission] support and you don’t care. I cannot support a msn that leads to corruption, human right abuses and liars. I am sullied — no more. I didn’t volunteer to support corrupt, money-grubbing contractors, nor work for commanders only interested in themselves. I came to serve honorably and feel dishonored.

The war in Ukraine raised the familiar bile, the revulsion at those who don’t go to war and yet revel in the mad destructive power of violence. Once again, by embracing a childish binary universe of good and evil from a distance, war was

turned into a morality play, gripping the popular imagination. Following our humiliating defeat in Afghanistan and the debacles of Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, here was a conflict that could be sold to the public as restoring American virtue. Russian President Vladimir Putin, like Iraqi autocrat Saddam Hussein, instantly became the new Hitler. Ukraine, which most Americans undoubtedly couldn’t have found on a map, was suddenly the front line in the eternal fight for democracy and liberty.

The orgiastic celebration of violence took off.

Bottom of Form

## The Ghosts of War

It’s impossible, under international law, to defend Russia’s war in Ukraine, as it is impossible to defend our invasion of

Iraq. Preemptive war is a war crime, a criminal war of aggression. Still, putting the invasion of Ukraine in context was out of the question. [Explaining](#) — as Soviet specialists (including famed Cold War diplomat George F. Kennan) had — that expanding NATO into Central and Eastern Europe was a provocation to Russia was forbidden. Kennan had [called](#) it “the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era” that would “send Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking.”

In 1989, I had covered the revolutions in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania that signaled the coming collapse of the Soviet Union. I was acutely aware of the “cascade of assurances” given to Moscow that NATO, founded in 1949 to prevent Soviet expansion in Eastern and Central Europe, would not spread beyond the borders of a unified Germany. In fact, with the end of the Cold War, NATO should have been rendered obsolete.

I naively thought we would see the promised “peace dividend,” especially with the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev reaching out to form security and economic alliances with the West. In the early years of Vladimir Putin’s rule, even he lent the U.S. military a hand in its war on terror, seeing in it Russia’s own struggle to contain Islamic extremists spawned by its wars in Chechnya. He provided logistical support and resupply routes for American forces fighting in Afghanistan. But the [pimps of war](#) were having none of it. Washington would turn Russia into the enemy, with or without Moscow’s cooperation.

The newest holy crusade between angels and demons was launched.

War unleashes the poison of nationalism, with its twin evils of self-exaltation and bigotry. It creates an illusory sense of unity and purpose. The shameless [cheerleaders](#) who sold us the war in Iraq are once again on the airwaves beating the drums of war for Ukraine. As [Edward Said](#) once wrote about these courtiers to power:

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special,

that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn’t trust the evidence of one’s own eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest *mission civilizatrice*.

I was pulled back into the morass. I found myself writing for [Scheerpost](#) and [my Substack site](#), columns condemning the bloodlusts Ukraine unleashed. The provision of more than \$50 billion in weapons and aid to Ukraine not only means the Ukrainian government has no incentive to negotiate, but that it condemns hundreds of thousands of innocents to suffering and death. For perhaps the first time in my life, I found

myself agreeing with [Henry Kissinger](#), who at least understands *realpolitik*, including the danger of pushing Russia and China into an alliance against the U.S., while provoking a major nuclear power.

Greg Ruggiero, who runs [City Lights Publishers](#), urged me to write a book on this new conflict. At first, I refused, not wanting to resurrect the ghosts of war. But looking back at my columns, articles, and talks since the publication of *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* in 2002, I was surprised at how often I had circled back to war.

I rarely wrote about myself or my experiences. I sought out those discarded as the human detritus of war, the physically and psychologically maimed like [Tomas Young](#), a quadriplegic wounded in Iraq, whom

I visited recently in Kansas City after he declared that he was ready to disconnect his feeding tube and die.

It made sense to put those pieces together to denounce the newest intoxication with industrial slaughter. I stripped the chapters down to war’s essence with titles like “The Act of Killing,” “Corpses” or “When the Bodies Come Home.”

[The Greatest Evil Is War](#) has just been published by Seven Stories Press.

This, I pray, will be my final foray into the subject.

**Chris Hedges** was a war correspondent for two decades in Central America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans, 15 of them with the *New York Times* where he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. He is the author of 14 books, including *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, *What Every Person Should Know About War*, and the just-published *The Greatest Evil Is War* (Seven Stories Press). He writes a column for [ScheerPost](#) and has a show, the Chris Hedges Report, on the Real News Network. He has taught at Columbia University, New York University, Princeton University, and the University of Toronto, as well as students earning their college degrees from Rutgers University in the New Jersey prison system. You can find him at [chrishedges.substack.com](#)

An introduction to this article can be found at [TomDispatch](#).



K  
D  
UR

LAW OFFICES OF  
**KELLY, DUARTE, URSTOEGER & RUBLE, LLP**

Sharon E. Kelly  
Jeffrey R. Duarte  
Markus R. Urstoeger  
Megan E. Ruble

1600 G St  
Suite 203  
P.O. Box 0142  
Modesto, CA

Workers' Compensation and Social Security Disability Attorneys

Know your rights  
Call today (209) 521-2552

# Gary Thomas: The Making of a Poet and Teacher

By **TOM PORTWOOD**

*The arrows I knew when I was eight  
Were made by my father from leftover flooring,  
Extra tongue-and-groove scantlings, dense planks  
Of oak and maple, and as he sawed them thin  
And whittled them round and smooth, I breathed in  
The redolence of the grains and his labor...*

Thus with tenderness and love does Turlock poet Gary Thomas portray his late father at work in the opening lines of “Ox Bow Education” – one of seventy-four poems that comprise Mr. Thomas’ superb new collection, *All the Connecting Lights* (available through Finishing Line Press:

[https://www.finishinglinepress.com/?s=Gary+Thomas&post\\_type=product](https://www.finishinglinepress.com/?s=Gary+Thomas&post_type=product))

Mr. Thomas admits later in the poem that he learned about “craft and responsibility” as he watched his father, and the “next lesson of a father’s love –/ the creation of the useful/ followed by the letting go.” As with so much of Mr. Thomas’ work, this beautiful poem encourages the reader to read closely and consider what’s been said thoughtfully. Poetry – as with all art – *does that* when it’s done well and true.

Published in July, *All the Connecting Lights* offers a rich sampling of Mr. Thomas’ sharp poetic observations about a wide range of subjects, particularly about growing up on a peach farm outside the small town of Empire, and of life in the Central Valley and beyond. Although the focus of much of the book is centered in the Valley, there is a universality to the themes and concerns Mr. Thomas addresses throughout the book, and a deep appreciation for life.

“I was born in City Hospital, in Modesto, which obviously no longer exists,” Mr. Thomas recalled recently. “I was originally scheduled to be born on October 24<sup>th</sup>, but my mom was older when she had me, and in those days “women of a certain age” were routinely expected to have a Caesarean, and October 24<sup>th</sup> was my mom’s birthday, and she didn’t want me to have to share a birthday with her, so she had me delivered on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. In other words, I got born two days early, which may account for a lot!”

“I grew up on a 23-acre peach farm. Before it was a peach farm, it was a dairy that my dad had run, and it turns out that peaches paid better than cows. He started switching over from grasslands to peach trees before I was born.”

“When I was *very* little, before my dad started getting the peaches in full time, I would help cut the wires to unbalance the hay, and put the hay in the trough. My dad also had three English walnut trees, so it was my job to go where the walnuts that had fallen, pick them up, and later take them to

market. And, yes, I knew how to pick peaches, even though I’m afraid of going up high on the ladder – but there’s the irony; *that’s what you do.*”

But Mr. Thomas’ childhood and youth were marked by an early tragic loss. His beloved father, born in 1893, died when young Gary was only ten years old. This was something of a turning point for him. “It was very difficult losing my dad,” he remembers. “First, I was ten, and my mom – bless her heart – was a much stricter person than my dad had been. So the laws at home seemed to get tighter and stricter at the very moment I was in the middle of loss. Then, when puberty hit, so did my first experiences with epilepsy and my mom not being really sure how to handle that. Of course,

any single parent having to deal with an adolescent male – I gotta give her a lot of credit. It was a tough time for both of us.”

Mr. Thomas writes movingly of his experiences with epilepsy in one poem, and in another, imagines with wry but warm humor his Baptist mother meeting Pablo Neruda on a cruise in 1924— —and the relationship that might have flowered if that had actually happened.

Sadly, Mr. Thomas’ mother also died when he was relatively young, during his first year at college. But his parents’ quiet work ethic and deep love of reading would take root in their son in the years ahead as he became a teacher and a poet.

“My parents were both readers, so there were always books in the house to read, and I took to that pretty early. I read pretty much anything I could get my hands on. As far as poetry — —the poetry they had, and the poetry that was taught in school — —was at least a hundred years old.”

While Mr. Thomas readily admits that he sometimes wrote “really bad love poems” while attending Thomas Downey High School in the 1960s, it was when he took a course at Modesto Junior College that he awakened to the idea that he could be a poet.

“I didn’t really take to the possibility that I could write poetry *seriously* until I had Lee Nicholson as my poetry professor at MJC.”

he explains. “That was about the time I bought **Ferlinghetti’s** *A Coney Island of the Mind*, and my mind began to be blown into new fresh fragments and inspired in me a very strong desire to read and write more poems.”

Attending Modesto Junior College proved to be a fortuitous decision, for Mr. Thomas not only began the journey of finding his poetic voice there, but he found his future wife Susan there as well. Following graduation, they continued their education together at the University of California, Santa Barbara— —Susan majoring in music, while Gary majored in English Literature.

After graduation, Mr. Thomas and his wife were back in the

Valley, where Gary secured a teaching position at Roosevelt Junior High School in Modesto. Unfortunately that position was eliminated because of “a little thing called Proposition 13,” but he met other teachers there who would inspire him to take up acting in community theatre— —a passion he has pursued through numerous local productions ever since.

In the meantime, he was hired to be a teacher at Turlock Junior High School, where he taught English for the next three decades, always finding time in each day to share a poem with his students. “I loved teaching,” Mr. Thomas exclaims, while acknowledging that he was often frustrated by the grinding rote learning required of the standardized testing system.

While teaching at Turlock Junior High, he participated in another “life-changing event”: the California Literature Project. “I got taught how to teach in a totally different way which was not to be the ‘*Sage on the Stage*, but the *Guide on the Side*.’”

“In other words, help a student bring out his or her creativity. So, I always had plenty of different options to help students along in the learning process. And I’ve used that approach ever since, because one assignment is not going to be everybody’s cup of tea and they deserve to show what they can do within the parameters of the lesson.”

Since launching *All the Connecting Lights* (which has been highly praised by poets across the Valley and the Bay Area) three months ago, Mr. Thomas has been busy with readings throughout the Valley. Reflecting on the role of poetry in his life, and on his writing process, he says,

“I first wrote poetry because I thought I might have something worth saying. Poetry was the way I could make some sense, some meaning of the world I was in. I would say that still holds true today. I read *a lot* of poetry. It would be an unusual week when I didn’t have three or four poetry books that I’m reading kind of simultaneously.”

“I’m more open to inspiration for reading poetry and writing it in the early morning. That’s usually when I get an idea. I get in my “daily pages” — —90% of that is going to be junk, but I might get in one idea or one phrase to put in

continued page 11

## Happenings at the MoSt: Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center

The **2nd Tuesday Poetry Reading** is “Kiss Me Like You Voted: Poetry for Election Night” (Open Mic). 11/8/22 at 7 p.m. Register here:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYscOqhpjgrGNZ9calCIAyo\\_9KPb7XWmAy](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYscOqhpjgrGNZ9calCIAyo_9KPb7XWmAy)

The **Poetry on Saturday Series** will feature poets **Linda Scheller** and **Bryan Medina**. Saturday, 11/19/22 at 2:00 p.m., in person at the Carnegie Arts Center in Turlock. An open mic will follow.

**MoSt Poetry Book Club** is reading US Poet Laureate Ada Limon’s *The Hurting Kind*. Discussion will be Monday, 11/21/22 at 6:30 p.m. at the downtown Modesto Library. Copies of the book are available to check out at the reference desk in the library.

Info: [www.mostpoetry.org](http://www.mostpoetry.org)



## Lillian Vallee – One of the Valley’s Finest Poets

Lillian Vallee was born in Hamburg, Germany, to Polish parents displaced by World War II. She grew up in Detroit, Michigan, but has spent most of her adult life in California, the last 37 years in California’s Great Central Valley.

Lillian earned degrees in English Literature (B.A.) and Slavic Languages and Literatures (M.A., Ph.D.) from the University of California, Berkeley, and is an award-winning translator of literature from the Polish. She taught English at Modesto Junior College for over two decades, has published widely (translations, articles, reviews, and poems), and has given over 100 public talks and lectures on subjects ranging from the poetry of Polish poet Czesław Miłosz to the critical ecological value of oaks in Central Valley habitats.

A Gathering of Voices is honored to present four of her superb poems.

### Boots

I hear them only at night  
Boots marching, keeping time  
Even though the snow is deep.  
Each time I think I have it wrong  
There must be some other reason  
For this pulse. But they keep coming  
The trudging feet, shod or bundled  
In rags, coming to invade or leaving  
In disgrace, returning home to hide  
Or being marched to the Arctic regions.  
Armies of Pilsudski or Napoleon  
Followed by Russian tanks, barbed wire,  
Spit-polished boots below costumes  
With pagan or Christian insignia.  
How much of it has the wild pear  
Seen? The lake? The alder groves  
And broad oaks before they were struck  
Down to warm the swollen feet?  
They are still now. Iron crosses return  
To church steeples. The trees are  
Allowed to get old. The basilica  
Enshrines the field altar of the  
Teutonic Knights and only the Virgin—  
Whose body opens to reveal three in one—  
Knows the laws of iron within this form.  
During the day grebes ply the placid  
Waters looking for nest sites in the canes.  
At night I waken to marching boots  
Pacing the edges of the house  
Taking stock of what will be theirs  
When our time comes.

*Radziucie/Sejny*  
March 2007



## Translucent at the Base

*Because bees avoid darkness, many bee-pollinated,  
funnel-shaped flowers, like penstemons, are translucent  
at the base.*

Judith Lowry, *Gardening with a Wild Heart*

What a relief to know  
the darkness does not last  
Into the deepest part of the flower  
That when you are bee-like, you see  
The places of gathering pollen and nectar  
Are light-filled by design as if the blossom  
Knew that the way to fruit or seed  
Must be illuminated by a burning ball of fire  
Five million miles away.

## The Shoes at Dr. Seng’s Back Door

Flip-flops, boots, sandals, pumps  
We step over them gingerly  
Benevolent mine fields  
Unlike the shoes behind glass in Auschwitz  
The creased high boot brown baby shoes  
Not dangling from a rearview mirror  
Or bronzed under a picture frame  
But next to piles of eyeglasses  
Objects given the task of testifying

Here in Modesto we enter a honeyed room  
Sit on chairs along dark counters  
Hear a man fill his lungs with courage  
to remember what no one wants to remember--  
Genocide, again  
All the electronic codes cannot explain  
Why we bury one another in brutal contests  
for something ungraspable, unholdable  
And ally with darkness against what loves

Dr. Seng’s sons set the stage for their father’s reading  
The words come haltingly:  
Why he checked himself into a hospital  
where almost everyone was dying, in a cloud of flies,  
abandoned by all the angels of the world  
Our eyes filled with the quaking fragility of his breath  
At the unspeakable grief and the joy at his walking away

People! Be wary, be watchful!  
A careless word becomes a noose, a blade, a prison wall  
And the demon of blind hatred moves through the ages

Without respect, without the shoes at the door  
Attachment to our homes, our minds, our variegated faces  
We are pitiless shadows never offering anyone comfort  
Mere desolate beings, pitting the earth with innocent graves

*Lillian Vallee/Draft 2/January 6, 2018*

## Rainbird

*(Song for Two Voices)*

### The Judgment

What a nifty little mechanical man!  
Piercing the navel of Tulare Lake  
Who could have guessed the power of his clan?  
Too late we discovered his real name:  
Not rain, not bird, not pronghorn, not elk  
Not pelican, not mud hen, not lake trout, not crane.  
Maybe cantaloupe, cotton, tomato or grape?  
Maybe valley fever, subsidence, selenium or wait:  
Is this how we moved from one dust bowl to the next?

Think of all the ways we have displaced water  
And whatever went with it: people, animals, plants  
A river carving its own bed  
A lake adjusting its shores to the wind  
Artesian springs, tule-choked sloughs—  
Nothing was where it was supposed to be  
The design all wrong and the exchange rate plain.

*He walks to the edge of the irrigation ditch where a small  
stand of tules is growing in a flotsam of soda bottles, beer  
cans, and assorted fast food packages. Sweeping away  
the rude veneer, he scoops his hands deep into the old lake  
bottom, carefully working his fingers around a small network  
of rhizomes. He pulls off a single tule sprout and its roots.  
He wraps it in a damp cloth and heads for home.*

### The Plea

Make it a prayer  
Make it a rite  
Make it a conversation

He takes the tule and plants a lake  
First the bulrushes, then the elk  
Next the pronghorn and the trout  
Then the rabbits and the quail  
Salmon, terrapin, mussels, clams  
Then the islands in the lake  
Then the nests the pelicans make  
Then the children stealing eggs  
Then men with charm stones  
Their bare legs straddling *ah-yahs*, setting nets  
Infants swaddled in feathered breasts  
Their mothers singing their love for the lake  
Amid the dark orgasm of wildflowers

Make it a prayer  
Make it a plea  
Make it an incantation  
Make it – an act of creation

– Lillian Vallee & Daniel Kasser

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

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

PSAs in English and Spanish broadcast multiple times a day about Covid-19 vaccination, produced by the West Modesto Community Collaborative.

## PROGRAMS

**NEW:** *Sports Talk Modesto* - Join Jay Freeda and Jimmie Menezes on your way home to catch up on everything happening in the sports world. - Thursdays, 5 pm.

**NEW:** *Vib'n with the West Modesto Collaborative* Karla Davies and Jasmine Corena Engage, Educate and Advocate on behalf of the West Modesto Community and showcase the Voices of the West Modesto Community - Thursdays, 7 pm.

*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 Paul Vogelzang - Fridays, 2:00 pm, Saturdays, 12:30 pm.

*Bucks Stallion's Radio Transmission Emporium* - Cyber Music - Sundays, 1:00 am

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

*AREA 5150 UFO RADIO* - Saturday night at Midnight.

## LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

*L-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 - 8:00 pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays, 9:00 am. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbpwotv> and on Spotify.

*People Not Profit* - with Pegasus - Wednesdays, 9:30 pm; Saturdays, 2:30 pm; Formerly *Peril and the Promise*. Listen here also: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp-peril>.

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

*Where We Were* - Fascinating local history with Felton Daniels. Monday & Thursdays 9am. Friday 8:30 pm; Sunday at 11:00 am & 4:30 pm.

## Local Music Programs

*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 Sunday.

*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.

## Weekdays (Monday - Friday)

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

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

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

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

## Donate Your Vehicle to KCBP Radio: It's a Win-Win Solution

Have you considered donating a vehicle to KCBP Radio? **Not only will you cruise past the hassles altogether, but you'll make a lasting impact.**

1. It's easy and the pick-up is free!
2. The proceeds from the sale of your vehicle will help us continue to provide community programs to you!
3. Donating saves time and money on repairs and maintenance.
4. Donating beats the hassles and worries of selling.

*Sojourner Truth* - 4:00 pm. Interviews, panels focusing on issues that affect people of color.

*Democracy Now!* - 7:00 am. Reporting by veteran journalist Amy Goodman.

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

## Children's Programming

*Confetti Park* - Saturdays 8:00 am; & Sunday's 12:30 pm.

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

## Science

*Explorations* - Science 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

**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.



# We the People Are All in This Together

By DAVID KORTEN

The purpose of human institutions is to secure the well-being of people and Earth. Despite our differences, all of Earth's people share a common destiny that depends on our learning to live together with mutual commitment to a foundational truth recognized by our early ancestors: "I am because you are." South Africans call it *ubuntu*.

Now, however, we get near-daily reminders of the failure of our institutions to uphold that truth. Ignoring *ubuntu*, they pit us against each other in a deadly competition to dominate and exploit both the planet and our neighbors.

Our future depends on cooperating to create new institutions that support us in caring for and living within the means of a finite living Earth. But competition presents a terminal barrier to progress on two defining fronts: the growing number of billionaires, and the growing dominance of the world's largest economies. The United States currently leads in both fronts. China is in second place but is positioned to soon take the lead.

Two current examples stand out in revealing the profound institutional failure that imperils our common future. Each underscores the need for the deep transformation we have only begun to envision.

## Gary Thomas from page 8

a poem later on."

In reading *All the Connecting Lights*, the reader senses a strong underpinning of faith in many of the poems. "And to the Young Ravens When They Cry" was inspired by Psalm 147:1-9. Mr. Thomas speaks eloquently of the faith that he holds close to him:

"I was raised a Christian, but I was away from any kind of faith other than the spiritual for many years until a difficult time in my life about twenty years ago. I'm still questioning, because doubt is an essential part of faith. I have a faith in the human spirit and abhorrence when that spirit is not being exercised."

*All the Connecting Lights* challenges the reader with many difficult truths – about racism, war, and the limitations on the mind and spirit we can impose upon ourselves. Enclosed within its pages are descriptions of the Valley that only someone who has spent nearly an entire life here could write. That alone makes it an invaluable testament of a life well lived. But, at its heart, I think this is a book of hope.

In "life as peaches" Mr. Thomas exhorts us to

*take life  
as you would  
peaches  
seize it juicily  
down your throat...  
...plunge your teeth  
In like fingernails  
To grab and shred  
And outline the sweetness  
Let it run down your chin  
The mark will be a stain of full high summer...*

There is much to savor in this fine book, which I highly recommend.

The U.S. has long presented itself as the model of prosperity and democracy for other nations to emulate—a conceit that is fast losing its luster. In addition, between 2019 and 2021, life expectancy in the United States dropped from 79 years to 76 years—the sharpest two-year decline in a century.

The U.S. and China are confronting each other over many issues, most recently the status of Taiwan. If we are to move toward peace, equality, and a sustainable climate on which a viable human future depends, our two countries must join in common cause to create a world in which the very concept of a global superpower is a relic of history.

Alarming statistics on the dramatic fall in U.S. life expectancy come from a New York Times news story on a report by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics. COVID-19 was the major driver.

Dr. Steven Woolf, director emeritus of the Center on Society and Health at Virginia Commonwealth University, observed that while other high-income countries were also hard hit by COVID-19 in 2020, most had begun to recover by 2021. "None of them experienced a continuing fall in life expectancy like the U.S. did, and a good number of them saw life expectancy start inching back to normal," Woolf told the Times. U.S. life expectancy is now the lowest it has been since 1995. Among the world's high-income nations, the United States is leading—in the wrong direction.

According to Dr. Woolf, compared with other high-income countries, we in the U.S. are handicapped by a fragmented, profit-driven health care system, poor diet, lack of physical activity, smoking, widespread access to guns, and high levels of poverty and pollution. Break it down, and much of our loss traces to the failures of an economic system captive to the power of profit-maximizing corporations.

We bear the consequences not just in our health industry. We also bear them in our food and agriculture, gun, automobile, and other industries that put financial returns to their richest shareholders above the well-being of their own workers and the communities in which they do business.

If we evaluate these industries based on the flow of profits to the rich, they are exemplary. If, however, we evaluate them based on their contributions to the well-being of people and Earth, they are literally killing us—revealing the U.S. as a model the rest of the world best avoid at all costs. Here are basics of the billionaire problem:

On Jan. 17, 2022, Oxfam International reported that the wealth of the world's 10 richest billionaires had doubled since the beginning of the pandemic. Incomes of 99% of the world's people had fallen while corporate profits soared as those companies raised their prices faster than their costs rose—the automobile industry being but one example.

In March 2022, Forbes identified a global total of 2,668 billionaires with a combined wealth of \$12.7 trillion, up significantly from the 2,096 billionaires it had identified in 2020 before COVID became a global pandemic. The U.S.

leads the world, with 735 billionaires holding a collective \$4.7 trillion in financial assets. China is a close second, with 607 billionaires holding \$2.3 trillion in assets. Together, the two countries account for 56% of the total assets of all the world's billionaires.

The more inequality grows, the more power shifts to those the current system enriches, thus increasing their ability to further shape the system to their advantage. Those competing for the top spot on the Forbes billionaires list have chosen to ignore the obvious reality that there will be no winners on a dead Earth.

On the global superpower front, the U.S. and China compete for global economic and military dominance. The U.S. military budget dwarfs that of all other nations, but here, too, China is in second place and growing rapidly.

An obvious place to start in eliminating human environmental damage to Earth is with things that provide us with no real benefit. War is an obvious example. As Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently pointed out to Russian President Vladimir Putin, "this is not an era of war."

So true. It is an era for eliminating war and moving forward a long overdue process of disarmament.

Achieving the well-being of both people and Earth will require a radical sharing of power to facilitate the cooperative learning and equitable resource sharing essential if humanity is to achieve the future most people seek. A key part of the process is transforming our society into an ecological civilization, which I outlined in my Club of Rome paper, "Ecological Civilization: From Emergency to Emergence."

The U.S. has presented itself as a model of democracy and prosperity for the world to emulate. China has led the world in reducing extreme poverty and has written a commitment to an ecological civilization into its constitution. Yet both nations stand out as the primary drivers of militarism, extreme inequality, and environmental devastation, pushing humanity toward social and environmental collapse. If our two countries continue competing to be the last global superpower on a dying Earth, we will fail to meet the minimum targets that science tells us are essential to avoid triggering environmental tipping points from which there will be no recovery. This existential crisis presents an opportunity for unprecedented cooperation between China and the U.S., along with other nations everywhere, in which we apply our proven creative potential to build a world of peace, equality, and a thriving Earth.

DAVID KORTEN is co-founder of YES! Media, president of the Living Economies Forum, a member of the Club of Rome, and the author of influential books, including "When Corporations Rule the World" and "Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth." His work builds on lessons from the 21 years he and his wife, Fran, lived and worked in Africa, Asia, and Latin America on a quest to end global poverty.

From Yes Magazine



# calendar

Help keep our readers informed. We urge people participating in an event to write about it and send their story to [Connections](mailto:Connections).

## november 2022

CHECK WITH MEETING HOSTS. ONLINE MEETINGS MAY BE PLANNED.

**MJC Science Colloquium** Fall 2022 Schedule. Wednesdays 3:15 - 4:15 pm. Back in-person in Science Community Center, Room 115, West Campus. Talks will also be recorded for the Science Colloquium's YouTube site for later viewing. **Nov. 09: Tom Crain, NASA Ambassador.** Here Comes the Sun. The Sun's origin, its longevity on the main sequence of stellar life, and what will be a very dramatic ending will be discussed. Breathtaking photos and videos from telescope observatories focused on the Sun, providing us with 24/7 coverage of what is happening, will be included.

**MAPS** (Modesto Area Partners in Science): free MJC science programs. on Fridays in MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 pm. Friday, **Nov. 18: Nick Stong, Monterey Bay Aquarium,** Manager of Public Programs. *The Amazing Life of the Western Monarch Butterfly.* A MAPS, GVM and SCOE production. \*A second presentation at 4 pm might be added. An art contest for K-16 students will be held prior to this event. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nick-stong-40a61587>

**The Prospect Theatre** has continuing offerings: Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2021-2022-season/>

**2 WED: VIGIL: SAVING OUR DEMOCRACY-VOTE!** 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm, McHenry & J. St., Modesto.

**3 THURS: Peace/Life Center ZOOM** Monthly Board Meeting, 6:30 pm. Email [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org) for login.

**4 FRI: Peace Center Harvest Gathering** to Honor Middagh Goodwin & Linda Scheller. 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm. See p. 1 for details.

**13 SUN: Alternative Christmas Gift Fair,** College Avenue United Church of Christ, 1341 College Ave., 11:00 am-12:30 pm. Peace/Life table, SERRV international items, more.

**20 SUN: The State Theatre** and the Modesto Film Society present *Chinatown*. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/chinatown-112022/>, 2 pm.

## looking ahead

**January 10:** Annual **John McCutcheon** Concert.

**February 25, 2023: 29th Annual MLK Commemoration.** Details TBA.

**Golden State Warriors Wheelchair Basketball** Team Benefit Game for KCBP Radio. TBA.

**June 2-4: Peace Camp** returns!

## regular meetings

### SUNDAYS

**Modesto Vineyard Christian Fellowship,** 10:00 am at the MODSPOT, 1220 J St. Call or text 209-232-1932, email [modestovineyard@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:charlie@imcv.org). Our mailing address is IMCV, P.O. Box 579564, Modesto, CA 95357.

### MONDAYS

**The Compassionate Friends,** Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter is meeting by Zoom on the second Mondays at 7:00 pm. 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](mailto: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](mailto:nandrews6863@charter.net).

**Monday Morning Funstrummers** Beginner Ukulele Lessons. Modesto Senior Center. 10:45am to Noon. Free Scenic and Bodem.

**Walk with Me,** a women's primary infertility support group and Bible study. 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm the first and third Mondays of each month. Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email [WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com](mailto:WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com) or call 209.577.1604.

### 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; email: [naacp.branch1048@gmail.com](mailto: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/24765549018387/>

**Pagan Family Social,** third Tuesdays, Golden Corral, 3737 McHenry Ave, Modesto, 6:00 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

**Tuesday Evening Funstrummers** Ukulele Jam. Songbooks provided. 6pm to 8pm, 1600 Carver Rd., Donation. 209-505-3216, [www.funstrummers.com](http://www.funstrummers.com).

**IMCV weekly Insight Meditation** and dharma talk, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely, donations welcome. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: [info@imcv.org](mailto:info@imcv.org)

**Adult Children Of Alcoholics,** Every Tuesday, 7 pm at 1320 L St., (Christ Unity Baptist Church). Info: Jeff, 527-2469.

### WEDNESDAYS

**Womxns Support Group** for Womxn in all stages of life. Join us in a safe and judgment free environment where you can give and receive support for the many issues that we struggle with as Womxn. Every Tuesday from 1pm-2pm at the Central California LGBTQ+ Collaborative, 1202 H St., Suite D, Modesto CA (Ages +18). Contact Sandra Vidor-209.652.3961 or Kellie Johnson 209.918.0271

**The GAP.** A place of support for Christian parents of LGBTQ+ or questioning kids every Wednesday 6:30pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church 1528 Oakdale Rd. Instagram: [Thegapmodesto](https://www.instagram.com/thegapmodesto)

**Ongoing meditation class** based on Qi Gong Principals. Practice a 3 Step Guided Meditation Process I have been doing for over a decade. Fun and Easy. JOIN ME! Donations accepted but optional. Call 209.495.6608 or email Orlando Arreygue, [CMT.RYT,orlando@arreygue.com](mailto:CMT.RYT,orlando@arreygue.com)

**Merced LGBT Community Center** offers a variety of

## MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

**Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS:** Held THE FIRST WEDNESDAY of the month at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Call the Center for info: 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 Thursdays, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom. Email Jim Costello for login information, [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)

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

monthly meetings and written materials. Volunteers, on site Wed-Fri, offer support. Ph: 209-626-5551. Email: [mercedboard@gaycentralvalley.org](mailto:mercedboard@gaycentralvalley.org) - 1744 G St. Suite H, Merced, CA. [www.mercedlgbtcenter.org](http://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/>

**GLBT Questioning Teen Support Group** (14-19 years old). 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, College Ave. Congregational Church, 1341 College Ave., Modesto. 7 - 9 pm. Safe, friendly, confidential. This is a secular, non-religious group. Info: call 524-0983.

**Transgender Support Group,** 2nd & 4th Wed., 7:30 to 9 pm. Info: (209) 338-0855. Email [info@stanpride.org](mailto:info@stanpride.org), or [tgsupport@stanpride.org](mailto:tgsupport@stanpride.org)

**Mindful Meditation:** Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7 - 9 pm. Info: Anne, 521-6977.

### THURSDAYS

**CA10 Progressive Coalition** Monthly Meeting, third Thursdays. Inclusive group of progressive activists to share resources, ideas, and information in order to support all the great organizing work happening in the Valley! Feel free to invite trusted allies. Meet-up and social hour: 5:30 pm-6:30 pm. Meeting: 6:30 pm-8:00 pm. Follow group on Facebook. Info: Tim Robertson, [tim@nvlf.org](mailto:tim@nvlf.org)

**Laughter Yoga,** Every other Thursday at The Bird's Nest, 422 15th St., Modesto. The dates are February & March 7th & 21st, April 4th & 18th, May 2nd & 16th. 5:30pm-6:30pm. \$15.00 per class. To register, call or text Nicole, 209-765-8006 or visit [www.nicoleottman.com](http://www.nicoleottman.com)

**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.

**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](http://www.StanislausGreenTeam.com)

**Third Thursday Art Walk,** Downtown Modesto, downtown art galleries open - take a walk and check out the local art scene. 5-8 pm every third Thursday of the month. Info: 209-529-3369, <http://www.modestoartwalk.com>

**The Book Group,** First & third Thursdays. College Ave UCC Youth Bldg., Orangeburg & College Ave., 3:30 - 5:00 pm. Info: [mzjurkovic@gmail.com](mailto:mzjurkovic@gmail.com)

**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>

**Pagan Community Meeting,** 1st Thursdays, Cafe Amore, 3025 McHenry Ave, Suite S., Modesto, 8 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

### FRIDAYS

**Funstrummers:** A Fun-loving Ukulele group gets together live to practice and play. Play along with us or work up to playing out in gigs. Friday mornings, 10am to Noon at the

Telle Classrooms, Trinity Presbyterian, 1600 Carver Rd., Modesto. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mej3gD0ZD40&list=LLB8Y19zZg660qHCXGoC6ojQ&index=1>

**Overcoming Depression:** small group for men & women. Every Friday, 7:15 pm. Cornerstone Community Church, 17900 Comconex Rd, Manteca, CA 95366, (209) 825-1220.

**Latino Emergency Council (LEC)** 3rd Fridays, 8:15 am, El Concilio, 1314 H St. Modesto. Info: Dale Butler, 522-8537.

**Sierra Club: Yokuts Group.** Regular meetings, third Friday, College Ave. Congregational Church, 7 pm. Info: 300-4253. Visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts> for info on hikes and events.

**Mujeres Latinas,** last Friday, lunch meetings, Info: Cristina Villego, 549-1831.

**Hispanic Leadership Council,** 3rd Fridays at noon, 1314 H St., Modesto 95354. Questions? Yamilet Valladolid, [yamiletv@hotmail.com](mailto:yamiletv@hotmail.com)

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

### SATURDAY

**New HIV support group:** +NET Peer Support Group meets at the LGBTQ+ Advocacy Center, every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month from 12-1pm. Focuses on supporting individuals with their struggles regarding HIV and AIDS. Providing information about community resources, promoting wellness with an emphasis on LIVING! Central California LGBTQ+ Collaborative, 1202 H St., Suite D, Modesto. Contact Vincent, 209.505.2863.

**12-Step/Buddhist Meeting** starts with a 30-minute meditation and then open discussion. Held monthly every second Saturday, 4:30 to 6:00 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto at the UUFSC in Sarana (small building, rear of the east parking lot). Freely-offered donations welcome. Information: 209 606 7214.

**Free Community Drum Circle** every third Saturday, 3 pm, Deva Café, 1202 J. St., Modesto. No experience or drums necessary to participate. All levels welcome. <https://drum-love.com/>

**Refuge Recovery:** A Buddhist Approach to Recovery from Addiction. @Friends Coming of Age., 1203 Tully Rd., Ste. B., Modesto. Saturdays 8-9 am. FREE (donations accepted). Info: [RefugeRecoveryModesto@gmail.com](mailto:RefugeRecoveryModesto@gmail.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](mailto:orkingenne@gmail.com)

**So Easy ~ So Good:** Vegetarian/Vegan/Wannabe Group. Potlucks, guest speakers, field trips, activist activities, movie nights, etc. Third Saturday of every month. Info: Kathy Haynes (209) 250-9961 or email [kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com](mailto:kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com)

### DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS: Tenth of each month.

Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to [Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org](mailto:Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org)  
Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.