

Mass Deportations Could Cost California Over \$275 billion, UC Merced Report Warns

By **Christian De Jesus Betancourt**, [The Merced Focus](#)



A new study by the Bay Area Council Economic Institute and UC Merced says mass deportations could strip more than \$275 billion from California’s economy and severely disrupt industries that rely on migrant labor.

Released Monday, the report [“The Economic Impact of Mass Deportation in California”](#) found that while about 2.28 million undocumented migrants live in California, an estimated 1.5 million of them are part of the state’s workforce, making up about 8% of all workers.

This working population drives most of the economic activity analyzed in the study.

The study comes as federal immigration enforcement intensifies, with expanded operations and faster deportations of people without legal status.

In the state’s vast agricultural sector, more than a quarter of workers are undocumented and over two-thirds are immigrants overall, according to the study. Removing these workers could shrink California’s farm economy by 14%, raise grocery prices, and create labor gaps that technology cannot quickly solve.

Construction would face similar strain. The study projects the sector’s gross domestic product could drop by nearly 16% if undocumented labor were lost, worsening housing delays and driving up costs in a state already struggling with affordability.

“Immigrants, both documented and

undocumented, are deeply and intricately woven into our overall economic fabric,” study co-author Abby Raisz, research director for the Bay Area Council Economic Institute, said in the release.

“The impact of losing 8% of California’s workforce would have a crippling effect on the state economy. The impacts would extend far beyond California’s borders, with labor shortages contributing to higher food prices nationwide.”

Beyond farms and job sites, the economic fallout would reach local shops, restaurants, schools and hospitals, the study found.

It’s estimated in the study that undocumented immigrants contribute more than \$23 billion in combined federal, state and local taxes each year and help sustain small businesses as both workers and customers.

Nearly 40% of California’s small businesses are immigrant-owned, and about 11% are owned by undocumented entrepreneurs. Without them, the report warns, many towns and neighborhood business districts risk losing the foot traffic and local spending that keep them alive.

Researchers also noted that the fear of stepped-up federal enforcement is already impacting families and small businesses.

The study, conducted by UC Merced



public health professor Maria-Elena De Trinidad Young and her team, included interviews with nearly 40 people, including business leaders, elected officials and the heads of community-based organizations.

Young’s approach to the research, according to the release, added nuance to the economic data by incorporating the voices of individuals who have already experienced the impacts of tighter immigration enforcement.

Young said in the release that California

has a deep history of welcoming migrants and benefiting from their economic, cultural and community contributions.

“Understanding how increased immigration enforcement is affecting such a large swath of our population is critical to addressing the fears many in the immigrant community are experiencing and informing how we plan for not only economic and fiscal impacts but the human impacts,” she said.

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ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS: Join the Modesto Peace/Life Center's Annual Hiroshima Remembrance and Potluck, Aug. 6

Join us at the southeastern corner of Graceada Park at Sycamore and Needham, Modesto, on **Wednesday, August 6th at 6:00 PM.**

Bring **food and drinks to share** as we converse and rededicate ourselves to reversing the efforts to rebuild and proliferate nuclear weapons.

It will be hot. Bring your own table service, a lawn chair, a hat, and water! Bring a candle if possible. We will gather with candlelight near sunset.

Be informed!

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

“Never Again”: Mark the Solemn 80th Anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with Us at Livermore Lab

From Tri-Valley CAREs

Unacceptable! 80 Years Of Nuclear Devastation

Remember Our History, Reshape Our Future!

Artist Peter Kennard joins us at the Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab on this historic 80th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to support global nuclear abolition at the location where horrific new warheads are being designed today.

The **WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025-9:00 am Rally** will be followed by a traditional Japanese Bon Dance, inviting our ancestors to join us, then nonviolent witness and direct action for those who so choose.

Directions: LIVERMORE NUCLEAR WEAPONS LAB-WEST GATE. From I-580 E take S. Vasco Rd. Exit. Stay on S. Vasco for 1.4 miles to West Gate Dr. Park on side streets.

Support the Hibakusha! We join the survivors' cry of “Never Again!” as we celebrate Nihon Hidankyo, the association of Japanese A-bomb survivors and recipient of

the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize. And, we recommit ourselves to nuclear abolition on the occasion of this 80th anniversary, carrying forward the work - and ensuring its visibility - as the last survivors pass on.

Come to Livermore

Founded in 1952 to speed the development of new “generations” of nuclear weapons, the Livermore Lab is one of two locations where all U.S. nuclear weapons are designed. Livermore Lab is currently spending billions to develop a new warhead for U.S. Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, another new warhead for a surprise nuclear attack to be launched by airplanes, and a third new warhead for small submarines that do not presently carry any nuclear weapons.

This is the place to be to stop nuclear weapons and demand their total elimination!

Information: Tri-Valley CAREs, (925) 443-7148, scott@trivalleycares.org, Western States Legal Foundation (510) 839-5877, wslf@earthlink.net.

Letter From the President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

The war between Israel and Iran, which the United States entered by bombing Iran's nuclear facilities over the weekend, has put millions of people in harm's way. The conflict is allegedly over Iran's potential to build nuclear weapons, even as Israel has for decades maintained a policy of ambiguity regarding its own arsenal estimated at around 90 nuclear warheads. Israel has also resisted entering any international agreements and regulatory processes that regard nuclear weapons and nuclear technologies.

The crisis threatens to engulf not just the region but the entire world. Humanity is hanging in the balance. We join the call of all pleading for peace and diplomacy, and condemn in the strongest possible terms the path of war and the devastation it brings.

It is hard to believe that humans are a quarter of the way into the 21st century and 80 years past the advent of nuclear weapons, and yet, we seem not to have accepted that peace amongst states is not just a moral, but an existential imperative. In Einstein's words, we must change our “modes of thinking” in order to move away from the brink.

At NAPF, we are always changing and interrogating what we do and how we do it. But one thing that we have never deviated from is the sincerest of beliefs that a world free of nuclear weapons must be pursued and must be achieved for the sake of nothing less than life itself. We agree with the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, who stated in 2013 that “there are no right hands to handle these wrong weapons.” That of course means that Iran should not acquire nuclear weapons, nor should any other state. At the same time, it is incumbent upon the nine

states that have nuclear arsenals to work in earnest towards eliminating them. As we near the 80th anniversaries of the Trinity explosion and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it would not be a moment too soon.

It is hard to pursue the goal of nuclear abolition for many reasons, especially in such challenging times. What helps to sustain us is the vision of leaders, experts, artists, and activists – within our own community and from around the world, both living and passed – who have dedicated themselves to the cause of peace and disarmament. Learning from them is an enormous privilege. Celebrating them, as has been an NAPF tradition since its founding, is always the highlight of our year.

On September 26, the International Day for Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, we will be immensely privileged to honor two extraordinary human beings who have been vocal and ardent advocates for humanity at our 38th Evening for Peace: actor and activist **Martin Sheen**, who will receive the 2025 Daniel Ellsberg Lifetime Achievement Award, and **Pope Francis**, who will receive, posthumously, the NAPF Distinguished Peace Leader Award for 2025. The event will take place at the Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort. More information to follow. For now, we hope you will save the date!

We also hope that you will join us for our **31st Annual Sadako Peace Day** on August 6, the 80th Anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, to honor the memory of Sadako Sasaki and all innocent victims of war. More information about this event is available below, along with our recent writing, videos, and other resources.

Something else that helps to sustain us is donations from people like you. Each contribution energizes us to push ever harder in pursuit of a peaceful world, free of nuclear weapons. Please consider giving today – we are grateful for your support!

Ivana N. Hughes

President, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

<https://www.wagingpeace.org/>

IN MEMORIAM

BILL MOYERS

June 5, 1934 — June 26, 2025

Press Secretary, Journalist,
Champion of Public Broadcasting
Democracy, & A Free Press



Photo: Gage Skidmore

Peace Camp Recap: Melanie Berru and the Pursuit of Justice



The 40th Annual Modesto Peace/Life Center Peace Camp was held on June 20-22, 2025.

Campers enjoyed a peaceful weekend in the Sierras filled with delicious food and activities, such as campfire singing, drumming, tie-dyeing, dancing, nature hikes, a talent/no talent show, and a wonderful workshop from Melanie Berru on how to transform self to transform society.

Melanie Berru delivered a powerful and reflective workshop titled “Transform Self: Transform Society.” Her message was clear: the pursuit of peace is inseparable from the pursuit of justice, and both begin within. Berru, a Central Valley sociologist and educator, opened with a grounding acknowledgment of the Yokuts, Miwok, and Paiute peoples, honoring the Indigenous stewards of the land where Peace Camp is held. It was a reminder that conversations about peace must be rooted in truth, history, and responsibility.

She then invited participants into reflective icebreaker questions that explored the intersection of peace, justice, and personal responsibility. The workshop centered on Dr. Bobbie Harro’s frameworks: [the Cycle of Socialization and the Cycle of Liberation](#). Berru guided the group through how we are socialized into systems of oppression through family, culture, institutions, and silence, often without realizing it. This conditioning shapes how we see ourselves and others, perpetuating inequity unless consciously interrupted.

The shift came with the Cycle of Liberation, which



offers a path toward change. Berru explained how liberation starts with “Waking Up” recognizing injustice within society and ourselves. From there, it requires deep reflection, unlearning, reaching out, building community, and committing to sustained action

A core message throughout was that “justice work is self work.” Berru emphasized that true peace isn’t simply the absence of conflict but the presence of justice—and that begins with examining the roles we play in sustaining or challenging systems of harm.

Her facilitation was both grounding and energizing, blending truth-telling with compassion. Participants were reminded that the work of peace isn’t abstract; it’s daily, personal, and collective.

One camper reflected, “I can’t remember the last time I



took so many notes from a workshop! It must have been in my college years so long ago.”

Berru wanted to leave participants with a renewed sense of commitment to inner growth as a foundation for outward change. Her message was an offering, a challenge, and a call to action: transform the self, transform society.

We look forward to welcoming campers again in 2026!



“Free Rides July” is Back - Ride Free All Month in Stanislaus County!

Summer just got even better! The Stanislaus Regional Transit Authority (StanRTA) and City of Turlock (Turlock Transit) are teaming up once again to bring riders Free Rides July — a month-long promotion offering FREE rides on all fixed-route, commuter, and ADA Paratransit buses throughout July.

This promotion includes:

- Fixed-route service
- ACE, BART, and Stockton Commuter express connections
- ADA Paratransit
- Medivan


All participating services meet ADA accessibility requirements to ensure inclusive transportation for all riders.

This free-ride campaign is funded through a grant from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) under the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP), along with federal transit support.

Ready to ride? Riders are encouraged to plan ahead and take full advantage of this fare-free month. Trip planning is easy with tools available at www.stanrta.org and www.turlocktransit.com.

Or, use apps like Transit, Google Maps, or Track the S for real-time routes and arrival info. (available on the Apple App Store and Google Play).

Hop on, ride free, and enjoy your summer with Free Rides July!



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

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A Walk in the Woods

By Elaine Gorman

When it's too hot in the Valley for hiking, go east on highway 108 into Stanislaus National Forest. I meet hiking pal Kathi in Twain Harte, then we head out for Fraser Flat and the South Fork of the Stanislaus River. After squeezing into the sketchy parking area at the bridge, we discuss the plan with our canine companion and walk upstream.

As this trail follows the old railroad grade of the Sugar Pine Railway, we walk on a wide, mostly level dirt road." The railroads in this part of the Sierra were used primarily for transporting logs to lumber mills in the Sonora area. There are wooden trail signs along the way and numbered interpretive markers. Interpretive brochures are available from the Summit and Mi-Wuk Forest Service offices. As this is a busy weekend, we encounter several groups of hikers and mountain bikers.

Mid-elevation Sierra conifers — Incense cedar, Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, White fir, and Sugar pine — provide abundant shade. The roar of the churning waters of the South Fork is our constant soundtrack. This branch of the Stanislaus River is hard-working and contains lots of infrastructure — Lyons Lake/dam is downstream, Pinecrest Lake/dam is upstream, and water diversions and flumes pull water from the river.

As we walk along, we note occasional wildflowers and shrubs such as ceanothus, manzanita, gooseberry, and currant. A few bright scarlet snow plants and pink coralroot orchids, both saprophytes (non-photosynthetic) have broken through the soil. Tall stalks of Washington lilies climb up the steep bank of the railroad grade. Their flower buds are emerging, and I conjure their heavenly fragrance. The attractive green and white mottled leaves of California waterleaf form feathery rosettes that pop up through the pine needles.

After about a mile, we see large patches of small white, low flowers, with one dot of purple on each of their 5 petals.



Hurray!! I've been looking for Fivespot all spring, and I'm very happy to finally locate these beautiful wildflowers.

Although the old railroad ties and rails of the Sugar Pine Railway were removed long ago, if you look carefully as you walk, you may see one remnant of the past. After about 1 1/2 miles, we find "lines" of heavy steel wire spaced a couple of inches apart embedded in the dirt in the middle of the trail. Wire-wrapped wooden culverts carried water away from the railroad tracks.

In about another mile, the trail veers away from the river. We come to a small meadow. Ssshhh.....maybe we'll see a deer or a bear (but not this time).

After 2.9 miles, slightly more than one hour of walking, we reach Old Strawberry Road. We turn around to look for a lunch spot along the river. A steep "use" trail brings us



to a flat spot near the river. Caution — in early season, the river is swift and cold and could prove hazardous to waders and pets. I keep my tootsies on terra firma.

As we head back to our parked vehicle, we bump into Modesto friends who are also seeking a walk in the cool Sierra. We share our plant discoveries and a few photos. Then it's time to wind back down the road to home.

Notes: There are no restrooms or water at the trailhead. One half mile further (past the bridge) on Forest Rte 4N01 is a nice campground and picnic area.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/stanislaus/recreation/sugar-pine-railway-strawberry-fraser>

Getting there: 75 miles from Modesto, 1 hr. 45-minute drive. Go east on Highway 108 past Oakdale, Sonora, Twain Harte, MiWuk, and Long Barn. Keep your eyes peeled for the Fraser Flat/Forest Rte 4N01 sign. Turn left, then drive 2.5 miles to the bridge over the [South Fork Stanislaus River](#). Park wherever you can, noting the "No Parking" signs.

A Different Approach for Combatting Climate Change

By Steve Murov, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry, Modesto Junior College

With the world in a state of chaos, conflict, bigotry, and with tariffs and inflation looming, the issue that should be at the top of our priorities for action is once again subjected to extreme neglect. Climate change is not only neglected but the actions and attitudes of "our President" are serving to substantially exacerbate an already serious threat to life and the environment. Attempts to educate via the media, celebrities, politicians, movies, books and educational institutions have been relatively unsuccessful, and society is ignoring efforts to find pathways to minimize the destructive capabilities of climate change. Towards this goal, I am suggesting a different approach to attempt to make society aware of the importance of the issue and the need for immediate action if we are to have any hope of a positive outcome.

There is an ever increasing and to me an alarming dependence on smart phones and AI resources. My

preference would be that we would all strive to educate ourselves by doing research and listening to experts. This will probably not happen. Given that people are becoming dependent on the smart phone for all types of information, I urge everyone to ask their phones, computers, Alexa, Siri (try Microsoft Copilot, Chatgpt, Google, Google Gemini, etc.) a couple of questions:

Is climate change a serious threat?

Is Donald Trump's response to climate change appropriate?

Please study the responses carefully and inform others if you think we need to take a more proactive approach towards combatting the climate change emergency.

I have prepared a website to discuss this issue, but would like your opinions on the viability of this smartphone approach. We cannot sit still and ignore the problem as it will take decades to solve the problem but we need to start today.

Visit <http://murov.info/climatechangecrisis.htm>

Contact the author at murovs@yosemite.edu

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A Letter from the President of the Stanislaus Community Foundation

Dear Friends,

I find myself waking up these days wondering what's next. I know I'm not alone. And while there is much uncertainty in the world today, as a place-based funder we remain focused on what's within reach: our local community. We are analyzing any federal funding cuts for their impact on local schools, public agencies and nonprofits.

Whether you support or oppose the cuts that are being proposed, there's no denying that reductions in public services will impact the most vulnerable in our community.

A startling 47% of Stanislaus County's residents are on Medi-Cal. 14% of Stanislaus County's families rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to buy groceries.

These are people, not programs. Our neighbors, not numbers.

Here in Stanislaus, we've built a remarkable ecosystem of care. Food banks, shelters, family resource centers, after-school programs, medical clinics and many other nonprofits work together every day to ensure that families have what they need not just to survive, but to thrive. Much of that tireless, quiet work is made possible by federal funding streams. When that funding dries up, the entire system will begin to fray.

To be clear, Stanislaus Community Foundation believes our public systems can and should be more agile and nimble. For more than a decade, our team has worked on the Focus on Prevention, Cradle to Career and Stanislaus 2030 initiatives, all of which embraced system change and focused on the root causes of poverty.

Our leadership work and funding centers around both addressing current symptoms of entrenched poverty while also building ladders to stability so that local families don't have to rely on public services to make ends meet. We have been relentlessly working towards early literacy, college

attainment, new industry clusters aligned with agriculture, expanded internships and scholarship programs, and the removal of other financial and educational barriers.

But we're not there yet. Many rely on safety net services due to the high cost of living and the lack of quality jobs. According to United Way's Real Cost Measure for Stanislaus County, a family of four (2 adults, 1 infant, 1 school aged child) would have to hold more than 3 full-time, minimum wage jobs to achieve economic security.

Here's what is at risk for local nonprofit programs as grants are delayed or eliminated:

Housing & Homelessness: Cuts to HUD programs, emergency rental assistance, and homelessness prevention grants could leave thousands of families at risk of eviction and further strain our local shelters.

Food Security: Reductions in SNAP (CalFresh), WIC, and food assistance programs will increase food insecurity, particularly among children, seniors, and low-income families.

Healthcare & Mental Health: Cuts to Medicaid, behavioral health services, and community health centers will make it harder for residents, especially seniors, low-income and rural populations, to access lifesaving medical and mental health care.

Workforce Development & Economic Growth: Funding for job training, apprenticeship programs, and small business support is critical to helping people achieve economic mobility and reducing unemployment in our region.

Education & Childcare: Reductions in early childhood education (Head Start), after-school programs, and Pell Grants will hurt working families and limit future higher ed opportunities for our youth.

Support for Victims of Violence: Reducing funding for domestic violence shelters, sexual assault crisis centers, and

trauma-informed mental health services will leave survivors without the critical support they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

If we lose these lifelines, we risk turning back years of progress—on education, public health, youth development, and economic self-sufficiency.

Amid all this, I find myself returning to one word: resilience. It's especially evident among our nonprofit



partners. Because even now, with budget shortfalls and bureaucratic delays, our local nonprofits are still feeding, teaching, healing, and housing. Still believing in the people and places they serve.

For our part, Stanislaus Community Foundation is doubling down on grantmaking. In addition to our donor-directed funding, we opened a record number of grant cycles this year. We've expanded our programming to support nonprofit capacity, too. We're also committed to disrupting organizational models. Earlier this month, Stanislaus Community Foundation hosted a workshop for local nonprofits to consider a number of scenarios and begin to prepare accordingly.

To our donors: thank you. Your investment at this moment matters more than ever. The truth is, local generosity cannot replace lost federal dollars—but it can build bridges, fill temporary gaps, and fuel nimble new solutions.

We are in uncharted territory here, but if we stay clear-eyed about what's at stake, we can ensure that local families don't fall through the cracks. And we can reaffirm the core belief that everyone in Stanislaus County deserves dignity, opportunity, and support.

With sleeves rolled up,
Marian Kaanon
President/CEO

Stanislaus Audubon Zoom Program

“*Small Mountain Owls*” presented by Scott Rashi, **Wednesday, July 16, 2025, 7:00 P.M.** Note - different day of the Week.

Scott Rashid is an artist, researcher, bird rehabilitator, and author. Scott has been painting, illustrating, and writing about birds for over thirty years. In 2011, he created the Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute in Estes Park, Colorado. Members of this nonprofit rehabilitate injured birds and research many avian species in and around Rocky Mountain National Park.

Scott has published six books, including *Small Mountain Owls*. In 2025, he was awarded the Champion of Owls Award and was inducted into the World Owl Hall of Fame by the International Owl Center in Houston, Minnesota.

Scott has documented the first nest of a pair of Flammulated Owls in Rocky Mountain National Park and



the first ever Boreal Owl nest in that park. He has studied and documented each species' habitats, courtship, nesting, feeding and the raising of their young. Scott and his team have been banding these birds for years. You will find out how many of these birds are banded by the members of CARRI each fall, and where they may spend the winter.

This program covers four small owls that may be found in and around Rocky Mountain National Park. His program will describe the natural history of Northern Pygmy-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Boreal Owl, and Flammulated Owl.

Join us for a fascinating exploration into the lives of these enigmatic denizens of the night.

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/SE35krqgSwms3yquILm3-g>

From *The Valley Habitat*, July-August 2025 A joint publication of the Stanislaus Audubon Society and the Yokuts Group of the Sierra Club.



Coming soon New Local News Source For Modesto & Stanislaus County

The Modesto FOCUS is the Central Valley Journalism Collaborative's next nonprofit community-based newsroom. Our mission is to deliver high-quality, nonpartisan journalism that informs, empowers, and reflects the communities of Modesto and Stanislaus County.

The Modesto FOCUS will launch in mid-2025 and is supported by a generous grant from the Stanislaus Community Foundation. The site will not have a paywall, ensuring our journalism remains accessible to everyone.

Information: <https://themodestofocus.org/>

Modesto Joins Millions Nationwide in No Kings Protest

By Eric Caine, The Valley Citizen

A longtime resident driving through Modesto's Five Points intersection might have thought it was the largest local protest ever. That same motorist might not have realized that the people crowding the sidewalks at Five Points were just a small fraction of the throng that gathered last Saturday in support of the nationwide "No Kings" movement that coincided with Donald Trump's Washington DC military parade on the same day.

Even two hours after the start of the rally at Graceada Park, people were still streaming onto the sidewalks along Needham Avenue, McHenry Avenue, and J and 17th Streets. It may indeed have been the largest protest ever in Modesto.

For many people, a march that had originated at the park went no farther than a few steps, simply because the crowd was too thick along the planned route to Five Points. Instead, people stood three or four deep along both sides of Needham Avenue while others formed small groups under the shade of Graceada Park's majestic oaks. Some retreated to the park gazebo, where the rally originated.

Saturday's protests were about preserving the fundamental rights of a democratic republic, including due process, the rule of law, civil rights, especially women's rights, and the right to free and fair elections. For millions of American citizens, these rights are under dire threat from a president who seems determined to make unlawful deportation to modern-day gulags a routine practice.

Likely spurred to even greater participation by the crude tactics of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in Los Angeles and southern parts of the San Joaquin Valley, Saturday's crowd members carried more American flags than usual.

Some of the flags were flown upside down, an internationally known signal of distress. Others were waved as obvious symbols of patriotism by people whose values tend toward liberty and justice for all, rule by law, and the increasingly quaint notion that we're all innocent until proven guilty.

Woven tightly into the fabric of the American flag itself, these fundamental values, most of which can be subsumed under the notion of "due process," are under growing threats as government attacks on educational institutions, law firms,



political opponents and immigrant laborers have become routine during Donald Trump's second term.

The June 14 protest occurred under the dark shadow of murder. Two Minnesota lawmakers were killed and two others injured early Saturday morning.

"We are all afraid," said Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski last April.

"It's quite a statement. But we are in a time and a place where I certainly have not been here before....I'm oftentimes very anxious myself about using my voice, because retaliation is real. And that's not right."

That threat of retaliation may be why so few local politicians, not just in Modesto but nationwide, have stood against Donald Trump's trampling of the Constitution of the United States. Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of twentieth century history could have predicted there would be soldiers in the streets during Trump's second administration. Last Saturday, those soldiers weren't just parading down Constitution Avenue in Washington DC, some were stationed in the City of Los Angeles.

Saturday, the only two local elected officials who spoke at the No Kings rally were Modesto City Councilman Chris Ricci and Waterford City Councilwoman Elizabeth Talbott. Both urged crowd members to get involved in government, either by supporting local candidates or by running for office themselves.

Local government is where democracy begins. Justly fearful of the tyranny of kings and dictators, America's Founding Fathers also knew that direct democracy too often resulted in mob rule. They designed a system of checks and balances they hoped would mitigate the dangers of government by men instead of by laws. They hoped that in times of the most extreme danger to liberty and justice for all, the people would choose equality under the law before royal edict or mob rule.

Many people today are looking for a leader to stand against a president who would do away with birthright citizenship, due process, and congressional authority. Such a leader may emerge, but only in response to energy sprung from deep devotion to government of, by, and for the people.

Those same people are the last bulwark against dictatorial

rule. Saturday, a young man who had wrapped himself in the flag, worn upside down, was asking strangers, "What can I do?"

"Everything's gone upside down," he said. "I don't understand what's happened. It's like I'm in a different country."

Today, America isn't a "different country," it's two countries. One of those countries supports Donald Trump's claim that the 2020 election was stolen. One does not.

The answer to "What can I do" is, "Seek the truth."

Choose reason, learning and law over impulse, propaganda, and edict. Defend free and fair elections, peaceful assembly, due process, and the rights of colleges and universities to determine their own curricula and research.



There should be nothing controversial about defending the fundamental values of American government. Those wishing a deeper understanding of where we are today and how we got here need only think deeply about the current relevance of Abraham Lincoln's words when he wrote,

"How many legs does a dog have when you say his tail is a leg? Four. Saying a tail is a leg doesn't make it a leg."

For further guidance, consider also the words of Thomas Jefferson:

"I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial by strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country."

If the dangers of the influence of money on government and saying a tail is a leg sound familiar, it's because lies and the corruptions of wealth have been fatal to justice long before the birth of our democratic republic. The truth may be elusive, but it's still the only path to freedom. Seek it out. Be brave.

Eric Caine formerly taught in the Humanities Department at Merced College. He was an original Community Columnist at the Modesto Bee, and wrote for The Bee for over twelve years.

Loving America

By Sheila D. Landre

The rich white men who wrote our rules of governance in the 1770s and 1780s worked diligently to create a Constitution which they hoped would last and would cover all the contingencies. They researched, they debated, they wrote rough drafts, and little missives to one another until they believed they had done their very best. They were well-educated for their time and determined to do better for their posterity than was done for them. But they were not clairvoyant. They could not imagine the country that would grow across the North American continent in the next nearly 300 years. Trains, planes, and automobiles, assault rifles, and atomic bombs. Votes for women and former slaves? Cell phones? It might have sounded like a fairy tale.

But they knew one important fact about the future: It would change. They built into the system the option to make changes to the Constitution. Almost immediately they started to do just that. The Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution, were also researched, drafted, trimmed from over twenty amendments to just ten which then had to be ratified by all current states before becoming part of the whole document.

We now have twenty-seven amendments including (white) Women’s Suffrage, citizenship and voting rights for former (male) slaves, prohibition and the repeal of prohibition, term limits for presidents, and the lowering of the voting age to eighteen, among others.

The Congress, comprised of rich white men, did not thoughtfully consider the issues of Justice and Equality, see the error of their ways, and grant privileges where none



had existed. Anyone not a rich white man had to fight for those rights, to protest, demonstrate, write, lecture, go to prison, and even die for their cause before someone who already had power gave up their stubborn stand and gave the people their rightful due.

“Remember the ladies,” admonished Abigail Adams as her husband went out to build a nation. It took another one hundred forty-four years for women to get the vote, and even then, the struggle for full equality was still one battle after another, even to the present day.

It’s hard to believe that “All men are created equal” when men like yourself aren’t even considered full human beings, when your family is being bought and sold and shipped like livestock. Even when the vote and other freedoms were granted to African-Americans, the white men of former slave states erected so many barriers to complete freedom, that we are still living in the twenty-first century entangled in the coils of injustices that should have been righted long ago. (Black women, by the way, did not get the vote until 1964).

We can’t forget the past. We don’t dare. But we can learn about it with a clear head and be reminded: We are not just capable of changing our country for the better, the Founding Fathers expected us to. They wanted us to make new laws to fit the times, and they provided a blueprint of how to do that. They were open to changing the Constitution, and we have done so twenty-seven times. They didn’t want any

one person or group to wield too much power so they gave us three

equal branches of government with a system of checks and balances. When everything goes as planned, all citizens vote in fair elections and the winning majority rules until another majority wins a future election. A peaceful transfer of power was expected and is a source of pride. That’s the plan anyway.

Take a good long look at our history. Accept that your ancestors were creatures of their times, ignorant in their own way of how to achieve “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.” We, as their descendants, are still dealing with both the mess they left us, and the tools they created to solve our problems. We are still trying to ensure “Justice for All” and come to grips with “all PEOPLE are created equal”—not identical, not the same, but of equal value and worthy of equal opportunity and equal justice.

White people today need not take on the guilt for past transgressions that rightly belong to ancestors long dead. But all Americans can educate ourselves and promote the education of “our posterity” to see which remnants of those problems still haunt today’s world. If we can see clearly what wrongs were done then, we can swear as individuals and as a People never to allow such injustices to happen again.

Americans must identify the problem in order to stop it in its tracks and thus go on to create a better country. We are not those cruel, ungodly people who oppressed whole categories of human beings in centuries past. Americans must be better than that. If the past makes people uncomfortable, good. That’s what motivates us to change the world we live in. No worthwhile progress has ever come from complacency and inaction. Thomas, James, John, Ben, Alexander, and the others would want us to do that. So would Abigail.

They were counting on us being that smart.

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Suicide is Among the Leading Causes of Valley Deaths. What's Being Done About It?

The suicide rate for the San Joaquin Valley is significantly higher than the statewide rate.

By **Tim Sheehan, The Merced Focus**

A crisis counselor with the Central Valley Suicide Prevention Hotline call center in Fresno takes notes on a computer as she talks with a caller.

Over the last seven years, the suicide rate in the San Joaquin Valley has been significantly higher than the statewide rate, according to a review of state and federal data.

Across Merced, Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare counties, the overall suicide rate in the region was 10.8 per 100,000 residents – a rate about 15% higher than the statewide suicide rate of 9.4 per 100,000 residents – from 2018 through 2024.

During that period, almost 3,300 Valley residents died by suicide.

“It’s a huge problem,” said Amanda Nugent Divine, CEO of Fresno-based nonprofit Kings View Behavioral Health, which operates the Central Valley Suicide Prevention Lifeline. “Obviously, it’s a very permanent solution to what is often a temporary problem or a transitional problem.”

How huge is the problem? Enough to rank suicide among the 15 leading causes of death over the seven-year period in each of the Valley’s eight counties – not as high as heart disease, cancer or accidental deaths, but in the same neighborhood as kidney disease, influenza and Parkinson disease.

Those who died by suicide represent a demographically diverse cross-section of the Valley’s population, according to data retrieved from a mortality database maintained by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

They range from children under 14 to teenagers, young adults, middle-age and senior citizens. Almost three-quarters were white, and the balance included Black, Asian, Native American and other racial groups. About one-third were of Hispanic ethnicity. They include both men and women, with men outnumbering women by more than 4-to-1.

About 10% of the suicides in the eight-county region were former military servicemembers. At least 314 veterans took their own lives between 2018 and 2022, the latest year for which data is available from the California Department

of Public Health, a suicide rate of almost 30 per 100,000 vets – nearly triple the rate of the general population.

More than 1,200 victims used a gun to take their life. About 1,000 others died by hanging or strangulation, and about 250 intentionally poisoned themselves through drug overdoses or other chemical exposure.

“We know that one of the biggest risk factors is when people lose hope, and they don’t feel that it would matter if they were gone,” Nugent Divine said. ... “That seems to be sort of a common thread, where people will go ahead and take that step.”

Suicides are not only a concern in the Valley, but statewide and nationwide as well. Nationally, suicide was the 12th leading cause of death from 2018 through 2024, claiming more than 334,000 lives.

[Fresno Survivors of Suicide Loss](#), a support program for people who have lost a loved one to suicide, reports that in 2022, about 13.2 million people in the U.S. seriously thought about committing suicide, about 3.8 million made a plan to commit suicide, and 1.6 million people attempted suicide. That year, more than 49,000 people died by suicide.

A wide range of factors can play a hand in triggering suicidal thoughts or intentions in a person, and they don’t necessarily have their roots in a chronic mental health issue, said Nugent Divine, who is also a psychologist in addition to her CEO duties at Kings View.

“Not everyone who commits suicide necessarily has a mental illness,” she said. “They may be suffering from a depression that is situational” rather than a longer-term diagnosed condition. “It may be completely circumstantial, obviously the loss of a job, loss of marriage. ... We see it in older folks who have just gotten a (medical) diagnosis they feel they cannot manage, or maybe they’re alone, or there’s fear.”

She also said drug and alcohol use can be contributing factors.

“We know that alcohol amplifies emotions,” she said. “We know that a number of other drugs amplify emotions.”

Alcohol and drugs not only impair judgment, she said, but also lower inhibitions that might ordinarily override a person’s desire to take their own life.

“There are people who survived their attempt, and they’ve shared that they used (drugs or alcohol) to be able to do it,” she added. “They shared that they would not have been able to do it if they had not used that substance.”

Still, societal perceptions about suicide – and an awkwardness about openly discussing the issue – can serve to dissuade people from seeking help because of the stigma associated with mental illness.

“You know, even talking about that is scary. I know some people are like, ‘Let’s not talk about that, because I don’t want to make people feel like it’s a good solution,’” Nugent

Divine said. “Of course it’s not a good solution.”

“We firmly believe that the more we talk about it, the better we’ll get at preventing it,” she added. “Not talking about it does not keep people safe. It doesn’t work that way.”

That’s the idea behind the [988 nationwide suicide prevention lifeline](#) system and crisis call centers across the U.S. The Central Valley Suicide Prevention Hotline is one of 12 such centers in California.

The counselors who field calls for the Valley hotline undergo 160 hours of training to prepare them for providing an empathetic and analytical ear for callers in crisis, said Karla Luna, who worked the phones at the Fresno call center for about six years before becoming the director of the crisis line about a year and a half ago.

Reaching out to be heard

The 988 system enables people to quickly call or text for help using the three-digit number. People can also chat with a counselor online at [chat.988lifeline.org](#). The call centers and text and chat systems are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. The service is free of charge and confidential for callers.

“A lot of it is just providing a listening ear,” Luna said. “A lot of the time that’s really all people need. They just

continued on page 11

THE MERCED
FOCUS



Gary Thomas: O Yes He's A Great Poet

Gary Thomas, a retired English teacher, is a founding member of the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center (MoSt.) A full-length poetry collection, *All the Connecting Lights*, was released in August 2022 from Finishing Line Press. His latest collection, *O Yes We Breathe*, was published in November 2024 by Manzanita Writers Press.



A Gathering of Voices is very pleased that Mr. Thomas is sharing several of his superb poems in this issue of *Stanislaus Connections*.

Sortasonnet # I've Lost Track

A month of sonnets that went sideways, transmuted to rambles and off-the-rails reveries – in short, a pretty perfect moon's run through which new life and old embraced, made a meal of the sort of moments

we usually blink our way past. Fast moods, short memories written down this time. Saved up for stranger days to ring the bell and be welcomed. Talk things over, wringing the truth and cussedness from one day's journey

into the nexts. Equal parts tinker toys, internalized deadlines, duct-taped metaphors, and ten-foot stares at the screen or sometime page reluctant to tell its story straight. Whispers from behind or just outside. That reach toward another hand.

So it's an unrhymed unnumbered cycle with poker cards in its spokes, slapping out some kind of song down the road.

Gary Thomas
30 April 2023

Bye

This is how we say goodbye without welling up, flowing over into clichés like these first two lines. Farewell, old friend, forty-year job, youth, recollection of that first love or of anything. Fare Well, or as Methodists say, *Traveling Mercies*. However *adieu* suits you, know you were and are loved *in extremis* and at leisure. Go and be glad of it.

Gary Thomas
12 May 2025



That Being Said

*and may you in your innocence
sail through this to that — Lucille Clifton,
"blessing the boats"*

*You don't ever let go of the thread. —
William Stafford, "The Way It Is"*

First day of each school year, I read
"You Reading This, Be Ready"
to all classes. A few days later, "praise
song" coaxed some giggles and respect
for those gone on or just about.

In those days of other wars, daily poems
were boats bearing us and our fears
to shores we had to want to see
for their brightnesses. Sometimes crude
rafts of prose replaced transcendence and

we clutched at cables on attention span bridges
between boredom and boundless prospects.
Sometimes all that suspended our disbelief
was a line by Levertov, a verse by Oliver,
a sonnet by Neruda beginning *I do not love you*

or Naomi's poem about a man carrying his son in the
rain——

*We're not going to be able
to live in this world
if we're not willing to do what he's doing
with one another.*

*The road will only be wide.
The rain will never stop falling.*

The brave ones retooled lumps in their throats
into umbrellas and embraces, handed me
their own haiku and ekphrastika in secret

after class, or turned in clutches of poems
handwritten in peacock blue ink that might
as well have been titled *I Trust You with This*——
and I always reckoned they could, and that
Lucille and Bill and Denise and Mary nodded.

Today a young man came to replace my cable modem,
recognized me as a former junior high taskmaster.
I didn't quote from Williams' red wheelbarrow,
even though the sky was drizzling enough
to glaze dozens of brick-red handcarts

Instead, that old thread tugged at me
until I could close my eyes and see

white chickens again inside and outside
the eight frail lines of their fence.
All that unfolds from now on

or at least this whittled-down hour
comes from my withered hand
holding a constant thread, watching
boats departing, returning, waiting
to be kissed by a blessed new wind.

Gary Thomas
26 April 2025

Aubade with Dregs and Song Sparrows

Insert mild oaths here

as I plod downstairs
to the kitchen, realize

I forgot last night
to prep fresh French roast
and filtered water
and what's left in the pot
is foul and gritty guck
but fills a whole mug to glug
and I'm not proud enough
not to.

I wince to swallow such bitter sludge,
brew a fresh batch, wait out the steep time,
spot a song sparrow perched on the skeleton
of our rusty backyard armillary sphere.

He's full of himself this early in the day,
this late in April, his trills and trials
to entice——his arias of allure as if
he were Don Giovanni——also toll
like the first four notes of Beethoven's

Fifth to warn away competitors,
serving, too, as perfect accompaniment to
these final hissing whooshing movements
of strong coffee making itself despite me.

This is not a dawn song. This is just attentiveness
revving up the only way it can today: caffeineation
combined with avian improvisation overheard.
This is Monday telling me *but wait, there's more.*

Gary Thomas
21 April 2025

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

Streaming on www.kcbpradio.org

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

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

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

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-renown composers - Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Ravel, Copland - and many more, mostly in the form of orchestral, chamber, and piano music - Saturdays, 10:00 pm.

The Not Old – Better Show - fascinating, high-energy program of big-name guests, inspiring role models, interesting topics, with entertaining host and former Modestan, Paul Vogelzang – Fridays, 2:00 pm, Saturdays, 12:30 pm.

Down on the Farm - topics important for our San

Joaquin agriculture with Madera organic farmer Tom Willey - Saturdays, 6 am

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

The Well-Being of the Community, Your Family, and You 11:00 am to 1:00 pm Thursdays.

Live, Bilingual in Spanish & English.

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

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

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

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

Arts of the San Joaquin Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - Mondays, 8:00 pm; Tuesdays, 9:00 am & Wednesdays, 8:00 pm. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp> and on Spotify

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

Modesto Sound - California Audio Roots Project

(CARP) – Tuesdays 5:30 pm, Wednesdays 11:30 am, & Sundays 11:00 am & 4:30 pm.

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

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

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

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. Boyett, 6 pm Thursdays. Replays Saturdays, 9 pm & Tuesdays 11 pm.

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

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

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

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

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

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Suicide is Among the Leading Causes of Valley Deaths

from page 8

need someone to talk to at the time. They maybe don't have that support system at home, or maybe it's a situation where they just don't feel comfortable talking to the people around them of what they're going through and what's going on, and it's a little bit easier to talk to a counselor."

When a caller dials 988, they have an option to speak to someone in English or Spanish. There are also options for military veterans and for LGBTQ callers – segments of the population that have been shown to be at higher risk for suicide.

Once connected, a counselor will explore with the caller what led them to reach out for help, Luna said. Counselors then go through a suicide assessment and talk the caller through a safety plan.

Sometimes, the caller is a person who is concerned that a friend or loved one may be considering suicide, and counselors provide guidance or resources. In some instances, if the caller agrees to it, the counselor will reach out to see if the subject of concern is willing to talk about their situation.

More than numbers

People who have taken their own lives are more than mere numbers in a government database. They were people with names and stories, survived by anguished families and friends who in many cases are left wondering: why?

Those are the people who feel "profound guilt, that there was something they missed, that they could have done more and it's their fault," Nugent Divine said. "Survivor guilt is overwhelming."

The suicide of a family member, she added, "changes their lives forever. It's never the same again."

Family members and friends often relate that while a victim may have been experiencing depression for several years, "more often than not it's the family that says they were doing so well ... that for the last six months they'd been thriving," Nugent Divine said. (See "Suicide warning signs" near the end of this article.)

That in itself can be a red flag, she added, because "people that suffered from a severe depression, when they decided to take their own life and had a plan, sometimes their mood lifted because they felt it was going to be over, that this was about to get better, ... that all that pain was going to be over."

Mental health stigma is a roadblock

One of the big challenges to getting people considering suicide to reach out for help is the societal stigma associated with mental illness, Nugent Divine said.

"When the body breaks down, maybe you have to take insulin shots, or you get cancer and you have to get treatment for that, and nobody blames you, you're not at fault," she said. "But with the brain, just because of the nature of it, we seem to believe that if the person just tried harder, or maybe they weren't a 'difficult' person, they wouldn't have this."

Many people manage to function well in society despite being treated for severe mental illnesses, she said. "And then there are people, like most of the rest of the world, who maybe have suffered from one depression in their lifetime, and it was hell, but they emerged on the other side

and never had another one."

Nugent Divine said the stigma is powerful enough that some people who seek clinical help ask to be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder because they think that makes their situation or experience less shameful.

"Because it implies that you did something worthwhile and you became a victim of something," she said. "We'll have people that have a mental health diagnosis, but do not want to be given that. They want the label of PTSD because people treat them differently."

LGBTQ+ youth especially at risk

Social stigma extends in particular to the LGBTQ+ community – a demographic acknowledged to be at greater risk for depression and suicide, Nugent Divine said.

A nationwide [survey of youth risk behaviors](#) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control in 2023 – and since disavowed by the Trump administration – revealed that 65% of high school students who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer had experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in the prior year.

That's more than double the percentage of their heterosexual or cisgender peers, and the highest percentage of any gender, orientation, race or ethnic demographic.

More than 40% of LGBTQ+ students responding to the survey reported they had seriously considered attempting suicide over the previous year; 32% had made a suicide plan; and 20% had attempted suicide. Each of those percentages was higher than those of any other group.

But in a [statement atop the survey results web page](#), the Trump administration denounced the survey results related to gender identity as "extremely inaccurate and disconnected from the immutable biological reality that there are two sexes, male and female."

"The Trump Administration rejects gender ideology and condemns the harm it causes to children, ..." the statement continues. "This page does not reflect biological reality and therefore the Administration and this (Health and Human Services) Department rejects it."

The web page was disabled shortly after President Donald Trump took office in January in accordance with one of his executive orders, but the statement adds that a court order required the Trump administration and HHS to restore the website.

But Trump's views of gender and sexual orientation continue to be reflected in budget legislation moving through Congress that would discontinue suicide prevention efforts geared specifically toward the LGBTQ+ community.

[KFF.org](#), a health news service, reports that the administration's budget request for 2025-26 would maintain overall funding levels for the 988 suicide prevention lifeline system, "but eliminates dedicated funding for the LGBTQ+ service."

The administration also took steps in February to remove any promotional materials for the 988 LGBTQ+ line from the website of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, an agency within the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

Such moves are not without potential consequences for

would-be callers to the 988 hotline.

"The people that are most compassionate about those who are struggling are the people that have struggled with it, that's the people that get it," Nugent Divine said. "We have to increase our ability ... to actually look and imagine what it may be like for someone."

Luna, the Valley hotline director, expressed a similar concern.

"We do find that a lot of the times when we do get individuals, maybe in a particular group, whether it's LGBTQ or Spanish speakers or veterans, a lot of the times they feel more comfortable talking to someone who can relate to their situation," Luna said. "That's very important ... when you're building rapport and when you're connecting with someone."

"To me, it's like we're making this progress (and then) having these lines shut down," she added. "It almost seems like we're going a little backwards."

Suicide warning signs

The [National Institute of Mental Health](#) details some indicators that a person may be thinking about suicide.

Talking about: Wanting to die, great guilt or shame, or being a burden to others.

Feeling: Empty, hopeless, trapped or having no reason to live; extreme sadness, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage; unbearable emotional or physical pain.

Changing behavior, such as: Making a plan or researching ways to die; withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will; taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast; displaying extreme mood swings; eating or sleeping less; or using drugs or alcohol more often.

Getting crisis help

If you or someone you know exhibit some of the warning signs of suicidal thoughts or behavior, the National Institute of Mental Health urges seeking help "as soon as possible."

The Central Valley Suicide Prevention Hotline offers a range of information and resources at its website, [www.centralvalleysuicidepreventionhotline.org](#). The hotline and website are a program of Fresno-based Kings View Behavioral Health. Persons in crisis can reach out any time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year, including holidays:

Call 988 to speak with a suicide crisis counselor.

Text 988 for a text chat with suicide crisis counselor.

Visit [chat.988lifeline.org](#) for an online chat with a suicide crisis counselor.

In Kern County, the 988 hotline connects with Kern County Behavioral Health Services.

Tim Sheehan is the Health Reporting Fellow at the nonprofit [Central Valley Journalism Collaborative](#). The fellowship is supported by a grant from the [Fresno State Institute for Media and Public Trust](#). CVJC student research assistant Lauren Aiello contributed to this report. Contact Tim Sheehan at tim@cvlocaljournalism.org.

NOTE: See the [article online](#) for the graphics not included here.

calendar

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

JULY

Kruse Lucas Art Gallery's Annual Graffiti Exhibit features Donna Wayman-Maurer's Classic Car paintings in July and August, as part of the 26th Annual Graffiti Festival, located at 525 Tully Road, Modesto. Open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding holidays.

MAPS - Modesto Area Partners in Science: Free MJC science programs on Fridays in MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 pm., unless noted otherwise. TBA FALL.

Modesto Science Colloquium, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free to the Public. Talks recorded for the Science Colloquium's YouTube Site. TBA FALL.

The Prospect Theatre: 24/25 season has continuing offerings. Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2024-2025-season/>

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

8 TUES: VIGIL: DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Info: Call the Center at 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

20 SUN: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society present *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/gentlemen-prefer-blondes-072025/>

22 TUES: VIGIL: DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Info: Call the Center at 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

AUGUST

5 TUES: VIGIL: DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Info: Call the Center at 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

6 WED: Join the Modesto Peace/Life Center's Annual Hiroshima Remembrance and Potluck at the southeastern corner of Graceada Park at Sycamore and Needham, Modesto, 6:00 PM. Bring food, drinks, your own table service, a lawn chair, a hat, water, and a candle if possible. We will gather with candlelight near sunset.

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

17 SUN: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society present *Silence of the Lambs*, 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/the-silence-of-the-lambs-082025/>

19 TUES: VIGIL: DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Info: Call the Center at 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org

LOOKING AHEAD

October 24: MPLC's Harvest Gathering, 5:00 pm. Location TBA.

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 jean.cvdc@gmail.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: cfmodestoriverbank@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.

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 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; For ZOOM link, visit <https://www.naacpmolestostanislaus.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/>

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.

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

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.

The GAP. A place of support for Christian parents of LGBTQ+ or questioning kids every Wednesday 6:30 pm 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

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Modesto Peace/Life Center **VIGILs:** held EVERY OTHER TUESDAY of the month at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:30-5:30 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.

been doing for over a decade. Fun and Easy. JOIN ME! Donations accepted but optional. Call 209.495.6608 or email Orlando Arreygue, CMTRYT,orlando@arreygue.com

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

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: jpmoestodo@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>

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

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.

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

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=LLB8Y19zZg660qHCXGoC6ojQ&index=1>

SIERRA CLUB: Yokuts group. Regular meetings, third Friday, Office of Valley Improvement 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/>

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

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

CALPRIDE STANISLAUS

Peer Support Groups

Hosted at CalPride Stanislaus
1202 H Street #C, 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+.

Folk 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 1202 H Street #C, 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+.