STANISLAUS
connections
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Echoes of the Ancestors: A Central Valley Chicana's Journey to the Motherland

By MELANIE BERRU

To honor Latinx Heritage Month, I am proud to highlight a specific positionality within the Latinx diaspora. As a third-generation Mexican (American)—Mexican by ethnicity, American by colonial-defined citizenship, and Chicana by choice—I navigate a bicultural identity. This article is for those who see their reflection in these words, for those living in the in-betweenness of Mexican-American, existing on the hyphen—a hybrid world that becomes a world of its own. As Gloria Anzaldua asserts, Nepantla is a transformative space between two worlds that births our consciousness, or as Luis Rodriguez claims, a third culture: Chicano*.

Whether I use Chicano* to refer to being Mexican-American or as a socio-political term to reject colonized white supremacy, this identity resonates deeply within our communities. You can hear informal conversations about living "in the betweenness" at BBQs, in academic hallways, at protests, at lowrider car shows, and in living rooms. It is the notion of being too Mexican for (white) Americans and too American for Mexicans.

Chicanos (a, x) are not a monolithic culture. We are on a spectrum, encompassing Afro-Chicanos, morenos, bronze hues, and pale-skinned Chicanos; those who speak Castilian Spanish, regional Mexican Spanish, hood Spanish, Calo, to those whose tongues dance beautifully between Spanish and English within each sentence, or those who know just enough Spanish to order from their favorite taco truck, and finally to those who don't speak Spanish at all or understand more than their lips can speak. The reasons for this linguistic diversity are rooted in our colonial history. To understand how we, as a people, show up today, we must explore the histories and social contexts that form our present-day realities. We are a mosaic, beautiful across the spectrum of class, race, gender, and sexual orientation, with a distinct reality shaped by living between cultural identities. Often, I don't feel like I belong to either world, but I have grown to find shelter in this third culture.

I grew up in a working-class family, where my neighbors were predominantly brown, yet the school's teachers were white. My childhood home was filled with the crackling sounds of Motown, Tex-Mex, disco, and funk on vinyl, and Cheech and Chong would be playing on our TV. English was spoken in my home, and Spanish was reserved for my maternal grandparent's home, the main place where I answered them in English because it was easier than exposing them to the embarrassment of my broken Spanish. And while they were both born in this country, my grandmother's cooking made their home sound, taste, and feel more like Mexico.

My introduction to the socio-political

Chicano identity began in an ethnic studies college course in the late 90s, during the aftermath of Proposition 187, a racist legislation aimed at banning undocumented immigrants from using the state's public services. Although it was never enacted, it reflected the era's sentiment. In that classroom, I discovered my history through my people's lens and realized I was Chicana. This identity was not just a label but a social and political lens and lifestyle that I embraced. My vision became clear: I believed in uplifting my community, self-determination, and pride in my culture. I rejected a watered-down, assimilated version of myself to make others comfortable with my realities. The veil of ethnic cultural assimilation lifted, revealing the beauty of my community.

With this newfound consciousness, I embarked on a journey of unlearning and relearning. I began acknowledging and decentering the whiteness in Spanish culture while making room for our Indigenous roots and African ancestry. At 19, I finally understood who I was, and it was liberating! I set a goal to visit Mexico City, to touch the ruins of Teotihuacan with my own hands, and reconnect with my ancestral roots.

It took over twenty years to fulfill this dream. Despite traveling to various parts of Mexico, barriers kept me from the capital until I recognized the importance of sacred timing. At 46, I finally made it to Mexico

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MAPS Showcase of Scintillating Experts

A gateway for the exploration of the wonders and mysteries surrounding us. MJC West Campus Sierra Hall 132* at 7:30 pm, FREE.

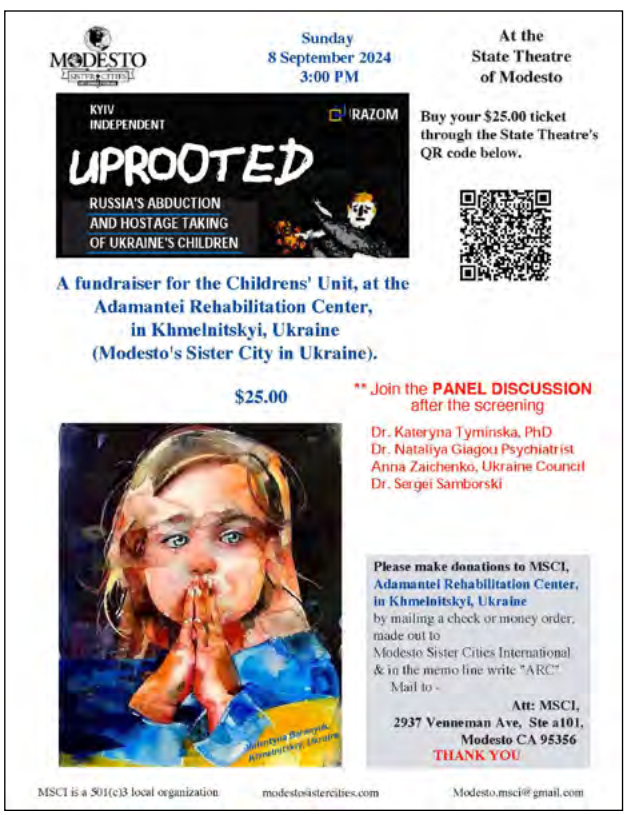
Friday, Sept. 20: Dr. Sean Lyon, UC Merced. "All About Birds, Stories in the Skins, Reading the Specimens of the Past to Guide the Future." https://www.seanclyon.com/my-story

Saturday, Sept. 21: *MJC West Campus Science Center, MAPS, and the Great Valley Museum present a Family Festival, **Wild Planet Day** featuring Sean Lyon and other animal experts with hands-on exhibits, 10 am – 3 pm. Huge Family Fun Day!

Fri., Oct. 18: Dr. Xinnan Du. The Kavli Institute for Particle Astrophysics and Cosmology at Stanford. "Do Galaxies Breathe, Too?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPyQImNkO6E https://www.linkedin.com/in/xinnan-du/

Fri., Nov. 14: Dr. Sarah Wheeler, Lab director of the Yolo-Sacramento Mosquito and Vector Control District. "Real-time Monitoring of Mosquito-spread Viruses in the Central Valley."

https://www.eventscribe.net/2023/AMCA/fsPopup.asp?Mode=presenterInfo&PresenterID=1461662



Modesto Science Colloquium Fall 2024

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

Sept 11: Georget Oraha, Instructor of Biology, Modesto Junior College. *Tethered Through Turbulence: Human & Environmental Impacts on Mussel Attachment***.** Discover the resilience of *Mytilus californianus,* the California mussel, as it navigates extreme daily temperature shifts in the rocky intertidal zone, showcasing its role as a foundational species and dominant space-holder in this dynamic environment.

Sept 25: Allison Pieretti, RN, MSN, CNS, FNP-BC, CHSE, Professor of Nursing, Modesto Junior College. *A nurse is a nurse is a nurse, right? LVN, RN, and CNA, what's are the differences?* Explore the diverse and vital roles of Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs), Registered Nurses (RNs), and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), shedding light on their distinct responsibilities, qualifications, and the crucial impact each has on the healthcare system.

Oct 9: Emily Jonagan, Fisheries Biologist, FISHBIO. *Diving into Careers in Fisheries Science***.** Learn about different career paths in fisheries science and ongoing conservation and monitoring efforts throughout California.

Oct 23: Diedre J. J. Bush, NASA Ambassador. *NASA's Citizen Science Opportunities*. NASA's citizen science projects are collaborations between scientists and interested public members. Learn how these volunteer "citizen scientists" have helped make thousands of important scientific discoveries. Open to anyone around the world, some 410 NASA citizen scientists have been named in refereed scientific publications.

Plankwalker Studios Presents "Rockin' with MJC"!

Rockin' with MJC students that is. KCBP 95.5 FM Community Radio proudly presents a series of 25 one-hour music shows created by Modesto Junior College Students as part of their Film, Television & Electronic Media (FTVE) class under the instruction of Janeiro Freeda.

For all you night owls out there, our show kicks off at 1:00 a.m. every Saturday (right after Cyber Stallion), with repeats at 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays and 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays. And the best part? A brand-new program will be waiting for you each week.

Art at the Kruse Lucas Art Gallery

The Kruse Lucas Art Gallery welcomes Carolyn Rossmann, a long-time plein air artist, for September, October, and November. She has painted regionally, in the States, and abroad.

The gallery is located at 525 Tully Road, Modesto, and is open Monday through Friday, 9-5, except holidays.

MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER
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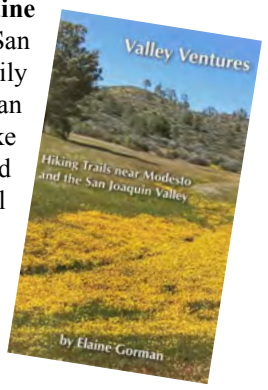
IN MEMORIAM – LAST WORDS

Posted to Facebook by Darlene Ruiz, Mother of Trevor Seever

1. Sonya Massey - “I rebuke you in the name of Jesus.”
2. George Floyd - “I can’t breathe.”
3. Eric Garner - “I can’t breathe.”
4. Michael Brown - “I don’t have a gun. Stop shooting.”
5. Philando Castile - “I wasn’t reaching for it.”
6. Breonna Taylor - “Why did you shoot me?”
7. Freddie Gray - “I need a doctor.”
8. Tamir Rice - “It’s not real.”
9. Oscar Grant - “You shot me! I got a four-year-old daughter!”
10. Laquan McDonald - No audible last words; shot while walking away.
11. Elijah McClain - “I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe. I’m just different. I’m just different, that’s all. I’m so sorry. I have no gun. I don’t do that stuff. I don’t do any fighting. Why are you attacking me?”
12. Alton Sterling - “What did I do?”
13. Walter Scott - “I’m just going home.”
14. Botham Jean - “Why did you shoot me?”
15. Stephon Clark - “Grandma, call the police.”
16. Atatiana Jefferson - “I’m here.”
17. Sandra Bland - “Why am I being apprehended?”
18. Tony McDade - “I’m not armed.”
19. Daniel Prude - “Give me your gun, I need it.”
20. John Crawford III - “It’s not real.”
21. Manuel Ellis - “I can’t breathe, sir.”
22. Amadou Diallo - “Mom, I’m going to college.”
23. Aiyana Stanley-Jones - No audible last words; shot while sleeping.
24. Terrence Crutcher - “I’m not doing anything.”
25. Sean Bell - No audible last words; shot multiple times.
26. Jonathan Ferrell - No audible last words; shot while seeking help after a car crash.
27. Ezell Ford - “It’s me, it’s me.”
28. John Crawford III - “It’s not real.”
29. Renisha McBride - No audible last words; shot while seeking help after a car accident.
30. Kenneth Chamberlain Sr. - “Why are you doing this to me?”
31. Tamir Rice - “It’s not real.”
32. Eric Harris - “I’m losing my breath.”
33. Jamar Clark - “Please don’t let me die.”
34. Rayshard Brooks - “I don’t want to hurt you.”
35. Alfred Olango - “Please don’t shoot.”
36. Shantel Davis - “What did I do?”
37. Kendra James - “Please don’t kill me.”
38. Akai Gurley - No audible last words; shot in a dark stairwell.
39. Miriam Carey - No audible last words; shot in her car.
40. Timothy Russell - No audible last words; shot during a car chase.
41. Malissa Williams - No audible last words; shot during a car chase.

42. Jordan Edwards - No audible last words; shot while leaving a party.
43. Yvette Smith - “I’m coming out.”
44. Jordan Davis - No audible last words; shot at a gas station.
45. Victor White III - No audible last words; died in police custody.
46. Dontre Hamilton - No audible last words; shot in a park.
47. Eric Reason - No audible last words; shot during a dispute.
48. Emantic “EJ” Bradford Jr. - No audible last words; shot in a mall.
49. Oscar Grant - “You shot me! I got a four-year-old daughter!”
50. Clinton Allen - No audible last words; shot during an encounter.
51. Ronnell Foster - No audible last words; shot during a foot chase.
52. Tony Robinson - No audible last words; shot during an altercation.
53. Charly Keunang - No audible last words; shot during an altercation.
54. Samuel DuBose - “I didn’t even do nothing.”
55. Quintonio LeGrier - “I’m sorry.”
56. Bettie Jones - “I’ve been shot.”
57. India Kager - No audible last words; shot in a car.
58. Keith Lamont Scott - “Don’t shoot him. He has no weapon.”
59. Jordan Baker - No audible last words; shot during a confrontation.
60. Christian Taylor - No audible last words; shot during a confrontation.
61. Michael Dean - No audible last words; shot during a traffic stop.
62. Rumain Brisbon - No audible last words; shot during an altercation.
63. Gregory Gunn - No audible last words; shot during an encounter.
64. Yuvette Henderson - No audible last words; shot during a confrontation.
65. David Joseph - No audible last words; shot during a confrontation.
66. Calvin Reid - No audible last words; died in police custody.
67. Antonio Zambrano-Montes - No audible last words; shot during an encounter.
68. Zachary Hammond - “Why did you shoot me?”
69. Anthony Hill - No audible last words; shot while naked and unarmed.
70. Saheed Vassell - No audible last words; shot while holding a metal pipe.
71. Willie McCoy - No audible last words; shot while sleeping in a car.
72. Robert White - No audible last words; shot during an altercation.
73. Micheal Lorenzo Dean - No audible last words; shot during a traffic stop.
74. Monique Tillman - “I didn’t do anything wrong.”
75. Randy Evans - No audible last words; died in police custody.
76. Vernell Bing Jr. - No audible last words; shot during a car chase.
77. Cameron Massey - No audible last words; shot during an altercation.
78. DeAndre Ballard - No audible last words; shot during a confrontation.
79. Maurice Gordon - “Can you let me out?”
80. Rayshard Brooks - “I don’t want to hurt you.”
81. Pierre Loury - No audible last words; shot during a foot chase.
82. Deborah Danner - “I’m not feeling well.”
83. Jason Harrison - “I’m sick.”
84. Corey Jones - “Hold on, wait!”
85. Keith Childress - “Don’t shoot.”
86. Justine Damond - No audible last words; shot after calling 911.
87. Amilcar Perez-Lopez - No audible last words; shot during an altercation.
88. Mario Woods - “I’m not going to shoot you.”
89. William Chapman II - “Don’t shoot me.”
90. Chad Robertson - No audible last words; shot while running away.
91. Charlie Willie Kunzelman - No audible last words; shot during a confrontation.
92. Terrence Sterling - No audible last words; shot during a traffic stop.
93. Sylville Smith - “Why are you harassing me?”
94. Bruce Kelley Jr. - No audible last words; shot during an altercation.
95. Korryn Gaines - No audible last words; shot during a standoff.
96. Maurice Granton Jr. - No audible last words; shot during a foot chase.
97. Paul O’Neal - No audible last words; shot during a car chase.
98. Antwon Rose II - “Why are they shooting?”
99. Patrick Harmon - “I’ll go with you.”
100. Aaron Bailey - “Why did you shoot me?”
101. Miles Hall - “No! Don’t do it!”
102. Jesse Sarey - “I am not doing anything.”
103. Jorge Antonio Gomez - “I’m walking to my car.”
104. Fermin Vincent Valenzuela Jr. - “I CAN’T BREATHE SOMEBODY PLEASE HELP ME.” Anthony Nunez - NEEDED HELP.
105. Derreck Mack- no audible last words. Shot twice in his back. While his hands were raised.
106. Shawn Brown -No audible last words. Shot while laying face down following police commands.
107. Jason Alderman - no audible last words. Shot in back seven times, almost on knees.
108. Trevor Seever - I can’t breathe! I don’t have anything!! I am dying.

Check Out the New Book on Local Hiking!



***VALLEY VENTURES*, by Elaine Gorman,** offers 20 hikes in the San Joaquin Valley of California, easily accessible from Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties. The narrative hike descriptions include natural and cultural history, mileage, special attractions, directions/drive time, and hiking tips. All hikes are within a two-hour driving range and include hikes in the San Joaquin Valley, the foothills, and the eastern Bay Area.

Price: $12 from the author, $14 at Bookish in Modesto (Roseburg Square), $14 via snail mail. Cash or check. Send check to 1521 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95357-0908.

The author is Vice-Chair of the Mother Lode Sierra Club, Yokuts Group, and a long-time Modesto Peace/Life Center member.

The Falling Leaf Boutique & Pantry Serves the Community

The First United Methodist Church is a community of people who care about their neighbors. For decades, we have supported local nonprofits with events like Home for the Holidays, the Habitat for Humanity Ecumenical Concert, the Apple Pie Fundraiser, and many other special events and projects. These various fundraisers have benefited the needs of the most vulnerable individuals in this community.

The Falling Leaf Boutique & Pantry
First United Methodist Church
Fellowship Hall
www.firstumcmodesto.org

This year's 4th Annual Falling Leaf Boutique and Pantry is focused on raising funds to help alleviate mental health issues and food insecurity. The beneficiaries chosen by the event committee are as follows:

Center for Human Services.

The Pirates Pantry, Modesto Junior College.

The Warrior's Pantry, CSU Stanislaus.

On Saturday, October 5th, a variety of items for the home, including handmade gifts, books, puzzles, potted plants, linens, and so much more, will be featured, all in the spirit of the fall season. Hours of love and dedication are put into making these goods with the hope of serving the needs of others.

The event will be held in the church's Fellowship Hall at 850 16th St. in downtown Modesto from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

To You The Community: Push Library Fundraiser Over the Top!

By PATTY GUERRA

Plenty of big, impressive gifts have helped the Friends of the Modesto Library close in on its $3 million fundraising goal.

Organizations, individuals, and businesses have contributed a total of $2.44 million toward the effort to augment a major renovation project at the main branch of the Stanislaus County library. Most recently, Modesto City Council approved a contribution of $500,000 toward the project.

The downtown Modesto library has long since outgrown its current I Street location, where it's been for more than 50 years. Since then, the city's population has more than tripled, and the services offered through the library have evolved as well. Outside of the story times, computer access, and workshops, the library is a special place to build community.

The library will close next year for a $24 million renovation, funded through a variety of public sources. The renovation will include asbestos abatement; ADA corrections in the Children's Story Time Room and public restrooms; ceiling tile replacement and LED lighting upgrade; improvements to HVAC system and elevator; security camera installation; upgraded wiring for IT; updated furnishings, fixtures (carpet, paint) and equipment.

Those changes are much-needed and will vastly improve the library's visitor experience. The Friends' campaign aims to make additional improvements, such as upgraded furnishings and fixtures (in public areas, including the auditorium) and audiovisual improvements to support programming and public service in multiple spaces.

Now, organizers are looking to the community to put the campaign over the top.

"While major donors have gotten us close to our goal, we are now relying on the average library lover to get us across the finish line," said campaign co-chair Lynn Dickerson. "From the beginning, this campaign has been one for donors of all sizes. There will be a permanent book in the newly remodeled library that lists the names of every person who made a contribution to the campaign. We want parents and grandparents to be able to show their little people their family's name and feel pride that they were part of such a great project that will benefit Modestans for years to come."

Community support in all forms is vital to the campaign's success, added co-chair Katy Menges.

"This library campaign has always been about the People's Library," she said. "We have always believed that everyone should have access and a way to contribute to making it a legacy for our future. No gift is too small, and every gift counts to reaching our goal! Your $25 gift is just as valuable as a foundation's gift! It all adds up to creating a Library that we all use and care about!"

Campaign volunteers are all smiles after updating the thermometer to show we now have $2.4 million in donations. (L to R) Jane Manley, Lynn Dickerson, Katy Menges, Melissa Monday, Denise Nordell.

And the community does use the library. In the fiscal year 2022-23, the Modesto Library had 221,000 visitors who checked out 460,000 books and materials. It also connected people to essential services and resources, such as WiFi, for those unable to access it at home, helping them create resumes and look for employment. In that same year, 18,525 computer sessions were held.

The library also hosts workshops, story times, and events for individuals and families. With the Capital Campaign, supporters hope to make the facility an even more welcoming environment, with a reimagined area for young children, upgrades to the McHenry Room auditorium, and even a gallery featuring the works of local artists.

An auxiliary site, yet to be announced, will offer residents access to books and services during the library's closure next year. Residents also will be able to visit the library's other branches in surrounding communities.

https://modestolibraryfriends.org/ website has more information on the fundraising effort, including how to donate. Donations may be sent to PO Box 4565, Modesto, CA 95352-4565.

Project 2025's Plan To Gut Checks and Balances Harms California

By COLIN SEEBERGER, Center for American Progress

The new authoritarian playbook would devastate residents of California in many ways. Project 2025 is a plan to gut America's system of checks and balances in order to enact an extreme, far-right agenda that would hurt all Americans. The plan proposes taking power away from everyday people to give politicians, judges, and corporations more control over Americans' lives. Here are specific ways that Project 2025 harms residents of California:

Taxes ■ Project 2025 shifts the tax burden from the wealthy onto the middle class. Under the plan, the typical family of four in California would see a tax increase of $3,201 per year, while 45,000 households in America reporting more than $10 million in income would each see an average annual tax cut of $1.5 million.

Social Security ■ Project 2025 cuts Social Security by raising the retirement age for roughly 76 percent of California residents—29,577,660 people. Project 2025 authors have endorsed and supported plans similar to the two most recent Republican Study Committee budget proposals, which propose increasing the Social Security retirement age from 67 to 69. Doing so would cut benefits by $4,100 to $8,900 after just one year, depending on when one claims Social Security. A median-wage retiree would lose $46,000 to $100,000 over 10 years.

Healthcare ■ Project 2025 proposes imposing "limits or lifetime caps on [Medicaid] benefits." In California, 3,467,900 Medicaid enrollees would be at risk of losing coverage because they are low-income and lack access to alternative, affordable coverage.

■ The plan would raise the cost of prescription drugs for up to 2,180,530 people in California by eliminating out-of-pocket Medicare drug cost limits. It also blocks the government from negotiating for lower drug prices.

Abortion Rights and Contraception ■ Project 2025 eliminates some emergency contraception medications from free preventive care requirements, meaning 5,560,000 women in California would lose guaranteed access to free emergency contraception.

■ The plan instructs the U.S. Department of Justice to misapply the Comstock Act, a pair of laws from 1873 and 1909, to criminalize the mailing of medication abortion. Doing so would result in an effective abortion ban nationwide, even in states where abortion is legal.

■ The plan instructs the Department of Justice to take legal action against local officials who refuse to bring cases against women and doctors who violate state abortion bans.

Childcare ■ Project 2025 eliminates Head Start, which provides access to no-cost childcare— among other services—for 85,236 low-income children in California. Eliminating Head Start would wipe out a critical supply of child care in rural and other underserved communities that already face a lack of child care slots.

Student Loans ■ Project 2025 replaces income-driven repayment (IDR) plans with a one-size-fitsall program that would increase payments for all borrowers enrolled in existing IDR plans, including the Biden-Harris administration's Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) Plan. Under Project 2025, 597,300 borrowers in California enrolled in SAVE would pay $2,700 to $4,100 more each year.

Public Education ■ Project 2025 eliminates the U.S. Department of Education, including Title I, which provides funds to ensure schools serving low-income students have additional resources to deliver a high-quality education beyond that which can be supported by local property tax revenue. Ending Title I would lead to the loss of 15,897 teaching positions, which serve 346,553 students, in California.

https://www.americanprogress.org/article/fact-sheets-the-harmful-effects-of-project-2025-by-state/?

"The president of the United States would be liable to be impeached, tried, and upon conviction of treason, bribery, or other high crimes or misdemeanors, removed from office; and would afterwards be liable to prosecution and punishment in the ordinary course of law."

Alexander Hamilton, March 14, 1788
The Federalist, Chapter 69

Echoes of the Ancestors from page 1

City, Tenochtitlan, our beloved Anahuac. This spiritual journey to a place I had never visited felt like a sacred calling back "home," with the echoes of my ancestors beckoning, perhaps with messages for the second half of my life.

My trip to Mexico City was a journey of a lifetime. I saw my reflection in the residents' facial features, mannerisms, art, food, style, and history. Though I live in the in-betweenness, Mexico City welcomed me, even with my broken Spanish and Americanized ways. The struggle for identity as Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, has persisted for over 500 years since the European invasion, conquest, and colonization. This history explains why some in our community align more with our European (white), Indigenous, or African heritage. It also accounts for why we can be both victims and perpetrators of white supremacy and anti-Blackness within our own communities.

I felt the profundity of this struggle while standing in the Zocalo in Mexico City. On one side were the ancient ruins of Templo Mayor, the Mexica capital; on the other stood the European Catholic Church, built atop those ruins. Between them, an Indigenous encampment praying, their feet moving to the Mexica drum, the air filled with the smell of copal, and inside the church was a statue of a Black Jesus. Surrounded by these European, Indigenous, and African influences, I saw my reflection in an Indigenous mother holding her baby, staring straight at me. Two women on different

sides of a socially constructed border, influenced by multiple cultures. Both mothers. Both birthing the next generation, who will one day make sense of it all for themselves. These juxtaposed structures, both Spanish and Native, are reminders in real time that we are part of a legacy of people who refuse to be annihilated.

For other moments, I felt at home, not straddling two worlds but being embraced by one, sure of my arrival in sacred time. Walking around the ruins of Teotihuacan felt natural, an alignment of body and spirit. I was at peace, experiencing a deep joy rooted in my soul. While the mind has limited memory, the body remembers. For once, I did not feel othered but at home, and home spoke in the language of the heart, in the sun's strong warmth, and the ground's dust. During my visit, I listened more than I spoke, in deep awe of the experience, feeling loved, accepted, and blessed.

It is now my task to make sense of it all. What messages were left for me? What do they mean? How will I use these newfound experiences to guide my journey through life? This is the fuel and compass for what lies ahead for this Chicana!

This article may be about my personal journey back to the motherland, but it is written for all those who see themselves between multiple worlds, striving to find their way. To you who live in the borderlands of identity, know that your existence and experiences matter profoundly. Reflect on the rich tapestry of your heritage and the strength it provides. While you may not know all your ancestors, they know you and have left messages for you in the whispers of the wind and the echoes of your heart. Consider a pilgrimage to the motherland; she awaits with open arms. Embrace your journey, and let it inspire you to navigate the complexities of your identity with pride, resilience, and a deep sense of belonging.

Ometeotl
Melanie Berru/ @Xicana_Mel

*I use the word Chicano as a way to tell my story and to acknowledge word count limitations and flow. I honor all folks who identify with Chicano/a/x.

More Sweeps? Why California Fails on Homelessness

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

Even before Gavin Newsom's statewide order to clear camps, Modesto's homeless people were saying Stanislaus County Sheriffs had already started arresting people with no place to go. Whether that's the case or not, jail time for homeless people is the expected outcome after the Supreme Court ruling on *Grants Pass vs Johnson* on June 28. Essentially overturning the 2018 decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that people could not be denied sleeping in public if there were no other place to go, the nation's Supreme Court has ruled sweeps and rousts of homeless people are legal and up to the discretion of cities and counties, regardless of whether or not alternative shelter is available.

Despite the suppressed but obvious glee from many state and local authorities, incarcerating California's homeless people will fail, just as years of sweeps and expenditures of billions of dollars have already failed. These tactics will fail because state and local authorities, despite years of opportunity to learn and an abundance of facts, still don't comprehend homelessness.

There are many reasons why homelessness has been an intractable enigma for California leaders, beginning with several bogus narratives that clouded people's minds from the beginning. It was Ronald Reagan who claimed,

"*You can't help those who simply will not be helped. One problem that we've had, even in the best of times, is people who are sleeping on the grates, the homeless who are homeless, you might say, by choice.*"

Even in Lincoln's time it was widely recognized that there will always be some people who need help that families, churches and charities can't provide.

That was forty years ago. Today, over 180,000 Californians have "chosen" to be homeless. Today, the fastest growing cohort of homeless people are the elderly, who everyday are "choosing" to live without showers and toilets, "choosing" to chance life on the mean streets of skid row and poverty lane, and "choosing" to be rousted by authorities whenever they lie down for a nap.

Only a few seconds of reflection would reveal the absurdity of believing that 180,000 California residents suddenly woke up one day and chose to be homeless; nonetheless, that belief dominates many people's views about homelessness, even today. The power of an early narrative, however false, can alter our minds even to the extent of distorting reality.

A Failure to Think

California's failures on homelessness aren't just due to false narratives, though false narratives do play a significant role. Especially when they handicap thought and reflection, false narratives shut down the critical analysis needed to address any problem.

Consider, for example, the word "homeless." For many, the word conjures up images of garbage and filth. It brings to mind crazed drug addicts, shoplifters and dirty bums, the dregs of society.

That image of homeless people is behind the NIMBYISM, the fear and the loathing that so many people feel about homelessness. They don't want homeless people in their neighborhoods, in their parks, and on their streets.

Many of these fears are to an extent justified. Frequently, the most visible homeless people are the mentally ill, whose disorders are often magnified by drugs. Screaming people on the streets has become a norm in too many of our cities and towns. In fact, a recent study of homeless people by UC San Francisco found that "66% were currently experiencing mental health problems." Unfortunately, rather than attribute the problem to failed systems of care for the mentally ill — especially the closure of mental institutions — we too often blame people who have impaired minds and need professional help.

Our capacity to think about homelessness is greatly reduced by what logicians call the "fallacy of composition." It's closely related to the more widely known "hasty generalization."

The homeless people we see on the streets don't necessarily represent the entire homeless population. In fact, over a third of chronically homeless people are disabled. Once you realize that typical disability incomes are around $1,000 a month, it's easy to understand why many disabled people become homeless. It's not because of choices, it's because they don't have enough money to pay the rent.

At any given time, almost two-thirds of California's homeless people are homeless for only a few months. These are the short-term homeless, people who have fallen on hard times and just need temporary assistance to get back on their feet. At one time, they would have survived in a cheap room or hotel. Those options are gone.

The cheap hotels and rooms — the flophouses and roach motels of yore —have disappeared. Gentrification, especially in major cities like San Francisco and Sacramento, hasn't only done away with cheap hotels and rooming houses, it's raised rents far beyond the capacity of many working people, hence the number of working people in major cities who live in cars, trailers, and motor homes.

Even in so-called "affordable" San Joaquin Valley cities like Modesto, where Bay Area commuters flock to snatch up houses and rentals they can afford, the average rent for a 785 square foot apartment is $1,652. The average hourly wage there is $30.48. Compare that figure to the average hourly wage in the San Francisco, Hayward and Oakland region, which is $46.86. And keep in mind that average rents in San Francisco, after a downward trend, are still over $3,000 a month.

Over the last decade, fewer than half of California's estimated need for 180,000 houses per year have actually been built. In a rational world, housing costs and housing shortages would be acknowledged as major factors in homelessness, factors beyond renters' and homeowners' control. In the fictional universe constructed by false narratives, homelessness is a choice. How much sense does that make?

The Myth of Help and Services

Corollary to Ronald Reagan's claim that people choose homelessness was his remark that, "you can't help people who simply won't be helped." It's now a settled belief among vast numbers of people that homeless people don't want help. Though that's not at all the case, it's easy to believe such a thing if you have too little acquaintance with homeless people and broken systems of care to understand their distress.

The first thing to understand about "help and services" is there is too little supply to meet the demand. The most commonly available "help" for a homeless person is a bed in a congregate shelter. Authorities often fail to acknowledge that local shelters are often full, especially during winter. Even when beds are available, there are many reasons people don't want to stay in a congregate shelter, including a history of bad experiences.

While the people who manage and staff congregate shelters are generally extraordinarily kind and competent, virtually all are overworked. Far too few are qualified to deal with the mentally and physically ill who end up in shelters simply because there's nowhere else to assign them.

Despite rules against drugs, drug use and drug sales are common in and near shelters. Shakedowns, robberies, fights, and threats are also common. For many people in distress, one or two bad incidents are more than enough to discourage them from congregate living.

Especially in faith-based shelters, mandatory prayer and lectures about the wages of sin become too much for people who come to feel they're being judged by people no better than they are. The lack of privacy in congregate shelters is especially wearing on residents who stay month after month and, sometimes, for years.

Congregate living imposes conditions many people can't meet. Shelter residents are often separated from spouses, partners, pets and friends. There are frequent encounters with the bureaucratic maze of case managers, counselors, government agencies, and non-profits, almost all of which lead directly back to that bed in the shelter, because no matter how much time and energy are directed to "help," there is not enough housing. Not enough rooms, not enough apartments, not enough houses.

The widespread belief that homeless people don't want

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help is yet another myth that enables authorities to avoid discussion of the material and structural factors that have driven homelessness throughout the state. It also permits justification for criminalizing poverty with jail time for the crime of having nowhere to sleep.

This failure to think clearly about homelessness has been a major factor in squandering billions of dollars on rousts, sweeps and arrests that do nothing more than relocate homeless people from one place to another, often only a mile or so away. Now, Governor Gavin Newsom is doubling down on sweeps as the primary tactic for managing homelessness throughout California, a tactic that to date has cost over twenty billion dollars and failed.

Modesto City Councilmember Nick Bavaro made a close study of local homelessness even before he was elected in 2022. After he got in office, he did ride-along tours with the city's law enforcement and outreach workers.

On one such ride, the city's Park Rangers team found campers at a local park and ordered them to move along.

"I went by the next day and they were across the street," said Bavaro later. "What's the point of moving them across the street?"

On another occasion, homeless people living in tents and vehicles had formed an encampment just outside city limits. When county sheriffs forced them to move, most of

the residents relocated into Bavaro's district.

A successful businessman, Bavaro is accustomed to evaluating returns on investment. He couldn't see any return on the dollars spent rousting homeless people from place to place.

"We [Modesto] have a 'Camp to Home" program,' said Bavaro. "We also need a 'Streets to Camp' program that actually gets people who have nowhere to go off the streets."

Along with two other councilmembers, Bavaro proposed the city of Modesto investigate options for safe ground for homeless people similar to programs established in Chico, San Diego, Sacramento and other California cities. The proposal was defeated by a 4-3 vote.

Now, as Governor Newsom has ordered even more sweeps, the clear message is jail time for homeless people. No one anywhere argues there is enough shelter space of California's homeless residents, nor are there enough services.

Jail Time Won't Work

California's elected authorities, including Gavin Newsom, know there are not enough shelter beds and services for homeless people. Now, according to the New York Times, Newsom has ordered state agencies, "including California State Parks and the Department of Fish and Wildlife," to emulate the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) practice of clearing homeless camps and offering services. Caltrans has cleared 11,000 campsites since 2021. Meanwhile, homeless numbers continued to grow. The Governor of California wants more sweeps.

Caltrans sweeps already have a proven record of failure. Now, cities and counties have been ordered to find places to direct homeless people as they are swept aside from freeway margins and other Caltrans property. Unless there is funding available to put those people in hotels and motels as during the pandemic, there are no other places than jail. Jail time for homeless people will just squander more money as minor offenses like trespassing will result in a catch, hold, and release program remarkable for the kind of expensive redundancies that have thwarted homeless management efforts for well over a decade.

The Myth of Enabling

Imagine if Rush Limbaugh, Robert Downey Jr. or any other celebrity drug addict were told they would have to quit using before they got treatment. Imagine that after they got treatment, they were homeless on the streets. Who would bet on them staying off drugs?

Despite the patent absurdities of the Limbaugh/Downey scenario, it's a common pattern for homeless people.

"We're not going to enable drug use," said a Modesto city official as he explained his opposition to permitted sleeping sites. Many state and local officials share the same view. They claim that providing safe places for homeless people will prevent them from "hitting bottom" and realizing they need help.

Like most every other myth about homelessness, the hitting bottom fallacy ignores reality. "Bottom" for many people never comes. That's why there are so many overdoses and deaths from drug use.

As for drug use itself, it's not only common in and around shelters, it's common in subsidized housing like Modesto's Kansas House and other projects dedicated to housing needy residents. The claim that punishing people until they hit bottom and suddenly decide to seek treatment is belied by experience, evidence, and common sense.

Many addicts, not unlike Limbaugh and Downey, have hit bottom multiple times and kept using. The difference between celebrity addicts and homeless people is that the celebrities can afford the finest treatment and have safety nets of wealth, housing, and continued care after they've stopped using. Homeless people have no such assets.

Almost no one ever asks what percentage of homeless people ever achieve such successful self-sufficiency.

The Myth of Rehab

Everyone loves the rehab story. Usually framed as a religious awakening, the rehab story's plot lines — despair, enlightenment, recovery and material success — always bring tears, applause, and standing ovations. Almost no one ever asks what percentage of homeless people ever achieve such successful self-sufficiency.

In fact, rehabilitation in terms of a self-sufficient income is an inappropriate model for the disabled, mentally ill, cognitively challenged, elderly and severely traumatized

people who make up large segments of the homeless population. These are people in distress. They need help and will always need help.

In many cases, the help will be sufficient if only in the form of subsidized housing. In other cases, housing will have to be accompanied by supervision and care, even if only minimal. Given the extraordinary resiliency and courage of many, some people will make it back into the mainstream despite the housing shortage, high rents, and insufficient wages that have been major factors in their plight. They will remain a small percentage of the total homeless population, at least until the structural and systemic factors driving homelessness have been remedied. If it happens at all, that adjustment is years away.

Denial and Wishful Thinking

From the very beginning of the homeless crisis, denial and wishful thinking have prevented recognition of the structural and systemic failures that have driven many of our most vulnerable and needy citizens onto the hard ground of homelessness. Blaming homeless people for their distress has enabled state and local authorities to dodge government's responsibility to provide the public with humane management of the humanitarian crisis of homelessness.

One-hundred seventy years ago, Abraham Lincoln defined government in his typically concise and eloquent way

The legitimate object of government, is to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but cannot do, at all, or cannot, so well do, for themselves…in their separate, and individual capacities….The desirable things which the individuals of a people cannot do, or cannot well do, for themselves, fall into two classes: those which have relation to wrongs, and those which have not…

The first — that in relation to wrongs — embraces all crimes, misdemeanors, and non-performance of contracts. The other embraces all which, in its nature, and without wrong, requires combined action, as public roads and highways, public schools, charities, pauperism, orphanage,

continued next page

THE CHAIR

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision in Grants Pass v. Johnson

The chair had been there for days
tucked in the oleanders by the sidewalk
just shy of the gas station at Bowen & McHenry
where a graying bedraggled fellow had slept with the sun beating down
but now the old man had disappeared with some of his belongings
but not all, not the chair
maybe because the chair had come up lame
and the fellow just gave up trying to fix it,
or maybe it was beyond repair, like the fellow carrying it around
sometimes felt himself to be – leastwise, that's the way
some people made him feel like he was some kind of
criminal, if they bothered to really see him at all–
anyway, whether the chair was fixable or not, the fellow had
left it here by the Baskin-Robbins sign
where he had sculpted out a cozy little hideaway
for a couple of nights and maybe the cops had rousted him
or maybe he became so desperately hungry he was
forced to forage for food
or the bad heart that had
been hounding him, wearing him down
overtook him
as he knew it would
had to happen
and he collapsed in the dust
one night and was carted off
or else
he just moved on
for reasons unknowable even to himself
his suffering leaching away at him
and he had left the chair because
it was one more thing to carry
and he no longer could drag it along
the sidewalk
not with the Valley sun blistering down
and none of it mattered, anyway
he'd be dead in days, weeks
maybe months at the outside
and who would be around to care
who would be around to care?

Tom Portwood

MeterMaids Begins 35th Year As Valley Writing Group

MeterMaids marks the beginning of its 35th Anniversary year this month, celebrating the evolving group's love of poetry, sisterhood, and family connection. While the members are a diverse mix of varied life paths, they each share a common focus on openness, respect, positivity, and mutual support.

The group's process most often involves shared prompts that inspire a synergy that is reflected in the echoes of shared words and phrases offered during the beginning of our gathering, as we greet each other and catch up on the latest in our corners of the world, followed by writing time and sharing what is written.

The poetry featured on page 9 is from the following prompts: "Lifespan of a Fact" (from a play of the same name), bailing out, scary things, senior moments, jumping ship, and Your truth, My truth, Their truth.

The magic comes as we write poems in community and grow in our writing and friendship.

California Fails on Homelessness from page 7

estates of the deceased, and the machinery of government itself.

From this it appears that if all men were just, there still would be some, though not so much, need of government.

Today, we've lost words like "pauperism" and substituted words like "homeless." But even in Lincoln's time it was widely recognized that there will always be some people who need help that families, churches and charities can't provide. Those people were called "paupers."

Paupers are poor people who can't support themselves. Sometimes their poverty is temporary because they're between jobs or have fallen behind on bills. Sometimes the poverty is permanent due to illness, disability, or the pressure of the times. What Lincoln recognized, and many others have recognized since the dawn of civilization, is that we don't turn our backs on people in distress due to poverty, especially when their plight is no fault of their own.

False narratives and a catalog of myths about homelessness have made it easy to objectify, depersonalize, dehumanize and demonize the poor, disabled, elderly, and sick who comprise the most vulnerable among us. Sweeping people aside, treating them like trash and refuse, and jailing them for the "crime' of sleeping in public are violations of the human contract we all endorse when we choose civilization over the law of the jungle.

Homeless people, as Modesto businessman and City Councilmember Nick Bavaro realized after a careful study, "have nowhere to go." The vast majority have nowhere to go due to factors beyond their control.

Homeless people, as Modesto businessman and City Councilmember Nick Bavaro realized after a careful study, "have nowhere to go." The vast majority have nowhere to go due to factors beyond their control. They are not unlike the survivors of a shipwreck, cast upon street corners, hard sidewalks and unforgiving asphalt by material forces that have swept them into the dire straits of extreme poverty.

Despite their plight, most homeless people want only a place to lie down and rest. Many will move on as soon as they have somewhere to go. Until that time, it is the duty of a civilized society to treat them like the human beings they are. The vast majority of the American people are inspired by the enduring spirit and example of Abraham Lincoln, who put pauperism into the category he considered "without wrong" but still mandating government assistance.

Today, we have made poverty "wrong," first by casting poor people into the streets and, now, by choosing to criminalize poverty. There's still time to rectify our error.

Today, we have made poverty "wrong," first by casting poor people into the streets and, now, by choosing to criminalize poverty. There's still time to rectify our error. Even after the Supreme Court's ruling and Gavin Newsom's orders, cities and counties have options other than jail time for the poorest among us.

In the end, we the people must be the ones who rise to the defense of our neighbors in distress. Homelessness is a humanitarian crisis, not least because it now threatens our own humanity. If we turn our backs on people in need, substituting jail time for the compassion and care we all owe one another under the authority of the Golden Rule, we lose the empathy and sympathy that constitute two of the most critical components of the human condition. In so doing, we lose the better parts of ourselves.

MeterMaids

Senior Moments

Senior moments
are delicious
when mixed in with the right proportion
of time
and memory
which seem to wax and wane.

Just as the heart skips a beat
when the brain's circuitry
gets crossed
and cross-crossed.

Yes, senior moments
are delicious
because for a moment
all is forgotten.
Your blank stare
and
your vacant eyes
look through time
and memories
at moments we once shared;
at buried memories
I would love to taste again.

– C Barstad

No-ing

Imagine for a moment
Erasing i-n-g.
What would happen to poems?
What would become of me?
No lurking in a corner,
No quiet solitude,
No listening to music
To set a soulful mood.
No dancing in the kitchen
Once dishes are all done;
No kissing before bedtime
To say that you're the one.
No bailing when we're way up high
Where all the air's too thin;
No jumping ship, no leaving home,
When there's no way to win.
No praying when we're all alone,
When life becomes too loud;
No hiding, no confiding,
When enveloped by the crowd.
No heating when it's cold outside,
No air conditioning--
Just sweating when the sun burns hot
And we can't do a thing.
No truth telling can happen,
Whether this be mine or yours;
One lie leads to another
'Cause when it rains, it pours.
Just a tiny suffix
That seems to be so small,
But sans the little i-n-g
There'd be no life at all.

– Andra Greenwald
July 22, 2024

Truth?

Too hot to sleep,
but what a sunrise –
pink mountain tops
as Bishop creek rushes incessantly on.
Natural air conditioning
by virtue of a wet bandana or
shirt dipped in the stream.
A fact –
a heatwave over our campsite above
Bishop.
But a few miles north,
storming sky on and off
all day,
all week.
My truth –
altitude suppresses my appetite.
I nibble and sip.
I enjoy the luscious lupine,
pink penstemon,
goldenrod,
cornflower,
pussy paws,
the tiny frog in the trail,
granite weathered to a peachy tone.
The changing light on the cliffs
surrounding us.
Your truth –
no appetite means no fuel in the tank –
you can't hike all day
without eating.

Our truth –
our friends want to give us an out.
The hail storm
and flooding in the trail
added an element of danger
to the empty tank.
My truth –
hail on this landscape
magnifies
the scent of everything I see –
so powerfully luscious and delicious.
We bail out this week.
We're not the only ones.
It's the right decision.
Back to phone calls
to my mom with her senior moments.
Where home is not the same language
as living closer to nature.
But it's more comfortable,
easier,
more muted,
faded; compared to being pelted by hail.
Shallower
than the deep gratitude I feel
for a bite of watermelon
or the unexpected, unearned kindness of a
stranger.
Back to fundamentalism on full display
as I try to catch up on the news.
Rather than slowly unfolding day
beyond the spinning news and constant
marketing.
How to capture that feeling
of soulful strolling among the
wildflowers,
the joy of laying on a slab of granite
and watching the cotton candy colors
playing buoyantly in the shifting clouds.
How to embody
the slow rapture
of watching the light change
on a lake
surrounded by sharp spires
whose relief is revealed with each passing
minute?

– Sonya Sukalski

Our Time

With the thermometer mounting
Reflecting sweltering days
And monotonous blue skies
We want to jump ship
Learn a foreign language
Be out in the World
To live the moment
In our new age.

Drama with presidential proportions
Keeps us glued to the news of facts
Told as stories
With visuals to boot.
What, no boring predictability.

Prospects of senior moments
Grounded in your truth, my truth & their
truth
Who wants to bail & miss a minute?
Historians will write their stories
In their time
While we now write ours.

– Julia Mensinger

Life Span of a Fact

A useful concept
consensually agreed upon
born in its own time
welcomed into a familiar group
here it grows; nourished, encouraged
attaches itself to an expanding matrix
of complementary ideas
goes through an adolescent phase
learns to stand up for its truth
solidify its identity
It matures
fosters agreeable companion facts
lives in blissful surety
for many years
until some outlier, philosopher or scientist
uncovers its growing lack of relevance
its cracks, its vulnerabilities
Once it was a fact
that the world was flat
what current fact
is ripe for revision?

– Karen Hansis Baker

Ship of truth

Overloaded
Your truth, my truth, their truth
I'm bailing, jumping ship
Swimming my truth into deeper waters

– Karen Hansis Baker

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CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

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

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

SCIENCE

Radio 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

Letters From An American - 11:00 a.m., Monday through Friday. Trenchant reporting and historical analysis by Heather Cox Richardson.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Biden's Cruel and Orwellian Remarks on Gaza at the DNC

A speech that denied the suffering of Palestinians was a journey into an alternative universe of political guile from a president who just six days earlier had approved sending $20 billion worth of more weapons to Israel.

By NORMAN SOLOMON, Aug 20, 2024, Common Dreams

An observation from George Orwell—"those who control the present, control the past and those who control the past control the future"—is acutely relevant to how President Biden talked about Gaza during his speech at the Democratic convention Monday night. His words fit into a messaging template now in its eleventh month, depicting the U.S. government as tirelessly seeking peace, while supplying the weapons and bombs that have enabled Israel's continual slaughter of civilians.

"We'll keep working, to bring hostages home, and end the war in Gaza, and bring peace and security to the Middle East," Biden told the cheering delegates. "As you know, I wrote a peace treaty for Gaza. A few days ago I put forward a proposal that brought us closer to doing that than we've done since October 7th."

It was a journey into an alternative universe of political guile from a president who just six days earlier had approved sending $20 billion worth of more weapons to Israel. Yet the Biden delegates in the convention hall responded with a crescendo of roaring admiration.

Applause swelled as Biden continued: "We're working around the clock, my secretary of state, to prevent a wider war and reunite hostages with their families, and surge humanitarian health and food assistance into Gaza now, to end the civilian suffering of the Palestinian people and finally, finally, finally deliver a ceasefire and end this war."

In Chicago's United Center, the president basked in adulation while claiming to be a peacemaker despite a record of literally making possible the methodical massacres of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians.

Orwell would have understood. A political reflex has been in motion from top U.S. leaders, claiming to be peace seekers while aiding and abetting the slaughter. Normalizing deception about the past sets a pattern for perpetrating such deception in the future.

And so, working inside the paradigm that Orwell described, Biden exerts control over the present, strives to control narratives about the past, and seeks to make it all seem normal, prefiguring the future.

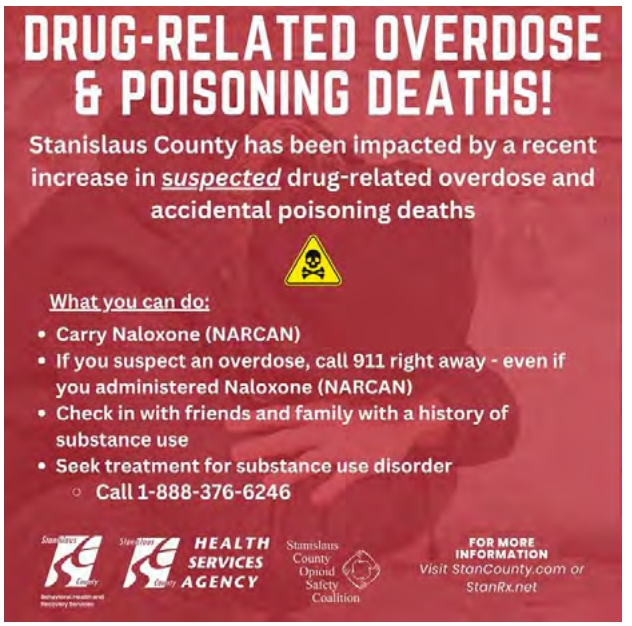
The eagerness of delegates to cheer for Biden's mendaciously absurd narrative about his administration's policies toward Gaza was, in a broader context, the convention's lovefest for the lame-duck president.

Hours before the convention opened, Peter Beinart released a short video essay anticipating the fervent adulation. "I just don't think when you're analyzing a presidency or a person, you sequester what's happened in Gaza," he said. "I mean, if you're a liberal-minded person, you believe that genocide is just about the worst thing that a country can do, and it's just about the worst thing that your country can do if your country is arming a genocide."

Beinart continued: "And it's really not that controversial anymore that this qualifies as a genocide. I read the academic writing on this. I don't see any genuine scholars of human rights international law who are saying it's not indeed there. . . . If you're gonna say something about Joe Biden, the president, Joe Biden, the man, you have to factor in what Joe Biden, the president, Joe Biden, the man, has done, vis-a-vis Gaza. It's central to his legacy. It's central to his character. And if you don't, then you're saying that Palestinian lives just don't matter, or at least they don't matter this particular day, and I think that's inhumane. I don't think we can ever say that some group of people's lives simply don't matter because it's inconvenient for us to talk about them at a particular moment."

Underscoring the grotesque moral obtuseness from the convention stage was the joyful display of generations as the president praised and embraced his offspring. Joe Biden walked off stage holding the hand of his cute little grandson, a precious child no more precious than any one of the many thousands of children the president has helped Israel to kill.

Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and the Institute for Public Accuracy executive director. His new book, ***War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine***, was published in June 2023 by The New Press.



calendar

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

september

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. **Friday, Sept. 20**: Dr. Sean Lyon, UC Merced. "All About Birds, Stories in the Skins, Reading the Specimens of the Past to Guide the Future." https://www.seanclyon.com/my-story. **Saturday, Sept. 21**: *MJC West Campus Science Center, MAPS, and the Great Valley Museum present a Family Festival, Wild Planet Day featuring Sean Lyon and other animal experts with hands-on exhibits, 10 am – 3 pm. Huge Family Fun Day!

Modesto Science Colloquium Fall Semester 2024, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free to the Public. Talks will be recorded for the Science Colloquium's YouTube Site. **Sept 11**: Georget Oraha, Instructor of Biology, Modesto Junior College. Tethered Through Turbulence: Human & Environmental Impacts on Mussel Attachment. Discover the resilience of Mytilus californianus, the California mussel. **Sept 25**: Allison Pieretti, RN, MSN, CNS, FNP-BC, CHSE, Professor of Nursing, Modesto Junior College. A nurse is a nurse is a nurse, right? LVN, RN, and CAN. What are the differences? Explore the diverse and vital roles of Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs), Registered Nurses (RNs), and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs).

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

3 TUES: VIGIL: PEACE-ISRAEL-GAZA at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:00-5:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

16 SUN: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society presents ***Lawrence of Arabia*** at 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit https://thestate.org/films/lawrence-of-arabia-092024/

LOOKING AHEAD

Saturday, October 5: Falling Leaf Boutique & Pantry at the First United Methodist Church. See article, p.2.

Friday, Nov. 1: The Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team returns to MJC for a Annual Harvest Gathering. Food, conversation. Help support KCBP 95.5 FM Community Radio. Details in the October issue.

Tuesday, January 14: John McCutcheon Concert.

31st Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration. Date TBA.

Saturday, March 22: Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team returns to MJC. Fundraiser for KCBP 95.5 FM Community Radio.

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

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

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

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.naacpmodestostanislaus.org/

email: naacp.branch1048@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS: Held THE **FIRST TUESDAY** of the month at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five points), 4:00-5:00 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, 6:00 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom. Email Jim Costello for login information, jcostello@igc.org

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

THURSDAYS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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=LLB8Yl9zZg660qHCXGoC6ojQ&index=1

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.

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 EVENTS

1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto, 209-408-8848.
Open Monday-Friday, 10 am-6 pm.

ONSITE GROUPS & PROGRAMS (Hosted at CalPride Stanislaus)

QUEER POINT: CalPride's harm reduction program supports individuals who use drugs and the broader community and provides on-site syringe services, safer injection kits, fentanyl test strips, and Narcan for overdose prevention. Available Monday through Friday, 10 AM to 6 PM.

FOLX Group for LGBTQ+ Individuals between the ages of 25-49**,** 2nd and 4th **Tuesdays**, 1-2 pm.

Women's Group, run by women for ALL women every **Wednesday,** Noon-1 pm.

Dreams and Solutions Drugs and Alcohol Support Group, 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 1-2 pm.

Writing Group Peer Support Group for anyone looking to explore themselves through creativity every **Friday**, 4:30 pm-6 pm.

BEADiFULL Peer Support Group focusing on organic, peer-lead conversation and connection while making friendship bracelets and beaded jewelry, **1st and 3rd Fridays**, 11:30 am-1 pm

Wellness Wednesdays, every **Wednesday** from 1-5 pm, for any individual receiving services in-center to be in community, create art, play games, etc.

Legal Name Change Clinic, every **Tuesday and Thursday**, 10 am-4 pm, and Monday, Wednesday, and Friday by appointment only.

Affirmation Station FREE Clothing Closet, open during business hours, Monday-Friday, 10 am-6 pm.

FREE HIV/HCV Testing and Counseling available Monday-Friday, 11 am-5 pm.

OFFSITE GROUPS (Hosted Elsewhere)

The Men's Senior Group meets every **Thursday** at 1 p.m. at the Queen Bean Coffee House, 1126 14th St, Modesto.

We Thrive POZ Art Group meets every **Wednesday** from 6 to 8 p.m. at The Dragonfly-Art for Life Studio, 1210 J St, Modesto.

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

Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.