

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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Catch the bus to the march and rally to end the Iraq War

By JASON FLORES

On Saturday March 21, 2009, there will be a bus to San Francisco for the Mass March and Rally to end the Iraq War. Find information on the march at www.actionsf.org.

The bus will leave Merced just before 8 a.m. and stop by the Modesto Peace Life Center. The cost, \$17.00/person, covers bus fuel and bus maintenance only.

Please send me the \$17 a week prior to the date, or make arrangements with me.

Bring your art of expression for a poetry slam on the bus. Music may be provided as well because there is culture and spirituality behind the movement for change, an improved world, and the idea of revolution. Youth and young adults, join us to express our voices and concerns about human policies carried out by our government.

ACTION: Contact Jason at wizmo16@hotmail.com, 5740 E. Olive Ave., Merced 95340, 209-201-8554.

You are invited to attend the

Twenty-third Annual 2009 Peace Essay Contest Awards Reception

Friday, the thirteenth of March, 7:00 p.m.
At the Mary Stuart Rogers Learning Center

Modesto Junior College/West Campus
2001 Blue Gum Avenue, Modesto

Light refreshments will be served.
The public is welcome.

Let's create a U.S. Department of Peace

Legislation (HR 808) to establish a U.S. Department of Peace was reintroduced into the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Dennis Kucinich (OH-10) and 62 Congressional cosponsors. Two additional cosponsors signed on after introduction, bringing the total number of supporters to 64.

This bill has some small but exciting changes. For example, it calls for \$10 billion dollars to fund the Department, with 85 percent of funds designated to reduce and prevent violence here in the United States.

From school shootings and bullying to car bombings, from domestic violence and rape to gang violence, from terrorist attacks to the more than 20 major armed conflicts currently raging around the globe, there is clearly a need for significant improvement in our ability to live and work and thrive together. The time has come to implement a national and global peacebuilding strategy.

A recent World Health Organization report estimated the cost of interpersonal violence in the U.S. at \$300 billion a year excluding war-related costs.

In the U.S., youth homicide rates are more than *10 times* that of other leading industrialized nations, on par with the rates in developing countries and those experiencing rapid social and economic changes. Violence prevention is not currently reflected in our national and local policies.

What the Bill Does

The Department of Peace legislation calls for:

- A Secretary of Peace, who will advise the president on peacebuilding needs, strategies, and tactics for use domestically and internationally.
- The creation of a Peace Academy, a sister organization to our

military service academies, which will build a world-class faculty of peacebuilding experts. They will analyze peacebuilding strategies at the highest level, advise other branches of government, and facilitate the training of peacebuilders for domestic and international service.

- Funding to create and expand proven domestic peacebuilding programs in our communities, such as mediation trainings for police, firefighters, and other emergency services personnel; alternative dispute resolution techniques, peer mediation and nonviolent communication programs in public schools.
- Providing ways to meaningfully prevent conditions of conflict before violence erupts.

Peacebuilding tools such as those described in the legislation have grown dramatically over the past 20 years. More than 300 colleges and universities give degrees in Peacebuilding and Peace Studies such as Notre Dame's Peace Studies Masters program and the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University.

Current successful programs offer practical ways of improving community/police relations, rehabilitating prisoners, reducing recidivism rates, preventing domestic violence, providing cultural competency education, teaching nonviolent conflict resolution, and preventing school violence.

Through the Department of Peace, effective citizen and community-based programs will be identified, funded, expanded, and made available to communities around the country. One example of the positive impact of these kinds of alternative approaches is in the field of Restorative Justice. Baltimore's "Community

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MJC Civic Engagement Film and Lecture series

The Film and Lecture Series provides students and members of the community with the opportunity to engage in topics of social interest and relevance through the screening of thoughtful movies and by bringing speakers to the campus knowledgeable on topics of social significance.

All films shown in Forum Building Room 101 (located on East Campus, 435 College Ave., Modesto) on Wednesdays at 7 p.m., are free to the public, and will be followed by a discussion with guest speakers or panelists.

February 18: *It's Elementary*, created by Academy Award-winning Director Debra Chasnoff and Producer Helen S. Cohen, depicts educators addressing gay issues in first through eighth grade classrooms, and the resulting moral condemnation of such discussions in elementary schools. The film, intended for an adult audience, argues that anti-gay prejudice and violence can be prevented if children have an opportunity to have these discussions when they're young.

March 4: *Nuestra Familia*. This documentary provides an inside look at the criminal operations of Nuestra Familia, an organized, Northern California, Latino prison gang and focuses on the devastating effect gangs have on their families and communities — and on what should be done to prevent it.

March 18: *At the Death House Door* is a moving and personal look at the death penalty from the perspective of former Texas prison chaplain, Carroll Picket, who presided over 95 executions in his 15 years of duty. The film explores how his experiences changed his own views on the death penalty. One execution profoundly shaped his opinions, since he realized that the man who executed was, in fact, not guilty.

April 1: *War Dance*. For 20 years, Northern Uganda has been at war with rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), who abduct children and force them to serve as LRA soldiers. *War Dance*, filmed in Patongo, a refugee camp for many of these children, follows them in preparation to compete in an important national music and dance festival. Set against the children's self-told stories of alarming brutality, the Patongo students' story speaks passionately of the power of the arts to motivate and to heal.

April 15: *The Visitor* is about a depressed professor whose life turns around after befriending an immigrant couple. In addition to rediscovering the joy of living, he discovers the secrecy surrounding post 9-11 U.S. immigration policies as well as the oppressive insecurity of being a refugee here.

For information, contact Jim Clarke, 575-6281; http://www.mjc.edu/cep/Film-Lecture_Series.html

Peace Camp

Peace Camp 2009 will take place at Camp Peaceful Pines in the high Sierra on June 26-28. The program is not yet set but early applications are being accepted. The application form is available online at www.stanislausconnections.org and can be copied and mailed in.

Early registration before June 1 qualifies for a discount. Registration before May 1 will also get you a free, cool peace bumper sticker.

PLC produces 'video postcard' to Obama

By MIKE CHIAVETTA

On January 20th, Americans from Washington D.C. to Modesto, California celebrated the inauguration of Mr. Barack Obama. This momentous event, that has engendered so much hope for our nation, was celebrated locally by the Modesto Peace/Life Center with a benefit concert by renowned musician John McCutcheon. At the concert, the community of concerned citizens attending were given the opportunity to participate in a "video postcard" to our new president in which they were asked to convey their hopes, wishes and dreams for the Obama administration.

The video postcard, produced by the Media committee's Brad Johnson and John Lucas, is a heartfelt and passionate appeal to President Obama concerning issues ranging from a call for the end of the war in Iraq to the reform of our nation's health care system, from justice for Latin America to a need to invest in America's future by increased funding for education.

The video, which has been sent to the President, has youngsters to octogenarians, humor and tears. Watch it at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9cF29ceiUk>



Brad Johnson films John Bryan's message to President Obama.

Photo: Anna Garcia.

PEACE CAMP MEMORIES

By Nicholas Altman

I remember. . .

Being two and staying in the nurse's cabin. I don't remember anything else from that weekend.

Singing songs and roasting marshmallows at campfire then going to bed with that "sooty smell."

Chasing lizards around trying to catch them.

Walking close to ten miles on a four-mile hike to a lake we never really found.

Sleeping on the top bunk of the bunk beds and falling out of the window one night . . . then never sleeping on the top bunk again.

Playing my first game of Ping Pong and horseshoes at Camp Peaceful Pines.

Trying to carve something out of wood each year, but usually ending up with stick without bark.

Writing one of the most powerful poems I've ever written against war at Peace Camp in fourth grade.

Spending some of the best times of my life and growing up at Camp Peaceful Pines.

Thank you Peace Camp

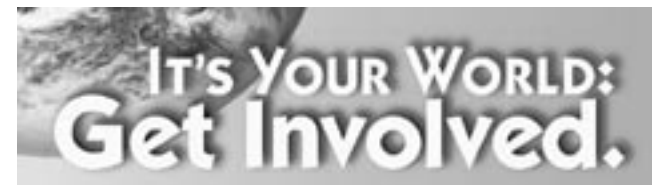
Nicaragua Network Hotline

By SHELLY SCRIBNER

The **Nicaragua Network Hotline** is a free weekly news/action alert about Nicaraguan news or the Latin American solidarity community.

It tells about the political and social life in this country and is produced by people very familiar with the daily life there, people who care and love the people and are always willing to help and offer friendship.

To sign up, visit <http://www.nicanet.org/>



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- I am enclosing an extra tax-deductible donation for Modesto Peace/Life Center
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Bob Moses in Modesto for MLK Commemoration

By DAN ONORATO

On January 17th, Bob Moses spoke at Modesto Junior College for the 15th Annual Martin Luther King Commemoration. In 1961 Moses left a comfortable job teaching high school math in New York City to work with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Mississippi. There, where black registration was the lowest of any southern state, he organized sharecroppers to register to vote. For three years, facing death threats, jail, and beatings, he inspired thousands. In 1964 his Mississippi Summer Project helped spark the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which finally assured all black Americans the right to vote. Two decades later, tenacious in his commitment to equality for all, he founded The Algebra Project, which has helped tens of thousands of poor inner city and rural students improve their math skills and become better prepared to succeed in our technological society.

Marian Wright Edelman writes of Moses: "For me and my generation of young civil rights workers, Bob Moses was, after Dr. King, the most influential person in our movement lives." Yet when Odessa Johnson asked the MJC audience to welcome the evening's legendary civil rights pioneer and educational innovator, Bob Moses didn't go to the well-lit podium on stage. Instead, he walked to a place on the floor in front of the stage, where he would stand close to the people he would talk with. That simple choice was symbolic of the man: Bob Moses has never sought the spotlight. He has focused always on helping others grow and discover their own power.

Fittingly, he opened his presentation by inviting everyone in the audience to repeat after him, phrase by phrase: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America."

Led by this soft-spoken man, we slowly repeated the words of the Preamble to the Constitution, pausing between the phrases, following his unhurried, deliberate pace so their meaning resonated in our hearts. "We the people . . ." foreshadowed Obama's appeal three days later that the challenge to change a nation is not his alone, but ours too. For a brief moment the audience felt transformed in reverence, as the

repetition took on the power of a long-held yearning turned to commitment.

Earlier in the day, Moses met with area math teachers at Deva's cafe. He explained how the Algebra Project works with students in the bottom half of their class who commit to taking math five days a week for 90 minutes a day and for all four years of high school. The immediate goal is to prepare them for college math, not remediation. The larger goal is to promote math literacy and create a culture in which students of all ages regard math as cool, and their parents support math the way they do athletic events. Moses envisions The Algebra Project as a model that might help transform our national educational culture.

In mid-afternoon, when Moses met with young people at the King Kennedy Memorial Center, his gifts as a teacher and his respectful rapport with the students were obvious. In the first half of the conversation he probed the students for their knowledge of their civil rights movement and encouraged them to pay close attention to history. "It's important to understand how we got to where we are today," he told them. Then "we might understand better how to get to where we need to be." When he asked them what they thought about the election, their enthusiasm for Obama and his call to change were electric.

Moses asked them what change they would like. One member of Project Uplift hoped Obama would fund more mentoring programs like the one he is benefiting from. Asked what the mentoring program had done for them, one student responded, "I'm surrounded by positive people showing me opportunities. I've learned it's not a bad thing to be smart." Another answered, "Seeing Obama as a colored person empowers us to go beyond stereotypes and feel we can do things." Moses, like a contemporary Socrates, probed further, "What would you like Obama to do?" he asked. "Start after-school programs for middle school kids." "How would you organize such a program?" "College or high school students could volunteer. We'd have activities we could do together." "How would you get that to happen?"

With his evening audience at MJC, Moses emphasized that the Constitution is not an object but a movement in which "We, the people" continue to work for change. With our impetus the Constitution grows. This process is evident in our history. In 1787, black people were regarded as mere property. Additional Amendments in the early Reconstruction period made them second-class citizens. Full citizenship came only through the civil rights movement. And when the Democratic Party finally changed its by-laws after its 1964 convention, that change, Moses stated, opened the possibility for an Obama. But "what we didn't get is an educational

structure that delivers a quality education for all children . . . We are still growing serfs in our cities with the equivalent of an eighth grade education . . . Obama's election," Moses asserted, "signifies the end of the era of civil rights and the beginning of an era of constitutional rights." "The right we now must work for," he said to an audience warming to his message, "is for every child to have a quality public school education."

The current reality is that legal responsibility for education has been left to the states. But with cases in 45 states, the momentum for a Constitutional change is building, and Moses urged us to get involved: "Obama will need us—We, the people—to work for this change."

The prospects for this happening may seem distant, but the words of a nine-year-old boy before Moses spoke were wisdom worth remembering. Khalil Williams was one of four groups of young people whose talents delighted the audience before Moses was introduced. Khalil accompanied Reverend James Anderson who, with his Christian Love Baptist Church, won the event's first Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Award. After receiving this tribute, Rev. Anderson turned to young Khalil and asked, "Are you ready?" With no hesitation, Khalil nodded, his feet shuffled into near dance as he stepped forward, and he started his rousing rendition of a song whose refrain brought the house down with applause, and exemplified the vision of Dr. King's life and Bob Moses' continuing commitment. "Think big," Khalil exhorted us, "if you think at all. There ain't no use in thinking small."

ACTION: At www.algebra.org learn more about The Algebra Project and what it's doing to promote a national discussion about quality public school education as a constitutional right. Also, read "Radical Equations: Math Literacy and Civil Rights," by Robert Moses and Charles Cobb.



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Celebrate Earth Day at MJC!

By MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE'S PROJECT GREEN

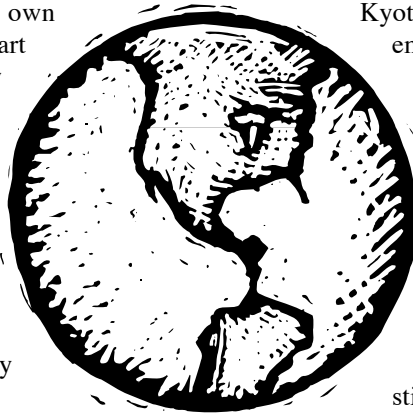
Project Green hosts its second annual Earth Day celebration on Thursday, April 9th from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on MJC's East Campus Quad.

This year's event will feature everything from wacky science demos led by Modesto Area Partners in Science, to edible and native garden displays. See how to make a solar oven pizza and find green products at your local stores. Your kids can join MJC's own preschoolers to plant seeds and do green art projects. Local Audubon experts will show you how to bird watch right here at MJC! Bring your cans, bottles, and energy bar wrappers to recycle. Come and see just where the Green Revolution can take you and your neighborhood.

The purpose of these activities is to heighten environmental awareness, celebrate Planet Earth and all that it provides, and educate the campus and the community about green and sustainable practices.

Twenty million people nation-wide celebrated the first Earth Day held on April 22nd in 1970. Congress adjourned, Fifth Avenue was shut down and a wake was held for the internal combustion engine at San Jose State University where students buried a car on campus. While issues like the Vietnam War and Free Speech polarized American society in the 1960s, the newly coalesced Environmental Movement brought middle-class Americans of all political stripes together. Soon after the first Earth Day, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established, tougher clean air and water acts were voted in, and the Endangered Species Act was created, all under the auspices of a Republican president who had not been noted for his environmental friendliness, Richard Nixon.

In 1990, 200 million celebrants in 140 nations engaged in green activities on the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day,



from teach-ins and recycling events to protests against the use of disposable chopsticks in Japan and the destruction of the rain forests in Brazil. And San Jose State students dug up their twenty-year-old gas-guzzler and recycled it. However, in the year 2000, fewer people turned out for Earth Day. The drop off in Earth Day participation seemed to set the tone for eight years of Bush's presidency during which the American government withdrew support from the

Kyoto Protocol — a UN initiative to curb the emission of carbon dioxide resulting from fossil fuel burning — and set the tone for a popular attitude of denial about the severity of global warming. Most recently, according to the organization Earth Justice, "The final days of the Bush administration were spent much like the preceding years: working hard to rollback environmental protections for the benefit of logging, mining, and drilling. It landed parting punches that will sting for some time."

However, in 2009, the debate over whether or not global warming is happening and abetted by human activity, has all but ceased. Americans are looking for solutions even at the highest levels of government. President Obama has pledged to reduce carbon emissions by 80% over the next four decades and establish a Global Energy Forum in partnership with the largest energy consuming nations.

Last year, events included a presentation by Crissy Trask, author of *It's Easy Being Green* as well as a "Convocation on Environmental Stewardship" featuring a panel of representatives from six Modesto area faiths who outlined their religion's beliefs on the proper relationship between humans and our environment. On Earth Day proper, 40 participants set up booths and, with the help of the MJC Student Environmentalist Organization (SEO), over 925 lbs of plastic, aluminum, and glass containers were recycled.

Seed saving

By ANNE SCHELLMAN

Horticulture Program Representative and Nutrition and Garden Coordinator, University of California Cooperative Extension

A seed is a living, resting embryo. A seed's viability is its ability to sprout, which is measured in years. If cared for properly, seeds can be viable for several years. Most seed packets are stamped with a date. When purchasing seeds on sale, be sure to check their age. If you have unmarked seeds and are not sure of their viability, try this simple test:

Choose 20-100 seeds

- Place the seeds between 2 paper towels that have been lightly misted
- Put the paper towels in a plastic bag and label with the date
- Keep the bag in a place that is 70-80°F. Keep towels well misted
- Check the seeds for up to 10 days.
- Record the number of seeds germinated and calculate the viability percentage
- 70% is considered a good rate

Saving seed requires a little background knowledge. Seed packets you purchase may be marked with the term "hybrid." These seeds have been selected by plant breeders for favorable characteristics such as better yield, disease resistance or improved color. The result of these unions is called a "hybrid."

Hybrid seeds produce the desired plant created by plant breeders. However, seeds from a hybrid plant are either sterile or produce plants unlike their parents. Seed packets marked "open pollinated" or "heirloom" are good candidates for seed saving.

Sometimes a vegetable from the grocery store or farmers market is so tasty; gardeners want to save its seed. Just remember, if the crop was a hybrid, the seed won't produce true to what you ate.

When saving seeds, select the healthiest plants in your garden as a seed source. Use seeds from several of these plants to create genetic diversity in your personal "seed bank." For example, save the seed of 6 different cucumbers from 6 different healthy plants (all the same variety).

In the garden, some pollination occurs by wind or insect. In the case of seed saving, cross-pollination is something a gardener may need to prevent. Because of this, certain crops should be grown some distance away from each other, or not grown at all.

Many crops can cross amongst themselves. For example, an 'English breakfast' radish will cross with a 'cherry belle' radish. Also, certain crops can cross with each other. For example, spinach can cross with beets.

For detailed information, visit: http://cestanislaus.ucdavis.edu/Gardening/Gardening_Publications.htm,

Or visit the UC Cooperative Extension Office at 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite A in Modesto and ask for the Seed Saving publication. Email the author at aschellman@ucdavis.edu

Sierra Club and Audubon Society offer scholarships

By ELAINE GORMAN

The Yokuts group of the Sierra Club and the Stanislaus Audubon Society are offering two \$500.00 scholarships for fall 2009. High school seniors and continuing students may apply. One scholarship, the Donna Durham Memorial Scholarship, will be available to students who are members of the local Sierra Club or Audubon Society, or if their parent(s)/grandparent(s) are members.

The Audubon Conservation scholarship is offered to students who have worked on a conservation or environmental

project/activity, or have worked on one in the past, and are also residents or attend school in Stanislaus County. Besides submitting an application, qualified students must submit a short essay. **Applications must be postmarked by March 31, 2009.**

Information is available through high school counseling offices, Modesto Junior College, or Stanislaus State University. Or contact Yokuts member Elaine Gorman at goford@sbcglobal.net.



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

By Lillian Vallee

53. Kindred Valley

Retired biologist and now nascent poet Lynn Hansen and I are traveling through the cold and rain, over Altamont Pass, on a gray February morning, on our way to Ravenswood, the site of regular poetry readings sponsored by Livermore's dynamic poet laureate, Connie Post; she conspired with Modesto's Cultural Commissioner Cleo Griffith (still tirelessly working to create common ground among poets) to get us there. Neither the weather, nor the sprinkling of Highway Patrol cars along the way, dampens our spirits, and we compose and sing ditties to the tune of the theme song to an old television program about a horse.

Once in Livermore, we decide to have lunch before the reading at a local *taqueria* bustling with weary Spanish-speaking laborers lured in by delicious hot food ("*Hoy Menudo*") and maybe by the television program, mainly lovely, sloe-eyed women in bikinis, on what seems to be a swimsuit channel. The older men, who come with their families, sit with their backs to the television set.

Lynn and I have a lot to celebrate: she has made her way recently through two major operations, knee and hip, and is negotiating the slippery sidewalks with cautious aplomb. I am here on a Sunday afternoon to read from new work and to simply appreciate Livermore Valley after reading one of the finest essays on a place I have ever read entitled "The Last Days of Livermore." The authors, botanists Stephen W. Edwards and Christopher Thayer, engage the reader's imagination from the opening paragraphs:

Livermore Valley with its unique floral remnants is one of the most threatened and rapidly disappearing natural regions in California. The small pieces that have not yet been tarmacked or covered with buildings are surprisingly rich in flora and fauna and preserve at least a hint of the beauty and abundance that the Ohlone enjoyed here before European contact. That this land was appreciated by Native American people is attested by numerous archaeological sites, some huge, as along Highway 680 near Bernal Avenue, and some extraordinarily rich, as along Highway 580 near Santa Rita Road. An excavation at the latter site uncovered two burials that were among the richest in grave goods ever found in northern California.

One, that of an adult male, was covered in shell beads. Researchers stopped counting them at 35,000. The other, an adult female, was lying on a carpet of exquisitely flaked obsidian knives, and she also had a bundle of flutes made from flight bones of condors and raptors, plus three very large quartz prisms with terminal facets preserved. Quartz was the most powerful substance known; it allowed shamans to fly to the spirit world and to cure the sick. Bird-bone flutes were also typical parts of a shaman's "toolkit." That women played

an essential role in the religious life of Livermore is also suggested by the fact that the valley is literally ringed by ceremonial cupule-rock sites, and these are nearly all associated with bedrock mortars. One site on the valley floor included an interment containing a large quantity of *Clarkia* seed—perhaps for use in the afterlife, though the possibility remains that this was a "flower burial."

Further descriptions of a "floriferous" valley entirely "dotted by vernal pools, some of them quite large" and as "one vast sheet of flowers from mid-March into May" are achingly familiar from similar Central Valley descriptions by Thomas Jefferson Mayfield and John Muir.

Readers are given insights into the history, botany, geology and hydrology of our sister valley. They learn that "[h]uge herds of livestock belonging to Mission San Jose grazed in Livermore Valley, probably commencing not long after foundation of the mission in 1797," just as livestock grazed the San Joaquin Plain. The Livermore Valley is slightly higher in the east and is riddled by a number of faults. The uplifted ancient sea bed is present in the surrounding hills containing oyster shells and whale bones. The flatlands "which are disappearing extremely fast," boast "the most unique and endangered habitats." As in the Central Valley, human alteration of the Valley's hydrology has resulted in the disappearance of various water features such as the lake that had existed in the west end of the Valley, as well as in "the amount of surface water in other areas."

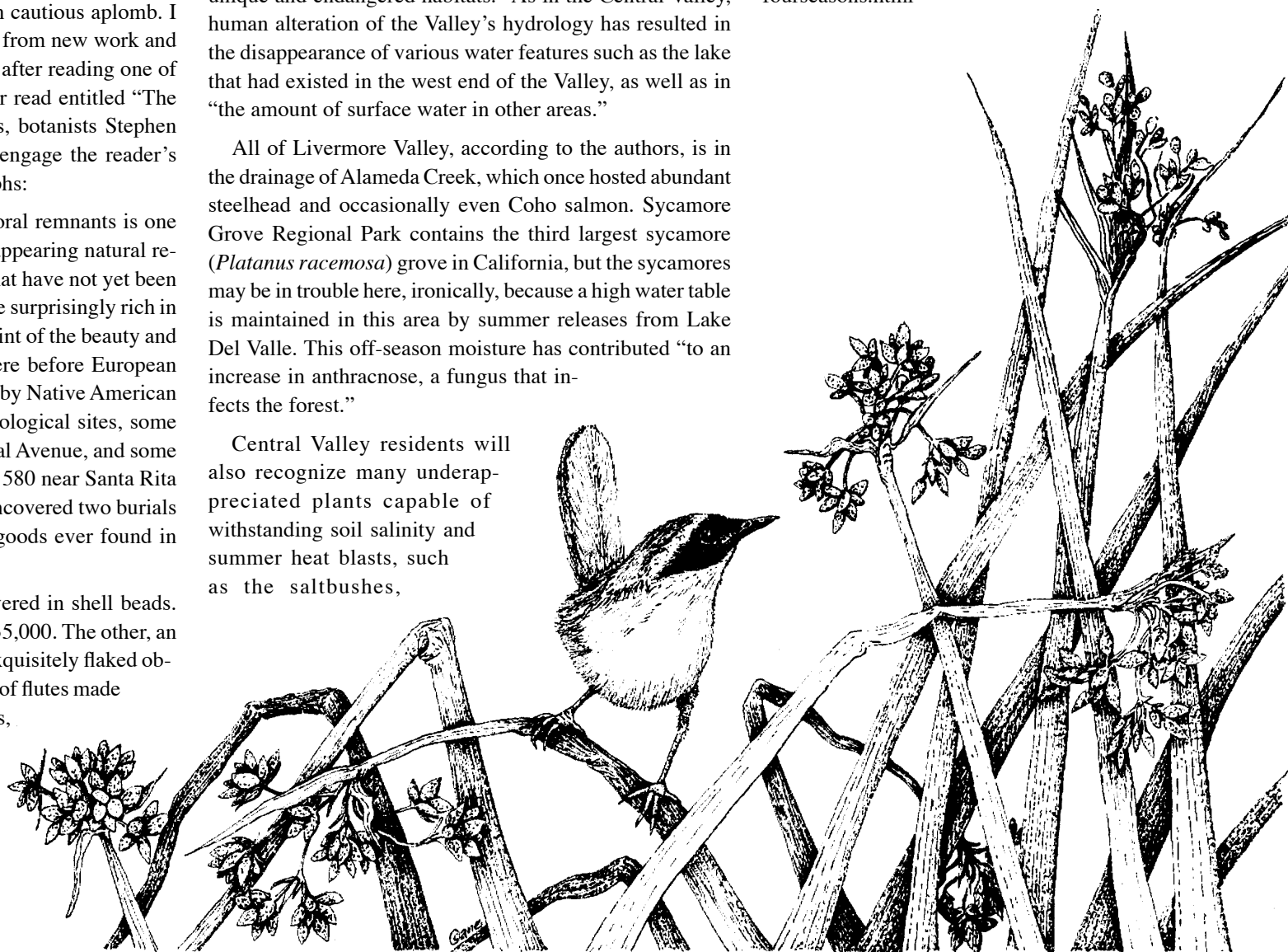
All of Livermore Valley, according to the authors, is in the drainage of Alameda Creek, which once hosted abundant steelhead and occasionally even Coho salmon. Sycamore Grove Regional Park contains the third largest sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) grove in California, but the sycamores may be in trouble here, ironically, because a high water table is maintained in this area by summer releases from Lake Del Valle. This off-season moisture has contributed "to an increase in anthracnose, a fungus that infects the forest."

Central Valley residents will also recognize many underappreciated plants capable of withstanding soil salinity and summer heat blasts, such as the saltbushes,

saltgrasses, tarplants, and flaxflowers. Saltgrass, according to the authors, "is known to have the remarkable capability to send its roots as deep as 40 feet below the surface to find water." Another featured plant, Yerba Mansa, seems to favor sulfurous springs and to have "an affinity for chthonic exhalations." The authors are great connoisseurs of habitats some might regard as *uncharismatic*, such as alkali sinks, scalds, playas, heaths, barrens and grasslands.

The lyrical conclusion to this essay emphasizes the priceless biological floral and faunal wealth of the Livermore Valley floor and the symphonic nature of an evening alone on Brushy Peak, "one of the most sacred parts of the Bay Area landscape for Native Americans." I cannot recommend this essay highly enough, for its science and its poetry, its humor and passionate plea for what was always beautiful in our kindred valleys but now is "both rare and beautiful" and "valuable beyond measure."

Sources: Stephen W. Edwards and Christopher Thayer, "The Last Days of Livermore" in *The Four Seasons*, Journal of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Volume 13, Number 2, December 2008. For more information on *The Four Seasons* Journal, visit <http://www.nativeplants.org/fourseasons.html>



How wonderful it is that nobody need
wait a single moment before starting

to improve the world.

— Anne Frank *Dairy of a Young Girl*
Young German Jewish diarist (1929-1945)

2009 Peace Essay Contest

Our world is filled with a variety of peacemakers. Some make the headlines while others quietly work behind the scenes. Some deal with international situation while others work in their own communities. They may be as close as a family member or next-door neighbor, or as far away as someone on the other side of the globe. The focus of each person's work may differ, but common to all peacemakers is a commitment to using nonviolent principals and actions to nurture and encourage a more peaceful world. The 2009 Peace Essay Contest invited students to study *living* peacemakers in our community and throughout the world. Each writer nominated one of these peacemakers whose work inspired them, to be the 2009 Peacemaker of the Year.

The 23rd annual Peace Essay Contest received 448 qualifying essays.

Sponsored by the Modesto Peace/Life Center and by the Modesto Junior College Department of Literature and Language Arts, the contest was open to all students, grades 5 – 12, who live or attend school in Stanislaus County.

2009 Peace Essay Committee: Margaret Barker, Indira Clark, Pam Franklin, Elaine Gorman, Russ Matteson, Suzanne Meyer, Deborah Roberts, Sandy Sample, and Shelly Scribner.

ПРЕДСТАВЬТЕ СЕБЕ МИР

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STELL DIR VOR ES IST FRIEDEN

love, yoko

2009 Peace Essay Contest Winners

Division I (grades 11 – 12)

First Place: Shaylyn Ordaz, Johansen HS

Second Place: Lee Fleury, Johansen HS

Third Place: Haley Gordon, Johansen HS

Honorable Mention: Jewel Abalos & Adan Magana, Johansen HS; Anne Coleman, Turlock HS

Finalists: From Johansen HS: Evan Brunvold; Morgan Graham; Emily Lehtikainen; Maribel Lopez; Anna Meyer; Sherri Ramirez; Abigail Ringle; Kinarik Shallow; Thalia Soto; Tim Stuart, Bonnie Towne; Zack Welch; & Austin Weltner; Emily Kay Shrader, Enochs HS

School Winners: Shaylyn Ordaz, Johansen HS

A school winner was chosen for all schools with ten or more entries in this division.

Division II (grades 9-10)

First Place: Brian Lewis, Johansen HS

Second Place: Courtney Burroughs, Johansen HS

Third Place: Cameron Plaster, Johansen HS

Honorable Mentions: Sasha Damon, Kelly Lonergan, & Sareeka Prakash, Johansen HS

Finalists: From Johansen HS: Jacob Cabrera; Jesus Castillo; Peter Hernandez; Alithza Lopez; Saranjit Moundi; Manuel Ochoa; Ashley Raynor; Marisol Rios; Natasha Sablok; Kyle Sessa; Ra'am Solomon; Cameryn Smith; Megan White; & Destiny Xiong

School Winners: Brian Lewis, Johansen HS

A school winner was chosen for all schools with ten or more entries in this division.

Division III (grades 7 and 8)

First Place: Sarah Lewis, La Loma JHS

Second Place: Joshua Rivas, Blaker-Kinser JHS

Third Place: Maia Skowron, La Loma JHS

Honorable Mentions: Aislinn Finn, Knights Ferry Elem; Julia Hackett, La Loma; Gabriela Romo, Blaker-Kinser

Finalists: From Blaker-Kinser: Johan Zeion Aquilar; Isabella R. Barba; Johnnae Denise McDaniels, Janaira Pena; Peyton Paul, Knights Ferry; from La Loma: Eva Brotslaw; Julia Callahan; Jerel Constantino; Hope Craighead; Yesenia Lozano; Olivia Mesches; Taylor Wilson; Maci Gerber & Dayna Nickle, Teel MS

School Winners: Joshua Rivas, Blaker-Kinser; Aislinn Finn, Knights Ferry; Sarah Lewis, La Loma; Maci Gerber, Teel

A school winner was chosen for all schools with ten or more entries in this division.

Division IV (grades 5 and 6)

First Place: Elizabeth West, Fremont Open Plan

Second Place: Shelley Agostini, Fremont Open Plan

Third Place: Rebekah L. Lamb, Lakewood Elem.

Honorable Mentions: Marisa Denea Costales & Douglas Henry Ward, Lakewood; Jordynn Franklin, Hidahl Elem.

Finalists: Adkison Elem: Serena Isabel Ramirez & Karina Torrez; Fremont Open Plan: Daniel Franklin, Josh Roy, & Emily Taylor; Lakewood: Conner G. Hannon, Mikayla Lee Hillar, Nathaniel Hong, Samantha Logan, Audrey MacEgan, Sophia Jean Mesches, Megan LillyAnn Robertson, Stefany A. Schmidgall-Brown, Tesla Truxell.


School Winners: Serena Isabel Ramirez, Adkison; Kiana Ridenour, Dieterich Elem.; Elizabeth West, Fremont; Rebekah L. Lamb, Lakewood

A school winner was chosen for all schools with ten or more entries in this division.

Many thanks to the 2009 screeners and judges: Margaret Barker, Jim Beggs, Jamie Campbell, Monique Capp, Peggy Castenada, Chris Davidson, Margaret DeMott-Feldman, David Franklin, Phil Franklin, John Frailing, Lorrie Freitas, Dorothy Griggs, Annaliese Hausler-Akpovi, Judy Kropp, John Lucas, Andi McGhee, Gill Moss, Mary Pieczarka, Shelly Scribner, Judy Ten Brink, Rachel Tyson, Amanda Woods, Steve Collins, Jim Costello, Tim Driskill, Simeon Franklin, Sandra Franklin, Nancy Griggs, Susan Janis, Barbara Manrique, Russ Matteson, Susan Novak, Dan Onorato, Kaye Osborn, Sandy Sample, Judy Sly, Tim Smart, Anita Young.

The Peace Essay Contest is a project of the Modesto Peace/Life Center. Co-sponsored by the Modesto Junior College Department of Literature and Language Arts

An Evening with





DAVID SEDARIS

Saturday, April 25, 2009
7:00 p.m.
Performing and Media Arts Center
Main Auditorium
Modesto Junior College, East Campus

Sedaris is the bestselling author of *Me Talk Pretty One Day* and *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim*. With sardonic wit and incisive social critiques, Sedaris has become one of America's pre-eminent humor writers. The great skill with which he slices through cultural euphemisms and political correctness proves that Sedaris is a master of satire and one of the most observant writers addressing the human condition today. He is the author of the bestsellers *Barrel Fever* and *Holidays On Ice*, as well as his latest book *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*. His original radio pieces can often be heard on National Public Radio's *This American Life*. In 2001, Sedaris became the third recipient of the Thurber Prize for American Humor.

—Times Literary Supplement.

Tickets: \$25, \$35, \$45
\$100 Ticket - Reception & premium seating
mjc.tix.com or Auditorium Box Office:
Tues. - Fri., Noon to 5 p.m., (209) 575-6776

PERFORMING AND MEDIA ARTS CENTER
MJC East Campus • 435 College Avenue • Modesto

A Latin Inspiration: Division I, First Place Winner

Shaylyn Ordaz

Johansen High School ~ Mrs. diCristina

[Freedom does not exist] how I
want it to exist [. . .] Not repressed
Depressed? No. Oppressed.
Oppressed? Not that either. Distressed
Distressed
-Shakira. Live & Off The Record

A peacemaker can be found anywhere. It could be a neighbor, a teacher, a political activist—but what about a pop star? How many celebrities are seen as true philanthropists, and of those, how many truly are? Little known about Colombian singer-songwriter Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll is that she is one of the greatest peacemakers of our time and should be Peacemaker of the Year.

Shakira grew up in the industrial town of Barranquilla in Colombia. As an only child, she was raised to be a devout Catholic, and her faith inflamed her disgust for lies and her desire for a better world. As she grew older, she became more and more aware of the poverty and squalor in the streets of not only her home town, but of the entire country and much of Latin America and she vowed to someday, somehow help those around her who so desperately needed it. Upon seeing her native country full of violence and conflict with nearly three million children working rather than attending school (and still living in poverty), she was stirred to create the nonprofit, nongovernmental organization. Stating that “we own a paradise and we live in a Hell” (Shakira: Live & Off The Record), Shakira grew frustrated with the displaced people and lack of education. She believes that children are a country’s best asset and that a child’s education affects his entire life and is key to a peaceful nation.

In 1995 at age eighteen, after her career as a pop star took off, she founded the Pies Descalzos Fundación (Bare Feet Foundation). The organization gained its name not only from the name of her most recently released album of the time, “Pies Descalzos,” but more importantly because of the poverty that could be found in her beloved Colombia, where people could not even afford shoes. Commenting on her reasoning for creating the foundation, she states that, “my generation is not willing to tolerate it anymore [...] If we don’t react now, then when?” (Shakira: Live & Off The Record).

Since its founding, the Pies Descalzos Fundación has created five schools in the Colombian regions of Barranquilla, Altos de Cazucá and Quibdo. The foundation provides nutritious meals, education, and psychological support services through its schools, currently 30,000 children and their families. Along with the schooling of children, the foundation teaches various skills such as dressmaking and ecotourism to household heads, more than just the children of the schools (“Mission and History”).

Aside from her Bare Feet Foundation, Shakira has, throughout the years, attended and put on various benefit concerts around the world, including the German leg of the Live Earth benefit concert in 2007 and, most recently, her newly founded ALAS Foundation. Earlier this year the foundation held massive concerts in Buenos Aires and

Mexico City in order to “reach as many people as possible in a massive way, and to sell children’s issues on a grand scale” (Loera). Specific programs in the foundation “aim to provide health assistance to pregnant women and babies, as well as to enroll homeless children in schools” (“Shakira helps children”) Currently, a man Shakira admires and says “will never die—at least not in my heart” (Shakira: Live & Off The Record) serves as the foundation’s Honorary President. Another man close to her heart, Argentina’s president’s son and the star’s fiancé, Antonio de la Rúa (“Leadership”) serves as one of two Vice Presidents.

Not only does the pop star demonstrate her activism through the founding of various organizations to help the people of Latin America, but her lyrics protest injustices in the world, wars, and political turmoil, speaking to her fans. An advocate of life and freedom, Shakira’s song “Octavo Dia” is often visualized and represented by puppets of George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein being controlled by Death as they play chess, destroying each other’s pieces and, in essence, each other and their followers. A powerful message can be gathered: life is precious. There is no sense in fighting.

Shakira’s work is little known, yet so significant to the world. With a global financial crisis, it becomes more and more necessary for the leaders of Latin American countries to take action to bring success to their people, and as Shakira herself has put it, children are a country’s best asset. Her push for higher education, health, and overall well-being is necessary for the rise of these countries. A child with an education and health care may grow up to improve the world she grew up in. Shakira’s work starts with the most ignored people of Latin America, the people who not only need the most attention, but are most vital to the countries

themselves. Her work has inspired many, including other Latin American artists, including Alejandro Sanz, Thalía, Ricky Martin, and Gustavo Cerati, allowing even more of the world to benefit.

This pop-star-turned-peacemaker has influenced the world. Even when she is not putting on a benefit concert or working toward a new foundation, Shakira donates much of her own private funds toward her foundations and others to see the growth of children and their statuses. Already inspired by her lyrics, I have found inspiration in her generous donations, her Pies Descalzos and ALAS Foundations, and in everything she stands for. Upon my own career success, I am determined to contribute to one if not both these organizations so that I may do what I can to help those children whose dreams have nearly been shattered. Every child deserves his dream, and Shakira’s realization of her own dream has allowed her to make clear to the world that by her side it can help realize the dreams of all children.

If my life can be useful to someone, to several, then all the better. I’ll continue doing what I do.

— Shakira: Live & Off The Record
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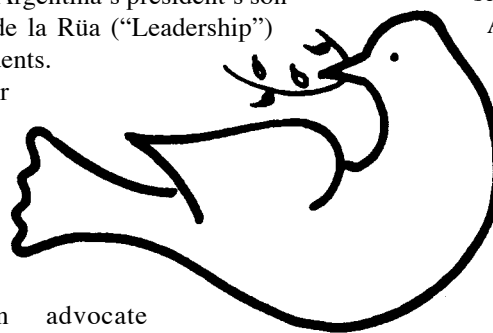
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Visit the **Oakdale** satellite
Meetings on
3rd Wednesdays from 7-9 pm
“Golden Oaks” Conference Room
Oak Valley Medical Building
1425 West “H” St.
pflagoakdale@dishmail.net

Modesto High Students' DC Inauguration Journal

So a group of four brave chaperones — Mrs. Chiavetta, Mr. Chiavetta, Mrs. Pereira, and Mrs. Villalobos, took a group of 36 students to the inauguration. My favorite part of the inauguration was when it hit all of the people, who were cascading around, that after the Civil War and the civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that there was finally an African American president. As we pondered over the long trail of blood, tears, and sweat that it took to get to this point; as we stood open mouth in amazement that one man could completely embody the hope the American people felt — and transform it into nothing short of a large gleaming light, a wave of magic fell over us. People were embracing those whom they had never so much as uttered a word to prior to this moment. There was a flurry of teardrops. Even if one didn't support Obama, the effect that this one person has had on America (2.2 million people showed up to the inauguration); it is truly a beautiful thing.

- Kelly Kariofilis

Hours of waiting. Overcrowded streets. Bitter cold. Disgusting portable toilets. I honestly have to say I wasn't as excited as I should have been getting up extra early for the inauguration. We arrived at the mall and displayed on the giant TVs were the vast amounts of people cheering, waving flags, some even crying. Someone handed me a flag and for some reason a wave of patriotism came over me and I joined in with the enthusiastic crowds. We were all there to see a peaceful change in government, to the historic first African American president. Just thinking about that as a dot within million on the mall was overwhelming. I was there. I was standing there, waving a flag frantically and cheering at the same place, at the same time history was being written. Wow, I was really there.

- Monica Sangco

We were so excited for the inauguration that we finally fell asleep at 2am, totally forgetting that we had to be up again at 3am. With only one hour of sleep, we put on a ton of layers of clothes and headed to the bus, immediately falling asleep again. All the roads in D.C. were closed for the day's events. The bus driver, Bob, dropped us 2.5 miles away from the lines. We walked and stood for hours waiting, thinking about how cold it was — 20°F with winds blowing on us faster than I could run. I couldn't feel my face or my fingers and we all stood there with over 2 million people with us in line. Everyone was surprisingly nice: there wasn't any pushing or any fights at all. We later learned that out of these millions of people, not one had gotten

arrested. It took almost four hours of waiting in line to finally get through the gates. It was worth it in the end, to watch history right before our eyes. We now have change, the first African American President was brought to office, and I was there.

- Nicole Sahota

I stood still. I closed my eyes.
And listened to the
sound of America.

Behind me, in front of me, and beside me. I wanted to take in the moment and never forget the feeling of being present at the 2009 Inauguration.

- Heather Sinclair

Early mornings off to the races
To see the great founders and many new places
We sang "good morning Baltimore"
And hoped March would fall no more...
Oh my that would be bad

We stayed out of trouble
By pairing to doubles
Though somehow the excitement still
couldn't escape us
A few peers were lost
We were covered in frost
Unable to feel fingers and toes

The good news is we no longer use leeches
And heard some great speeches
Change was all around

The people were kind
The same thoughts on each mind
"Obama Obama Obama"

Ziplock bags in hand
Space in demand
And somehow we made it through

The port-a-pottys weren't great
The mall was free of hate
Together we can change
For sure

So as I sit on the plane
And wave bye to the terrain
You'll see my reflections
Are merely a taste
Of the action packed week
That was truly a treat
For me, for all, for D.C.

- Heather Sinclair

Ed. Note: There were many more comments that we did not have space to print. To see them all, visit <http://stanislausconnections.org/>

Letter to the President

From Mrs. Chiavetta's 2nd Grade Class, Wilson School



January 29, 2009

Dear President Obama,
We are very glad you are our president. You are going to have a very big job. We hope you will like living in the White House, and that you and your family will be safe. We would like you to work hard and stay focused. We want you to take good care of us. We want you to make sure to have houses for the poor and homeless. Please take care of our environment, and respect the Earth. We want you to find a way to feed the poor and homeless. Can you make sure all people have jobs? We all want to go to college, can you figure out a way for us to do that? Please be good to other countries, take care of our military, and stop all wars!
We hope you enjoy being our president, and that you have wonderful days each day for four years. We also hope Malia and Sasha will enjoy living in the White House. We would love to hear about their new school. Please have them write to us. We would really like to hear from them! Send Mrs. Obama our best. We know you will be a fantastic president!

Hope, peace, and love,
Mrs. Chiavetta's second grade class
Wilson School

Connie Post: Friend of the San Joaquin Valley and advocate for parents of autistic children

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

Connie Post, a published poet for over 20 years and the first and current Poet Laureate of Livermore, California, was appointed on May 23, 2005 and continues her work to create new poetry programs in Livermore through May 20 of this year.

As Laureate, she has developed two new poetry series, "Wine and Words" and the "Ravenswood Poetry Series," in order to bring positive attention to Livermore in the area of creativity and expand the city's growth in the arts and literature.

Connie's goal has been to bring poetry to the community in a way that is accessible and fun. She has developed a monthly youth poetry critique group for teens, and has written over twenty-five poems for various city and civic events.

She is the author of six published collections, and her poetry has been published in many publications including *Kalliope*, *Comstock Review* and the *Song of the San Joaquin*.

Her most recent book, *City of Words*, compiles all the poems written as Laureate.

Connie started writing poetry in the late 1980's when her son, Thomas, was diagnosed with severe autism. Thomas does not speak, so she tells his story, because he cannot. She has written two books about parenting a child with autism. One of her poems recently appeared in a new book entitled, "Families of Adults with Autism."

As a poet and presenter, Connie tells Thomas's story through her poetry and speaking engagements. One of her mission's is to educate people about the difficulties of raising a child with autism. She has given local presentations and was the Keynote speaker at the California Association of Program Specialists conference in Sacramento in March 2007.

She has reached out to both professional groups and parents, has provided training and presentations on autism to local church groups and organizations, and serves as a contact for parents who may have autistic children.



TAPS: "Day is done. Gone the Sun"

The trumpet song of Taps
Is playing all throughout the house

At first cannot find the musician
Or the instrument that hides him

But I find the song in cupboards
Where pieces of soldiers lay

Notes unheard flutter in faded kitchen light

I find the song in the floorboards
Where peace has dropped through

I hear the mind of the quiet soldier
Always nineteen
Never grown

Wondering why he must play this song
And no one hears it
Leaders shut their eyes at night
While he stands and stands
Until dawn
And more music falls dead
At his feet

Wondering why, over and over again
Bombs blow off his limbs
A mother is screaming
But he must hold this trumpet

It plays
Each time the news explodes
Or more troops climb into an empty plane

How the sky moans
When the plane is emptied like a womb

How the melody burns
Like ancient pieces of shrapnel
That fall inside us, like a grief unobserved

By Connie Post - published in *Kalliope/ Women and War Issue Volume XXIX No. 2*

Song

There is a song
that seeps through the pavement
when everyone has gone to bed

there is a voice
that remembers the grassy hills
resting like a painting against a rusty sky

There are invisible symphonies
playing beneath the orchards –
Even the crickets stop in the night
to listen

It is a place of old towns
and migrant workers
farmers who still tip their hats
when dawn greets them
with melting sun and
buttered bread

there is an old diner
with the neon sign half lit
serving warm pie
after the sun has gone down

It is highway 99
and all the roads in between
It is north and south
and all the directions we've never known

we may leave the uneven roads
time and time again
but so often
something calls us back
to listen to the quiet, ever present
Song of the San Joaquin

rolling its voice out
like thunder across a forgiving field

published in *Winter 2008 Song of the San Joaquin* – written for "Song of the San Joaquin"

PROFESSORIAL KNOWLEDGE

I see the night as an old professor
sitting quietly at the front of the classroom
wearing a gray cap,
holding a broken piece of chalk

he is there to tell the day
how to retain its identity
even when you lose
the very light that defines you

how to remain omnipotent
a teller of stories,

even when your opaque knowledge
has escaped through the last moon

the day defines its own brightness
defies instruction
and fidgets in class
uninterested in the equations of twilight
the transcendent philosophies
of blackness

the day leaves class early
never studies the mysteries of plato
the quiet obsidian sky

misses assignments about dusk and Dante

until one day,
a deep fog falls
the day finds
it has missed the contrast
of shadow,
the contradiction of itself

and heads back to the old room
where the professor seems to be gone

but on the desk
there is an ancient map of the galaxy
worn and weary,
but oh so patient

the student looks up
finds the professor waiting for him
at the top of Stonehenge
in the falling light

Originally published *Iodine Poetry Journal Summer 2008*



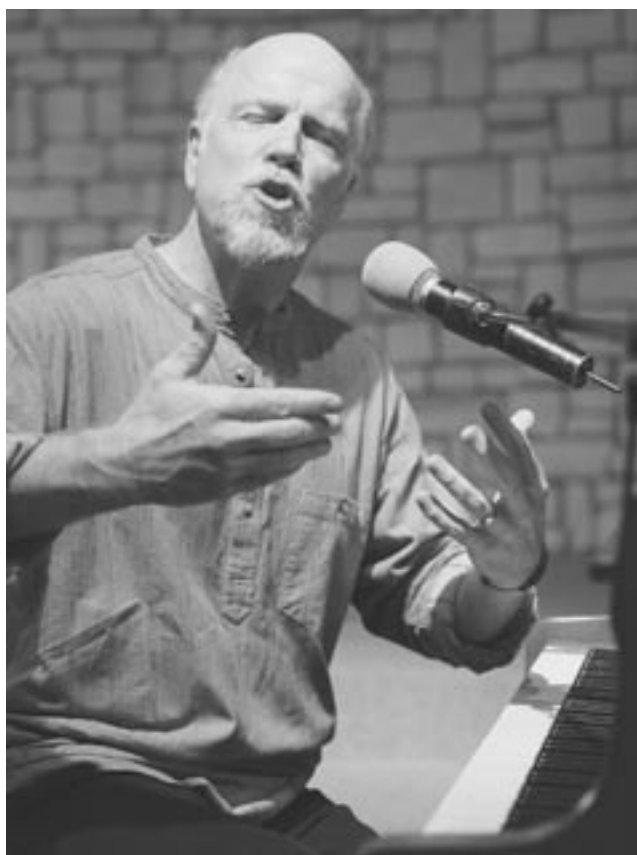
John McCutcheon Inauguration Day concert a rousing success

By KEN SCHROEDER

The John McCutcheon Inauguration Day concert was a rousing success with a full house of over 300 at the Modesto Church of the Brethren. The audience came from at least six counties and listened, sang along and celebrated hope and community all evening.

A hearty thanks to those who worked on the planning, made copies, sent out the mailer, hosted meetings, coordinated sponsorships, became sponsors, sold tickets, made announcements, designed the poster, put up posters, coordinated the tech work, set up the sound, moved chairs and the piano, sent messages to President Obama, filmed the messages, took photos, strummed ukuleles, baked cookies, staffed the intermission refreshments, coordinated and prepared the reception, handed out programs and collected tickets, sold CD's and books, staffed the Peace/Life table, hooted and hollered, sang louder than usual, M.C.'d, coordinated volunteers, made donations, wrote press releases and articles, set up lodging and food, emailed and talked to friends, drove long distances to attend, handled finances, cleaned up after the concert and brought tremendous enthusiasm to the event.

Special thanks to the Church of the Brethren for hosting and selling tickets, to Anderson Custom Framing and Gallery for being a ticket venue, to Marian Martino and to the Funstrummers for their ukulele entertainment before the concert and during intermission.



Friends Seeking Peace

January 20, 2009
President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N W,
Washington, D C, 20500

Dear Friend,

We are writing to you as a small Quaker Meeting centered in Stockton, California. Our Meeting wishes to send you our support and best wishes, as you lead our country through this time of change. We understand that the challenges are significant, and that the prayers and efforts of all Americans are needed to make positive change possible.

As Friends we are dedicated to the principle and practice of seeking peace and the good in all people. We also believe that war and fighting come from injustice and inequality, from a world where so few have so much, and yet so many struggle just to survive.

Delta Friends are deeply grateful to know that you are striving to restore balance to this country and the world. Removing American military forces from Iraq is an important step in replacing military action with diplomacy and civilian support.

It is this same deep concern that prompts us to urge you to seek peaceful engagement in Afghanistan and the Middle East. We are troubled about the reliance on military actions to resolve conflicts and about proposals to both continue and to escalate warfare in this part of the world. We encourage you to support activities to lift people out of poverty, to ensure that basic necessities are met. We support efforts to build fair and impartial judicial and legal systems to promote human rights and eliminate corruption. We ask you to continue preventive diplomacy, which may lessen tensions and resolve conflicts. We ask that you assure the world that the United States will not engage in torture.

In closing, Delta Friends want to reinforce to you our prayerful support as America comes to recognize all people as co- equal brothers and sisters filled with the essence of our Creator.

In respect and peace,

Judith Bunting, Clerk
*Delta Monthly Meeting of Friends
Jackson, CA*

10 reasons not to be TOO hopeful about 2009

Sarah Van Gelder wrote an upbeat essay on what to expect in 2009. Too upbeat. A poet once said "if you tell me the oxen are kneeling in the barn, I'll go with you hoping that it may be so," but there's a flip side to her ten reasons for hope:

1. **Young people stepping up.** Maybe, but of the hundreds I registered [to vote] at MJC, many didn't know their home county, and a huge number who checked "American

Independent" had to be asked if they meant "decline to state."

2. **Election protection is working.** The 2000 and 2004 elections were stolen neater than a Brink's heist. Obama may have won by twice the stated margin. *Why* should we think that that can't happen again?

3. **Overwhelming support for universal health care is not here;** when it is, will it focus on money in doctor and HMO pockets, not on curing indigent kids' sniffles?

4. **Corporate power is on the wane.** Had Obama *really* threatened to change The System, corporate hit squads would never have let him be inaugurated,

5. **The failing economy** remains that - failing - because our system has failed. Even FDR needed a war to fix a depression.

6. **Getting real about climate change.** Not to rain on any parade, but smart money has the polar ice caps already toast.

7. **Social movements build people power.** Non-violent demonstrations working? Where, exactly, has this phenomenon taken place?

8. **Do it yourself communities** lead a shift. I don't know about others, but *I* surely cannot read a set of directions.

9. **International cooperation now possible.** I'd like to think so, but have they heard in Israel and Gaza, Washington and Iraq, Darfur and Sudan?

10. **Obama!** Yes, we're all ecstatic. He's not Bush! A centrist with a tent big enough for people who'd kill us is the best that progressives will ever get. Expect no more.

Fred Herman

Modesto

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS, published by the Modesto Peace/Life Center, has promoted non-violent social change since 1971. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the center or editorial committee. CONNECTIONS encourages free speech to serve truth and build a more just, compassionate, peaceful and environmentally healthy community and world. We seek to enhance community concern, bridge interests of diverse groups. CONNECTIONS' editorial committee views peace as built on economic and social justice and equal access to the political process. We welcome pertinent signed articles - to 800 words - and letters with address, phone number. We edit for length, taste, error and libel. Deadline is 10th of the month. Send articles to Myrtle Osner, 1104 Wellesley, Modesto 95350, 522-4967, or email to osnerm@sbcglobal.net or Jim Costello jcostello@igc.org.

Photos and ADS should be submitted as high-resolution JPEG or TIFF files. Do NOT submit as pdf files if possible.

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Israeli-Palestinian conflict dialogue continued

I want to thank *Stanislaus Connections* for its frequent coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although some of the mainstream U.S. media are becoming more balanced in their approach, their long-standing pro-Israel bias is still prevalent. In this media environment *Stanislaus Connections* provides readers with useful information, perspectives, and context to this issue at the crux of creating peace in the Mideast.

In last month's issue I was happy to see three letters responding to Chris Hedges and Kathy Kelly's articles (Jan. & Feb.). Dialogue is vital in advancing understanding. But I take issue with some of what is stated in the letters. In his first paragraph Tom Gough shows deep compassion, but then slips into sweeping generalizations and stereotypes. One example illustrates the questionable thinking: "As long as the Muslims care little for human life, i.e., suicide bombers, and Judaism puts life above all, where will they meet?" Suicide bombers represent all Muslims? All Muslims care little for life? Judaism as a religion may put "life above all," but does the Israeli government? With the disproportionate killing in the recent Gaza war—13 Israelis dead, over 1,300 Palestinians dead—this assertion carries a troubling irony. Have the leaders of Israel forgotten or lost their heritage's noble Judaic values?

Ken Kohler's scathing criticism of Hamas and his ardent defense of Israel contradict his conclusion that "The Peace Life Center must never take sides in a conflict; the only right side is the side of peace and nonviolence." I infer that Ken believes all of us who espouse peace and nonviolence should avoid taking sides. Tina Driskill seems to share this same premise when she comments that Kathy Kelly's "Tunnel Vision" article "shows the on-going side-taking of the US 'peace' community." While Tina makes some good points—that both sides share responsibility for the hostility, that we should support grass roots efforts of all people (Israelis and Palestinians) to live together in peace, and that we should encourage negotiation—I question her reluctance to take a political position.

Sure, it makes sense to support groups like the ones mentioned in Libby and Len Traubman's February Connections article that work for mutual understanding and reconcili-

Gaza: cutting and pasting one-sided phrases

To one whose family was chased out of Hitler country, one with a firm commitment to a Jewish homeland, Gaza action poses a moral dilemma not solved with slogans.

Three letters on page 7 of February's *Stanislaus Connections* make facile accusations - that Hamas "terrorists" and not Tel Aviv target civilians to create an atmosphere of fear, that Palestinians "manipulate martyrdom" and want Israel not to exist, that Palestinians alone hold on to tribal mentalities and "care little for human life."

Yes, the situation is complex, but cutting and pasting such one-sided phrases tend to dehumanize one side and do not further the cause of peace.

Fred Herman
Modesto

ation between Israelis and Palestinians. However, necessary change will not come from laudable efforts like these alone.

Effective negotiation at the highest levels comes only after both sides acknowledge injustices committed and wrongs done. But these are seldom admitted without pressure from groups that take a stand against the injustices. For this to happen in a context in which one side's view has been constantly repeated for years, as Israel's has in the U.S., a counterforce has to explain the Palestinian version of the facts as widely as possible when justice and truth are at stake. Americans need to know why Hamas and many Palestinians feel so much resentment or hatred against Israel. Americans need to know the Palestinians' story, just as they have learned the Israelis' story. Only then, with facts as perceived by both sides laid out for all to see, understand, and gradually acknowledge, only then can negotiation move toward a just peace.

It's one thing to say that we in the peace movement must pay close attention to the facts and be fair to both sides in our analysis. And, that we need to be mindful always that our understanding is limited, our tendency to be selective can impair our vision, and our self-righteousness can easily lead to self-deception. But it's quite another to assert we should not take sides. Does this mean that the Hebrew prophets should not have denounced their rulers' oppression? That Jesus should not have condemned the Pharisees' hypocrisy? That the Abolitionists should not have opposed slavery? That the women's suffrage movement should not have argued against those who viewed women as second-class citizens? That Bishop Desmond Tutu should not have preached tirelessly against Apartheid? That Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. should not have protested the Vietnam War and called America "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today"?

Amid the din of propaganda, truth must speak to power. For prophets throughout history, naming and denouncing injustice is the first step toward ending it. A peace movement that fails to do this is not worth its salt.

Dan Onorato
Modesto



Dept. of Peace . . . from page 1

Conferencing" program reduces recidivism rates (return to the criminal justice system) by 60% in young offenders compared to similar juvenile justice cases in the traditional juvenile justice system.

We can teach our children positive socialization skills and tendencies – "preemptive education" in how to both manage and prevent conflict. Imagine K-12 core school curriculum integrating peer mediation and conflict prevention education.

The Secretary of Peace will advise and inform the President on matters of international conflict. If we are to adequately address and prevent conflict around the globe, peacebuilding experts need a seat at the table of power.

For example: Terrorism is a very real and serious threat. Many are working to prevent the next terrorist attack, yet, who is working to prevent the root cause of terrorism? We must tap into the wealth and breadth of knowledge and expertise in the peacebuilding community, those who have an understanding of the psychology of terrorism and its root causes, and put their expertise to bear on these crucial issues.

We have the best military technologies in the world; what we are missing and what needs to be augmented are educational, humanitarian, and psychological technologies. The focus should be on developing deeper understanding of cultural and religious differences.

The Department of Peace would provide the military with a far larger array of options on the ground with which to build civil society, helping soldiers remain safe and effective while faced with potential violence.

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