

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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Send message to President-elect Obama at the John McCutcheon Inauguration Day concert

By DON MCMILLAN

Concertgoers attending John McCutcheon's annual Peace/Life Center benefit concert can expect a signal event. Many activists for peace, justice, and a sustainable economy look forward to Tuesday, January 20, 2009 as the beginning of the Obama administration. Modesto has the stunning fortune of hosting six-time Grammy nominee McCutcheon to cap the day's events.



The concert promises "a spirit of hope and of getting ready to work hard to support the change that we've all wanted," said Modesto Junior College Photography instructor Doug Smith. And this year's concert provides a

chance to begin "getting ready to work." According to Ken Schroeder, an organizer of the event, "We will be providing an opportunity for participants to express their hopes, wishes, and encouragement for positive change. Individual members of the audience will be able to give a very brief video message to President Obama before or after the performance or during intermission." Schroeder said the combined messages will be sent to Obama. Other avenues, including YouTube, are being explored to share the sentiments of our citizens.

McCutcheoncontinued p. 4

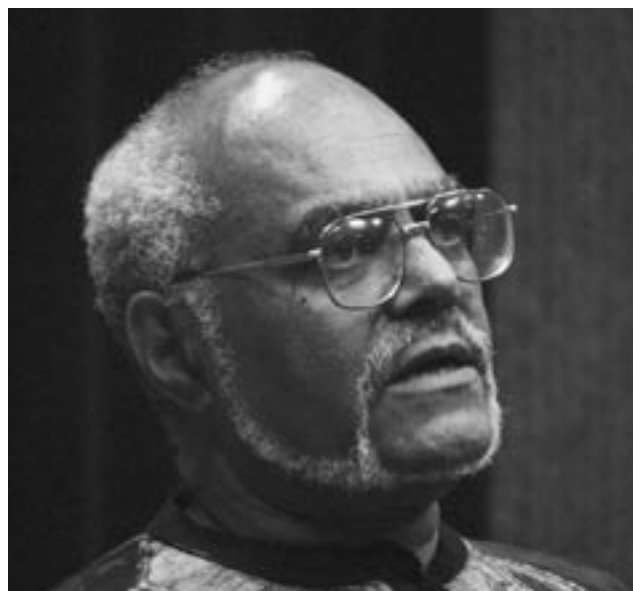
Hear Robert Moses, pioneer civil rights activist, educator

By JAMES COSTELLO

Dr. Robert Moses, Civil Rights activist and founder of the Algebra Project will speak at the Fifteenth Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration on Saturday, January 17, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at the Main Auditorium on Modesto Junior College's East Campus. Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

There will be an open reception for Dr. Moses at the King-Kennedy Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. There will also be a **special meeting with students and young people** there from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. All interested youth are invited to participate. These events are free to the public.

During his young adult life, Dr. Moses was a pivotal organizer for the civil rights movement as a field secretary for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and was director of SNCC's Mississippi Project. He also served



Robert Mosescontinued p. 10

Spay Day USA – Modesto's 1st annual

By SALLY MEARS, Cruelty Free Consumers

It continues to be a hard, fought battle in Stanislaus County to try to get the pet overpopulation problem to decline instead of increase each year. Now, with the foreclosures and hard times, people are dumping their pets, many un-altered, throughout the County more than ever. Rescuers, official and not, are working harder than ever to alleviate some of the suffering. The world of "animal rescue" is a very hard one. It's a world that many do not know even exists. They have no idea that people actually go out of their way to care for homeless animals every day. So, those that *would* help just don't know about these caring people and what they do. For the long-time rescuer it can be a very lonely, frustrating, heartbreaking and expensive existence – but, at the end of the day, they know they will do it again tomorrow. They have to.

Luckily, word is getting out a little bit more all the time, bringing attention to these quiet but serious issues. And one way attention will come to this vital problem is coming up in February 2009.

In 1995, the Doris Day Animal League designated a day, February 24th, called Spay Day USA, to bring awareness to the tragedy of pet overpopulation. The following year, the Humane Society of the United States joined the effort. Many rescue groups now hold low cost spay neuter clinics throughout the month of February. This is what many volunteers intend to do for the first time in Stanislaus County.

One of the wonderful, local volunteers helping to promote this effort is long-time Modesto resident, Kathleen Gutierrez. I asked her where her origins for animal rescue came from:

"I have been involved with animals since childhood, on our North Dakota family farm. I helped take care of orphaned and rejected calves and lambs. I learned to care for animals from my grandparents. My house has always been a magnet for stray cats, dogs – even a family of possums."

Kathleen has been a dedicated member of the local Humane

Spay Daycontinued p. 8

INSIDE CONNECTIONS

COMING EVENTS2	HUMANITARIAN DISASTER . . . 7
BUILDING HOPE3	TORTURE 8
POTATOES4	GATHERING OF VOICES 9
LIVING LIGHTLY5	HARBINGER 10
LABOR & JUSTICE6	CATASTROPHE 11

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Big bailouts, bigger bucks

By BARRY RITHOLTZ

Whenever I discussed the current bailout situation with people, I find they have a hard time comprehending the actual numbers involved. That became a problem while doing the research for my *Bailout Nation* book*. I needed to put this into proper historical perspective.

If we add in the Citi bailout, the total cost now exceeds \$4.6165 trillion dollars. People have a hard time conceptualizing very large numbers, so let's give this some context. The current Credit Crisis bailout is now the largest outlay in American history.

Jim Bianco of Bianco Research crunched the inflation-adjusted numbers. The bailout has cost more than all of these big budget government expenditures – combined:

- **Marshall Plan:** Cost: \$12.7 billion, Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$115.3 billion
- **Louisiana Purchase:** Cost: \$15 million, Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$217 billion
- **Race to the Moon:** Cost: \$36.4 billion, Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$237 billion
- **S&L Crisis:** Cost: \$153 billion, Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$256 billion
- **Korean War:** Cost: \$54 billion, Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$454 billion
- **The New Deal:** Cost: \$32 billion (Est), Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$500 billion (Est)
- **Invasion of Iraq:** Cost: \$551b, Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$597 billion
- **Vietnam War:** Cost: \$111 billion, Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$698 billion
- **NASA:** Cost: \$416.7 billion, Inflation Adjusted Cost: \$851.2 billion

TOTAL: \$3.92 trillion

From <http://www.ritholtz.com/blog/2008/11/big-bailouts-bigger-bucks/> Reprinted with permission.

*<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0071609059/thebigpictu09-20>

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- Keep sending me CONNECTIONS. (Check renewal date on mailing label)
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- \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other

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Email _____

Friends, colleagues, co-workers of Outstanding Women — we want you!

We want you to nominate the outstanding women in your life for the 2009 Stanislaus County Commission for Women Outstanding Women Awards.

Nominate women who have made a meaningful contribution to the quality of life for all women and children. Women:

- who have been pathfinders; who began an important program, or took on a challenging cause.
- who have been first to achieve a significant accomplishment in their field.
- who have been inspirational role models.
- who are representatives in government.
- who stand up for the issues of women and children.

Nominations are being accepted for Outstanding Women including the categories of Women of History and Living

Pioneers. Nominations are also being accepted for scholarship opportunities for Outstanding Young Women (high school seniors to age 21).

Nomination forms are available at all Stanislaus County Libraries, through the mail by contacting Jane Manley at 209-523-9083, or via email at sccw01@gmail.com

Nominations must be postmarked no later than January 16, 2009. Awards will be presented on Saturday, March 28, 2009.

The Stanislaus County Commission for Women is an independent, non-governmental organization to promote within the community an awareness of issues that concern women. For information: Jane Manley, SCCW President, 209-523-9083.

How to take charge of your health — for teen and young adult women

By LUELLA COLE

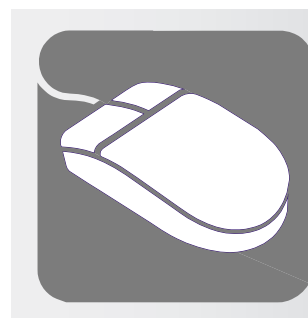
Are you a young woman between 13 and 25 years of age? Are you the parent of a teen girl? Then this workshop is for you. Melanie Deal, a women's health nurse practitioner with over 12 years of clinical experience, will be at the Modesto Church of the Brethren on Saturday, January 24, 2009, from 9 to 11 a.m. to present a workshop on such topics as primary health concerns for young women; what to expect at a woman's health exam; and the pros and cons of the HPV vaccine (Gardasil). Young women and their parents are encouraged to attend and bring questions.

The workshop begins at 9:00 a.m. with a continental breakfast of muffins, bagels, fruit, juice and coffee or tea. The presentation ends with a question-and-answer session, and concludes by 11:00 a.m.

Ms. Deal serves on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health, and works at the Student Health Center at San Francisco State University.

ACTION: Please RSVP to the church at 209-523-1438 or email goodnews@modcob.org by Monday, January 19 to let the staff know you are coming, or for more information.

The church is located at 2301 Woodland Ave., near the intersection of Woodland and Rosemore, 1/2 mile west of Carpenter Rd.



Look for
CONNECTIONS
online at:
<http://stanislausconnections.org/>

Be a student ambassador: Apply for Summer Student Exchange to Japan

By NANCY HOLMES

Modesto Sister Cities International invites Modesto-area students who will be sophomores, juniors, or seniors in the fall to apply for its annual summer student exchange to Kurume, Japan.

The MSCJ Japan Committee will select up to 10 high school students to take part in a 10-day exchange to Kurume from late July through early August. Then, Kurume students will arrive in Modesto in mid-August for 10 days. Modesto students who are accepted on the exchange will be required to host a Japanese student.

Cost of the programs, including airfare, is estimated at \$1300. Scholarships are available based on financial need.

ACTION: For information and/or an application, call Nancy Holmes, 765-9290 or go to www.modestosistercities.org. The deadline for applications is April 1, 2009. Modesto Sister Cities International, PO Box 580253, Modesto, CA 95358.



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Cal-Earth is solution to many housing, environmental concerns

By HALEY GREENWALD-GONELLA

Currently, I am working short term in the family real estate business while I explore my options for graduate school. Working in real estate has opened my eyes to the large number of foreclosed homes in the Central Valley. The startlingly high percentage of foreclosures has led me to question whether or not we are promoting a better future by investing in the current housing market. Continuing to invest in building practices that are costly to the environment exacerbates problems like the mortgage crisis and homelessness. It would seem that it is in our best interest, in these times fraught with concern about climate change and the constant threat of natural disasters, to be familiar with the building mechanics of our own homes and use sustainable building materials in their construction.

Actor Ed Begley and TV personality Bill Nye have set an eco-friendly example in their Studio City, California neighborhood by attempting to outdo each other as the greenest man on the block. Their friendly competition pales in comparison to the “art meets science” humanitarian efforts of the California Institute of Earth Art and Architecture in strikingly beautiful and quiet Hesperia, Ca.

I was introduced to Cal-Earth during my first year at the University of California, Irvine, when I accompanied friends on a Memorial Day weekend excursion into the desert to visit the facility. Cal-Earth is the innovation of world-renowned architect,

innovator, and translator of Rumi poetry, Nader Khalili who, inspired by Rumi’s poetry, set out to create a home building system utilizing natural elements. Sheefteh, Khalili’s daughter, carries on her late father’s work in collaboration with his wife, Iliona Outram Khalili, and his son Dastan.

That night in 2003 my friends, including Sheefteh, and I stayed in an domed ceramic home, which had been constructed using Khalili’s system, then set ablaze, turning the earth and sandbag structure into a solid ceramic unit. The walls had been painted with a milk-based non-toxic paint. The house remained the perfect temperature during the hot day and the cold night in the middle of the California desert.

Khalili, who had spent years constructing skyscrapers,



believed that “every man and woman should be able to build a home for his or her family using the earth under their feet and integrating some features of modern technology to make their homes resistant to fire, flood, hurricane, earthquake and other disasters.”

He developed the Eco-Dome system in response to a call from NASA for human settlements on the Moon and Mars. Although the Eco-dome plans were originally designed for outer space, Khalili brought his system to Iran, his native country, to help house refugees after the Persian Gulf War.

The Geltaftan Earth-and-Fire System known as Ceramic Houses, his first effort, later led to the Velcro-Adobe system, also known as Superblock, which is constructed from sandbags and barbed wire. Ultimately, he created the Superadobe system, which uses soil-cement or lime-stabilized earth to fill Superadobe coils or Earthbags, a version of a sandbag. His design utilizes the sun, shade, and wind for energy efficient heating and cooling.

At a time when one in five people in the Central Valley has lost a home, the concept of a self-built home at the cost of a few thousand dollars and the cost of materials — the price of a double unit of the Eco-Dome version of the Cal-Earth Superadobe home, could solve many financial and environmental problems.

It is amazing to me, even with unemployment numbers rising, as well as the number of people without homes, that the United States has yet

to embrace this remarkable resource. I realize that things take time, especially change, but how much longer do we have to wallow in our current state of affairs? Cal-Earth is a gem—a pearl of knowledge and a ruby that sets the heart afire with the courage to build one’s own home. It takes the feeling that a young boy scout has the first time he sets up a tent and magnifies it a hundredfold.

ACTION: On your next trip to Southern California, visit Hesperia — it will surely change your life. The Cal-Earth website (<http://www.calearth.org>) lists apprenticeship courses, books, DVDs, and an Eco-Dome package.



Modesto High students want to “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

By JOHN LUCAS

Mahatma Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” This is also the motto Modesto High students have chosen for their Ecuador Project. Their goal is to build a school in rural Ecuador for children who don’t have any. Their inspiration came from history teacher Mr. Mike Chiavetta who got the notion to do this good deed from a book he read last summer called *Three Cups of Tea*. Written by former mountain climber, Greg Mortenson, the book’s premise is that building schools for those who need them is one the best ways to spread peace and good will towards our fellow man.

In an attempt to climb K-2 in 1993, the second tallest mountain in the world, Mortenson got into trouble. Mountain people in the border along Pakistan and Afghanistan helped him and saved his life. While staying with these people, he learned how important they felt education was for their children, but they had no school to provide it. Since then he has built over 40 schools.



When Mr. Chiavetta presented this idea to his students, they were very eager and excited do anything they could to help others have what we sometimes take for granted in our country.

With the support of Mr. Chiavetta, who contacted Oprah Winfrey’s foundation, and other Modesto High faculty and administrators, the Ecuador Project was started at the beginning of this school year. The students have raised almost \$5,000 thousand dollars to date. They need \$10,000 for the school.



ACTION: Please support these student’s efforts! Email Mike Chiavetta at chiavetta.m@monet.k12.ca.us, or call Modesto High, 576-4401. More on Greg Mortenson’s efforts to build schools at <http://www.gregmortenson.com/> and <http://www.ikat.org/>

Visit these “green” sites

By ALEXANDER BRITTAIN

<http://www.greenplanetsearch.com>

<http://www.care2.com/causes-news>

<http://greendealsdaily.com/>

<http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com>

<http://thegoodhuman.com>

<http://www.ecorazzi.com>

<http://lighterfootstep.com>

<http://ecopreneurist.com>

<http://www.sciencenewsblog.com>

McCutcheon

... from page 1

Opportunities to pitch in with support begin well before the day of the concert which is made possible in part by the generosity of sponsors. **Sponsorships are still available** and come with premiums including event tickets, mention in the program, reserved seating and a reception following the concert with McCutcheon. Levels of sponsorship and corresponding contribution amounts and premiums include Autoharp-\$40 one ticket, Guitar- \$75 two tickets, Banjo- \$150 four tickets, Piano \$300 eight tickets, Hammer Dulcimer \$500 sixteen tickets. **To sponsor call, 572-1307, or email keith.werner@sbcglobal.net**

Righteously passionate and wickedly funny, John McCutcheon is a gifted songwriter, musician and storyteller. Johnny Cash called him “the most impressive instrumentalist I’ve ever heard.” He sings about subjects, great and small, including peace, family, politics, working people and kids. On his blog John writes:

“The thing that buoys me the most about an Obama presidency is his experience as a community organizer. As such, he understands where real power...and real change...comes from... Let’s savor this moment and remember its promise. And then let’s make that promise real by righting this grand old ship once again.”



ACTION: The concert is on Tuesday, Jan. 20 at 7:00 p.m. at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave. (off Carpenter Rd.). Tickets: \$20 in advance and \$23

at the door, with youth 17 and under \$5. Groups of 10 or more are \$15 per person. Tickets are available at the church, 523-1438 and at Anderson Custom Framing and Gallery, 1323 J St., 579-9913.

John McCutcheon’s web site: www.folkmusic.com

Potatoes are buried treasure

By ANNE SCHELLMAN, Horticulture Program Representative & Nutrition & Garden Coordinator, UC Davis-Stanislaus County Cooperative Extensions

Next month, seed potatoes arrive at local nurseries and garden centers. Potatoes are a fun and easy crop to grow. Kids (as well as adults) love digging for them, an activity that resembles hunting for buried treasure.

Although only a few varieties are sold in the supermarket, there are more than 5,000 kinds of potatoes grown worldwide. Local nurseries will carry white, red, yellow, and blue type you’ve never grown potatoes before, sampling of each. For more advanced gardeners, catalogs and online stores will have a larger selection.

Several days before you intend to plant, cut potatoes into 1 ½ to 2 ounce pieces. Each piece should have an “eye,” which is actually the bud from which the new plant will sprout. Store these cut pieces for 1-3 days at room temperature, until a callous forms. Small seed potatoes can be planted whole.

Grow potatoes in well-drained soil. Add compost and mix well. At this time, you can apply a 5-10-5 or 10-10-5 fertilizer to the soil. Mix in 3 pounds of fertilizer thoroughly per 100 square feet.

To plant, dig a trench that is 6 inches deep. Space the potatoes 6-12 inches apart, with the “eye” side face up. Closer spacing yields more (but smaller) potatoes at harvest, while spacing seed potatoes farther apart yields larger (but less)



potatoes. Cover the potatoes with 3-4 inches of soil, but do not completely fill in the trench. Once the sprouts begin to form, cover them with another 3-4 inches of soil. When the plant reaches 8 inches tall, fill the trench in with more soil, about halfway up the potato stem.

Your potato crop will form between the layer of soil and the seed potato. Several weeks later, you may need to add another inch or two of soil to the trench. The main point of covering the potatoes with soil is so they are not exposed to sunlight. However, do not cover up too much of your foliage, as this will prevent the potatoes from growing properly.

You can also grow potatoes in half-barrel size containers, as long as they have drainage holes. Just remember, soil in containers can dry out quickly, so check frequently once the weather warms.

Harvest potatoes as soon as they begin to form. The early, small potatoes are known as “new potatoes” and are especially delicious. If you wish to “cure”

your potatoes for long-term storage, leave them in the ground until the plant tops turn brown before harvesting.

Although potatoes have a reputation for being fattening, they are actually a very healthy food. Potatoes contain Vitamin C and B6 as well as potassium. How we prepare them is the factor that raises their calorie content.

Reach the author at aschellman@ucdavis.edu. The University of California Cooperative Extension Office is located at 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite A, Modesto, CA 95358; (209) 525-6800.

Take solar power with you

From Greentips: December 2008

Many of us have experienced the frustration of having a cell phone or MP3 player go dead and being away from a power outlet to charge the batteries. Many others would simply like to reduce their dependence on the electricity grid. Thanks to technology improvements and lower production costs for photovoltaic (PV) cells, you can now harness sunlight at home or on the road to power a variety of products while reducing your environmental impact.

PV cells generate varying amounts of electricity based on their size and composition, and on the amount of incoming sunlight. Here are just a few examples of products for which sunlight provides a viable and affordable alternative power source:

- **Chargers.** Nearly any electronic gadget that is plugged into an electrical outlet to charge (such as cell phones, digital cameras, MP3 players, or laptops) can use a solar-powered charger instead. Some solar chargers are designed for stationary use while others are incorporated into backpacks or other portable totes so you can charge a device while you carry it around. These products can vary widely in their wattage outputs and subsequent charge times (a cell phone can take 2 to 14 hours to charge, depending on the product).

- **Lighting.** Walkway lights are the most commonly known solar-powered light fixtures, but floodlights, outdoor task

lights (such as grill lights), and even holiday lights can be charged with solar panels during the day. On average, a sunny day can provide 8 to 12 hours’ worth of power. Some solar light fixtures feature timers or motion sensors as well.

- **Toys.** Solar-powered toy cars, planes, boats, and robots are not only fun for kids but also teach them about renewable energy. You can also green up battery-operated toys by using rechargeable batteries instead of alkaline, and charging them with a solar-powered battery charger.

[Note: Bug zappers are available in solar-powered versions as well, but like their plug-in counterparts, they are not recommended because they indiscriminately kill insects, including those beneficial for biodiversity.]

Solar-powered products are available in garden centers, toy stores, camping and hiking stores, and from online retailers that promote environmentally friendly products, such as Real Goods.* Because solar products vary in their power output, review their specifications before purchasing to ensure they are the best fit for your needs and, in the case of chargers, are compatible with the devices they will be charging.

* Inclusion of these examples is intended for informational purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the Union of Concerned Scientists.

From <http://www.ucsusa.org/publications/greentips/>

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

By Lillian Vallee

51. Long Nights Moon

In the early morning hours of Saturday, December 13, I was awakened from a sound sleep by the radiant light of a full moon peering into the western window of my bedroom. Perched directly in the center dip of the schoolyard oak across the street, the moon cast a fiery rectangle of light across my face and pillow. My calendar called the round face the "Long Nights Moon," from the lengthening nights of mid-December, and, in spite of the angularity of its lunar shadows, the moon struck me as a tender and benevolent presence.

My calendar also told me that the previous day marked the anniversary of the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the recently converted Juan Diego at the site of a former Aztec temple in 1531. The Goddess of the Americas or *la Guadalupeana* is known by many names: *Tonantzin* ("Our Mother"), *Tequatlanopeuh* ("She Whose Origins Were in the Rocky Summit"), Our Lady of Tepeyac (from the summit on which she first appeared), or *Tlecuauhtlacupeuh* ("She Who Comes Flying from the Light Like an Eagle of Fire"), among others.

I wondered how much the Long Nights Moon had to do with the mystery of that apparition almost five hundred years ago—the first appearance of the Virgin on American soil. I planned to attend a performance of the miracle play, *La Virgen del Tepeyac*, at Mission San Juan Bautista the next day. Written and adapted by noted playwright and activist Luis Valdez, the play was being performed by El Teatro Campesino for the 23rd time (the first production had been presented in the historic mission in December of 1971). Valdez's goal was to create a "reenactment of that glorious encounter centuries ago, between the humble indio Juan Diego and his beautiful vision of the Mother of Christ, [which] never fails to inspire all of us with deep feelings of joy and brotherhood."

According to Valdez, it was the appearance of the Virgin "that served as the foundation for Christianity among the indigenous people of Mexico and the Americas." Valdez adapted a dramatization of the event, probably written by a priest in Mexico sometime in the eighteenth century, and added music, song and dance "to highlight the sense of beauty and power inherent in the original script."

Valdez finds it "entirely significant" that the "four mysterious appearances of *La Virgen* between December 9 and 12, 1531, were made to "indio Juan Diego, as the Conquest of the New World threatened all the Indian peoples of this land. Present-day atrocities committed against the indios

of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and other parts of Central and South America only underscore the severity of their historical condition."

I had attended only one other El Teatro Campesino production at the mission, a captivating morality play entitled *La Pastorela*. A handsome (and tragic) *Satanas* (Satan) had ridden into the tiny mission on a magnificent steed, and spry devils had flitted among the pews and pinched the unwary into attention.



Humor was not absent from *La Virgen* either. Luis Valdez (who played the Bishop) introduced the production by saying that anyone who needed bathrooms, *los banos*, certainly knew where they were: over Pacheco Pass. When the laughter died down, he added a comment about port-a-potty complaints: unless someone wanted to donate the \$600,000 needed for bathroom renovation at the mission, the theater had no choice but to provide port-a-potties.

The interior of San Juan Bautista, with its vivid *reredos* of California poppies and wild animal footprints in the old tiles, lends itself well to a theater of the sacred. Founded in 1797 right at the edge of California's most destructive fault

line, the San Andreas, the church has been repeatedly rebuilt from earthquake damage yet has been in almost continuous use since 1812. The mission was viewed as a "buffer" between the Coast and "the unruly Tulare [or Valley] Indians." It was the site of confrontations between native peoples and the new Christian order, and today a historical marker indicates the mass grave of native peoples who succumbed to old world diseases and regimens. It is this history that makes the mission a haunting backdrop to the miracle and morality plays.

The steady rain had not discouraged the long lines of people crowding the corridor of the mission in order to gain a good vantage point once the doors were opened. The play recreated the conversations between Juan Diego and *La Virgen*. Ana Castillo writes that their conversations "are filled with moving expressions of mutual tenderness and respect." "The Conquered Mexic-Amerindians may have turned to the Mother—"Castillo ventures, "and it was She who responded—to bring comfort, assurance, hope, when their mighty male gods became silent..."

But the figure of Juan Diego also captures the audience. Luis Rodriguez explains his power in this way: "...she would appear to Juan Diego, the 'least of them' (and, therefore, the greatest of them), who tells her in Nahuatl: 'For I am pitifully poor, for I am harness, for I am hod, for I am all elbows, all haunches, for I am of the dispossessed, for I am a pack carrier,' and...through Juan Diego, the people's deeds, the people's dreams, the people's stories, would be exalted."

And it is to him that the Virgin responds with "Let nothing scare you or distract you. Do not let your heart ache.... Am I not your Mother? Are you not under my shadow, my protection?" *La Diosa*, Saint Moon, Queen of Nature is, according to Rodriguez, the face of all mothers; the bearer of myths, rites, and ancient quests; and "the poor people's agent, not bound by form, or by a name, or by the limitations of time, space, or race. She returns as vessel of the indigenous spirit, as the shamed land crying back its blood. She returns speaking the inflections of an ancient tongue, before Christianity, beyond Christianity."

Was it her mild face I saw in the radiant mantle of a December moon? Or her light-filled arms extending from the crown of a Valley Oak? Juan Diego would have known.

Sources: *California Missions: A Pictorial Tour*; *The California Missions: A Pictorial History*; Ana Castillo, ed., *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*; El Teatro Campesino program notes for *La Virgen Del Tepeyac*.

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“Somebody Has to Respond”

By DAVID BACON, *truthout* | Perspective

When the day finally comes that Raul Flores loses his job, he will face a bitter search for another one. “I’ve got a family to support, so I’ve got to do whatever it takes,” he says. “It’s going to be hard. The economic situation is not good, but I can’t just wait for something to happen to me.”

That puts Flores in the same boat as millions of other US workers. Last month alone, 533,000 workers lost their jobs - the highest figure in 34 years. A week ago, the heads of the Big Three auto companies were in Washington, DC, pleading for loans to keep their companies afloat. As a price, lawmakers and pundits told them they had to become “leaner and meaner,” and in response, General Motors announced it would close nine plants and put tens of thousands of workers in the street. Ford and Chrysler described a similar job-elimination strategy.

What makes Flores special? He didn’t just accept the elimination of his job. Instead, he sat in at the Chicago plant where he worked for six days, together with 240 other union members at Republic Windows and Doors.

Republic workers were not demanding the reopening of their closed factory, at least not yet. They have been fighting for severance and benefits to help them survive the unemployment they know awaits them. Yet, their occupation can’t help but raise deeper questions about the right of workers to their jobs. Can a return to the militant tactics of direct action, that produced the greatest gains in union membership, wages and job security in US history, overturn “the inescapable logic of the marketplace”? Can employers, and the banks that hold their credit lines, be forced to keep plants open?

Unlike the auto giants, Republic is not threatening bankruptcy. It makes a “green product,” Energy Star-compliant doors and windows that should be one of the bedrock industries for a new, more environmentally sustainable economy. But Bank of America, as it was receiving \$25 billion in federal bailout funds, pulled the company’s credit line, leaving workers in the lurch. Perhaps that alone led President-elect Obama to support the workers. The bank-enforced closure

undermines his program for using environmentally sustainable jobs to replace those eliminated in the spiraling recession. He called Republic workers “absolutely right. What’s happening to them is reflective of what’s happening across this economy.”

Federal law requires companies to give employees 60 days’ notice of a plant closure or pay them 60 days’ severance pay to give them breathing room to find other jobs.

Republic workers got three days and no money. “They knew they’d be out on the street penniless,” says Leah Fried, organizer for Local 1110 of the United Electrical Workers. “When the negotiating committee came back

to the factory to report that the company didn’t even show up to talk with them, the workers were so enraged they voted unanimously not to leave until they got their severance and vacation pay.”

While the workers acted to gain their legally-mandated rights, the plant occupation resurrects a tactic with a radical history. In 1934, auto workers occupied the huge Fisher Body plants in Flint, Michigan, and when the battle was over, the United Auto Workers union was born. Sitdown strikes spread across the country like wildfire. Occupying production lines in plant after plant, workers won unions, better wages and real changes in their lives.

Seventy years later, the workers who have inherited that legacy of unionization and security are on the brink of losing everything. Just since 2006, the United Auto Workers union has lost 119,000 members. The threat of plant closure has been used to cut the wages of new hires in half, to \$14.50, the same wage paid on the window lines at Republic, where the union is only four years old.

Flores certainly hopes that those whose livelihoods are in peril will rediscover the tactic. “This is the start of something,” he urges. “Don’t let it die. Learn something from it.” And the sitdown was successful. After a thousand people rallied in front of Bank of America at the end of the day on December 10, the bank announced it would put up \$2 million in loans to meet the money owed the workers. Flores and his coworkers then voted to end the occupation.

But Bank of America, as it was receiving \$25 billion in federal bailout funds, pulled the company’s credit line, leaving workers in the lurch.

“I think this is not the last time we’re going to see American workers occupying American plants...”

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Fran Tobin, midwest organizer for Jobs with Justice, a coalition of labor and community groups with chapters around the country, shares Flores’ optimism. “I think this is not the last time we’re going to see American workers occupying American plants, as part of a move to save jobs and turn things around,” he says. Organizers for Jobs with Justice are fanning out with a program they call a “Peoples’ Bailout.” Tobin emphasizes that, “We need to ask, ‘What kind of an economy and recovery do we want?’” He lists funds for a jobs program, rather than huge loans to banks, a moratorium on home foreclosures, investment in infrastructure repair, and helping local and state governments (and public workers) survive the crisis without massive budget cuts.

Flores, Tobin and Fried all agree that none of those demands can be won without unions and workers willing to fight for them. That makes the Republic plant occupation more than just a local confrontation. “This might not be the right tactic in every situation, but people know we need to be fighting back,” Fried says.

Will the unions in auto plants and other workplaces hit by layoffs take up the challenge of the Republic workers? To Flores, they have to do something more than just watch the elimination of their jobs. “We’ve got to fight for our rights,” he emphasizes. “It’s not fair that they just kick us out on the street with nothing. Somebody has to respond.”

David Bacon is a writer and photographer. His new book, “Illegal People - How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants,” is published by Beacon Press.

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Israel's 'Crime Against Humanity'

By CHRIS HEDGES

Israel's siege of Gaza, largely unseen by the outside world because of Jerusalem's refusal to allow humanitarian aid workers, reporters and photographers access to Gaza, rivals the most egregious crimes carried out at the height of apartheid by the South African regime. It comes close to the horrors visited on Sarajevo by the Bosnian Serbs. It has disturbing echoes of the Nazi ghettos of Lodz and Warsaw.

"This is a stain on what is left of Israeli morality," I was told by Richard N. Veits, the former U.S. ambassador to Jordan who led a delegation from the U.S. Council for the National Interest Foundation to Gaza to meet Hamas leaders this past summer. "I am almost breathless discussing this subject. It is so myopic. Washington, of course, is a handmaiden to all this. The Israeli manipulation of a population in this manner is comparable to some of the crimes that took place against civilian populations fifty years ago."

The U.N. special rapporteur for human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, former Princeton University law professor Richard Falk, calls what Israel is doing to the 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza "a crime against humanity." Falk, who is Jewish, has condemned the collective punishment of the Palestinians in Gaza as "a flagrant and massive violation of international humanitarian law as laid down in Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention." He has asked for "the International Criminal Court to investigate the situation, and determine whether the Israeli civilian leaders and military commanders responsible for the Gaza siege should be indicted and prosecuted for violations of international criminal law."

Falk, while condemning the rocket attacks by the militant group Hamas, which he points out are also criminal violations of international law, goes on to say that "such Palestinian behavior does not legalize Israel's imposition of a collective punishment of a life- and health-threatening character on the people of Gaza, and should not distract the U.N. or international society from discharging their fun-

damental moral and legal duty to render protection to the Palestinian people."

"It is an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe that each day poses the entire 1.5 million Gazans to an unspeakable ordeal, to a struggle to survive in terms of their health," Falk said when I reached him by phone in California shortly before he left for Israel. "This is an increasingly precarious condition. A recent study reports that 46 percent of all Gazan children

Falk, who is Jewish, has condemned the collective punishment of the Palestinians in Gaza as "a flagrant and massive violation of international humanitarian law..."

suffer from acute anemia. There are reports that the sonic booms associated with Israeli overflights have caused widespread deafness, especially among children. Gazan children need thousands of hearing aids. Malnutrition is extremely high in a number of different dimensions and affects 75 percent of Gazans. There are widespread mental disorders, especially among young people without the will to live. Over 50 percent of Gazan children under the age of 12 have been found to have no will to live."

Gaza now spends 12 hours a day without power, which can be a death sentence to the severely ill in hospitals. There are few drugs and little medicine, including no cancer or cystic fibrosis medication. Hospitals have generators but often lack fuel. Medical equipment, including one of Gaza's three CT scanners, has been destroyed by power surges and fluctuations. Medical staff cannot control the temperature of incubators for newborns. And Israel has revoked most exit visas, meaning some of those who need specialized care, including cancer patients and those in need of kidney dialysis, have died. Of the 230 Gazans estimated to have died last year because they were denied proper medical care, several spent their final hours at Israeli crossing points where they were refused entry into Israel. The statistics gathered on children—half of Gaza's population is under the age of 17—are increasingly grim. About 45 percent of children in Gaza have iron deficiency from a lack of fruit and vegetables, and 18 percent have stunted growth.

"It is macabre," Falk said. "I don't know of anything that exactly fits this situation. People have been referring to the Warsaw ghetto as the nearest analog in modern times."

"There is no structure of an occupation that endured for decades and involved this kind of oppressive circumstances," the rapporteur added. "The magnitude, the deliberateness, the violations of international humanitarian law, the impact on the health, lives and survival and the overall conditions warrant the characterization of a crime against humanity. This occupation is the direct intention by the Israeli military and civilian authorities. They are responsible and should be held accountable."

The point of this Israeli siege, ostensibly, is to break Hamas, the radical Islamic group that was elected to power in 2007. But Hamas has repeatedly proposed long-term

truces with Israel and offered to negotiate a permanent truce. During the last cease-fire, established through Egyptian intermediaries in July, Hamas upheld the truce although Israel refused to ease the blockade. It was Israel that, on Nov. 4, initiated an armed attack that violated the truce and killed six Palestinians. It was only then that Hamas resumed firing rockets at Israel. Palestinians have launched more than 200 rockets on Israel since the latest round of violence began. There have been no Israeli casualties.

"This is a crime of survival," Falk said of the rocket attacks. "Israel has put the Gazans in a set of circumstances where they either have to accept whatever is imposed on them or resist in any way available to them. That is a horrible dilemma to impose upon a people. This does not alleviate the Palestinians, and Gazans in particular, for accountability for doing these acts involving rocket fire, but it also imposes some responsibility on Israel for creating these circumstances."

Israel seeks to break the will of the Palestinians to resist. The Israeli government has demonstrated little interest in diplomacy or a peaceful solution. The rapid expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank is an effort to thwart the possibility of a two-state solution by gobbling up vast tracts of Palestinian real estate. Israel also appears to want to thrust the impoverished Gaza Strip onto Egypt. There are now dozens of tunnels, the principal means for food and goods, connecting Gaza to Egypt. Israel permits the tunnels to operate, most likely as part of an effort to further cut Gaza off from Israel.

"Israel, all along, has not been prepared to enter into diplomatic process that gives the Palestinians a viable state," Falk said. "They [the Israelis] feel time is on their side. They feel they can create enough facts on the ground so people will come to the conclusion a viable state cannot emerge."

The use of terror and hunger to break a hostile population is one of the oldest forms of warfare. I watched the Bosnian Serbs employ the same tactic in Sarajevo. Those who orchestrate such sieges do not grasp the terrible rage born of long humiliation, indiscriminate violence and abuse. A father or a mother whose child dies because of a lack of vaccines or proper medical care does not forget. A boy whose ill grandmother dies while detained at an Israel checkpoint does not forget. All who endure humiliation, abuse and the murder of family members do not forget. This rage becomes a virus within those who, eventually, stumble out into the daylight. Is it any wonder that 71 percent of children interviewed at a school in Gaza recently said they wanted to be a "martyr"?

The Israelis in Gaza, like the American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, are foolishly breeding the next generation of militants and Islamic radicals. Jihadists, enraged by the injustices done by Israel and the United States, seek to carry out reciprocal acts of savagery, even at the cost of their own lives. The violence unleashed on Palestinian children will, one day, be the violence unleashed on Israeli children. This is the tragedy of Gaza. This is the tragedy of Israel.

http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/20081215_israels_crime_against_humanity/

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Friends of PFLAG Modesto present:

Cabaret Night Talent Show

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

From 7-10 pm

Emanuel Lutheran Church
Luther Hall
324 College Avenue
Modesto

General Donations begin at \$5
twelve and under free

Light refreshments provided

Raffle prizes!

Proceeds to benefit the educational fund for PFLAG Modesto Chapter 107-0716
www.pflagmodesto.org

This is the fourth year for fun and frivolity! We are still looking for talented piano players, comedians, jugglers, clowns, dancers, musician, etc. Please call Jeff or Shane at 209-923-3501 if you fit the bill!

Spay Day

..... from page 1

Society of Stanislaus County since its inception, now a few months into its second year. The HSSC, not affiliated with the national Humane Society of the United States, has been one the best things to happen to animals in our county. Started by Traci Jennings, with the efforts of the motivated, committed people involved with Humane Society of Stanislaus County, it has been doing those things that are so necessary for lasting change in attitudes towards our dog and cat companions. Traci's special emphasis has always been in reaching the schools and teaching students about responsible pet ownership. A huge part of that is stressing the importance of spaying/neutering.

Spay Day USA will be another way to actively show responsible pet ownership. Still in the early planning stages, volunteers are actively seeking local veterinarians to be a part of it. The goal is to do four weekends of aggressive Spaying/Neutering for cats, since their overpopulation has exploded this year. Stanislaus County has signed on but we are asking for your help, too. Contact Humane Society of Stanislaus County if you can help in any way, or if you know of a local veterinarian that may want to volunteer for one weekend day in February. Go to www.humanestanislaus.org for information. Our local Humane Society survives by donations only. Its goal is not only to provide education in our local schools but to continue to find low cost ways for people to alter their animals. They conducted several very successful 'One day' low/no cost clinics during 2008. The longer-term goal is to have a state of the art, permanent, full-care eco-facility and adoption center for sheltering homeless animals, providing an alternative to the current situation we have at the County shelter. In this country, about 8 million animals are euthanized in shelters each year – one every 8 seconds. Stanislaus County makes up about 15,000 – 20,000 of that number.

Kathleen stresses the importance of events like this and the lasting effect they can have:

"Locally, an aggressive spay neuter program is crucial, not just in the month of February, but all year long. The proposed new Stanislaus County Animal Shelter is a good start, but without a public education program, and an effective spay/neuter system, the new facility will then become overcrowded. The current kill rate is unconscionable, and will only increase without animal population control."

ACTION: Contact Humane Society of Stanislaus County, (209) 345-5967, to help in any way, or for details about Spay/Neuter, or to schedule your pet for spay or neuter. You can be a part of this great event in February!

ACTION: Many individuals who care for stray and feral colonies are incurring financial hardships providing food for so many abandoned animals. If you can donate food, water bowls, or know of an inexpensive food source, contact me at (209) 652-4131 or write to ryke40@ainet.com



Cheney throws down gauntlet, defies prosecution for war crimes

By MARJORIE COHN, *truthout* | Perspective

Dick Cheney has publicly confessed to ordering war crimes. Asked about waterboarding in an ABC News interview, Cheney replied, "I was aware of the program, certainly, and involved in helping get the process cleared." He also said he still believes waterboarding was an appropriate method to use on terrorism suspects. CIA Director Michael Hayden confirmed that the agency waterboarded three al-Qaeda suspects in 2002 and 2003.

US courts have long held that waterboarding, where water is poured into someone's nose and mouth until he nearly drowns, constitutes torture. Our federal War Crimes Act defines torture as a war crime punishable by life imprisonment or even the death penalty if the victim dies.

Under the doctrine of command responsibility, enshrined in US law, commanders all the way up the chain of command to the commander in chief can be held liable for war crimes if they knew or should have known their subordinates would commit them and they did nothing to stop or prevent it.

Why is Cheney so sanguine about admitting he is a war criminal? Because he's confident that either President Bush will preemptively pardon him or President-elect Obama won't prosecute him.

Both of those courses of action would be illegal.

First, a president cannot immunize himself or his subordinates for committing crimes that he himself authorized. On February 7, 2002, Bush signed a memo erroneously stating that the Geneva Conventions, which require humane treatment, did not apply to al-Qaeda and the Taliban. But the Supreme Court made clear that Geneva protects all prisoners. Bush also admitted that he approved of high-level meetings where waterboarding was authorized by Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, John Ashcroft, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld and George Tenet.

Attorney General Michael Mukasey says there's no need for Bush to issue blanket pardons since there is no evidence that anyone developed the policies for any reason other than to protect the security in the country and in the belief that he or she was doing something lawful. But noble motives are not defenses to the commission of crimes.

Lt. Gen. Antonio Taguba, who investigated the Abu Ghraib scandal, said, "There is no longer any doubt as to whether the current administration has committed war crimes. The only question that remains to be answered is whether those who ordered the use of torture will be held to account."

Second, the Constitution will require President Obama to faithfully execute the laws. That means prosecuting lawbreakers. When the United States ratified the Geneva Conventions and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, thereby making them part of US law, we agreed to prosecute

those who violate their prohibitions.

The bipartisan December 11 report of the Senate Armed Services Committee concluded that "senior officials in the United States government solicited information on how to use aggressive techniques, redefined the law to create the appearance of their legality, and authorized their use against detainees."

Lawyers who wrote the memos that purported to immunize government officials from war crimes liability include John Yoo, Jay Bybee, William Haynes, David Addington and Alberto Gonzales. There is precedent in our law for holding lawyers criminally liable for participating in a common plan to violate the law.

Committee Chairman Senator Carl Levin told Rachel Maddow that you couldn't legalize what's illegal by having a lawyer write an opinion.

The committee's report also found that Rumsfeld's authorization of aggressive interrogation techniques for use at Guantanamo Bay was a direct cause of detainee abuse there. Those techniques migrated to Iraq and Afghanistan, where prisoners in US custody were also tortured.

Pardons or failures to prosecute the officials who planned and authorized torture would also be immoral. Former Navy General Counsel Alberto Mora testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee in June 2008 that "there are serving US flag-rank officers who maintain that the first and second identifiable causes of US combat deaths in Iraq - as judged by their effectiveness in recruiting insurgent fighters into combat - are, respectively the symbols of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo."

During the campaign, Obama promised to promptly review actions by Bush officials to determine whether "genuine crimes" were committed. He said, "If crimes have been committed, they should be investigated," but "I would not want my first term consumed by what was perceived on the part of the Republicans as a partisan witch hunt, because I think we've got too many problems we've got to solve."

Two Obama advisers told the Associated Press that "there's little - if any - chance that the incoming president's Justice Department will go after anyone involved in authorizing or carrying out interrogations that provoked worldwide outrage."

When he takes office, Obama should order his new attorney general to appoint an independent prosecutor to investigate and prosecute those who ordered and authorized the commission of war crimes.

Obama has promised to bring real change. This must be legal and moral change, where those at the highest levels of government are held accountable for their heinous crimes. The new president should move swiftly to set an important precedent that you can't authorize war crimes and get away with it.

Marjorie Cohn is president of the National Lawyers Guild, a professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, and author of "Cowboy Republic: Six Ways the Bush Gang Has Defied the Law." Her new book, "Rules of Disengagement: The Politics and Honor of Military Dissent" (co-authored with Kathleen Gilbert), is forthcoming. Her articles are archived at www.marjoriecohn.com

From <http://www.truthout.org/121908J>

CHINA – 2008

A huge, lumbering land of mountains, forests, cities, millions of people.

An ancient, storied land where Emperors built monuments to their glory by the inhumane labor of their subjects.

The fabled East has embraced the capitalism of the West. Enormous cities sprout skyscrapers much as asparagus spears thrust themselves into the sunlight of Spring.

The yellow construction crane, the new “national bird of China,” is everywhere as China hurries to catch up with the West.

Hundreds of new factories, fueled with soft coal, spew filth into the air to keep up with the demands of the world’s passion for cheap goods.

People walk on the sidewalks, in the parks, white masks covering parts of their faces to protect them from the polluted air.

Hurry, hurry, catch up with the West, build, grow, become a world power. China is marching, belching gray death, smothering the world.

Floating Bear

I saw a picture in the Sunday Parade magazine of a black bear sitting on a large ice floe floating by a ship sailing in the opposite direction.

The picture was taken as humorous, fun to see, a bear floating by.

I stared at it with horror and saw no humor in it, glad that I would not have to witness a beautiful creature’s death by drowning as his icy refuge melted.

Mr. Bear has become a symbol to me of what is happening in our world.

I fear we are becoming spectators watching millions die of starvation, disease, suicide bombs, land mines, war with its casualties.

TV news, 24 hours a day, allows us a front row seat, voyeurs, watching glaciers melt, seas rise, forests die from lack of rain. Floods drown neighborhoods. Fires burn thousands of acres, hundreds of homes.

“Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee,” the poet wrote. We must listen, it is tolling for the death of our world.

Lynne Sutton - 2008

A walk on the beach

I walked today on the beach at Malibu in the crystal morning light. The sea thundered its greeting pelicans winged their way across the top of the waves, searching for breakfast.

Waves, in their constant rhythm, washed over my feet like playful puppies hugging my toes in a game of tag.

No other human was in sight yet the remains of man’s carelessness were everywhere.

Containers, aluminum cans, plastic glasses, bags, forks, cigarette butts. Some persons seem to prefer to be surrounded by garbage.

They read it, watch it, listen to it through their earphones while walking on a magnificent beach, missing the symphony of the sea.

Then, still mindless, they leave the detritus of their visit for others to clean up.

Let’s establish Museums filled with fabulous finds to feed the souls of these thoughtless humans.

Advertising would extol the wonders, the uniqueness, of each collection, people would flock to see the garbage they had discarded being showcased. An entire new culture could spring up.

Then, dazzled by the value placed on this evidence of their garbage- filled lives, perhaps, just perhaps, they would leave the mountains, the sea, the forests to those who glory in the beauty, the quiet, the perfection.

Lynne Sutton – July 1991



Lynn Sutton: storyteller

I think of myself as a storyteller, rather than a poet, although often the stories evolve into prose/poems. As a child, I thought in storytelling ways, often acting out the parts. I still tell stories, and I hope I always will.

I spent my childhood in the verdant Sonoran Desert of Arizona, my young adult life in the Pacific Northwest with Puget Sound in my front yard, and after a job transfer to Modesto, I decided I’d better find out the good things about a farming community where the only scenic location is Dry Creek. My search led me to music and wonderful friends.

I have been a long-time member of the Modesto Symphony Association Board of Directors and a Past President of the Modesto Symphony Guild. One of my greatest joys is going to schools as a docent and sharing my love of music with the children and the importance of classical music in their lives.

I was formerly on the Board of Directors of the Townsend Opera Players, as well as Past President of The Townsend Opera League. I also am a member and secretary of the Board of Directors of Healthy Aging Association

Another of my passions has been cooking, and I have chaired many large dinners and luncheons for the symphony, opera and other charitable organizations. The food-focused fundraisers are a thing of the past, but they were lots of fun at the time.



Robert Moses . . . from page 1

as Co-Director of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a group that comprised all the major civil rights organizations working in Mississippi. In that capacity, he was recognized as a driving force behind the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964 and in organizing the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) which challenged the Mississippi regulars at the 1964 Democratic Convention.

In 1976 Bob Moses pursued doctoral studies in Philosophy at Harvard University. A MacArthur Foundation Fellow from 1982 to 1987, Dr. Moses used his fellowship to work full-time teaching algebra to seventh and eighth graders in the Open Program of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School in Cambridge, MA. During that period, Dr. Moses founded the Algebra Project and began to carry it out together with parents, teachers, educators and activists.

Bob Moses is the author of the *Algebra Project-Transition Curriculum*, which uses experiential learning drawn from the work of Dewey, Lewin, Piaget, Quine, and Kolb—and a five-step curricular process Moses innovated—to help middle school students make the conceptual shift from arithmetic to algebra and be prepared for algebra in the eighth grade, and thus a college preparatory math sequence in high school. Dr. Moses, with Charles E. Cobb, Jr., authored *Radical Equations—Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project* which has sold over 23,000 copies won several awards. Dr. Moses will sign copies of his book at the event.



ACTION: Help us provide the community with this free, important remembrance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Make your tax-deductible check payable to the “Modesto Peace

Life Center-MLK,” c/o Jim Costello, 1849 Richard Way, Ceres, CA 95307-4504. The Modesto Peace Life Center is a 501 (c)(3) organization, tax ID # 94-2800825. For information, email jcostello@igc.org, or call 209.575.7990, or 209.577.5355.

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The silent winter of escalation

By NORMAN SOLOMON, *truthout* | Perspective

Sunday morning, before dawn, I read in The New York Times that “the Pentagon is planning to add more than 20,000 troops to Afghanistan” within the next 18 months - “raising American force levels to about 58,000” in that country. Then, I scraped ice off a windshield and drove to the C-SPAN studios, where a picture window showed a serene daybreak over the Capitol dome.

While I was on C-SPAN’s “Washington Journal” for a live interview, the program aired some rarely seen footage with the voices of two courageous politicians who challenged the warfare state.

So, on Sunday morning, viewers across the country saw Barbara Lee speaking on the House floor three days after 9/11 — just before she became the only member of Congress to vote against the president’s green-light resolution to begin the US military attack on Afghanistan.

“However difficult this vote may be, some of us must urge the use of restraint,” she said. The date was September 14, 2001. Congresswoman Lee continued, “Our country is in a state of mourning. Some of us must say, Let’s step back for a moment, let’s just pause just for a minute, and think through the implications of our actions today so that this does not spiral out of control.”

And she said, “As we act, let us not become the evil that we deplore.”

The footage of Barbara Lee was an excerpt from the “War Made Easy” documentary film (based on my book of the same name). As she appeared on a TV monitor, I glanced out the picture window. The glowing blue sky and streaky clouds above the Hill looked postcard-serene.

But the silence now enveloping the political non-response to plans for the Afghanistan war is a message of acquiescence that echoes what happened when the escalation of the Vietnam War gathered momentum.

During the mid-1960s, the conventional wisdom was what everyone with a modicum of smarts kept saying: Higher US troop levels in Vietnam were absolutely necessary. Today, the conventional wisdom is that higher US troop levels in Afghanistan are absolutely necessary.

Many people who think otherwise — including, I’d guess, quite a few members of Congress — are keeping their thoughts to themselves, heads down and mouths shut, for roughly the same reasons that so many remained quiet as the deployment numbers rolled upward like an odometer of political mileage on the road to death in Vietnam.

Right now, the basic ingredients of further Afghan disasters are in place - including, pivotally, a dire lack of wide-ranging debate over Washington’s options. In an atmosphere reminiscent of 1965, when almost all of the esteemed public voices concurred with the decision by newly elected President Lyndon Johnson to deploy more troops to Vietnam, the tenet that the United States must send additional troops to Afghanistan is axiomatic in US news media, on Capitol Hill and — as far as can be discerned — at the top of the incoming administration.

But the problem with such a foreign-policy “no brainer” is that the parameters of thinking have already been put in the rough equivalent of a lockbox. Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara and Lyndon Johnson approached Vietnam policy options no more rigidly than Hillary Clinton, Robert Gates and Barack Obama appear poised to pursue Afghanistan policy options.

I was thinking about this when I left the C-SPAN building in the full light of day. The morning glow made the Capitol look majestic. Yet, it was almost possible to see, streaked across the dome, an invisible new stain of blood and shattered bones.

Along with the grim patterns, there’s a tradition of brave dissent on Capitol Hill. It’s epitomized by Barbara Lee’s prophetic statement just after 9/11 — and by an earlier kindred spirit, the fierce Vietnam War opponent Sen. Wayne Morse. If you’d like to see historic footage of them, retrieved from the nation’s Orwellian memory hole, watch the “Washington Journal” segment by clicking <http://www.cspan.org/Watch/watch.aspx?MediaId=HP-A-13214>.

On Monday, USA Today reported that the top US commander in Afghanistan “has asked the Pentagon for more than 20,000 soldiers, Marines and airmen” to raise the US troop level in Afghanistan to 55,000 or 60,000. Gen. David McKiernan says that is “needed until we get to this tipping point where the Afghan army and the Afghan police have both the capacity and capability to provide security for their people.” Such a tipping point “is at least three or four more years away,” the general explained. So, “if we put these additional forces in here, it’s going to be for the next few years. It’s not a temporary increase of combat strength.”

Is Afghanistan the same as Vietnam? Of course, competent geographers would say no. But the United States is the United States — with domestic continuity between two eras of military intervention, spanning five decades, much more significant than we might think.

Bedrock faith in the Pentagon’s massive capacity for inflicting violence is implicit in the nostrums from anointed foreign-policy experts. The echo chamber is echoing: The Afghanistan war is worth the cost that others will pay.

Norman Solomon is executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. Information about the documentary film “War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death” is at www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org. To view the C-SPAN “Washington Journal” interview that included excerpts from the film, go to: <http://www.cspan.org/Watch/watch.aspx?MediaId=HP-A-13214>

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Centuries of engagement, unspeakable gratitude

By **LEN and LIBBY TRAUBMAN**

On Monday, December 8, 2008, our 16-year-old Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue in California gathered in a participant's home for the 200th time.

Our convening reminded us of Convivencia, living together, describing in Spanish the better part of 1,000 years in Spain - Al Andalus - before 1492. During those many centuries, Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived together, matured, and flowered under Muslim rule.

At our start, 1992 marked the first San Mateo in-home gathering of a courageous, inquisitive handful of Palestinian, Jewish, and supportive other women and men.

We had been compelled by the June, 1991, Beyond War conference - Building A Common Future - which a few of us had helped conceive and enact in the California redwoods for Israeli and Palestinian citizen-leaders. One result was their historic, first signed document - "Framework for a Public Peace Process" - presented at a Stanford University public ceremony to a standing ovation and reported in print and TV news.

The at-home, face-to-face living room model had come to our attention in 1989, when the annual Beyond War Award was presented to Koinonia Southern Africa, as well as to Neve Shalom~Wahat al-Salam (Oasis of Peace) cooperative village of Palestinian and Jewish families sharing their lives in Israel.

Koinonia means "belonging together." During the 1980s years of apartheid, blacks and whites of the Koinonia Southern Africa movement gathered in family residences and public places to share stories and meals, sometimes at

risk to their lives. They helped change the fabric of South African culture and the direction of history itself. Their story and methods changed how we would live our lives, too.

Now, after sixteen years, our California Dialogue continues to pass on the tradition, having helped birth and support many dozens of similar groups in North America and beyond, while initiating hundreds of public outreach endeavors.

We continue providing humankind with best-practices and inspiration, while preserving increasing hundreds of success stories of others in Palestinian- Jewish and interfaith relationship building worldwide.

At year-end 2008 we remember and thank those Muslims, Jews, and Christians of Convivencia; blacks and whites of Koinonia Southern Africa; inventive Americans of Beyond War; visionary Palestinians and Israelis who created the

Oasis for Peace, and who forged the "Framework for a Public Peace Process," and all those we name from our personal lives and collective histories - even antiquity - who continue to shape and inspire us.

Today we especially cannot forget our African exemplars of vision and courage.

For the rest of this story, visit <http://traubman.igc.org/koinoniastory.htm>

ACTION: Learn more about California Dialogue from Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group, 1448 Cedarwood Dr., San Mateo, CA 94403. Voice: (650) 574-8303; fax:(650) 573-1217, <http://traubman.igc.org/>; E-mail: LTRAUBMAN@igc.org



Global starvation ignored by American policy elites

By **PETER PHILLIPS**

A new report from The World Bank admits that in 2005 three billion one hundred and forty million people live on less than \$2.50 a day and about 44% of these people survive on less than \$1.25. Complete and total wretchedness can be the only description for the circumstances faced by so many, especially those in urban areas. Simple items like phone calls, nutritious food, vacations, television, dental care, and inoculations are beyond the possible for billions of people.

Starvation.net logs the increasing impacts of world hunger and starvation. Over 30,000 people a day (85% children under 5) die of malnutrition, curable diseases, and starvation. The numbers of unnecessary deaths has exceeded three hundred million people over the past forty years.

These are the people who David Rothkopf in his book *Superclass* calls the unlucky. "If you happen to be born in the wrong place, like sub-Saharan Africa, ... that is bad luck," Rothkopf writes. Rothkopf goes on to describe how the top 10% of the adults worldwide own 84% of the wealth and the bottom half owns barely 1%. Included in the top 10% of wealth holders are the one thousand global billionaires. But is such a contrast of wealth inequality really the result of luck, or are there policies, supported by political elites, that protect the few at the expense of the many?

Farmers around the world grow more than enough food to feed the entire world adequately. Global grain production yielded a record 2.3 billion tons in 2007, up 4% from the year before, yet, billions of people go hungry every day. Grain.org describes the core reasons for continuing hunger in a recent article "Making a Killing from Hunger." It turns out that while farmers grow enough food to feed the world, commodity speculators and huge grain traders like Cargill control the global food prices and distribution. Starvation is profitable for corporations when demands for food push the prices up. Cargill announced that profits for commodity

trading for the first quarter of 2008 were 86% above 2007. World food prices grew 22% from June 2007 to June 2008 and a significant portion of the increase was propelled by the \$175 billion invested in commodity futures that speculate on price instead of seeking to feed the hungry. The result is wild food price spirals, both up and down, with food insecurity remaining widespread.

For a family on the bottom rung of poverty a small price increase is the difference between life and death, yet neither US presidential candidate has declared a war on starvation. Instead both candidates talk about national security and the continuation of the war on terror as if this were the primary election issue. Where is the Manhattan project for global hunger? Where is the commitment to national security though unilateral starvation relief? Where is the outrage in the corporate media with pictures of dying children and an analysis of who benefits from hunger?

American people cringe at the thought of starving children, often thinking that there is little they can do about it, save sending in a donation to their favorite charity for a little guilt relief. Yet giving is not enough; we must demand hunger relief as a national policy inside the next presidency. It is a moral imperative for us as the richest nation in the world nation to prioritize a political movement of human betterment and starvation relief for the billions in need. Global hunger and massive wealth inequality is based on political policies that can be changed. There will be no national security in the US without the basic food needs of the world being realized.

Peter Phillips is a professor of sociology at Sonoma State University and director of Project Censored, a media research group. His new book Censored 2009 is available from by Seven Stories Press.

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