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## Afghan memories

By JOHN MOREARTY

Growing up in Milwaukee, “afghan” meant the cozy blankets Grandma made, sitting in her big mahogany rocker. They were brilliant, gorgeous, soft and warm. Ma learned the skill, I still have two of hers—one fluffy squares, knitted from leftover yarn in flagrant colors, the other tightly crocheted, soft tan with bright red roses and green vines twining.

Babur the Great missed the roses of Afghanistan and its mountain air. His armies swept down through the Khyber Pass in 1526 to found the tolerant and cultivated Mughal Empire in Delhi. But he detested the climate; “Bury me in Kabul,” he said, “the loveliest valley on earth.” His tomb was rebuilt there after the Taliban were driven out in 2001, and families picnic in the garden. The Persian inscription reads, “If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this!”

Back in the 1800s British and Russian empires competed for Afghanistan. The Russians wanted warm water ports, the Brits

denied them and wanted opium for their lucrative monopoly in China. Mystical imperialism lured both empires as well; “If only we can conquer those high mountains with our swords and cannon, world peace and the harmony of all religions will descend—under our imperial auspices, of course, as God wills it.” Read Kipling’s story, “The Man Who Would be King.” But Afghans with hand-made rifles drove the Brits out.

Triumphal religious fantasy still tempts American Christians. George W. Bush believed he was Jesus’ instrument, and U.S. Lieutenant General William Boykin boasted against the Muslims, “My God is bigger than their God.” Gun on hip, American soldiers distributed Bibles in Afghanistan—“Jesus is coming, we are his messengers, rejoice and be glad.”

For a hundred years Afghans have struggled to become a modern, tolerant, educated society. About 1920 in the south

Afghan memories . . . . .continued p. 11

## Reflections of our Peace Vigil

By MIKE CHIAVETTA

It is 8:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of October and I am still in the “afterglow” of the Modesto Peace/ Life Center Peace Vigil from last evening. My wife Jana and I have been attending the peace vigil consistently; come rain or shine, 100 degrees or a wee bit chilly, for the last 2 years. This hour has become an integral part of our commitment to peace and social justice issues in Modesto and in our country.

We were invited to our first Peace Vigil by our “peace mentor” John Lucas and, since then, we cannot think of missing the opportunity to participate, albeit in a small way, in an activity that helps us deal with the wasteful and destructive conflicts that are country is involved in. Yesterday’s vigil fell on the 8th “anniversary” of U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan. As is typical at a peace vigil, the individuals there conducted an interesting discussion of the use of the word “anniversary” to mark the start of the war. For most of us the word anniversary has a joyous and positive connotation. We decided that “memorial” would be a much more appropriate word for this date.

This conversation is an example of one of the reasons why I attend the Peace Vigil. It is an hour of respect, reverence, contemplation, conversation and action about the turmoil in our world that has been relegated to the backburner of our collective conscience. It is an opportunity to stand up, in public, and declare our feelings about war. It is also a chance to see my Peace/Life buddies and to introduce new people to this endeavor. Be it John or Shelley, Ken or Dan, Fred or Elaine, it is always a chance to touch and feel a unity



Dan Onorato, Mike Chiavetta and John Lucas vigil for peace.

of purpose with people that are committed to social justice issues and willing to put their beliefs into action. It is also an opportunity for young people to do something that has a real impact on their lives.

Yesterday was an example of this since we had three young people come to their first peace vigil. When talking to them, they felt empowered by their participation. They enthusias-

VIGIL . . . . .continued p. 10

## Don't miss SLaM on RyE

By SAM PIERSTORFF

SLaM on RyE, Modesto's Monthly Poetry Slam, continues on Wednesday, October 14th at the Prospect Theater, 520 Scenic Dr. Modesto, 95350, 7:30pm. (Get there early!). \$5.00 for general admission & competing poets. Admission limited to the first 100 people.

**OPEN SLAM:** First 7 poets to sign up are in + random drawing for last 3 (10 poets total). Come early to sign up early at 6:30 p.m. Cash prizes for 1st & 2nd place. Audience Judges!

## FEATURED POET: ROB "RATPACK SLIM" STURMA

ROB "RATPACK SLIM" STURMA has been getting on open mics since 2000, when a sweet California lass brought him to the Los Angeles open mic Da Poetry Lounge, and where he subsequently fell in love with the art of performance poetry and spoken word. As slammaster of Western Regional slam team Gang Green, he took three teams to Big Sur, rocking nationally ranked teams outta their seats. He was the poetry editor for GetUnderground.com. His new book of poems, *Miles of Hallelujah*, will be available on Write Bloody Press soon ([www.writebloody.com/store/](http://www.writebloody.com/store/)).

**HAIKU BATTLE:** If you're willing to compete in this 17-syllable slam, please let me know ASAP! Sam Pierstorff ([pierstorff@mjc.edu](mailto:pierstorff@mjc.edu)); WEB: [www.slamonrye.com](http://www.slamonrye.com)

## ILL LIST UPDATE:

ILL LIST 6 tickets (Saturday, December 12th) are NOW available online at [www.thestate.org](http://www.thestate.org), and at SLaM on RyE if you want to avoid transaction fees! This year's line up includes uber-poets like BUDDY WAKEFIELD, AINSLEY BURROWS, JAMIE DE WOLF, JAYLEE ALDE, QUEEN SHEBA, MICHAEL SIMMS, ORIGINAL WOMAN and one more special guest TBA. This event has sold out 5 years in a row, so don't wait and then blame us later! Get your tickets!!! It's gonna be insane.

## Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

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## Make a difference at the Alternative Faire

By MARY BAUCHER

The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Alternative Faire is scheduled for Sunday, November 29, at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., from noon to 2:00 p.m. All are welcome to make donations in the name of family/loved ones and to purchase gifts from agencies that reach out to help people in difficult circumstances.

Find out about and make contributions to or purchase gifts at:

- **Family Promise**, part of the national Interfaith Hospitality Network, houses and feeds homeless families in churches, rotating weekly, while helping them find jobs and permanent housing.
- **SERRV** sells items providing incomes to artisans in developing countries and the U.S.
- **Church World Service** provides humanitarian aid including thousands of blankets in world disasters within hours of a major catastrophe. Five dollars "buys" a blanket for someone who has lost everything! Tools and other means of livelihood also available.
- **Community Housing & Shelter Services** works to get families into affordable rentals.
- **Habitat for Humanity** builds houses locally and worldwide with families. Purchase building materials or buy cards, cups, shirts, bears.
- **Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP)** supports human rights observers who live with the indigenous Mayans while they rebuild their lives and seek justice after the brutal civil war.
- **Heifer International** provides animals, fuel, and fiber to U.S. families and around the world.
- **Inter-Faith Ministries** operates the Food Bank and Clothes Closet and Redwood House for mothers recovering from substance abuse.
- **Modesto Peace/Life Center** works for justice, peace, and a sustainable environment.
- **Sierra Club** will have beautiful calendars for sale to help the environment.
- **Somoto-Merced** project helps people of Somoto, Nicaragua, meet basic needs through the sale of hand-crafts made in that sister city.
- **A light luncheon.** Contribute toward the Global Food Crisis Fund to feed hungry people around the world.
- **Bake sale goodies** sold by young people will provide money for feeding the guests at Modesto's 9<sup>th</sup> and D Street homeless shelter.
- **Black Cows**, root beer floats made by the youth. Proceeds go to Heifer International.

**ACTION:** *Bring friends and be generous to people in need.* All money goes to the designated agencies except cost of food for lunch and Black Cows. The church keeps nothing. Contact Mary Baucher, 523-5178, for information.



## Attend Inter-Religious Thanksgiving Celebration

By MARK HASKETT

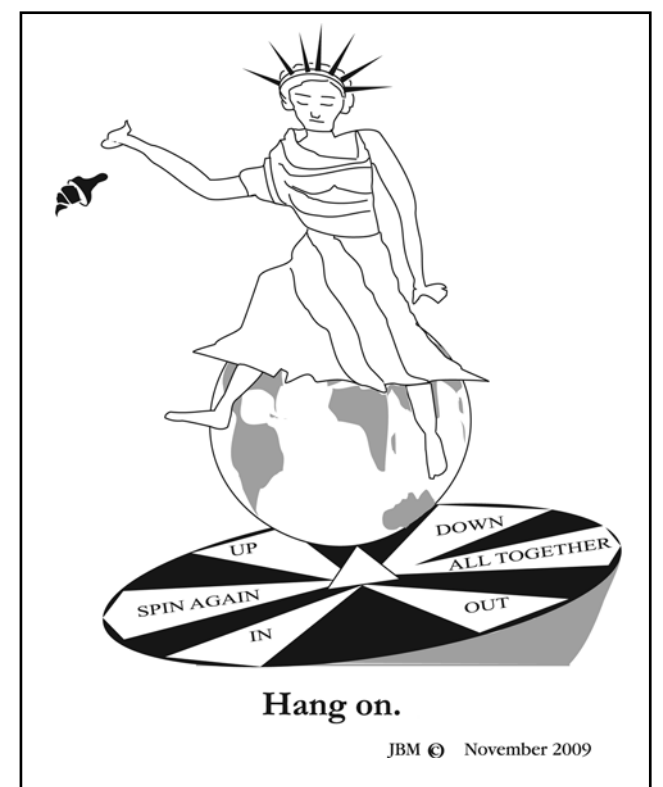
Following last year's hiatus, the local Community of Faith will come together once again on Monday, November 23, 2009 from 7:15 - 8:45 p.m. before our national holiday to express shared sentiments of Thanksgiving for the many blessings we all enjoy—not the least of which is Freedom of Religion.

Representatives of the area's diverse spiritual traditions will gather for the first time at Congregation Beth Shalom, 1705 Sherwood Ave. in Modesto, to offer prayers, sacred readings and music related to the theme of "Giving Thanks Together." Expected to join the Celebration are representatives of the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Unitarian Universalist traditions.

Donations of canned goods and non-perishable food items will be accepted during the event, as well as financial contributions, to benefit Inter-Faith Ministries' Emergency Food Pantry. The need is especially great at this time of the year because of the current economic downturn.

The gathering of so many different congregations under one roof is rare enough that many consider the event cause for celebration in itself! The opportunity to witness the spectrum of spiritual practices through which gratitude is expressed can only enrich our own feelings of thankfulness. As we approach the end-of-year holidays, which can easily become an excuse for excess, this Inter-Religious Thanksgiving Celebration should help make us more conscious of what we *already have*—including spiritual as well as material blessings—while affording us a taste of the unity and harmony all our faith traditions espouse.

For further information, contact: Mark S. Haskett, Director, InnerFaith Resources, PO Box 3365, Modesto, CA 95353, 577-0864.



## We can't afford health care? You lie!

By TOM H. HASTINGS, *truthout* Perspective

We see the spectacle of the US Congress unable to manage decent health care reform that will actually enable the American citizenry to join the rest of the industrialized world in having health care for all. The problems, it is clear, come from those who are lying.

Death panels? That's true - we already have them. Insurance companies deny care to Americans, who then die as a result. It happens every day, Sarah Palin - but ascribing that to the Obama plan is untrue. In fact, those corporate death panels would be outlawed.

Find the language in Obama's bill that says that illegal aliens are covered or admit it's a canard - God forbid we should help some migrant worker who is stricken by illness or accident while laboring in service to Americans. South Carolina's Joe Wilson is just the Tourette tip of a dissembling iceberg.

We can't afford the plan? That is a whopper. It's all choice.

If every child in America doesn't have health care, but we own more than 6,000 nuclear weapons, more than half of them on board a fleet of 18 extremely expensive Trident submarines ready to fight the Soviets (Hey! Where'd they go?), isn't it time to ask some fundamental questions? One is: Why spend \$16.5 billion just on the Department of Energy nuclear weapons budget for FY 2010 with 50 million uninsured citizens? Does US Sen. Jim DeMint (R-South Carolina) speak for us all when he calls health care a privilege (and presumably threatening life on Earth is a human right for the US military)?

When our working poor are so often without either the money to pay for health insurance or the high costs of health care for ailing family members, and yet we somehow manage to justify spending in excess of \$915 billion on the so-called War on Terror, shouldn't we engage in some national discussion about priorities?

\$1 trillion for war while unemployment pushes ten percent in more and more states is unconscionable. Unemployment means a loss of health care for a high percentage of those who lose jobs and more foreclosures on the American dream of home ownership every month. Historically, it naturally correlates with increases in crime. The US is the last of the so-called developed countries to fail to insure the unemployed and underemployed, and we have the highest crime rates. So many thousands of us are shot each year that we more than qualify to be considered at war inside our own borders. Much of that carnage relates to social problems like unemployment, lack of health care and simple hopelessness.

Does it not seem that when the US can afford and not question nearly 1,000 military bases on other people's sovereign soil - 287 of them in Germany alone - that we can afford to create jobs? Rather than have our young people learning how to hurt others in the military, we could end economic conscription, lower the crime rate, drastically reduce the numbers of uninsured, reverse the home foreclosure numbers and enhance our nation's productivity by offering minimum wage jobs to anyone willing to work. Those jobs would include housing in some cases, health care benefits in all cases and on-the-job training and supplementary education for those needing it. Closing foreign military bases until these programs were paid for would be a giant leap for the US back toward the health of our workforce, our economy, our educational system and our very citizenry.

No one is talking about this? True. So, it's time to start.

*Tom H. Hastings is director of PeaceVoice and a founder of Whitefeather Peace Community in Portland, Oregon. He is a core faculty in the Portland State University Conflict Resolution graduate program.*

<http://www.truthout.org/091609R>



2010



## Peace Essay Contest

Peace can only last where human rights are respected,  
where people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free.

-- The Dalai Lama



### INTRODUCTION:

The word "peace" has many meanings, from the absence of war and armed conflict to personal inner serenity. All around the world people yearn for the opportunity for their families to live, work and thrive in peace. They dream of a future where forces like injustice, poverty and racism no longer exist. The *2010 Peace Essay Contest* invites students to envision a more peaceful future that includes respect and equality for all.

### Division I (grades 11-12)

and

### Division II (grades 9-10)

Consider the problems in our world that prevent people from experiencing peace. Then narrow your focus to one area. Imagine that you suddenly have the power to put into action a non-violent plan to bring about a more peaceful future that includes respect and fairness for all.

In your essay of 500-1000 words,

- Describe the problem area you have chosen to address;
- Tell what led you to focus on this area;
- Explain your plan for bringing about change including how your solution would contribute to a more peaceful future;
- Consider and explain how your strategy would impact your family, your community or the whole world and thus lead to a more peaceful future.

Deadline for entries:

**December 4, 2009**

Notification of winners:

### Division III (grades 7-8)

and

### Division IV (grades 5-6)

Consider the problems in our world that prevent people from experiencing peace. Then narrow your focus to one area. Imagine that you suddenly have the power to put into action a non-violent plan to bring about a more peaceful future that includes respect and fairness for all.

In your essay of 250-500 words,

- Describe the problem area you have chosen to address;
- Tell what led you to focus on this area;
- Explain your plan for bringing about change including how your solution would contribute to a more peaceful future.

	Awards			
	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place	Honorable Mention
Division I	\$300	\$200	\$100	\$50
Division II	\$300	\$200	\$100	\$50
Division III	\$150	\$100	\$50	\$25
Division IV	\$150	\$100	\$50	\$25

For more information, email: [peaceessay@juno.com](mailto:peaceessay@juno.com)



## Peace Essay Contest 2010

### Rules

1. The Peace Essay Contest is open to all fifth through twelfth grade students who are residents of Stanislaus County or attend any public, private, or home school in Stanislaus County.
2. Submit one copy of your essay. Essays in Division I & II must be typewritten, double spaced. Essays in Divisions III & IV must be either typewritten or written in dark ink, double spaced. Use one side of white paper 8 1/2 x 11 inches. Number the pages consecutively. Your essay must be of a quality to photocopy legibly.
3. Give your essay a title. Place it on the first page where you begin your essay. **DO NOT** use a separate title or cover page.
4. Attach a "3 x 5" index card with your name, school, grade, teacher's name and principal's name, on the index card. **YOUR NAME SHOULD NOT BE ANYWHERE ON OR IN THE ESSAY.**
5. Cite any quotations, borrowed ideas, and facts that are not general knowledge. If you are uncertain about plagiarism, ask your teacher.
6. You must do your own work. However, you may ask a teacher, parent, or friend for constructive criticism.
7. The Modesto Peace/Life Center reserves the right to reprint entries. Entries will not be returned.
8. Entries may be mailed or delivered to the Modesto Peace/Life Center. Mail all entries, postmarked no later than December 4, 2009, to:

2010 Peace Essay Contest  
Modesto Peace/Life Center  
P.O. Box 134  
Modesto, CA 95353-0134

### Judging

A distinguished group of local writers, educators, and peacemakers will judge the essays.

Judging guidelines (in order of weight) include:

#### I. Content:

- A. Does the essay demonstrate concern for establishing a more peaceful world?
- B. How well-developed are the ideas?
- C. Does it address the given topic?

#### II. Style:

- A. Is the essay original and interesting?
- B. Is it written with conviction?
- C. Does the personality of the writer come through?

#### III. Clarity of expression:

- A. Are the ideas clearly stated?
- B. Is the essay well-organized?
- C. Does it have an effective beginning and ending?

#### IV. Mechanics:

- A. Is grammar, spelling, and punctuation reasonably correct?
- B. Does the author cite all quotations, borrowed ideas, and facts that are not general knowledge?
- C. Does the essay stay within the word limit?



Email: [peaceessay@juno.com](mailto:peaceessay@juno.com)

First, Second, and Third prizes will be awarded in each of the four divisions which have at least 15 entries. In the event that fewer than 15 entries are entered in any one division, all prizes may or may not be awarded in that division at the discretion of the judging panel. Up to three Honorable Mentions may be awarded in each division. Group entries (more than one author) are welcome.

The writer of the best essay in a division from a school which has ten or more entries in that division will be honored as the school winner. All participants will receive a Certificate of Participation.

### Notification of Winners

In mid-February 2010, winners will be notified. Prizes will be presented at an Awards Reception in the spring. All participants, teachers, judges, and sponsors will be invited as guests of honor.

**2010 Peace Essay Committee:** Margaret Barker, Indira Clark, Pam Franklin, Elaine Gorman, Suzanne Meyer, Deborah Roberts, Sanoy Sample and Shelly Scribner

The 24th Annual Peace Essay Contest is a project of the Modesto Peace/Life Center (209) 529-5750 and is co-sponsored by:  
Department of Literature and Language Arts, Modesto Junior College

## Gardening with succulents

By ANNE SCHELLMAN, Horticulture Associate, University of California Cooperative Extension

Looking for an easy and interesting gardening project? Try your hand at composing a container full of succulents. Local nurseries and garden centers have numerous varieties of these fascinating plants available.

Succulents store water in stems and leaves as well as roots, a trait which allows them to endure infrequent or minimal watering. Some familiar types of succulents include the jade plant, "hen and chicks" and the famous medicinal plant *Aloe vera* (now *A. barbadensis*).

I first encountered succulents while in Morro Bay years ago. While visiting The Garden Gallery nursery, I happened upon an attractive display. I felt a twinge of envy, thinking only coastal gardeners could grow them, but a nurseryperson quickly convinced me that many succulents could grow inland. I purchased several varieties and put together an eye-catching container of my own.

Many of the original plants I bought are still alive. Since then, succulents have held my interest and continue to intrigue me. They come in so many different shapes and colors; it's easy to see why groups of people have formed official societies of succulent lovers.

When shopping for succulents, it's important to note that plants are described by two Latin words. The first word found on a plant tag is the genus, and the second word is the species. Latin is the universal language used to describe plants. In English, *Crassula ovata* is the jade plant.

Some of my favorite succulents belong to the genus *Echeveria*. This group of plants has several species known as "hen and chicks". The reason for the name is the tendency of the "mother" plant to have numerous offsets growing alongside. These "chicks" are easily removed and planted elsewhere.



Another really neat genus is the *Aeonium*. These plants have a tall stem that bears a "flower" of green to reddish black. *Aeoniums* are stunning and make a great addition to any container.

Plants in the *Sedum* genus come in varying shades. Two exceptionally attractive species are golden sedum (*S. nussbaumerianum*) and donkey's tail (*S. morganianum*). Golden sedum grows prostrate and has yellowish orange leaves. Donkey or burro's tail has light green tail-like stems that can trail over a container.

The genus *Sempervivum* contains numerous plants with a rosette shape. One remarkable species is the Cobweb house-leek (*S. arachnoideum*). This plant has rosettes that appear to be connected by spider webs. *Sempervivum* also make offsets that can be removed from the original plant.

*Kalanchoe* is a familiar genus, with bright pink, orange

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

By Lillian Vallee

## 60. Singing Back the Lake

Once upon a time, about two million years ago, there was an “especially large and persistent lake” in the southern reaches of the great trough between uplifted mountain ranges in the center of what we now call California. This was the great, great grandfather of a later lake with interior drainage, a lake that became the centerpiece of the Tulare Basin, a depression in the southern end of the Great Central Valley. In high water years, in times of prodigious rainfall and snowmelt, Tulare Lake was the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi and was linked by a slough to two sub-basins holding Kern and Buena Vista lakes. Tulare Lake could stretch seventy-five miles from north to south and twenty-five miles from east to west.

Many of the plant communities around the lake, such as the lowland heath communities, could thrive there only because of the high water table created by the entrapped drainage of four rivers—the Kings, Kaweah, Tule and White. The alluvial fan of the Kings River created a barrier ridge (thirty feet higher than the lake bed), keeping the river waters in the basin except in years of heavy rain and snowmelt when basin waters joined the flooding San Joaquin River (via Fresno Slough) to create a freshwater inland sea draining into the Delta. Beneath the basin were aquifers of fresh water and pockets of “fossil” saline water, the latter relics of the basin’s former life as marine shelf and inland sea.

Surrounding the lake were diverse soils and terrain, rich in plant and animal foods nourishing the densest non-agricultural, aboriginal population in North America (19,000 Yokuts in the Tulare Basin on the eve of European contact). In addition to the savannas and riparian forests on alluvial soils in the river deltas, there were marsh, prairie and desert saltbush habitats. Perennial grasses, herbs, forbs, and shrubs were the norm. The earliest evidence of human habitation

in the Tulare Basin goes back 11,000 years to Tulare Lake’s western shore. The lake teemed with wildfowl, fish, turtles, frogs, mussels and clams. Acorn leaching (discovered about 4,000-5,000 years ago) added “a vast new food supply,” to the array of animal and plant foods, and burning to enhance plant productivity and to attract game helped create even greater stability in basin communities. According to William Preston, The Tachi Yokuts village of Bubal (near present day Alpaugh)

was not only a cultural center but an important focus of long-distance trade with mountain and coastal tribes. The Tachi and other groups would trade fish, obsidian, salt from saltgrass, seeds, steatite beads, herbs, baskets, antelope and elk skins, rabbit-skin blankets, elderberries and asphaltum, to name just a few items, for various shells (limpet, haliotis, olivella), dried starfish or abalone, sinew-backed bows, stone mortars and pestles, clay, digging sticks, fire drills, and white paint, among other items. When the Tachi Yokuts refused conscription into forced labor at the missions, the Spanish destroyed this village. The Yokuts responded by moving the village site farther from Spanish reach. Later they proved resourceful in extending their trade to horses and cattle.

It is almost impossible for us to imagine the vibrant natural world of a basin that has been so drastically altered by water diversion and reduced (in diversity if not in productivity), yet any effort to revive it must begin with an imaginative and informed reconstruction. *Tulares*, the Spanish

word for the reeds and rushes lending the lake their name, sometimes formed a rim two miles thick. Tule elk would use these edges for cover when browsing marsh grasses in the basin. Pronghorn antelope migrated seasonally between the grassy plains, lightly timbered foothills, and water holes of the eastern Coast Range. James Audubon called the basin “the chosen country of the antelope.”

Gray wolves prowled after the antelope, and grizzlies

would sometimes leave the shelter of oak forests to raise their young on the lakeshore. Coyotes, bobcats, kit foxes, raccoons, badgers, grey foxes, minks, jackrabbits, cottontails, ground squirrels, chipmunks, porcupines, skunks, weasels, gophers, rats, moles, shrews, voles, bats, river otters, and beavers animated the landscape. Latecomers, such as William Brewer, saw the basin as “unhealthy” because of the (also teeming) insect life (“mosquitos of unparalleled ferocity” and “tarantulas by the thousands”).

Islands in the lake were littered with bald tule nests--white pelican rookeries. Indian women used the feathery skins of the white pelicans “to wrap their babies in,” wrote Pedro Fages in 1775, “for the skins are as large as those of moderate-sized lambs, and very soft.” In the 1870s and 1880s Tulare Lake became a market hunter’s paradise. Trout, turtle soups, frog legs, ducks, geese, even sandhill cranes were in demand in San Francisco restaurants. Just one haul of a horse-drawn seine through Tulare Lake could net eight tons of fish.

Gerald Haslam has called Tulare Lake, “the lake that will not die,” a phantom lake that keeps breaching its levees and reaffirming its passion to rest in its ancient bed. Nor have the pelicans forgotten: they are still circling, circling, looking for Tulare Lake.

Many years ago I bought a cassette recording of Tachi Yokuts songs. The first recording is the “Tulare Lake Song” sung by two women identified as O. Atwell and Clara Barrios. I don’t know what the words mean, but I have made a phonetic transcription and have learned the song. Its plaintive repetition haunts me.

Every time I cross the San Joaquin River I sing to it, and now brave and monumental efforts have begun to revive the most important artery of the San Joaquin Plain. Maybe two decades of lawsuits had something to do with it, but I will always believe the singing lets the lingering spirits know we remember how it was and how much we yearn to repair what we have broken. It’s time to do the same for Tulare Lake.

**Sources:** *California Indian Music Sampler #4*, “Tachi Yokuts,” P.A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley; William L. Preston, *Vanishing Landscapes: Land and Life in the Tulare Lake Basin*.



Tulare Lake and the southern San Joaquin Valley in the early 1870s. At the onset of American settlement in the area in the late 1840s, the lake was the largest body of fresh water west of the Great Lakes. Its destruction by the late 1800s because of diking and water diversion for irrigation was one of the most dramatic signs of a major theme in the state's history: the rapid transformation of the wild California landscape into one dominated almost completely by human action. From *Report of the Board of Commissioners on the Irrigation of the San Joaquin, Tulare, and Sacramento Valleys of the State of California* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874). Courtesy Huntington Library.



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**CONNECTIONS**

is published monthly except in August  
by the **Modesto Peace/Life Center**  
720 13<sup>th</sup> St., Modesto, CA 95354.  
Open by appointment.  
Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,  
Modesto, CA 95353  
209-529-5750.

CONNECTIONS is available for  
a suggested donation of \$25.00/yr.



# Teen social leadership conference a success

By **VICKIE PARDINI, student, Modesto High School**

On Saturday morning Sept. 26, 2009 about 57 Modesto students shuffled in to the "gathering place" at the Modesto Church of the Brethren for the first annual Social Justice Youth Leadership Conference

Tables covered in pamphlets from thirteen groups around the county, including the Modesto Peace/Life Center, the primary sponsor of the event, Habitat for Humanity, the NAACP, the American Civil Liberties Union, PETA, and Modesto Interact lined the room. Speakers from each group were enthusiastically waiting to educate students on various social causes.

Eventually, music flooded the event center as students mingled with other students and learned more about the social causes driving their peers and of the progressive events going on in their areas.

Bonnie Kay from Free the Children, an organization devoted to freeing children from exploitation and poverty to affect positive change in the world, spoke about what teens could do to create change locally. Students listened and asked questions about how they could get involved in similar causes.



Students also attended a workshop on how to be a peaceful leader. They discussed personal experiences with each other in order to gain insight into the lives of other individuals.

The idea for the conference came from Mike Chiavetta, a history teacher at Modesto High School, and his wife, Jana, and stemmed from last year's efforts to build a school in

Ecuador through funds raised by Modesto High students. Because of the project, the pair hoped to get as many kids from the area as possible involved in social causes, calling upon socially progressive students to become aware of the resources available to them to make a positive change.

Chiavetta organized a committee including his wife, John Lucas, Dan Onorato, Jim Costello, and Shelly Scribner to help out with the conference. He also gathered Modesto High students Katie Elstad, Gianna Gallo, Rebecca Mears, and Sarah Wong to compile a binder on information about different national and international peaceful organizations.

Because of the conference, teens learned ways that they could be "socially progressive" in their community.

"The conference has confirmed the belief that you don't have to be "old" or have a talk show or be a teacher to have a voice," said Modesto High School senior Kyla Manawatao. "Even the littlest things like being in a local club can make a difference."

Beyond the conference, the Chiavettas are organizing monthly meetings for students interested in becoming a "Peace Ambassador" and furthering the cause of social justice at the Modesto Peace/Life Center. The meetings, intended to be workshops similar to those at the conference, offer microlabs about political action, and possibly provide the opportunity to write letters or make posters about various social causes. Additionally, the Chiavettas hope to set up a calendar dedicated to social justice efforts among Modesto area high schools so all teens can take part in them.


Modesto High School senior Haley Walker expressed interest in taking part in the gatherings, because she said, "I'm trying to reach out to spread peace all over the world."

Along with the gatherings, students willing to further peace can take part in many of the Modesto Peace/Life Center activities, including the monthly Peace Vigils on the first Wednesday of every month at Five Points (McHenry Ave. and J St.).

"I hope kids go to peace vigil, and become Peace Ambassadors," Mr. Chiavetta said. "What wars are costing, and costing your education is more in one year than the entire Health Care Plan."

Chiavetta encouraged students to get involved with Social Justice Youth Gatherings by emailing him at Chiavetta.m@monet.k12.ca.us, and to opt for peace.





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love gay?**

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---

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## SULHITA: painting a picture of life beyond war

By LEN & LIBBY TRAUBMAN

**The Sulha Peace Project - <http://www.sulha.com>** - in the Holy Land is citizen peace-builders inspired by the indigenous "sulha" process of face-to-face engagement, then mediation to rebuild trust and restore dignity beyond political agendas. September 24-27, /2009 was their powerful Sixth Youth Sulhita in the Holy Land desert.

*"At first I was very angry that there were Jews and Arabs together. It's impossible to describe how the Sulhita has changed me...it's infinite. I want to keep in touch with my Sulhita friends because they symbolise love and friendship and they are so special."*

— Palestinian girl, 16, Hebron

*"The uniqueness and power of the Sulhita lies in the hominess, the beating heart and the connection of the two sides through simple, human dialogue. When I'm in the army, I'll treat Arabs with humanity and I'll make listening circles with them. I accept Arabs more as people I can live with. You are doing holy work!"*

— Jewish boy, 18, Kfar Aaron

Living side-by-side were 90 participants and staff — Bedouins, Druze, Arab and Jewish Israelis, including from Sderot, with 40 Palestinians from across the border and for whom there was 100% success in getting permits.

The 60 youth and 30 volunteers — facilitators, kitchen and film staff, and more — from Israel and Palestine cooperated and learned during four days of sharing life stories, pain, and hopes. Envisioning their shared future, they further became leaders for authentic, peaceful relationships and unprecedented creativity together. The powerful days of courageous, successful trust-building surprised many participants, especially in the shadow of recent, traumatizing death in Gaza and southern Israel that increased stress and mistrust.

Sulhita 2009 was the fruit of a four-month process of confidence-building between two citizen-teams from Palestine and Israel who chose to cooperate and work as equals in planning, facilitating, and funding. The exciting results filled everyone with hope and the promise of doing more together for lasting peace.

**For more information**, contact Elad Vazana:” Elad@havayati.co.il

SEE: **Palestinian-Israel Planning Team Story** (3.3 MB) [http://www.sulha.com/UserFiles/File/the\\_sulhita\\_story2009c.doc](http://www.sulha.com/UserFiles/File/the_sulhita_story2009c.doc)

**Illustrated 9-page Sulhita 2009 story**, with youth responses (1.6 MB) <http://www.sulha.com/UserFiles/File/Sulhita%20September%202009d.doc>

**Beautiful 15-page PowerPoint description** (1.7 MB) [http://www.sulha.com/UserFiles/File/sulhita2009\\_small1.ppt](http://www.sulha.com/UserFiles/File/sulhita2009_small1.ppt)

Perhaps most inspiring of all, be sure to watch the Powerful 9-minute youth-created VIDEO with music by 18-year-old Ala Salman, a Palestinian participant from Beit Safafa, East Jerusalem: <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=1228696430216>

*This message will reside on the Web at <http://traubman.igc.org/messages/587.htm>*

Slightly edited.

## The need for an engagement plan

By KOBİ SKOLNICK

According to a poll conducted by Dr. Colin Irwin from the Institute of Irish Studies and the One Voice movement, 74 percent of Palestinians and 78 percent of Israelis would be willing to accept a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. So, where are these people?

For decades there has been a profound lack of support for peace-building efforts aimed at the grassroots level and for strategic engagement of the public sphere in the peace process. This has led to a great discrepancy between the general desire for peace and the belief that it is possible and practical. Although the polls show willingness to accept peace, for many Israelis, a Palestinian is someone who would kill them if he had the chance. For many Palestinians, a Jewish-Israeli is either a settler with a gun or a soldier at a checkpoint.

Fears and paranoia, while grounded in real experience, have created a vicious cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies and violence. What both societies need are open dialogues, where people truly listen to each other, to counter these fears.

Repeated exposure to violence over the years, coupled with a dynamic of extreme stereotyping and skewed perspectives in both societies, has overwhelmed the voice of reason.

Meanwhile, the high-level discussions among world leaders, which seemingly signal a shift in policy and progress toward peace, demonstrate a profound separation from reality. Even when top leaders sign treaties, on the ground there remains a deep enmity among Israelis, Palestinians, and the Arab world in general. For many, it is just another phase in a cycle of false hope.

Feelings of passion and hate are not easily broken. When a group of students was killed near me, coupled with the loss of friends to Palestinian violence months before, this trauma generated hatred and a desire to take revenge. This was directed against an enemy that had no face and no name. When I imagined the Palestinians I would kill, I imagined only cruel expressions and fiery eyes filled with hate toward me and my family.

I only changed my perspective when I realized that Israelis and Palestinians could relate as humans, regardless of our divergent narratives. This realization came when I met with Palestinians in a safe setting, where I could share my pain and ask the questions I had always wanted to ask.

Although I am aware that there are Palestinians who still want to kill me just because I am Jewish-Israeli, I now know Palestinian friends who went through the same transformation that I did.

There is a clear need to go beyond government negotiation

and political tradition, and to increase support for people-to-people efforts on the individual level.

To be sure, this long-term conflict needs a long-term vision. The social fabric of relationships among both societies is torn apart by decades and generations of hatred. Building new perceptions cannot happen overnight. This requires careful planning to create the mechanisms by which Israelis and Palestinians can meet and work together, but it is the only effective tool for neutralizing radicalization. People need a place to express the trauma of loss and grief, and both societies need to begin to see the human on the other side. Only then can the peace process avoid manipulation by leaders at the extreme ends of the political spectrum.

I find myself fearful that this peace process will end as others have before, with a major violent incident reinforcing false assumptions, and with extremist factions celebrating the continued bloodshed. We cannot let that happen. Our generation can choose to change our ways and in turn change our future. When people meet with each other and break down preconceptions, peace becomes as palpable and real as any stone or wall, and just as lasting.

\* Kobi Skolnick, an Israeli who moved to a radical settlement in the West Bank during high school, was a member of the Kahana youth movement that promoted Jewish power and regularly encouraged its members to assault Palestinians. During his army service he became aware of the complexity of the conflict and opened his mind to other perspectives. He is a student in New York and Associate Scholar Practitioner at the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University.

From Common Ground News Service (CGNews), 20 August 2009, [www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org)

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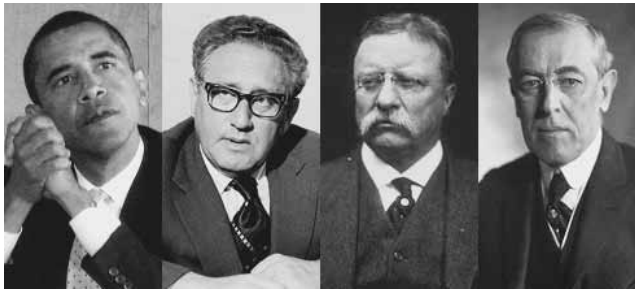
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## Nobel Prize for promises?

By HOWARD ZINN, *truthout* Op-Ed

I was dismayed when I heard Obama was given the Nobel Peace Prize. A shock, really, to think that a president carrying on wars in two countries and launching military action in a third country (Pakistan), would be given a peace prize. But then I recalled that Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Kissinger had all received Nobel Peace Prizes.



The Nobel Committee is famous for its superficial estimates and for its susceptibility to rhetoric and empty gestures, while ignoring blatant violations of world peace.

Yes, Wilson gets credit for the League of Nations - that ineffectual body which did nothing to prevent war. But he also bombarded the Mexican coast, sent troops to occupy Haiti and the Dominican Republic and brought the US into the slaughterhouse of Europe in the first World War - surely, among stupid and deadly wars, at the top of the list.

Sure, Theodore Roosevelt brokered a peace between Japan and Russia. But he was a lover of war, who participated in the US conquest of Cuba, pretending to liberate it from Spain while fastening US chains around that tiny island. And as president he presided over the bloody war to subjugate the Filipinos, even congratulating a US general who had just massacred 600 helpless villagers in the Philippines. The Committee did not give the Nobel Prize to Mark Twain, who denounced Roosevelt and criticized the war, nor to William James, leader of the anti-imperialist league.

Oh yes, the Committee saw fit to give a peace prize to Henry Kissinger, because he signed the final agreement ending the war in Vietnam, of which he had been one of the architects. Kissinger, who obsequiously went along with Nixon's expansion of the war with the bombing of peasant villages in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Kissinger, who matches the definition of a war criminal very accurately, was given a peace prize!

People should not be given a peace prize on the basis of promises they have made (as with Obama, an eloquent maker of promises) but on the basis of actual accomplishments towards ending war. Obama has continued deadly, inhuman military action in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Nobel Peace Committee should retire, and turn over its huge funds to some international peace organization which is not awed by stardom and rhetoric, and which has some understanding of history.

*Howard Zinn is a historian. He is perhaps best known for "A People's History of the United States."*

From <http://www.truthout.org/101009A>

## Get off Obama's back ... second thoughts

By MICHAEL MOORE

Last night my wife asked me if I thought I was a little too hard on Obama in my letter yesterday congratulating him on his Nobel Prize. "No, I don't think so," I replied. I thought it was important to remind him he's now conducting the two wars he's inherited. "Yeah," she said, "but to tell him, 'Now earn it!?' Give the guy a break — this is a great day for him and for all of us."

I went back and re-read what I had written. And I listened for far too long yesterday to the right wing hate machine who did what they could to crap all over Barack's big day. Did I — and others on the left — do the same?

We are weary, weary of war. The trillions that will have gone to these two wars have helped to bankrupt us as a nation — financially and morally. To think of all the good we could have done with all that money! Two months of the War in Iraq would pay for all the wells that need to be dug in the Third World for drinking water! Obama is moving too slow for most of us — but he needs to know we are with him and we stand beside him as he attempts to turn eight years of sheer madness around. Who could do that in nine months? Superman? Thor? Mitch McConnell?

Instead of waiting to see what the president is going to do, we all need to be pro-active and push the agenda that we want to see enacted. What keeps us from forming the same local groups we put together to get out the vote last November? C'mon! We're the majority now — the majority by a significant margin! We call the shots — and we need to tell this wimpy Congress to get busy and do what we say — or else.

All I ask of those who voted for Obama is to not pile on him too quickly. Yes, make your voice heard (his phone number is 202-456-1414). But don't abandon the best hope we've had in our lifetime for change. And for God's sake, don't head to bummerville if he says or does something we don't like. Do you ever see Republicans behave that way? I mean, the Right had 20 years of Republican presidents and they still couldn't get prayer in the public schools, or outlaw abortion, or initiate a flat tax or put our Social Security into the stock market. They did a lot of damage, no doubt about that, but on the key issues that the Christian Right fought for, they came up nearly empty handed. No wonder they've been driven crazy lately. They'll never have it as good again as they've had it since Reagan took office.

But — do you ever see them looking all gloomy and defeated? No! They keep on fighting! Every day. Our side? At the first sign of wavering, we just pack up our toys and go home.

So, .... let us celebrate what people elsewhere are celebrating — that America now has a sane and smart man in the White House, a man who truly wants a world at peace for his two daughters.

Many, for the past couple days (yes, myself included), have grumbled, "What has he done to earn this prize?" How 'bout this:

The simple fact that he was elected was reason enough for him to be the recipient of this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

Because on that day the murderous actions of the Bush/Cheney years were totally and thoroughly rebuked. One man — a man who opposed the War in Iraq from the beginning — offered to end the insanity. The world has stood by in utter horror for the past eight years as they watched the descendants of Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson light the fuse of our own self-destruction. We flipped off the nations on this planet by abandoning Kyoto and then proceeded to melt eight more years worth of the polar ice caps. We invaded two nations that didn't attack us, failed to find the real terrorists and, in effect, ignited our own wave of terror. People all over the world wondered if we had gone mad.

And if all that wasn't enough, the outgoing Joker presided over the worst global financial collapse since the Great Depression.

So, yeah, at precisely 11:00pm ET on November 4, 2008, Barack Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize. And the 66 million people who voted for him won it, too. By the time he took the stage at midnight ET in the Grant Park Historic Hippie Battlefield in downtown Chicago, billions of people around the globe were already breathing a huge sigh of relief. It was as if, in that instant, one man did bring the promise of peace to the world — and most were ready to go wherever he wanted to go to achieve that end. Never before had the election of one man made every other nation feel like they had won, too. When you've got billions of people ready, willing and able to join a cause like this, well, a prize in Oslo is the least that you deserve.

One other thought. The Peace Prize historically has been given to those who have worked to throw off the yoke of racial discrimination and segregation (Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu). I think the Nobel committee, in awarding Obama the prize, was also rewarding the fact that something profound had happened in a nation that was founded on racial genocide, built on racist slavery, and held back for a hundred-plus years by vestiges of hateful bigotry (which can still be found on display at teabagger rallies and daily talk radio). The fact that this one man could cause this seismic historical event to occur — and to do so with such grace and humility, never succumbing to the bait, but still not backing down (yes, he asked to be sworn in as "Barack Hussein Obama") — is more than reason enough he should be in Oslo to meet the King on December 10. Maybe he could take us along with him. 'Cause I also suspect the Nobel committee was tipping its hat to all of us — we, the American people, had conquered some of our racism and did the truly unexpected. After seeing searing images of our black fellow citizens left to drown in New Orleans — and poor whites seeing their own treated no better than the black man they had been raised to hate — we had all seen enough. It was time for change.

Thank you, Barack Obama, for giving us the opportunity to redeem ourselves. Now for the tasks ahead. We need you to do all that you promised to do. We need it. The world needs it.

My prediction for the future? You become the first \*two-time\* winner of the Nobel Peace Prize! Yeah!

Fred (that's Norwegian for "Peace"),



## Dan Wooldridge: poet

I was born in 1976 in Turlock, Stanislaus County, California, a town I remember mostly in recurring dreams and scenes edited from an idyllic childhood through the mechanisms of retelling and photography. A town in farmland, a plum tree I climbed by the Baker Pool, where I



learned to swim and ran with tribes of local children. There were palm-lined backroads and a dusty farm smell, a park across the street where I learned that cork came from the bark of a tree and chipped my front tooth on a metal slide.

All my life I have liked to take the backroads, through ricefield sunsets, haze and warmth that seem to bring the memories back from dream, which is itself for me a palm-lined road that seems to exist, never ending or beginning, in these fields where I was born.

As a poet and child of California my first and foremost influences are my parents, my mother, Susan Wooldridge, author of Poemcrazy and Fools Gold, and my father, a mathematician concerned with the purity of numbers. Other poets I have loved deeply and drawn on as influences include Kenneth Patchen, Octavio Paz and Frank Stanford, as well as various sundry Bukowskis and Ginsbergs. I once had a dream that all the artists put down their paintings and formed a fireman's chain to carry buckets of water to a burning house.

## BLANKET WAR

The blanket was a sea of stars that was laid across the universe,  
a thick watching, on our space existing in a voice-  
the singular world entering waters,  
energy and life.

A blanket atop a universe,  
a Sergeant Peppers space with numbers  
and numerals itself is a blanket pilgrimage,  
a feast, layered heat turned into a tutelage  
about the errors of space stars.  
The birds that flew in a banquet blanket  
crows and mockingbirds fought  
like boxers over acres  
and the moon swam in nightlight  
a delicious motion of ice cream  
happening all over the world,  
the drinking world of moons  
orbiting a foundation  
a wall of robots, a motion of ripples  
in fabric, a sky galaxy in sun lands  
curving through my shower- shaving  
houseguests earning less approximate amounts,  
in a single stitch in that crossed flower  
walking away un-militarily.  
A jovial greeting from sun to sun  
postcards in an olden style of lasers  
the mounting hush of silver guns  
and motionless burnished hulks  
after a firefight in the '40s.

— Dan Wooldridge

## TRANSMITTED SHE WAS LOST

Elephants and eagles still have to have their teeth pulled  
it's something all young ones must go through  
muddling up the elder sky, skiing past a hotdog stand  
or something the weight of all those teeth  
suddenly made it harder to float and the most convenient  
way around it was to not even start.  
A half smoked cigarette they were passing  
back and forth led them to the place  
where the starlight finally hit their fur,  
or wait was it feathers, in that certain way  
and they sat on the ground and proclaimed it good,  
yes this is good, this is a good earth  
and we will walk or wait is it fly  
from one end of it to another, we'll celebrate  
with a half smoked cigarette, yes  
that would seem to be the way.

— Dan Wooldridge



## An Irreverent Thankfulness List

In this month of thankfulness and honoring Veterans, I ponder what I should pause to honor.

There's always G-d, mother and apple pie.

Stretch those out to include family, friends and the material comforts of life.

Top all that with freedom of choice and a healthy respect for personal limitations.

Throw in some sappy garnishes like love, sentiment, altruism and pink and yellow ribbons.

Round it off with five healthy senses and the possibility of a sixth.

Add it all up and I can offer myself a plate of in-the-moment awareness, reverent self-respect and ongoing self-encouragement to understand how my actions affect myself and others,

As I tuck thankfulness around  
keeping my will flexible  
my heart open  
and my mouth SHUT!

— Tina Arnopole Driskill

## DITCHING CAPABILITY

He had ways to go west in those golden hours  
the rest of us followed him or were lost.  
The extremity of our need was still barely  
enough to bring the government into it.  
Things like bears don't translate well,  
their thoughts are too natural and the stink  
of all that cleaning product is unavoidable  
when you are lying in the sun waiting to be  
reabsorbed into the earth, the hungry  
earth you could say, you would be there  
for a very long time and you would leave  
something like a residue in the margins,  
which appear necessary, but really the paper  
this is written on is just a way for trees to die  
while expressing themselves as they must  
always do even when being hunted by mountains  
as he was, some reformed bureaucrat,  
eating jerky and the like, resisting the weather still  
and drinking from streams whenever  
he crossed one on his way.

— Dan Wooldridge



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## The Top 10 Censored Stories of 2008 and 2009

**1. US Congress Sells Out to Wall Street:** Federal lawmakers responsible for overseeing the US economy have received millions of dollars from Wall Street firms. Since 2001, eight of the most troubled firms have donated \$64.2 million to congressional candidates, presidential candidates and the Republican and Democratic parties. As senators, Barack Obama and John McCain received a combined total of \$3.1 million. The donors include investment bankers Bear Stearns, Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley, insurer American International Group, and mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

**2. US Schools are More Segregated Today than in the 1950s:** Schools in the United States are more segregated today than they have been in more than four decades. Millions of non-white students are locked into “dropout factory” high schools, where huge percentages do not graduate, and few are well prepared for college or a future in the US economy.

**3. Toxic Waste Behind Somali Pirates:** The international community has come out in force to condemn and declare war on the Somali fishermen pirates, while discreetly protecting the illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fleets from around the world that have been poaching and dumping toxic waste in Somali waters since the fall of the Somali government eighteen years ago.

**4. Nuclear Waste Pools in North Carolina:** One of the most lethal patches of ground in North America is located in the backwoods of North Carolina, where the Shearon Harris nuclear plant is housed and owned by Progress Energy. The plant contains the largest radioactive waste storage pools in the country.

**5. Europe Blocks US Toxic Products.**

**6. Lobbyists Buy Congress:** According to a study by The Center for Responsive Politics, special interests paid Washington lobbyists \$3.2 billion in 2008—more than any other year on record. This was a 13.7 percent increase from 2007 (which broke the record by 7.7 percent over 2006).

## Succulents

. . . from page 4

or yellow flowers that last for many months. Kalanchoes are a good choice for adding color and height to a container. Succulents are simple to propagate, making them easy to share with friends. For plants that don't produce offsets, simply cut a stem, remove several leaves below it and let this piece dry for a few days. Then, when the bottom of the stem has hardened, insert it into a container of cactus and succulent growing media. Within a few weeks, the stem will begin to show signs of new growth.

When creating a succulent container, the only limit is your imagination. Place plants close together to make an instant and appealing display. Adding cactus specimens (also a type of succulent) can create interest.

Although succulents are known for storing water, plants can easily dry out when grown in small containers. However, it is important to note that succulents that are over-watered will rot. Keep an even balance between moisture and dryness by letting pots dry out in between watering. In spring, water pots every few days, checking the soil for moisture. When Central Valley temperatures reach the 90's and higher, check containers daily.

**7. Obama's Military Appointments Have Corrupt Past:** Obama's retention of Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense makes Gates the first appointment from an outgoing administration of opposing party to be kept in the position. Gates served on the board of directors of Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), which reported \$7.5 billion earnings in 2005. SAIC is involved in everything from intelligence gathering to Iraq reconstruction for the Pentagon.

**8. Bailed out Banks and America's Wealthiest Cheat IRS Out of Billions:** A 2008 study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that eighty-three of the top publicly held US companies have operations in tax havens like the Cayman Islands, Bermuda, and the Virgin Islands. Fourteen of these companies, including AIG, Bank of America, and Citigroup, received money from the government bailout. The GAO also reported that activities of Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) are directly connected to tax avoidance.

**9. US Arms Used for War Crimes in Gaza:** Israel's repeated firing of US-made white phosphorus shells over densely populated areas of Gaza during its recent military campaign was indiscriminate and is evidence of war crimes, Human Rights Watch said in a report released March 25, 2009.

**10. Ecuador Declares Foreign Debt Illegitimate:** In November 2008, Ecuador became the first country to undertake an examination of the legitimacy and structure of its foreign debt. An independent debt audit documented hundreds of allegations of irregularity, illegality, and illegitimacy in contracts of debt to predatory international lenders. The loans, according to the report, violated Ecuador's domestic laws, US Securities and Exchange Commission regulations, and general principles of international law

For complete source information and the rest of the list, visit [www.projectcensored.org](http://www.projectcensored.org)

In winter, temperatures can reach low points that cause succulents to freeze. Keep them in a shielded space, preferably in a corner area or near other plants that can provide protection. Ensure that water drains from the containers, otherwise, plants will rot. If plants freeze and turn dark colors, do not remove them immediately. Wait until spring to see if they will resprout.

After plants have been in their containers for one year, they may begin to look leggy and need to be transplanted. Tall plants can be cut and shortened through propagation, while offsets can be removed and replanted. Arrange cuttings and offsets into new containers, or share extra plants with friends.

Succulent plants grown in containers can add appeal to an entryway, accent a corner of the garden and add interest overall to a landscape. They are also easy to grow and make great conversation pieces.

**INFORMATION:** Email the author at [aschellman@ucdavis.edu](mailto:aschellman@ucdavis.edu), University of California Cooperative Extension, 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite A, Modesto, CA 95358, (209) 525-6800.

### In Memoriam

Don Vance

December 18, 1943 - October 16, 2009

A memorial celebration

Friday, November 27, 2009, 1:30 p.m.

Franklin & Downs Chapel

1050 McHenry Ave., Modesto

## Vigil

. . . from page 1

tically counted the number of positive responses the group received by passing cars that honked, waved or flashed a peace sign. As they shouted out “73, 74, hey that's 75” they brought a youthful vigor to yesterday's vigil. I have often had my students ask me why I participate in the vigil. I tell them there are several reasons why. To put it simply, it is my hour of power. It is my opportunity to grind against the machine, and most importantly, it is when I have the feeling that I AM DOING SOMETHING to stop the madness!

I invite other Peace Vigil regulars to share their experiences and reasons for attending. I believe that our collective commitment can affect change and motivate others to participate in this worthy endeavor. I invite everyone who reads this to the vigil. You will not regret it, and who knows, it might become a habit. The Modesto Peace/Life Peace Vigil is the first Wednesday of the month (the next one is Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-5:00 p.m., NEW TIME).

Come out and join your Peace friends! “Let there be Peace on Earth and let it begin with me.”

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](mailto:osnerm@sbcglobal.net) or Jim Costello [jcostello@igc.org](mailto: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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## OPINION: Population, choice, and poverty

By LOUIS and MARGARET DEMOTT-FELDMAN

Periodically, the news media gives descriptions and statistics of deplorable living conditions in various parts of the world. Frequently, we as individuals and we as a country are asked to help those living in these conditions.

People are living in squalor without sufficient food, they are plagued by disease, and there is inadequate medical care. We are shown pictures of children living in this intense poverty. Seeing children suffer this way evokes a natural feeling of sympathy and a desire to help. Of course, we should help, but what is the best way to help?

If the intense poverty is a temporary situation caused by a natural disaster such as a hurricane, a flood, or an earthquake, countries with means should send food, medicine, and professional relief workers as has historically been the case. If the intense poverty is not a temporary situation caused by natural disaster, or if the poverty had been ongoing and was only accentuated by a natural disaster, what should be done?

In the latter cases, unfortunately, the intense poverty is a choice. It is caused by overpopulation: people are choosing to live in intense poverty by having too many children. *Choosing*

*to reproduce* and have more children, after having one child and seeing that the child will live the rest of her or his life in squalor and hunger, without the hope of ever rising out of poverty amounts to irresponsibility. Aid should not be given to those who are making these totally irresponsible choices.

Giving aid to those who have so chosen to live in poverty is a waste. As the size of the population continues to grow, improvements brought about by the aid will be spread among so many *more people* that their standard of living will not improve, but will eventually decline. Help should be given only to those living in poverty who agree to contribute to improving their own living conditions by limiting their birth rate to one child per family, by promoting, as a social norm, parenting only after the age of 28, and by requiring young men and young women living in poverty to work on improving sanitation, increasing food production, and doing other activities to raise their standard of living.

During the period of transition to one child per family and parenting only after the age of 28, population growth will become slower and slower; then, the size of the population will begin to decline. With many fewer births and the addi-

tion of young women's labor in the workforce, a noticeable increase in the average standard of living should result within two to three years. The rate of increase will accelerate as the size of the population declines. The limitations on the birth rate and the age of parenting should continue until the food supply and the population size come into balance and the average standard of living is well above the poverty level.

Aid should be given only where it will help produce lasting benefits and only to those people who choose to rise above poverty.

The following are actions that can be taken to direct aid for those living in poverty to where it will actually produce permanent improvements:

1. Contact your congressmen and senators and demand that the United States adopt and implement a population size stabilization program. Ask them to pressure the United Nations to adopt a worldwide population size stabilization policy.

2. Contact your congressmen and senators and share your opinion that the United States give foreign aid only to those countries that agree to help themselves as described in this article.

## Afghan memories

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of Afghanistan, in "British" India, the Muslim Pashtun leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan led a totally nonviolent movement for a secular India independent from the British. He was a close ally of Gandhi; his 100,000 "Red Shirts" called themselves Servants of God.

In 1919 the new king of Afghanistan, Amanullah, reformed the army, introduced the solar calendar and required western dress in parts of the country. He discouraged the veil and the oppression of women, abolished slavery and forced labor, and introduced secular education as well as education for girls and nomads. In 1923, just three years after the U.S., he gave women the right to vote. He guaranteed civil rights to all minorities, established a legislative assembly, courts, and penal, civil and commercial codes, as well as prohibiting revenge killings, and abolishing subsidies for tribal chieftains and the royal family.

Amanullah was warmly received in Europe, and given financial and technical assistance by the Soviet Union, Turkey, Italy, Germany and France. (The U.S. ignored him.) But in 1929, conservative mullahs who hated the liberation of women, and landlords opposed to land reform, brought him down. British officers feared he was setting a bad example for their Indian colony, by showing the kind of modern society Asians can create.

In 1979 the Soviets invaded. President Jimmy Carter's national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski smiled, "We didn't push the Soviets to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would." He told Carter, "Now we can give the USSR its Vietnam War."

The CIA ran its largest covert operation ever. We funded and armed Afghan opium warlords, and trained Islamist fanatics like Osama bin Laden, who would eventually become al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Thirty years later, President Obama orders war-gamers in Colorado caves to bomb Afghan villages with drones. And he sends brave young American soldiers into the Afghan mountains, Bearing Democracy. "If we don't fight them here, they'll be at the gates of Brookside...."

Three recent books illuminate Afghanistan for me.

*Invisible History: Afghanistan's Untold Story* by Paul Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Gould was published in 2009; back in 1981 the authors produced a PBS documentary on Afghanistan, and they've been studying it ever since. Noam Chomsky calls their book "critically important"; it is my source for most of the recent history in this article.

What to do now in Afghanistan? Ryan Croken, in Truthout, [www.truthout.org/053109Y](http://www.truthout.org/053109Y) summarizes their proposals:

Stop bombing innocent civilians. It makes terrorists out of the people whose support we need.

Bring fresh voices to the table. The very same people who led the crusade to arm terrorists and destabilize Afghanistan 30 years ago should not be in charge of disarming terrorists and stabilizing Afghanistan today.

Help Afghans in a way they can understand, see and appreciate. More money for schools and streets, less for weapons. Fire corrupt and inept private contractors.

Declare the global "war on terror" to be over.

Promote a regional dialogue.

End the war on drugs, and let Afghan villagers produce morphine for global medicinal use.

Give up the U.S. fantasy of global hegemony. Realize that we live an interconnected world, where nation affects nation, and where past affects present and future.

My wife and I could not stop reading Afghan Khaled Hosseini's two best-sellers. *Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* plunge us into the colors and fragrance of Kabul, and into the hearts of Afghan people. The first tells mostly the struggle of boys and men, and immigrants to California; the second of girls and women in Afghanistan, from 1960 till now. Don't read them alone, or late at night! But the beauty and humanity are deep and rich. Watch for flamingos.

We learned that in 2000, when the crazed Taliban banned all movies, "Titanic" was an underground hit in Kabul—literally underground. Late at night people would dig up their buried TV-VCRs, pull down the shades and huddle around the gorgeous, disastrous, triumphant love story of Jack and Rose.

Apparently it's their story.