

stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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Speakers from Israel in Modesto, April 15

By DAN ONORATO

Israeli human rights activist Jeff Halper calls the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the “epicenter of instability in the Middle East.” It is vitally important that the U.S. help end this conflict. For that to happen, all of us must understand the issues and realities in the region more deeply and apply pressure for change on our political leaders.

On Thursday, April 15, we will have a rare opportunity to learn more. Ismail Kharoub, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, and Jewish Israeli Ofra Yeshua-Lyth will present two largely unheard perspectives about the impact on the people and State of Israel of the continuing conflict and the failure to resolve it through diplomacy. They will speak at the **Modesto Church of the Brethren on 2301 Woodland Ave. at 7:00 p.m.**

Ismail Karoub, an 18 year old Palestinian citizen of Israel, currently attends art school in Tel Aviv and works with Sadaka Reut, an Arab-Jewish youth partnership organization that promotes peace camps for Jewish and Arab youth that encourage cultural awareness, dialogue, and understanding.

Ofra Yeshua-Lyth is a member of the feminist anti-war group New Profile in Israel. Her daughter has conscientiously refused to serve in the Israeli military because she is opposed to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories since 1967. Yeshua-Lyth has worked as a journalist in the U.S. and served as a correspondent for Israel’s second largest newspaper in Germany. Currently she co-owns a Tel Aviv public relations and strategic consultancy. Recently she published *A State of Mind: Why Israel must become secular and democratic*. In it she argues that conflicts within Israeli society based on ethnic, social, and cultural gaps are a direct outcome of Israel’s failure to separate state and religion.

New Profile (NP) is a grass roots Israeli organization that offers support for those refusing military service. It challenges the pervasive influence of militarism on Israeli society, and strives to civilize the politics and everyday life of Israel. NP opposes any message or promotion of war as bringing a reasonable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or Israel’s internal divisions. NP also favors a truly democratic civic education that teaches the practice of peace and conflict resolution, rather than training children to enlist and accept warfare.

One of the goals of Karoub and Yeshua-Lyth’s tour of California is to raise funds for New Profile in Israel. Donations will be gratefully accepted.

The Church of the Brethren is co-sponsoring this event with the Modesto Peace/Life Center. All are invited.

ACTION: Come, listen, and learn. For information on New Profile, visit www.newprofile.org/english/

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Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarships and Peace Fellowships available

There are two **Rotary World Peace Fellowship** options. The **Masters Program** is a 15-24 month course at one of seven Universities: Duke University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina; International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan; Universidad Del Salvador, Buenos Aires, Argentina; University of Bradford, West Yorkshire, England; Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand; and University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Fellowship includes tuition and fees, room and board, roundtrip transportation and internships expenses. Applicants must have a Bachelors degree or equivalent in a related field, strong grades and a minimum of three years of relevant paid or unpaid work experience. A **Certificate Program** provides an opportunity for three months of study of peace and conflict resolution. Applicants for the certificate program must have at least five years of relevant work experience.

Application deadline: April 15, 2010

The **Ambassadorial Scholarship** program supports the mission of the Rotary Foundation to further world understanding and peace.

During their studies abroad, Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholars serve as "ambassadors of good will." Through appearances before Rotary clubs and districts, schools, civic organizations, and other forums, the scholars represent their homelands and work to further international understanding and peace. Ambassadorial Scholarships are for one academic year abroad and provide a grant of \$24,000 to fund round-trip transportation, tuition and fees, room, board, some educational supplies, and language training (if necessary). Applicants must obtain sponsorship of a local Rotary club).

Deadline for application: April 15, 2010 for study in 2011-12.

For more information and applications for fellowship and scholarship programs go to Rotary International at www.rotary.org/rotarycenters, or contact Lisa Millegan, 345-6977 or lmillegan@hotmail.com

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Cost of War for Modesto and the United States

As of March 16, 2010:

Total Cost of Wars since 2001:	Modesto:	\$583,827,000 and counting.
	United States:	\$971,858,000,000 and counting.

And we worry about the deficit and healthcare funding...

Source; <http://www.costofwar.com/>

River group announces Paddle to the Sea 2010

A journey down the Tuolumne River from Yosemite to the Golden Gate

The Tuolumne River Trust has opened registration for the 2nd annual Paddle to the Sea—a month long journey down the Tuolumne to build support for better stewardship of the river. The 18-leg Paddle-A-Thon begins on May 7 with rafters and kayakers completing the classic whitewater run. Canoers will paddle through the Central Valley past the confluence with the San Joaquin River. Sea kayakers will then paddle cross San Francisco Bay into the finale event at the Aquarium of the Bay in San Francisco on Saturday, June 5. Hundreds of people will join in the expedition by paddling one of the 18 legs or attending one of the riverside parties along the way.

"The Tuolumne is the lifeblood of communities from the Sierra to the Sea, but our reliance on the River has come at a price," said Eric Wesselman, Executive Director of the Tuolumne River Trust. "Paddling down the River all the way to the Sea demonstrates how the River connects these communities and underscores the need for better stewardship of this shared resource."

The Tuolumne River Trust is concerned that the salmon population on the Tuolumne has crashed from 18,000 in 2000 to less than 500 for the last five years in a row. All of the funds raised through this Paddle-A-Thon will directly support the Trust's work to save the salmon, promote water conservation, and train the next generation of river stewards by taking kids out to learn about the River.

The Tuolumne is considered a world-class river for whitewater rafting and fly fishing, and it also supplies water for agriculture in the Central Valley and 2.5 million people in the Bay Area. The Tuolumne River Trust is the voice for the river; its mission is to ensure the River is healthy, vibrant, and teeming with fish and wildlife, and to hold it in trust for future generations. Learn more and sign up at <http://paddletothesea.dojiggy.com/>

Information: Eric Wesselman, 415-882-7252 or eric@tuolumne.org

Earth Day at MJC

By DEBORAH GILBERT

Modesto Junior College invites you to Earth Day 2010, Wednesday April 14th from 10 AM- 2 PM on the East Campus Quad.

Earth Day turns 40 this year, and while we rejoice over the longevity of such a hopeful and important celebration, many of us are angered by the inertia in this country. Americans debate if people or planetary trends are to blame for global warming while the ice on Mount Kilimanjaro, the Caucasus Mountains, the Himalaya and the Andes is melting at alarming rates. Malaria, dengue fever and yellow fever are spreading to higher altitudes. Fijians and other Pacific islanders have documented receding shorelines by as much as 45 feet in 90 years (www.climatehotmap.org).

In this country the polarizing and public debates over the causes and severity of global warming (see <http://climatedebatedaily.com/>) delay the important discussions and action. We need to start the real work like those in metropolitan Copenhagen where 37% of people ride a bike to work, or Sweden where 44% of energy production comes from hydropower.


We could do it too.

Researchers Mark Jacobson and Mark Delucchi, who have done extensive modeling, write that we could convert to wind, water and solar -- eliminating all fossil fuels -- in twenty years if we mobilized like we did during WWII ("A Plan to Power 100 Percent of the Planet with Renewables," *Scientific American*).

Yet, recently, President Obama has pledged to help fund the first nuclear reactors to be built in almost thirty years, and the U.S. has agreed to build a pipeline from Canadian tar sands over the border developing one of the dirtiest fossil fuel industries. I can't say that I was surprised recently when I read that 2,500 energy lobbyists work the capital (that's approximately four energy lobbyists per congressperson) or that according to a May 2009 Rasmussen poll, only 42% of U.S. voters believe that Americans need to change their lifestyle to save the environment.

Do many people actually believe the words of Hoover Institute's Thomas Gale Moore who writes, "Global warming, if it were to occur, would probably benefit most Americans... global warming is likely to be good for most of humankind. The additional carbon, rain, and warmth should promote the plant growth necessary to sustain an expanding world population" (*Happiness is a Warm Planet, 1997*)?

I believe that we simply need to kick the fossil fuel addiction, and we can begin to do that by seeking out inspiring models of what could be. Come to MJC's Earth Day for a dose of inspiration. And don't forget Captain Planet's motto: "The power is yours."



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Story-teller to share tales at Peace Camp

By KEN SCHROEDER

Story-teller B.Z. Smith has been added to the program for Peace Camp, June 25-27. She will share stories at the Friday night campfire and lead a workshop on Saturday morning. Karlha Arias of the Tuolumne River Trust will lead the Sunday morning workshop. Camp also includes hiking, recreation, young people's activities, talent show, campfire, and singing.

Camp runs from Friday afternoon June 25th to Sunday noon June 27 at Camp Peaceful Pines on Clark Fork Rd. off Hwy. 108 in the Sierras. Early registration fee for the weekend is \$60 for adults, \$40 for youth 4-17 and free for children 3 and under. After June 6 the price goes up \$10. Fees include lodging, food and program. Scholarships are available.

Beautiful mountain setting. Stimulating activities. Fun for all ages. Great food. Refreshing mountain air. People who share your values for peace and justice. What better way to spend a summer weekend?

Registration forms are available online at www.stanislausconnections.org and can be copied and mailed by U.S. mail. The first 10 families or individuals to register will get a free cool peace bumper sticker. Contact Ken Schroeder, 209-526-2303, kschroeder70@yahoo.com for more information.



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A "Cool Kid Who Cares!"

By MICHAEL CHIAVETTA

This is the first installment of a monthly addition to *Connections* in which we highlight a high school student who is involved in "social justice" issues. The first individual chosen as a "Cool Kid Who Cares" is Rebecca Mears, a junior at Modesto High School involved in several activities that show that she cares about this world. She is active in Panthers Against Landmines, a group that raises money to eradicate the millions of landmines throughout the world. She is a member of Green Team, the school's environmental action club. Most importantly, she is a member of The Modesto Bee's Teens in the Newsroom program and has written numerous articles about social justice activities at Modesto High and in the community. These articles included the introductory article about Project Ecuador (a successful, year-long activity to raise money to build a school in rural Ecuador), and a follow-up article about the Modesto High Arts Festival and Rummage Sale held last spring to raise money for Project Ecuador. She also was an attendee at the first Social Justice Youth Leadership Conference and has attended the Modesto Peace/Life Center Peace Makers trainings held each month for area high school students. We sat down for a short interview to see the motivations behind her commitment to social justice causes.

Why do you like to be involved? I want to do more with my life than to just sit on the sidelines of history. I can't stand seeing all the injustice in the world and not feel compelled to do something about it!

I see that you are a journalist. Is this one of the ways you find to be involved? Writing is probably the biggest way for me to be involved. It allows me to reach a broad audience and show other students some of the ways that they can be involved. I am motivated by the good work that is done by numerous teachers, students and community organizations. I also feel that it is my "gift" and I am led to utilize it.

When you are involved in social justice activities what do you get out of it? Honestly, a sense of accomplishment. If I can in any way make a difference in someone else's life or the world as a whole I feel that my life has meaning.

When you look at the world what is the one thing that you would like to see happen? That is a really tough question! I suppose that the most pressing issue is the on-going wasteful wars that are in today's world. When I see the carnage, waste, and bloodshed, I can only ask "Why?" We are sacrificing our national treasure and the valuable lives of numerous people and for what? I would like to see a day when the world moves beyond war; when the power of words

is sufficient to end the use of armed conflict.

Who has been a motivator to you in the area of social justice? I would have to say my dad. I never really realized it until I had to think about this question, but now I realize that many of the lessons he taught me when I was little had a huge impact and remain a major influence on me today.



Do you want to elaborate on this point? There is one thing that my father taught me and it was that everyone is smart in her own way. He used to point out a homeless person and explain to me that in certain things he knows much more than me. It humbled me and taught me to respect all people and to realize that they have value.

Do you think that you will carry on with your involvement in social justice causes as you go on to college and after? Of course I will remain active. It is simply part of me. My career goals are right up this alley, because I want to major in Constitutional Law and Political Science and work as a lawyer to fight for those who are oppressed.

ACTION: If you want to nominate a young person whom you think is a "Cool Kid Who Cares" let us know at chiavetta.m@monet.k12.ca.us. Deadline is May 1st for the next installment.




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Peace Granola recipe

By ELAINE GORMAN

For about 20 years, I have been making granola for the annual Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the Modesto Peace/Life Center. Yogurt, fresh local berries, and granola are a combination that can't be beat, and makes a delicious accompaniment to the scrumptious pancakes that are served.

I learned to make granola at Emandal summer camp in Willits, where I was one of the cooks for 3 summers in the early 1980's. We would make gallons of granola every week for the campers. Currently, homemade granola is the standard breakfast for my husband and me, and we enjoy it almost daily.

1. In a large mixing bowl, add the following ingredients:
6 cups "old fashioned" rolled oats.
1/2 cup each of: sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, flax meal.
1 1/2 cups local raw nuts, coarsely chopped (almond or walnut).
2. In a small saucepan, heat the following until bubbling:
3/4 cup vegetable oil.
3/4 cup local honey.
3. Pour the oil/honey mix over the oat mix and stir until all ingredients are well-coated. Spoon the mixture into 2 baking pans or cookie sheets. Bake in 300 F. degree oven, for about one hour or until lightly browned, stirring every ten minutes.
4. Let cool. Add 2 cups raisins or other dried local fruit. Store in airtight container.

Additions and substitutions include rolled wheat (or other grain), bran, wheat germ, and coconut. Maple syrup can be substituted for honey. This recipe makes about 3 quarts of granola.

Worm farming: a great way to compost

By JENIFER WEST

I suppose it was bound to happen. Looking wistfully at those efficient (and expensive) drum-style models in a catalog, I noticed another item. Something that's always intrigued me, but seemed too – what? Weird? Messy? Unglamorous? Yet there it was, unobtrusively on the page next to the one with those shiny-new, ultra-efficient drum ones. Sleek, green plastic -- well designed.

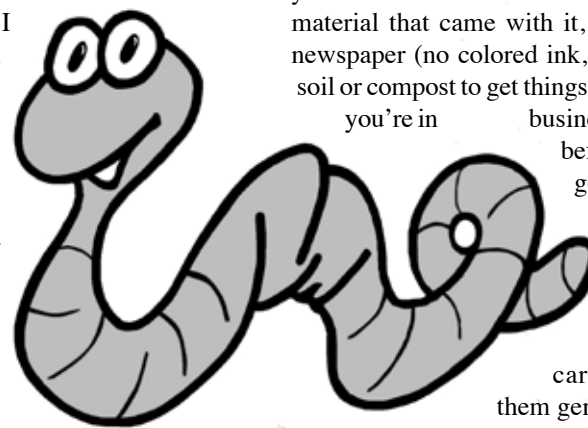
So I made the fatal mistake — I went online. Did a bit of research, and learned how much sense it makes all the way around. You put your prepared kitchen scraps in, and in a very short time, get back high-powered compost and supercharged "tea", and reduce your "carbon footprint" at the same time.

I casually mentioned it to my husband who, to my astonishment, said it sounded like a good idea. Next thing I knew, a 5-drawer, forest green model was headed our way. So we were off on yet another new adventure — into the earthy and exciting world of... Worm Farming!

Turns out, those little babies can turn 5 to 8 pounds of food scraps a week into compost. Food waste that's thrown into the landfill breaks down inefficiently in that anaerobic environment, producing methane gas. So by hiring the little wigglers to recycle it, you reduce the negative impact you have on the environment. *And* that compost is even richer and better for plants than traditional.

We've had our worm bin since last fall. You start out with

1 tray, plus the bottom, which has a spigot for collecting the "tea" — use it to perk up sickly plants. Worms need to be protected from extreme temperatures, so pick a sheltered location — ours are in the laundry room. (There really isn't much smell, unless the lid is open or they have been over-fed — and, if the latter, it goes away in a day or so.) The bin should come with instructions and bedding material to get you started. Moisten the coir (coconut fiber) and cardboard material that came with it, and add a couple of sheets of newspaper (no colored ink, unless it's soy-based). A bit of soil or compost to get things started, maybe some leaves, and you're in business. Set up your worm bin just before you obtain your worms. (I got my worms from Bond Worm Farm, 900 Bliss Rd., Ceres, 209-537-5255.)



Believe it or not, the little critters are a bit delicate. When you get them home, carefully unwrap them, and put them gently into the bin. Cover with the newspaper and put the lid on. Leave a light on for several days (they don't like light, and will stay in the bin to avoid it). It sounds funny, but they can get upset when you move them, and if you don't leave the light on, they might crawl out — you wouldn't want them to disappear, or to find them wandering all over the house...

It took me a little while to figure out how much and how often to feed our worms, which can eat a half-pound of food a day. We're big salad eaters, so they get the trimmings from the huge salad we make every couple of days. I also give them lint from the dryer, and napkins & paper towels. And they can make short work of junk mail — how's that for a "green" paper shredder — and your identity couldn't be safer with them on the job!! They can also "recycle" smashed egg shells, coffee grinds & filters and small amounts of leftover bread.

Unfortunately, at first I was so afraid of overfeeding them that I was starving the poor little things. Finally, I realized that I can pretty much give them veggie trimmings whenever we have them, as well as all our dryer lint, and the odd paper towel or napkin. If they're not ready to be fed again the next time I have something for them (if they're not actively feeding on what you put in last, wait a day or so), I either hold it for a day or grit my teeth and toss it into the garbage like I did before we invited the worms to live with us.

In two or three months the bedding in the first tray will be used up. Set the second one up according to the instructions, leaving the original one underneath it. The worms will continue to work in both trays. After a while, the bottom tray will be full of beautiful compost. It's pretty potent — I've mixed it with soil to recharge lettuce plants that have been producing all winter, and it only takes a little bit. Likewise with the tea — I mix a small amount into the water for my vegetable seedlings, and it really seems to help them get off to a great start.

So if you really want to compost, but have limited space, I highly recommend a worm bin. It's a great way to quickly turn kitchen scraps into supercharged compost, and become a better steward of our earth in the process.

Great Valley Museum celebrates spring with Open House and Native Plant Sale

Great Valley Museum of Modesto Junior College invites the community to a Spring Open House on Saturday, April 3 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Guests can tour the museum displays and participate in special activities, and admission is free.

Linda Knoll, local artist and author, will read her just-released children's picture book "Over in the Valley" at 12 noon and again at 2 p.m. The book, which features plants and animals of the Central Valley, will be available for purchase and signing by the author. Children can take part in creating a watercolor mural inspired by the book between readings.

The California Native Plant Society will hold a native plant sale in the garden and a wildflower show in the Museum Annex. A natural history used book sale will also take place in the Annex.

The Great Valley Museum, annex and garden are located at 1100 Stoddard Avenue in Modesto. For more information on the Spring Open House and Native Plant Sale call (209) 575-6196.



Illustration from Knoll's book "Over in the Valley"

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

By Lillian Vallee

65. Sympathy & Vision

As the rainy season blossoms into spring, the air fills with beebuzz and birdsong. A quick survey of the neighborhood yields a hummingbird picking tiny spiders out of almost invisible webs, an egret perched on a neighbor's rooftop to spy on chubby koi, and woodpeckers drilling the utility poles. The golden currant is in full glory, valley oaks are unfurling their leaves, and *three* red-shouldered hawks circle in nuptial flight (oh the complications of the species).

In my college composition classes students are reading about pre-Gold Rush California history. They are writing essays about accounts and letters from Spanish, then Mexican, Alta (or Upper) California, and many of the documents are from the National Archives in Mexico City. Students have told me that the book, *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California, 1535-1846*, translated and edited by Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, astounds them. Not only is most of the information contained in the collection almost completely unknown to them, but student Maria Ontiveros told me she had not understood, until now, the scale of native suffering on the land we now occupy. Some of the fragments contain the voices of California Indians who explain why they fled the missions (hunger, grief, beatings) or participated in rebellions (cruelty, displacement, dispossession). One poignant excerpt describes in loving detail the daily life and traditional dances of Indians at Mission San Luis Rey. The chronicler is a young Indian man, Pablo Tac, taken to Rome to be trained for the priesthood. He dies there, still a teen.

Does sorrow hover over the land and ambush us in a moment of heartrending beauty?

Maria shared her thoughts not in the classroom, but this past weekend at the Merced National Wildlife Refuge. She had brought her son Nick and, together with sixteen other Modesto Junior College students, had spent the cold and windy but crystalline morning planting wild rose, blackberry, quail- and coyote bush while nesting red-tailed hawks voiced their disquiet at our well-intentioned intrusion into their cottonwood kingdom.

Surrounded by the winter clarity of the San Joaquin Plain—white peaks of the snow-covered Sierra to our right, soft green mounds of the Diablo Range to our left—we talked about how the clean beauty of the March day allowed us to understand the loss of native life to a mission regimen and disease, herds of cattle and pigs, and to men on horseback in leather, with guns. We talked about whether the awareness of loss should be a part of the identity derived from a place as we worked to restore one small fragment of its ecological integrity. Does sorrow hover over the land and ambush us in

a moment of heartrending beauty?

In his *magnum opus* on the Tulare Lake Basin, geographer William Preston describes how Tulare Basin Yokuts derived their material and spiritual identity from tending, shaping, and using the diverse resources available to them. He presents the history of the disappearance of Tulare Lake by tracing the process of gradual separation of its residents from their place as exotic systems, technologies, animals, plants, and markets are introduced into the basin. Preston opens his book with a quote from William Powell in “San Joaquin Vision”: “Every man’s valley can be beautiful beyond the telling, if he lives in sympathy with his environment and heeds the vision of creative writers.”

Earlier in the week many of the same students had attended Sam Pierstorff’s poetry reading celebrating the appearance of his first major poetry book, *Growing up in Someone Else’s Shoes*. The reading was powerful and revealing. Someone mentioned an older man who shook his head disapprovingly at the language and then broke into helpless laughter. We discussed Sam’s hyperbolic sense of humor and his explicit use of language which, as he noted, disguises a rather conservative moral framework. Sam is like many of my young colleagues, a dynamic and devoted husband and father. His most stirring poems are about the antics and attachment of his three children.

Poets feign detachment. Language helps them create distance between themselves and overwhelming emotions, but language, no matter how removed, rough, even obscene, cannot, if the poetry is authentic, hide reality and often, in rereading poems we consider finished business, we are ambushed by raw emotion. Poetry contains a secret code, the history of our anger, owned and un-owned, the history of our loves and humiliations.

Elegant, pedigreed language can conceal a rotting corpse and be the blunt tool of oppression just as dirty, swaggering language, full of bravado and seduction, can be a tool of liberation, of release for reader and listener alike.

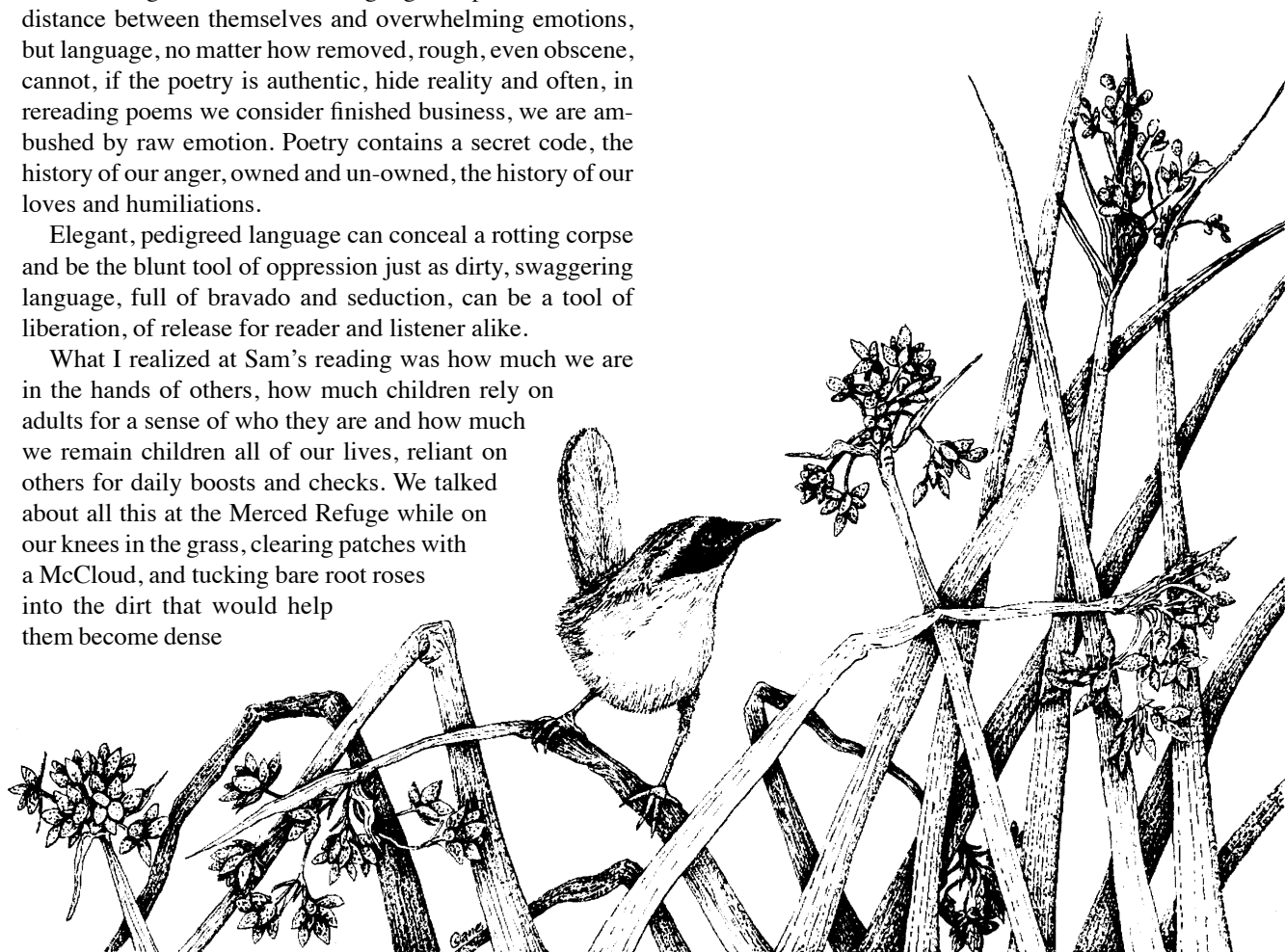
What I realized at Sam’s reading was how much we are in the hands of others, how much children rely on adults for a sense of who they are and how much we remain children all of our lives, reliant on others for daily boosts and checks. We talked about all this at the Merced Refuge while on our knees in the grass, clearing patches with a McCloud, and tucking bare root roses into the dirt that would help them become dense

Poetry contains a secret code, the
history of our anger, owned and
un-owned, the history of our loves
and humiliations.

understory thickets for mice and voles.

On the way home, west on Sandy Mush Road, I passed thousands of Snow and Ross’s geese blanketing the San Joaquin floodplain as if the snow-capped mountain peaks had taken wing and landed on the valley floor. As I drove over Salt Slough and the San Joaquin and Merced rivers, I thought about how much I value deriving an identity from this place, from the snowy peaks we drink to the fiery words we eat, from the plaintive language of hawks to the brave words of poets and chroniclers who grow up in someone else’s shoes or in someone else’s culture.

Sources: Rose Marie Beebe & Robert M. Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair*; Sam Pierstorff, *Growing Up in Someone Else’s Shoes*; and William Preston, *Vanishing Landscape: Land and Life in the Tulare Lake Basin*.



Is a two-state solution viable?

By DAN ONORATO

Vice-President Biden in Bethlehem recently insisted the U.S. is committed to achieving a “Palestinian state that is independent, viable and contiguous.” But just a few days ago Israel announced its decision to build 1600 new housing units in East Jerusalem which international law regards as Palestinian. In the face of Israel’s relentless policy of claiming and taking over ever more Palestinian land in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, a key question must be faced squarely: is a viable Palestinian state as a part of the two-state solution backed by the U.S. even possible? American-born Israeli human rights activist Jeff Halper thinks not.

only 6% of the land. The Palestinians and the Arab states refused to accept the partition.

The second map reflects the reality of the 1949 Armistice Line after Israel’s victory in the 1948 war. Israel now controlled 78% of the country, including half the territory the UN had allocated to the Palestinians. This line, known as the “Green Line,” marks the internationally recognized boundary of Israel and *de facto* demarcates the State of Israel until today. Since 1988, when the Palestinians under Yasser Arafat recognized Israel within that boundary, it has constituted the basis of the two-state solution, with the Palestinians claiming a state on all the lands conquered by Israel in 1967: the

West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

The third map shows the reality today after nearly forty years of persistent Israeli expansion through settlement building and other infrastructural changes: Israel now controls 85% of the original Palestine, while the shrunken Palestinian territory is cut up into non-contiguous “bantustans” by Israeli settlements, roads only Israelis can use, and the Separation Barrier/Wall. Halper believes this carving up of the land into disconnected enclaves, over which Israel insists on maintaining control, forecloses the possibility of a viable and truly

sovereign, independent Palestinian state.

Halper raises the question: If Israel really wanted peace and security, why didn’t it accept Arafat’s amazingly generous offer that conceded to Israel 78% of the Palestinians’ historic homeland in exchange for a two-state solution in which Israel would live securely within the Green Line borders? After all, Israel is infinitely stronger than the Palestinians. It’s the world’s fourth largest nuclear power, and it receives \$3.5 billion in military aid from the U.S. each year. If the agreement didn’t work and conflict broke out, Israel could easily defeat the Palestinians. Similarly, in 2002 the entire Arab League adopted the Arab Peace Initiative that offered Israel peace and

social and economic integration into the region if Israel withdrew within the internationally recognized boundaries of the Green Line. But Israel rejected the offer. Between these two peace initiatives, and especially after the 1992 Oslo Accords agreements that were supposed to lay the foundation for peace and eventual independence for Palestine, Israel increased its settlement building in the West Bank, adding over 200,000 settlers. Today, nearly a half million Israelis populate East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The conclusion, for Halper, is clear: peace and security are less important to Israel than controlling the entire country. Israel—Halper distinguishes between the Israeli people and their government—believes it can beat the Palestinians, so why compromise. It can maintain what Halper calls its “Matrix of Control” over the entire country by creating irreversible facts on the ground in the form of settlements, exclusive Israeli-only roads, hundreds of checkpoints, and the Separation Barrier.

Israel also believes it can make a separate peace with each Arab country, as it has done with Egypt and Jordan, thus avoiding conflict with Arab neighbors. It already has relations with the two largest Muslim countries, Indonesia and Morocco. As for integration into the Middle East, Israel sees itself as a European country and would prefer to be a member of the European Union.

Moreover, Israel feels no need to compromise since it has U.S. support. Seldom has the U.S. held back any aid or given any serious ultimatum to Israel. President Bush (the father), when James Baker was Secretary of State, withheld \$10 billion in loan guarantees because of settlement building, and President Eisenhower insisted Israel get out of Sinai. For the last forty years, with the exception of President Carter, Democrats have watched Israeli territorial expansion and done nothing to stop it. To its credit, the Obama Administration quickly condemned Israel’s latest housing plan in East Jerusalem, but what it will actually do to pressure Israel to stop, and how successful it will be, remain to be seen.

A further reason for Israel’s refusal to compromise, Halper asserts, is that it has the U.S. Congress in its pocket. An example of Congress’s automatic support for Israel is its reaction last fall to the UN commissioned Goldstone Report that concluded Israel was guilty of war crimes in its invasion of Gaza. With little discussion, Congress rejected the report as biased, despite the fact that the report spends many pages



Halper has lived in Israel many years. After teaching anthropology at Haifa University and Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheba, in 1997 he founded The Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHN). Over 24,000 Palestinian homes have been destroyed since Israel began its occupation of the Palestinian Territories in 1967. Halper and other ICAHD members have stood in the way of Israeli bulldozers, chained themselves inside targeted Palestinian houses, and organized Palestinian, Israeli, and international teams to rebuild demolished homes. He has been arrested at least 8 times for civil disobedience in his nonviolent actions. In 2006 he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the American Friends Service Committee for his work to end the “yoke of structural violence” and “build equality between Israelis and Palestinians by recognizing and celebrating their common humanity.”

Halper spoke recently at the Mt. Diablo Peace Center in Walnut Creek on “Resisting Occupation, Constructing Peace.” He began, as he did in Jerusalem when he addressed the Interfaith Peace-Builders Project I was a part of in 2005, by showing three maps that convey the heart of the problem. The first map, from the 1947 UN Resolution 181 that partitioned Palestine, shows Israel with 55% of the land, even though Jews were only a third of the population and owned

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Jewish and Palestinian women birthing peace

By **LEN and LIBBY TRAUBMAN**

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.

— Aristotle (384-322 BC)

If ever the world sees a time when women shall come together purely and simply for the benefit of (hu)mankind, it will be a power such as the world has never known.

— Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), British poet

Giving birth to peace, THE MIDWIVES COEXISTENCE PROJECT is a group of Palestinian and Israeli midwives freely sharing their combined knowledge to help pregnant Israeli and Palestinian mothers experience safe and natural births.

A coexistence project of Circle of Health International (COHI). Since 2004, the midwives have worked with women throughout Israel and the Palestinian Authority. http://www.cohintl.org/05news/beit_jala_meeting.php

They cooperate to (1) reduce the use of anesthetics during birth and (2) enable women to safely and naturally give birth without a doctor, assisted only by a midwife, if they so choose.

The Palestinian town of Mithaloon is home to the only West Bank birthing center where women can deliver their babies assisted only by a midwife.

Aisha Saifi (SaifiAisha@yahoo.com) the Palestinian coordinator, holds a B.S. in Nursing as well as a Diploma in Midwifery from Bethlehem University in Palestine.

Israeli project coordinator Gomer Ben Moshe (GBenMoshe@cohintl.org) worked in a hospital delivery room midwife for many years after earning her B.A. in Nursing and midwifery diploma.

Ben Moshe and Saifi agree that the unforgettable experience of childbirth creates a bonding environment for the

midwives, who discover, as they work together, that they share much more in common than they thought.

SEE VIDEO at: Midwives for Peace, Israel21c, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mDIXTpGSew>

KIDS FOR PEACE

Muslim Hanan Gaffaly (Believe11@walla.co.il) is an extra-ordinary relationship builder in the Holy Land. The Jaffa resident is preoccupied with building youth into the spiritual leaders and bridge builders of today and tomorrow. She invests most days working with KIDS FOR PEACE — <http://www.kcpeace.org/>

Hanan works with other Palestinians and Jews of

SULHA — and especially their SULHA bringing Israeli, West Bank, and Gazan youth across borders to engage and grow together <http://www.sulha.com/>).

See “For one Israeli Arab woman, peace begins within: Palestinian Arab Israeli Hanan Gaffaly experienced a spiritual and professional metamorphosis on the road to becoming a peacemaker” by Karin Kloosterman, Israel21c — 13 January 2010

<http://israel21c.org/people/for-one-israeli-arab-woman-peace-begins-within>

These and hundreds of other success stories are preserved at <http://traubman.igc.org/messages.htm>

Two state solution

. . . from page 6

detailing Hamas’s violations of international law as well as Israel’s. Apparently, Judge Goldstone’s international reputation for unbending honesty didn’t sway Congress to think and act more with more deliberation. His leadership in UN investigations of genocide in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia and in overseeing the precedent-setting Truth and Reconciliation Hearings in his homeland of South Africa mattered less, it seems, than complying with the pressure from the American Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC) and Christian Zionists who support Israel’s policies without question today.

Besides feeling assured of continued U.S. support, Israel is convinced it can wear down the Palestinians by making life so difficult they will leave their homeland. The apparatus of the Occupation — with the daily humiliation and hassle of its check points, occasional closures of whole cities, the Wall separating Palestinians from their farms, the demolition of homes, the difficulty of getting permits to travel to Jerusalem, and so on — makes life, day after day, stressful and frustrating. It’s no wonder in the last 10 years over 300,000 Palestinians, mostly from the well-educated and professionally trained middle class, have left.

Within Israeli society itself, their government’s humiliating

and harsh treatment of the Palestinians arouses relatively little reaction from most people, Halper said. Israel doesn’t use the word “occupation,” most people are caught up in their daily concerns, and the five right-wing parties running the government don’t seem concerned that Israel is moving toward Apartheid status in which one population separates itself from the other over whom it exercises domination.

Halper concludes

that the initiative to end the Occupation has to come from outside of Israel. For us in the U.S. that means framing the conflict so Americans feel its resolution serves our vital interests. If America wants to regain its moral leadership as a beacon of human rights and fairness in the world, it can no longer afford to back Israel when Israel persists in defying international law and human rights standards. Americans need to understand that for much of the rest of the world, the Occupation is viewed as an American-Israeli Occupation. The conflict represents the epicenter of instability in the Middle East, far more destabilizing for the role of the U.S. in the world than Iraq. The conflict symbolizes the humiliation of Islam by the West. The current Israeli policy to take over East Jerusalem, home of one of Islam’s most sacred shrines, the El Aksa Mosque, is a particularly inflammatory humiliation. Because of the conflict’s symbolic resonance, Halper states, “This is the bone in America’s throat. This is *the* issue America must help resolve if it wants to reduce terrorism and make peace in the Muslim world.”

With Israel expanding farther into the West Bank and annexing more of East Jerusalem, creating yet more “facts on the ground” that are not likely to be reversed, the prospects for an economically and socially viable and independent Palestinian state are, in Halper’s view, dead. But other ways of creating a durable and just peace are possible. Though Halper proposes a “regional confederation,” he isn’t sure what form the peace will take. *But crucial to its emergence is pressure from the world community, especially from the U.S. For us in Stanislaus County that means contacting our congressional representative and our state senators. Each letter, each phone call, each visit will help them feel more support to act wisely and boldly for new policies that truly serve America’s best interests.* As John McCutcheon sings, “Step by step the longest march can be won, can be won.”

ACTION: For more information about ICAHD and its educational resources, check out its website: www.icahd.org, or the US office at www.icahdusa.org. For phone calls to political leaders: Rep. Dennis Cardoza: 527-

1914; Rep. George Radanovich: 579-5458; Senator Feinstein: 202-224-3841; Senator Boxer: 202-224-3553.

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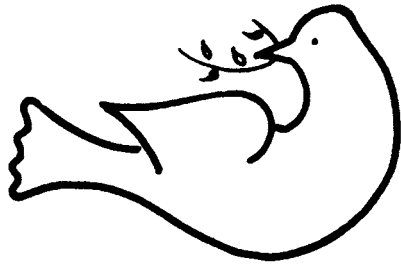
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Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free.

— The Dalai Lama

2010 Peace Essay Contest

“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.”

The 24th annual Peace Essay Contest received 1015 qualifying essays from fifth through twelfth grade students from throughout Stanislaus County.

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. Each writer focused on a problem preventing people from experiencing peace and explained his/her plan for bringing about change.

Sponsored by the Modesto Peace/Life Center, the contest is co-sponsored by the Modesto Junior College Department of Literature and Language Arts.

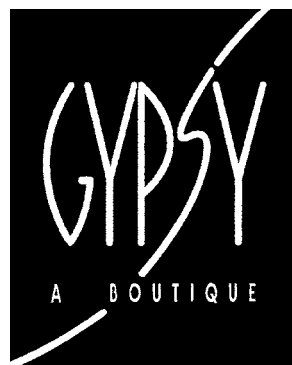
2010 Peace Essay Committee: Margaret Barker, Indira Clark, Pam Franklin, Elaine Gorman, Suzanne Meyer, Deborah Roberts, Sandy Sample, and Shelly Scribner.



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GEORGIA
ANDERSON

Economic Stability Throughout the Globe

Division II, 2009 Peace Essay Contest
First Place & School Winner

Julia Hackett

Johansen High School ~ Mr. Knight

As I look at the world’s most volatile and violent regions such as Africa, parts of South America, and the Middle East there is a common thread that connects each region to each other. They are developing countries that have weak economies, most citizens are unemployed, and the government lacks the resources or willpower to reverse these situations. People gravitate toward a stable form of a monthly paycheck; often times this is a guerilla organization that derails government stability and creates chaos. This leads me to conclude that if I had all the resources possible to make a more peaceful world, I would focus on raising economic standards in violent regions that have weak economies.

The first priority is to create public works projects that pay citizens, who are unemployed, to fix or create infrastructure in their country. This helps countries with their unemployment rates while helping to fix basic problems in their country like irrigation, sanitation, energy, etc. For instance, projects should be enacted that create irrigation systems to remote villages so they can start producing more food, thus leading to a society that can sustain itself without foreign aid. Also, improving roadways would not only give employment to many, but it would create a more diverse economy since people could more easily travel to different areas, so trade would increase.

Next, I would create companies and corporations based on the improved infrastructure. I would start by emphasizing the agriculture possibilities in places like Africa and Brazil. This creates a domino effect on another problem our world is facing, world hunger. More people would be producing more food for our world population thus creating more jobs, more money, and more food. In Brazil and other South American countries, the possibility for renewable resources is endless. So growing more corn or sugar, for instance, creates more agricultural industry while expanding the “green” industry for bio-fuels and helping to solve global warming. Creating corporations leads to massive employment opportunities and people are not so reliant on guerilla organizations. For example, the Taliban in Afghanistan is also an economic support system for many Afghans, not so much an ideologue.

Also, developed countries would begin to trade with undeveloped countries with their resources or manufactured

products. If countries trade more with each other it would increase the ties economically and diplomatically between countries. When economies are interconnected (globalization), the chance that countries would go to war with each other is slim because of their dependence on each other. For example, the European economy is threaded together by the European Union. This benefits the people of Europe, creates economic prosperity and stability, while strengthening diplomatic ties. If Germany went to war with France, it would be economic and political suicide.

This concept could also prove successful in Africa, parts of South America, and the Middle East. Primitive tribal disputes result in constant conflicts and war within a country such as Pakistan, India, or Afghanistan. To solve this problem, I would propose, as I mentioned earlier, intertwined economies. If tribes traded with each other more, their dependence on one another would increase, therefore lessening potential violence.

If this plan succeeded, the results would be astonishing. The next generation would experience economic prosperity and a utopian, ideal world that is peaceful. Countries would have more money to spend on education. I believe that education is a key ingredient in unlocking the wonders of our minds and expanding our belief system so we can accurately assess problems and their potential solutions. But this world will not exist, if we do not focus on economic standards that increase each country’s strength.

Economic viability in poor countries is the starting point for everything else within the country to develop. It is only a small piece that connects a large jigsaw puzzle, but I firmly believe that every country should enjoy the prosperity that we Americans do. Just imagine what we could all accomplish if the rest of the world did not have to constantly worry about money in developing countries. The answer: infinite possibilities.

Is someone you love gay?

Parents, Families and Friends
of Lesbians and Gays

Modesto Chapter
meets on the
1st and 3rd Tuesdays from 7-9 pm
at the Emanuel Lutheran Church
324 College Ave.
Helpline: 527-0776
www.pflagmodesto.org

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

dirt poor

we lived in the projects
and Daddy lived away
in a rundown rental
on Cone avenue
in Merced

despite our poorness
Daddy insisted
on farming

he worked graveyard
at Castle AFB
then hit the fields in the morning
pruning, weeding, picking
for someone else,
until finally
scraped enough,

to lease a small piece
of land
mostly tomatoes
but bellpeppers, squash, chilis
and more

he'd drag us there
to work
until our blisters
had blisters

every cent
went to this failed garden

we weren't
any great success,
but Daddy,
never gave up

after years
of nothing
when everyone
all of them
joked privately
of his annual
failed garden,
at last
his masterpiece

in lush greens,
rows and rows
of reds, and yellows
bountiful and plenty

right here,
under a bright
radiant sun,

Daddy was
the richest man in town

Superman

Yesterday, a story in *The Sacramento Bee* said a man saved another man from a horrible fire. A man on the side of the road trapped in a burning car. People standing there, frozen, watching him screaming, burning to death. Suddenly, another car stops, a man jumps out, races into the flames, busts out the window, and pulls the man to safety.

"He came out of nowhere," a witness said, "like Superman!"

The newspaper didn't say a Mexican immigrant who spoke no English, because he was. It didn't say he dove into the fire to save a white man. It didn't say a Catholic man saved a Christian man, or a poor man saved a rich man. He was just a man.

Through a translator they asked this hero why he risked his life diving into the fire. "He needed help, so I helped him," he answered simply.

Not a brown face, or a purple face, a human face. Able to leap religion, race, insane, stupid politics, in a single bound. More powerful than runaway hate,

...Superman.

broken home

every night
after a long day
of working the fields
Daddy came to us

his skin
caked hard from the sun
eyes burnt
to a squint

his old pick-up
a patchwork
of blue, orange, and rust,
barely drivable

the door creaked
as he stepped down,
stomped the pavement
to knock the dust,
then used a wet rag
to wipe a clean spot
on his face

stooped shoulders
dusty felt hat
his body
exhausted, beaten

by the time
he reached the screen door
he'd be smiling
scooping us up
kissing
one by one
then leave

every day
through the window
i waited for that truck
ached for him

too small to burn

woke up,
stretched, unfolded
in the back seat

it's daylight,
already sweating

pulled myself up
to the window
squinted
far down the rows
of desert sand
for Daddy and the rest,
tiny dots

"you're still too small,
and the job's too hard,"
Daddy told me,
in the morning darkness

i pleaded, cried
clung to his pants leg

he shook his head,
wrapped me in his coat
then laid me in the back seat

choppin 'sparagus
somewhere in Ballico
by the bridge,
where we catfish
and swim

no trees
a sizzling, brutal sun

opened the door
slipped down
to the cool shade
of the big tire,

and waited for him



Charles Mariano

Charles Mariano born in Merced, California, graduated from Merced High School, 1970. Contributor to *Song of the Joaquin*, and author of *The Whole Enchilada, Recipes, Photos & Stories from Merced, CA.*



My father.



Media Conference promotes independent, progressive media

By MIKE KILLINGSWORTH

On February 19th I traveled to Fresno for a collaborative meeting of independent media sources at the **Free Speech Media Conference**. Mike Rhodes, editor of the *Community Alliance* newspaper gave the welcoming speech confirming the value of independent sources of news. Various Fresno groups have been instrumental in the development of various media resources such as newsletters, newspapers, radio, television and video.

Keynote speaker and former Professor of Journalism at UC Santa Cruz, Conn Hallinan spoke of the concentration of media into 7 giant media corporations, pointing out that they often print stories about puppies while leaving out important community activities and problems. His research into the history of media in America revealed that in the early years of the republic, the government supported independent media to the tune of \$1.3 trillion dollars in today's money. But he then pointed out how government has almost eliminated such support today. Many of us who listen to Capitol Public Radio know that its funding has been reduced so much that it uses corporate advertising to bridge the gap between the cost of running its stations and what the government and fund drives provide. Mike Rhodes described how the *Community Alliance* newspaper grew from a monthly lithograph to an excellent,

monthly, 24 page community news source that covers events and opinions that rarely see the light of day in the local news media (<http://fresnoalliance.com/wordpress>). One of the editors of another excellent monthly called *The Undercurrent*, described and exhibited their newspaper dedicated to providing information about the arts and entertainment as well as political analysis.

Rych Withers informed attendees how listener-supported, free speech KFCF 88.1 FM radio is a vital source of community activist progressive media. The variety of topics on KFCF is impressive. Just as our local X106.1 LPFM provides non-commercial radio access to local bands, Amy Goodman and FSTV News, topical programs on social, environmental and political issues, the Bob Marley Ghost Show, The Morning Mayor Show etc. over the airways, they both also allow access by streaming programs live over the internet. The internet offers the music and information on these stations to a broad listening audience. They can be found at www.valleymedia.org and www.KFCF.org.

Indibay.org (www.indybay.org) is a radical group founded in Berkeley and is a website of the San Francisco Bay Area and Santa Cruz Independent Media Centers. Anyone can post on that website according to David. David was in Seattle when the Gang of 8, I mean the G8, meeting riots occurred. He and members of indybay.org are into radical interventions

at such meetings. Their motto is "make media, make trouble."

Mary Jane Skjellerup of FresYes and the Community Media Access Collaborative (CMAC) (www.cmacfresno.org/) was there with three students. Through CMACfresno.org and FresYes she gets local high school and college youth into media production. Interested youth can learn videotaping, interviewing, editing and production skills. The workshop presented by this group gave basic tips on making video media. They pointed out that anyone can make videos and put them on the internet. Those of us who have Microsoft Movie Maker can get answers to our questions on how to use the software at Google.com.

Maria Erana from Radio Bilingue (www.radiobilingue.org/index_en.htm) gave the history of the radio stations that are now in Fresno - KJSV 91.5 FM, Modesto-Stockton - KMPO 88.7 FM, Bakersfield - KTQX 90.1 FM, Salinas - KHCD 90.9 FM, El Centro - KUBO 88.7 FM, and Laytonville - KVVH 88.5 FM. They are available at www.radiobilingue.org on the internet.

The Modesto Peace/Life Center has applied for a license to operate an FM station that will cover Stanislaus County and provide progressive ideas and programs in our community. Let's all support that effort. If Fresno can bring a broad range of progressive media to the public, we can too!

Calls for dignity, fighting against "rankism"

By JOSEPH HOMER

Unequal and unjust treatment have been confronted time and again. Progress has been made, but the struggle never ceases even though concessions have been made to improve the conditions for those who have been disenfranchised, subjugated, discriminated against and prevented from participating in society with equal opportunities.

There is another form of discrimination that lingers in the shadows whenever these other issues are at the forefront, one that seems to unite these seemingly unrelated forms of discrimination into a common experience. This type of discrimination is so basic that it doesn't always register when we think about these other forms but it is, nonetheless, real and present. Called Rankism, it takes place when individuals who have rank in a particular social hierarchy abuse the power attendant to their rank. Whether this abuse of power is understood in economic, political or other terms, it has a similar result. Using Rankism as a lens, we can see that racism, sexism and homophobia have also come from similar origins. Rankism, the abuse of one's perceived rank in these hierarches, is common to all of these discriminations.

In a very tangible way, Rankism is at play in all levels of society. On the level of individual interaction, bullies employ their greater strength to take advantage of others on the playground. On the international level, stronger nations use their greater economic and political strengths to take advantage of and exploit nations with lesser political and economic power. It is this same story of exploitation based upon higher rank that is common to these and so many other examples, and it is only by recognizing such instances of

abuse that we will ever have a chance to root out Rankism. But to accomplish this, we must acknowledge something very basic and fundamental to being human: the importance of respecting individual dignity.

This use of the term "dignity" is not a nuanced or particular one. It is the familiar, the well-known. Dignity is what is meant when one is recognized as being worthy, as being important, as playing some role, while the particularities of that role are of less concern. The basic idea is that we all play some role in this or that human community, and we would like to be recognized as important to that community be it a group of friends, a company or an international coalition. It is a feeling that has been called by different names at different times but all of these refer to a common experience for human beings, of value and belonging in the human community.

Understanding dignity can help us see how different forms of discrimination function, from the individual human being on up. Racism and sexism are some well-known forms of Rankism but there are others that do not fit into racial or gender categories. Still, it is the common lack of respect for the dignity of the individuals in these groups, and the legitimacy of the groups themselves, that binds them together. Rankism helps us make sense of how all of these forms of discrimination are similar and how they need be addressed on the grounds of being an affront to a common sense of human dignity. When a boss maltreats his/her employees or pays them less than they have earned, Rankism is taking place. When governments misuse and overstep their authority and violate the implicit pact they have made with the governed, another form of Rankism surfaces. The practice is widespread

and until we acknowledge and act upon the right of our human dignity, then such exercises in Rankism will continue.

Recognizing how important it is to respect dignity, in the case of our interpersonal interactions, as well as advocating for dignitarian ideals on the institutional, national or international levels is only the first step. From there, each one of us must take concrete steps to address and eliminate Rankism. These range from speaking up to another person about an indignity they caused to protesting institutional or international Rankism. Keeping governments and corporations accountable to their people and employees are some others. There are so many ways in which we, as human beings, can help one another in the fight for a more dignitarian society.

If you are interested in joining the dignitarian cause, or have experienced these or other forms of Rankism please email me at jhomer42@gmail.com. We can share our common desire to add dignity to the list of those most fundamental human rights.



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

Greetings from the edge of the Stanislaus River...

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

The annual Tule Fog Fete is a fundraising event for Modesto's Great Valley Museum. Held outdoors at Caswell Memorial State Park, the child-centered event includes live animal exhibits, docent-led walks through the park's many riverside paths, snacks, silent auctions, and live music.

As a local amateur musician, I volunteer my services every year to the Great Valley Museum and the Tule Fog Fete. I play guitar and mandolin in the Zero Visibility String Band, a pickup band that was started specifically for the Tule Fog Fete dozens of years ago.

By 11:00 AM on March 7, the band assembled and began unpacking instruments. Keith Davis, Meg Eshom, and Jason Winfrey shared guitar duties; Linda McFelter swapped liberally back and forth between guitar and mandolin; Ken van de Kieft played a lot of octave mandolin and some guitar; yours truly played mandolin for the entire afternoon. But the most appreciated performer of the afternoon, measured in applause, was a young Miss Winfrey who pulled out her fiddle and, with help from her proud father, led us through a spirited rendition of "Old Joe Clark."

We always play the fete without amplification. Set up and tear down remains simple and keeps us close to the action. Were we to employ microphones and a PA system, we would need to be farther away from our fellow volunteers and the animals they bring with them. And we would be removed from our audience, separated by a wall of sound.

Without amplification we can participate to a greater degree in the day's activities, and draw our audience in. Once the

audience is in, they listen and enjoy. The experience becomes neighborly and nearly participatory. Smiles get wider, toes tap, and voices drift out of the audience in harmony with our songs. Food for the souls of acoustic musicians.

The size and make-up of the band made it possible for individuals to take their own breaks. Meg scooted off to place bids on baked goods. Linda enjoyed some lunch. I grabbed a cold drink, a couple of chocolate chip cookies, and made time to chat with friends and relatives. Each of us rested a bit all while the band played on.

The advantage to the flowing and transient audience was that the music never stopped longer than the time it took to figure out whose turn it was to pick the tune. If you sat down to eat and listened while you waited for the next nature walk to start, you got a lot of music from different sets of people even though there were never fewer than 3 of us playing together at one time.

During our non-stop 4 hour set, warm sunlight filtered through the still leafless branches of black oaks that ring the picnic area and felt good on our faces and backs of our necks. We cast aside our jackets and let the sun do its work on bare arms.

We all realized the rare privilege of playing together in such beautiful surroundings. At the end of the day smiles and handshakes went all around, and we told each other we needed to do more of this. I am sure that part of the magic was the fete itself, a thing difficult to duplicate without a sunny day in the park and a lot of happy people in attendance.

I wish I could say the park itself was in good condition. Winter-fallen debris still litters the ground in the picnic area, brush cleared from a tree-fall nearby has been left in the overflow parking area, and half of the restroom buildings are closed. Caswell Memorial State Park, on the state park

service closure list, could use some heavy yard work and a little maintenance.

The plants and animals do not mind the extra debris in the meadows and parking lots. It does not directly hurt a park to return to its less maintained state. But without clear trails, picnic benches, ample parking, and restroom facilities, this land will go unused. In the end it could become an attractive nuisance or a burden to the state. Then it could be sold to the highest bidder, who would be within his or her rights to clear it for multiple home construction. We would lose one of the few examples of riparian habitat still extant in the San Joaquin Valley.

One of the things that I hope arises out of the Tule Fog Fete is not just the monetary support gained by the Great Valley Museum, but greater awareness among our friends and neighbors in the valley that maintaining places like Caswell Memorial State Park is important to our quality of life. We have precious few places as wild and wooded as Caswell within easy driving distance. We need to preserve every one of them.

Perhaps we could use the model provided by the Great Valley Museum to raise funds for the upkeep of Caswell and other places in need. How about a May Day Festival? I know where we can scare up some committed volunteers, and I have "in" with a local Bluegrass band that would play for free.

Gallo Arts Center offers student & senior rush tickets

A new "rush ticket" discount program, open to qualifying seniors and students, has been launched by the Gallo Center for the Arts, thanks to the sponsorship of Wells Fargo.

The program is designated for Center-presented performances only.

Rush tickets, when available, will be on sale on the day of performance, and must be purchased in person at our Ticket Office, 1000 I Street in downtown Modesto. (No online or phone purchase.)

Qualifying seniors, age 60 and over, must present valid, current identification. Students must present a valid current school identification card. Purchases are limited to two tickets per person, and the location of rush ticket seating is at the discretion of the Center's Ticket Office.

Info.: <http://www.galloarts.org>

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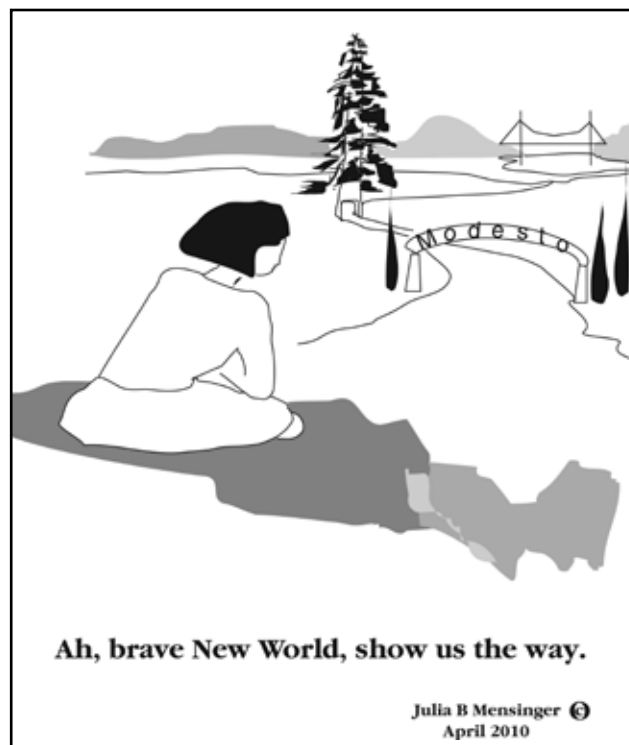
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