

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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INSIDE CONNECTIONS

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National Priorities Project tallies cost of war through September 30, 2010

From the National Priorities Project

Congress has appropriated an additional \$136.8 billion for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for the 2010 fiscal year. National Priorities Project estimates that for this fiscal year, \$64.5 billion is directed to Iraq and \$72.3 billion to Afghanistan. Bills that included war-related funding were the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act (H.R. 2892) passed on October 28, 2009; the Consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 3288) passed on December 16, 2009; and the Department of Defense Appropriations Act (H.R. 3326) passed on December 19, 2009.

These new appropriations bring total war-related spending for Iraq to \$747.3 billion and for Afghanistan to \$299 billion, with total war costs of \$1.05 trillion [1]. National Priorities Project (NPP) [2] updated its Cost of War counters [3] to reflect the new totals and to show the local costs of these wars to states and many cities. NPP's trade-off tool [4] allows you to explore what services could be obtained for your community with the same amount of money that Congress has appropriated for war spending.

These current year appropriations do not include funds to support the "surge" of 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan proposed by the Obama administration on December 1, 2009. Conservative estimates suggest that it will cost approximately \$30 billion to fund this surge. Supplemental appropriations for this funding are expected later this year.

Since 2001, the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and related activities have been funded through emergency supplemental appropriations. In a clear departure from this practice, the Obama administration integrated the FY2010 war funding into the core budget appropriations process. While this process purportedly allows for greater scrutiny and control over the allocation of tax dollars relative to the emergency supplemental funding process, it has – ironically – also become more difficult to ascertain the exact spending amounts directed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Past supplemental bills outlined funding almost exclusively for war costs whereas departmental appropriations combine these war costs with all other departmental funds for the entire fiscal year.

War funding was found within three separate appropriations bills with the bulk of money in the Defense Appropriations Bill passed just before Congress left for their winter break. In addition to defense funding, this bill was used to extend Food Stamp benefits (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP), unemployment benefits, and COBRA payments to continue health insurance coverage for the unemployed [5].

NPP will continue to follow Iraq and Afghanistan war funding including any supplemental bills to support the Afghanistan surge that has already begun as well as any other additional war costs.

For more information: call 413.584.9556 or visit www.nationalpriorities.org

[1] Total war funding to date includes all approved funds for Afghanistan since FY2001 plus all approved funds for Iraq since FY2003. See also CRS Report RL33110 September 2009 [7]. Please note that funding estimates for FY2007-2009 have been revised in this updated report on which our estimates are based.

[2] The cost of these extensions was not included in the bill but NPP estimates place funding for these three programs at approximately \$40-\$45 billion.

Links:
[1] <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/2009/1/11/Cost-of-war-tallies-through-FY2010#sdfootnote1sym>

[2] <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/>

[3] <http://costofwar.com/>

[4] <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/tradeoffs>

[5] <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/2009/1/11/Cost-of-war-tallies-through-FY2010#sdfootnote2sym>

[6] <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/2009/1/11/Cost-of-war-tallies-through-FY2010#sdfootnote1anc>

[7] <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>

[8] <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/2009/1/11/Cost-of-war-tallies-through-FY2010#sdfootnote2anc>

Modesto Peace/Life Center Annual Meeting

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2010

PEACE/LIFE CENTER

720 13th ST., MODESTO

8:30 AM — Coffee and Conversation

9:00 AM — Business Meeting:

- Financial Report
- Committee Reports
- Election of Board Members

— Discussion:

- Action plans, ideas and strategies
- Possible By-Law changes

12:30 PM — Adjournment

For 39 years the Modesto Peace/Life Center has been a meeting place for people concerned about peace, justice, equality, a sustainable environment, education and working to make our community and world a more peaceful and equitable place. Please join us!

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Alternative Media Conference in Fresno

By MIKE RHODES
Editor, Community Alliance Newspaper

This conference will introduce people to the wide variety of alternative/independent media in Fresno and show them how they can become involved. We will cover radio (KFCF and Radio Bilingüe), TV (with the new Public Access group), the Internet (Indymedia) and newspaper (*The Undercurrent*, *Community Alliance*, and *Because People Matter* in Sacramento).

The conference will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 20 at the Dickey Community Center at Glenn and Divisadero in Fresno.

- 9 a.m. – Registration.
- 9:30 a.m. - Conn Hallinan will give a welcome address at
- 10- 11 a.m. - Panel discussion. Each sponsoring group will have up to 10 minutes to talk about their organization.
- 11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. - workshops where participants get basic training in writing, video production, interview techniques, and how to use Indymedia. Conference participants will pick one workshop to attend.
- 12:30 - 1 p.m. - Lunch.
- 1 - 1:45 p.m. - Wrap up.

We are still working on details about who exactly will lead the workshops and who will present at the opening panel.

This conference will be a lot of fun. I hope that we can increase participation in all local alternative/independent media as a result of this conference.

Information: Contact Mike Rhodes, editor@fresnoalliance.com, (559) 978-4502, www.fresnoalliance.com

In Memoriam

GLENN A. ANDERSON

April 25, 1926 — November 30, 2009

In Memoriam

LENORE PALSGROVE

September 8, 1925 — January 5, 2010

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

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- Send me CONNECTIONS. Here's my \$25 DONATION.
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- I am enclosing an extra tax-deductible donation for Modesto Peace/Life Center
- \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other

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The Peace/Life Center needs YOU!

By DAN ONORATO

Grassroots nonprofits that tilt against windmills need two things to survive: money and people to do the work. Many of you have recently been very generous in donating to the Center as a result of our end-of-the-year fund appeal letter. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

But now we need more volunteers to help with the work. Picture yourself in a cave overlooking the high desert when late afternoon sunshine paints the panorama below you in breathless hues of orange, red, and magenta. The wind is blowing eerily. Time stops as you listen, riveted to the voice speaking out of the wind. We need you, it repeats slowly, like the intonation of a chant, we need you. It's a mantra your spirit welcomes. We need you. We need you. Gradually the blend of color, panpipe wind, and this gentle invitation enchants, enraptures, and captivates you. Here I am, you respond freely. I am ready.

OK! Now you're primed. Here are three tasks you can help with:

1) For our Media Committee we need one or two people to help shoot and edit stories to show on our weekly TV program each Wednesday and Saturday from 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. on Cable Access Channel 26. Someone who knows how to do computer editing is especially needed. For high school or college students, this experience could enhance your portfolio or help meet your requirement for community service. 4-10 hours a month. Contact John Lucas, 765-3813 lucasjal@sbcglobal.net.

2) For Stanislaus Connections we need writers, editors, and people to help with mailing the paper. Currently 3 to 4 hard-working volunteers do most of the work getting Connections into print. They need help, people who like to write about

IF NOT YOU
Then Who?

issues related to peace, justice, and our environment, and people with editing skills. We could do more to cover local issues and activists, and we'd have a better chance at snagging a Pulitzer if we had a larger committee of writers. 3-10 hours a month. Contact Jim Costello, 537-7818, jcostello@igc.org. The mailing committee also needs reinforcements for their end-of-the-month task of putting labels and stickers on each copy of Connections. A congenial group, good conversation. 2-3 hours once a month. Contact Shelly Scribner, 521-6304, shellys833@aol.com.

3) For our office we need one or two volunteers to clean windows, vacuum, dust, and arrange things neatly. This seemingly simple request may be like those small colorful lacquered Russian doll sets: one opens to another that opens to another, and so on. See this task as an adventure in cleaning up, as with Hercules' imagination when faced with the Augean Stables. 2-3 hours once every 2-3 months. Call Shelley, 521-6304.

Last and least, here are some things we need for the office: a vacuum cleaner in good condition, a stapler, and a container that holds scotch tape. If you'd like to donate any of these, call Shelly, 521-6304.

For all who respond, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Dan Langhoff
Owner

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How we can complete the Gaza Freedom March

Electronic Intifada Co-Founder, Author and Activist Ali Abunimah will speak on Sunday, February 28 at the King Middle School, 1721 Rose St., Berkeley. Tickets are \$15 General, \$8 students. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Ali Abunimah was among the 1400 activists who gathered in Cairo last month for the Gaza Freedom March. Though the march was blocked by Egyptian authorities (at the request of Israel and the US), activists organized many powerful solidarity actions in Egypt. Abunimah is author of the book, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse*.

A benefit for MECA. The Middle East Children's Alliance. Tickets available at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/96204>

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MJC Civic Engagement Film & Lecture Series

All events are free and open to the public. Events start at 7pm in Forum 101 at Modesto Junior College, East Campus on alternate Thursdays starting February 4.

FEB 4 Film: *Bigger, Stronger, Faster*

In America, we define ourselves in the superlative: we are the biggest, strongest, fastest country in the world. We reward speed, size, and, above all else, winning—at sports, at business and at war. Metaphorically we are a nation on steroids. Is it any wonder that so many of our heroes are on performance enhancing drugs? Director Christopher Bell and his two brothers used steroids themselves in an effort to realize their own American dreams. Bell looks into the steroid sub-culture and at those who oppose it.

FEB 18 Film: *The Betrayal*

Filmed over 23 years, *The Betrayal*, an Academy Award nominee, captures a historical and personal perspective of a Laotian family, who, abandoned by the American forces they'd fought with during the Vietnam War, escape to America where they confront new challenges as immigrants.

MAR 4 Film: *Trouble the Water*

Trouble the Water is an Oscar nominated documentary about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, but its real subject is the persistence of class issues in America and in American government.

MAR 18 Film: *Flow: For the Love of Water*

Directed by Irena Salina, *Flow* explores one of the most important environmental issues of our times—the privatization of our dwindling fresh water supply. The film examines specific cases of water privatization and argues that water belongs to all of us and, hence, should not be commodified. *Flow* also reveals many simple, technological solutions to the water crisis.

APR 1 Lecture: *Liberal & Conservative: Defining the Terms*

Liberal. Conservative. Although we often hear these terms in conversation, rarely are these terms explained in depth. What do they mean? How exactly do conservatives differ from liberals? When did these terms arise historically? How has each term changed? This panel discussion will aim to shed light on the meaning of these terms and how they have changed in the past 200 years.

APR 15 Film: *Food, Inc.*

Drawing on Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* and Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, director Robert Kenner's documentary explores the food industry's detrimental effects on our health and environment. Kenner spotlights people working to reform an industry rife with monopolies, questionable interpretations of laws and subsidies, political ties, and rising rates of *E. coli* outbreaks.

School of the Americas 2010 Delegations

El Salvador: Travel to El Salvador - land of martyrs, with Father Roy Bourgeois on an Oscar Romero Legacy Delegation, from March 19 to 26, 2010.

Commemorate the 30th anniversary of Monseñor Romero's assassination at the hands of SOA graduates. Walk in the footsteps of martyrs Ita Ford, Maura Clark, Fr. Ignacio Ellacuria, Celia Ramos and others. Accompany SOA Watch's Partnership America Latina (PAL) Coordinator Lisa Sullivan in visiting high-level Salvadoran government officials in asking that El Salvador send no more soldiers to this school of assassins. For more information and to apply, write Lisa Sullivan at LSullivan@soaw.org

Venezuela: Come to Venezuela from April 9-18 on the anniversary of a people's victory in overturning a coup d'état and learn about how the 8 member countries of ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) are forging a new and exciting new economic model of cooperation and solidarity. Join SOA Watch's Lisa Sullivan in getting a different view from within of this country where she has lived for 25 years. Meet with Colombians in exile in Venezuela and hear from them and from Venezuelans about their concerns for US militarization along the Colombian border of Venezuela. For more information and to apply, write Lisa Sullivan at LSullivan@soaw.org

Honduras: Respond to the request of human rights leaders in Honduras to come to their country to help prevent further atrocities from taking place.

World attention towards Honduras has diminished after US-approved November elections legitimized the June coup, while assassinations of resistance members has increased.

Leaders of the human rights community have requested a constant presence of international visitors to bring attention to this situation and help protect the lives of Hondurans. We are urging SOA Watch activists to join the Task Force on the Americas delegation to Honduras from March 13-20, 2010 (for more information write Dale Sorensen, geodale1@earthlink.net), a Quixote Center delegation (contact Jenny Atlee, jennya@quixote.org) or the January 24-31, 2010 Rights Action delegation (contact Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org)

Colombia: With over 10,000 troops trained at the school, Colombia is the SOA's largest customer and has the worst human rights record in Latin America.

The 8th Day Center for Justice and Witness for Peace are organizing a delegation to Magdalena, Colombia from August 7-17, 2010. The delegation will focus on human rights, corporate abuse, military repression and internal displacement. Delegation participants will meet with community leaders, displaced persons, and human rights defenders.

For more information: Contact Erin Cox, Erin@8thdaycenter.org, 312 641 5151 or Ashley Valchek, Ashley@8thdaycenter.org or email wfpmagdalena@gmail.com

SOA Watch is a nonviolent grassroots movement that works through creative protest and resistance, legislative and media work to stand in solidarity with the people of Latin America, to close the SOA/WHINSEC (School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) and to change oppressive U.S. foreign policy that institutions like the SOA represent. Visit <http://www.soaw.org/>

MEMRI announces the Martin Luther King Jr. Reformist Award to Saudi women's rights advocate Wajeha Al-Huwaider

Each year, in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) will recognize a reformist in the Arab world whose efforts to advance the rights of people in their societies embody the courageous and non-violent activism epitomized by Dr. King.

Wajeha Al-Huwaider has been referred to in the Middle East as "the Arab Rosa Parks." She is a leading activist in the struggle for women's rights in Saudi Arabia, in particular freedom for women to live without being controlled by a male guardian, as well as freedom of mobility as represented by the right to drive. She initiated an international black-bracelet campaign to raise awareness of this struggle.

As part of its Democratization in the Arab and Muslim World project, a section of its website is dedicated to exploring the work of influential reformists in the Middle East. Visit http://www.memri.org/content/en/leading_arab_and_muslim_reformists.

MEMRI has dedicated two webpages to Ms. Al-Huwaider's work: <http://www.memri.org/subject/en/220.htm> and <http://www.memritv.org/subject/en/460.htm>

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) is an independent, non-profit organization providing translations of the Middle East media and original analysis and research on developments in the region. Visit www.memri.org

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Don't throw it away: recycle it!

The Modesto Area Freecycle™ Network is a place where your trash really is someone else's treasure!

Don't throw it away, RECYCLE it! Modesto Freecycle is a place to connect people who have stuff to get rid of with people who could use it - furniture, appliances, clothing, electronics, household and baby items - just about ANYTHING can be given away!

Visit <http://www.freecycle.org>



Plant a tree, protect the Tuolumne River

By KARLHA ARIAS

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve." In celebration of this, and in conjunction with the "Give a Day, Get a Day at Disney," volunteer program the Tuolumne River Trust is coordinating five spring habitat restoration days along the Tuolumne River which started on Saturday, January 23, 2010. Community volunteers and families will restore forest, river and wildlife habitat along the Tuolumne River at the Big Bend Habitat Restoration located 15 minutes west of Modesto.

"Tuolumne River Trust volunteers serve our community with tremendous dedication and enthusiasm," said Karlha Arias, River Parkway Project Manager "Without their assistance, we would not be able to protect and restore the health and well-being of our beloved Tuolumne River."

This is the fifth year that the Trust has led volunteer's efforts at the 240-acre Big Bend Habitat Restoration. Planting days are scheduled for Saturdays February 6th and 27th and March 6th (9am-noon). Since this is a private ranch, volunteers are asked to contact Karlha at 209.236.0330, via email at karlha@tuolumne.org or visit the Tuolumne River Trust at www.tuolumne.org for address and directions.

The Tuolumne Trust is the voice for the River. We seek a healthy and vibrant river that is teeming with fish and wildlife, safe for drinking, fishing and swimming, and held in trust as a refuge for future generations.

SAVE THE DATE: GREEN ON THE STREAM, MAY 22, 2010. Follow us on Twitter and become a fan on Facebook. Tuolumne River Trust, 829 13th St., Modesto, CA 95354, 209.236.0330, www.tuolumne.org

EPA Announces 4th Annual Rachel Carson Contest

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) invites the public to submit creative projects to the 4th annual Rachel Carson intergenerational "Sense of Wonder" contest.

The categories are poetry, photography, essays and dance. The contest seeks to instill a sense of wonder for the environment among all generations and spur environmental stewardship.

Carson is considered to be the founder of the contemporary environmental movement through her landmark book, *Silent Spring*. Its publication is credited with reversing the nation's pesticide policy.

Entries must be from a team of two or more persons from

both younger and older generations. EPA is working with the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, the Rachel Carson Council, Inc., and Generations United to sponsor this contest.

The deadline for team entries is June 16, 2010. The winners will be announced in October 2010. The public will have the opportunity to vote among the finalists for the winners in each category.

More information: <http://www.epa.gov/aging/resources/thesenseofwonder/index.htm>

Contact: Enesta Jones, jones.enesta@epa.gov, 202-564-7873, 202-564-4355.

Photography exhibition of foreclosed homes

The Modesto Junior College Art Gallery will host a photographic exhibit, "Scenes From Surrendered Homes," by Douglas Smith, M.J.C. Art Professor, from February 24 - March 26. An Artists Reception will be held on March 12, from 5:00 - 7:00 PM in the MJC Art Gallery, South Drive, East Campus.

The photographs portray scenes in and around foreclosed homes in the San Joaquin Valley.

Douglas Smith comments on the exhibition:

"I see the images as an artistic interpretation of an important historical development, the thousands of foreclosed homes in our country - especially in our region - as a result of the recent U.S. economic crisis. The photos of vacant homes tell stories of people who lived there and constructed their family spaces and lifestyles. As a photographer, I observed that owners often left signs of sadness, resentment, fear, and possibly relief of financial burden. I felt that a character, or even spirit, was revealed that informed and touched my emotions.

One of my favorite eras to study in American photographic history is the 1930's when Walker Evans and others photographed the effects of the Great Depression. I've stared at those images of the poor so many times and extracted stories about them.

Some of the most beautiful spaces displayed the tender care of parents who transformed children's rooms into fantasy refuges ala' Disney etc. The scenes were very striking - the dreams of the young and their parents were so visible and yet often hinted of our culture's materialism and over-consumption. The private spaces of older children often exhibited their heroes and mottos on walls and furniture; I was struck by the irony of the posters and stickers with the words "Trust" and

"America Forever" on them. I thought of how the experience of a family's failed mortgage, the societal stigma that goes with it, and the disruptive effects of relocating a family might affect our society in the future.

As I continue work on this project, it offers me new lessons. A growing list of my friends have chosen to let their homes revert to the mortgage agencies. One person tried desperately to hold onto his house, negotiating with the bank for months, finally getting approval of a lower payment and principle, only to find that his bank sold the loan to a larger bank that did not approve the negotiations. He kept up his payments, paying \$1,500 per month, holding out hope that the banks would come through. Now he must decide whether to become one of the bankrupt or continue to pay for something he feels he will have little chance to recoup his investment in the foreseeable future. Other people give up early and accept the consequences of what has become an essential business decision of our era.

Our citizenry is being forced to replace the morality of paying one's bills by that of corporations that make similar decisions in the name of profit and stockholders.

We can point to many factors, including regulations and deregulations, oversight mechanisms and personnel, business and personal decisions, and cultural pressures contributed to this breakdown in our society. These photographs are not meant to be propagandistic; the series is primarily an artistic study. I do hope, however, that it encourages further understanding and desire to engage the issue and to seek systemic solutions.



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

By Lillian Vallee

63. White Rabbits & Shooting Stars

Tomorrow night is the night of the Cold or the Wolf Moon, the brightest moon of the New Year. The white rabbit now living in my front yard seems to know nothing of cold or wolves. With his creamy fur and cocoa eyeliner and patches, he sits nestled in the golden currant, self-contained and oval as an egg. Old civilizations associated rabbits/hares with the moon as the dark patches on the lunar surface appeared to resemble leaping hares, ancient symbols of good luck, longevity, and vigilance.

This is the third rabbit that has appeared in my garden within the last year. Their presence makes me reconsider my *Conejo* address. Are people fattening their rabbits in my urban pasture? The mornings can be foggy and gray in late January, but the sight of a plump rabbit nibbling on greens gives the stillness a fairytale quality. Knowing the rabbit has made it through another night always makes me happy, especially when I see a red-shouldered hawk in the schoolyard oak across the street. "Mom," my daughter says to me over the phone, "if I were you I wouldn't tell too many people I was seeing a white rabbit."

At first the rabbit doesn't let me get too close. But once I put out the sliced carrots and fresh salad greens, he is won over and doesn't hop away. As luck would have it, he and I have been eating many of the same foods. Every Thursday I grab a giant basket and head for The Carrot near the corner of College and Needham. I empty the box (and recipe letter) from Rancho Piccolo CSA (Community Supported Agriculture or produce by subscription from local farmers, Michelle and David Silveira) into the basket, pick up a loaf of multi-grain bread specially made for The Carrot by our local Word-of-Mouth Bakery, and head for home feeling like the richest person in the world.

This time of year we eat organic bok choy, broccoli, rutabaga, cauliflower, dandelion, kale, and collard greens in

addition to the slightly more exotic rapini and mizuna. The recipes (all lip-smacking so far) are always accompanied by a letter identifying the vegetables and the source of the fruit addition. I also get fresh eggs, some brown and others a pale blue-green (from grass-fed hens). Everything is wonderfully fresh, and I look forward to the surprise combination of vegetables and fruit (most recently oranges and kiwis) each week.

The importance of Community Supported Agriculture took on an even more urgent dimension recently when I looked at a CSA website mentioned by an old friend, Connie Jacowitz of Berkeley. Her daughter Lily, whom I remember first as an unusually bright one year old and then as a toddler and then as a teenager who could make anything from scratch in their kitchen, was now farming. "Lilly and [her] boyfriend lease eight acres near Fairfield and grow organic vegetables--you can see the farm at www.shootingstarCSA.com," wrote her Mom.

So I looked and there was Lily: serious, absorbed, driving a tractor; washing carrots; hugging a farm dog; and sitting at a Farmers Market with a smile that could light up the darkest corner of the universe. Her boyfriend is Matt McCue, a 29-year-old Iraq war veteran and Peace Corps volunteer who has dedicated his life to farming. Lily had experience running a 100-member CSA in Petaluma and Matt grew specialty vegetables in Sebastopol. Now they farm eight acres in the Suisun Valley and this past season was their first very successful year together.

In interviews, Matt is a very articulate and self-effacing spokesperson for the wisdom of giving veterans opportunities to farm. He claims that growing food is the ideal transition and gives vets a purpose, a way of defining themselves after the harsh experiences of combat. He credits the vibrant home gardens and pomegranate orchards of Iraq as his inspiration. When asked in one interview what he carried away from the Iraq war, he seems to choke up for a moment, but then smiles and says that he learned the Iraqis had a much sweeter lime than he had ever tasted in the States.

It was the Farmer Veteran Coalition, founded by Michael O'Gorman, which gave Matt the opportunity to do specialty farm work in Sebastopol, and its website (www.farmvet.co) is full of photographs and programs showcasing this very productive partnership. The slogans are "Farmers Helping Veterans" and "Veterans Helping Farmers." Ageing farmers, sometimes without heirs to their work, pass their knowl-

edge and skills to young people who might otherwise be adrift, without work, and veterans work away from social pressures to re-enter the work force by nurturing what grows and nourishes others. Some Veteran Medical Centers are now incorporating gardens cared for by patients as part of their programs.

Another example of innovative veteran programs is the eighty-acre Victory Farm designed to help re-integrate homeless vets who have been unable to resume their previous lives. "With a little assistance," says O'Gorman in a *San Francisco Chronicle* feature, "returning combat vets could find healing and productive work on farms, while communities burgeoning with locavores [people who want to support local, sustainable agriculture] would benefit from new recruits to local food production."

I have on my wall a silk screen print of Valley Oak leaves Lily made for me when she was in junior high. Her parents raised her and her sister with an appreciation for native plants, home food gardens, self-sufficient habits and a modest, sustainable life style. There is comfort and hope when children grow up to look after the soil, the food we eat, and one another after life's hard experiences. And there is comfort and hope when there is an Ithaca to which Odysseus can return, after hostilities, to beat his sword into a ploughshare, and to grow limes and pomegranates, cucumbers and corn, carrots and kale, for locavores and locarabbits.

Sources: Hans Biederman, *Dictionary of Symbolism*.

Community Garden Taking Reservations

The Modesto Church of the Brethren is taking reservations for garden plots for the spring season. Come, let your garden grow!

Call us today to rent your plot - (209) 523-1438.



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online at:
<http://stanislausconnections.org/>



Answering Helen Thomas on why they want to harm us

By RAY MCGOVERN, t r u t h o u t | Op-Ed

Thank God for Helen Thomas, the only person to show any courage at the White House press briefing after President Barack Obama gave a flaccid account of the intelligence screw-up that almost downed an airliner on Christmas Day.

After Obama briefly addressed L’Affaire Abdulmutallab and wrote “must do better” on the report cards of the national security schoolboys responsible for the near catastrophe, the President turned the stage over to counter-terrorism guru John Brennan and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano.

It took 89-year old veteran correspondent Helen Thomas to break through the rapid remarks about channeling “intelligence streams,” fixing “no-fly” lists, deploying “behavior detection officers,” and buying more body-imaging scanners.

Thomas recognized the John & Janet filibuster for what it was, as her catatonic press colleagues took their customary dictation and asked their predictable questions. Instead, Thomas posed an adult query that spotlighted the futility of government plans to counter terrorism with more high-tech gizmos and more intrusions on the liberties and privacy of the traveling public.

She asked why Abdulmutallab did what he did.

Thomas: “Why do they want to do us harm? And what is the motivation? We never hear what you find out on why.”

Brennan: “Al Qaeda is an organization that is dedicated to murder and wanton slaughter of innocents... They attract individuals like Mr. Abdulmutallab and use them for these types of attacks. He was motivated by a sense of religious sort of drive. Unfortunately, al Qaeda has perverted Islam, and has corrupted the concept of Islam, so that he’s (sic) able to attract these individuals. But al Qaeda has the agenda of destruction and death.”

Thomas: “And you’re saying it’s because of religion?”

Brennan: “I’m saying it’s because of an al Qaeda organization that used the banner of religion in a very perverse and corrupt way.”

Thomas: “Why?”

Brennan: “I think this is a — long issue, but al Qaeda is just determined to carry out attacks here against the homeland.”

Thomas: “But you haven’t explained why.”

Neither did President Obama, nor anyone else in the U.S. political/media hierarchy. All the American public gets is the boilerplate about how evil al Qaeda continues to pervert a religion and entice and exploit impressionable young men.

There is almost no discussion about why so many people in the Muslim world object to U.S. policies so strongly that they are inclined to resist violently and even resort to suicide attacks.

Obama’s Non-Answer

I had been hoping Obama would say something intelligent about what drove Abdulmutallab to do what he did, but the President limited himself to a few vacuous comments before sending in the clowns. This is what he said before he walked away from the podium:

“It is clear that al Qaeda increasingly seeks to recruit individuals without known terrorist affiliations ... to do their bidding. ... And that’s why we must communicate clearly to

Muslims around the world that al Qaeda offers nothing except a bankrupt vision of misery and death ... while the United States stands with those who seek justice and progress. ... That’s the vision that is far more powerful than the hatred of these violent extremists.”

But why it is so hard for Muslims to “get” that message? Why can’t they end their preoccupation with dodging U.S. missiles in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Gaza long enough to reflect on how we are only trying to save them from terrorists while simultaneously demonstrating our commitment to “justice and progress”?

Does a smart fellow like Obama expect us to believe that all we need to do is “communicate clearly to Muslims” that it is al Qaeda, not the U.S. and its allies, that brings “misery and death”? Does any informed person not know that the unprovoked U.S.-led invasion of Iraq killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and displaced 4.5 million from their homes? How is that for “misery and death”?

Rather than a failure to communicate, U.S. officials are trying to rewrite recent history, which seems to be much easier to accomplish with the Washington press corps and large segments of the American population than with the Muslim world.

But why isn’t there a frank discussion by America’s leaders and media about the real motivation of Muslim anger toward the United States? Why was Helen Thomas the only journalist to raise the touchy but central question of motive?

Peeking Behind the Screen

We witnessed a similar phenomenon when the 9/11 Commission Report tiptoed into a cautious discussion of possible motives behind the 9/11 attacks. To their credit, the drafters of that report apparently went as far as their masters would allow, in gingerly introducing a major elephant into the room:

“America’s policy choices have consequences. Right or wrong, it is simply a fact that American policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American actions in Iraq are dominant staples of popular commentary across the Arab and Muslim world.” (p. 376)

When asked later about the flabby way that last sentence ended, former Congressman Lee Hamilton, Vice-Chair of the 9/11 Commission, explained that there had been a Donnybrook over whether that paragraph could be included at all.

The drafters also squeezed in the reason given by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed as to why he “masterminded” the attacks on 9/11:

“By his own account, KSM’s animus toward the United States stemmed ... from his violent disagreement with U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel.”

Would you believe that former Vice President Dick Cheney also has pointed to U.S. support for Israel as one of the “true sources of resentment”? This unique piece of honesty crept into his speech to the American Enterprise Institute on May 21, 2009.

Sure, he also trotted out the bromide that the terrorists hate “all the things that make us a force for good in the world.” But the Israel factor did slip into the speech, perhaps an inadvertent acknowledgement of the Israeli albatross adorning the neck of U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Very few pundits and academicians are willing to allude to this reality, presumably out of fear for their future career prospects.

Former senior CIA officer Paul Pillar, now a professor at Georgetown University, is one of the few willing to refer, in his typically understated way, to “all the other things ... including policies and practices that affect the likelihood that people ... will be radicalized, and will try to act out the anger against us.” One has to fill in the blanks regarding what those “other things” are.

But no worries. Secretary Napolitano has a fix for this unmentionable conundrum. It’s called “counter-radicalization,” which she describes thusly:

“How do we identify someone before they become radicalized to the point where they’re ready to blow themselves up with others on a plane? And how do we communicate better American values and so forth ... around the globe?”

Better communication. That’s the ticket.

Hypocrisy and Double Talk

But Napolitano doesn’t acknowledge the underlying problem, which is that many Muslims have watched Washington’s behavior closely for many years and view pious U.S. declarations about peace, justice, democracy and human rights as infuriating examples of hypocrisy and double talk.

So, Washington’s sanitized discussion about motives for terrorism seems more intended for the U.S. domestic audience than the Muslim world.

After all, people in the Middle East already know how Palestinians have been mistreated for decades; how Washington has propped up Arab dictatorships; how Muslims

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have been locked away at Guantanamo without charges; how the U.S. military has killed civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere; how U.S. mercenaries have escaped punishment for slaughtering innocents.

The purpose of U.S. “public diplomacy” appears more designed to shield Americans from this unpleasant reality, offering instead feel-good palliatives about the beneficence of U.S. actions. Most American journalists and politicians go along with the charade out of fear that otherwise they would be accused of lacking patriotism or sympathizing with “the enemy.”

Commentators who are neither naive nor afraid are simply shut out of the Fawning Corporate Media (FCM). Salon.com’s Glen Greenwald, for example, has complained loudly about “how our blind, endless enabling of Israeli actions fuels terrorism directed at the U.S.,” and how it is taboo to point this out.

Greenwald recently called attention to a little-noticed Associated Press report on the possible motives of the 23-year-old Nigerian Abdulmutallab. The report quoted his Yemeni friends to the effect that he was “not overtly extremist.” But they noted that he was open about his sympathies toward the Palestinians and **his anger over Israel’s actions in Gaza.** (Emphasis added.)

Former CIA specialist on al Qaeda, Michael Scheuer, has been still more outspoken on what he sees as Israel’s tying down the American Gulliver in the Middle East. Speaking Monday on C-SPAN, he complained bitterly that any debate on the issue of American support for Israel and its effects is normally squelched.

Scheuer added that the Israel Lobby had just succeeded in getting him removed from his job at the Jamestown Foundation think tank for saying that Obama was “doing what I call the Tel Aviv Two-Step.”

More to the point, Scheuer asserted:

“For anyone to say that our support for Israel doesn’t hurt us in the Muslim world . . . is to just defy reality.”

Beyond loss of work, those who speak out can expect ugly accusations. The Israeli media network Arutz Sheva, which is considered the voice of the settler movement, weighed in strongly, branding Scheuer’s C-SPAN remarks “blatantly anti-Semitic.”

Media Squelching

As for media squelching, I continue to be amazed at how otherwise informed folks express total surprise when I refer them to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed’s statement about his motivation for attacking the United States, as cited on page

147 of the 9/11 Commission Report. Here is the full sentence (shortened above):

“By his own account, KSM’s animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experience there as a student, but rather from his violent disagreement with U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel.”

One can understand how even those following such things closely can get confused. On Aug. 30, 2009, five years after the 9/11 Commission Report was released, readers of the neoconservative Washington Post were given a diametrically different view, based on what the Post called “an intelligence summary:”

“KSM’s limited and negative experience in the United States — which included a brief jail-stay because of unpaid bills — almost certainly helped propel him on his path to becoming a terrorist . . . He stated that his contact with Americans, while minimal, confirmed his view that the United States was a debauched and racist country.”

Apparently, the Post found this revisionist version politically more convenient, in that it obscured Mohammed’s other explanation implicating “U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel.” It’s much more comforting to view KSM as a disgruntled visitor who nursed his personal grievances into justification for mass murder.

An unusually candid view of the dangers accruing from the U.S. identification with Israel’s policies appeared five years ago in an unclassified study published by the Pentagon-appointed U.S. Defense Science Board on Sept. 23, 2004. Contradicting President George W. Bush, the board stated:

“Muslims do not ‘hate our freedom,’ but rather, they hate our policies. The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the longstanding, even increasing support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan, and the Gulf States.

“Thus, when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy.”

Abdulmutallab’s Attack

Getting back to Abdulmutallab and his motive in trying to blow up the airliner, how was this individual without prior terrorist affiliations suddenly transformed into an international terrorist ready to die while killing innocents?

If, as John Brennan seems to suggest, al Qaeda terrorists are hard-wired at birth for the “wanton slaughter of innocents,” how are they also able to jump-start a privileged 23-year old Nigerian, inculcate in him the acquired characteristics of a terrorist, and persuade him to do the bidding of

al Qaeda/Persian Gulf?

As indicated above, the young Nigerian seems to have had particular trouble with Israel’s wanton slaughter of more than a thousand civilians in Gaza a year ago, a brutal campaign that was defended in Washington as justifiable self-defense.

Moreover, it appears that Abdulmutallab is not the only anti-American “terrorist” so motivated. When the Saudi and Yemeni branches of al Qaeda announced that they were uniting into “al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula,” their combined rhetoric railed against the Israeli attack on Gaza.

And on Dec. 30, Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi, a 32-year-old Palestinian-born Jordanian physician, killed seven American CIA operatives and one Jordanian intelligence officer near Khost, Afghanistan, when he detonated a suicide bomb.

Though most U.S. media stories treated al-Balawi as a fanatical double agent driven by irrational hatreds, other motivations could be gleaned by carefully reading articles about his personal history.

Al-Balawi’s mother told Agence France-Presse that her son had never been an “extremist.” Al-Balawi’s widow, Defne Bayrak, made a similar statement to *Newsweek*. In a *New York Times* article, al-Balawi’s brother was quoted as describing him as a “very good brother” and a “brilliant doctor.”

So what led al-Balawi to take his own life in order to kill U.S. and Jordanian intelligence operatives?

Al-Balawi’s widow said her husband “started to change” after the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. His brother said al-Balawi “changed” during last year’s three-week-long Israeli offensive in Gaza, which killed about 1,300 Palestinians.

When al-Balawi volunteered with a medical organization to treat injured Palestinians in Gaza, he was arrested by Jordanian authorities, his brother said.

It was after that arrest that the Jordanian intelligence service apparently coerced or “recruited” al-Balawi to become a spy who would penetrate al Qaeda’s hierarchy and provide actionable intelligence to the CIA.

“If you catch a cat and put it in a corner, she will jump on you,” the brother said in explaining why al-Balawi would turn to suicide attack.

“My husband was anti-American; so am I,” his widow told *Newsweek*. Her two little girls would grow up fatherless, but she had no regrets.

Answering Helen

Are we starting to get the picture of what the United States is up against in the Muslim world?

Does Helen Thomas deserve an adult answer to her question about motive? Has President Obama been able to assimilate all this?

Or is the U.S. political/media establishment incapable of confronting this reality and/or taking meaningful action to alleviate the underlying causes of the violence?

Is the reported reaction of a CIA official to al-Balawi’s attack the appropriate one: “Last week’s attack will be avenged. Some very bad people will eventually have a very bad day.”

Revenge has not always turned out very well in the past.

Does anyone remember the brutal killing of four Blackwater contractors on March 31, 2004, when they took

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The power of nonviolent movements

Jonathan Schell, a leader of the anti-nuclear movement, offers motivation and tactical advice to the new generation of climate activists.

By BRYAN FARRELL

In 1982, upwards of one million people gathered on the Great Lawn in New York's Central Park to rally against nuclear weapons while the U.N. held a Special Session on Disarmament. Two days later 1,600 demonstrators were involved in acts of civil disobedience at the consulates of five countries.

One of the seminal figures of that movement was author Jonathan Schell, whose 1982 book *The Fate of the Earth* reinvigorated the anti-nuclear movement with its rallying call for a nuclear freeze. Though still very much focused on nuclear disarmament, Schell has begun thinking about another problem that also threatens human civilization: climate change.

I met him at the Brooklyn Bridge March for Climate Leadership, one of 5,000 plus actions that took place on October 24, the 350.org International Day of Climate Action. Not long after that, we sat down for a more formal discussion of climate activism. Drawing from his deep knowledge of nonviolent movements—the focus of his 2003 book *The Unconquerable World*—he spoke about the power of nonviolent movements and offered tactical suggestions for climate activists.

Bryan Farrell: What has been the impact of the late emergence of the climate justice movement?

Jonathan Schell: The absence of a social movement is a crippling disability when it comes to changes in policy that are on a deep and fundamental level, whether that's changing the economic system, or opposing wars and the whole imperial mindset behind them, or addressing global warming. Historically, it's very hard to find fundamental change in policy that wasn't preceded by a very powerful social movement. So if you don't have that card in your deck, I think it's incredibly difficult to get fundamental change. In terms of public awareness, [the climate justice movement] has been stronger than some of the other movements. Certainly it's been longstanding and there are lots of strong organizations.

Bryan: What do you think of Bill McKibben's group 350, which has created a global movement around a number that defines a stable climate? (See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/350-the-most-important-number-in-the-world>.)

Jonathan: They've done better with the number than anyone else has done thus far. That speaks well for it. The specificity has a virtue. It sort of takes you out of a certain fog and establishes a clear benchmark for success. But it has its disadvantages. The number doesn't itself appeal to emotion or spirit. It's not self-explanatory.

Bryan: What did you think of the Brooklyn Bridge March?

Jonathan: There was a lot of emphasis on the pictorial. But I think it's just great that some form of public movement has got going. It's been a missing element for some years and, after all, we're facing the most dire threat there's been since the nuclear threat—which still exists, by the way.

Bryan: Do you think it would have been any more effective if the march had taken place on the lanes of traffic rather than on the pedestrian path?

Jonathan: There have been lots of demonstrations over the years that have disrupted traffic, but that was never the

explicit purpose of them. In this case, a disruption of traffic would have an actual purpose, since driving and the combustion of gas is a huge contributor to global warming. There would be a direct and immediate meaning to it that you don't normally have. You've got to relate to what you're protesting.

In a way that's not true of almost any other issues. All of us are involved in doing what's wrong. We're all living lives that pollute the atmosphere. The solutions have to be on a global as well as a personal level. Still, it's very much in the spirit of nonviolence to take the suffering on yourself. A hunger strike or an energy strike or a carbon strike would allow people to protest by taking on themselves some of the deprivation that's going to land in spades on future generations.

Bryan: What other avenues of protest do you see as being effective for climate activists?

Jonathan: Boycotts may be one of the tools of the non-violent arsenal. It would be highly appropriate and perhaps rather effective if people were to organize boycotts of coal and pay a higher price for the alternative. But that assumes what we don't have: a very lively public.

Bryan: Bill McKibben recently characterized the climate movement as “dispersed in a disempowering way—individual actions don't add up to enough.” How can a movement overcome this problem?

Jonathan: There's no good answer. I think one of the most mysterious phenomena is the rise of mass public movements. It's easy to say that you have to organize and do this and that, but sometimes you do those things and you get a response and sometimes you don't. For 70 years the Soviet Union continued along and then one day the Solidarity Movement came along and the whole thing was history. What made that moment? Or with the civil rights movement, Jim Crow went on for 100 years until Martin Luther King, Jr. and others formed a movement. Then there's the anti-nuclear movement, where suddenly in the 1980's you have a freeze movement. A million people protested in Central Park. But then it faded away. Public engagement just seems to come along in its own way.

Bryan: Are there any nonviolent case studies the climate movement should follow?

Jonathan: The women's rights movement, the civil rights movement, the anti-nuclear movement, Gandhi's movement, the Solidarity movement in Poland. They show you that if you can get a movement going you can win with it. Power is there at your fingertips if you could reach out and summon it up. There's no lack of knowledge about what to do. It's not a secret what these movements have done. Each time there's something a little different and the key is to figure out what that is for this movement. Seeking a nuclear freeze was the right instrument for its movement. History shows you can spectacularly succeed.

Bryan: How does the climate threat compare to the nuclear threat?

Jonathan: They are two of a kind. They're both threats to species, including our own, and mutilations of the Earth, which is all that we have. The difference is really between destroying ourselves instantly [with nuclear war] or doing it more slowly with global warming. It's a threat of a new order of death and magnitude. I think the nuclear danger was an

alarm bell for the environment.

Bryan: Is one more solvable than the other?

Jonathan: Both are solvable, but the nuclear danger is more easily solved. It can be gotten rid of without making any sacrifice. It doesn't have the economic dimension that global warming has.

Bryan: What lessons should the climate movement take from other social movements before it?

Jonathan: If you want things to happen you need masses of people to change them. That's the lesson of the last century. But we have not been dipping our bucket in that well. The real energy crisis is the failure to mine the energy that is locked up within each of us. This is the missing ingredient.

How that came to be, I don't know. We've got to begin tapping that kind of energy. Nothing can be solved without it. One of the most frustrating and baffling things about public concern and movements and action is that there's no surefire way to trigger it. You can make your case before the public and they either take it or they don't. But if you're in a time when the general public is lethargic, the whole process is given over to the interests of the powers that be. The main problem is that we haven't succeeded in galvanizing the public will. One huge exception to this was the Obama campaign, because that did tap into public energy. That did have a movement aspect to it. It was something quite new and different. We're used to movements that grow up outside the electoral sphere. This came about within the electoral sphere and had a tremendous power, but it had its sharp limitations as well. It meant staying within the bounds of conventional wisdom. But it does show that it is possible for people to get out and do things.

Bryan Farrell is a New York-based writer whose work has appeared in *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, and *The Guardian*. He is also a founding editor of WagingNonviolence.org, a blog that covers nonviolent actions and movements around the world.

Interested?

A Powerful Peace: If the nuclear powers wish to be safe from nuclear weapons, they must surrender their own. Jonathan Schell shows how we could negotiate the abolition of nuclear weapons. Visit <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/a-just-foreign-policy/a-powerful-peace>

From YES! Magazine, <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/the-power-of-nonviolent-movements>



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Monologue for a Massacre

I dissected a drop of rain
and discovered a poultry farm,
thousands of hysterical chickens,
necks snapping to the sound
of an engine that wouldn't crank.

Later, in the psychedelic bathroom,
my house filled with drunkards,
I pried open my skull to witness
black children in chains
running naked through rows
of burning apple trees.

In my best moments,
I still come to with stomach cramps,
heart thrashing like an epileptic in a
straitjacket;
above me, the billboard of a fading
rainbow.

I will never be able to defecate all the rage
I have eaten
or make peace with elephants lying
mutilated in the brush,
ivory tusks hacked into cheap gewgaws,
much as we, too, have been hacked, into
men.

Dharma

i.
Of course I remember
those nights of violin sex,
the foghorns on the bay,
that old sailor crooning on the boardwalk.

ii.
You were driving, and I was mesmerized
by October, the wonder glow, your secrets
sitting between us like a chaperone.

iii.
It's as if I'm passing,
this swirl of yearning and dread,
reveling in tongues at the post office.

iv.
Yesterday
I released the handle of momentum,
watched things dissipate, dissolve,
other things being born in vortices.

v.
Today
I asked the universe to help me stop eating
meat.

John Amen

Believing strongly in the maxim that "art saves lives," John Amen has worked frequently with young writers, musicians, and painters, helping them to develop their artistic voices and express their concerns, frustrations, and experiences through the creative process.

John actively supports NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and has worked with bipolar writers, helping them to use their poetry and fiction as a way to voice and address their emotional challenges.

John is a member of the communications team for H3O, an international micro-lending organization that provides assistance to struggling entrepreneurs living and working in Kenya and other parts of Africa. He is the author of three collections of poetry, *Christening the Dancer*, *More of Me Disappears*, and *At the Threshold of Alchemy*, and founded/edits *The Pedestal Magazine*. Additional information is available on his website: www.johnamen.com



Birth of Evil

At first, autonomy was encouraged. That changed
after the rift, when He banished his eldest. A sarcasm
circulated, that He would have blamed Lucifer's mother
had that been possible, but clearly we were all immaculate
extensions of Him, knew what we were afraid to say,
that He couldn't bear to see Himself echoed in Lucifer
and so chose to oust him. Many wanted to gibe,
Glanced in a mirror lately? but of course we refrained.
Those with the nerve to dissent joined the exodus.
Who can fault Lucifer for what's ensued? Rejection
is hatred's fodder. Banishment breeds pathology. Splinters
were buried in the immortal psyche. I hardly see Him
anymore. I can't remember the last time we spoke.
A somberness hovers in the gilded chambers, flattens
the soaring choruses—raw disapproval that's festered
for eons, hypocrisy we don't talk of, that what we dub
evil was hatched here, the glint in a killer's eye sparked,
stoked in this refuge we still presume to call Heaven.

Enough Is Enough

for RS

I remember those weeks before my mother passed, watching
her binge on ice cream and chocolate, feet swollen, bowels bogged,
silence and stillness her arch nemeses. I realize now that she
was simply a child sent to a boarding school too early, turned
over to nuns who branded her with the crucifix, an orphan reared
on broth and brimstone, pawned off by guardians to my father,
sixteen years her senior. It makes sense somehow that she would
become an actress, a connoisseur, the quintessential hostess, but
fast forward a decade or so, and it's what happened after the party
ended, when the guests would leave, that I recall—father's drunken
jealousy erupting, their voices shrill, staccato, then mother wailing
in the jasmine, dirt on her face, handfuls of hair in the moonlit grass.
I spent my childhood running a gauntlet between house and lawn,
engineering truces between mad giants, praying that we might
get some sleep before the new light. On these August evenings
pulsing with fireflies, I still see mother writhing by the boxwood
with a corkscrew in her heart, father pacing his overturned castle,
shattering wine glasses on the patio. I'm pausing tonight to say
I'm sick and weary of red-washing my numbness with their blood.
Valerie, Bill, I no longer need to keep your graves unmarked.

Angelica Tells Her Story

"True, human beings are strange ..."
—Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Voices"

I used to ride a bus to the suburbs, visit
my insane sister in her white prison, floors lined
with withered petals, pages from her bloody diary.
On days of armistice and amnesty,
I would have my palm read by a bald gypsy.
Sometimes soldiers showered me with gewgaws.
My mother was a mannequin with red eyes.
I watched the earth swallow my father limb by limb.
I remember my old town as you remember an eccentric aunt;
snapshots emerge from thorny darkness;
words and incidents wash over me like hunger.
Oh Marta, I suffered until laughter crawled
up the birth canal of my heart and cried its lungs awake.
I grieve for my sister, still chained to the storm in her gray pulp;
my mother, who died looking out a window; my father,
who left behind account books, a car we sold on the internet.
Paradox is my native tongue. Oh Marta, when late April dawns,
when snows melt and spring is finally suckled, I want to remember
where I come from. If I forget, please, will you remind me?



A local activist and advocate for Modesto citizens

By SALLY MEARS

Meet Robert Stanford, one of those wonderful local advocates who speak up for those that have little or no voice in our community. I interviewed him in January 2010.

Sally Mears (S.E.): Please provide us some background on your life, and when you came to be here in Modesto / Stanislaus county.

Robert Stanford (R.S.): I have been a civil rights activist all of my life. My family background is Polish Jew, and I was raised by my grandparents who were very affected by World War II. I attribute much of my passion for civil rights activism to the underlying currents that were prevalent while I was raised by my grandparents.

I moved to Modesto from Delhi with my grandparents in 1977. Previously I had been living on a goat farm and had been somewhat isolated. Modesto, even at that time, looked like the big city to me.

Throughout my life, I have worked for many branches of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), usually in an advocacy/counseling role.

S.E.: You have made the southeast Modesto area (otherwise known as the Airport District) a focus for your efforts. Why?

R.S.: Because it was an area that I quickly found to be the point of a massive influx of Mexican immigration when I first arrived there on a referred social service case, an area of rich documented history of previous migrations and seemingly needless neglect by the greater community.

I looked for assistance from some of the other local organizations but became disenchanted when I felt that my clients were being taken advantage of for monetary or political purposes. For the most part I have been on my own in my work in the Modesto Airport District.

Through networking within the Modesto Airport community, I came to be very involved with assisting several immigrant families with everything from domestic training (some had never experienced electricity and many appliances and house-fixtures we take for granted) to health education (lead avoidance, diabetes prevention, breast/cervical cancer, etc.) Though at first I could not verbally communicate at all with most of my caseload, I found that I was able to conduct my workshops with a great measure of success by utilizing materials in Spanish.

Soon my caseload had expanded to its peak in 2007 of approximately 200 households, mostly in the Modesto Airport District, but I still had clients in other parts of the county as well. Approximately 80 percent of my entire caseload were Mexican immigrants. Many of these people I now consider my actual family as they also do likewise.

S.E.: What are some of those problems you have witnessed in the Airport neighborhoods, and what issues have you attempted to remedy and/or succeeded in confronting and solving? What are some issues that have proved more challenging?

R.S.: The biggest problem that faces the residents of the Modesto Airport District is a huge disparity of information; a lack of information that many of us in other areas of the community take for granted. Health, the importance of education, gangs, drugs. Many of the people that are most afflicted by

these tragedies had no way to prevent their onslaught, because they had no understanding of what the signs of onset were.

The issues that I feel to have been the most challenging were those that involved deaths in the immigrant families that I served. The two primary causes of this were gangs and drunk driving.

I have been most successful in educating families regarding drugs and gangs – the signs that herald the onslaught of real problems concerning these issues. I have also been very successful in domestic violence counseling. I have always been amazed at the contrast of these immigrants in comparison with my work with Americans – the immigrants really want to change and better themselves and their relationships.

Most of the families that I work with are complete in structure. There is a very low divorce rate among the immigrant families. I feel that this is something that we, as Americans could really learn from.

S.E.: You recently ran for public office. What was that experience like, and will you try again in the future?

R.S.: This was actually my second attempt at running for Modesto City Council. I believe that my passion for the poor and downtrodden is mischaracterized, in that most people (primarily because of the local paper) believe that this is all I care about, and that is just simply not true. Through all that I do, my primary goal has always been and remains – equality. Equality for everyone.

I walked away from this lost election with the feeling that no one really cares if I am rescuing homeless people from the freeze in the middle of the night – they just don't want to think about that. And every time I speak, that is what I remind them of.

I intend to run again and again – however many times it takes. I feel like I can really bring the entire community full circle by being in a position to better promote understanding that we are ALL God's children.

S.E.: For people that know me, the issue of our local animals and their plight are a large part of my focus. I know you are an animal helper too, and you've taken in your share of strays – what are your thoughts on our local crisis of overpopulation of dogs and cats?

R.S.: Once again, it is all about education. We must somehow make people understand that spaying and neutering is vital to saving the lives of beautiful animals. Once people understand this, they are very agreeable to participating in the process of spaying or neutering their animals.

The next obstacle is cost. We must make this affordable for those that struggle to feed their children.

S.E.: As the situation can be in most larger cities with poorer sections, these are always the areas that seem to have few resources close by for nutritious food, since the larger grocery stores are usually far away. What are your thoughts on how to turn this city's focus to address these common problems associated with poorer areas: lack of sidewalks, proper drainage, high crime/graffiti etc...

R.S.: There was once a grocery store where a Save Mart Warehouse sits today. Several years ago, this store closed. It has been difficult to promote various healthy diet programs when the access to fresh fruits and vegetables and affordable groceries are not easily accessible – especially since

transportation is also a huge problem in the Modesto Airport District. The city could offer tax incentives perhaps, or some other motivation for a store to set up at least on the outskirts of the district, but since they ignore all other aspects (though they deny it when you ask) I fear it may be a while before we have another grocery store.

The only way to turn this city's focus to benefiting the Airport District and other areas of Modesto that are comprised of primarily large unincorporated areas is at the ballot box. We need to vote into office people who are concerned with more than their own short-term gain. Candidates need to be elected that cannot have the dots connected to the development machine that has all but destroyed Modesto's agricultural heritage and farmland.

S.E.: Robert – tell us about what you see in the future for Modesto and the County –

R.S.: I can see the path that the City of Modesto is on now – and it is dark and gloomy. But I can also see another path that is possible. And that is one in which the collective consciousness of Modesto wakes up and realizes that ALL of us have built this city and that everyone, no matter what their social class or financial status is necessary to the team. A team that can literally lead the nation not by shunning our neighbors but by elevating them.

If it was up to me, I would start with the McHenry Museum and rewrite the history of Modesto, from one which is now presented as White only – to one that is a true reflection of our history – many races and cultures.

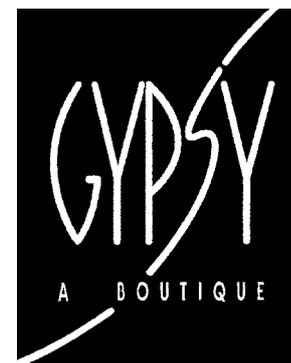
S.E.: Finally, what can the rest of us do to help make our town a better place to live for all? Please let us know how to contact you for more information.

R.S.: The very best thing an individual or group can do to make this City a much better place is to reach out from a heart of love to an individual that is obviously hurting. They are easy to find. Love will save Modesto and the world.

If you would like to find out more about Robert Stanford, visit <http://stanford4modesto.com/articles.html>

To contact the interviewer, Sally Mears, "Cruelty-Free Consumers" write: ryke40@ainet.com or call 402-8923.

Editor's Note: Most of the Airport district is under Stanislaus County jurisdiction. However, part of the District bordered by the intersection of Oregon Dr. on the north, S. Santa Cruz on the west and south including Legion and Tuolumne River parks to the Tuolumne River, and Tioga Dr. on the east – are included in District 4 of the City of Modesto.



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WE GET LETTERS



Project collecting oral histories from conscientious objectors

The CO Project, based in Washington State collects oral histories from conscientious objectors for multiple book and film projects and teaching materials.

... I've been traveling across the US, Canada, and Europe collecting material. The book I'm working on first will be a selection of interviews with COs from a variety of backgrounds and experiences (World War II through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan).

I'm not looking to write a historical perspective about COs, at least not yet. Instead, this is a "COs in our midst" kind of project that will focus on how a CO's decision affects one's life both during and long after the conflict that moved the individual to seek CO status.

I'm also interested in getting views on the times we're living in today, and on how a CO deals with the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

All interviews are conducted in person. I'm starting to plan my 2010 travel schedule. I do hope we might meet and talk.

If you're interested in participating in this project, please feel free to get in touch with me coproject@msn.com.

John Ellison

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

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

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OUR 20th YEAR: Poetry – Short Fiction – Artwork – Photography

Deadline: Friday, February 26, 2010.

Submit one copy of artwork/photography (11" x 17" max or slides).

Submit two hard copies of written work with name, address, phone number and e-mail address on one copy only AND a CD containing each submission as a separate file saved in Rich Text Format (rtf). Include a brief biography (3 lines max). Written work, CD will not be returned.

Mail up to five submissions to: Rofiah Breen, English Dept., CSU Stanislaus, One University Circle, Turlock, CA 95382.

(209) 483-9844 or email: rofiab@gmail.com

Answering Helen Thomas

a bad turn and ended up in the wrong neighborhood of the Iraqi city of Fallujah — and how U.S. forces virtually leveled that large city in retribution after George W. Bush won his second term the following November?

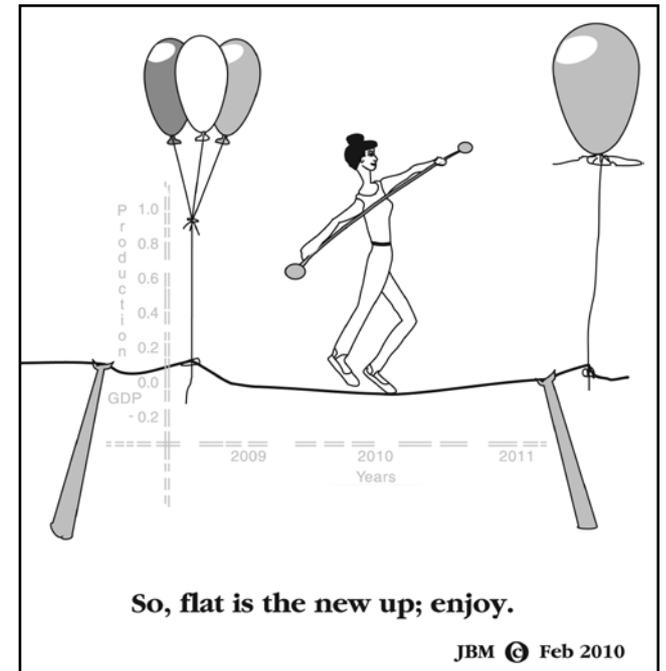
If you read only the Fawning Corporate Media, you would blissfully think that the killing of the four Blackwater operatives was the work of fanatical animals who got — along with their neighbors — the reprisal they deserved. You wouldn't know that the killings represented the second turn in that specific cycle of violence.

On March 22, 2004, Israeli forces assassinated the then-spiritual leader of Hamas in Gaza, Sheikh Yassin — a withering old man, blind and confined to a wheelchair. (Emphasis added)

That murder, plus sloppy navigation by the Blackwater men, set the stage for the next set of brutalities. The Blackwater operatives were killed by a group that described itself as the "Sheikh Yassin Revenge Brigade."

Pamphlets and posters were all over the scene of the attack; one of the trucks that pulled around body parts of the mercenaries had a large poster photo of Yassin in its window, as did store fronts all over Fallujah.

We can wish Janet Napolitano luck with her "counter-radicalization" project and President Obama with



... from page 7

his effort to "communicate clearly to Muslims," but there will be no diminution in the endless cycles of violence unless legitimate grievances are addressed on all sides.

It would certainly also help if the American people were finally let in on the root causes for what otherwise gets portrayed as unprovoked savagery by Muslims.

This article was previously published on Consortiumnews.com., <http://www.consortiumnews.com/2010/010810b.html>

Ray McGovern works for Tell the Word, the publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in Washington, DC. He was an analyst at the CIA for 27 years, and is on the Steering Group of VIPS.

<http://www.truthout.org/1091012McGovern>

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Visit the **Oakdale** satellite
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