

Modesto Peace/Life Center Statement on Osama bin Laden's Death

Our statement borrows significantly from the official statement of Pax Christi USA on the death of Osama bin Laden (www.pax-christiusa.org/2011/05/04/statement)

The killing of Osama bin Laden will lead, we hope, to deep reflection on the tragedy of 9/11 and our nation's response to it. We are troubled by the displays of celebration and call upon all people of good will to pause and reflect rather than rejoice and exalt. We remember the victims of that terrible day in September; their families and loved ones whose lives were changed forever; the first responders whose sacrifice and heroism inspired a shocked and grieving nation; and all the countless volunteers who spent weeks amid the rubble and dust at Ground Zero and who continue to suffer serious health effects today. At the same time, we mourn our nation's misguided response: the mayhem and carnage unleashed, the distortion of our deepest values, the abandonment of our highest principles, and the ultimate subversion of our national char-

acter. And we think of the cycle of violence started that day that has destroyed, injured, and displaced so many lives, military and civilian, American, Afghani, Iraqi, Pakistani, and from countries across the globe.

Vengeance leads to ever more violence and death. This cycle must be broken. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. beckons us with a challenge: "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it . . . Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate . . . Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

For nearly a decade our national narrative has been driven by the Global War on Terror that has undermined our moral leadership

in the world. Our nation, which espouses freedom, the rule of law, and the promotion of human rights, carried out mass arrests and indefinite detention, torture, rendition, and indiscriminant bombing. Our government's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, besides their high toll in human lives, have helped drain our national treasure and kept us from dealing with pressing needs at home. One out of every five children in America now lives in poverty, the worst rate among rich nations, behind Mexico. We have the world's most expensive health care system, and yet in 2009 infant mortality in the U.S. was higher than in 20 other countries and the worst among rich nations. It seems there's always money for war but not for needs at home, like education or health care or clean, renewable energy. Our priorities are gravely distorted.

It's time to turn the page on this narrative dominated by fear, violence, and a permanent war economy to one focused on rebuilding America, based on solidarity, commitment to the common good, and peace. Peace will be best served by setting a concrete withdrawal date for all U.S. forces and contractors to leave Afghanistan as well as Iraq. In contrast to the violent legacy of bin Laden's life, let this become the concrete outcome of his death.

Actually, "The Rich" Don't "Create Jobs," We Do

By **DAVE JOHNSON**, Campaign for America's Future [3]

You hear it again and again, variation after variation on a core message: if you tax rich people it kills jobs. You hear about "job-killing tax hikes," or that "taxing the rich hurts jobs," "taxes kill jobs," "taxes take money out of the economy," "if you tax the rich they won't be able to provide jobs." ... on and on it goes. So do we really depend on "the rich" to "create" jobs? Or do jobs get created when they fill a need?

Here is a recent typical example, Obama

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3rd Annual Social Justice Youth Leadership Conference September 24

By MIKE & JANA CHIAVETTA

“Be the Change you want to be in the World!” These words by Gandhi have become the central theme of the Modesto Peace/Life Center’s Social Justice Youth Leadership Conferences. Last year’s conference, the 2nd, was attended by over 80 area high school students. They were informed on numerous topics including the environment, human rights, animal protection, Habitat for Humanity, serving food to the homeless and other worthy endeavors. The students came away inspired and motivated to live out Gandhi’s message.

Preparations are underway for the 3rd Annual Social Justice Youth Leadership Conference scheduled for Saturday, **September 24th** at the Modesto Church of the Brethren from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM.

This year’s keynote focus is on Civil Rights. We will have a keynote speaker that will enlighten attendees about civil rights and numerous community organizations will present their projects that students can be involved in. Workshops will inspire, inform and motivate those in attendance. Food and “cool stuff” (t-shirts, tote bags, etc.) will be provided to

attendees. Participation is open to all area high school students. **One of the main “improvements” that we hope to accomplish is to have as many area high schools as possible represented. To assist in this endeavor, we need individuals, teachers and parents to help us network to different school sites.** If you are interested in receiving materials and registration forms to distribute please contact the organizers at chiavetta.mi@monet.k12.ca.us or mike.chiavetta@gmail.com. If you would like to register to attend the conference please email your name, school and your T-shirt size (men’s t-shirt) to the email addresses above.

The Social Justice Youth Leadership Conference is offered to participants for free. We have an operating budget of \$1500. This pays for materials, food and miscellaneous expenses. If your organization would like to be a co-sponsor or you would like to donate to this worthy endeavor, contact us via the email addresses above or send donations (payable to Modesto Peace/Life Center), to the Modesto/Peace Life Center, 720 13th St., Modesto Ca 95351. Please put “Youth Conference” in the memo of the check.

10 Days for Peace Calendar

(Tentative)

Sun. 9/11: Public Event: September 11th Multi-Denominational Peace and Reconciliation Gathering. Time/ Place: TBA. Coordinator: Rev. Russ Matteson

Mon. 9/12: “Get your Peace ON” Day: Wear peace related clothing and be prepared to discuss why to people who ask and also to advertise the “10 days for Peace.”

Tues. 9/13: Introspection Day: Spend some time today meditating, praying, yoga-ing, playing for Peace, walk for peace, read a Peace book.

Wed. 9/14: Public Event: Peace Day @ MJC. Tentative: Peace Speaker, Interactive Peace Art Display, Civic Engagement Film, Peace Poetry Slam. Coordinator: Dan Onorato.

Thurs. 9/15: Communication Day: Write a letter to someone, send an email, talk to someone you have meant to talk to, “bury the hatchet,” etc.

Fri. 9/16: Fast for Peace Day. Donate your “lunch Money” to charity. (Possibly to erect a “Peace Pole” in Graceada Park).

Sat. 9/17 (a.m.): Public Event: Community Activity For Peace Day: Tuolumne River Clean-up. (Possibly plant a “Peace Grove”). Coordinator: Tuolumne River Trust

Sat. 9/17 (p.m.): LBGT/ Straight Unity High School Dance. Coordinator: Tricia Spenser.

Sun. 9/18: Family Gathering/Make a Plan Day: Spend time with your family, have dinner together and commit, as a family, to doing something for Peace this next year.

Mon. 9/19: Random Acts of Kindness Day: Make a conscious effort to “pay it forward” ALL DAY LONG!

Tues. 9/20: Green Peace Day: Do something for the environment today. Ride your bike to work or school, recycle, take a walk, eat lower on the food chain (vegan or vegetarian),

wear organic, etc.

Weds. 9/21: Public Event: International Day of Peace, Song Circle, Poetry and Peace- Nic. Time/place: 5:30 PM-8:00 PM/Graceada Park. Coordinators: Shelly Scribner, John Lucas, Mike Killingsworth.

ACTION: Participate in this and other activities during the **10 Days for Peace** which starts on September 11, 2011, the 10th Anniversary of 9/11. For more information, call John Lucas, 527-7634, lucasjal@sbcglobal.net

Note: Poets are being sought to read at the two “10 Days for Peace” readings. Gathering of Voices poets at the Barkin ‘Dog on September 13 and general poets at the picnic in the park on International Day of Peace on September 21. Contact Tina Driskill at seekersee@sbcglobal.net if interested.



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209-529-5750.
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Commuter Conversion Electric Cars: club and classes in Turlock

By MIKE PARKER

The CVEAA or Central Valley Electric Auto Association meets in Turlock on the 3rd Thursday each month at 7 p.m. at Lamppost Pizza, 2321 W Main St # B, one block west of the Hwy 99 near the Turlock Cinema. What you will see and hear there: conversion electric cars used for commuting; the latest news about batteries (Lithium Ion are hot now); conversion kit components and roadside opportunity charging stations.

Classes: two ten-day C2EC2 Commuter Conversion Electric Car Classes will be held in Turlock. Students can bring a car body and a complete conversion kit and we’ll convert the car to electric. Or, students can register, attend class and assist in the “wrenching” on, creating an electric car with a range of 60 to 100 miles/charge and a top speed of 70 to 100 mph. Roadside opportunity charging station design and implementation will also be covered.



The C2EC2 Electric Car Class has been taught in Turlock since 2005. Graduates teach C2EC2 in other cities and countries. The class content is now accepted as a viable class in one of the alternative fuel automotive associations.

Converted electric cars can: help reduce air pollution. Improve employment development locally via conversion shops. Help reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil. Give commuters a less expensive, reliable means to get back and forth to work.

A typical, proper electric car conversion using Lithium Ion batteries can do 100 mph and have a 100 mile range.

ACTION: For more information, contact Mike Parker, 209-202-7825, email: mikeparker1940@yahoo.com

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Proposed Fresno nuclear plants lose supervisor endorsement

From Tri-Valley CAREs

On June 7, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors voted to withhold their endorsement of an AREVA-backed plan to build two nuclear power plants near Fresno to desalinate water. The Fresno Bee said: "An outpouring of protest against nuclear energy prompted Fresno County supervisors on Tuesday to back off plans to support a local nuclear venture. The Board of Supervisors unanimously agreed to withhold a letter of interest for the Fresno Nuclear Energy Group, which is pursuing an 'energy park' with potentially two nuclear reactors in Fresno County."

Also on June 7, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

ordered a 52-month delay in the schedule for hearings on an application for license renewal at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant near San Luis Obispo.

More information at <http://www.fresnobee.com/2011/06/07/2418180/fresno-co-supes-back-off-on-nuclear.html>

Tri-Valley CAREs : <http://www.trivalleycares.org/>

Important: For an overview of energy company AREVA's plans for the San Joaquin Valley, see <http://us.aveva.com/EN/home-645/aveva-fresno-nuclear-energy-group-sign-mou-for-clean-energy-park-project-in-california.html>

Remember Hiroshima 66 years later in Modesto and Livermore on August 6th & 9th

Join us at the Modesto Peace/Life Center's Annual Hiroshima Remembrance and Potluck at Legion Park, Modesto on Saturday August 6th at 6:30 PM. Bring food and drinks to share as we converse and rededicate ourselves to reversing the efforts to rebuild and proliferate nuclear weapons. The evening will conclude with a candlelight vigil on the banks of the Tuolumne River.

From Tri-Valley CAREs:

The theme this year will be "From Hiroshima to Fukushima to Livermore: Confronting the two-headed dragon of nuclear weapons and power."

The BIG event will be August 6 at Livermore Lab (corner of Vasco and Patterson Pass Rds.) and at the park across

the street. We are planning a peace festival at 6 PM, a program with amazing speakers, music and more starting at 7 PM sharp, Skype (and projection) between the crowd in Livermore and activists in Japan, a spiral dance and a powerful experience with projected images linking Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima, Livermore Lab, uranium mining, and other nuclear weapons sites.

On Tuesday, August 9, at 8 AM, there will be a ceremony and the option to peaceably "risk arrest" in the gate at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Check Tri-Valley CAREs' newsletter, Citizen's Watch at <http://www.trivalleycares.org/new/CWspring2011final.html>

Stop the Machine! Create a New World! A Call to Action - Oct. 6, 2011 and onward

October 2011 is the 10th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan and the beginning of the 2012 federal austerity budget. It is time to light the spark that sets off a true democratic, nonviolent transition to a world in which people are freed to create just and sustainable solutions.

We call on people of conscience and courage—all who seek peace, economic justice, human rights and a healthy environment—to join together in Washington, D.C., beginning on Oct. 6, 2011, in nonviolent resistance similar to the Arab Spring and the Midwest awakening.

A concert, rally and protest will kick off a powerful and sustained NONVIOLENT resistance to the corporate criminals that dominate our government.

"Stop the Machine! • Create a New World!" is a clarion call for all who are deeply concerned with injustice, militarism and environmental destruction to join in ending concentrated corporate power and taking direct control of a real participatory democracy. We will encourage a culture of resistance—using music, art, theater and direct nonviolent action—to take control of our country and our lives. It is about courageously resisting and stopping the corporate state from



destroying not only our inherent rights and freedoms, but also our children's chance to live, breathe clean air, drink pure water, grow edible natural food and live in peace.

ACTION: Join us in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 6, 2011, to Stop the Machine. Details at <http://october2011.org/statement>



Don't miss the Connections Potluck Auction, Sept. 9!

By DAN ONORATO

Connections reader, mark your calendar right now. The 20th Annual *Stanislaus Connections* Potluck Auction, on Friday, September 9, awaits you.

Trumpets announce your arrival, drums roll in expectant greeting, late summer breezes draw heat away from the earth to welcome you. You enter the enchanting environment of John Frailing and Maria Arevalo's home at 629 Ila Way, Modesto. You feast on culinary delights prepared with love by all who attend. You enjoy the camaraderie and lively conversation of like-minded seekers of a better world. You enjoy the antics and down-home good fun of our renowned duo of auctioneers, Sir John Frailing and Duke David Rockwell. They draw you in. Deep within your peace-loving nature your innate instinct to compete arises. You get caught up in the drama.

Hucksters for a good cause, with each new treasure John and David entice, cajole, wheedle, and charm. Bid for that relaxing weekend retreat in Twain Harte; that dinner for four prepared by legendary wizard of taste and presentazione, Dona Alicia; those Yoga lessons to limber body and soul; those six scrumptious Myrtle Osner home-made fruit pies to delight your family and guests throughout the year.

You leave happy, enriched. You go home with your "treasure," but far more importantly you have shared an enjoyable evening under the stars with some good people. And you have helped support your local peace, justice, and environmental newspaper.

If this scenario attracts you—the delicious potluck surprises, the memorable company of friends new and old, the excitement of a fun-filled auction, the satisfaction of helping the Peace/Life Center continue publishing *Stanislaus Connections*—start planning your potluck specialty, and join us around 5:00 p.m.

ACTION: We need auctions items. To donate, contact Dan Onorato, 526-5436, onoratod@sbcglobal.net, or Jim Costello, 537-7818, jcostello@igc.org.



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Potato harvest

By JENIFER WEST

Discovered my potato vines are starting to die back yesterday, so realized harvest must be close at hand. A coworker and I split an order of seed potatoes awhile back, and the pressure's been on! He planted his in the ground; mine are in plastic garbage pails with holes drilled in the bottoms. For weeks the friendly competition has continued – a few weeks into the adventure, there were boasts about feeding all the neighbors, and maybe having to set up a roadside stand...

But all joking aside, this potato business is serious. Did you know that potatoes are sprayed to inhibit sprouting – both before and after they've harvested? They must stay marketable, which means sprout-free, for some time after harvest. So they're doused with chemicals to prevent them from sprouting. And the residue of one of those chemicals is highly toxic to fish, and stays active for a year! Growing your own, obviously, allows you to avoid these chemicals.

Another advantage of growing your own potatoes is freshness. There's nothing like the flavor of a freshly dug potato, cooked until soft and tossed with a little butter and salt. And then there's the variety of tubers not available any other way – we planted no less than five different varieties, including some fingerlings, a delicious, perfectly round one called a German Butterball, and even a variety that's pink inside and out, as well as one that's blue!

Growing potatoes is easy, and can be done a number of ways. You can grow them as simply as tossing them on the ground and covering with mulch, or, as I did, in garbage cans with a few holes drilled in the bottom. (I've even read of folks burying seed potatoes in their compost piles, although I'm not sure I'd recommend it.) Or, there are bags sold especially for that purpose. I've never tried them, and so can't advise as to whether they work well or not. If you plant them in the ground, be forewarned – they do tend to sprawl. However you plant them, make sure to give them something good and rich to grow in. Potatoes are heavy feeders, and you can grow them in straight compost, or you can use a mix of compost and soil. However you grow them, make sure they stay covered with soil, and have good drainage.

The first time I planted potatoes, I put about a 6-inch layer of compost in the bottom of the bucket and tucked them in. As they grew, I layered straw over them. This was supposed to increase the yield, by way of causing them to grow longer roots and therefore more potatoes. Perhaps I didn't do it correctly, but I didn't find that to be the case. I have tried both leaving the leaves, and pinching them off as I covered them, but as the tubers tend to form in the top 6 inches, neither approach seemed to make much difference.

Potatoes can be planted either in early spring (late February – March) or late summer (late July – mid August), so if you plan it right, you can get two harvests a year. My goal, these days, is to save a few potatoes from each harvest to plant for the next. If you choose the "early" varieties, and plant in August, you should be able to put freshly dug potatoes on your table for Christmas dinner.

One important thing to remember about potatoes: After they're harvested, it's necessary to keep them in the dark. Potatoes stored in the light develop a greenish tint, which indicates that a high level of a toxin called solanine has



formed. While not generally considered dangerous in small doses, ingestion of enough of it can definitely make a person ill. Don't store them in single layers of burlap – I found out the hard way that burlap bags do not provide enough protection from light to avoid development of this toxin. (Ah, well, now we have plenty of seed potatoes!) So when you harvest your potatoes, be sure to store them where they won't be exposed to light. They area should be kept cool (42 – 55 degrees is ideal), and humid, if possible. Potatoes stored in the refrigerator will become dark when fried, due to the conversion of starches to sugars.

Growing potatoes, whether in the ground, in buckets or in bags, is very rewarding, and something that every gardener should definitely consider trying!



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

By Lillian Vallee

74. "A Pretty Good Place"

My friend Judith Lowry, proprietress of Larner Seeds in Bolinas, came to visit this month bearing gifts, as usual, which included an array of seeds deemed suitable for Modesto: Central Valley Gumplant (*Grindelia camporum*), Red Maids (*Calandrinia ciliate*), Bigelow's Coreopsis (*Coreopsis bigelovii*), Elegant Tarweed (*Madia elegans*), California Goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*), Chia (*Salvia columbariae*), and Tomcat Clover (*Trifolium wildenovii*). But the greatest gift was yet to come. Judith had ordered a box of *Streams of the San Joaquin, Geographic and Ecological Considerations of California's San Joaquin Valley* by Robert Edminster, grand champion of our region's rivers, flora and fauna. Since Edminster's retirement from Merced College in 1985, he has published his magnum opus, *Streams of the San Joaquin*, as well as *What Everyone Should Know About the San Joaquin Valley* and the *San Joaquin River; Foxes in Central California*; and *Tales from the San Joaquin: Growing up Wild in Stevinson Colony, the Land Between Rivers*. Judith had arranged to pick up the books at the Edminster home in Los Banos, and I was looking forward to seeing Bob and his wife Mary Ann, whom I had not seen for many years but whom I knew from our shared activities at various restoration plantings at local refuges and from forays to vernal pools in Merced County.

On one of the trips, after traipsing around in the heat eager to get another glimpse of Delta Coyote Thistle (*Eryngium racemosum*, a rare plant "presumed extinct" and rediscovered by Edminster and his daughters on a fishing trip), Edminster, then already in his seventies, said, "If I drop dead out here, the keys to my truck are in my right pants pocket. Drive on out!" He was indefatigable. He had a profound, lifelong intimacy with the land between the Merced and San Joaquin rivers, his childhood kingdom. As a guide, he could bring the landscape to life instantly and animate it with first-hand knowledge and boyhood memories. He had not read about geese blotting out the sun with their numbers, he had seen them passing, for hours: "Hundreds of duck ponds in the Merced County wetlands made the area from the Merced River south through the middle of the county a duck hunter's paradise," Edminster writes in *Tales from the San Joaquin*.

While many of his father's relatives referred to the Valley as "godforsaken," Edminster thought even then that it was "a pretty good place." Born in 1925, Edminster writes with detailed enthusiasm about life on the Edminster Ranch in Stevinson during the Depression and war years: "In the spring of 1938, at the age of twelve and a half, I watched the San Joaquin River and Los Banos Creek take out the newly completed State

Highway 140 between Gustine and the Fremont Ford Bridge. During my teen years hunting, fishing, backpacking, exploring, swimming, horseback riding, and work caring for cattle in the river bottom were routine activities. A most valued possession during those years was a good-swimming horse. No greater pleasure was ever found in my entire life than to ride on horseback through the marshes in late spring when hundreds of thousands of newborn shorebirds, ducks, and other wetland creatures were taking their first steps of life."

The meandering San Joaquin (before Friant Dam) was his fishing river: "My first recollection of the Lower San Joaquin River was as a child before 1930 when our farm community would gather at the Shad Banks near Fremont's Ford to catch a supply of shad, a type of ocean-going fish that runs the rivers like salmon."

Edminster describes how the net set for shad snagged a thirty-pound salmon and managed to pull the net, and his brother John holding it, into the river. When the river was low and the community picnicked at Shad Banks, men would spear salmon. Once a neighbor "speared a sturgeon over 100 pounds and six or seven feet long. I ran down to the water's edge," recalls Edminster, "just as Emmet lost his footing and began being dragged upstream

in about waist deep water.... As my brothers Johnny and Oscar ran down the bank to help Emmet land the fish I thought I would never see Emmet again. In about a half hour, the three of them came back up the bank, carrying on their shoulders what seemed to me... a huge sea monster. Sturgeons were common in the river in those days."

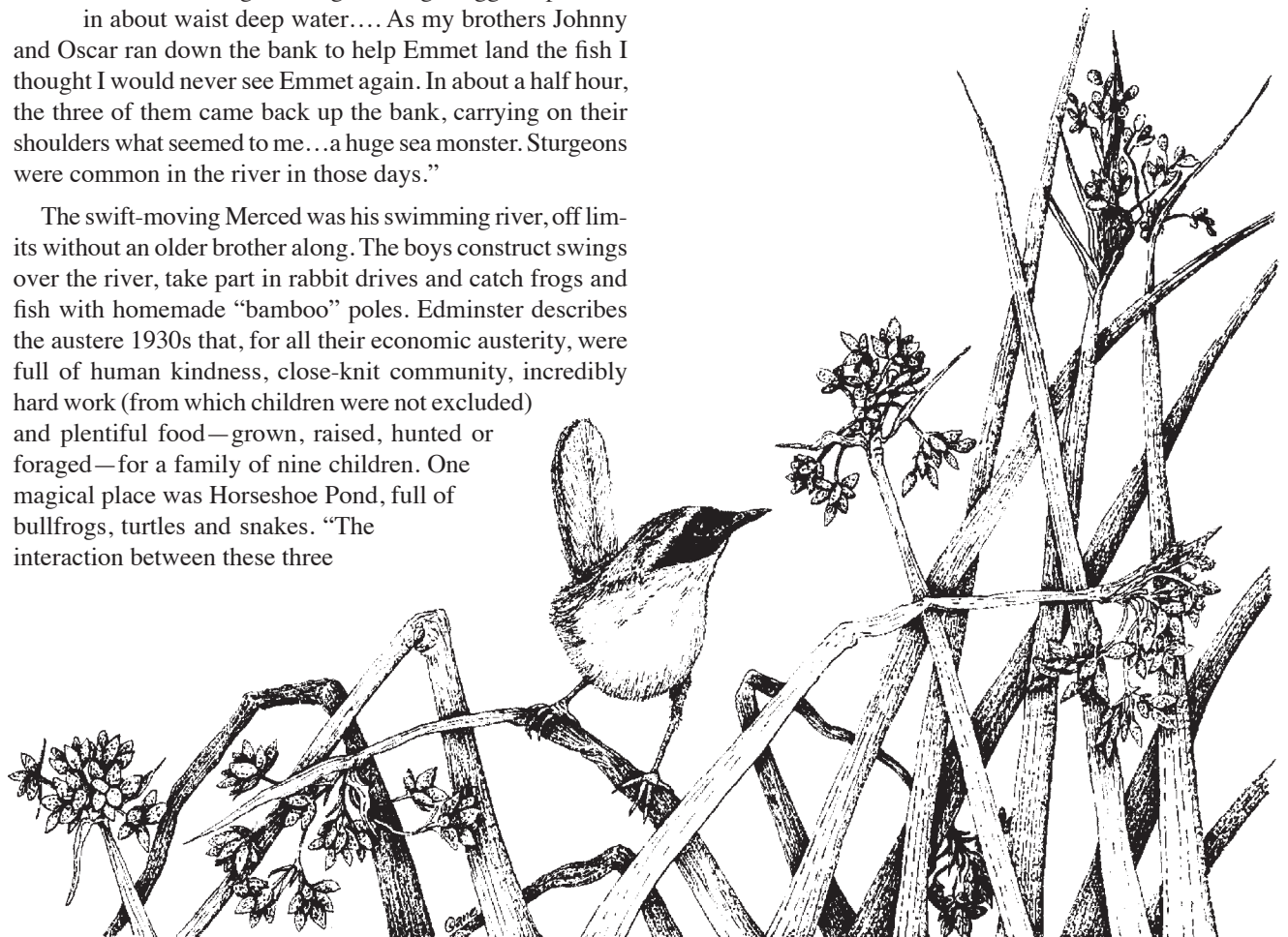
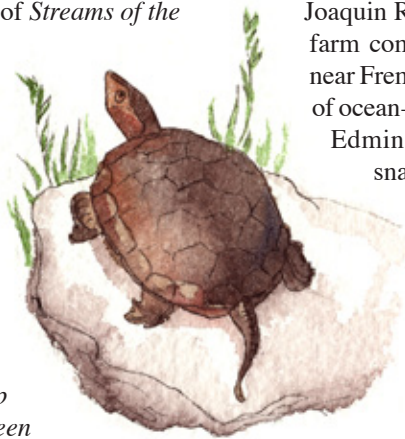
The swift-moving Merced was his swimming river, off limits without an older brother along. The boys construct swings over the river, take part in rabbit drives and catch frogs and fish with homemade "bamboo" poles. Edminster describes the austere 1930s that, for all their economic austerity, were full of human kindness, close-knit community, incredibly hard work (from which children were not excluded) and plentiful food—grown, raised, hunted or foraged—for a family of nine children. One magical place was Horseshoe Pond, full of bullfrogs, turtles and snakes. "The interaction between these three

reptile species...probably made it my first natural history laboratory," writes Edminster in *Tales*. "When I think how little understanding of ecosystems I had when I was a boy (I didn't even know what the word meant), it brings me to the understanding that the first lessons we learn in any subject begin in simple ways."

There is not enough room here to mention all the charms and insights contained in the four books Robert Edminster has written with such sustained passion and curiosity. Edminster has recently struggled with cancer and lost an arm: "It is August 7, 2009, today as I sit here pecking away on my word processor," he writes at the end of *Tales*. "The armless shoulder is healing very well. How long I will continue is unknown, but considering that the cancer doctors gave me only a few months in May '07, I'm doing OK. It is now August 7, 2009."

On June 16, 2011, assisted by a devoted wife and grandson, he was still okay, still signing books, and still nourishing visitors with a boy's bright love for a pretty good place.

ACTION: Robert Edminster's books can be acquired from Quercus Publications, 1073 Madison Avenue, Los Banos, CA 93635, (209) 826-5425, <http://www.quercuspublications.net/>



NEW REPORT: Improvements to U.S. detention practices in Afghanistan necessary to protect U.S. national security

More than 1700 prisoners currently detained by the United States in Afghanistan do not have the right to see evidence being used against them or the right to legal representation in breach of the minimum standards of due process required by international law, a new report finds.

The findings, released by Human Rights First on May 11, come as the number of detainees held at the United States' Bagram Air Base surpasses 1,700 – almost triple the number held by the Bush administration and around 10 times the number of prisoners at Guantanamo.

The detainees at Bagram are, in fact, afforded far fewer rights than are those at Guantanamo, who have the right to challenge their detention in a US court and to representation by a lawyer. "Some detainees at Bagram have been imprisoned for eight years or more without charge or trial, based largely on evidence they have never seen and with no meaningful opportunity to defend themselves," according to the report.

"The current system of administrative hearings provided by the U.S. military clearly violates international laws prohibiting arbitrary detention, and flies in the face of the well-founded wisdom of our top military leaders in the region who have warned repeatedly of the dangers of denying Afghan detainees due process," said Human Rights First's Daphne Eviatar, who drafted the report following a recent investigative trip to Afghanistan. "Beyond the imprisonment of many likely innocent people, the lack of due process erodes support for U.S. forces in Afghanistan and ultimately undermines U.S. goals there."

The report cites statements from General David Petraeus, Commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and his successor General Stanley McChrystal that applying minimum international legal standards of due process will bear heavily on the successful achievement of US objectives, including building the long-term capacity of the Afghan government to uphold international law. Major General Douglas Stone warned after investigating US detention practices in Afghanistan in August

2009 for the US Central Command that detaining moderate Afghans risks transforming them into radicals.

The report— "Detained and Denied in Afghanistan: How to Make U.S. Detention Comply with the Law"—is based on the observation by Human Rights First of hearings given to detainees by the U.S. military in Sept. 2010 and Feb. 2011, as well as an Afghan trial supported by the U.S. military in February. In addition, HRF conducted interviews with 18 former detainees, all of whom had been released from U.S. custody within the previous year. This report follows up on Human Rights First's earlier report, issued two years ago, on US and Afghan detention practices in Afghanistan.

According to the report, there have been a number of improvements over the past two years, since the suspension of the Bush administration's completely secret detainee assessment process. For example, the Obama Administration now allows detainees to attend at least a portion of a hearing and address a board of U.S. military officers examining their case. Each detainee is now assigned a "personal representative" to help present the case and is entitled to a new status hearing every six months. The military has also implemented some of the recommendations that Human Rights First made in its last report, such as:

- Allowing human rights organizations to observe hearings;
- Excluding evidence obtained through torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment;
- Embarking on efforts to improve the prosecution of national security detainees in Afghan courts.

Even so, Human Rights First's on-the-ground research in Afghanistan revealed that the current detention system remains plagued by failures to comply with international law. Case examples drawn from this research are featured in the report to underscore Human Rights First's key findings:

- The current U.S. detention policy in Afghanistan does not provide detainees the minimum level of due process required by international law, including the right to see and effectively challenge the evidence, and to have their rights determined by an independent authority, empowered to order release.
- While the U.S. military has a legitimate need to protect intelligence sources and methods, the heavy reliance on


secret evidence to determine whether a detainee meets the criteria for continued detention is unacceptable and does not meet the minimum requirements of due process – a practice that is counterproductive to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan because it encourages hostility toward U.S. forces.

- The DRB's lack of authority to order a detainee's release represents a serious shortfall in due process, one that leaves the process open to arbitrary delays and the possibility of political interference. This undermines both the legitimacy of the board's proceedings and the ability of detainees to meaningfully challenge their detention.
- There is a lack of compensation – or even an official apology – for wrongful detention, theft or damage to property.
- The responsible transition of detention authority to Afghan control is critical to the future stability of Afghanistan, as well as to U.S. national security interests in the region. To help the Afghan government meet basic standards of due process will require a lasting commitment on the part of the U.S. government, working in coordination with other donor nations.

The report documents in detail the basis for each of these findings and puts forth a series of recommendations designed to tackle these detention reform objectives. Recommendations include providing detainees with legal representation, and reducing the reliance on secret evidence at their hearings. Human Rights First also recommends that as the U.S. withdraws troops from Afghanistan, it maintain its commitment to civilian assistance for development of the rule of law.

"Even after the United States withdraws the bulk of its troops from Afghanistan, ongoing support for its fledgling justice system will be necessary, and critical to the country's stable development," Eviatar concludes. "Human Rights First urges the United States government to take a long-term view of the problem and to commit to civilian assistance for Afghan judges, lawyers and legal institutions far into the future."

To read the full report, visit <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Detained-Denied-in-Afghanistan.pdf>



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Rescind Obama's "Transparency Award" Now!

From warisacrime.org

On March 28, 2011, President Obama was given a "transparency award" from five "open government" organizations: OMB Watch, the National Security Archive, the Project on Government Oversight, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and OpenTheGovernment.org. Ironically -- and quite likely in response to growing public criticism regarding the Obama Administration's lack of transparency -- heads of the five organizations gave their award to Obama in a closed, undisclosed meeting at the White House. If the ceremony had been open to the press, it is likely that reporters would have questioned the organizations' proffered justification for the award, in contrast to the current reality:

- President Obama has not decreased but has dramatically increased governmental secrecy! According to a **new report to the president** [3] by the **Information Security Oversight Office** [4] (ISOO) -- the federal agency that provides oversight of the government's security classification system -- the cost of classification for 2010 has reached over \$10.17 billion. That's a 15 percent jump from the previous year, and the first time ever that secrecy costs have surpassed \$10 billion. Last month, ISOO reported that the number of original classification decisions generated by the Obama administration in 2010 was 224,734 -- a 22.6 percent jump from the previous year. See "**The Price of Secrecy, Obama Edition**" [5].

- There were 544,360 requests for information last year under the Freedom of Information Act to the 35 biggest federal agencies -- 41,000 requests more than the year before. Yet the bureaucracy responded to 12,400 fewer requests than the prior year, according to an **analysis by the Associated Press** [6].

- Obama has invoked baseless and unconstitutional executive secrecy to quash legal inquiries into secret illegalities more often than any predecessor. The list of this President's invocations of the "state secrets privilege" has already resulted in shutting down lawsuits involving the National Security Agency's illegal wiretapping -- **Jewel vs. NSA** [7] and **Shubert vs. Obama** [8]; extraordinary rendition and assassination -- **Anwar al-Aulaqi** [9]; and illegal torture -- **Binyam Mohamed** [10].

- Ignoring his campaign promise to protect government whistleblowers, Obama's presidency has amassed the **worst** [11] record in US history for persecuting, prosecuting, and jailing government whistleblowers and truth-tellers. President Obama's behavior has been in stark contrast to his campaign promises which included live streaming meetings online and rewarding whistleblowers. Obama's Department of Justice is twisting the 1917 Espionage Act to press criminal charges in five alleged instances of national-security leaks -- more such prosecutions than have occurred in all previous Administrations combined.

- The Obama DOJ's **prosecution of former NSA official Thomas Drake** [12] who, up till June 9, faced 35 years in prison for having blown the whistle on the NSA's costly and unlawful warrantless monitoring of American citizens typifies the abusive practices made possible through expansive secrecy agreements and threats of prosecution.

- President Obama has set a powerful and chilling example for potential whistleblowers through the abuse and torture of **Bradley Manning** [13], whose guilt he has also publicly

stated prior to any trial by his, Obama's, military subordinates.

- Obama is the only president who has reenacted Fahrenheit 451 by actually having his agency collect and burn a book due to a never-justified classification excuse: Lt. Col Tony Shaffer's **Operation Dark Heart** [14].

- Under President Obama, the FBI has launched a **series of raids** [15] and issued grand jury subpoenas targeting nearly two dozen antiwar activists. Over **two thousand six hundred** [16] arrests of protesters in the US have been made while Obama has been president, further encroaching on the exercise of First Amendment rights.

- President Obama has initiated a secret assassination program, has publicly announced that he has given himself the power to include Americans on the list of people to be assassinated, and has attempted to assassinate at least one, **Anwar al-Aulaqi** [17].

- President Obama has **maintained** [18] the power to secretly kidnap, imprison, rendition, or torture, and he has formalized the power to lawlessly imprison in an executive order. This also means the power to secretly imprison. There are some 1,700 prisoners outside the rule of law in Bagram alone.

- The Obama Administration is also busy going after **reporters** [19] to discover their sources and convening **grand juries** [20] in order to target journalists and news publishers.

- President Obama promised to reveal White House visitors' logs. He didn't. In response to outrage over his refusal to reveal the names of health insurance CEOs he had met with and cut deals with on the health insurance reform bill, he announced that he would release the names going forward, but not those in the past. And going forward he would **withhold names** [21] he chose to withhold. White House staff then began regularly meeting lobbyists just off White House grounds in order to avoid the visitors' logs.

- President Obama has sent representatives to aggressively pressure Spain, England, and Germany to shut down investigations that could have exposed the crimes of the Bush era, just as he has instructed the US DOJ to avoid such matters. This includes his refusal to allow prosecutions of the CIA for torture, following a public letter from 8 previous heads of the CIA informing him that he had better not enforce those laws.

The "transparency award" in question was described as "aspirational," similar to the rationale for awarding Obama the Nobel Peace Prize early in his presidency when he had done nothing yet to further the cause of peace. Participants admitted they used the private meeting in March to try and lobby Obama to do more to earn their award. If the President doesn't change course as a result of the lobbying and "award," there are some who would shrug and say, "no harm, no foul." The giving of an unmerited award, however, whether for transparency or peace, is not entirely benign! No one knows better how destructive secrecy is for maintaining systems of justice, ethics and democracy than these self-proclaimed "open government" watchdogs. Especially when such a false accolade emanates, as in this case, from those who are supposed to serve as counters to secrecy and to retaliation against government whistleblowers, such appearance of approval will tend to cover up and mask the reality of the Executive's increasingly undemocratic and illegal use of secrecy.

Therefore the undersigned call on these organizations:

OMB Watch, the National Security Archive, the Project on Government Oversight, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and OpenTheGovernment.org, to publicly take back their "transparency award," as difficult as that may be, from Barack Obama. The watchdog organizations should, of course, continue to promote aspirations for open, democratic government, reduced secrecy and adherence to the rule of law, in more genuine, legitimate ways than giving unmerited awards to the Executive. Such false awards only stand to backfire and hurt the cause of open government.

Drafted by FBI Whistleblowers Sibel Edmonds and Coleen Rowley Whistleblowers:

Raymond L. McGovern- Former Analyst, CIA; Colonel Ann Wright- US Army Reserve (Ret.) and Former US diplomat; Daniel Ellsberg- Former Official, Department of Defense and Department of State

To view other signers and references, visit <http://warisacrime.org/takeawardback>

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7 Ways to stop Wall Street's con game

By DAVID KORTEN

Wikipedia defines a “confidence trick” as “an attempt to defraud a person or group by gaining their confidence. The victim is known as the mark, the trickster is called a confidence man, con man, confidence trickster, or con artist, and any accomplices are known as shills. Confidence men exploit human characteristics such as greed and dishonesty.”

Ever hear a business reporter on the evening business news say, “Today, investors drive up the price of commodities to create a hundred billion in new value,” or some such? Sounds great, almost implying we should offer thanks to these champions of the public good who are risking their fortunes to expand the pool of wealth to enrich us all. The reporter is manipulating the language to set us up as marks in the Wall Street con.

A more honest report might have said, “Today, hedge fund traders speculating with other people’s money walked away with multimillion dollar commissions for inflating the commodities bubble by a hundred billion dollars.” In a more honest world, the report would clearly distinguish between real investors creating real wealth through real investments and speculators creating phantom wealth with financial games. People who bet on the price of pieces of paper would be called “gamblers.” Those who hold the bets and distribute the winnings would be called “bookies.”

Boil it down to the basics and you see that Wall Street is in the business of operating four sophisticated, large-scale confidence games.

In a more honest world, business news would clearly distinguish between real investors creating real wealth through real investments and speculators creating phantom wealth with financial games.

Counterfeiting: Through financial bubbles and loan pyramids, it creates facsimiles of official money for private gain unrelated to anything of real value.

Securities fraud: Selling shares in asset bubbles that are maintained solely by the constant inflow of new money is, in effect, a Ponzi scheme.

Reverse insurance fraud: Insurance fraud, by common definition, occurs when the insured deceives the insurer. In reverse insurance fraud, the insurer deceives the insured. In Wall Street practice this involves collecting premiums to cover risks the insurer lacks adequate reserves to cover and then refusing to pay legitimate claims.

Predatory lending: Using a combination of extortion, fraud, deceptive promises, and usury, predatory lenders lure the desperate into perpetual debt at exorbitant interest rates.

Because of Wall Street’s hold on lawmakers, these may all be perfectly legal, but phantom wealth is still phantom wealth, and these are all forms of theft. In three-card monte, the dealer shuffles the cards so fast you can’t follow them, while talking even faster. Complex derivatives are a fast shuffle that makes it virtually impossible to follow the connection to any real value.

What makes the Wall Street con so much better for the dealers than a typical street con is that Wall Street dealers bet on their own game using other people’s money and then manipulate the market outcome in their own favor, rewarding themselves with huge bonuses when they win and taking

billions in taxpayer bailouts when they lose.

Real financial reform would render unproductive speculation either illegal or unprofitable. Here are a few suggestions:

- Prohibit selling, insuring, or borrowing against an asset not actually owned by the seller, and issuing any security not backed by a real asset—all common Wall Street practices.
- Place strict limits on how much a financial institution can borrow in order to buy a property, and establish conservative reserve and capital requirements for institutions in the business of selling insurance of any kind.
- Regulate bond-rating agencies and impose strict penalties for fraudulent ratings.
- Impose a small financial-speculation tax of a penny on every \$4 spent on the purchase and sale of financial instruments such as stocks, bonds, foreign currencies, and derivatives. This would have no consequential impact on real investors making long-term investments in real businesses and assets. But it would discourage short-term speculation and arbitraging.
- End the obscure tax loophole that allows hedge fund managers to report their billion-dollar compensation packages as capital gains, taxed at only 15 percent.
- Assess a 100 percent capital gains surcharge on profit from the sale of assets held less than an hour, 80 percent

if held less than a week, and perhaps falling to 50 percent on assets held more than a week but less than six months. This would render most forms of speculation unprofitable, stabilize financial markets, and lengthen the investment horizon without penalizing real investors.

- Eliminate debt slavery by raising the wages of working people and the taxes of the moneylenders.

Opponents will claim that such regulation and taxes will stifle financial innovation. Good. That is the intention. Wall Street’s financial innovations are mostly ever more sophisticated and deceptive forms of theft. They should be discouraged. Keep the casinos in Vegas. The need to rebuild financial institutions that meet our needs for basic financial services will be the subject of next week’s blog.

David Korten (livingeconomiesforum.org) is the author of *Agenda for a New Economy*, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, and the international best seller *When Corporations Rule the World*. He is board chair of YES! Magazine and co-chair of the New Economy Working Group.

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“The Rich” Don’t “Create Jobs,” ...

from page 1

people are most often found in government.

Perhaps the most vivid description of what happens to a society where the parasites become so numerous and powerful that they destroy their productive hosts is Ayn Rand’s classic novel *Atlas Shrugged*. ...

Producers and Parasites

The idea that there are producers and parasites as expressed in the example above has become a core philosophy of conservatives. They claim that wealthy people “produce” and are rich *because* they “produce.” The rest of us are “parasites” who suck blood and energy from the productive rich, by taxing them. In this belief system, We, the People are basically just “the help” who are otherwise in the way, and taxing the producers to pay for our “entitlements.” We “take money” from the producers through taxes, which are “redistributed” to the parasites. They repeat the slogan, “Taxes are theft,” and take the “money we earned” by “force” (i.e. government.)

Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner echoes this core philosophy of “producers” and “parasites,” saying yesterday [6],

I believe raising taxes on the very people that we expect to reinvest in our economy and to hire people is the wrong idea,” he said. “For those people to give that money to the government...means it won’t get reinvested in our economy at a time when we’re trying to create jobs.”

“The very people” who “hire people” shouldn’t have to pay taxes because that money is then taken out of the productive economy and just given to the parasites -- “the help” -- meaning you and me...

So is it true? Do “they” create jobs? Do we “depend on”

the wealthy to “create jobs?”

Demand Creates Jobs

I used to own a business and have been in senior positions at other businesses, and I know many others who have started and operated businesses of all sizes. I can tell you from direct experience that I tried very hard to employ the *right number of people*. What I mean by this is that when there were lots of customers I would add people to meet the demand. And when demand slacked off I had to let people go.

If I had extra money I wouldn’t just hire people to sit around and read the paper. And if I had more customers than I could handle that -- the revenue generated by meeting the additional demand from the extra customers -- is what would pay for employing more people to meet the demand. It is a pretty simple equation:

You employ the right number of people to meet the demand your business has.

If you ask around you will find that every business tries to employ the right number of people to meet the demand. Any business owner or manager will tell you that they hire based on need, not on how much they have in the bank. (Read more here, in last year’s *Businesses Do Not Create Jobs* [7].)

Taxes make absolutely no difference in the hiring equation.

In fact, paying taxes means you are already making money, which means you have already hired the right number of people. Taxes are based on subtracting your costs from your revenue, and if you have profits after you cover your costs,

Adios, mi Cruzita

She'll never know her first true love.
She'll never steal a kiss.
She'll never meet new friends in school.
Or savor childhood bliss.

She won't get her picture taken
In her new Christmas dress.
The gown that she now sleeps in,
Will always be her best.

Daddy left his gun at hand,
And just within her reach.
For safety's sake he kept it loaded,
With one up in the breech.

She was only two, how could she know,
It wasn't a new toy?
One in the breech, was all it took,
To kill her mother's joy.

Holding Hands

We spread the blanket on the sand,
Tight to a log left by the last storm.
Snuggling close against the chill,
We shared coffee from a thermos,
As the sun kissed the horizon goodnight.

In the orange afterglow of twilight, you took my hand,
And pulled me into your embrace.
Your touch was warm, your kiss unhurried.
What a wondrous thing it is,
To hold your hand at twilight
Sitting by the sea.

Loneliness

If we lived in the woods and you saw me
walking along the path beyond your fence,
while you were splitting wood.
Would you give a friendly wave
put down your axe
open the gate and invite me in?
Would we sit on your porch,
share coffee and company in the morning sun?
Or would you just nod your head
and go back to the measured blows
of solitude?

His Number

She left the shelter today
alone
her belongings in a backpack.

Her two girls
taken from her,
adopted out a week ago.

She didn't care
that she only had eighteen dollars.
She had his number.

The Divergent Road

I would not have known you if not for cancer
The road you traveled was so far from mine
But for a while, our paths crossed
Our lives touched, and the journey became less difficult

You shared your song with me
I shared my poem with you
We shared joy in living
And fear of the unknown ahead

We filled our lives with music
And the laughter of friendship
Silenced only by guarded whispers
Of treatments to come

But ahead, the road forks yet again
We are each on our own journey
And your path is diverging from mine
Filled with obstacles that are yours alone to overcome.

Though I can't go with you I won't be far away
I'll stay where the road divides till you are out of sight
Even though you're leaving me behind
I'll always have your back my friend

Two More Weeks

"Two more weeks" he said,
"We'll have the test results."
"Two more weeks, we should know by then".

You go home to hope and wait and pray.
You take her picture from the shelf
Remember the last time she kissed your cheek,
Her laugh as you dropped her off at school.

You ache at the thought of telling her goodbye.
"Two more weeks," he said, as he sent you home
To wait sleepless.
Is it her body they found?

Barely Midnight

He stopped the car
waved a twenty out the window
she ran across the street
sat beside him as he drove into the alley
into the dark.

It was barely midnight, her expectations were high
she had made enough to feed her habit
one more twenty and she'll feed her kids.



Dan Murray: poet, cancer survivor

I'm retired and a six-year cancer survivor. Married to Kathy, with three children and five grandchildren.

My first chapbook, *Barely Midnight*, was published a year ago. I had never written or had much interest in poetry until I became a participant in the Writing Through Cancer Complimentary Therapy program sponsored by Memorial Medical Center and led by Lin Sexton. These programs provide a safe refuge for sharing the emotions brought about by cancer and its treatment, and a place to enjoy the writings of others.

My favorite poets are Ted Kooser, Robert Frost, Billy Collins, and our own Lin Sexton and Ed Bearden, Modesto's Poet Laureate. I'm a bit of a ukulele junkie, and think that the world would be a far better place if everyone would read a little poetry and play the ukulele, preferably at the same time.



Fr. Roy Bourgeois letter: refusing to recant

Editor's note: *Connections* does not normally publish articles of a religious nature. We make an exception in this case because Fr. Roy Bourgeois, in his struggle regarding the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, raises issue regarding sexism and justice that have implications far beyond the narrow confines of a particular religious institution. Furthermore, Father Roy is a courageous example to us all of someone fighting for justice based upon personal conscience, the same conscience that has compelled him to work to close our infamous "School of the Americas."

Rev. Edward Dougherty, M.M., Superior General
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
P.O. Box 303
Maryknoll, NY 10545
April 8, 2011

Dear Father Dougherty and General Council,

Maryknoll has been my community, my family, for 44 years, so it is with great sadness that I received your letter of March 18, 2011 stating I must recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women, or I will be dismissed from Maryknoll.



When I was a young man in the military, I felt God was calling me to be a priest. I later entered Maryknoll and was ordained. I am grateful for finding the happiness, meaning and hope I was seeking in life.

For the past 20 years I have been speaking out and organizing against the injustice of the School of the Americas and U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. Over these years I discovered an injustice much closer to home - an injustice in my Church.

Devout women in our Church believe God is calling them to be priests, but they are rejected because the Church teaches that only baptized men can become priests. As a Catholic priest for 38 years, I believe our Church's teaching that excludes women from the priesthood defies both faith and reason and cannot stand up to scrutiny for the following reasons:

(1) As Catholics, we believe that we were created in the image and likeness of God and that men and women are equal before God. Excluding women from the priesthood implies that men are superior to women.

(2) Catholic priests say that the call to be a priest is a gift and comes from God. How can we, as men, say: "Our call from God is authentic, but your call, as women, is not"? Who are we to reject God's call of women to the priesthood? I believe our Creator who is the Source of life and called forth the sun and stars is certainly capable of calling women to be priests.

(3) We are told that women cannot be priests because Jesus chose only men as apostles. As we know, Jesus did not ordain anyone. Jesus also chose a woman, Mary Magdalene, to be the first witness to His resurrection, which is at the core of our faith. Mary Magdalene became known as "the apostle to the apostles."

(4) A 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the Vatican's top Scripture scholars, concluded that there is no valid case to be made against the ordination of women from the Scriptures. In the Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian and other Christian churches, God's call of women to the priesthood is affirmed and women are ordained. Why not in the Catholic church?

(5) The Holy Scriptures remind us in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither male nor female. In Christ Jesus you are one." Furthermore, the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on The Church in the Modern World states: "Every type of discrimination ... based on sex. .. is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent."

After much reflection and many conversations with fellow priests and women, I believe sexism is at the root of excluding women from the priesthood. Sexism, like racism, is a sin. And no matter how hard we may try to justify discrimination against women, in the end, it is not the way of God. Sexism is about power. In the culture of clericalism many Catholic priests see the ordination of women as a threat to their power.

Our Church is in a crisis today because of the sexual abuse scandal and the closing of hundreds of churches because of a shortage of priests. When I entered Maryknoll we had over 300 seminarians. Today we have ten. For years we have been praying for more vocations to the priesthood. Our prayers have been answered. God is sending us women priests. Half the population are women. If we are to have a vibrant and healthy Church, we need the wisdom, experience and voices of women in the priesthood.

As Catholics, we believe in the primacy and sacredness of conscience. Our conscience is sacred because it gives us a sense of right and wrong and urges us to do the right thing. Conscience is what compelled Franz Jagerstatter, a humble Austrian farmer, husband and father of four young children, to refuse to join Hitler's army, which led to his execution. Conscience is what compelled Rosa Parks to say she could no longer sit in the back of the bus. Conscience is what compels women in our Church to say they cannot be silent and deny their call from God to the priesthood. And it is my conscience that compels me to say publicly that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is a grave injustice against women, against our Church and against our God who calls both men and women to the priesthood.

In his 1968 commentary on the Second Vatican Council's document, *Gaudium et Spes*, Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, said: "Over the pope ... there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary, even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority."

What you are requiring of me is not possible without betraying my conscience. In essence, you are telling me to lie and say I do not believe that God calls both men and women to the priesthood. This I cannot do, therefore I will not recant.

Like the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement and the right of women to vote, the ordination of women is inevitable because it is rooted in justice. Wherever there is an injustice, silence is the voice of consent. I respectfully ask that my fellow priests, bishops, Church leaders in the Vatican and Catholics in the pews speak out and affirm God's call of women to the priesthood.

Your Brother in Christ,
Roy Bourgeois, M.M.
P.O. Box 3330
Columbus, GA 31903
Tell Fax 706-682-5369

<http://www.womensordination.org/content/view/345/>

ACTION: Letters of support can be sent to the Maryknoll address above and to Father Roy.

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MAKE A
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Music, community and belonging

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

The more I think about why I am a musician, the more I run headlong into the idea of community.

As a young man learning to play, the guitar became the center of my sense of community. Perhaps a dozen of my high school peers played guitar, as a group of enthusiasts we got together, shared songs, discussed music, and coveted higher quality instruments than we owned. We were often competitive, but our shared interests and common location made us a community.

Later on, in college, I gigged around State College, Pennsylvania looking for a community to join. But none of the people I fell in with were very good at creating or maintaining a sense of community. State College is the home of Penn State, and as such has a high rate of residential turnover. Since most of my band mates, jamming buddies, and fellow solo artists were only going to be in State College for a few years, none of them felt the need to create a community based around their musical endeavors. And I had no idea that doing so would make playing music more sustaining and more rewarding.

I moved to Davis, California in 1988 to start a new band with some boyhood friends. We very nearly pulled it off. Again, not knowing the importance of community, we took our friends and fans for granted. That nonchalance about the people who appreciated us pushed me out of the band and back to school.

My girlfriend at the time supported in my decision to leave the band despite the fact that it was the reason we met. We married a few years later. Thus, even my marriage was evidence of seeking community through music.

As both an undergrad and a graduate student at Sonoma

State University, I focused on my studies. Music became a spice of life rather than the staff of life. And so I spent most of the 1990s fumbling around with a sort of psychological blindfold on. I could neither find nor create a community that provided me a sense of complete belonging.

I discovered Bluegrass music about ten years ago. My attraction to it has never been the music itself, though I like it well enough and I respect its better practitioners as excellent musicians. What drew me to Bluegrass was the sense of community. Here was an entire population who played, listened to, and enjoyed not only the music but each other's company. The community is tight knit, very organized, and it creates a strong sense of belonging. I had stumbled (still without knowing it) into the very reason I started to enjoy music in the first place. I was suitably hooked.

Recently I have been working on a musical project with a friend who lives in Niles. Niles is a small enclave of the city of Fremont that is geographically isolated from the rest of the city and has a separate history. These folks do community! Local gardeners supply local restaurateurs. Local musicians organize performances for the community and perform in them. Everyone, it seems, in Niles feel like they are a part of something special and unique. They honor it and draw both sustenance and enjoyment out of it.

As luck would have it, I have been made an honorary Nilesian. (The regulars took a vote in Michael McNevin's Mud Puddle Shop during a local jam. [Look up Michael McNevin, he's an excellent songwriter and singer who deserves your attention.] Moreover, many a Nilesian has stopped to suggest I move to the town. I have to admit a strong pull. Such a warm, welcoming, and musical community seems like heaven to me. I have good friends there and would be

exposed to a lot of opportunities to play music.

Recently, my other (current) musical endeavor started gigging and finally settled on a name. Beggar's Banquet has played a couple of Riverbank's "Sip & Stroll" events, performed in the lobby of the State Theater during a Modesto Art Walk, and most recently has served as a "tweener" for local Bluegrass band, Red Dog Ash.

Playing with Red Dog Ash was the inspiration for this column. I noticed at the gig that the band had brought friends, family members, and even kids to the show. The audience was diverse in age and background, but they seemed to know one another. The connections are intricate and convoluted but they are there, and the guys in Red Dog Ash foster and support those connections.

It was a great night for a gig and a sort of epiphany for me. I realized, upon reflection, that Red Dog Ash is actively seeking to create a community. Then I realized that I have been searching for a sense of belonging to a community through the act of sharing music. And for one night I was exactly where I wanted to be. I am happy to be a member of their community, and thrilled that they think Beggar's Banquet can be an active part of it.

Suitably inspired by both Niles and Red Dog Ash, I'd like to begin to create my own musical community. The trick for me is putting myself out there, letting people know who I am, what I do, and that they might enjoy it. I am a bit shy about sharing my musical endeavors, and I'm a lousy self-promoter. So I'll need to turn over a backyard full of Modesto Ash and Sycamore leaves to change that about myself. Leaf number one: I invite you to look me up on Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, or just Google me. Contact me and come to a gig. Maybe you and I can become part of each other's community.

"The Rich" Don't "Create Jobs," ...

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then you might be taxed. You don't even calculate your taxes until well after the hiring decision has been made. You don't lay people off to "cover" your taxes. And even if you did lay people off to "cover" taxes it would lower your costs and you would have more profit, which means you would have more taxes... except that laying someone off when you had demand would cause you to have less revenue, ... and you see how ridiculous it is to associate taxes with hiring at all!

People coming in the door and buying things is what creates jobs.

The Rich Do Not Create Jobs

Lots of regular people having money to spend is what creates jobs and businesses. That is the basic idea of demand-side economics and it works. In a consumer-driven economy designed to serve people, regular people with money in their pockets is what keeps everything going. And the equal opportunity of democracy with its reinvestment in infrastructure and education and the other fruits of democracy is fundamental to keeping a demand-side economy functioning.

When all the money goes to a few at the top everything breaks down. Taxing the people at the top and reinvesting the money into the democratic society is fundamental to keeping things going.

Democracy Creates Jobs

This idea that a few wealthy people -- the "producers" -- hand everything down to the rest of us -- "the parasites" -- is fundamentally at odds with the concept of democracy. In a democracy we all have an equal voice and an equal stake in how our society and our economy does. We do not "depend" on the good graces of a favored few for our livelihoods. We all are supposed to have an equal opportunity, and equal rights. And there are things we are all entitled to -- "entitlements" -- that we get *just because we were born here*. But we all share in the responsibility to cover the costs of democracy --

With the rich having a greater responsibility than the rest of us because they receive the most benefit from it.

This is why we have "progressive taxes" where the rates are supposed to go up as the income does.

Taxes Are The Lifeblood Of Democracy And The Prosperity That Democracy Produces

In a democracy the rich are supposed to pay more to cover things like building and maintaining the roads and schools because these are the things that enable their wealth. They actually do use the roads and schools more because the roads enable their businesses to prosper and the schools provide educated employees. But it isn't just that the rich use roads

more, it is that *everyone has a right to use roads and a right to transportation* because we are a democracy and everyone has the same rights. And as a citizen in a democracy you have an obligation to pay your share for that.

A democracy is supposed have a progressive tax structure that is *in proportion to the means to pay*. We do this because those who get more from the system do so because the democratic system offers them that ability. Their wealth is because of our system and therefore they owe back to the system in proportion. (Plus, history has taught the lesson that great wealth opposes democracy, so democracy must oppose the accumulation of great, disproportional wealth. In other words, part of the contract of living in a democracy is your obligation to protect the democracy and high taxes at the top is one of those protections.)

The conservative "producer and parasite" anti-tax philosophy is fundamentally at odds with the concepts of democracy (which they [8] proudly acknowledge - see more here [10], and here [11]) and should be understood and criticized as such. Taxes do not "take money out of the economy" they enable the economy. The rich do not "create jobs, We, the People create jobs

Source URL: <http://www.truthout.org/actually-rich-dont-create-jobs-we-do/1305380742>. See references there.