

Beyond Retaliation: A Response to the Killing of Osama Bin Laden

From Voices for Creative Nonviolence

This morning, a reporter called to talk about the news that the U.S. has killed Osama bin Laden. Referring to throngs of young people celebrating outside the White House, the reporter asked what Voices would say if we had a chance to speak with those young people.

We'd want to tell them about a group of people who, in November of 2011, walked from Washington, D.C. to New York City carrying a banner that said, "Our Grief is not a Cry for War." Several of the walkers were people who had lost their loved ones in the attacks on 9/11. When the walk ended, they formed a group called "Families for Peaceful Tomorrows" to continually represent the belief that our security is not founded in violence and revenge.

Often, during that walk, participants were asked what we'd suggest as an alternative to invading Afghanistan. One response was that the U.S. and other countries could enact a criminal investigation and rely on police

work and intelligence to apprehend the perpetrators of the attack. As it turns out, the U.S. discovered where Osama bin Laden was through those means and not through warfare. How have the past ten years of aerial bombardments, night raids, death squads, assassinations and drone attacks in Afghanistan benefited the U.S. people? Did the carnage and bloodshed bring the U.S. closer to discovering the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden? Have we defeated terrorism or created greater, deeper hatred toward the U.S.?

In the past, President Obama has said that "we stand on the shoulders of giants like Dr. King, yet our future progress will depend on how we prepare our next generation of leaders." (Jan. 18, 2010). In a historic speech, "Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break Silence", King said: "We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of

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David Smith-Ferri added to Peace Camp lineup

By KEN SCHROEDER

It's time to register for Peace Camp, June 24-29 at Camp Peaceful Pines in the Sierras.

David Smith-Ferri will return to camp to read from his new book of poetry, *With Children Like Your Own*. David is Poet Laureate of Ukiah, CA and is an active member of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. He has traveled twice to Iraq and traveled to Afghanistan with Voices in a December 2010 delegation. The people he met on his journeys inspired his poetry. His book will be available at camp. David has visited Modesto several times to share his poetry and stories.

There will be a discussion of Michael Pollan's book, *In Defense of Food* led by Modesto High School teacher Jennifer Pereira. Campers are invited to read the book before camp. From Pollan's introduction: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants. That, more or less, is the short answer to the supposedly incredibly complicated and confusing question of what we humans should eat in order to be maximally healthy... Eaters have real choices now, and those choices have real consequences, for our health and the health of the land and the health of our food culture." Learn more at www.michaelpollan.com/books. Jennifer will also offer a yoga workshop each morning.

Tim Smart will share his popular star walk with stories about the night sky. Lenore Mantegna of Santa Cruz will lead a workshop on nonviolent communication. In addition to the workshops there will be hiking, campfire, a talent show, children's activities and arts and crafts, including banner making and origami.

The \$70 fee covers program, food and lodging for the weekend. Young people are \$50. Early registration, before June 6th, entitles registrants to a \$10.00 per person discount. Partial scholarships and day-rates

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are also available. Registration forms are available in this issue or at www.stanislaus-connections.org, where they can be printed and mailed. Directions and additional details will be mailed to registrants.

Campers may arrive any time after 2:00 p.m. on Friday. The camp opens with supper on Friday and closes at noon on Sunday. Directions and other information will be mailed to participants before camp. Information: Ken Schroeder in Modesto, 209-569-0321.

29th Annual Peace Camp June 24, 25, and 26, 2011



Camp Peaceful Pines
near Pinecrest, California



Registration Form

Early Registration Deadline: **June 6, 2011**

Adults (age 18 and older)

1. _____ Address: _____
2. _____ City/State: _____ Zip _____
3. _____ Phone#: _____
4. _____ Email: _____

Total x \$70 ----- \$ _____

Youth (ages 4 -17)

1. _____ Age _____ 2. _____ Age _____
3. _____ Age _____ 4. _____ Age _____

Total x \$50 ----- \$ _____

Infant (ages 0 - 3) _____ Age _____ **NO CHARGE**

Early registration discount by June 6: subtract \$10 per person _____ (-) \$ _____

I need vegetarian meals _____ Voluntary Donation for scholarships \$ _____

Special Health needs, allergies, etc. _____

Special needs for cabin assignment: _____

I can offer/need a ride Friday _____ Saturday _____

GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

**There is an additional \$15 fee for each person
who comes to camp without pre-registration.**

Make checks payable to:
Modesto Peace/Life Center
P.O. Box 134
Modesto, CA 95353-0134

Parent authorization for minor children (must be signed if applicable)

I give permission for decisions to be made in my absence about the need for medical care. I give permission for my child to be treated by a physician or hospital in case of an emergency. I understand and agree that the Modesto Peace/Life Center is not responsible for my child/children. I will not hold the Modesto Peace/Life Center, its officers or leaders liable for medical aid rendered.

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (PRINT) _____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian _____ Date _____

Note: If adults bring children not their own, the parent/legal guardian of those children must complete and sign a separate parent authorization.

For camp information and scholarship availability:
Call Ken Schroeder, (209) 569-0321.

New website for High school student writers

Michael Moore is starting website called, "HIGH SCHOOL NEWSPAPER." at <http://mikeshighschoolnews.com/>. Here high school students will be able to write what they want and publish it. You will have freedom and an open forum and a chance to have your voice heard by millions.

Michael's 17-year-old niece, Molly, will edit this page for the first six months. She will ask you to send her your stories and ideas and the best ones will be posted on www.MichaelMoore.com.

Go to <http://mikeshighschoolnews.com/user/register> and register. Then once you're done, start submitting blogs, music, video and more!

stanislaus
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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

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.

Weds. 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: Public Event: Community Activity For Peace Day: AM: Tuolumne River Clean-up. (Possibly plant a

"Peace Grove"). Coordinator: Tuolumne River Trust

Sat. 9/17: PM: LGBT/ Straight Unity High School Dance. Coordinator: Tricia Spenker.

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



International Day Of Peace Picnic & Song Circle September 21, 2011

By JOHN LUCAS

Sponsored by the Modesto Peace/Life Center, the Peace Picnic & Song Circle is the final event ending the 10 Days for Peace events commemorating the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. Bring your blanket and a picnic dinner to Graceada Park on September 21. The festivities will be start at 5:30 PM. The Peace Center will provide dessert. Come to celebrate by listening to music provided by the "Funstrummers Ukulele Band", and to peace poems read by local poets, and then, singing peace songs together.

The International Day of Peace was established by the United Nations in 1981. It was first celebrated on September 21, 1982. In 2002, the United Nations declared September 21 as the permanent day for International Day of Peace. Since its inception, Peace Day has marked our personal and planetary

progress toward peace. It has grown to include millions of people in all parts of the world, and each year events are organized to commemorate and celebrate this day. Events range in scale from private gatherings to public concerts and forums where hundreds of thousands of people participate.

Come to Graceada Park to celebrate with others locally and around the world to make our world a more peaceful and just place to live.



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. A schedule of events appears above.

For more information call John Lucas, 527-7634, lucasjal@sbcglobal.net

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.**



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It's easier than you think

By JENIFER WEST

I recently read something that stopped me cold. It happened to be in the February/March 2011 issue of Organic Gardening magazine, and it struck me so profoundly that I feel compelled to pass it on, in hopes that others can be aware of it and so begin to combat it.

The statement was in a letter to the editor, entitled "Sharing Experience," submitted by Randy Hermanson of Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Hermanson makes several critical points, but the two I want to pass along are:

1) the contributions of gardeners to their local food pantries/kitchens banks can make the difference between others in their communities having something to eat or going hungry; and

2) we have lost the knowledge of how to cook and, particularly, what to do with fresh produce. While the former is a very important point (and probably the subject of a future column), this article will focus on the latter. Mr. Hermanson points out that, "Lack of knowledge is rapidly becoming a starvation issue in America." What a travesty!

As I write this, my mind is whirling. It seems I've had so many conversations about food, lately. The drastic increase in the cost of it, for one thing. But just as importantly, the preparation.

Some of the most satisfying, perhaps, are the ones I've had with a new friend. Although she and her husband are young, he recently had a health scare that's caused them to re-think how they feed their family. Not that they didn't eat well – they certainly work harder at that than most folks. But they realized they needed to "fine tune" things a bit.

Those discussions began with a loaf of homemade bread which I had sent over as a sort of show of support after learning that he'd spent a night in the ER. When he had tasted it, he called to ask for the recipe. Which prompted a conversation, the first of many, with his wife. As it turns out, they had wanted to learn to make bread, but hadn't known where to start. Like most folks, they had assumed it was difficult, but it absolutely isn't! In fact, it was only a few short generations ago that all bread was baked at home – there was no such thing as "store-bought." And what a wonderful thing it is – our friends have now purchased a grain mill, are enjoying fresh, homemade bread every day, saving money and avoiding buying one more thing in packaging in the bargain!

Their story demonstrates how brainwashed we've become. I arrived in this world towards the end of the Baby Boom, and am the only woman in my circle of friends who bakes her own bread. Or cans fruit. Or, sometimes, even, cooks dinner.

There are a lot of reasons for this, some of them legitimate (for the bread and canning, and maybe the occasional dinner, anyway). But the most offensive is the pervasive assumption that the big food companies "do food" better than the average person. Some folks even pay a premium to have someone else cut up and package their salads – no wonder we're losing the knowledge of how to feed ourselves!

My own dear husband, for example, who can fend for himself in the kitchen, didn't realize how easy it is to make Thousand Island salad dressing. He was amazed, when I showed him – not only because it's so easy, but because the flavor of the overpriced stuff on the grocery store shelves isn't anywhere near as good as what you can whip up in your own kitchen, using just three ingredients (mayonnaise, sweet pickle relish and ketchup, in case you're wondering).

"Lack of knowledge is rapidly becoming a starvation issue in America."

It really isn't difficult. Each of us can begin to take responsibility for what we put on our tables. It doesn't have to be anything elaborate – a little lettuce and carrot, dressed with the aforementioned Thousand Island or a little oil & vinegar, for example. Maybe a little steamed broccoli or asparagus. Make it a point to try an unfamiliar fruit or veggie – you just might discover a new favorite! From there, perhaps one could add a pot of rice. With an inexpensive rice cooker (Costco sells one for about \$30 that can be programmed to cook the rice while you're away, and can even be used to cook one-pot meals), you can branch out into things like chicken, beans or whatever else inspires. If someone you know makes a dish you particularly enjoy, ask him or her to show you how to make it. Most likely, your friend will be flattered that you asked. Invest in a good, all-around cookbook that covers everything, like the red-and-white-checked one from Better Homes & Gardens, or use an online search engine to explore methods and recipes.

And once you've learned a thing or two, share that knowledge! I work in an office but recently used a lunch break to teach coworkers how to cut up a chicken (it's quick, and easy) – and help them see how much money you can save, if you buy it on sale, cut it up yourself and freeze it.

We can all eat well, save money and go easier on the environment in the bargain – it really is easier than you think.

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

By Lillian Vallee

73. Run, River, Run!

This spring a drive west along Highway 132, across the San Joaquin River, revealed a river coming beautifully into its own, a hopeful sight in a time of economic hardship and political turmoil. Hundreds of egrets gleaned the fields to the east and west, swallows fed in arabesques, and the river flowed between and around islands of oaks and elderberry, lush in their spring finery. Rivers flooding the bottomlands frighten us because we are not used to a porous, “edge” world, one in which we lose land to water, even if temporarily, while the rivers spread their life-giving silt and create fecund seasonal and, sometimes, permanent wetlands. Without the hard-won, additional release of water into the San Joaquin riverbed and efforts to maintain its tributaries, the wetlands that comprise national wildlife refuges in the San Joaquin Plain would be in jeopardy. The necklace of refuges along the Pacific Flyway is critical to the safe passage of migratory wildfowl into wintering habitat when conditions grow harsh in the northern reaches of the continent.

Two solid new books highlight the importance of Central Valley wetlands and the tentative successes of their champions: *The Fall and Rise of the Wetlands of California's Great Central Valley* by Philip Garone, Assistant Professor of History at California State University, Stanislaus, and *Seeking Refuge: Birds and Landscapes of the Pacific Flyway* by Robert M. Wilson, Assistant Professor of Geography at Syracuse University.

Garone's book is divided into sections that describe, first, “The Nature of the Great Central Valley and the Pacific Flyway”; then the “fall” of our wetlands, from “Native American Lands of Plenty” to reclamation; and finally the “rise” or resurgence of Central Valley wetlands in recent decades, including federal and state responses to waterfowl crises, Kesterson, and the battles for Grasslands and the San Joaquin River.

This brief passage from Part I demonstrates the loving detail of Garone's book and explains not just how wetlands help waterfowl, but how the waterfowl and other waterbirds help wetlands: “They can maintain or increase biological diversity in wetlands by transporting invertebrates and invertebrate eggs, as well as plant seeds, in or on their plumage. In addition, ducks transport seeds in their digestive tracts, a small percentage of which remain viable after passage. Herbivorous birds such as snow geese and white-fronted geese can significantly reduce emergent vegetation and, by digging out tubers, can deepen basins, thereby retarding plant succession and the filling in of marshes.... Less direct, but more widespread, is the influence of waterbirds on wetlands owing to nutrients excreted into the water column and substrate. Flocks of waterfowl attracted to wetland sites deposit nutrients in amounts significant enough to increase the growth of algae, thus influencing food webs and larger ecosystem processes. In each of these ways, waterfowl and other waterbirds influence wetland development and community structure.”



Robert Wilson's book begins at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge and illuminates the complexities of modern wildlife management: artificial wetlands, excavated canals, water contracts, postage-sized refuges serving multitudes of birds, crop predation by hungry waterfowl, pesticides and bird die-offs. This is the saga of, in William Cronin's words, bird biology entangled with human politics. “Pacific flyway waterfowl vividly demonstrate,” Wilson writes, “that the landscapes of the Far West are a shared space. Through their migratory journeys, these birds connect seemingly disparate places, since, for them, the wetlands along the flyway serve as one habitat. If waterfowl and other birds are to have a future, society must cultivate and support the spaces they need to survive. Yet as this history demonstrates, this does not mean creating separate places apart from society or trying to restore landscapes to pristine conditions. Migratory waterfowl have survived in some of the most intensely transformed landscapes in North America. But if they are to thrive, rather than merely endure in small numbers, they need more than marginal land and waste water from agriculture.”

On June 1 and 2 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is soliciting public input for a proposed expansion of the San Joaquin River National Wildlife. The proposed expansion “presents a unique conservation opportunity to restore a major migratory corridor through the center of California to benefit the birds of the Pacific Flyway, neo-tropical migratory birds, and other wildlife. The proposed expansion would connect the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge with the Grasslands Ecological Area, a 160,000-acre mosaic of Central Valley floor habitats located in the historic floodplain of the San Joaquin River.” The Service would like “to build on the success of previous restoration efforts” and restore some of the “complex system of channels, swales, ridges, flood basins, and sloughs” that were once “periodically inundated and supported a great diversity of permanent and seasonal wet-

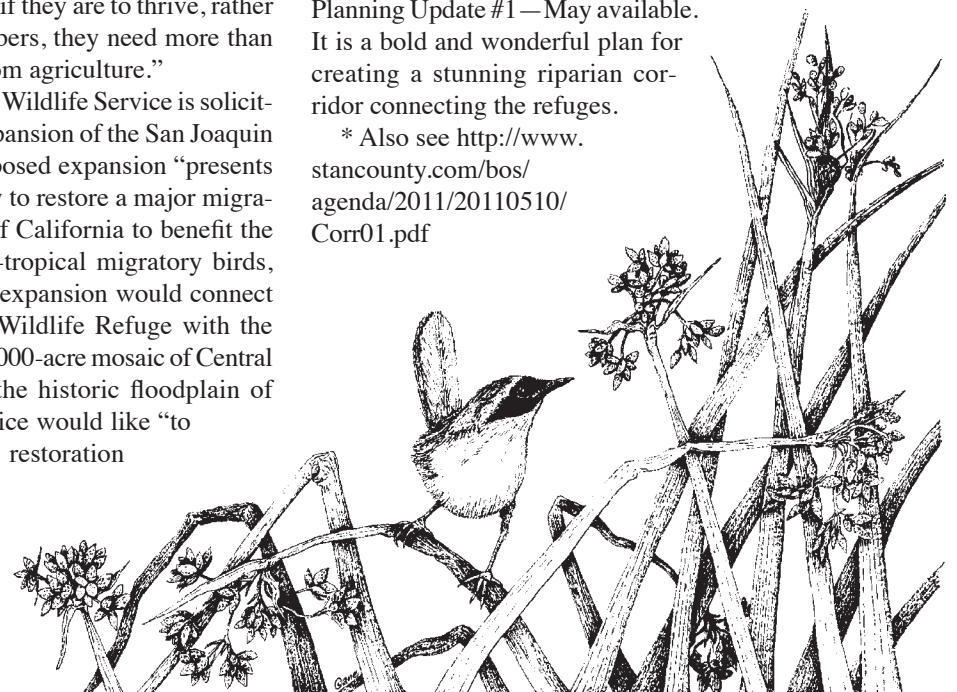
lands, riparian scrub and forest, and aquatic habitat teeming with fish and wildlife.” *

This summer Central Valley residents have an opportunity to learn about how federal and state agencies, environmental and other organizations, and individuals have reconciled the needs of people with those of wildlife in their backyard. They may also learn something about the connection between wetlands and the collective imagination. In the book, *Tracks in the Sky: Wildlife and Wetlands of the Pacific Flyway*, published in 1987 and still unsurpassed in its stunningly lyrical photography and prose, Peter Steinhart writes: “Losing wetlands is, in part, losing the ability to look at things, to see their light and mass, color and edge. City life closes our eyes to such things. The city offers many choices to our pocket-books, but fewer and fewer to our hearts and eyes. We use our eyes on city streets or before television screens, where they turn our dreams into apprehension of war, panic, mugging and ruin. What we see increasingly makes us afraid of our imaginations. And as we grow to fear what we imagine, we shrink from dreams. We are threatened with boredom, sameness, perhaps even the death of story and faith. Such things were once nurtured in wetlands. Such things may survive in them.”

NOTE: For people who did not make the public commentary session on June 1 and 2 in Los Banos and Modesto, respectively, there are several ways to be heard by July 15, 2011, closing date for comments. The first is to use the email fw8plancomments@fws.gov. Use “San Joaquin River” in the subject. There is also a refuge planning website: <http://www.fws.gov/cno/refuges/>. People can also write directly to Richard Smith, 2800 Cottage Way, W-1832, Sacramento, CA 95825 or fax him: (916) 414-6497, or contact Kim Forrest, Project Leader, San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex, P.O. Box 2176, Los Banos, CA 93635 (209) 826-3508. There is a brochure on the Proposed Expansion, Planning Update #1—May available.

It is a bold and wonderful plan for creating a stunning riparian corridor connecting the refuges.

* Also see <http://www.stancounty.com/bos/agenda/2011/20110510/Corr01.pdf>



IN ONE word: Bravo!

By URI AVNERY

The news about the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas is good for peace. If the final difficulties are ironed out and a full agreement is signed by the two leaders, it will be a huge step forward for the Palestinians – and for us.

There is no sense in making peace with half a people. Making peace with the entire Palestinian people may be more difficult, but will be infinitely more fruitful.

Therefore: Bravo!

Binyamin Netanyahu also says Bravo. Since the government of Israel has declared Hamas a terrorist organization with whom there will be no dealings whatsoever, Netanyahu can now put an end to any talk about peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. What, peace with a Palestinian government that includes terrorists? Never! End of discussion.

Two bravos, but such a difference.

THE ISRAELI debate about Arab unity goes back a long way. It already started in the early fifties, when the idea of pan-Arab unity raised its head. Gamal Abd-al-Nasser hoisted this banner in Egypt, and the pan-Arab Baath movement became a force in several countries (long before it degenerated into local Mafias in Iraq and Syria).

Nahum Goldman, President of the World Zionist Organization, argued that pan-Arab unity was good for Israel. He believed that peace was necessary for the existence of Israel, and that it would take all the Arab countries together to have the courage to make it.

David Ben-Gurion, Israel's Prime Minister, thought that peace was bad for Israel, at least until Zionism had achieved all its (publicly undefined) goals. In a state of war, unity among Arabs was a danger that had to be prevented at all costs.

Goldman, the most brilliant coward I ever knew, did not have the courage of his convictions. Ben-Gurion was far less brilliant, but much more determined.

He won.

NOW WE have the same problem all over again.

Netanyahu and his band of peace saboteurs want to prevent Palestinian unity at all costs. They do not want peace, because peace would prevent Israel from achieving the Zionist goals, as they conceive them: a Jewish state in all of historical Palestine, from the sea to the Jordan River (at least). The conflict is going to last for a long, long time to come, and the more divided the enemy, the better.

As a matter of fact, the very emergence of Hamas was influenced by this calculation. The Israeli occupation authorities deliberately encouraged the Islamic movement, which later became Hamas, as a counterweight to the secular nationalist Fatah, which was then conceived as the main enemy.

Later, the Israeli government deliberately fostered the division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by violating

the Oslo agreement and refusing to open the four “safe passages” between the two territories provided for in the agreement. Not one was open for a single day. The geographical separation brought about the political one.

When Hamas won the January 2006 Palestinian elections, surprising everybody including itself, the Israeli government declared that it would have no dealings with any Palestinian government in which Hamas was represented. It ordered – there is no other word – the US and EU governments to follow suit. Thus the Palestinian Unity Government was brought down.

The next step was an Israeli-American effort to install a strongman of their choosing as dictator of the Gaza Strip, the bulwark of Hamas. The chosen hero was Muhammad Dahlan, a local chieftain. It was not a very good choice – the Israeli security chief recently disclosed that Dahlan had collapsed sobbing into his arms. After a short battle, Hamas took direct control of the Gaza Strip.

A FRATRICIDAL split in a liberation movement is not an exception. It is almost the rule.

The Irish revolutionary movement was an outstanding example. In this country we had the fight between the Hagana and the Irgun, which at times became violent and very ugly. It was Menachem Begin, then the Irgun commander, who prevented a full-fledged civil war.

The Palestinian people, with all the odds against them, can hardly afford such a disaster. The split has generated intense mutual hatred between comrades who spent time in Israeli prison together. Hamas accused the Palestinian Authority – with some justification – of cooperating with the Israeli government against them, urging the Israelis and the Egyptians to tighten the brutal blockade against the Gaza Strip, even preventing a deal for the release of the Israeli prisoner-of-war, Gilad Shalit, in order to block the release of Hamas activists and their return to the West Bank. Many Hamas activists suffer in Palestinian prisons, and the lot of Fatah activists in the Gaza Strip is no more joyous.

Yet both Fatah and Hamas are minorities in Palestine. The great mass of the Palestinian people desperately want unity and a joint struggle to end the occupation. If the final reconciliation agreement is signed by Mahmoud Abbas and Khalid Meshaal, Palestinians everywhere will be jubilant.

BINYAMIN NETANYAHU is jubilant already. The ink was not yet dry on the preliminary agreement initialed in Cairo, when Netanyahu made a solemn speech on TV, something like an address to the nation after an historic event.

“You have to choose between us and Hamas,” he told the Palestinian Authority. That would not be too difficult – on the one side a brutal occupation regime, on the other Palestinian brothers with a different ideology.

But this stupid threat was not the main point of the statement. What Netanyahu told us was that there would be no dealings with a Palestinian Authority connected in any way with the “terrorist Hamas”.

The whole thing is a huge relief for Netanyahu. He has been invited by the new Republican masters to address the US Congress next month and had nothing to say. Nor had he anything to offer the UN, which is about to recognize the State of Palestine this coming September. Now he has: peace is impossible, all Palestinians are terrorists who want to throw us into the sea. Ergo: no peace, no negotiations, no nothing.

IF ONE really wants peace, the message should of course be quite different.

Hamas is a part of Palestinian reality. Sure, it is extremist, but as the British have taught us many times, it is better to make peace with extremists than with moderates. Make peace with the moderates, and you must still deal with the extremists. Make peace with the extremists, and the business is finished.

Actually, Hamas is not quite as extreme as it likes to present itself. It has declared many times that it will accept a peace agreement based on the 1967 lines and signed by Mahmoud Abbas if it is ratified by the people in a referendum or a vote in parliament. Accepting the Palestinian Authority means accepting the Oslo agreement, on which the PA is based – including the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. In Islam, as in all other religions, God's word is definitely final, but it can be “interpreted” any way needed. Don't we Jews know.

What made both sides more flexible? Both have lost their patrons – Fatah its Egyptian protector, Hosny Mubarak, and Hamas its Syrian protector, Bashar al-Assad, who cannot be relied upon anymore. That has brought both sides to face reality: Palestinians stand alone, so they had better unite.

For peace-oriented Israelis, it will be a great relief to deal with a united Palestinian people and with a united Palestinian territory. Israel can do a lot to help this along: open at long last an extraterritorial free passage between the West Bank and Gaza, put an end to the stupid and cruel blockade of the Gaza Strip (which has become even more idiotic with the elimination of the Egyptian collaborator), let the Gazans open their port, airport and borders. Israel must accept the fact that religious elements are now a part of the political scene all over the Arab world. They will become institutionalized and, probably, far more “moderate”. That is part of the new reality in the Arab world.

The emergence of Palestinian unity should be welcomed by Israel, as well as by the European nations and the United States. They should get ready to recognize the State of Palestine within the 1967 borders. They should encourage the holding of free and democratic Palestinian elections and accept their results, whatever they may be.

The wind of the Arab Spring is blowing in Palestine too. Bravo!

The great mass of the Palestinian people desperately want unity and a joint struggle to end the occupation.

The wind of the Arab Spring is blowing in Palestine too.

New data show California global leadership in green patents, VC investment, energy productivity & solar energy generation

From Next 10

New statistics recently released in the “2010 California Green Innovation Index” document California’s increasing global leadership in green innovation, cleantech venture capital investment, and energy productivity, despite the economic downturn. New data also show that more businesses are opening in California than are closing or leaving. California’s economy has profited from reducing its dependence on carbon, according to Index statistics.

The third edition of the California Green Innovation Index (<http://www.next10.org/environment/greenInnovation10.html>), an initiative from Next 10 and compiled by Collaborative Economics, tracks California’s history of policy and technology innovation, and resulting economic and environmental gains or losses.

Some of the Index Findings:

California’s global leadership in green innovation continues to grow, attracting billions in investment dollars

- Global venture capital (VC) investment in clean technology is becoming more concentrated in California. Accounting for 24 percent of total global investment, the

Beyond retaliation from page 1

hate. And history is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate.” (See <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatime-tobreaksilence.htm>.)

In that same speech, King called for a neighborliness that goes beyond one’s tribe, race, class, and nation. We think of that call in light of experiences of a 2010 Voices delegation that visited a rural village in the central highlands of Afghanistan. They sat with women who were close in age to the young people who were celebrating outside of the White House last night. Asked if they had ever heard of a time when a large passenger plane had crashed into a tall building in the United States, the young women were puzzled. They had never heard of 9/11.

They live in a country where 850 children die every day, a country which the UN has termed the worst country in the world into which a child can be born, where the average life expectancy is 42 years of age. The UN says that 7.4 million Afghans live with hunger and fear of starvation, while millions more rely on food help, and one in five children die before the age of five. Each week, the U.S. taxpayers spend two billion dollars to continue the war in Afghanistan.

Matt Daloisio, who co-coordinates the Witness Against Torture Campaign, sounded a note that we find far more authentic than triumphal celebration. “10 years,” Matt wrote. “Over 6000 US Soldiers killed. Trillions of Dollars wasted. Hundreds of thousands of civilians killed. Tens of thousands imprisoned. Torture as part of foreign policy. And we are supposed to celebrate the murder of one person? I am not excited. I am not happy. I remain profoundly sad.”

From <http://vcnv.org/>

New data also show that more businesses are opening in California than are closing or leaving.

state has attracted \$11.6 billion in cleantech VC since 2006.

- In the first half of 2010, the state attracted 40 percent of global cleantech VC exceeding the first half of 2009 by 246%.
- California is the top state in patent registrations in green technology outpacing second-ranked New York by more than 150 patents between 2007 and 2009.
- From 2007 to 2009, California represented 39 percent of Solar Energy patents registered in the U.S., up from 24 percent in the period 1995 to 1997.
- California accounts for 20 percent of all Battery Technology patents registered in the U.S. between 2007 and 2009, and 16 percent of total Wind Energy patent registrations.
- California dominates the country in solar energy production, representing over 90 percent of the total U.S. net solar electricity generation in 2007.

California’s green manufacturing jobs are growing while conventional manufacturing jobs are in decline

- From 1995 to 2008, manufacturing employment in core green economy expanded by 19 percent, while there was a nine percent drop in total manufacturing employment. Between 2007 and 2008, green manufacturing employment grew by 1 percent, while total manufacturing employment dropped 4 percent.
- Green manufacturing is taking place in every region - with growth since 1995 in the Bay Area (55%), Orange County (54%), and San Joaquin Valley (38%).

California’s economy has profited from efforts to improve energy efficiency and reduce its dependence on carbon.

- For every dollar of GDP generated in 2008, the state’s economy requires 32 percent less carbon than it did in 1990, saving California residents money and giving California businesses the competitive edge.
- Overall GDP produced per unit of energy continues to be 68 percent higher than the rest of the nation and has been rising at a faster rate at least since the 1990s, freeing up billions of dollars to produce goods and services that would otherwise have been spent on energy.
- In 2007, California’s manufacturers generated nearly \$44 of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for every dollar spent on electricity — \$13 more than the rest of the nation.
- From 1992 to 2007, California GDP relative to total electricity expenditures in manufacturing increased 21 percent, compared to 3 percent in the rest of the country.

- Between 2002 and 2007, electricity productivity of manufacturers improved by 13 percent in California and dropped by ten percent in the rest of the nation.
- Each Californian used 20 percent less energy in 2008 than in 1970, while energy consumption per capita in the rest of the country has generally remained above 1970 levels.

Californians are getting out of their cars more to use public transportation, or using more alternative fuels when driving

- Public transit ridership is on the rise in California even as transit availability shrinks. The total number of annual passengers riding public transit was 16 percent higher in 2008 than 2004. Between 2007 and 2008, total revenue miles (a measure of transit availability) decreased 15 percent.
- Total vehicles in the state dropped by 1.3 percent from 2007 to 2008.
- Alternative fuel use is on the rise, jumping 9 percent from 2006-2007, while conventional fuel use dropped 0.4 percent. Over the longer term (2003-2007) alternative fuel use increased 55 percent, while conventional fuel use increased 4 percent.

This year’s *Index* examines myths about California’s business climate and found contrary to conventional wisdom, the facts are:

Fact One: Electricity bills are lower in California.

Fact Two: California manufacturers spend a smaller percentage of total operating costs on electricity.

Fact Three: California’s electricity productivity in manufacturing is outpacing the rest of the nation.

Fact Four: More businesses are starting up in California than are leaving or closing.

The *Index* was produced in partnership with Collaborative Economics. Proprietary patent registration data was produced in cooperation with 1790 Analytics (based on data from the U.S. Patent and Trade Office).

About Next 10: Next 10 is an independent, nonpartisan organization that educates, engages and focuses on innovation and the intersection between the economy, the environment, and quality of life.

About Collaborative Economics: Collaborative Economics is a California-based research and consulting organization that works in the area of economic and environmental research.



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Yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world

By CHUCK KAUFMAN

I have been hearing a lot lately that we need to be proactive; that we need to focus our work on positive things. If we believe that a better world is possible, we need to build that better world.

All that is true – up to a point.

Augusto C. Sandino, the Nicaraguan “General of Free Men”, had a vision. He, and a group that shared his vision, planned to start a utopian, self-sustaining and democratic commune where they could build their own version of a better world. But he knew that the commune would never be allowed to survive, much less thrive, while his country was occupied by US Marines. So he led a successful, six-year guerrilla war from 1927-1933 to oust the foreign invaders. He left from a peace dinner with the country’s president thinking that he could finally lay down his sword and take up his plow. Instead he was abducted by troops trained by the marines to keep “order” in their stead. To this day his body has not been found, his community remains a dream, and his country suffered through 45 years of US-supported dictatorship before the Sandinista Triumph in 1979.

To paraphrase a Christmas editorial in the 1897 New York Sun, “Yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world.”

The Mexican group, Las Abejas (The Bees), had a dream as well. They were a pacifist group of Zapatista supporters in the community of Acteal, Chiapas. On December 22, 1997, while in a prayer meeting at the Catholic Church, they were set upon by the paramilitary group Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice). Forty-five people were slaughtered over several hours while the near-by Mexican army refused to intervene. Women and children were among those massacred including pregnant women who were stabbed or shot in the belly to insure that their unborn children did not survive.

Yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world.

On April 5, 2010, WikiLeaks released a classified US military video, shot from the gun-site camera of an Apache helicopter, showing the indiscriminate killing in Iraq of over a dozen people including two Reuters news staff, and the wounding of two young children. The video included audio of the American soldiers glorying in the slaughter.

Yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world.

Torture at Abu Graib, indefinite imprisonment at Guantanamo Bay, predator drones killing women and children in Pakistan, Israelis firing on unarmed Palestinians during the commemoration of Al Nakba (The Catastrophe), mass graves in Mexico, massacres in Guatemala, police firing US-donated tear gas canisters at demonstrators’ heads in Honduras, racist laws against immigrants, house raids and grand jury subpoenas for peace activists in the American Midwest, oh yes, Virginia, there is evil in the world.

After a decade in the current anti-war movement, a quarter century in Latin America solidarity, and a lifetime of witnessing wars, coups, bombings, and democracy only for those who can pay for it, I’m tired and frustrated. It would be nice to weed my own garden for a while, to grow and eat

organic vegetables.

But more and more I look to the Abolition Movement, both slave and free, for my inspiration and my reason to go on. Slavery would not have ended without struggle. I don’t buy the myth that it was doomed by economic factors. That’s the story they tell us so we won’t believe that our struggles make a difference. No amount of focus on positive things, on personal fulfillment, on community joy would have lanced the awful pustule, that maggot-filled boil that was chattel slavery. Only through men and women, black and white, putting their lives, their fortunes and their health on the line to change the culture of their day, was this blot on our humanity eradicated from our shores.

No amount of prayer and meditation, no amount of giving to the poor, no amount of being nice to your maid or generous to her children brought about the Voting Rights Act, equal education, and an end to lynching and the Ku Klux Klan. No. It came about through human beings, white and black and brown, militantly wrestling with evil and accepting the beatings, the jailings, the killings that shocked the conscience of society. It came about because people like you and me refused to stop or be distracted until the laws and

the culture which defended racial supremacy were changed and the process of recognizing the humanness of us all could begin.

Mothers Day was not founded to honor our mothers; it was founded by mothers who had lost their sons in the Civil War as a way for them to demand an end to war.

So yes, let us focus on the positive. Let us build our sustainable communities. Let us practice our yoga or religion or whatever gives us personal strength and fortitude to carry on. But let us never forget that there is evil in the world; evil that has the capability to destroy all our good works. Let us never mistake actions that make us feel good with actions that are necessary. If we are to build a better world, we must first defeat the evil that makes this one so bad for so many. There is no other way forward than through struggle.

As citizens and residents of the country that is the greatest threat to world peace, the greatest threat to human survival, we have a moral obligation to struggle against evil. To react IS to focus on the positive. We are at a moment in history when it is not possible to live a moral life, when it is not possible to build a better world, unless we are every day on

the barricades struggling to end the wars, struggling to cut the bloated Pentagon budget, struggling to stop the corporate rape of the environment, struggling for an end to Empire and corporate greed.

In reality, it is a false dichotomy to say we have to be either reactive or proactive. We have to be both. No matter how tired or frustrated we feel at times, our lives are easy. Very few of us don’t know how we will feed our children tonight. Very few of us worry that we will be killed by paramilitaries or police on our way home from work. Very few of us live with the stress of knowing that a knock on the door could end our freedom or a hellfire missile through the roof could end our life. The truth is, we really do have the capacity to work on those things which we believe will build a better world while at the same time we struggle against those things which inhibit its birth. We really have no other choice.

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must... undergo the fatigues of supporting it. – Thomas Paine

[Chuck Kaufman is national co-coordinator of the Alliance for Global Justice.]

... I look to the Abolition Movement,
both slave and free, for my inspiration
and my reason to go on.

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THE LATTE REBELLION MANIFESTO

*If you are reading this, you are clearly sympathetic
to the cause!*

What cause, you ask?

*The cause of brown people everywhere—
whether you have espresso-colored hair,
a perfect latte tan, or you're as light as a mocha bianca!*

The world must acknowledge you!

The world will appreciate you!

Our philosophy is simple:

Promote a latte-colored world!

Forget bananas and coconuts!

Go for the seamless blend! You can't un-latte the latte!

It doesn't matter if you are only coffee on the inside.

If you're a latte at heart, you are welcome.

Iced or hot, raise your cup to the cause!

Lattes of the World, Unite!

1

Summer vacation, so far, was an epic failure. A truly monumental waste. Hot interminable days that melted one into the next. The monotony of lying around baking in the heat broken only by the further monotony of work. Money we weren't allowed to spend (because it went straight into the college fund) earned at retail jobs we yearned to quit (because they were embarrassingly menial, excruciatingly boring and swarming with mallrats, half of whom went to our school).

Then there was the unfortunate confrontation at the Inter-Club Council pool party.

That was what planted the seeds of the Latte Rebellion. But when I really sit down to think about it, it started a hell of a lot earlier than that.

Take this incident that happened a couple of weeks before, at the end of junior year: Carey and I were crammed into the auditorium bathroom before graduation, touching up our hair and makeup along with the other top-ranked juniors who got to march in the Honor Guard. Kaelyn Vander Sar—who had blossomed from mildly catty to full-blown bitch on wheels after we started high school—said, “Oh, Carey, you look so cute in that white dress. Like a little Japanese cartoon character.”

Kaelyn turned to me, blotting her shell-pink lipstick with a tissue. “And your dress—wow. It takes some guts to wear something like that. I guess you have to have Mexican J-Lo curves to pull it off.”

I stared at her, one hand going reflexively to my hip, where I'd just tied a gauzy scarf that I thought was not only sassy but also accented my waist. Evidently all it did was draw attention to my butt.

The heat rose behind my cheeks, my head filling with any

number of things I could tell her. *Carey is NOT Japanese. And J-Lo is not from Mexico. She is a Puerto Rican American. That is not even CLOSE to the same thing. There are these things called maps; you should look at one. And, am I dreaming or did you just say my butt was big?*

But in the end, I didn't say any of it. It seemed futile. She just didn't get it. Maybe she really did think she was paying us a compliment. Or worse, she could have been deliberately trying to provoke us. We weren't exactly the best of friends, after all.

Anyway, because she had to bring up J-Lo, I obsessed about my round butt, round shoulders and round face the whole time I was standing out there in front of the school, and Carey stood there in stony silence, convinced that being five feet tall made her a midget, and pissed at me for not setting Kaelyn straight. It was a bad situation. But it wasn't an isolated incident, not by a long shot. It was just one of many. And they all seemed to culminate in the scene at the pool party, the summer before our senior year.

Leaving Lonelytown

*A found poem, from “Alaska Coasts Melting –
And Not Just the Ice.” NationalGeographic.com
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2009/02/090220-alaska-coast-melting.html>*

Swallowed by the sea
near the town of Lonely
Remains of the ghost town

a century on shore
buried underwater

perpetually frozen earth
melting
erosion patterns
drifting
reshaping

the findings
document human settlements
At least one has already been lost
another will soon be gone

unusual landscape
especially vulnerable

a picture of a whaling boat
massive amounts of ice

a natural process
melting so fast
a shift in the forces
plans can be devised

not just the ice
according to the research
but it would be unusual.



Sarah Jamila Stevenson

Sarah Jamila Stevenson, writer, artist, editor and graphic designer has lived in Modesto for ten years. Her visual art has been exhibited around California, and her writing has appeared in a variety of web sites and print publications. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Mills College, a BA in Art Practice and Psychology from U.C. Berkeley, and a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Printmaking from the San Francisco Art Institute. Her first novel for young adults, *THE LATTE REBELLION*, was published in January 2011 by Flux.

Sarah is active in the online writing and literacy community, and is passionate about helping readers get access to good books and good information about books. In 2005, she co-founded a blog about YA literature and writing, *Finding Wonderland* (<http://writingya.blogspot.com/>), with author Tanita Davis, where they maintain a special focus on multicultural and diverse books for teen readers. She is the graphic designer and webmaster for *Guys Lit Wire* (<http://guyslitwire.blogspot.com/>), a group blog devoted to bringing literary news and reviews to the attention of teenage boys and the people who care about them. She has been a volunteer judge for the Children's and Young Adult Bloggers' Literary Awards (Cybils) for the past five years, and she is co-founder of the brand-new website *Reach A Reader* (www.reachareader.org), a clearinghouse for resources pertaining to children's and YA book donation.

Visit Sarah online at www.SarahJamilaStevenson.com

Subjective/Objective

His ears were extra-sensitive, like bats' ears, curving inward like a spiraling shell, even on the inside where you couldn't see. The little bones, hammer, anvil and stirrup, would perform their function, the eardrum would vibrate and the tiny hairs and stones and mysterious organs would dance and throb. It would enter his brain and travel the synapses and spark across gaps, cause chemicals to release and other chemicals to stop releasing and somewhere along the line the message was amplified as if through the belly of a conch, trumpeting into his consciousness as something larger than life, a burst of noise like a howl of wolves or engines. Nobody knew if it was the process of transformation, the journey from outside to inside, that did this. His father always said he had oversensitive hearing, but it was certainly possible, just the tiniest bit possible, that maybe everything was just *too loud*.

Seeking a Shore

February, 2011

After Hosni Mubarak resigned

I

In 2004, in the days after the tsunami spread its wide,
heavy body
over Indonesia and Thailand and Sri Lanka and India,
crushing homes, hospitals, schools,
videos of the wave were posted online and shared
electronically.
Accustomed to viewing explosions, raging waters,
hurricane winds,
some people who watched
from the dry comfort of their homes or offices were
disappointed.
The wave didn't impress.
They would have been even more disappointed
had they followed the wave
as it moved through deep ocean waters,
only the crown of its head visible.
People failed to recognize its unity and dimensions,
how it had leapt from the sea floor,
gathered itself from so many individual particles of water,
and traveled hundreds of miles
remaining intact,
how its legs extended deep into the ocean.

II

In Egypt, people have risen in a wave

and swamped the US-backed government of Hosni
Mubarak,
forcing the resignation of the dictator-president.
A wave of humanity.
A wave of human longing.



Major media outlets are calling it the 18-Day Revolution,
but it was decades in coming,
decades of resistance,
decades of people taking risks,
forming civil society groups,
speaking truth to their children
and nieces and nephews and neighbors,
decades of holding together.

And as tents were erected in Tahrir Square,
and we watched on Al-Jazeera and CNN and MSNBC and
online,
we began to see how tall the wave is
and how long its legs are.

I come from three generations who have been fighting for
social reform and fiscal
freedoms in this country, Khalid Abdalla said.

We watched as Hosni Mubarak tried to protect himself
by firing and replacing government ministers,
by bringing in a Vice-President,
how Mubarak laid down sand bags
trying to prevent the waters from reaching him,
only to see the wave come ashore outside the Parliament
building.
And it was too late to outrun it,
too late to seek high ground.

We watched in horror as Mubarak
tried to frighten people, to fracture and disrupt the wave.
As Egyptian police fired rubber bullets and tear gas,
and turned water hoses on the protesters.
As pro-government groups, on horses and camels,
armed with sticks and rocks, and some, yes, some with
guns,
charged Tahrir Square.
And three hundred people were killed.
And when the need for unity was greatest,
the wave held.

III

Across the region,
in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia,
Yemen...
across the globe, wherever the tectonic plate of
government oppression
pushes against the rights of its citizens,
a shift occurs in people's hearts
and the same wave of longing leaps up to ride out on seas
seeking a shore.

— David Smith-Ferri

David, along with Kathy Kelly, Nobel Peace Prize
nominee and leader of *Voices For Creative Nonviolence*,
was brought to Modesto by the Peace Community to read
his poetry, and has been a featured poet in *Stanislaus
Connections*' "A Gathering of Voices." Visit <http://vcnv.org/seeking-a-shore>. He will be at Peace Camp.

2-Roads poetry on My TV 26

By ED BEARDEN

June 4: Gary Thomas, teacher, poet, actor

June 6 and 11: Chad Sokolovsky poet and keyboard artist

June 13, and 18: Tom Myers, teacher and poet

June 20 and 25: Arlene Mattos, Modesto's 2nd poet
laureate, 1996-2000

June 27 and July 2: Pat Eggenberger

Two Roads Productions has just completed our 24th "Poets
Of Modesto" interview, and they are all on the in-ter-net at
www.vimeo.com. Search for any of these great interviews:

Arlene Mattos, Bill Sehl, Bruce Crawford, Chad
Sokolovsky, Cleo Griffith, debbie loyd, Evanelle Ator Davis,
Gary Thomas, Gillian Wegener, Gordon Durham, Kathleen
West, Linda Prather, Linda Sawyer, Linda Scheller, Louise
Kantro, Lynn M Hansen, Manny Moreno, Marge Brooks,
Pat Eggenberger, Roberta Bearden, Roberta McReynolds,
Sal Salerno, Tom Myers.

If you are a poet, and would like to be interviewed, contact
Ed Bearden at choc624@sbcglobal.net and we can set up an
interview time.

NOTE: If you have written a 9-11 poem, send it to me by
June 15 and I will publish it in an up-coming 9-11 anthology.
(Choc624@sbcglobal.net). I am interested in how 9-11 was
experienced in the valley. I know many of our poets have
written 9-11 poems. September is publication date. Thanks
very much for your support on this 10th anniversary of a
national tragedy.

Let's thank Richard Anderson for this new and exciting
medium.

MICHAEL R. BAUDLER, CPA
DONNA E. FLANDERS, CPA

Office (209) 575-2653
Fax (209) 575-0629
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Ice Pick #6

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

Six months after moving into my apartment, I began to wade through three large boxes holding more than 20 years of musical detritus. Books, notebooks, sheet music, disembodied guitar parts, batteries, small tools, newspaper articles, and old magazines were scattered in heaps in the cardboard cartons.

At the bottom of one of them I found an old Tupperware cosmetics case containing wires, plugs, jacks, and a penknife. Inside the cosmetics case I found a small balsa wood coffin protecting a shiny metal guitar pick. And in a moment I was catapulted back more than two decades to Davis where I played in a rock band that for three years was the toast of the town.

The source of the pick was a man whose name I never really knew. His handle was "Ice-Man." He rode his bike everywhere, played passable guitar at local open mic nights, and loved the Grateful Dead.

Ice-Man also hand crafted guitar picks. Small, one of-a-kind pieces of art, made of sheet metal and brass. He called them "Ice Picks" and put uncounted hours of effort into their creation. He gave me Ice Pick #6.

The band I was in had two other guitar players both of whom were better than me. They should have been the recipients if Ice-Man had been making an objective decision. He must have thought I was more approachable, a safer place



to risk the rejection of his handiwork.

I did not take it for granted. I don't remember the transaction, but I'm sure I said, "Thank you." I am also sure that was the end of the interaction.

I thought enough of the pick to try it out, but as a guitar pick it did not work for me. At that point the Ice Pick became a question. I had no idea what to do with it. I had no idea how to respect the giver and the gift.

Indecision became its own decision. The Ice Pick was too nice to throw away and returning it would have embarrassed us both. I put it in that Tupperware box and carried it with me as I moved from Davis to Modesto by way of Rohnert Park, Sebastopol, Richmond, and Emeryville. It languished in the backs of closets and perched in the rafters of a garage until now. It sits on my desk, here in front of me and asks me about the nature of the obligation a gift can create.

Wistfulness, regret, and apology mingle together and bubble up at the sight of this gift. I feel like I let Ice-Man down: I kept his gift and did nothing with it. The only way I can think to atone is to share the Ice Pick with you. Maybe I have developed some eloquence that will serve both the giver and the gift.

Here then is Ice Pick #6...

The construction of this unique guitar accessory is simple: two thick pieces of sheet metal welded around a thin piece. The outside pieces serve as the grips and give the pick weight. The inside piece is free of the other two at the business end, and is intended to be the portion of the pick that contacts the strings. The top outside piece carries Ice-Man's emblem in brass, a lightning bolt.

Ice Pick #6 is clearly hand crafted. It lacks the kind of internal uniformity and fit that indicate automated fabrication. But this is no criticism. In these days of ultra-high tolerances and perfect fit, the open gaps and odd angles make it both

charming and unique. Your iPhone would not function were it hand made, but such things do not matter to the function of a guitar pack.

Indeed the overall shape, a teardrop, is enhanced by the gentle irregularities. Though it is metal and can push its way through the side of an unsuspecting aluminum can, the Ice Pick's shape and proportions give it a warm rather than cold aspect. It doesn't look like it could seriously damage your guitar if it fell between the strings and into the sound hole.

The case that serves as a home for Ice Pick #6 is also unique and hand crafted. Made of stained balsa wood and shaped like a coffin, it communicates Ice-Man's commitment to his creation. Carved into the lid of the coffin is the basic shape of the pick, sans lightning bolt. The bed is made of purple felt and the clasp is made of a small piece of Velcro.

When you hold the Ice Pick, you feel that warmth and a reassuring weight. It's neither too heavy, nor too light. The highly polished metal would allow the pick to slide around between your fingers if Ice-Man had not emblazoned the top with that brass lightning bolt. So the decoration serves a purpose, and does its job well.

The last point of consideration with regard to guitar picks is always the most important. How does it affect the sound of the guitar? In this case, all of the effort comes to naught. The design of the Ice Pick forces the player to use only one end of the pick, the pointed middle layer of the sandwich. Here the sheet metal is sharp edged, flat, and extremely flexible. These three qualities combine to impart a very scratchy percussive sound, which most players will find unattractive.

I love everything about this pick except the sound it creates on steel strings. So it will sit in a prominent place on my bookshelf and remind me to cherish the people who come into my life.

Thank you Ice-Man for both the gift and the lesson.

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EDITOR: Jim Costello

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Indira Clark, Jim Costello, Tina Driskill, Myrtle Osner

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