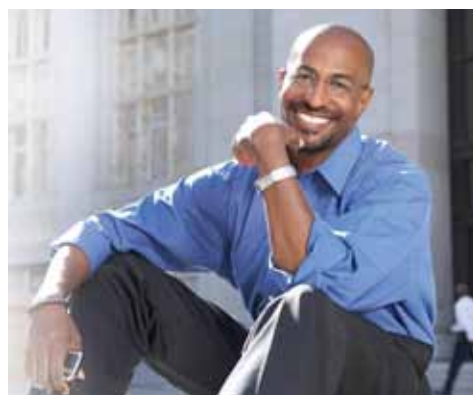


Jan. 22 King commemoration speaker, Van Jones

By DAN ONORATO

Honored by *Essence* Magazine as one of the 25 most inspiring African Americans in 2008, by the World Economic Forum as a “Young Global Leader,” and by *Time* Magazine in 2009 as one of the 100 most influential people in the world, Van Jones will speak on “**The New Dream: Dr. King’s Vision in the Ecological Age**” for the January 22nd Annual Commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Modesto Junior College. The free event will take place in the East Campus Media and Performing Arts Auditorium starting at 7:00 p.m.

This annual commemoration aims to keep alive the memory of Dr. King and his nonviolent vision of social change. Van Jones will discuss his work in light of that vision. The Modesto Peace/Life Center is one of the event’s organizing groups, along with the Parks, Recreation & Neighborhoods Department of the City of Modesto, Modesto Junior College, the Associated Students



of MJC, and California State University, Stanislaus.

Van Jones is working to combine solutions to America’s two biggest problems: social inequality and environmental destruction. In Oakland, California, in 2007 he founded Green for All to build an inclusive, green economy that would provide “green-collar jobs and opportunities” for disadvantaged

JONES continued p. 2

McCutcheon Ten in 2011

Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines! No, take off your mittens. January’s here, and that means Modesto’s tenth (see, you need all ten fingers now) one-night engagement on Tuesday, January 18 with folk musician and storyteller John McCutcheon, a benefit concert for the Modesto Peace/Life Center.

Phyllis Young, a Community Hospice registered nurse and Unitarian Universalist, needed four fingers to count how many McCutcheon performances she’d taken in last January. She recounted enthusiastically hearing and watching McCutcheon teach and lead the audience in singing a song in different languages including American Sign Language. “It was sort of like no matter what language you speak it could all be connected even though we don’t speak each other’s language,” she said. “We’ve been teaching the children at the church sign language. I hope to go back and teach it to them.”

“He s a true folk singer,” said Larry Cole, a member of the Church of the Brethren and husband of a *Stanislaus Connections* editor who also attended the 2010 event. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard anyone better. And my favorite kind of music comes from that part of the country too: Virginia and North Carolina—Doc Watson and that whole genre,” said Cole who eagerly awaits McCutcheon album releases including “Man from Sarajevo.” He’s going to come out with an album like he did *Christmas in the Trenches*, and the cellist is going to play on it.”

Another Modesto fan at the 2010 concert learned about McCutcheon through a friend when she was at Gallo in 1991 or ‘92. “He said, ‘I have a friend; a college friend of mine was a musician,’ and ... gave me a tape. It happened to be [McCutcheon’s] *Winter Solstice*,” said former Fremont Open Plan mom Becky Vaille. “At some point, popped [the tape] into the car stereo; loved it! When I got to ‘Christmas in the Trenches,’ I was a goner. From that moment on, I was a huge fan,” Vaille said. “When I saw that he was coming to Modesto, I brought my daughter. She was 9 [attending] Fremont. When I met John, I knew his friend.”

Needing a full five fingers to count the



McCutcheon performances he’d taken in by the 2010 concert, Church of the Brethren member, painting contractor, hiker and backpacker Mike Castaneda takes McCutcheon’s music with him through the year. “I have a couple of his CDs and listen to them periodically. They’re in my iPod,” he said. But there’s something extra to the artist’s January appearances for Castaneda. “There’s the old songs I really like, and I’m always looking forward to the new ones ... And it’s great to connect with people that I’ve talked to about John,” he said. “It’s a very positive experience and takes the gray out of January.” Castaneda closed with a recommendation to see McCutcheon perform “The whale song: everybody’s got to hear that on the dulcimer.”

You don’t have to just take these listener’s words for it. Even if it’s your first, you can lift a finger this January and find out what’s all the excitement about.

To see 6-time Grammy-nominated John McCutcheon, come at 7:00 PM, Tuesday, January 18, 2011, at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave. He’ll be performing songs from his new album, *Passage*, as well as old favorites. Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$23 at the door. Groups of 10 or more are \$15 per person. Youth (18 and under) are \$5. Tickets are available at the Church of the Brethren, 523-1438 and at Anderson Custom Framing and Gallery, 1323 J St., 579-9913.

Become a sponsor of the John McCutcheon Benefit Concert! For a donation of \$40, \$75, \$150, \$300 or \$500, you’ll receive tickets to the concert, your name in the program, and reserved seating at the concert. For information, call 572-1307 or email keith.werner@sbcglobal.net

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Van Jones

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people. He is committed to creating “green pathways out of poverty,” while greatly expanding the coalition fighting global warming. Jones was the main advocate for the Green Jobs Act signed into law by George W. Bush in 2007. Under the Obama Administration, this act has resulted in \$500 million for green job training nationally.

In 2007 Jones helped the City of Oakland pass a “Green Jobs Corps” proposal that allocated funds to train Oakland residents in eco-friendly “green collar jobs.” He is also co-founder of a new national coalition that promotes the idea of a national “Clean Energy Jobs Corps.” This multi-billion dollar federal initiative would put hundreds of thousands of people to work rewiring and retrofitting the energy infrastructure of the United States.

The best-selling author of the definitive book on green jobs, *The Green-Collar Economy*, Jones served as the green jobs advisor in the Obama White House in 2009. Currently he holds a joint appointment at Princeton University as a distinguished visiting fellow in both the Center for African American Studies and in the Program in Science, Technology and Environmental Policy at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

While best known for his promotion of green jobs, Jones has been hard at work for nearly two decades on solutions to some of urban America’s toughest problems. In 1996 he co-founded the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, now located in Oakland. Named for an unsung civil rights heroine, the award-winning Center promotes alternatives to

violence and incarceration. In 2005, following the catastrophe after Hurricane Katrina, he co-founded Color of Change to strengthen the political voice of Black America and all who have been left behind in political silence. The organization pledges to do all it can “to make sure *all* Americans are represented, served, and protected—regardless of race or class.”

A 1993 Yale Law graduate, Van is a husband and father.

ACTION: Mark your calendar now and tell your friends about this event. Van Jones is a stimulating and inspiring speaker. And please consider becoming a co-sponsor. While this annual MLK commemoration is free to the public, it costs a good deal of money to bring nationally prominent leaders like Van Jones to Modesto. We need more co-sponsors, both individuals and businesses, to cover our costs. All donors of \$100 or more will be gratefully listed in our program as co-sponsors.

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to “Modesto Peace Life Center-MLK,” and send it to Jim Costello, 1849 Richard Way, Ceres, CA 95307-4504. The Peace Life Center is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Our tax ID # is 94-2800825.

For information, email Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org, or call 537-7818.

At press time, sponsors, in addition to those listed above, are: Frailing, Rockwell, Kelly and Duarte; Rubén Villalobos, Trustee, Modesto City Schools; College Avenue Congregational Church.



Pet resources in Stanislaus County

By SHERRY CHAPMAN

Pet homelessness and euthanasia can be stopped if everyone shares information. However, spay/neuter and adoption information is sometimes hard to find in Stanislaus County.

Now there is a website that provides links to animal shelters, rescue organizations, and spay/neuter resources all in

one place: <http://www.spayneuteradoptstanislaus.info>

Please feel free to email any information or suggestions to help promote spay/neuter/adoption in this county. Rescue/adoption stories and pictures are also requested for the site because they bring awareness to adoption. If individuals or organizations have pets available for adoption, email pet and contact information, a story about the pet and a picture. Please share this information with anyone whom it may help. If people can find the resources, change will happen.

On another exciting note: California has finally started a program for spay/neuter license plates. This program is sponsored by the California Veterinary Medical Board: <http://www.caspayplate.com/>

Contact the author at sherrychapman.animals@gmail.com

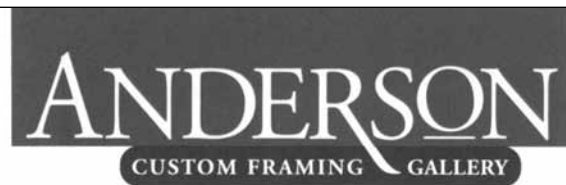
Volunteers needed for Connections distribution

Stanislaus Connections needs help with distribution to local businesses. Contact Shelly Scribner if you can help at ShellyS833@aol.com, 521-6304.



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MJC Science Colloquium: Spring 2011

Science Colloquium: Science That Matters. All lectures held on Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m., MJC East Campus, Science 208.

Jan 25: Richard Anderson, MJC Emeritus, Biology: “Good Bugs, Bad Bugs: The Microbes That Live In and On You.”

Feb. 1: Noah Hughes, MJC Meteorologist, “Heartbeat of the Earth: What El Nino Is...Really.”

Feb. 8: Debra Bolter, “*Ardipithecus ramidus*, *Australopithecus sebida*, and Neanderthal genes: Do new fossils and ancient DNA change our ideas about human evolution?”

Feb. 15: Darwin Day Speaker, Mark Grobner, CSU, Stanislaus: “How Could Darwin Know So Little Yet Be So Right?”

Feb. 22: Richard Anderson, MJC Emeritus, Biology: “Why the Confusion About Climate Change?”

Mar. 1: Dennis Albers, Columbia College Physicist, Why Won’t Rocket Propulsion Systems Seen In the Cinema Ever Work for Human-Lifetime Journeys to the Stars?

Mar. 8: David Baggett, MJC Agriculture Professor, “Sustainable Agriculture.”

Mar. 15: Richard Ravalli, MJC Historian, “Too Cute for Their Own Good: How sea otter aesthetics have both helped and hurt conservation efforts.”

Mar. 22: Tim Fisher, Great Valley Center, “Conveniently, It’s More Than Just Climate Change.”

Mar. 29: Cecelia Hudelson-Putnam, MJC Geographer, “Using Geography to Study Possible Cancer Clusters in the Central Valley.”

April 5: Richard Serros, MJC Art Professor, “The Science and Creativity of Leonardo Da Vinci.”

April 12: Susan Bowman, “Plesiosaurs in California.”

April 19: Nancy Fisher, Stan Co. Public Health Dept. “Emergency Preparedness and Response-You and the Public Health System.”

Info: Richard Anderson, Ph.D., andersonr@yosemite.edu

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Help brainstorm “10 Days for Peace,” January 25

By MIKE CHIAVETTA

As we begin a new year we hear and feel a great deal of frustration and consternation from fellow progressives and all who care about peace, civil rights and the environment. The results of the mid-term elections and the President's perceived lack of bold leadership have many of us feeling disheartened, cynical, and ineffectual. But we are here to say loudly and clearly we have only begun to fight!

As progressives it is always important to remember, as Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us, that even though there are fits and starts, the “arc of the moral universe bends toward justice”! We have been handed a series of setbacks in the last several months but in the “big picture” we are going to prevail—as long as we keep working. Our cause is just and we are agents of that bending arc! So let's keep our chins up, roll up our sleeves, and recommit ourselves to the task at hand—working for social justice. In this spirit, the Modesto Peace/Life Center is declaring 2011 the “Year for Peace.”

To highlight our aspirations, the Peace Center is planning “10 Days for Peace,” starting on the 10th anniversary of 9/11. The ten days would begin with a solemn commemoration of the World Trade Center bombing. To counter hate,



divisiveness, and scapegoating, this event could be a multi-denominational day of reflection, reconciliation, and cooperation. The ten days would culminate on September 21st, the “International Day of Peace.” The idea is to focus in big and small ways on how we can help bring about more peace in our community and world.

Some suggestions have included a day of fasting and spiritual reflection, a community song circle, a film showing of *The International Day of Peace* at MJC, a concert, a dance for LGBT and straight students, an art presentation, a peace vigil, and so on. The possibilities are limited only by our imagination and willingness to engage in the work. We can do this! We can be a beacon of hope to this community (we have been for 40 years).

To put together a project this big will require the involvement of numerous individuals and groups. Consider this article an invitation. YOU CAN HELP! We are holding an organizational meeting on Tuesday, January 25th at 7:00 p.m. at the Modesto Peace/ Life Center, 720 13th St., downtown Modesto. Come and see how you can help. Bring your ideas, enthusiasm, and your commitment to making this world more verdant, equal and peaceful. We can do this! In the words of Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful and committed citizens can change the world.”



ACTION: This is a project of the Peace/Life Board of Directors. We need all the help we can get. Please come and add your ideas or commitment to help. Mark your calendar right now!

Holiday giving on a grand scale

By BILL SANFORD

Some 85 volunteers from this part of the Valley set a record last Sunday. They filled 3,800 Ziploc bags with small gifts for inmates of the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla. Working in the social hall of the United Methodist Church of Merced, representatives of a number of local groups breezed through the packing process in him three hours and 22 minutes — the fastest time in the past five years.

Groups supplying workers included three high school Key Clubs (Livingston, Merced and Golden Valley), Campfire Girls, Circle K of UC Merced, Delta Gamma of UC Merced, First United Methodist Church of Modesto, Unitarian Universalist Fellowships of Fresno and of Merced, United Methodist Church of Merced, Unity Church of Merced and Wesley House.

The packets contained 18 items including toothpaste, shampoo, soap, candy, greeting cards and the Ziploc bag itself is highly valued.

The project is an undertaking of the Inmate Family Council. The chairman of the project since its inception is Dave Hetland. He has proven to be an unusually talented

organizer. This year, things were set up so efficiently that about 1,000 packets could be processed every hour.

Inmates have written notes and letters telling how much they appreciate receiving these holiday gifts.

This year one note stood out from the others in that it was from a former inmate who wrote: “Enclosed, you'll find a donation to the Prison Project that prepares Christmas bags for women prisoners at CCWF. I received several of those bags while I was incarcerated there. They are such a treat in those dreary surroundings and now, as conditions worsen almost daily, they are even more important. Thank you.”

The Ziploc bags neatly packed in 76 boxes were trucked to the prison December 8th, with distribution prior to Christmas.

While the project appears fairly short and simple when it reaches its climax, actually there's work throughout the year to get all the stuff gathered and sorted. Look at it in terms of numbers: if there are 18 items in one bag, there are 68,400 items in 3,800 bags. Five years at 3,800 a year brings the total number of bags to 19,000. Grand total number of items: an astounding 342,000.

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stanislaus CONNECTIONS

is published monthly except in August
by the Modesto Peace/Life Center
720 13th St., Modesto, CA 95354.

Open by appointment.
Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,
Modesto, CA 95353
209-529-5750.

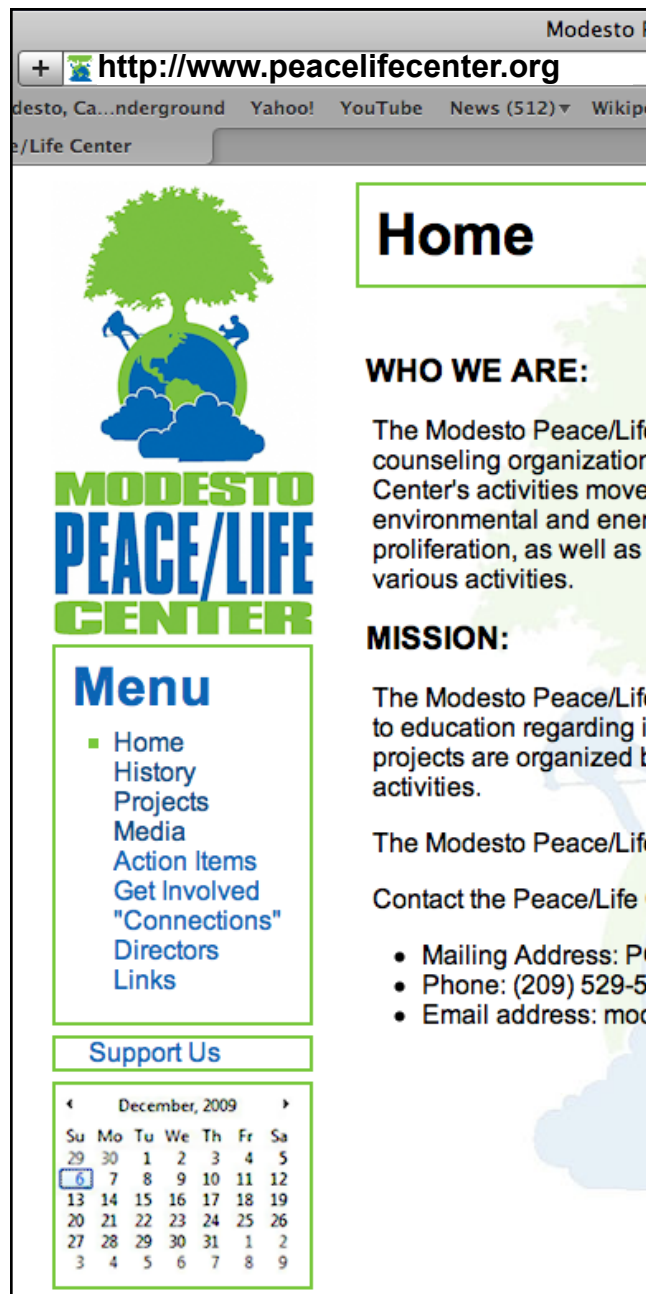
CONNECTIONS is available for
a suggested donation of \$25.00/yr.

Book reading and signing: Sunday January 30, 3-6 PM

Karen Mitchell, long-time member of the Yokuts Sierra Club, has recently had a book published through Outskirts Press. *Woman Without a Name: A Wisdom Tale* is a fictional narrative about how the process of fully entering into our individual experience leads to contact and connection with the mysterious depths of the earth.

Karen will also give a brief talk on the nature of creativity. Contact host Elaine Gorman at 209-524-7630 or goford@sbcglobal.net to RSVP and get directions to her home. Refreshments will be served.

Visit the NEW Peace/Life Center website!



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The Modesto Peace/Life counseling organization Center's activities move environmental and energy proliferation, as well as various activities.

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The Modesto Peace/Life

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Lesson in *carnitas*, *tortillas* and life

By JENIFER WEST

I was recently given a rare opportunity: The mother of one of the women at work has become famous for her homemade *carnitas* and Spanish rice (which her daughter brings to potlucks), and one of my coworkers adores them so much that she asked if she would be willing to show her how to cook them. So, on a recent morning, five women, of several heritages and at least two languages, gathered in my friend's kitchen for a lesson in authentic Mexican cooking.

We started out the day by learning to cut the pork for the *carnitas*. The five of us gathered around a long table, wielding knives and making small talk, getting to know each other a little better in this new setting. Señora Garcia showed us how to cut the meat, and how much fat to leave on. With so many hands, the work was quickly done.

Once the pork was simmering, we started on the rice, simultaneously preparing a salsa with the fresh tomato and peppers leftover from the rice. As we worked, Señora Garcia told us in Spanish of cooking for a crew of 13 men, which she did for eight years. Her daughter translated for those of us who do not speak Spanish, although most of us understand at least a little.

After a while, an interesting thing happened. As we got comfortable, and focused on the work at hand, the language barrier seemed to fade. True, there were several of us who could, to varying degrees, handle both languages. But there is a magic that happens when folks (and, admittedly, it's usually women) work in the kitchen together. I think that's one of the reasons we love the holidays – a congenial group works together to get the meal on the table, stirring up conversation with the gravy, and serving up food flavored as much with the pleasure in the company as the contents of the salt shaker.

Next, Señora Garcia showed us how to make flour *tortillas*. This turned out to be a bit more of a challenge than it looked! I've baked my share of bread, but I haven't done a lot with pie dough – which is the kind of baking experience that would have helped – a lot. But after awhile, we all got the hang of rolling out the dough ("see, how much better, when you have no fear!"). But I made more than my share of "maps" – for which I was teased heartily!

Finally, we made corn *tortillas*. We all gasped when Señora

Garcia brought out her *tortilla* press, such a thing of beauty it was! All wood, darkened with age and use – it could have been 10 years old or 100. (About 30, as it turns out.) She told us you can buy metal ones here in the United States, but she didn't like them. (Who would, after having used one as beautiful as that!) She showed us how to shape the dough into a slightly flattened ball, then, press it gently but firmly, to create a perfectly round *tortilla*. This was then cooked on an ungreased grill. I'm not necessarily the world's biggest corn *tortilla* fan – or at least I wasn't, until I tasted Señora Garcia's homemade *tortillas*, freshly made and hot off the grill!

As the last of the *tortillas* were being shaped for grilling, Señora Garcia's family began to arrive. It was lunch-time, and everyone was eager to sit down to enjoy her wonderful food. As we ate, the talk (in a mixture of Spanish and English) touched on a range of subjects, finally landing on a group of local students who wanted to do something to help some local needy families. Various suggestions were made, which the adult responsible for guiding them said she'd present to them. From there, the discussion centered on the challenges faced by today's youth, the issues with the school system, and then, issues with society today in general.

It happened to be Veteran's Day, and my friend's father expressed his outrage that immigrants who had fought for the United States in a number of wars, with a promise that they would be taken care of for life in return, are now being deported.

Then, one of the women said that growing up, she had always had hope for society, but that she wasn't sure she still did. Several in the group immediately spoke up to address her concern, but Señora Garcia had the last word on the subject: She stood up and walked over to stand directly in front of the one who had said it, looking her straight in the eye. "There is one hope," she said, "and that is to ask God, every day, with all your heart, to help and guide your children." She looked around the room, at each of us in turn. "That is the one hope we all have."

It would be difficult to put into words the feeling we all shared, as we helped tidy up, and put food onto plates to take home to those we love. One thing was certain – each of us had a lot more to take home than the food on those plates.



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Genealogy: searching out your family's memories

By JENIFER WEST

I recently had the privilege of interviewing a dear older relative. Realizing that life can be a bit uncertain, particularly if one happens to be a nonagenarian, I had asked to speak with her with the hope of obtaining information about my forebears. I made an appointment with her ahead of time, allowing her an opportunity to gather some records (relatives' names and dates of birth, death certificates, etc.) as well as her thoughts.

I arrived on a Sunday afternoon, freshly baked bread and shiny new laptop in hand. (It made good sense to me to invest about \$10 in a microphone that plugs in to the computer, which provides much better sound quality than the one built into the computer.) My relative was wonderfully helpful. I was interested in both family history (names of ancestors, important dates and places in their lives, etc.) and understanding a little better what her earlier life and the times through which she lived might have been like.

She shared again some information with which I was familiar, as well as some things I didn't know. As she gave me dates and talked about what was occurring in her life at various times, I got a better feel for how those things must have impacted her. The experience deepened my appreciation of her, and what her life might have been like as she grew up, married and raised a family.

This dear lady lived through the Great Depression, and she shared a little of her experiences during that difficult time. She spoke of losing her mother at a very early age, and of being packed up, along with her several sisters, into the family car and driven across the United States, following whatever work her father could find. For all of them growing up, there

was never a time when this strong lady and her sisters didn't work — no matter how young they were.

The family lived in a tent during most of those years. It would be very difficult for those of us who have grown up with roofs over our heads and food on the table to truly understand what that experience must have been like. The girls got themselves ready and walked to school while their father was at work — whatever work he could find. They were itinerant, and so attended whatever school was nearby. After school, they did their homework and prepared dinner. No television, and certainly no internet. They did, sometimes, have music — the homemade variety. The kind where everyone contributes, whether by playing a guitar or banjo, banging on pots and pans, slapping spoons together, or singing along. (And this lady, I'm told, was quite a yodeler in her day)

It's not unusual to have an interest in family history, these days. Genealogy is the fastest growing hobby in North America, even surpassing things like quilting and gardening. If you're interested in finding out a little more about your forebears but aren't sure where to start, here are some tips:

Start by gathering things from around the house. A family Bible, if births, marriages and deaths were recorded in it, can be absolutely invaluable. Other documents, such as birth, marriage and death certificates, can also provide a lot of information. Newspaper clippings, obituaries and other published items can provide much valuable information, as well. Old photos, particularly if the subjects' names, and maybe even the dates, are listed, can also be extremely helpful. Allow yourself several weeks to gather the materials — you'll probably be pleasantly surprised by how much information you already have.

Once you've gathered your materials, contact relatives for assistance. Over the course of the conversation with my relative, I learned that a couple of other family members have been researching our family history for some time, and have much valuable information to share. A word of caution: be sensitive when asking older relatives for information about their earlier lives. If your loved one lived through the Great Depression, the Holocaust, a war, or some other difficult time, they may not be comfortable discussing their experiences from that period of their lives.

Once you've gathered up everything available from your family, move on to official records. These can include city or county birth, marriage and death records, church records, as well as US Census and Social Security records. Take advantage of the tools we didn't have even a few years ago — websites on the Internet. For more information, use your favorite search engine and type in "genealogy" or "family history". You'll find an impressive number of websites available to assist you in your efforts.

Whether you're interested in family history, or just have an older relative who can shed some light on what it was like to live in earlier times, don't delay — make the call, sit down with him or her, and preserve those memories!



The tragedy of under-reaching: after the election disaster: back to basics

By NORMAN SOLOMON

We need to build a grassroots progressive movement — wide, deep and strong enough to right the right and challenge the corporate center of the Democratic Party.

The stakes are too high and crises too extreme to accept "moderate" accommodation to unending war, regressive taxation, massive unemployment, routine foreclosures and environmental destruction.

A common formula to avoid is what Martin Luther King Jr. called "the paralysis of analysis." Profuse theory + scant practice = immobilization.

It's not enough to denounce what's wrong or to share visionary blueprints. Day in and out, we've got to organize for effective and drastic social change, in all walks of life and with a vast array of activism.

Yes, electioneering is just one kind of vital political activity. But government power is extremely important. By now, we should have learned too much to succumb to the despairing claim that elections aren't worth the bother.

Such a claim is false. As bad as the election results are, they would have been much worse across the country if progressives hadn't worked hard against the right-wing juggernaut.

For instance, consider the many hundreds of on-the-ground volunteers who rejected the paralysis of analysis by walking precincts and making phone calls to help re-elect progressive Congressman Raul Grijalva. He won a tight race in Arizona's southwestern district and will return to Congress next year — much to the disappointment of the corporate flacks and xenophobes who tried to defeat him because of his strong stance against the state's new racial-profiling immigration law.

The mass-media echo chamber now insists that Republicans have triumphed because President Obama was guilty of overreach. But since its first days, the administration has undermined itself — and the country — with tragic under-reach.

It's all about priorities. The Obama presidency has given low priority to reducing unemployment, stopping home foreclosures or following through with lofty pledges to make sure that Main Street recovers along with Wall Street.

Far from constraining the power of the Republican Party, the administration's approach has fundamentally empowered it. The ostensibly shrewd political strategists in the White House have provided explosive fuel for right-wing

"populism" while doing their best to tamp down progressive populism. Tweaks aside, the Obama presidency has aligned itself with the status quo — a formula for further social disintegration and political catastrophe.

The election of 2010 is now grim history. It's time for progressives to go back to the grassroots and organize with renewed, deepened commitment to changing the direction of this country. If we believe that state power is crucial — and if we believe in government of, by and for the people — it's not too soon to begin planning and working for change that can make progressive victories possible in future elections.

Norman Solomon is a journalist, historian, and progressive activist. His book *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death* has been adapted into a documentary film of the same name. His most recent book is *Made Love, Got War*. He is a national co-chair of the Healthcare NOT Warfare campaign. In California, he is co-chair of the Commission on a Green New Deal for the North Bay; www.GreenNewDeal.info

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Missing: a vision of economic possibility

This election showed us that neither of our two major parties has a credible vision for our economic future. And that's why this is a moment of opportunity.

By DAVID KORTEN

It is now the morning after. Republicans, as expected, are celebrating a sweeping victory. Democrats are licking their wounds. Meanwhile, record numbers of people are still contending with the hardships of unemployment and foreclosure with no relief in sight. And the nation braces for deepening political gridlock.

It is a moment of opportunity for America to set a new course and for a young President Barack Obama to establish his place in history as a path-breaking leader.

So how does electoral failure and political gridlock create a moment of opportunity?

Neither of our two major parties has a credible vision for the economic future of our nation.

We are a nation consumed by short-term thinking and fragmented political contests centered on narrowly-defined issues. Neither of our two major parties has a credible vision for the economic future of our nation.

The Republicans offer only their standard prescription of tax cuts for the rich, a rollback of regulations on predatory corporations, and elimination of the social safety net—a proven prescription for further job loss and devastation of the middle class.

The Democrats have no identifiable program for economic recovery, let alone for adapting our economy to the dramatic demographic, environmental, economic, and political changes that rule out any chance of a return to pre-2008 business as usual.

In an insightful interview, Populist historian Lawrence Goodwyn suggests that this creates a historic opportunity. He observes that bankers have been a dominant ruling power throughout much of our national history and a barrier to realizing the democratic ideal on which our nation was founded. It has not been within the power of any American president to break their hold due to lack of an adequate public understanding of the nature of the problem.

We now have 15 million unemployed people who feel deeply betrayed and upwards of two million homeowners whose homes have been foreclosed—all as a direct consequence of the actions of Wall Street bankers. These same interests used conceptual deception backed by massive political spending to swing the election in favor of right wing extremists devoted to policies that will further decimate the middle class without resolving the pain of the unemployed and the foreclosed.

The deception, which can be maintained only so long, sows the seeds of its own self-destruction. In taking control of the House and leaving the Democrats with only a slim majority in the Senate, Republicans now share responsibility for what is certain to be continued economic failure.

The administration, however, remains in the hands of a now seasoned Democratic president who, Goodwyn believes, has the potential to rise to the occasion, lead his party to a second term victory, break the power of Wall Street, and actualize the democratic ideal that has for so long eluded us.

It requires, however, a vision of a New Economy that is truly democratic, based on sound market principles, rooted in community values, and accountable to community interests. Economists steeped in the economic models that got us into this mess are not going to provide President Obama with such a vision. He will need to look to the people who are working from the bottom up outside the halls of established power to frame and implement a new economic vision aligned with the values of caring and sharing at the core of authentic spiritual teaching and for which scientists tell us our brains are wired.

This vision is being articulated and popularized by alliances such as the New Economy Working Group and the New Economy Network and implemented by groups such as the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, the American Independent Business Alliance, Transition Towns, local food movements, and many others. The vision is grounded not in some utopian ideology or theory, but rather on the work and experience of millions of people already engaged in living the New Economy into being through grassroots actions that flow from their deepest values and aspirations.

The emerging vision calls for a fundamental economic restructuring to put life values ahead of financial values, give the creation of sustainable livelihoods for working people priority over bonuses for Wall Street traders, and

The vision is grounded not in some utopian ideology or theory, but rather on the work and experience of millions of people

root the power to create and allocate money in people and community rather than in Wall Street financial institutions. David Brancaccio has documented impressive examples in a PBS television special titled "Fixing the Future" which aired on November 18, 2010. See <http://www.pbs.org/now/>

[fixing-the-future/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/now/fixing-the-future/index.html)

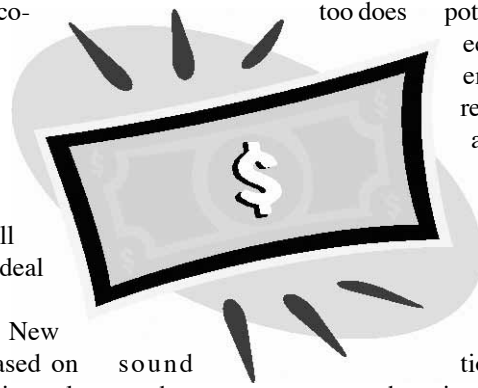
As awareness grows that no adjustments at the margin of the existing Wall Street-dominated economy will resolve the plights of joblessness and the homelessness, so too does potential political support for fundamental economic restructuring in support of the emerging vision. The political party that responds to this rapidly growing economic and political force will gain a decided advantage in 2012 and beyond.

It is President Obama's opportunity to win a second term and establish his place in history not only as the first African-American president, but as well the president who liberated the nation, our democracy, and the market from the grip of Wall Street. I have drafted a framing presidential economic address ready for delivery by the future president who dares to take on the challenge. Imagine a president delivering this speech. Let us make it happen.

David Korten is co-founder and board chair of *YES! Magazine*, co-chair of the New Economy Working Group, president of the People-Centered Development Forum, and a founding board member of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE). His books include *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth*, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, and the international bestseller, *When Corporations Rule the World*.

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Our Friend Jake Kirihiara: February, 1917 - November, 2010

By BRAD BARKER

Yokuts Group Chair, Sierra Club

A farmer from Livingston, Jake Kirihiara, was at the first Sierra Club meeting I ever attended. After that meeting 25 years ago in a living room in Merced, I joined the club and got to know Jake. He was in his late 60s and, despite his modesty, was something of a legend.

Jake and his wife Fran were at the heart of almost every progressive issue in the San Joaquin Valley: the peace movement, social justice, farmworker rights, farmland protection, organic farming and, of course, the environment. Jake had a deep reverence for the natural world.

My first Sierra Club hike was led by Jake. It was a night hike up a minor peak near Mariposa, but there was a major view at the summit. On that clear night we had an expansive, sparkling view of the San Joaquin Valley, the valley where both he and I were born. The city lights of Merced, Atwater, and Turlock shone in the distance.

Months later, there was a Sierra Club day trip to Elkhorn Slough on the central coast. I rode in Jake's car and showed some impatience asking, "Why aren't we taking the highway? It's a long way to Moss Landing."

"The birds, Brad, along the way we can see some good birds," Jake explained. His route went along the refuges west of Merced. He was right, of course. His way had less traffic,

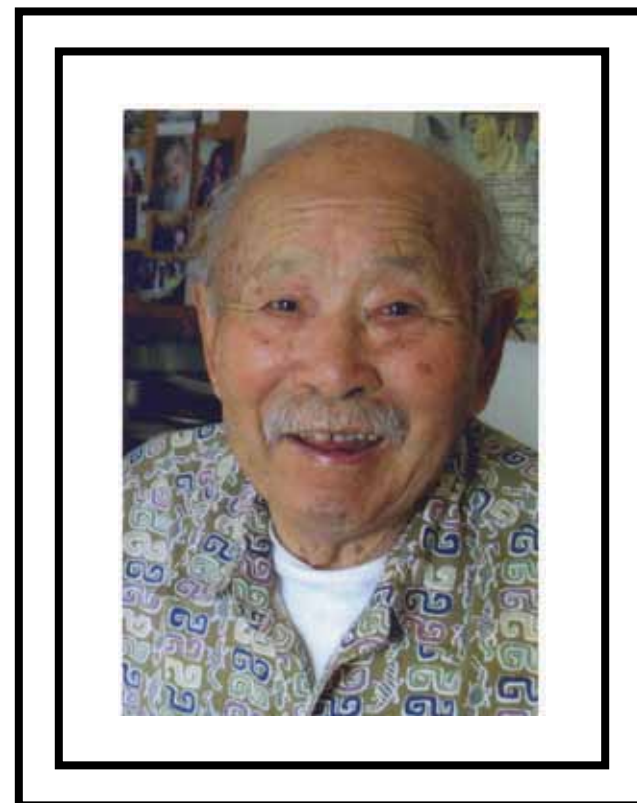
less stress, more scenery, and some very nice raptors, herons, geese, other birds. I clearly needed the lesson in appreciating the journey, not just the destination.

Jake didn't discuss his military service much, but I learned from others. After Pearl Harbor, the Kirihiaras and other Japanese families living in Livingston were sent to relocation centers and internment camps. Jake joined the army, and served in the Nisei Regiment, the 442, composed almost entirely of Japanese-American soldiers. This regiment fought Nazis in Europe and became the most decorated unit in WW II.

At a signing ceremony in October, 2009, President Obama praised the famous regiment, and the President quoted our friend: "And one member of the regiment, Private Jake Kirihiara, whose parents were held in a camp here in America while he fought overseas, later said: '...even though this wrong was done to us, there was never any question whether America was my country. If America needed me to help, I'll do it.'"

And, Jake and Fran continued to help their country in so many ways for all these decades after the war.

After the very moving memorial service for Jake in Livingston last month, Monica and I skipped Highway 99 and drove back to Modesto the scenic way through the orchards along Santa Fe. You were right, Jake, we saw some kestrels, egrets, and herons. We saw some good birds.



Honoring those who search for common ground

By LIBBY & LEN TRAUBMAN

"This is now. Now is all there is. Don't wait for Then; strike the spark, light the fire."

— Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273)

"Every player plays from his or her competencies, not from a sense of deficiency. There is no such thing as 'good enough' for any team member."

— Carol Ann Tomlinson, Virginia Teacher of the Year

"Dreams come a size too big so that we can grow into them."

— Josie Bissett

November 2010: diverse global women and men social innovators were honored for acting on dreams to build bridges between individuals and communities — overcoming barbed wire, darkness, or ignorance that had divided people. For leading by example and teamwork, they were acknowledged in Washington, DC, by the non-profit Search for Common Ground: <http://www.sfcg.org/>

PLEASE READ this inspiring review of great citizen-leaders and teams, captured with an economy of words by writer Naazish YarKhan (NaazishYarKhan@gmail.com).

"Honouring those who search for common ground" by Naazish YarKhan, Common Ground News Service, 16 November 2010, <http://sfcg.wordpress.com/2010/11/18/honoring-those-who-search-for-common-ground/> or <http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=28829>

Three television and radio stories below offer more past and present examples of brave citizen innovators who follow dreams, strike sparks. They fire up relationships to dignify and protect one another shining light on what is so possible and closer at hand than we once imagined.

Mothers and Daughters Together in Jerusalem

Since 2007, Jewish and Muslim mothers and daughters meet regularly to learn about their own and the other's faith tradition, and about each other. Interfaith dialogue was established in Israel in the late 1950s by a small group of visionaries which included Martin Buber. Despite decades of commendable interfaith activities in the country, only an extremely limited circle of individuals have recognized that religious faith and commitment without dialogue threatens the stability of society. More about the successful, ongoing Interfaith Encounter Association is at <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org>

"Mothers and Daughters: Jerusalem Interfaith Encounter," SABC-TV South Africa, "The Future", August 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wj-v4MRh5Qo>

Jews and Muslims Meet Successfully Near Boston

A small group of Muslims and Jews near Boston is vowing to close the distance between them. Thirteen members of the Muslim American Civic and Cultural Association in Malden and Temple Hillel B'nai Torah in West Roxbury have started a series of conversations about politics, stereotypes and the

conflicts that have divided Muslims and Jews. Jewish Leslie Belay: "What more urgent reason is there for Americans, Muslims and Jews to talk to one another?" "We can't allow these things to happen either as victims or as perpetrators, in our names."

Muslim Mohamed Brahimi: "I think it would be naive to say we don't carry our own stereotypes. The usefulness of these dialogues is that we all get together and kick these things around and check their validity. This is the place where authenticity is being checked."

"A Conversation With Muslims And Jews," WBUR-FM Boston — 05 November 2010, <http://www.wbur.org/2010/11/05/interfaith-dialogues>

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



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Unsustainable population growth

By LEE MILLER

biologist, California Dept. of Fish and Game, retired

Although it is true that the rate of population increase is in decline, population growth is still high, with 77 million individuals added to the planet annually. That increase will result in 2 billion people being added over the next few decades before population can be stabilized. Since we already have 2 billion living on \$2 a day or less, 1 billion going hungry every day, millions in refugee camps and millions unemployed, it would seem insane to add to an already stressed population.

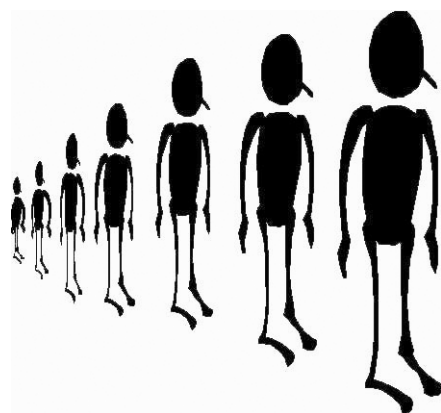
Global climate change will mean that 9 billion people will live on a planet far different from the one I grew up on in the 1940s. This new planet will have higher ocean levels, devastating to coastal areas such as New Jersey, Florida and Bangladesh.

However, there is no indication that humans are willing to do anything about rising greenhouse gas emissions. It's likely it's already too late to avoid climate disruption and flooding. People remain in denial.

Peak oil production is often ignored in relation to population growth. Our oil-dependent, industrial food production uses yesterday's photosynthesis stored as coal, gas and oil. Since 1859, we have used up a trillion barrels of oil. An estimated trillion remain, but it is much more difficult to extract than the first trillion. This fossil energy accumulated over 400 million years. To grow enough biomass to replace current oil use of 80 million barrels per day and meet other demands for food and fiber would require 30 to 40 additional planets' worth of farmland.

How dependent are we? The bioenergetics are not good. In nature, if an animal expends more energy to capture food than the food contains, starvation is the eventual outcome. Our contrived food chain uses 10 calories of fossil energy to put one calorie of food on the table. When energy production declines, we can expect food production to decline also. Here is a recent headline from the British newspaper The Guardian: "US military warns oil output may dip causing massive shortages by 2015."

Thomas Malthus, population theorist, was also an economist, and his prediction about population outpacing food supply has been wrong for the past 200 years due to human cleverness at increasing food supply. The result has been an overshoot of carrying capacity. Some scientists think the population will crash to a lower carrying capacity of about 1 billion or less. Most geological epochs have rounding errors of 10,000 years or more, which is the time frame of our human civilization. Our moment in the sun will be a short run by geological reckoning.



Economists talk only of growth when what we need is stability and a reversal of growth on an overpopulated, finite planet. Perhaps economist Ken Boulding said it best: "Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist." Economics is a subset of ecology and nature, not the other way around.

It is a biological and geological world, and we need to come to terms with its finiteness no matter how self-congratulatory we are at globalization and at being clever.

Lee Miller has a B.S. in biology from Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania and a M.S. in biological sciences from the University of Delaware. He retired after 37 years with the state Department of Fish and Game working on Delta fishes. He is a member of the Sierra Club's Committee for Sustainable World Population.

(This Op/ed was adapted from a 12/4/2010 response to an economist's Opinion in *The Stockton Record*)

NOTE: Mr. Miller will present a power point program and discussion about population and the enormous ecological problems facing the human race and about our consumption of natural resources on Monday January 10. **The Yokuts Sierra Club Movie Night and Potluck begins at 6 PM**, the program at 7 PM. Contact host Elaine Gorman, 209.524.7630 or goford@sbcglobal.net, to RSVP and get directions to her home.

Value of a nation

By ALEX ANVARI, Senior, Modesto High School

After the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti, the world jumped to its aid. Rescue efforts began in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and still continue to this day. MHS is even planning to build a school in Haiti. The world united in this humanitarian effort and helped a nation in crisis. Haiti relief efforts became quite popular, sweeping through the United States especially. While these movements are admirable, it raises questions as to why a similar effort was not made for Pakistan in the aftermath of its flood.

Approximately one-fifth of Pakistan lay under water after heavy monsoon rains. The flood directly affected twenty million people. The damage to property and infrastructure was unimaginable. The total economic impact is estimated to be forty three billion dollars. Seventeen million acres of Pakistan's most fertile cropland were submerged in water, destroying the crops. Months after the disaster, conditions are still abysmal. The people are forced to drink unsafe water and live in small tents due to the infrastructure damage.

Despite the magnitude of this disaster, many countries have been slow to raise a helping hand. The United Nations has criticized the international community for their half-hearted or nonexistent efforts. One month after the start of this crisis, only forty five million dollars had been raised, piling in comparison to the relief efforts of similar crises. The question is, why did the world abandon Pakistan? Was it more fashionable to give money to Haiti? Both nations were in dire straits but only one received the attention it deserved. Relief came too little too late.

The situation in Pakistan is worsening by the day. The people are without homes and jobs; they have few ways to support themselves. It has become survival of the fittest; the distribution sites are chaos as hundreds upon hundreds of Pakistanis fight for what little supplies they have received.

Why has the world stood still when there is so much suffering right under its nose? Are the people of one nation more valuable than another?

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MAKE A
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Creek Walk

Walk the creek almost a riverside
 A crane startles up
 To crease the sky
 My expectations are raised by a departure
 Waitstill pinpoints on stalks of grass
 Clear my eyes and heart with a sigh
 Oily rainbows ribbon my feet

She was Young

The knight of wands
 Dark hair light of face

Ten of pentacles
 Covers her
 Home and possessions hold her

The devil crosses her
 For good or evil
 Sensuality and selfishness freely
 Chosen

Nine of wands below her
 Unexpected choices

King of Pentacles is passing
 Face his parade and
 Forsake the sacrifice

Brings Judgment's face before her
 Feelings rising from the past
 From cool damp earth
 (run be a gypsy
 Hide in a crush of dancers)

Fearful memories of bliss
 See a child of heart
 Wish for mastery
 Choose

The Mouth of the South

Ted Turner believes
 In global warming and
 An end to irrigated agriculture
 Without water or snowpack he sees
 Cannibalism-
 A good reason to recycle and use less for me



I left out the joy of Open Plan and how much I love living
 in a place that in springtime can only be exited through
 clouds of almond blossoms.

— Leilani Young

Untitled

Water weights me to the ground
 While wind whistles up my soul
 To a storm off the coast of Mexico
 Satellite visions of rippling earth
 Before surrender to dispersion

Untitled

How thick is the air today for you?
 I can't get enough clear to rest
 My weary worry breathing
 I chug and puff
 Clear today with coughing

Untitled

I see the holding hands, the bedside
 Wait the days and months of care
 Travel to the gates of Hell
 Sterile white and bare
 Color comes from men who feel too
 Strong to let this pass
 Alone no they sing and laugh and joke and cry and carry on
 To bring light and love where death awaits
 Brother, soldiers on the battlefield
 Of marriage rights came from truths of these.
 Families' true patient love for the right to
 Hold a hand.

Stand Down

A child you say, a tied up child
 A beaten child a child that was just
 Too much. A life where the child took
 Too much room as the world grew smaller.
 Your reach grew less and support was gone
 And your failure seemed too painful for a child.
 Better dead
 Than depending on you, a lost cause and tired
 pain.
 Let go Don't hold on instead
 Of your plan
 Stand down Let go
 You're done

Cloud Language

Whistle speech reported
 Affixex,clitics,tonals
 Zapotecs at the canneries
 Fellow peasant agriculturists
 I too whistle and dance my urgent
 Communications
 Body language plus necessity is the mother tongue
 Over here
 Look out
 This right now please
 Stop there
 Me and the cloud mountain language speakers
 Clicking and whistling
 working the roar of water carrying
 whale-sized fruit loads
 beginning to ending with juice

Justice Department prepares for ominous expansion of "Anti-Terrorism" law targeting activists

By MICHAEL DEUTSCH, t r u t h o u t | News Analysis

In late September, the FBI carried out a series of raids of homes and antiwar offices of public activists in Minneapolis and Chicago. Following the raids, the Obama Justice Department subpoenaed 14 activists to a grand jury in Chicago and also subpoenaed the files of several antiwar and community organizations. In carrying out these repressive actions, the Justice Department was taking its lead from the Supreme Court's 6-3 opinion last June in *Holder the Humanitarian Law Project*, which decided that nonviolent First Amendment speech and advocacy "coordinated with" or "under the direction of" a foreign group listed by the Secretary of State as "terrorist" was a crime.

The search warrants and grand jury subpoenas make it clear that the federal prosecutors are intent on accusing public nonviolent political organizers, many of whom are affiliated with Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO), of providing "material support" through their public advocacy for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The Secretary of State has determined that both the PFLP and the FARC "threaten US national security, foreign policy or economic interests," a finding not reviewable by the courts, and listed both groups as foreign terrorist organizations (FTO).

In 1996, Congress made it a crime - then punishable by 10



(Photo: Ryan J. Reilly; Edited: Lance Page / t r u t h o u t)

years, which was later increased to 15 years - to anyone in the US who provides "material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization or attempts or conspires to do so." The present statute defines "material support or resources" as:

... any property, tangible or intangible, or service, including currency or monetary instruments or financial services, lodging, training, expert advice or assistance, safe houses, false documentation or identification, communications equipment, facilities, weapons, lethal substances, explosives, personnel and transportation except medicine or religious materials.

In the *Humanitarian Law Project* case, human rights workers wanted to teach members of the Kurdistan PKK, which seeks an independent Kurdish state, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which sought an independent state in Sri Lanka, how to use humanitarian and international law to peacefully resolve disputes and obtain relief from the United Nations and other international bodies for human rights abuses by the governments of Turkey and Sri Lanka. Both organizations were designated as FTOs by the Secretary of State in a closed hearing, in which the evidence is heard secretly.

Despite the nonviolent, peacemaking goal of the *Humanitarian Law Project's* speech and training, the majority of the Supreme Court nonetheless interpreted the law to make such conduct a crime. Finding a whole new exception to the First Amendment, the Court decided that any support, even if it involves nonviolent efforts towards peace, is illegal under the law since it "frees up other resources within the organization that may be put to violent ends," and also helps lend "legitimacy" to foreign terrorist groups. Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Roberts, despite the lack of any evidence, further opined that the FTO could use the human

rights law to "intimidate, harass or destruct" its adversaries, and that even peace talks themselves could be used as a cover to re-arm for further attacks. Thus, the Court's opinion criminalizes efforts by independent groups to work for peace if they in any way cooperate or coordinate with designated FTOs.

The Court distinguishes what it refers to as "independent advocacy," which it finds is not prohibited by the statute, from "advocacy performed in coordination with, or at the direction of, a foreign terrorist organization," which is, for the first time, found to be a crime under the statute. The exact line demarcating where independent advocacy becomes impermissible coordination is left open and vague.

Seizing on this overbroad definition of "material support," the US government is now moving in on political groups and activists who are clearly exercising fundamental First Amendment rights by vocally opposing the government's branding of foreign liberation movements as terrorist and supporting their struggles against US-backed repressive regimes and illegal occupations.

Under the new definition of "material support," the efforts of President Jimmy Carter to monitor the elections in Lebanon and coordinate with the political parties there, including the designated FTO Hezbollah, could well be prosecuted as a crime. Similarly, the publication of op-ed articles by FTO spokesmen from Hamas or other designated groups by *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, or the filing of amicus briefs by human rights attorneys arguing against a group's terrorist designation or the statute itself could also now be prosecuted. Of course, the first targets of this draconian expansion of the material support law will not be a former president or the establishment media, but members of a Marxist organization who are vocal opponents of the governments of Israel and Colombia and the US policies supporting these repressive governments.

In his foreword to Nelson Mandela's recent autobiography *Conversations with Myself*, President Obama wrote that "Mandela's sacrifice was so great that it called upon people everywhere to do what they could on behalf of human progress. ... The first time I became politically active was during my college years, when I joined a campaign on behalf of divestment, and the effort to end apartheid in South Africa." At the time of Mr. Obama's First Amendment advocacy, Mr. Mandela and his organization the African National Congress (ANC) were denounced as terrorist by the US government. If the "material support" law had been in effect back then, Mr. Obama would have been subject to potential criminal prosecution. It is ironic - and the height of hypocrisy - that this same man who speaks with such reverence for Mr. Mandela and recalls his own support for the struggle against apartheid now allows the Justice Department under his command to criminalize similar First Amendment advocacy against Israeli apartheid and repressive foreign governments.

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Winter light

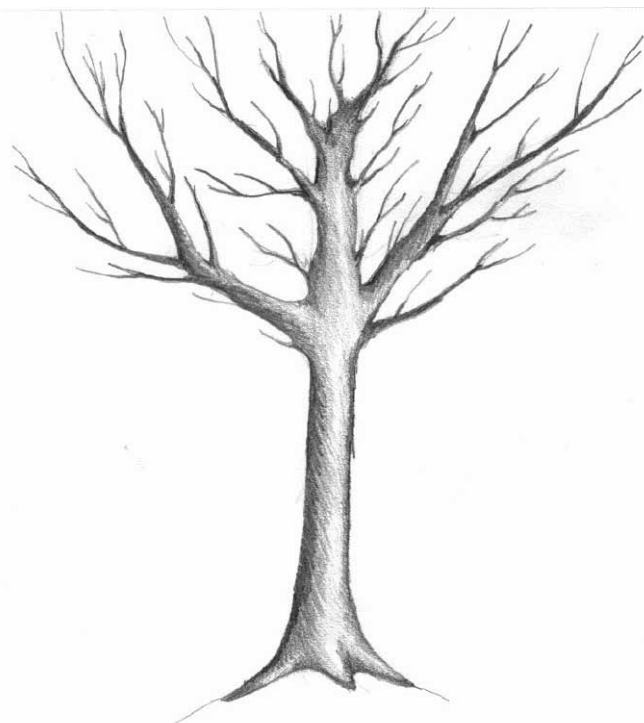
By DANIEL NESTLERODE

By the time you read this, the shortest days of the year will have come and gone. But as these words appear on my screen those days are still ahead. These days lack comfortable length and available light, but winter days here in the central valley evince a unique and wonderful charm that I never expected to find.

No doubt you are wondering what could be charming about short, mostly gray days colored either by tule fog or rain clouds. The nut and fruit trees have yet to bloom, most of the trees are bare, and the dominant sound of most towns here in the valley is the hiss of rubber tires peeling water off the tarmac as the cars they support speed from garage to massive parking lot and back.

Let us put aside the fact that California needs all of the winter water it can get. Put aside the idea that the minor discomfort we feel now can be seen as a kind of karmic payment for the beautiful weather we have in every other season. What we are after here is not suffering for the greater good or future benefit. What we are after here is finding beauty in the dead of winter.

Don't look up. You are right. The sky, when it's wet, is mostly gray. The tule fog has a monochromatic tone that is guaranteed to bore the most inspired artist. And the rain clouds vary in their shades of gray from medium dark to medium light. Not much better.



Instead of looking up, get out early and take a walk on a foggy morning in a quiet neighborhood or out in the country. Later it will be no better than low overcast, but in this moment you have the power to suspend reality and pretend the world is a much different place.

Forget your knowledge of your surroundings and look at the shapes in the mist. They change as you approach and are sometimes identifiable only within feet of where you stand. If you have ever lain on your back and identified shapes in passing clouds then you know this game. Is that a dragon skulking back to its lair after a night of dining on local herd animals, or is it a hedgerow?

Later, wait for the sun to make an appearance. But don't look up. Get out of town. Not far, just into the countryside. Find an almond or a walnut orchard and watch the light dance through the bare limbs of the trees. The colors and shades here in the orchards exist nowhere else and at no other time of year.

You have heard of and possibly experienced rain coming down sideways. But I bet you have not noticed the sun shining sideways. Here in the valley, the light is so incredibly indirect near sunrise and sunset that sunlight actually sneaks under things. It gets under the lowest car allowing you to see photons tickle muffler, tailpipe, differential, and leaf spring. No other time and place provides the sun as much room to play as the central valley of California.

Watch the shadows in open ground. The wide, flat valley promotes the rapid growth of winter shadows. Any other time of year your shadow would stay close, unable to venture very far from the solid matter that gives it form. But in the winter, on the shortest days, shadows stretch out as if in search of some unattainable freedom. They glide over obstacles, changing the texture of the light as you pass by.

While the sun is at its highest, get out in the open or up a couple of stories and cast your eyes east and west. The air is so clean you can see both sides of the valley, the mountains

that define our home. Look for snowcaps in the Sierra Nevada as specks and streaks of white on faded blue. Turn around. The coastal range to the west is showing sharp relief: oranges and purples. In the afternoon as the light shifts, shadows float over the canyons until the sun moves behind the peaks and shows us silhouettes.

Facing northwest, look for a double peak visible above the rest of the coastal range. That's Mount Diablo. It has the second longest visual horizon in the world (Kilimanjaro in African has the longest) and you are standing in it.

Later this winter wait for a good, strong, fast moving storm. Sometimes the sky clears in the west behind the heavy weather. That's when being in open country can be a visual treat. As the sun sets it will get low on the horizon and shine through the westward moving rain. If the storm is big enough and dark enough you will have the chance of seeing the full arc of a rainbow. And sometimes the darkness of the storm, the angle of the sun, and the amount of rain combine to treat you to a double rainbow.



I have to admit that I grew up back east where winters are longer and colder than they are here in the central valley. Further, I grew up in the mountains of central Pennsylvania where the terrain made much of what I have described here impossible. But none of it was more impossible than a double rainbow. I believed that accounts of such things were exaggerations at best until I moved here and saw one for myself.

Enjoy your winter. It's brief opportunity to experience some uniquely beautiful sights here in the central valley.

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