

## Election 2012: A look at the County ground game

By **KEN SCHROEDER**

Millions of dollars were spent on campaigns for and against propositions and candidates in Stanislaus County during the 2012 election. Voters were drowning in political ads paid for with that money. So what was the most significant factor in Stanislaus County election results? For Propositions 30 and 32, it may have been the ground game, the get-out-the-vote efforts using volunteers to do person-to-person contact. Local grass-roots organizations mounted an impressive effort to identify and get people out to vote.

The conventional wisdom says we live in a conservative county. However, Prop 30 won here and Prop 32 was defeated. Barack Obama also won here. Prop 30 was the initiative to raise the sales tax a small amount and to increase the income tax on the wealthiest Californians in order to avoid additional devastating cuts to public K-12 schools and universities. It passed in Stanislaus with 53% in favor and won statewide with 54% of the vote. Prop 32 was the measure to shackle the

ability of unions to raise funds for political purposes while leaving corporations exempt. It failed in our county with 53% in opposition and statewide with 56% voting against it.

What happened locally during this election? Homero Mejia, director of Congregations Building Community (CBC) says, "This election shows that the electorate is changing. Phoning and door-to-door contact that connect to voters' interests and to the issues get results." CBC is a local faith-based community organizing group and is the Stanislaus PICO affiliate. California PICO volunteers spoke to voters face-to-face or on the phone, focusing on young adults, immigrants and communities of color. Locally, over 250, mostly young, CBC volunteers worked phone banks and identified 4,500 "Yes on Prop 30" voters. On election day they spread out into the neighborhoods, especially areas of traditionally low voter turnout, knocking on doors and reminding the "Yes on 30" voters to get out and vote.

Labor unions were also working to get out

the vote. The Modesto Teachers Association (MTA) focused on "Yes on 30" and "No on 32." Friday, October 5 was a furlough day when schools were closed in the Modesto City Schools district because of budget cuts. On that day the MTA joined with the California School Employees Association, CBC and school district managers to walk in voter precincts to promote "Yes on 30." Between October 5 and Election Day, the educators' campaign had over 300 volunteers walking in 90 neighborhood precincts. MTA executive director Megan Gowans said, "We have deep gratitude for those who supported Proposition 30 so that our schools can plan for the future and improve programs that had been cut."

Working out of the North Valley Labor Federation office on McHenry Avenue in

Modesto, unions had a priority of defeating Prop 32, with a secondary focus on passing Prop 30. Catherine Houston, Rapid Response Coordinator and California political coordinator for the United Steelworkers Union, directed the effort. Union volunteers worked phone banks and walked in precincts across the county, talking to voters. When Prop 30 started losing support in the polls, they flipped their priority and started promoting Prop 30 first. 556 volunteers, including entire families, came out to work. Looking back at the campaign, Houston said, "It doesn't get any better than this. The union effort in the Valley was phenomenal."

*Mi Familia Vota* is a non-profit organiza-

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**LAST TWO CONNECTIONS ISSUES TO BE SENT BY POSTAL MAIL**

The Post Office changes newspaper publication requirements on January 5, 2013. These changes make it impossible for Stanislaus Connections to be sent in bulk by postal mail after that date.

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# John McCutcheon returns in concert

By KEN SCHROEDER

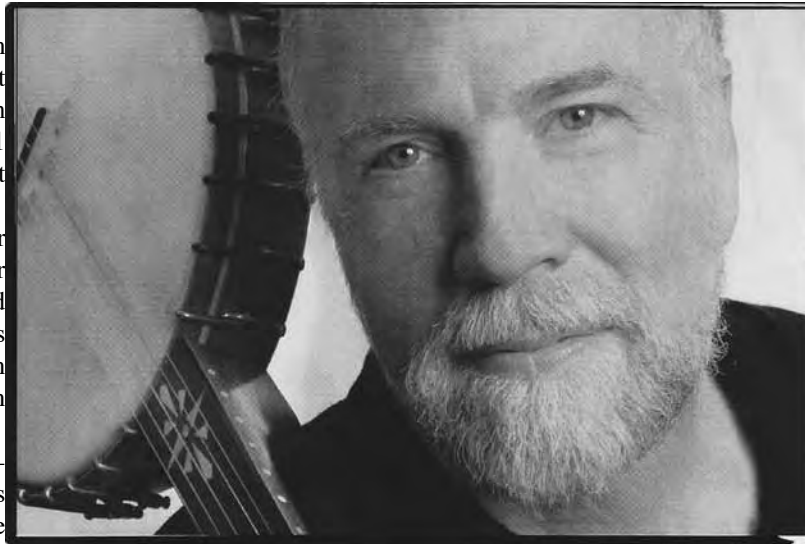
Six-time Grammy nominated folk musician John McCutcheon brings his annual Left Coast tour to town on Tuesday, January 22 at 7pm at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Avenue. This is John's 12th benefit concert for the Modesto Peace/Life Center.

John's song's and stories have touched our hearts, lifted our spirits, and brought us laughter and tears. His values for peace and justice and his concern for regular folks are reflected in his music. One concert-goer enthused that "John McCutcheon is the best thing about January in Modesto!"

2012 saw John turn 60. He's been featuring Woody Guthrie's music in all his concerts this year. He performed at the Woody Guthrie 100th Birthday Weekend in Woody's hometown of Okemah, Oklahoma, along with Arlo, Judy Collins and Billy Bragg.

From John's newsletter: "As for me, let me take this opportunity to thank you for your support and for those chances we have to share an evening or an album's-worth of a car ride. Hope it's been worth the trip. I know it has for me. Hope to see you out there someplace so I can thank you personally. 'Til then, be well, stay warm,... and let's stay in touch."

Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$23 at the door and youth 18 and under are \$5. Groups of 10 or more are \$15 per person. Tickets can be purchased by check or cash at the Brethren Church, 2301 Woodland Ave., 523-1438 or at Beads of Contentment, 1028 J St., Modesto, 523-6335. Out-of-towners



can call the church to arrange to purchase tickets by mail. Consider giving tickets as a holiday gift.

As a sponsor of the concert you can receive tickets to the concert, your name in the program, and reserved seating at the concert. Five levels of sponsorship are available:

- Autoharp — \$40 *One* ticket
- Guitar — \$75 *Two* tickets
- Banjo — \$150 *Four* tickets
- Piano — \$300 *Eight* tickets
- Hammer Dulcimer — \$500 *Sixteen* tickets

For information on sponsorships, contact Keith Werner, 572-1307, keith.werner@sbcglobal.net

# The ILL LIST 9: Poetry Slam Invitational


The most prestigious and highly anticipated spoken word event in the Central Valley is back! **The ILL LIST 9: A Poetry Slam Invitational** returns to The State on Saturday, December 8 with eight nationally renowned spoken word artists, many of whom have previously appeared on HBO's Def Poetry Jam.

Through three rounds of original poetry, poets match metaphors and battle rhyme for rhyme on their quest for \$1,500 in cash prizes! Randomly selected judges from the audience, using Olympic-style scorecards, award points to poets based on the strength of their poems and the quality of their performance.

Audience members are strongly encouraged to root for their favorite poems as cuts will be made after every round. Cheering, yelling, booing, hissing, whistling, and good-natured heckling are welcome and expected. (This is a free-speech event.)

Doors at 7; show at 8 p.m. Tickets: \$15, \$22.50 and \$30

For tickets, visit the State Theatre at <http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/615/view>



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## Support workers at union grocery stores

By KEN SCHROEDER

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) and Raley's settled on a new contract after a 9-day strike. A statement from the union said, "Grocery workers around the country are acknowledging the tremendous resolve and solidarity of Raley's and Nob Hill workers who took tremendous risk to protect middle class grocery jobs... The fight in California was truly a fight against lowering the bar in this industry, and worker solidarity with loyal customers and allies from around the labor movement secured a real victory for grocery workers."

One of the main issues in the contract negotiations was the challenge faced by union grocery chains like Raley's in the face of the growing number of non-union grocers. The non-union grocers are subsidized by the lower wages and benefits that their workers receive. That is the high cost of low prices. Union grocery jobs have traditionally been a path into the middle class for many workers. That path is being threatened by the race to the bottom initiated by the non-union chains. Stores that pay substandard wages and do not provide decent health insurance lower the standard of living in our communities.

The long-term answer is to organize the non-union competition so that all workers can enjoy the benefits of union representation. The obstacle that workers at non-union stores face is that the companies are extremely hostile to unions. Workers can face intense pressure and retaliation when they attempt to organize.

A group known as OUR Walmart (Organization United for Respect at Walmart), supported by the UFCW, has begun organizing for better conditions at Walmart. There have been walkouts at stores and warehouses in several states across the country and workers have demonstrated outside the annual investors' meeting in Arkansas. For more information, see [www.forrespect.org](http://www.forrespect.org) and [www.makingchangeatwalmart.org](http://www.makingchangeatwalmart.org)

### What we can do?

When we shop, we vote with our dollars. When we shop at union stores we are supporting workers, encouraging those stores to stay in business and lifting up the standard of living in the communities where we live. In Stanislaus County, the unionized stores are Raley's, Nob Hill, Safeway, Savemart, Maxx Value, FoodMaxx, Rite Aid, Cost Less (Ceres), and Fresh Market (Turlock).

## Do we need unions?

By JOHN McCUTCHEON

I was sitting backstage with a fellow musician about a month ago, chewing the folk fat at a festival in the Shenandoah Valley. I mentioned that I knew a mutual acquaintance because we'd worked together in the musicians' union. He repeated a phrase I've heard far too often of late, "Well, unions had their purpose at one time, but we really don't need them anymore."

It seems apropos to mention the need for unions this year, the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, the Lawrence Bread-and-Roses Strike, the birth of Woody Guthrie, one of labor's great troubadours. The scenes from 100 years ago: the company towns, sweatshops, child labor, the robber barons, near-total lack of safety standards, slave wages... is a veritable photographic gallery of Doris Ullman-style images of want and privation. Unions came to rescue, the only force powerful enough to combat the headlock of America's Industrial Revolution on workers and their families.

Organized Labor helped build the American middle class, gave us weekends, paid vacation, health care, child labor laws, retirement pensions, dignity, and respect. And, all the while, helped build this country.

Fast forward to the undeniable corruption that infiltrated some unions in the 20th Century. It was reprehensible and wrong. Little is made, of course, of the undeniable corruption in the business sector. An unrelenting campaign to discredit unions began in the wake of World War Two and continues unabated today. Are unions perfect? Of course not. Are they outdated? Absolutely not.

Today we have the most productive workforce in American history, yet real wages are down to levels not seen in 40 years. Workers who were told over and over again that they could look forward to a dignified retirement are having their pensions vacated without recourse. Too old to work, too poor to retire, their lives are turned upside down. Every round of contract negotiations includes concessions and givebacks couched in threats and ultimatums. Meanwhile, 2011 delivered record executive bonuses and the highest corporate profits in our nation's history. How did you do last year?

Capitalism, like it or not, is the operating system that drives our economy today. It only works when the balance of greed and the public good is maintained at an acceptable equilibrium. Historically, Labor was the counterbalance to

that force. You want to count on the government to do that work? One party is in business' pocket and the other is incapable of doing anything effective. So what entity can the middle class count on to look out for its interests and has the muscle to stand up to corporate power?

And business understands that power. They're working overtime to discredit it. When the mortgage crisis and unregulated greed in banking and on Wall Street brought down the American economy, who were we suddenly told was responsible? Teachers! Public Workers! Unions! Incredible. The most incredible part is that people bought it.

I make no claims of neutrality. I've been a union member my entire work life. My union helped me get a mortgage on my house, obtain disability insurance when no one would talk to a musician, protects my instruments, and will pay me a good pension when I turn 65. It also protects the interests of my fellow musicians, which adds to my own security. I've seen unions care for families from cradle to grave, fight for the rights of workers and their communities, march proudly for other causes, stand by those who could not, and speak when others would not. I've been involved in a lot of struggles in my life and, if I needed someone to stand with me when the chips were down, believe me, I know exactly who I could count on to be in my corner.

So when I hear someone say, "We don't need unions anymore," I'll point them to businesses that turn fulltime employees into 30-hour-a-week workers solely to avoid paying benefits. I'll ask them about older workers who've had their retirements stolen. I'll wonder with them why the average CEO's compensation today is 400 times that of the average worker. We'll wrestle with the notion that companies are given tax breaks for sending jobs overseas. I'll ask what's to be done when a worker is terminated without cause, or laid off a month shy of retirement, or assigned dangerous work without protection or training. Who can they call? Who will listen and act?

Oh, right: those things we don't need anymore.

Solidarity is a wonderful thing, everybody's for it. As long as it stays in Poland.



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# Finger Pickin Good

By JENIFER WEST

Elizabeth Kirby vividly recalls the day she embarked on the adventure that changed her life. It happened, not coincidentally, on the heels of another major life change. “I opened the door, and it was a beautiful day. I remember the colors were really clear and bright.” So she went for a walk around her Tracy neighborhood. And began to notice things. The classic architecture, for example. And then, fruit growing on the neighborhood trees. And that day, the cloud of a difficult life event behind her, Elizabeth began a venture that would, ultimately, help feed a whole lot of people – her family included.

Inspired by the abundant fruit and veggies in her neighbors’ yards, Elizabeth began knocking on doors. “What a beautiful lemon tree – would you be willing to share some of your fruit?” That fruit, she assured them, would go to those who really needed it. At first, she admits, there was distrust. Eventually, though, folks were won over by her forthright manner, determination and upstanding character – along with an occasional treat made from the fruit they donated. Elizabeth provided a box; the tree or garden owner filled it, and she picked it up and delivered it to local charities (keeping a bit for her family along the way) the same day. The service was, and is, free, and the network quickly grew. And Finger Pickin’ Good was born. Virtually single-handedly, Elizabeth created the kind of grass roots venture that can change lives.

Asked if there was a moment when she began to think of what she was doing specifically as “a program”, or if she was just sort of “riding the wave,” picking up and delivering fruits and veggies, Elizabeth responds that she was so busy doing

the work (designing and distributing flyers, contacting anyone and everyone in town with a fruit tree or garden, dropping off empty boxes, picking up full ones and distributing them to groups that feed the needy; somehow finding time to learn the nuts & bolts of running a nonprofit businesses along the way) that she never really stopped to think about it. It “felt like a dream”, she says – and clearly still does. The last four years, she notes, have passed “in a blink!”

What surprised her the most, she says, is people: How much they want to contribute, how generous they are, both with resources and, whenever possible, time. Many times, she says, things that looked impossible seem to have somehow fallen into place. For example, she was helping to organize a community dinner to benefit the homeless, and one of the folks who’d had a major hand in planning the event, and who was needed to help pull it off, passed away shortly before it was to occur. So the Homeless Coalition applied “a little elbow grease”, and finished putting the event together. Then, just a week before the event, a couple buying tickets to it, learning of the difficulty the group had faced, volunteered their family to help “take up the slack”. And the event went off without a hitch.

Also a pleasant surprise, Elizabeth says, was the quantity of fruit and veggies available in the yards around town. And, she notes, Tracy is not unique – every town has yards that produce more fruits and veggies than their owners can consume. It just takes someone willing to take the time to look around to find them, and make the effort to get the excess to those who could really use it.

The people she’s met along the way have made her venture incredibly rewarding. And being so busy with this kind of work, she says, keeps her “on the straight and narrow”. “It makes the chaos in life bearable – life is a hurricane, and we don’t often get to be in the eye. It makes you really appreciate it.” There’s no time for loneliness – for herself or anyone else involved in this important endeavor. Through this kind of work, she says, people literally help each other. And those who are struggling come to realize that they aren’t alone. Everyone involved is rewarded, in many ways.

In these challenging times, we can’t assume that “someone else” will do our part. Each of us is responsible for helping those around us who are less fortunate, and Elizabeth Kirby has proven it can be done – single-handedly, if necessary. Asked what advice she would give to someone considering starting a program like Finger Pickin’ Good, Elizabeth emphasized what she calls “nanosecond thinking” – if it didn’t work one way, try something different. You can make things happen – you may just need to keep trying until you find an approach that works. Pay attention to what seems “comfortable” and work with it.

And never give up.

**December Gardener’s Note:** Plant broccoli, cabbage and lettuce now. Check your stock of seeds, as well as things like asparagus and potatoes, and purchase or order any you might need for the upcoming spring and summer growing seasons. Good resources: Johnny’s Selected Seeds ([www.johnnyseeds.com](http://www.johnnyseeds.com)) and Peaceful Valley Farm Supply ([www.groworganic.com](http://www.groworganic.com)).

## Green Tips for A Green Planet: ‘Tis the Season to Think Globally and Act Locally

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

In past holiday seasons we have published ideas on peaceful and green holiday gifts, gift wrapping, and decorating. This year we focus on Green and Peaceful Holiday Shopping.

First consider saving your time, energy, sanity and the use of fossil fuels by listening to Santa...Make a List and Check it Twice. Be sure to include names of your recipients, gift costs, and fit for specific needs or wants. You can further avoid the commercial holiday hype-and-buy hysteria that leads to buying things that don’t meet your shopping list criteria by allowing time to sleep on it.

Shopping available online 24/7 allows for less wasted time, frazzled nerves, and holiday traffic jams, and items are delivered directly to your front door via mass transit.

While online, check out the holiday gifts offered by your favorite green, philanthropic, and non-profit organizations. Heifer Project International, UNICEF, World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and many more offer gift certificates, calendars, greeting cards, and beautiful gifts made locally and internationally benefitting both the creators and the recipients.

Points or rewards earned from credit cards can be redeemed as donations to favorite green and/or human rights causes, and your friends and loved ones may appreciate the honor of a donation in their name rather than “stuff.” Sites

like Good Shop, We-Care.com, iGive and giveandshop.com work through Amazon.com and other major retailers to earmark a portion of profits to charities of your choice, suggests Dan Shapley of DailyGreen. He also points to sites like Ecobunga, Pristine Planet and greencouponcodes.com, which offer discount coupons for sustainable, Fair Trade and organic products.

If that “perfect” gift requires a trip to the store, shop locally, which helps to revitalize downtown business districts and encourages urban development, in turn helping to preserve open spaces and vital farmland. Local Modesto Area merchants offer locally produced olive oils, nuts, and homemade candies. Area artisans are featured at the Mistlin Gallery on J Street and at private galleries and studios. Modesto’s logo and other Modesto items are available at the Modesto Visitors’ and Convention Bureau, 9 and K Streets, and the McHenry Mansion and Modesto Museum, both on I Street, feature a charming array of Stanislaus County and other historical gifts. Gift certificates to local restaurants, performing arts venues, beauty salons, jewelry stores, grocery stores, bakeries, floral shops, bowling and game centers, used bookstores and countless other local retail and service businesses are always welcome.

Search out Energy Star electronics, organic clothing, Fair

Trade and Conflict Free jewelry, recycled paper items (books, wrapping paper, cards and stationary) and other gifts that are produced by socially responsible companies who pay fair wages and use eco-friendly materials.

Finally, with an eye to the usual piles of wrapping paper, packaging, boxes and ribbons that fill living rooms and ultimately our landfills, take the challenge to produce less waste than what you started with by purchasing items made of recycled materials and use minimal packaging, and then, creatively wrapping them with paper and containers you have on hand or placing gifts in reusable shopping bags like those sold at the Modesto Peace/Life Center.



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CONNECTIONS  
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<http://stanislausconnections.org/>

# The growing global movement against austerity

By AMY GOODMAN

Amaia Engana didn't wait to be evicted from her home. On Nov. 9, in the town of Barakaldo, a suburb of Bilbao in Spain's Basque Country, officials from the local judiciary were on their way to serve her eviction papers. Amaia stood on a chair and threw herself out of her fifth-floor apartment window, dying instantly on impact on the sidewalk below. She was the second person in two weeks in Spain to commit suicide as a result of an impending foreclosure action. Her suicide has added gravity to this week's general strike radiating from the streets of Madrid across all of Europe. As resistance to so-called austerity in Europe becomes increasingly transnational and coordinated, President Barack Obama and the House Republicans begin their debate to avert the "fiscal cliff." The fight is over fair tax rates, budget priorities and whether we as a society will sustain the social safety net built during the past 80 years.

The general strike that swept across Europe Nov. 14 had its genesis in the deepening crisis in Spain, Portugal and Greece. As a result of the global economic collapse in 2008, Spain is in a deep financial crisis. Unemployment has surpassed 25 percent, and among young people is estimated at 50 percent. Large banks have enjoyed bailouts while they enforce mortgages that an increasing number of Spaniards are unable to meet, provoking increasing numbers of foreclosures and attempted evictions. "Attempted" because, in response to the epidemic of evictions in Spain, a direct-action movement has grown to prevent them. In city after city, individuals and groups have networked, creating rapid-response teams



Courtesy of Flickr

that flood the street outside a threatened apartment. When officials arrive to deliver the eviction notice, they can't reach the building's main door, let alone the apartment in question.

The general strike across Europe ranged from mass rallies in Madrid, with participation from members of Parliament, to protests in London, to outside the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, to high atop the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy, where protesters flew anti-austerity flags and banners. In calling for the first pan-national general strike in Europe in generations, the European Trade Union Confederation hoped to express "strong opposition to the austerity measures that are dragging Europe into economic stagnation, indeed recession, as well as the continuing dismantling of the European social model. These measures, far from re-establishing confidence, only serve to worsen imbalances and foster injustice."

Back in the U.S., a group from Occupy Wall Street, which itself was inspired in part by the Spanish M-15 movement against austerity that began on May 15, 2011, has taken a creative approach to the blight of debt that is afflicting millions. Calling itself "Rolling Jubilee," after the ancient practice of forgiving all debts every 50 years, the group is buying debt from lenders, for pennies on the dollar, and canceling it. This discounted debt market exists primarily because collection agencies and "vulture capitalists" acquire bad loans that people have stopped paying for 2 to 3 cents on a dollar, and still make a profit by hounding people to pay back some or all of that debt. Rolling Jubilee, according to its website, "believes people should not go into debt for basic necessities like education, healthcare and housing. Rolling Jubilee intervenes by buying debt, keeping it out of the hands of collectors, and then abolishing it ... to help each other out and

highlight how the predatory debt system affects our families and communities. Think of it as a bailout of the 99 percent by the 99 percent." To date, Rolling Jubilee has raised \$175,000, which it says will be used to abolish \$3.5 million in debt.

The amount may be symbolic, but an important message to President Obama and House Republicans as they wrangle over the future of the U.S. tax rates, deficit reduction and how to fund so-called entitlements. Sarah Anderson of the Institute for Policy Studies prefers to call Social Security and Medicare "earned benefit programs, because these are programs that American workers are paying into over their lives, and they have a right to that money, to have these basic social programs that have made us a much stronger society with a stronger middle class." Anderson told me, "The approach to the debt should be to look at the ways that we could raise revenues through ... taxing financial transactions ... cutting fossil-fuel subsidies and using carbon taxes, and cutting military spending. That kind of combination could raise trillions of dollars over the next decade."

As the movement for that strong social safety net grows around the world, and locally here at home, the mandate is clear: Austerity is not the answer.

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**"Despite what the debt and deficit hawks would have you believe, we can't cut our way back to prosperity. No large economy has ever recovered from serious recession through austerity. But there is another factor holding our economy back: inequality."**

**Joseph Stiglitz,  
Nobel Laureate in Economics**

# Israel and Gaza: Enough is Enough

By RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

All the usual suspects are cheering on their respective sides in the latest struggle between Israel and Palestine being fought out at the expense of some Israeli and more Palestinian civilian lives. I've been overwhelmed with sadness at the tragic loss of lives, and outraged at all those who continue to justify their side and demean the other, implicitly cheering on the violence even as they officially deplore it! Enough is enough. Stop the violence immediately!

**First step:** the international community, led by the U.S., should impose an immediate cease-fire on all sides of the struggle, and should introduce an international peace force to restrain and if necessary arrest anyone involved in any side of this struggle who is acting to continue the violence. That force should be equally charged with arresting any military figures on the Israeli side or guerrilla forces on the Palestinian side that are attempting to engage in hostilities.

**Second step:** hold an international conference to create a politically and economically viable Palestinian state living in peace with Israel (details on what that would look like are in my book *Embracing Israel/Palestine* which you can order online at [www.tikkun.org/eip](http://www.tikkun.org/eip), or on Kindle format at Amazon.com).

**Third step:** begin a truth and reconciliation process to coincide with implementing the creation of a politically and economically viable Palestinian state.

So how do we get there, given the apparent willingness of everyone from Obama to the most liberal Dems in the Congress to want to be seen as giving Israel carte blanche to do what it will to punish Hamas, while even the normally predictable peace voices are keeping a very low profile?

We have to move the focus from who did what to whom to the more significant question: how do we use this moment to push beyond the usual cacophony of righteous believers in the goodness of their side's cause so that we can realize that the issue for all humanity is how to put love, kindness and caring for each other and for the earth on our collective agenda? The human race simply can no longer allow itself to be distracted by outrageous and endless vicious nationalist struggles.

Yes, there are steps that could be taken to guarantee a lasting cease-fire. Israel could offer to end the blockade of Gaza (which in any event has been ineffective in keeping Hamas from gaining long-range missile capabilities) and end all drone over flights in both the West Bank and Gaza and all targeted assassinations. In exchange, Hamas would agree to allow international monitors to search all forms of entry to Gaza to prevent that military hardware from being imported. Simultaneously Hamas would agree to prevent all future bombardment of S'derot and any other Israeli targets, and to punish those engaged in rogue actions of that sort (e.g., Islamic Jihad or whoever else tries to provoke war by shooting at Israel from Gaza). The international monitors should also be policing West Bank settlers, some of whom are committed to disrupting any peace process that might lead to reducing West Bank settlements.

These are bold steps. But no such moves are likely to work without a fundamental change of attitude: a new approach of compassion for each side by the other; the adoption of a zero tolerance of war as a solution to anyone's problems; and replacing the strategy of domination ("we'll show them how tough we are") with a new strategy of generosity ("we'll show them how much we can care for them beyond all reasonable expectations").

The first step in this process: it is time the Israelis acknowledge the cost of their Occupation and denial of fundamental democratic and human rights on the Palestinian people. Much of the Israeli media gives little attention to the ongoing violence directed at Palestinians, such as outright stealing of land from Palestinian farmers, Israeli Defense Force suppression of non-violent demonstrations against the Occupation, holding Palestinians without charges, and targeted assassinations now carried out by drones whose daily presence in the skies over Gaza make that tiny area the world's largest outdoor prison.

The majority of Israelis go about daily life oblivious to the suffering that the status quo generates until Palestinians launch their (thankfully mostly ineffective) missiles against hapless citizens in S'derot and other southern Israeli towns. And when Israelis flex their overwhelming military muscles, the leaders (sic) of the organized Jewish community in the U.S. jump into line, screaming that Israel's existence is in danger (a complete fantasy) and that the U.S. must support its "ally" (which meanwhile is scheming how to drag the US into a war with Iran).

While it is true, as the Palestinians and their global supporters purport, that Israel can (and does) murder far more Palestinians than Hamas murders Israeli citizens, this ignores the suffering of citizens in S'derot who for years now have regularly faced rockets launched from Gaza that forced them to run to shelters to protect their families from the potential murderous impact of those Hamas generated missiles. And now millions of Israelis are once again experiencing the fear of mass annihilation. The rockets fired at Tel Aviv and Jerusalem reinforce the Holocaust traumas that pervade Jewish consciousness. This rocket firing also provides the most right-wing elements in the Israeli government with precisely the kind of "evidence" it needs that there can be no two state solution (because the Palestinian Authority can't control Hamas and hence can't deliver a lasting peace agreement).

The murder of civilians on either side only builds resentment and entrenches both sides in their self-righteous indignation. As civilians hide in terror, (one side in their bomb shelters, the other hiding wherever they can), their political leaders play a game of chess to promote their position and prolong the fighting. In actuality, neither Hamas nor the Netanyahu government wants peace.

Hamas wants to subvert the Palestinian Authority's efforts to get Palestine a higher status at the U.N. because that would make Hamas less viable in the coming Palestinian national elections. Its launching missiles against Israeli targets is not aimed at winning anything. Though some may justify such actions morally as the response of the powerless to the ongo-

ing evil of the Israeli occupation and its murderous day-to-day reality, we must also note that it is a cynical ploy by Hamas to undermine the Palestinian Authority's seven past years of non-violence and seeking accommodation with Israel. At the same time, Palestinian non-violence is the last thing the Netanyahu government wants. Hence it continues its provocative policies of taking ever more Palestinian land to undermine the possibility of a two state solution that it deceptively claims to still support. Meanwhile it is now escalating the violence against Palestinian civilians as its calling card for the forthcoming Israeli elections. Netanyahu is willing to endanger the lives of Israelis by failing to reward Palestinian non-violence from the Palestinian Authority but instead escalating violence against Gaza. It's his ticket not only to re-election, but also to his legacy as "the Prime Minister who stood firm against outside pressure."

Nothing Israel can offer short of ending the Occupation **now** and creating a politically and economically viable Palestinian state (along terms I've outlined in chapter 8 of my 2012 book *Embracing Israel/Palestine*) will change anything. A cease fire will merely perpetuate an awful status quo. Yet the kind of generous offer I propose in my book is not going to happen until there is a much larger change in the consciousness not only of Israelis and Palestinians but also of their champions and cheerleaders around the world.

What is needed is for both sides to approach the other recognizing that their own well-being depends upon the well-being of the other side. A first step toward enhancing that well-being is to agree to resolve remaining issues without violence. A second step is to teach their own people a way of compassionately understanding the discourse, experience, and history of the other side, learning to tell the other side's story with an open-hearted spirit of generosity. And that not for the sake of some flakey good feelings, but for the sake of realizing that 5,000 years of war making by the countries of the world has not led to safety and security, but to endless suffering.

In short, what is needed is a new global ethos of recognizing that our well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else alive today and the well-being of the planet as well. The path to homeland security for everyone and every country is a path of generosity. And that generosity has to take form in consciousness and in action. In our consciousness we must learn each other's stories so that we are able to see the world from the others' perspective.

As for action, the U.S. should take the leadership with the other advanced industrial countries (the G-20) to launch a domestic and global Marshall Plan. The aim would be to give 1-2% of each country's Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty to once and for all end global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care, and to repair the damage done to the global environment. This project would be financed from the trillions saved in military spending, and in part by a 1% Tobin tax on all global money transfers of more than a million dollars. This strategy would provide the world with a far more effective

## Supermarket is an unexpected arena for Israeli-Palestinian co-existence

By RUTH EGLASH

Sha'ar Binyamin, West Bank - Israeli and Palestinian leaders might still be refusing to meet each other to even discuss the prospect of peace, but at one West Bank supermarket Arab residents of Ramallah and those living in the Jewish settlements surrounding it come face to face every day.

This supermarket is one of many businesses in the region that bring Israelis and Palestinians together on a regular basis, and highlights ordinary people's shared desire for a more peaceful life.

"They come here to shop because it's cheaper and more convenient," declares the supermarket's security guard, a jolly middle-aged man who is quick to comment on the peaceful atmosphere that prevails here but is nervous to divulge his own name.

The guard was recently forced into action when more than 100 activists from the pro-Palestinian Popular Struggle Coordination Committee stormed the store to protest the presence of a prominent Israeli-owned business in the West Bank, and Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory in general. However, he adds that it was a very unusual event and that the shoppers here get along just fine.

"Everyone gets treated the same by me at least," he says with an infectious smile.

Indeed, on this weekday morning, the guard greets shoppers in a mixture of Hebrew and Arabic. And despite last month's protest, the scene today is calm.

Shoppers of all backgrounds browse the food aisles side-by-side, check out at registers staffed by a mix of Israeli and

Palestinian cashiers, and then drive back to their own sides of the conflict. Until they reach their respective neighbourhoods the differences between them are minimal, with everyone here striving for the same goal: grocery shopping.

Despite the recent protest and mounting pressure on Palestinians to boycott Israeli products or Israeli-owned businesses, workers here say the store is often filled with shoppers from Ramallah and beyond.

"Many Palestinians like to come here so that they can say they have been to Israel," quips Abdullah Twam, 22, one of the Palestinian workers, referring to the Hebrew-language signs and the numerous Israeli shoppers, sights one would not see in supermarkets in Palestinian-controlled areas.

The West Bank is divided into three sections, with some areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority and some by the Israeli army. The supermarket itself is located in Area C, which remains under Israeli civil and security control but is also accessible to Palestinians.

Twam, who is from the nearby village of Jaba, says that he has not felt any pressure to stop working here because of its location or its Jewish ownership. Rather, he says, the chain treats him and other Palestinian employees well.

With the Muslim call to prayer echoing in the background, women wearing the traditional Muslim head covering and Jewish women clad in colourful headscarves push their trolleys past the guard and disappear through the supermarket's entrance.

Freda Sviri, a Jewish shopper from the nearby settlement of Beit El, explains that it is more convenient to come here

than traveling all the way into Jerusalem, which is about 10 kilometres away, and that it is cheaper.

"When there is a big sale, the place is packed with Arabs and Jews shopping together," she observes.

While there is little interaction between the Israeli and Palestinian shoppers who come, Sviri notes that the Palestinian staff is "very helpful" and "we treat each other with respect."

"The problem is not with ordinary people," she observes, "but with our leaders."

Israel's Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas have consistently refused to meet each other to discuss peace. It's a deadlock, with the Palestinians calling for certain pre-conditions and Israelis saying any negotiations have to start from scratch.

With all talk of peace at a standstill since Netanyahu came to power nearly four years ago, the coexistence found at this shop is unusual. However, owner Rami Levy, who has three other branches of the chain that bears his name across the West Bank, has reportedly made peaceful overtures towards the Palestinians. Levy meets regularly with well-known Palestinian businessmen to discuss the potential for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation outside of the political arena.

With such businessmen committed to finding a way for Israelis and Palestinians to coexist, perhaps it is time to start utilising the forums that highlight common ground between them to break down ever-growing barriers in the region and make peace.

Ruth Eglash is the former Deputy Managing Director of The Jerusalem Post, and now contributes to a variety of international publications. She lives just outside of Jerusalem.

Source: Common Ground News Service (CGNews), [www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org)

## Israel and Gaza

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path to safety and security. If implemented in a true spirit of generosity, such a concerted effort would break the depressive certainty that every country has that no one cares about anyone else but themselves, and thus could open the hearts of people in the Middle East who remain stuck in various demonizing visions of who the other "really is."

Implementing such a strategy will take average citizens around the world, like you and me, not only to demand an end to this senseless violence, but to insist that our own countries reject the strategy of domination and adopt the strategy of generosity. As a symbolic statement of your support for this direction, I urge you to use this Thanksgiving to raise this idea of generosity and caring for others as the foundation for our global survival and as the only practical and realistic path to end the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians! And lovingly tell the partisans that their approach of supporting further violence is really destructive to the well-being of the very people they claim to be serving; after all, the endless cycle of violence damages the bodies and spirits of both Israelis and Palestinians. And then, if you can develop this capacity of compassion within yourself, provide empathy for the depth of their pain. Try to understand their story—the story of those who will put you down for being too idealistic—because they can only be moved when their pain is listened to and understood. And then engage them in

visualizing their way to bring a lasting peace that doesn't involve annihilating or expelling the other from the Holy Land! And recognize that the realists who insist that caring for others is unrealistic are actually the reason we've never been able to eliminate war, poverty and oppression. In doing all this, affirm the centrality of love and generosity, because in fact these provide the foundation for the only strategy that can possibly work.



**ACTION:** The path of the so-called "realists," who allow what is to shape their vision of what could be has led to endless wars and destruction. Enough is enough! It's time to stop being "realistic" and instead start insisting on the kind of world we and all humanity need and want. After Thanksgiving, contact your Congressional reps and tell them that you want the US to change its role from lead cheerleader for Israel to actually being substantively pro-Israel, since the only way to be pro-Israel is to also be pro-Palestine, because the fate of both peoples is eternally interlocked and interdependent. Write a letter to the editor with the same idea.

This article has been edited for length. For the full article see: <http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2012/11/19/israel-and-gaza-enough-is-enough/>

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# Michael Moore's suggestions for President Obama

**1. DRIVE THE RICH RIGHT OFF THEIR FISCAL CLIFF.** The “fiscal cliff” is a ruse, an invention by the Right and the rich, to try and keep their huge tax breaks. On December 31, let ALL the tax cuts expire. Then, on January 1, put forth a bill that restores the tax cuts for 98% of the public. I dare the Republicans to vote against that! They can't and they won't. As for the spending cuts, the 2011 agreement states that, for every domestic program dollar the Republicans want to cut, a Pentagon dollar must also be cut. See, you are a genius! No way will the Right vote against the masters of war. And if by some chance they do, you can immediately put forth legislation to restore all the programs we, the majority, approve of. And for God's sake, man – declare Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid untouchable. They're not bankrupt or anywhere near it. If the rich paid the same percentage of Social Security tax on their entire income – the same exact rate everyone else pays – then there will suddenly be enough money in Social Security to last til at least the year 2080!

**2. END ALL THE WARS NOW.** Do not continue the war in Afghanistan (a thoroughly losing proposition if ever there was one) for two full more years! Why should one single more person have to die FOR NO REASON? Stop it. You know it's wrong. Bin Laden's dead, al Qaeda is decimated and the Afghans have to work out their own problems. Also, end the drone strikes and other covert military activities you are conducting in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Colombia and God knows where else. You think history is going to remember the United States as a great democracy? No, they're going to think of us as a nation that became addicted to war. They'll

call us warlords. They'll say that in the 21st century America was so in need of oil that we'd kill anyone to get it. You know that's where this is going. This has to stop. Now.

**3. END THE DRUG WAR.** It is not only an abysmal failure, it has returned us to the days of slavery. We have locked up millions of African-Americans and Latinos and now fund a private prison-industrial complex that makes billions for a few lucky rich people. There are other ways to deal with the drugs that do cause harm – ways built around a sense of decency and compassion. We look like a bunch of sadistic racists. Stop it.

**4. DECLARE A MORATORIUM ON HOME FORECLOSURES AND EVICTIONS.** Millions of people are facing homelessness because of a crooked system enacted by the major banks and Wall Street firms. Put a pause on this and take 12 months to work out a different way (like, restructuring families' mortgages to reflect the true worth of their homes).

**5. GET MONEY OUT OF POLITICS.** You already know this one. The public is sick of it. Now's the time to act.

**6. EXPAND OBAMACARE.** Your health care law doesn't cover everyone. It is a cash cow for the insurance industry. Push for a single-payer system – Medicare for All – and include dentistry and mental health. This is the single biggest thing you could do to reduce the country's deficit.

**7. RESTORE GLASS-STEAGALL.** You must put back all the rigid controls on Wall Street that Reagan, Clinton and the Bushes removed – or else we face the possibility of

another, much worse, crash. If they break the law, prosecute them the way you currently go after whistleblowers and medical marijuana dispensaries.

**8. REDUCE STUDENT LOAN DEBT.** No 22-year-old should have to enter the real world already in a virtual debtors' prison. This is cruel and no other democracy does this like we do. You were right to eliminate the banks as the profit-gouging lenders, but now you have to bring us back to the days when you and I were of college age and a good education cost us little or next to nothing. A few less wars would go a long way to being able to afford this.

**9. FREE BRADLEY MANNING.** End the persecution and prosecution of an American hero. Bush and Cheney lied to a nation to convince us to go to war. Manning allegedly hacked the war criminals' files and then shared them with the American public (and the world) so that we could learn the truth about Iraq and Afghanistan. Our history is full of such people who “break the law” for the greater good of humanity. Army Specialist Bradley Manning deserves a medal, not prison.

**10. ASK US TO DO SOMETHING.** One thing is clear: none of the above is going to happen if you don't immediately mobilize the 63,500,000 who voted for you (and the other 40 million who are for you but didn't vote). You can't go this alone. You need an army of everyday Americans who will fight alongside you to make this a more just and peaceful nation. In your 2008 campaign, you were a pioneer in using social media to win the election. Over 15 million of us gave you our cell numbers or email addresses so you could send us texts and emails telling us what needed to be done to win the election. Then, as soon as you won, it was as if you hit the delete button. We never heard from you again. (Until this past year when you kept texting us to send you \$25. Inspiring.) Whoever your internet and social media people were should have been given their own office in the West Wing – and we should have heard from you. Constantly. Need a bill passed? Text us and we will mobilize! The Republicans are filibustering? We can stop them! They won't approve your choice for Secretary of State? We'll see about that! You say you were a community organizer. Please – start acting like one.

President Obama – my cell number to text me at is 810-522-8398 and my email is MMFlint@MichaelMoore.com. I await my first assignment!

Excerpted from “An Open Letter to President.” Read the entire text at <http://www.michaelmoore.com>

## Election 2012

from page 1

tion working to increase civic engagement in Latino and immigrant communities. In Modesto Mi Familia Vota ran their voter registration and get out the vote campaign out of the office of the North Valley Labor Federation. 2,700 new voters registered through the work of 15 staff and 45 volunteers. They knocked on 20,000 doors and made 10,000 phone calls to get out the vote for 30 and against 32.

Well-know national figures visited Modesto to encourage the campaigns. *Mi Familia Vota* board member Eliseo Medina came to speak to volunteers before they went out to encourage Latino voters. Medina is the international secretary treasurer of the Service Employees International Union and was a Valley farm worker and former board member of the United Farm Workers. Rich Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, the national labor federation, stopped in Modesto at the North Valley Labor Federation to fire up union volunteers working on the voter campaign. Film and TV actress Rosario Dawson came to downtown Modesto just before Election Day to rally volunteers from CBC, *Mi Familia Vota* and other groups.

The successful mobilization of voters in Stanislaus County by volunteers from grass roots organizations in the interests of workers, students and the underrepresented is tremendously encouraging. The strengthening of working relationships among the leaders of diverse communities finding common interest was powerful. In a 1984 speech at the Commonwealth

Club in San Francisco, Cesar Chavez declared, “We are filled with hope and encouragement. We have looked into the future and the future is ours! History and inevitability are on our side... The day will come when the politicians do the right thing by our people out of political necessity and not out of charity or idealism.” We know that elections have consequences in the lives of people. And we know that elections are not enough. With the success in the recent election and the level of organization and commitment that made it possible, the prospects for continued success look bright.

Propositions	Yes votes/ %	No votes/ %
Stanislaus		
Prop 30	75,506 53.29%	66,180 46.71%
Prop 32	65,947 46.9%	74,671 53.1%
California		
Prop 30	5,727,311 54.3%	4,817,552 45.7%
Prop 32	4,538,512 43.7%	5,837,807 56.3%
<b>President</b>		<b>Total votes/ %</b>
Stanislaus		
Obama	70,609 48.9%	
Romney	69,549 48.16%	
California		
Obama	6,414,573 59.3%	
Romney	4,136,120 38.3%	

## CORRECTION

In the October issue of Connections, the description of the poet, Elena Kanevsky, was incorrectly described in the “Gathering of Poets.” The proper attribution is:

Elena is from Moscow, Russia, has a master's degree in biology from Moscow State University, and took classes at MiraCosta College when she moved to California in her late forties.

Connections apologizes for the error.



## One Sister at a Time

A sister listens to her inner Sister Giant and resurrects Marie Curie in the form of a one woman play. Inspired, I reflect upon the women who have created this hologram that I call my life.

A sister and her millions of sisters, endured, and still endure, slavery while creating loving homes for their children, with rich traditions and spiritual wisdom. Then their children are also sold into slavery... togetherness lost forever.

A sister inspired hundreds of thousands of sisters, to demand our right to vote... and to use it. A Sister Giant enters her House and her Senate. We support her know we are growing wiser, with the passing of each day and each election... and more compassionate.

A sister crosses the ocean in a small boat, Like our ancestors, she holds her Big Hopes in her Brave Heart... a better life for her children, her brothers and sisters, her struggling planet, and herself. She may arrive on our shore safely but many don't.

A sister who is my mother joins the Air Force. To celebrate, she has a red heart tattooed on her left upper arm with Her Own initials inside. She drives a troop truck, and after WWII meets a soldier on a troop train who becomes the man who is my father.

Gathering with my sisters on this fall evening, we give thanks for sisters who give so much. We are aware of how easy it is to forget, and how much more there is to do. We also give thanks for all of our brothers who have supported our sisters... One Sister At a Time.



Chyrl Turner lives in gratitude for each day and to all of the people who founded and support our state and national parks. She is in love with the trails on Tioga Pass.

## Hello My Little Friend

Moving beyond the illusions... sometimes the journey seems long and the obstacles foreboding. But my Clear Heart knows this is yet another illusion. My Clear Heart knows the way home, and takes me there in an instant.

She smiles the Dalai Lama smile, then she takes a deep breath ... and moves me back into this moment. Inhaling, exhaling, inhaling, exhaling... transcending the stories that feed the illusions of my frightened little ego.

My Clear Heart places her hands together in the sacred pose of prayer and befriends my fearful, hungry, and helpless little ego with the nourishment she truly needs... the greeting of the Buddhist monk Tich Nhat Hahn: "Hello My Little Friend".

## Awake for the Show

Two hours before daylight, the crescent moon is perfectly centered in the rectangle of my window. It has found a tiny opening in the almost solid cloud cover, and it has found an opening in my heart.

Its two friends, Jupiter and Venus, larger and brighter than usual, are close to each other and close to the moon. A thin line of almost transparent clouds are under the bottom crescent tip and seem to be supporting it. Does it need a brief rest on its journey across the sky?

Closing my eyes, I say thanks for this stunning beauty to behold, thanks for having been awakened for the show. Opening my eyes, the three heavenly bodies have gone. Has my sense of time been shifted? Is my window frame searching for something new?

Going outside in the chilly morning air, I am aware that the brief opening in the clouds has been closed. I say, "Goodbye", to my friends and give another thanks for everything I've experienced that has made me feel so exhilarated and thrilled to be Awake for the Show.



Photo by Chyrl Turner 5-18-10

## Calling

We Are Love...  
And mostly we forget.  
We are called ...  
to Remember  
mostly Every Moment.



Photo by Chyrl Turner 6-22-06

## Light Moments

Big nature calls to our spirit, though we are much smaller than the rickrack trees edging the hills.

Small nature sings to us on the branch of an old tree then flies away as we get near.

In this moment, we breathe in the crisp fragrance of evergreen air, watch the long light of the setting sun briefly illuminate Nevada Falls. There will never be another moment just like this. We breathe it in.

And give thanks for the blessings, big and small, especially being here, really being here, rather than being home organizing our desk.

# In Memory of John Morearty

(Sept. 15, 1938 - Oct. 11, 2012)

By JAMES WALSH

*From the Board of the Peace and Justice Network of San Joaquin County.*

It is with great sadness that the Peace and Justice Network of San Joaquin says good-bye to one of our founders and most energetic elder and leader, John Morearty. John was the author of many of our fundraising letters touting the activities of PJN and speaking to your conscience to consider supporting San Joaquin County's most vibrant network of progressive organizations as well as the only regular, progressive newspaper. I am honored to carry on where John left off and all of us at PJN look forward to the challenge of expanding and promoting the Morearty legacy of seeking social justice and peace in our world.

To that end, we have decided to rename our center the John Morearty Peace and Justice Center. Watch for details and plans for a dedication soon in San Joaquin Connections.

The PJN BOD also plans to carry on the activities initiated by John and our co-founders by:

- Continuing to promote THE JOHN MOREARTY PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER as a meeting place for our affiliate organizations, as an educational event center, and as a social meeting hall to reweave the bonds of social connections so vital for our campaign to build a new world.
- Sponsorship of two half-hour local talk shows on SJTV Ch 26.

- Co-sponsorship of the annual festival, Earth Day at Victory Park every spring.
- Organizing the only "Peaceful Holiday Gift Faire" every early December.

We are taking your pulse: What do you want? Do you have ideas on how to honor John?

What are you looking for from the Peace and Justice Network? Please let us know what you think.

And in John's words,

"Like the song says, Peace is flowing like a river, flowing out of you and me.... Take heart, let peace flow out of you, with your generous financial support for our ongoing efforts. And let peace flow out with your response to our survey. Please give us your reflections and share your compassion, so together we can strengthen our work. Together we are building the new world, and it takes every one of us."

"Your generosity and encouragement have always been the wind under our wings.

We need your faithful support now, more than ever."

The Peace and Justice Network of San Joaquin County, 231 Bedford Rd., P.O. Box 4123, Stockton, CA 95204; 209-467-4455; <http://www.pjnsjc.org>

Reach James Walsh at [jwprod1956@clearwire.net](mailto:jwprod1956@clearwire.net)

# Prison Gift Bag Project update

By DAVID HETLAND

Friends of the Prison Gift Bag Project:

Packing Day is scheduled for Sunday, December 2nd, 1:00 to 5:00 PM, in Wesley Hall at the United Methodist Church of Merced, 899 Yosemite Park Way.

Donations are coming in at steady pace. Since my last update, more than \$900 has been received in cash contributions! This is greatly appreciated and has allowed us to do some serious shopping for quality products to go in the gift bags. Additional cash donations will assist in the purchase of toothbrushes, shampoo, and conditioner, items that are not donated as often.

Due to the closing of Valley State Prison for Women (the institution across the street), the population count continues to increase at Central California Women's Facility and now stands at 2990. We're projecting the need to pack 3800 bags.

Recruitment of volunteers has begun and many of you representing organizations have been contacted. If you haven't already, please provide me with an estimate of the number of volunteers.

There are reports that the incarcerated women look forward to this annual event with great anticipation. For many, it will be the only remembrance that they receive during the holidays.

Contact Dave Hetland if you have questions, 209-388-1608 [dhetland2003@yahoo.com](mailto:dhetland2003@yahoo.com)

## Christmas in the Trenches

Words and Music by JOHN McCUTCHEON

*Inspired by a back-stage conversation with an old woman in Birmingham, AL, this song tells a story that is not only true, but well-known throughout Europe.*

My name is Francis Tolliver, I come from Liverpool,  
Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school.  
To Belgium and to Flanders to Germany to here  
I fought for King and country I love dear.  
'Twas Christmas in the trenches where the frost so bitter hung,  
The frozen fields of France were still, no Christmas song was sung,  
Our families back in England were toasting us that day,  
Their brave and glorious lads so far away.

I was lying with my messmate on the cold and rocky ground  
When across the lines of battle came a most peculiar sound  
Says I, "Now listen up, me boys!" each soldier strained to hear  
As one young German voice sang out so clear.  
'He's singing bloody well, you know!' my partner says to me  
Soon one by one each German voice joined in in harmony  
The cannons rested silent, the gas clouds rolled no more  
As Christmas brought us respite from the war.

As soon as they were finished and a reverent pause was spent  
'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' struck up some lads from Kent  
The next they sang was "Stille Nacht," 'Tis 'Silent Night', says I  
And in two tongues one song filled up that sky.

"There's someone coming towards us!" the front line sentry cried  
All sights were fixed on one lone figure coming from their side  
His truce flag, like a Christmas star, shone on that plain so bright  
As he bravely strode unarmed into the night.

Soon one by one on either side walked into No Man's land  
With neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand  
We shared some secret brandy and we wished each other well  
And in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell.  
We traded chocolates, cigarettes, and photographs from home  
These sons and fathers far away from families of their own  
Young Sanders played his squeeze box and they had a violin  
This curious and unlikely band of men.

Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more  
With sad farewells we each began to settle back to war  
But the question haunted every heart that lived that wondrous night  
'Whose family have I fixed within my sights?'  
'Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost so bitter hung  
The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung  
For the walls they'd kept between us to exact the work of war  
Had been crumbled and were gone for evermore.

My name is Francis Tolliver, in Liverpool I dwell  
Each Christmas come since World War I I've learned its lessons well  
That the ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame  
And on each end of the rifle we're the same.

# Remembrance Day

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

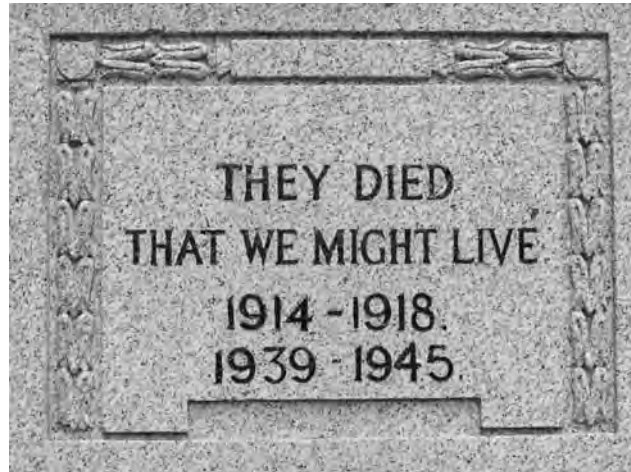
My Facebook page was filled yesterday with hundreds of well-wishes and many thanks for veterans' services to their nations. Indeed November 11th is an important day for both Great Britain and the United States. At precisely 11:00 am on 11/11/1918, simultaneous shots were fired at from the Eiffel Tower in Paris and Fort Mont-Valerien outside Paris announcing an end to the hostilities. November 11th is the day when The Great War ended.

I prefer to use the old name of the First World War. I think that name helps to maintain a sense of the immensity of the scope of that war, as well as the utter devastation it caused to both central Europe and a generation of men in Europe. This war brought us machines designed and used to annihilate people. Massive artillery guns capable of hitting a target miles away, hand held weapons capable of spitting out thousands of bullets a minute, and toxic gases: the technology of war advanced farther and faster than the generals who engineered the war could grasp.

Nearly 30,000,000 men were killed or wounded between August 1914 and November 1918. These numbers include 360,000 American soldiers, 5,600,000 French soldiers, and 3,000,000 British soldiers. Three million is nearly 10% of the total population of Great Britain as it was measured in 1911. Nearly 1 in 10 people of this nation were killed or wounded in the war. Everyone knew several people directly affected. Moreover, the British census of 1921 shows decline in the number of 21-23 year old men from the 1911 census. The birth rate dropped as a result of that deficit.

It is safe to say that the Great War had as profound an effect on Europe as the Civil War had on America. This makes Remembrance Day closer in spirit to Memorial Day than to Veterans Day. They mark the 11th of November a little differently here in the Great Britain than you do in the US.

As you know, in the US Veterans Day is a national holiday, a day for remembering the men and women who have served their nation as a member of the United States Armed



Services. Living or dead veterans are honored and thanked for their service to the nation. Flags appear in public places. Likewise, people who fly the flag at home make sure it's out on Veterans Day. The President and members of the federal government hold a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery and then watch the parade of colors by representative members of US Armed Forces.

Here, Remembrance Day is a day to specifically remember the fallen. No one waves a flag, they wear poppies on their lapels and we all stop what we are doing for 2 minutes of silence at 11:00 am. Towns and villages with memorials to the Great War hold local gatherings where the dead of that war are remembered. After World War II, the fallen of every conflict have rightly been included, but the day itself maintains a character of somber reflection rather than patriotic exposition.

I took a bicycle ride through the countryside of northern Cambridgeshire yesterday. In Landbeach I rode past a church. The small and largely elderly congregation were standing in the cold morning air among the tombstones with their heads bowed. The vicar in his white vestments was leading them in prayer. I thought perhaps it might have been a funeral ceremony until I reached Cottenham and saw the beginnings

of a public ceremony at the Great War memorial. A public address system had been assembled and the residents were beginning to meet on the square. In Histon and Impington I rolled up the High Street which had been closed to automobile traffic in order to accommodate a memorial parade.

I ended my Remembrance Day in a folk club in Grays, Essex. Nearly every performer that afternoon used his or her talent to say something about the cost of war, and nearly all wore poppies on their lapels. Some sang Vietnam Era protest songs. Some read poetry, including In Flanders Fields. When my turn to perform came I started by saying how much I respect the purpose of Remembrance Day and explained how it differs from America's Veterans Day. To me remembering the dead has a greater sense of poignancy than thanking all veterans. It says to me that war is terrible, it wastes human lives and makes the world poorer for all the lost potential. Remembrance of war requires reflection rather than gratitude. And while I would like to thank all of the service men and women in uniform, out of uniform, or in the ground I would also like to end war. Maybe devoting more days of the year to reflection upon the losses that war creates would help.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.  
Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

By John McRae, Canadian veteran of The Great War

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Julia B Mensinger November 2012





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