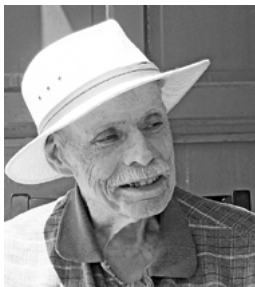


# The Attempt To Erase History - Then The Pushback

BY TOM PORTWOOD

In mid-March, less than eight weeks into the second Trump presidency, several news organizations began reporting the disappearance of key historical facts and biographies from many of the U.S. government’s websites. Axios reported that information related to the Navajo Code Talkers of the World Wars had been scrubbed from all U.S. Military websites as part of the broader Trump Executive Order and directive aimed at removing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies and practices from the U.S. government.



This purging of the heroic story of the Navajo Code Talkers is but one example where the current administration is attempting to erase the distinguished contributions of countless people in our nation’s past and present. This is not just ahistorical. It denigrates the heroism and humanity of those who served and often died so that the rest of us – including President Trump, I might add – could live in a country “of, by, and for the people” – *all* the people. It’s as if the Administration and those executing directives are fearful of the full story of our nation’s past. It is not just wrong that these attempts at erasure are happening. It is deeply shameful.

A few days later, reports surfaced from NBC News and the website [Last Real Indians](#) that the gallant story of Pima/Akimel O’odham Marine Ira Hayes had been eradicated from military websites

as well. Ira Hayes was one of the six U.S. Marines pictured in the famous *Life* magazine cover photo taken by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal when the American flag was raised atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima in February 1945. Prior to fighting on Iwo Jima, Hayes had previously served in the Bougainville and Northern Solomon Island campaigns.

A 1961 biopic starring Tony Curtis, *The Outsider*, depicted the profound difficulties Ira Hayes encountered in adjusting to life following the war, including suffering from a severe case of post-traumatic stress syndrome. I have seen it several times over the years, and it is a very powerful but heart-wrenching film. In 1964, Johnny Cash released a song in tribute to him called “The Ballad of Ira Hayes.” Hayes died in 1955, when he was only 32 years old, and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

His story and the stories of many others had been removed – and would likely have remained removed had it not been for the outcry from myriad points of activism and advocacy.

As Axios reported in a follow-up piece on March 20th (<https://www.axios.com/2025/03/20/trump-anti-dei-purge-erasing-military>), government posts or articles about the military and baseball careers of Jackie Robinson had been first removed, then restored to Department of Defense websites. The reposting of further invaluable historical and biographical information is also apparently in the works, with articles on the Tuskegee Airmen, the 442nd Regimental Combat Group, The 54th Massachusetts Regiment (Civil War era), Medal of Honor recipient Army Maj. Gen. Charles Calvin Rogers and the Women

Airforce Service Pilots, among others, are slated to be restored following their earlier removal from government websites.

This is an important victory – for truth, for a society that celebrates and honors the best and bravest among us. Unquestionably, the Administration’s assault on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is only beginning. No doubt, its attacks on the press and free

speech will be ramping up in the weeks and months to follow. We must all be vigilant. But peaceful protests are noticed. Voices raised are voices heard. Activism can work, yes, against fascists who would rather we become lost in a foggy haze of fake history where only white men count as heroes. That’s not acceptable. That’s not the truth, nor an America any of us should ever want.



## MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER ANNUAL MEETING

In Person and on Zoom\* • All Welcome

RESCHEDULED TO Saturday, May 10, 2025, 829 13<sup>th</sup> St., Modesto

9:00 AM Coffee, Conversation

9:30 AM Business Meeting, Financial Report, Committee Reports, Board Member Nominations

Discussion: Action plans, ideas, and strategies

12:00 PM Adjournment (\*Link to be sent)

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If you do not have Adobe Reader, download it free from

<http://www.adobe.com/downloads/>



**Modesto Science Colloquium**, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free to the Public. Talks recorded for the [Science Colloquium's YouTube Site](#)  
**April 9, 2025: Global Impact: The Power of NGOs in Shaping a Sustainable Future.**

Vanessa Correa Roldán is Co-Chair of the Global River Protection Coalition. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are pivotal in tackling some of the most pressing challenges communities worldwide face. This presentation delves into how NGOs contribute to addressing these global issues and highlights how their initiatives and efforts foster sustainable change internationally.

Talks will be recorded for the Science Colloquium's [YouTube Site](#)



## MAPS Showcase of Scintillating Experts

A gateway for the exploration of the wonders and mysteries surrounding us. MJC West Campus Sierra Hall 132\* at 7:30 pm, FREE.

**April 11: *The Science Wizard*.** Learn about the different fields of science in this highly acclaimed extreme science show! Hagerman will lead the audience on a fun, wild journey for all ages. Prepare to laugh and learn at the same time. \*West Campus Mary Stuart Rodgers Center. Current recordings since 2020 are housed on the [GVM YouTube page](#). Previous recordings before 2020 can be found [HERE](#).

## 40th Annual Peace Camp is Here! June 20-22

By **DALEY PERRY**

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's 40th Annual Peace Camp in the Sierras will take place on June 20-22, 2025. Come celebrate 40 years of Peace Camp, a rich tradition of people gathering together in peace and kindness to live out and imagine a more peaceful world. Spend a weekend in nature, building community and working toward peace, justice, and a sustainable environment through nonviolent action. You'll enjoy workshops, good food, singing, crafts, a talent show, recreation, and stimulating conversation with people of all ages in a beautiful mountain setting.

### About Peace Camp

Peace Camp officially opens at 3pm on Friday and closes on Sunday at 12pm. The camp is run by volunteers where campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and other work around the camp, including assisting with recreational activities and programming. Families and individuals of all ages are welcome. Minors under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Camp rates and registration dates will be announced soon! The camp fee covers the program, food, and lodging for the weekend. Partial scholarships and day rates are also available. Donations for scholarships are appreciated.

### About Camp Peaceful Pines

Peace Camp takes place at Camp Peaceful Pines, in Dardanelle on Clark Fork Road off Hwy. 108 in the Stanislaus National Forest. Camp Peaceful Pines features a kitchen/mess hall, bathroom facilities with hot showers, rustic cabins, and platform tents with bunk beds. Special accommodations may be requested for any medical or mobility needs. Depending on the number of campers, cabins may be shared.

Directions and other information will be provided to participants before camp.

**Registration will open soon! For more information, please visit: [peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp](http://peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp)**

## Kruse Lucas Art Gallery Showcases Rhett Regina Owings

The Kruse Lucas Art Gallery welcomes Turlock resident **Rhett Regina Owings** for her art exhibit for April & May 2025.

Rhett is an artist who has been painting in the Central Valley of California for over 30 years. She enjoys painting landscapes, still life, animals, and flowers in a variety of media, including oils, acrylics, pastels, and gouache.

The gallery is located at 525 Tully Rd., Modesto, and is open Monday through Friday, 9-5, except holidays.



## IN MEMORIAM

### MARY BAUCHER

Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Award Recipient  
Peace & Social Justice Advocate

### JOSEPH STEPHEN COLLINS

Interim President Modesto Junior College  
Professor, Public Servant

## Love Modesto on April 26!

By **JEFF PISHNEY**

Mark your calendars for Love Modesto on April 26 - our 17th year! These past 16 years, you have shown up - over 64,117 total volunteers, 300,292 volunteer hours, and \$9.5+ mil in community service! We love Modesto!

If you have any projects that you would like to see, please email [kim@lovestanislauscounty.org](mailto:kim@lovestanislauscounty.org)

Do you want your business or organization to be known for caring about our community? Learn more about being a Sponsor: [LoveModesto.com/sponsor](http://LoveModesto.com/sponsor)

If you live in another area or city, learn about your April 26 Volunteer Day:

[LoveStanislausCounty.org](http://LoveStanislausCounty.org)

Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions for this year: Jeff Pishney, CEO and founder of LoveModesto.com and [LoveStanislausCounty.org](http://LoveStanislausCounty.org), 209.409.8135.



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# Endangered Species Unit Imperiled

*Ed. Note: this letter was sent to Valley Congressional representatives. It is slightly edited for publication.*

**Dear Representatives Gray, Valadao, Huffman, Garamendi, Harder, and Costa:**

We are writing to you with concerns about the abrupt suspension of federal funding through the [Central Valley Project Conservation Program](#) (CVPCP) that threatens the continued existence of critical wildlife conservation efforts in our region. This multi-year grant is administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, while other Central Valley Project (CVP) grants, like the Habitat Restoration Program (CVPHRP), is administered by the US Bureau of Reclamation. For over 30 years, CVP-related grants have been funded by California water user fees as mitigation legislated by the [Central Valley Project Improvement Act \(CVPIA\)](#) and is specifically for projects impacted by the CVP.

As residents and biologists representing different organizations and businesses in the Central Valley, we are committed to protecting our state's wildlife. We recognize the freeze of CVPCP awards affects numerous projects and conservation initiatives, but we have united specifically to highlight the imminent loss of the [Endangered Species Recovery Program](#) (ESRP) at the California State University, Stanislaus. Since 1992, ESRP has been working to facilitate recovery/de-listing and conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals by addressing threats to listed species in your district. Their dedicated staff are not distant academics or elitists – they are your neighbors who answer the call when a Bakersfield resident finds a sick kit fox in their backyard or who trudge through floodwaters to rescue endangered rabbits in Vernalis.

The sudden freeze on current CVPCP funding has affected not just ESRP, but numerous other projects throughout California's Central Valley. This widespread suspension threatens decades of progress made in balancing the needs of communities, agriculture, and wildlife. Without funding from the CVPCP, ESRP only has enough resources to continue until April 2025. After that, three decades of conservation knowledge and community service may simply disappear. What is most alarming, though, is how this funding freeze coincides with the ongoing reduction of staff and resources at federal wildlife refuges, national parks, and other federal lands critical for conservation. This systematic dismantling of our conservation infrastructure puts both protected lands and their species in jeopardy while placing impossible strains on local resources. We are witnessing the potential collapse of conservation efforts that took generations to build. For its part, ESRP has long supplemented federal and state agency staff with manpower and expertise – this collaborative approach maximizes limited resources and facilitates crucial knowledge-sharing that benefits everyone. Without programs like ESRP to fill these widening gaps, the burden will fall entirely on already-overwhelmed local agencies.

**What would the loss of ESRP mean for the community?**

- No one to respond when a resident finds a sick kit fox suffering from sarcoptic mange, a 100% fatal skin disease if left untreated.
- No assistance for rescue efforts during floods and fires that threaten both wildlife and communities.
- Loss of three decades of data and expertise on threatened and endangered species in the Central Valley.
- Disappearance of a program that has trained hundreds of students and young professionals who often remain in the Valley to work.
- The loss of outreach to local schools, including many in underserved communities, to teach about local wildlife, public lands, and their benefits.

The work that ESRP does bridges the gap between government agencies and the public. They help to create practical solutions that work for wildlife and real people, provide valuable outreach to the public, and quickly respond to citizen concerns about local wildlife in their area. ESRP and collaborators were responsible for bringing the riparian brush rabbit back from near extinction through captive breeding and reintroduction. They also monitor wildlife health as an early warning system for environmental problems that could eventually affect human health – battling deadly diseases that threaten both San Joaquin kit foxes and riparian brush rabbits. When a developer or consultant needs help with construction guidelines while protecting listed wildlife, ESRP has always been there. When the California Department of Fish and Wildlife calls to assist with the rescue of a kit fox struggling to free itself from sports netting, ESRP comes to the response. When a resident of Bakersfield notifies us about a sick kit fox curled up in a classroom, ESRP rushes to help.

Beyond the immediate conservation impact, ESRP inspires hope and provides career pathways for students interested in conservation. At a time when young people often feel powerless in the face of environmental challenges, ESRP offers them ways to make a difference. Many former students of the program now work throughout the Central Valley, applying their skills and education that benefit their communities and our natural heritage.

We recognize environmental laws like the CVPIA, the [National Environmental Protection Act](#) (NEPA), and the [Endangered Species Act](#) (ESA) may benefit from thoughtful amendments and improvements. However, completely abandoning these protections would cause far greater harm to both wildlife and the land that sustain our communities and agricultural economy. We believe in finding balanced approaches that protect our natural resources while respecting the needs of all stakeholders in the Central Valley.

**We respectfully request:**

1. A clear explanation of why CVPCP conservation funding has been suspended – both current awards and future notices.



**ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY PROGRAM**

— EST. 1992 —

2. Information on when or if the current CVPCP funding will be reinstated – not just for ESRP but for all impacted projects. Our project and budget period are December 1, 2023 – December 31, 2026.
3. Your commitment to ensuring the future of the CVPIA, NEPA, and ESA protections that benefit both wildlife and communities in the Central Valley.

As independent organizations and businesses with our own missions and priorities, we have chosen to unite behind this letter because we recognize that the loss of ESRP would create an irreplaceable void in our region. The unique position ESRP holds—bridging research and conservation with hands-on learning experiences for students and providing community service—makes them an invaluable partner to all our organizations, businesses, and to the communities we serve.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your staff to discuss this matter further and to show you firsthand the value of ESRP's conservation work.

Most Sincerely,

**Jaime Rudd, Ph.D.**

Director, Endangered Species Recovery Program  
California State University, Stanislaus <https://esrp.org/>

And the following signatories:

**Adam Livingston**

Director of Planning and Policy  
Sequoia Riverlands Trust

**Travis Hemmen**, President & General Manager  
Westervelt Ecological Services  
<https://wesmitigation.com/>

**Melissa Romero**, Policy Advocacy Director  
California Environmental Voters

**Randi McCormick**, President, Principal Biologist  
McCormick Biological, Inc.

**Suzanne Hume**, Educational Director & Founder  
CleanEarth4Kids.org

**Jann Dorman**, Executive Director  
Friends of the River

**Jenny Hatch**, Executive Director  
Sierra Nevada Alliance <https://sierranevadaalliance.org/>

# The Gem of Hughson

BY ELAINE GORMAN

If you would like to go on a stroll in a rural setting that is close to Modesto and Turlock, consider visiting Hughson Arboretum and Gardens (HAG). It is a lovely spot to picnic, walk your dog, watch birds, or relax and enjoy the dozens of interesting trees and shrubs.

Margaret and Judd Sturtevant began farming in Hughson in the 1940s. In 1994, Margaret began planting trees for the future arboretum. There are native and exotic plants, and many have beautiful blossoms during the spring. During bike rides in the Hughson area, I would swing through the HAG and was often greeted by Margaret as she pulled weeds. The non-profit organization continues Margaret's vision and efforts.

On this late winter afternoon, Julie and I pull into the bark-covered parking lot off Euclid Ave. There is a kiosk with a map of the 12-acre site. There is a box for brochures, but there weren't any available the day we were there. We follow the path indicated by the trail sign. Many trees and shrubs are numbered but not named. Colorful iris fills a circular space. As we walk, we see conifers, pepper trees, redwoods, and sycamores. For an olfactory buzz, I crush California bay leaves and conifer needles to release their scents.

Several benches are scattered around, and we sit for a while listening to nearby farm sounds, blasts from passing trains, and overhead hawk calls. After a while, we walk over to check out the approximately 15-foot diameter redwood slice that was once part of the coast redwood forest in Humboldt County. Some redwood trees were removed from Redwood National Park by an Act of Congress when the highway was re-routed due to a massive flood in 1964! Wow, cool bit of California history!

We admire the shocking magenta blooms on some of the trees (#10) and then wander over to Margaret's Patio. I always look for the Yokuts Sierra Club's brick which is part of the patio. Beautiful pink and white flowers fill the magnolia trees. Nearby native California buckeye trees are just beginning to leaf out. A flock of Cedar Waxwings checks out some of the trees, searching for left-over fall fruits.

The half-mile trail runs near the perimeter of the property. Another set of benches is under some dense pines at the north edge of the property. As we walk, we see White-Crowned Sparrows, Mockingbirds, and Yellow-Rumped Warblers. We pass a small swale, with native bunch grasses rimming the edge. We wonder about the owl box — do Barn Owls raise a family here?

As we return to our cars, I think of the plaque that I



noticed in the arboretum — “Those who plant trees plant hope.” Just what we need in 2025.

**Notes:** The Hughson Arboretum and Gardens are open daily from dawn until dusk. A porta-potty is located in the parking lot. Downtown Hughson, just west of HAG, has several restaurants. Seasonal events take place at HAG during the year. Be sure to check the website and Facebook page.

<https://www.hughsonarboretum.org/>

**Getting there:** About 10 miles from Modesto, a 20-minute drive. Drive south on Mitchell Rd. Turn left at Hatch Rd. After about 5 miles, turn right on Euclid Ave. After one mile, look for the sign for HAG on the right. The address is 2490 Euclid Ave., Hughson.

# Don't Miss the 5th Annual Modesto RecFest!

From the Tuolumne River Trust

We're excited to invite you to the 5th Annual Modesto RecFest on Saturday, April 12th, 2025, from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at beautiful Gateway Park, between 10<sup>th</sup> St. and S. Morton Blvd. in Modesto!

## Discover Your Outdoor Playground

Modesto RecFest is Stanislaus County's premier celebration of outdoor recreation and adventure. This one-day festival brings together outdoor enthusiasts, families, and local businesses for a day filled with:

- Youth fishing clinic
- Paddling experiences on the water
- Guided bicycle rides on newly expanded trails
- Scenic hiking expeditions
- Bird watching and nature hikes with local experts
- Orienteering challenges
- Disc golf tournaments
- Equipment demos from outdoor recreation groups
- Educational workshops on outdoor skills, conservation, and safety

Whether you're an experienced outdoor adventurer or just beginning to explore California's natural wonders, Modesto RecFest has something for everyone of all ages and skill levels!

This community event is completely FREE and designed for the whole family to enjoy. It's the perfect opportunity to:

- Try new outdoor sports with professional guidance
- Connect with local outdoor businesses and organizations
- Learn about environmental conservation and responsible recreation
- Experience the incredible recreational opportunities in Stanislaus County

## Volunteer Opportunities Available

Want to be part of making RecFest a success? We're looking for volunteers (ages 15+) to help with a range of jobs. Volunteers can sign up for a 3.5-hour morning or afternoon shift, with plenty of time to enjoy the event outside of their shift! Event Leaders can sign off on community service hours for students and organizations that require it.

## Join Us in Celebrating Modesto's Natural Beauty!

Mark your calendar for April 12th and join us at Gateway Park for a day of outdoor fun, education, and community connection. Help us celebrate California's outdoor lifestyle and the natural treasures of our region!

For more information or to sign up as a volunteer, **visit our website** or reply to this email.

We hope to see you there!

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# First-in-the-World Online Pesticide Notification System

*Shafter, CA:* For decades farmworker communities across California have demanded the right to know beforehand what, when, and where hazardous agricultural pesticides will be applied. They have wanted to be able to take safety precautions against exposure to pesticides drifting from fields. For years, these communities have called for an online system that could warn of upcoming toxic pesticide applications.

That system finally arrived on March 24, 2025. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) launched a new online statewide pesticide notification system called “[Spray Days](#).”

“This is a first-in-the-world pesticide notification system,” said Californians for Pesticide Reform (CPR) Co-Director Angel Garcia. “Since California uses more pesticides than any other state, including more than 130 pesticides that are not approved in the European Union, farmworker communities have demanded a ‘heads up’ in order to take measures to reduce the risk of exposure to our loved ones. We need far better protections from the State, but this is a giant step forward toward transparency about toxic pesticide use.”

Byanka Santoyo, an organizer with the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CRPE) added: “Right here in Shafter, five years ago, our community called on the Ag Commissioner to give us advanced notice of cancer-causing fumigant applications, but he refused. We kept pushing and pushing at AB 617 meetings, at public hearings, at news conferences and protests. Now, not just Shafter, but

the whole state will have access to upcoming pesticide information.”

The [Spray Days system](#) allows anybody with Web access to search a map of California for notices of intended pesticide applications for the following day (for fumigants, the information will be provided 48 hours in advance). People can also sign up to receive notices of pending pesticide use through text or email. The notices will be for restricted material pesticides only—the pesticides considered most hazardous by DPR. Some of these restricted pesticides can cause cancer and damage brains and lungs, among other health harms.

“We love the pesticide map system and the opportunity to get text notices. With this information, for the first time, agricultural communities can take the proper health precautions by closing windows and doors, taking clothes off the line, and allowing the especially vulnerable – like pregnant or asthmatic individuals– to stay indoors at home, work, or school,” said Erika Alfaro, a public health nurse in Northern California and member of Safe Ag Safe Schools.

Irene Gomez, an Oxnard resident and member of the Coalition Advocating for Pesticide Safety – Ventura County or CAPS 805, raised a remaining concern: “When my community in Nyeland Acres had the pilot notification project, our biggest issue was that you couldn’t find out exactly where the pesticides would be applied – which farm? That’s still a problem with Spray Days. You can only

know pesticides are being applied within a square mile, but not whether it’s coming from behind your house, across the street, or even a mile away.”

It is possible such concerns can be addressed through the Spray Days review process, which calls for an Environmental Justice Advisory Committee and the California Department of Food & Agriculture to make annual recommendations for changes, as well as a yearly public comment period.

The Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment and Californians for Pesticide Reform sponsored a celebratory news conference attended by more than 50 supporters at Shafter Veterans Hall. At the same site, DPR hosted a launch event presentation of the online Spray Days system and sign-up to receive pesticide notifications by text or email. The events were live streamed at <https://www.facebook.com/safeagsafeschools/>

[The Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment](#), based in Delano, California, is a national environmental justice organization providing legal, organizing, and technical assistance to grassroots groups in low-income communities and communities of color. Our mission is to achieve environmental justice and healthy, sustainable communities through collective action and the law.

[Californians for Pesticide Reform](#) is a statewide coalition of 200+ member groups working to strengthen pesticide policies in California to protect public health and the environment. Member groups include public and children’s health advocates, clean air and water groups, health practitioners, environmental justice groups, labor, education, farmers, and sustainable agriculture advocates from across the state.

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# Authoritarian Clickbait: Trump's Spectacle Distracts From His Corporate Power Grab

*While the world watches Trump's political theater, his administration is quietly engineering one of the most aggressive transfers of public wealth to private interests in modern American history.*

BY PETER BLOOM, Mar 24, 2025, [Common Dreams](#)

Traditionally, authoritarian regimes were defined by their capacity to control information. Critics were silenced, press outlets were shuttered, and opposition voices were imprisoned or worse. Power was exercised through fear, secrecy, and violence. But in President Donald Trump's America, authoritarianism has evolved. It no longer hides behind walls of censorship—it thrives in plain sight.

Trump's political style isn't about suppressing attention. It's about seizing it. Whether threatening to [annex Greenland](#) "one way or another," mocking Canada as the "51st state," or [pressuring Columbia University](#) to abandon free speech protections, the goal isn't to avoid controversy. The aim is to create it.

---

In a world governed by algorithms, virality, and information overload, authoritarianism no longer seeks silence—it seeks spectacle.

This shift reflects a deeper transformation in how power is exercised in the 21st century. In a world governed by algorithms, virality, and information overload, authoritarianism no longer seeks silence—it seeks spectacle. Trump's provocations are not mere outbursts. They are designed and timed to dominate headlines, crowd out serious scrutiny, and keep the public in a state of reactive agitation.

These performances are not without precedent. But in Trump's case, the provocation is the point. His administration has leaned into fascist-style imagery, with symbolic salutes, rallies drenched in nationalism, and open threats against [political dissidents](#)—both foreign and domestic. But this isn't authoritarianism for the sake of totalitarian control. It's authoritarianism repurposed for an attention economy—where outrage drives clicks, and distraction enables deeper, quieter abuses of power.

## The Distraction Machine: Authoritarianism in the Age of Virality

In previous generations, authoritarian leaders worried about hiding abuses. Trump, by contrast, seems to invite public attention to his most outrageous behavior—not in spite of its controversy, but precisely because of it.

What happens when Trump threatens journalists? When his administration cracks down on campus protests, or fans conspiracy theories about foreign states? The media—both traditional and social—explodes with takes, outrage, and analysis. These cycles create a spectacle that consumes public attention. And while Americans are arguing over whether Trump's statements are ironic, dangerous, or "just

trolling," his administration is quietly enacting policies that concentrate wealth and corporate power behind the scenes.

This is by design. When Trump publicly praised authoritarian leaders while floating the idea of [withdrawing the U.S. from NATO](#), or when he staged a militarized inauguration complete with [nationalist salutes](#) and fascist-style imagery, outrage predictably dominated headlines and flooded social media. While commentators debated the symbolic threats to democracy, far less attention was paid to the administration's simultaneous efforts to expand fossil fuel drilling, dismantle environmental protections, and push through financial deregulations that directly benefit corporate donors and billionaire allies.

This is the sleight of hand that defines contemporary authoritarian populism. Performative controversies act as bait. While political opponents and the press react to each new provocation, policy moves quietly. Headlines focus on Trump's tone, but not his taxes; on his insults, but not his infrastructure contracts; on his speeches, but not his subsidies.

As Trump escalates mass deportations, including the forced removal of immigrants to El Salvador, the moves are framed as tough-on-crime, anti-immigrant theater—crafted to energize his base and dominate the media cycle through performative spectacle. But behind the headlines, there are real victims: parents separated from children, asylum-seekers denied due process, and vulnerable people sent back to life-threatening conditions. At the same time, while public attention is consumed by immigration crackdowns, the administration is quietly advancing [energy deals](#) and deregulation efforts that [benefit economic elites](#).

Rather than suppressing debate, Trump drowns it in noise. His style weaponizes the velocity of modern media, not to clarify public discourse, but to overwhelm it. And in that chaos, the structure of governance shifts: away from democratic accountability, and toward unregulated corporate control.

## Authoritarian Theater, Corporate Power

While the world watches Trump's political theater, his administration is quietly engineering one of the most aggressive transfers of public wealth to private interests in modern American history. The façade of populism masks a policy agenda deeply aligned with corporate elites, billionaire donors, and the industries that stand to gain from the dismantling of public regulation and oversight.

Tax policy remains one of the clearest examples. The tax law passed during Trump's first term [overwhelmingly favored the wealthy](#), while doing little to stimulate broad-based economic growth. Now, in his return to power, he's doubling down. His 2025 budget [proposal](#) slashes funding for housing, food assistance, and healthcare. Meanwhile, Trump and [Elon Musk](#) gleefully proclaim they're slashing government waste in the name of efficiency, yet remain conspicuously silent on the [bloated corporate excesses](#) of defense spending—where billions vanish into unaccountable contracts, overpriced weapons, and Pentagon

boondoggles cloaked in patriotic branding.

Trump's cabinet and advisory circle are drawn from the [ultra-rich](#)—CEOs, private equity barons, and political megadonors. The revolving door between his administration and industries like oil, finance, and private prisons ensures that public policy is crafted not to serve the electorate, but to entrench elite interests. [The prison industry](#), in particular, has seen surging stock prices and expanding contracts as Trump ramps up deportation efforts and privatizes detention infrastructure.

Energy policy tells the same story. While the

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While the world watches Trump's political theater, his administration is quietly engineering one of the most aggressive transfers of public wealth to private interests in modern American history.

administration rails against international climate accords and environmental "wokeness," it is quietly threatening to [sell off public lands](#) and roll back environmental policies as a windfall for the [fossil fuel industries](#). The beneficiaries are not small businesses or working Americans. They are multinational corporations and a handful of ultra-wealthy shareholders.

This isn't an accidental byproduct of Trumpism—it is its core. Despite branding himself as anti-elite, Trump's political machine is [funded and sustained](#) by America's richest families and corporate lobbies. His alliance with figures like Elon Musk reflects a broader trend: the convergence of authoritarian populism with a new form of oligarchic capitalism—one where billionaires publicly attack "the establishment" in order to [pursue their own profitable agenda](#).

As inequality deepens and democratic norms erode, the U.S. faces a dangerous convergence: a political class that performs populism while practicing plutocracy. This is the new authoritarianism—not built on repression alone, but on distraction, deregulation, and the strategic manipulation of spectacle.

## Looking Beyond the Noise

Donald Trump's political style is often dismissed as chaotic or unserious—a constant stream of tweets, outbursts, and provocations. But behind that chaos lies a deliberate structure: a feedback loop of distraction and policy, performance and power.

What looks like madness is often method. The attention-consuming controversies, the culture war posturing, the outlandish threats and statements—all function to consume public focus while his administration executes a radical, elite-centered program of capitalist plundering.

continued next page

# For Valley trans, LGBTQ+ residents, the fear is real but so is the resilience

Since Donald Trump returned to the White House, his administration has unleashed a wave of policies that have caused concern in the Valley's LGBTQ+ community.

By Marijke Rowland

Takoda Blaze (left) and Cymone Reyes unfurl a trans flag to display inside the office of Central Valley Gender Health & Wellness in Stockton, Calif. Credit: Marijke Rowland/ CVJC.

The [Central Valley's LGBTQ+ community](#) is once again learning what a difference a presidential administration makes. And it's adapting.

Since Donald Trump returned to the White House last month, his administration has unleashed a wave of anti-transgender, anti-diversity and anti-inclusive policies that have made daily life – and legal decisions – more complicated, and frightening, for transgender and nonbinary people.

“I do feel that fear,” said Takoda Blaze, a 34-year-old Stockton-based trans man. “For the first time in a very long time, I was fearful of entering the bathroom.... Entering the men's bathroom like I have done thousands of times, it was the first time I carried fear of anything happening.... There's the risk of being hurt, being beat, being raped, being – so many different things, and that fear is real.”

On day one of his presidency, Trump [signed an executive order](#) declaring that the United States government only recognizes two genders – male and female – which are locked in at birth and cannot be legally changed. His administration has since stripped federal websites of all references to transgender people and their history, including [references to them](#) on the [Stonewall National Monument](#), the nation's first U.S. monument dedicated to LGBTQ+ rights.

In [his address to Congress](#) this month, he boasted about banning trans people from competing in school sports and



blocking funding for gender-affirming care for trans youth. He has also stopped transgender and nonbinary people [from serving in the military](#) and from having their federal government documents [reflect their gender identities](#).

In the Central Valley, this has caused concern and confusion. While many local advocates said that trans and other gender non-conforming people still have broad protection from the state, the Trump administration's campaign against transgender rights has made navigating this moment difficult for many.

“Every hour on the hour, we have to check to see if there's anything else that's been signed or done just to see what's next,” said Roman Scanlon, executive director of [CalPride Stanislaus](#). “There's a big fear of the unknown, and I think this is what's causing a lot of the stress on the LGBT community.”

## Recommendations for trans people on passports, identifications

[CalPride](#) runs nonprofit LGBTQ+ centers in Modesto, Merced and Sonora, which offer an array of free services, including peer and group support, health and STI testing, harm reduction substance use treatment and gender-affirming care.

Megan Weidman, a program assistant at CalPride, said the number of people asking for help with name or gender-marker paperwork has doubled since the start of the year. The requirements can be complicated, as each change request requires a different form and fee. Weidman has a two-inch “name-change binder” she uses to help people navigate the process.

The high demand caused by Trump's order has led to longer wait times to have paperwork approved. Scanlon said documents filed at the start of the year have still not been returned. Still, he encourages those seeking changes who have lived in California for longer than six months to go forward with the paperwork for state-administered documents, including gender marker, name change and birth certificate.

## Authoritarian Clickbait continued

The real danger of Trumpism is not just what he says and does, but what it prevents us from seeing. As media cycles churn and social media outrage erupts, entire layers of policy are being written to serve corporate interests, privatize public goods, and redirect national wealth upward.

This isn't just about optics or inflammatory rhetoric—it is a substantive and growing form of authoritarianism. Trump is using real tools of state power to target dissent, intimidate opposition, and punish vulnerable communities, turning repression into a political strategy. From aggressive crackdowns on student protesters to the mass deportation of immigrant families, these actions are not symbolic—they are deliberate mechanisms to consolidate control and clear the path for a hyper-capitalist plutocratic agenda. The victims are real, and the consequences are structural, not theatrical.

To resist this model of governance, we must not only confront its authoritarian aesthetics and the very real

victims it creates—but expose its oligarchic foundation. It requires dismantling the capitalist plutocracy that thrives within—and actively sustains—this viral authoritarian political and media culture. That means cutting through the noise, tracking the money, and asking not just *what* Trump is doing, but *who* is benefiting too often in the shadows while the cameras roll.

In the end, Trumpism thrives not on silence but on spectacle—a new model of power built on authoritarian clickbait, where outrage fuels distraction, and distraction clears the path for profiteering.

Peter Bloom is a Professor at the University of Essex in the UK. His books include “Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Globalization” (2016), “The CEO Society,” and, most recently “Guerrilla Democracy: Mobile Power and Revolution in the 21st Century.”

From [Common Dreams](#).

## Lynn M. Hansen: Among Our Valley's Poetic Treasures

Lynn M. Hansen is a retired professor of biological sciences from Modesto Junior College where she taught for 33 years. Lynn was the first woman to be hired in science since the beginning of the college. She has been writing poetry for twenty-five years. She has two self-published chapbooks, *Loose Energy: Poems About People* (2004) and *Stones in the Road* (2006) as well as two poetry collections, *Flicker; Poems by Lynn M. Hansen* (2013) published by Quercus Review Press, MJC and *In the Presence of the Moai: Poetry and Prose of Travel*, published by National League of American Pen Women (2023). She has self-published an historical novel about her grandmother entitled *The Journey to Sky Avenue: The Life of Mernie Daisy Lewis* (2021). Her poems have been published in *The Pen Women Magazine*, *hardpan*, *Song of the San Joaquin*, *Iodine Review*, *Monterey Poetry Review*, *Stanislaus Connections*, *The Ina Coolbrith Anthology* publications, *Poets Corner*, *The Homestead Review*, *More Than Soil More Than Sky: The Modesto Poets*, *Quercus Review*, *Brevities*, *Medusa's Kitchen* and *Rattlesnake Review*.

Lynn is a member of the Ina Coolbrith Circle in Orinda, CA., member and past president of the National League of American Pen Women, Modesto Branch, founding member of the Modesto Stanislaus Poetry Center, and currently



serves as the contest chair for the Aileen Jaffa Youth Poetry Contest in Stanislaus County. Lynn has participated in the following ekphrastic poetry events: *Women Moving Forward* by Pen Women, Modesto Branch, *Collision VII*, *Collision VI* and *Collision III at the Mistlin Gallery*, *Women in America Celebration Exhibit* at Mistlin Gallery, *Inspiring Women: An Exhibit in Arts and Letters* by NLAPW, Modesto Branch at Carnegie Center for the Arts in Turlock, California.

Lynn's poetry gives focus to a sense of place, character studies and celebration of nature. She and her husband have traveled to the five continents providing rich access to a variety of cultural experiences. When not writing, she is an avid gardener, favoring native plants, and an amateur photographer. She lives with her husband, Richard Anderson, in Modesto, CA.

*A Gathering of Voices* is very honored that Lynn shares several of her poems in this issue of *Stanislaus Connections*.



### Gifts of Loss

They warned me it would be gone.  
It would take fourteen days  
for my hair to fall into my food,  
gather in clumps at my feet  
in the shower, form mats  
in my brush or comb by the fistful.

As if on schedule, long grey strands  
loosened from their follicles  
then drifted to the floor  
making it necessary to clip  
the remainder, before a patchwork  
pate became unbearable.

Friends came, held hands

in ceremony to honor loss.  
Mani burned white sage, offered  
Yaqui prayers, sang Lakota blessing.

Melinda buzz-cut the remaining strands.  
Lillian helped harvest my locks  
for moments of sharing –

strands draped from garden fence posts,  
at the wildlife refuge bundles dangled  
on barren willow twigs and cottonwood  
branches swollen with buds, wisps  
of hair fluttered on naked cattail stalks –

my gifts to the birds for their mothering.

*Lynn M. Hansen*

## A Reminiscence

By RICHARD ANDERSON

The week after the November, 2024 election, two heartwarming things happened that helped show me what I must do out of a defeat.

And that is to strengthen the part of our community life that will *not* be ruined by the November election.

Ben Hoover's, friend Dave's father, has ridden a classy, old, perfect-conditioned girl's bicycle.

One day, at lunch downtown, he forgot to lock the bike. When he came to ride away, it was gone. Remorse relented in a few days when Dave's bike mechanic called him and said he had Dave's bike!

Apparently, someone snatched it, perhaps only to ride it to where they wanted to go, maybe to sell, who knows. But someone wanted the mechanic to fix their newly acquired bike and took it to the right guy for Dave! This is the kind of thing that happens in a well-established, genteel community like Modesto.

And the other?

Ruhi and Sam Pierstorff bought the Queen Bean and began renovating it. Soon, a looter stole some valuable objects at night.

Living in the Bay Area, Looter may have thought, "No one here knows me, so I don't even need to mask myself." Wrong! A good video surveillance video showed his face clearly.

Local police identified him, arrested Emmanuel Dominguez of Milpitas, and found many other stolen items from the Bay Area. Again, our close-knit community healed itself of a problem.

Let's continue creating, sustaining, and healing!

### *Lasthenia californica*

Raindrops vibrate  
dry claypan soil,  
collect into vernal pools  
scattered over Central Valley floor  
like small liquid mirrors.  
In these cauldrons of rebirth  
spadefoot toads stir  
from moist mud,  
translucent cysts free  
fairy shrimp larvae,  
tiger salamander nuptials  
begin after long nocturnal trek  
and summer seeds of goldfields,  
*Lasthenia californica*,  
awaken.

Oh, *Lasthenia* of Mantinea,  
female disciple of Plato,  
your golden namesake  
encircles vernal pools



like floral leis cast at random  
 onto a sea of green  
 rippling in soft breezes.  
 Like you, these flowers live  
 at the edge of their community.  
 Without protection  
 they cluster in disguise not as men  
 but as brilliant rings of vernal fire.  
 Buzzing among them, a choir of native bees  
 gathers glassy buckets of pollen  
 for larvae nestled  
 in earthen chambers,  
 gifts from each tiny flower head  
 before they scatter seed,  
 lose everything.

*Lynn M. Hansen*

## Beach Walk

*Every day I see or hear something  
 that more or less kills me with delight...*

– *Mary Oliver*

You might think I am delirious when I tell you  
 though I am flat on my back in a hospital bed  
 in the most dismal of environments  
 when my cell phone pings  
 I know I am in for a treat of the day,  
 one that will carry me to the beach  
 for a vicarious walk with a friend  
 who faithfully sends messages  
 to pull me away from the task like Sisyphus  
 of pushing my healing rock up the hill.

Sometimes she sends snapshots of a curlew  
 made special by its green band,  
 or the rapid rush of little peeps  
 running along surf's lacey edge,  
 legs ablur as they probe exposed sand  
 or the dive of an osprey  
 who captures a live fish,  
 repositioning it in mid-air onto its talons,  
 transports it to a nearby tree for breakfast.  
 It may also be the dynamic roar of the ocean,  
 so vivid I can taste the salty texture of chilled sea air.  
 Then there are the sunrises in the eastern sky  
 or sunsets with Morro Rock, a distant silhouette.

All sensations of beauty are her daily gifts,  
 carrying me blissfully away  
 from an otherwise  
 antiseptic day.

*Lynn M. Hansen*

## A Mother's Reflections

*for Jeff (October 7, 1970-November 13, 2024)*

At birth doctor said "Your hippie is here."  
 It took two days of labor for you to appear.

Your swirl of black hair was quite a sight.  
 We were happy when you slept through the night.

As a toddler you scattered toys here and there.  
 Five months is when we first cut your hair.

You tried baseball, soccer, and acrobats too,  
 but golf is the sport that was best suited to you

Music and piano you learned to enjoy  
 and sang in high school Knights choir for boys.

When your mom needed insects to collect for a class  
 you were her helper and with your net had a blast.

Your interest in bugs led to an occupational role  
 as owner and president of Premier Pest Control.

And when you met Lisa, the love of your life  
 for twenty-four years you were man and wife.

Together you two began a business duo  
 you were sales but bookkeeping she knows

Though your life on Earth is too soon done  
 you were nephew, friend, spouse and son.

Legacy and good memories you leave behind  
 and in our hearts, you're forever enshrined.

As mother or wife, it was our joy you evoked  
 for we are the ones that loved you the most.

*Lynn M. Hansen*

## A Letter For Clifford

Grandma knew how to manage  
 restless young children in church.  
 Her tools were simple, pencil and paper  
 distributed under her watchful eye.  
 My sister and I explored our imaginations,  
 drew horses, high fashion gowns, doodles,  
 while a crescendo of words flew from the pulpit.

This Sabbath, my sister was thinking of Clifford,  
 the young milk-white boy  
 in her first-grade class  
 whom students had been warned  
*should not be kicked in the stomach.*  
 Armored with institutional protection  
 Clifford had become a real pest.  
 He sat as close to her as possible,  
 Patted her arms as if she were his pet cat,  
 even worse, stared at her face.

While Grandma listened intently,  
 my sister penciled a clear response  
 to Clifford's attention:

*Dear Clifford,  
 I hate you.  
 Love, Gail*

The letter is still in Grandma's Bible,  
 I don't know what happened to Clifford.

## Coso Petroglyphs

In Renegade Canyon,  
 wall images seem simple,  
 pounded through patina of basalt.  
 Grooves hammered  
 by shamans into rock fabric  
 weathered by the elements –  
 graven.

Stick figures with spherical heads  
 wearing ceremonial costumes,  
 geometric patterns,  
 elaborate medicine bags,  
 antelope, scorpion, snake  
 and desert bighorn sheep

emerge and disappear  
 with slant of light  
 as if carved in black velvet.  
 Each design embodies mystery –  
 vision quest revelation,  
 tribal boundary marker,  
 hunting magic.

But in this desert stillness  
 I hear a thrumming,  
 rock strike on rock  
 a working rhythm,  
 an absolute focus  
 of ancient artists

that ricochets along  
 the canyon gallery,  
 feel shivers of reverence  
 as I walk back  
 in time,  
 listening.

*(Naval Air Weapons Station  
 China Lake, California, 2011)*

# Great Programs on KCBP 95.5 fm, the Voice of the Valley

Streaming on [www.kcbpradio.org](http://www.kcbpradio.org)

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

**Confetti Park** - Music, stories New Orleans style, Saturdays at 8:00 am; & Sunday's 12:30 pm.

**The Children's Hour** - Sundays 3:00 pm. And Mondays at 4:00 p.m.

### SCIENCE

**Radio Ecoshock** – the latest scientific information on Climate Change – Saturdays, 9:00 am.

**Explorations** – Science explained with Dr. Michio Kaku - 9:00 am Sundays.

**Big Picture Science** - 1:00 pm Sundays.

**Planetary Radio** – 2:30 pm Sundays.

## PROGRAMS

**The Ralph Nader Hour:** Citizen advocate Ralph Nader and guests discuss topics important for consumers and our nation on Saturdays at 4 p.m.

**Ukraine 2.4.2** - a collaboration between Anne Levine, WOMR, the Pacifica Network, and Kraina FM, a 26-city radio network in Ukraine that arranges weekly cutting-edge and exclusive interviews with key people in Ukraine – Thursdays, 10:00 am.

**Beethoven to Bernstein** - Classical music ranging from Beethoven to Bernstein. Big hits from well-renown composers - Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Ravel, Copland - and many more, mostly in the form of orchestral, chamber, and piano music - Saturdays, 10:00 pm.

**The Not Old – Better Show** - fascinating, high-energy program of big-name guests, inspiring role models, interesting topics, with entertaining host and former Modestan, Paul Vogelzang – Fridays, 2:00 pm, Saturdays, 12:30 pm.

**Down on the Farm** - topics important for our San Joaquin agriculture with Madera organic farmer Tom Willey - Saturdays, 6 am

**Sounds Irish** Music from County Wicklow - Saturdays, 7:00 pm.

**Various musical programs during the noon hour:** *Oldies, Old Piano, and International.*

**Dead Air** - Hear the Grateful Dead with Cory Daniels. Fridays, 6 pm; Saturdays, 3 pm.

**Attitude with Arne Arnesen** – 3:00 pm. Political and social issues.

**Sojourner Truth** - 4:00 pm – Tuesdays. Interviews and panels focus on issues that affect people of color.

**Democracy Now!** - 7:00 am, Monday thru Friday. Reporting by veteran journalists Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez.

**Flashpoint Magazine** - 10:00 pm, Monday thru Friday. Politics, social issues, from KQED's Dennis Bernstein.

**Julian Taylor's Jukebox** – 4:00 pm, Thursdays and Fridays. Eclectic, contemporary music.

**Nuestra Música** – 4:00 pm, Tuesdays. Eclectic, Latin-flavored music with a beat!

## LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

**The Well-Being of the Community, Your Family, and You** 11:00 am to 1:00 pm Thursdays.

Live, Bilingual in Spanish & English.

**Rockin' with MJC** – One-hour music shows by Modesto Junior College students. 1:00 a.m. Saturdays; 2:00 p.m. Saturdays; 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays.

**Triumphant Tuesdays** – Noon, Tuesdays. Inspirational thoughts & music with Catrice.

**Sports Talk Modesto** - Join Jay Freeda and Jimmie Menezes. Snappy banter to catch up on everything happening in the sports world. – Thursdays, 5 pm.

**Vibn with the West Modesto Collaborative** - Jasmine Corena and Likhi Rivas. Engage, Educate, and Advocate on behalf of the West Modesto Community. Showcases Voices of the West Modesto Community – Wednesdays, 7 pm.

**AREA 5150 UFO RADIO** – Spooky music & sounds out of this world, Friday night, 11:00 pm.

**Cyber Stallion: Bucks Stallion's Radio Transmission Emporium** – Cyber Acoustic Music - Saturdays, 12:00 am, Wednesdays, 5:00 p.m.

**I-On-Modesto** - John Griffin interviews local people who reveal their inspiring stories. Mondays & Fridays, 10 am and Wednesdays at 9 pm.

**Arts of the San Joaquin Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes** - Mondays, 8:00 pm; Tuesdays, 9:00 am & Wednesdays, 8:00 pm. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp> and on Spotify

**Women of the Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes** - 8:00 pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays, 9:00 am. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbpwotv> and on Spotify.

**Modesto Sound** - California Audio Roots Project (CARP) – Tuesdays 5:30 pm, Wednesdays 11:30 am, & Sundays 11:00 am & 4:30 pm.

**Sunday Cruisin'** with your host, DeeJay Rig! Oldies hits from 1959 to 1999 – Sundays, 5:00 p.m.

**Faithful Fridays** – inspirational music and thoughts with Catrice – Fridays, 7:00 p.m.

**Why Not Nice?** - Showcases unique music from unique cultures and thinkers worldwide, focusing on world/academic/jazz and roots music – Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

**Mars Radio – Hip-Hop Show** - Music, interviews from local & regional artists - Fridays, 8:00 pm. A new, second show plays on Saturday nights at 8:00 pm, with a third at 8:00 pm Sundays.

**Modesto Area Music Awards (MAMA)** with Middagh Goodwin – Mondays 5:00 pm; Fridays 9:00 pm & Saturdays 6:00 pm.

**Freak Radio** with Christian E. Boyett, 6 pm Thursdays. Replays Saturdays, 9 pm & Tuesdays 11 pm.

**This is SKA** with Middagh Goodwin - Tuesdays, 9 pm; Fridays, 11 pm; Sundays, 5 am to 7 am.

**I'll Take You There** - A musical journey with Modesto's El Comandante - Saturday, 5:00 pm; Sundays, 9:00 pm.

**Penny Bloods** – Fun, Victorian melodrama radio plays, often performed by local actors, written by Arnold Anthony Schmidt, CSU, Stanislaus. As scheduled.

PSAs in English and Spanish produced by the West Modesto Community Collaborative.

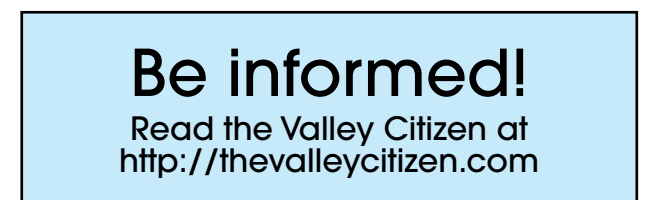
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# Valley trans, LGBTQ+ residents continued from page 7

But the same advice does not apply for federal documentation. Filing for a new passport or renewing an expired one should be delayed, if possible, he said. The [U.S. State Department](#) has stopped issuing “X” gender markers and stated it will “only issue passports with an M or F sex marker that match the customer’s biological sex at birth.”

Even high-profile celebrities, like 26-year-old actress Hunter Schafer, who transitioned as a teenager, have [run into passport problems](#). Schafer, a star of the hit HBO series “Euphoria,” [spoke out last month](#) when her new passport (which replaced one that had been stolen) was returned with a “M” gender marker instead of the “F” she had before.

Valley LGBTQ+ group leaders have heard reports of local people having their gender markers changed and experiencing difficulty getting their supporting documentation back from the federal government. Carrying official paperwork that does not match one’s gender identity can have serious consequences. “It creates a really dangerous space because ultimately you’re being outed at that point, right?” said Blaze, who works as the health equity director at Stockton’s [Central Valley Gender Health & Wellness](#). “As much as a trans person would prefer to pass in community, having those two markers not match is just like a target on your back. As if we weren’t already targeted, now it’s like a bull’s eye just pinpointing you out.”

## Many in LGBTQ+ community fear for safety, worry about violence

Those safety worries are compounded by a rise in hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people in recent years, according to [an FBI report released last fall](#). While violent crime overall was down from 2022 to 2023, incidents based on sexual-orientation and gender-identity bias were up 8.6%.



For area trans and gender-nonconforming people, those statistics are more than scary, there is proof that the possibility of violence against them is growing.

“We are definitely under attack,” said June Sparrow, vice president of [MoPride](#), a longtime grassroots LGBTQ+ resource center in Modesto. “Even if we are protected by California laws, the growing community that is against us is growing more bold, more violent, and that is certainly a worry that affects many trans people.”

The 41-year-old Modesto resident identifies as gender fluid, and said they don’t feel comfortable going to unfamiliar places or walking alone downtown at night anymore.

Sparrow said Trump’s language and actions are vilifying the trans community. Even the title of Trump’s day-one executive order – “[Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government](#)” – characterizes the move as a necessary measure to protect the public, they said.

“Unfortunately, it’s easier to get votes through hate,” Sparrow said. “You give people a common enemy. You make it about the children. You say it’s a matter of public safety and health. You do all the things that one would do to dehumanize and erase. And I think we’re an easy target because we’re one of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.”

## LGBTQ+ advocacy groups vow to continue to provide support, resources

Transgender people make about 1.3% of the U.S. adult population, according to a [Gallup poll](#) released in February. A [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study](#) released in October found that trans youth faced higher rates of violence, discrimination and suicidal thoughts than their classmates who are cisgender (meaning their gender identity matches their gender at birth).

More than a quarter, or 26%, of trans or questioning students had attempted suicide in the last year, according to the CDC. The rate for non-trans students was 11% for cisgender girls and 5% for cisgender boys. Even more trans and questioning students, an estimated 40%, said they were bullied at school, compared to 20.3% and 14.8% for cis female and male students respectively.

In last November’s presidential election, every Valley county from San Joaquin to Fresno voted for Trump over Kamala Harris, even as a majority of California voters overall voted for the former vice president.

In early February, three people – a 44-year-old man and two juveniles – were [arrested](#) for allegedly beating a gay man outside an apartment complex in Jamestown.



Shortly after, residents in neighboring Sonora packed a [city council meeting](#) to demand accountability and condemnation of the attack.

Still despite the fear of violence, and of self harm, Valley LGBTQ+ leaders said they remain as committed as ever to providing the community with resources and respect. Like CalPride and MoPride, Stockton nonprofit Central Valley Gender Health & Wellness offers services that include support groups, gender-affirming clinics and free clothes closets.

The group’s founder and executive director, Cymone Reyes, said the most immediate concern is making sure the Valley’s LGBTQ+ community knows their doors are open and that help is available.

Reyes said people who have faced harassment, assault or other violent incidents should contact the group for help connecting with services and law enforcement.

“We won’t be erased,” said Reyes, a trans woman who has worked in LGBTQ+ advocacy for the past 30 years. “I mean, this isn’t the first time that our community has been targeted and the subject of being basically annihilated or removed from existence – as they wish to do. And so we’ll get through this together, and that’s the important part... Never feel that you have to do that alone.”

*Free LGBTQ+ services, mental health support, and suicide prevention services are available through the following sources:*

**CalPride:** Nonprofit LGBTQ+ resource center with offices in Modesto, Merced and Sonora with varying drop-in hours. Call 209-567-2662.

**MoPride:** Nonprofit LGBTQ+ resource center has open drop-in hours 1 to 6 p.m. Wednesday to Friday at 508 13th St., Modesto. Call 209-567-2124.

**Central Valley Gender Health & Wellness:** Nonprofit LGBTQ+ resource center has open drop-in hours from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday to Friday at 907 N. El Dorado St., Stockton. Call 209-395-3082.

**988 Lifeline:** 988 National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available to call, text or chat 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, 365-days a year by dialing 988.

**Trans Lifeline:** The first crisis hotline run by and for trans and gender nonconforming people, can be accessed 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday by calling 877-565-8860.

**The Trevor Project:** LGBTQ+ youth crisis line is available 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, 365-days a year by calling 866-488-7386 or texting “START” to 678-678.

**NAMI Helpline:** The National Alliance on Mental Illness offers a free helpline available 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Friday by calling 800-950-NAMI (6264), text “HelpLine” to 62640 or email us at [helpline@nami.org](mailto:helpline@nami.org)

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