

## Visible Homelessness Leads to Increased Criminalization

By **CYNTHIA GRIFFITH**

Experts proclaim that as homelessness becomes a more visible problem, the public does not become more empathetic toward the plight. In fact, they tend to lean more in favor of punitive policies – criminalization – that force houseless residents back out of sight by running them forcibly into prisons.

As the National Homeless Law Center's Legal Director Eric Tars explained, "The danger is that the worse the housing situation gets, the more people we see on the streets, the more will be the push for these punitive policies."

### It Is Not Just Homelessness That's on the Rise, but Also the Anti-Homeless Legislation that Exacerbates It

School records indicate that approximately 2.5 million children will experience homelessness each year. Another 580,000+ visibly homeless adults will be counted as homeless on any given night by volunteers who scour street corners and citywide shelters to gather a snapshot of the situation.

Decades of misinformation have fueled harmful narratives about the problem that is difficult to overcome, even for city leaders who cite a lack of public support for affordable housing programs as one of the main reasons they feel responsible for the issue but helpless to rectify it.

Carefully and quietly, we have created a system that seeks a false sense of security over a solid, actionable plan. Put bluntly, it would seem that people are perfectly okay with homelessness existing. This includes people hailing from groups more vulnerable to homelessness, such as single mothers, low-income earners, and senior citizens.

So long as we can all uphold the façade that homelessness results from flawed decision-

making and personal failures, we can rest well, assuming it could never happen to us. But there's a problem with this way of thinking that could further deepen the already burdensome crisis.

### Creating a False Narrative to Sooth the Anxiety Around Homelessness Has Severe Consequences

As homelessness becomes more visible, everyday Americans, who may be just a paycheck or two away from falling into the desolate condition, attempt to convince themselves that all or most homeless people are criminals.

In truth, most of our neighbors without walls are just people who can no longer afford rent.

A lot of statistics are feeding into this scenario all at once. Family homelessness is rising alongside the price of gas and groceries. Senior homelessness is projected to almost triple by 2030 due mainly to nationwide increases in housing costs. Even so, the two homelessness are addiction and mental health.

We are fooling ourselves and paying a hefty price for it. That price is even more homelessness.

### Local Legislators Press for More Camping Bans and Claim it is to Satisfy the General Public's Demands

There's a political incentive to criminalize homelessness. Feeding the prison system costs taxpayers millions but all the cheap labor lines the pockets of the rich. What was less clear before the findings of a recent poll was that when politicians push for criminalization, they perceive themselves as acting not in favor of the mega-rich but in

alignment with the values of poor and middle-class citizens.

Worse still, further research somewhat supports these claims, showing that the more visible the homeless problem becomes, the more "criminal" the homeless person seems in the eyes of the general public.

These stigmas are not just raising eyebrows and turning heads. They are costing people their freedom and their lives.

### It's Time to Change the Way We Look at Homelessness

We used to deal with homelessness by simply turning our faces in the opposite direction. This was never the solution, but in 2023, it is no longer an option. The humanitarian crisis is smack in the middle of our faces now. Sweeping it under the rug will only cause things to fester.

As difficult a truth as it might be to swallow, we all must come to terms with the fact that the main thing fueling the homeless crisis is a lack of affordable housing. This means that, in the end, homelessness can happen to you. It can happen to anyone.

If we continue to pass laws that do not address the root cause of the problem, it will happen to even more people in the future. Instead of finding a way out of the situation, homelessness will serve as a way into the prison system. For this reason, we must change the way we look at homelessness.

How do we do it? By looking at the facts:

Fact – The majority of people enduring homelessness are not criminals.

Fact – The fastest growing group of people falling into homelessness are senior citizens.

Fact – 75% of Americans can no longer afford a home.

Fact – Rental protections are dissipating while benefits programs and wages are stalled.

Fact – None of these issues get solved by putting homeless people in prison.

### Think About This:

Some of the most dangerous things in life are invisible. Cancer, soot, particle pollution, carbon monoxide gas, etc., are all examples of lethal elements we cannot see. Just because we can't see them doesn't mean they won't hurt us. It could easily be argued that if these elements were visible to the naked eye, they would pose less of a threat because we could identify and perhaps even eliminate the problem.

The same is true of homelessness. Moving it will only make you more comfortable temporarily. Eventually, the problem will pose a serious danger because it never really went away. All the while, it was waiting in the shadows, preparing to take you under too.

### Lack of Affordable Housing is the Leading Cause of Homelessness – Discuss it with Your Legislators

Several city leaders are under the misguided impression that most voters have staunchly opposed building more affordable housing. They think the people want public camping bans and would rather remove the eyesores seen in tent cities than present long-

term solutions.

Contact your legislators today and let them know that you support the prospect of a newly improved

affordable housing market where housing is a human right for all.

*Cynthia Griffith is a freelance writer dedicated to social justice and environmental issues.*

*From Invisible People: Changing the Face of Homelessness.*



#### INSIDE CONNECTIONS

LOCAL . . . . .	2
COSTS OF GOOD INTENTIONS . . .	3
RAMBLE ROUTE . . . . .	4
SAVE DEMOCRACY . . . . .	5

2ND WOUNDED KNEE . . . . .	6-7
POETRY . . . . .	8
GATHERING OF VOICES . . . . .	9
KCBP RADIO . . . . .	10
COSTS OF CRUELTY . . . . .	11

### READERS! Sign-up for our e-edition!

Get the latest e-edition of Stanislaus Connections delivered right into your email box!

#### Can enlarge text to read more easily! Print out if desired!

To sign-up, send your email address to Jim Costello, [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)

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

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

## MAPS: Free, Informative, Engaging Community Science Programs

Approximately monthly on Fridays MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132, 7:30 pm

**April 14: *Blow Your Mind Botany*.** Joe Medeiros taught college botany and ecology at MJC and Sierra College and was the first Great Valley Museum Director. Joe will review how humans are 100% dependent upon plants. He will com-



pare our five senses to the twenty of plants and share recent research demonstrating sophisticated plant communications (within their own and between other species) and how they mutualistically partner

with all other living groups to literally direct ecological stability within all sunlight-driven ecosystems.

MAPS is grateful to MJC, the MJC Foundation, Stanislaus County Office of Education, Modesto Teachers Assn., the Great Valley Museum, and the Stanislaus County Library for support.

## Modesto Junior College Science Colloquium - Spring 2023 Speakers

Wednesdays 3:15 - 4:15 pm (recorded for later viewing on Science Colloquium YouTube)

Science Community Center, Room 115, Modesto Junior College West Campus. Parking permit needed.

**April 5:** Nicolas Tobin, MJC, Instructional Support Technician, Horticulture. **MJC Horticulture Program.** Learn about MJC's horticulture program and plant nursery, current plant trends, and what goes into developing new, successful plants.

Committee: Daniel Chase, Jill Cross, Elizabeth McInnes, Denise Godbout-Avant, Troy Gravatt, Deborah Martin, Michael Shirley, Catherine Tripp.



## The 38th Annual Peace Camp is Happening!

**Save the Date:  
June 23-25, 2023**

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's rescheduled 38th Annual Peace Camp in the Sierras will take place on June 23-25, 2023. 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 people of all ages in a beautiful mountain setting.

### About Peace Camp

Peace Camp officially opens with supper at 6:00 pm on Friday and closes after breakfast and the morning gathering on Sunday. The camp is run by volunteers and 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.

If you are interested in volunteering or want to be added to the Peace Camp 2023 Interest list for the latest updates, contact Megan Parravano (information provided below).

Camp Peaceful Pines, on Clark Fork Road off Hwy. 108 in the Stanislaus National Forest, is the venue for Peace Camp. Camp Peaceful Pines features a kitchen/mess hall, bathroom facilities with showers, rustic cabins and platform tents. A cabin with special needs may be requested. Depending on the number of campers, cabins may be shared.

In 2018, the Donnell Fire burned much of the surrounding area but the Camp itself remains intact and is still a place of beauty and tranquility surrounded by Mother Nature's continuing restoration. Directions and other information will be provided to participants before camp.

**Information:** Megan Parravano, 209-497-7220, [megan-parravano@gmail.com](mailto:megan-parravano@gmail.com)

**PEACE CAMP**  
MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER

Spend a weekend in nature building community and working toward peace, justice, and a sustainable environment through nonviolent action

More details at:  
[peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp](http://peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp)

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**June 23-25, 2023**  
Camp Peaceful Pines  
Dardanelle, CA

**Families & Individuals Welcome!**



# Homeless: Where your money goes, Part III: The costly effects of good intentions

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

*Despite the expenditure of billions of dollars, homelessness in California continues to burgeon. While every city and county throughout the state faces different challenges trying to manage the problem, there are enough similarities that all can learn from one another's failures. Stanislaus County and the City of Modesto offer typical examples of tactics that have failed again and again. ed*

Frank Ploof may know more about homelessness in Stanislaus County and the City of Modesto than anyone else in the region. With over ten years of on-the-ground experience dealing with homeless individuals and the county's various systems of care, Ploof has also sat on many of the region's various committees devoted to homelessness, housing, and behavioral health.

Recently he said, "What we call a system of care is a system of referrals. A true system of care for homelessness was never designed and should be for obvious reasons."

Like many frustrated observers of people in dire need with nowhere to go, Ploof recently joined Modesto businessman Steve Finch in the formation of a nonprofit dedicated to filling some of the many gaps in the city and county's overburdened systems of care.

The Stanislaus Homeless Advocacy and Resource Enterprise (SHARE) grew out of need and compassion. The need was for housing and shelter and the compassion was for people incapacitated by disability, age, illness, and poverty who had nowhere to go.

One of SHARE's roles is to fill the gap between city and county "services" and placement of people in temporary, transitional, or permanent housing. Finch and Ploof are frequently called upon to provide motel rooms for people in immediate need of shelter that city and county agencies can't or won't provide.

While city and county officials insist there is always help available for anyone who wants it, the fact is that appropriate help and services for homeless people in need are often unavailable when they need it. A common case involves people recently released from hospitals when they're well enough to leave the hospital but can't access appropriate shelter while recovering fully. Other cases might involve someone with a



**Allen (in wheelchair) and Frank Ploof**

terminal illness awaiting entry into hospice care.

Ploof estimates there are at least thirty-five local nonprofits and government agencies dedicated to helping homeless people, yet homeless numbers keep growing. The most obvious problem is the lack of housing, but a greater issue is the lack of a homeless management plan.

In theory, at least, Stanislaus County is responsible for managing behavioral health problems within county lines. In fact, the county doesn't have sufficient capacity for managing behavioral health.

Well over a year ago, the Salvation Army's Harold Laubauch said that, "Forty percent of our residents deal with mental health challenges and another 40 percent deal with substance abuse challenges." Laubauch was referring to residents of Stanislaus County's low-barrier shelter; the Salvation Army has a contract to manage it.

Homeless people trying to get off drugs often end up in the low-barrier shelter because of a lack of capacity at the Stanislaus Recovery Center (SRC), the county facility for drug rehabilitation. Not only is there insufficient capacity at SRC, there have also been several cases of drug overdoses within the facility, most likely because of staff shortages and insufficient funding.

Because both SRC and the low-barrier shelter lack capacity and expertise to deal with difficult cases involving mental illness and drug use, they often turn away or evict people. Those difficult cases become the default responsibilities of organizations like SHARE.

The overarching problem is that because there's no homeless management plan, there's also no linear chain of command and custody for managing Modesto's homeless population. A Stanislaus County official recently admitted the county doesn't know how many mentally ill homeless

people are on the streets of Modesto. Officials not only don't know how many, they also don't know where they are or what they need.

Nonprofits and volunteers do their best to fill these gaps in knowledge and need but are overwhelmed by sheer numbers. Since most experts estimate that at least half of California's homeless population struggle with mental illness or drug addiction, and since there's widespread agreement that Modesto has at least 1500 destitute inhabitants with nowhere to go, we have to assume several hundreds of those people need services the city and county do not have.

While nonprofits like SHARE tend to be operated and staffed by some of the most resourceful and competent people in the region, their attempts to fill gaps in the county's systems of care can't possibly reduce overall homeless numbers because there are more people than there are places to house or shelter them.

Since there's no management plan for homelessness, attempts by nonprofits to work around the shortfalls in systems of care too often result in a series of repeated efforts by vari-



**Streets of Modesto, December 2022**

ous agencies to help people for whom there's no real help because there aren't enough services and facilities.

The result is a repetitive process that ends up with homeless people back on the streets, even after a great expenditure of resources. Even worse, the bewildering array of nonprofits and agencies devoted to homelessness diffuses oversight and accountability and enables local officials to claim services are available when they are not.

Growing numbers of homeless people in Modesto represent an ongoing depreciation of property values, lost business, and the hollowing out of downtown Modesto, which continues to lose iconic venues like the Deva Café and Commonwealth restaurant, as well as lost use of local parks and nature trails.

Nonprofits, especially those operated by local citizens, represent the best intentions and capabilities of many of the region's most civic-minded and able residents. Unfortunately, they also enable local elected officials to avoid their responsibilities for public health and safety by establishing a system of referrals that drops a curtain of confusion and obfuscation over failed systems of care while homeless numbers burgeon.



**MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER**

Working for **peace, justice**  
and a **sustainable future**

**Connections** is published monthly except in

August by the Modesto Peace/Life Center

829 13<sup>th</sup> St., Modesto, CA 95354

Open by appointment.

Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,

Modesto, CA 95353

209-529-5750

## Be informed!

Read the Valley Citizen at  
<http://thevalleycitizen.com>

# Rural Ramble Route Rock River Road

By ELAINE GORMAN

Betcha you can't say that 5 times real fast! Besides the pleasing alliteration, this stroll offers pastoral landscapes, streams and ponds, lots of birds, and traces of early California history. The seven-mile round-trip walk, along an undulating narrow road, is located about 10 miles east of Knights Ferry where western Tuolumne County nudges into eastern Stanislaus County. The drive along highway 108/120 is also pleasant, with the Stanislaus River just to the north as we gain access to the Sierra foothills.

On this late winter day, during a lull in the 2022-23 rain/snowstorms, we enjoyed clear blue skies and chilly temperatures. I had on 4 layers plus a neck buff and headband below my cap. Binos were slung around my neck. As the walk is along an asphalt road, we left the hiking poles at home.

We parked at the intersection of Green Springs Rd. and Rock River Rd. Rock River Rd. bisects private land, so please respect the fencing, locked gates, and "No Trespassing" signs. We began walking west, and within minutes grazing cows came into view. At first, they seemed curious but ran off once Charlene, Russ, and I started to converse. The bare blue oaks created forests of rickety skeletons. Without leaves, the oak galls, mistletoe, and bird life are a lot more evident. The railroad tracks that run between Oakdale and Sonora are visible to the south.

After about a half mile, a large pond comes into view on the right/north side. Scanning the pond with binos, I spotted buffleheads, ruddy ducks, wigeon, and gadwall. A vehicle stopped, and a birder with a spotting scope began to check out the pond. He told me of Tundra swans and other water birds that he has seen there. (note: Rock River Rd. is a well-known birding area)

As we continued walking, moos and meadowlarks' trills provided the soundtrack. We passed a homemade memorial decked out with flowers. A cyclist rode by and told us that it is a remembrance for a local caballero. Rest in peace, A.E. Old telephone poles and wooden fence posts are riddled with woodpecker holes and stashed acorns.

Hand-built stone walls crisscross the land, and at several points along the road, these 100+-year-old fences are joined by wooden fence posts and metal fence posts indicating three eras of land use and division.

After about 1.5 miles, we cross not-so-Dry Creek. We know this stream well, as it meanders toward Waterford and Modesto to meet the Tuolumne. It's nice to see the creek in this semi-pristine condition. Gooseberries are growing nearby, their buds just beginning to swell with yellow petals.

This road has very little traffic, and just a few Hetch Hetchy trucks drive by. There are very few homes visible. We aren't able to hear noise from Highway 108, so it seems much more isolated than it actually is. Tombstone rocks (tilted-up sedimentary rock slabs) formed graveyards under the oak canopies, providing a slightly somber atmosphere. Hawks, vultures, savannah sparrows, and robins provide lots of birding opportunities.

After about 3 miles, the large Hetch Hetchy structure (which puts chemicals in the water, to adjust the pH) dominates the view. A tunnel that transports water from the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park to the Bay Area,

is located beneath the hills. Just past the building, we noticed an unpleasant acrid smell. Around the bend appeared a large pile of silage, the source of the odor. We held our breath and kept walking. One more small hill and our destination, the horse farm, came into view. I hoped that we would be greeted by the horses, but they somehow knew that we didn't have any snacks for them.

The birders were also there and pointed out a soaring golden eagle, tri-colored blackbirds, and pale mountain bluebirds. I mentioned the killdeer and spotted towhee that I had seen. We all admired the expansive view to the southwest of our beloved San Joaquin Valley.

After a quick snack, we turned around and headed back to our car. We noticed only a few wildflowers — fiddleneck, *Lomatium*, blue dicks. One or two vehicles drove by. Drivers are courteous, drive slowly, and give us a wide berth. Extra clothing layers were removed as the temperature rose. Now heading east, we had long views of the snow-covered Sierra. Charlene used her peak finder app to locate peaks in Yosemite.

During the stroll back, we spotted two lumps hanging down in the branches of an oak. On closer inspection, they appeared to be bird nests, probably bush tits. The nests were constructed of some purloined plastic netting plus plant material. Something cool to check out in the future...

I was disappointed that I hadn't spotted the two birds I was hoping to see. As we approached the pond, I looked to the right, and a couple of hundred feet away, I saw a dark woodpecker flying to a fence post. Hurray, a Lewis's Woodpecker! Then another one appeared, its dark pink belly visible. Then near the pond, I saw a flash of blue and white. Who else has that big ol' head but a belted kingfisher? So, just a half mile from the car, my two birds made their appearance.

Our appetites being sufficiently stimulated, we walked briskly back to the vehicles. 50s Roadhouse in Knight's Ferry beckoned for us to pause for a late lunch. Yum!

**Getting there:** From Modesto, go east on highway 108/120. About 9-10 miles east of Knight's Ferry turn right/south on Green Springs Road. After about a mile, turn right on Rock River Road. Park where safe.



# We Don't Have to Choose Between Nuclear Madmen

By **NORMAN SOLOMON**, Reader Supported News

The announcement by Vladimir Putin over the weekend that Russia will deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus marked a further escalation of potentially cataclysmic tensions over the war in neighboring Ukraine. As the Associated Press reported, "Putin said the move was triggered by Britain's decision this past week to provide Ukraine with armor-piercing rounds containing depleted uranium."

There's always an excuse for nuclear madness, and the United States has certainly provided ample rationales for the Russian leader's display of it. American nuclear warheads have been deployed in Europe since the mid-1950s, and current best estimates say 100 are there now -- in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

Count on U.S. corporate media to (appropriately) condemn Putin's announcement while dodging key realities of how the USA, for decades, has been pushing the nuclear envelope toward conflagration. The U.S. government's breaking of its pledge not to expand NATO eastward after the fall of the Berlin Wall -- instead expanding into 10 Eastern European countries -- was only one aspect of official Washington's reckless approach.

During this century, the runaway motor of nuclear irresponsibility has been mostly revved by the United States. In 2002, President George W. Bush withdrew the U.S. from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, a vital agreement that had been in effect for 30 years. Negotiated by the Nixon administration and the Soviet Union, the treaty declared that its limits would be a "substantial factor in curbing the race in strategic offensive arms."

His lofty rhetoric aside, President Obama launched a \$1.7 trillion program for further developing U.S. nuclear forces under the euphemism of "modernization." To make matters worse, President Trump pulled the United States out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, a crucial pact between Washington and Moscow that had eliminated an entire category of missiles from Europe since 1988.

The madness has remained resolutely bipartisan. Joe Biden quickly dashed hopes that he would be a more enlightened president about nuclear weapons. Far from pushing to reinstate the cancelled treaties, from the outset of his presidency Biden boosted measures like placing ABM systems in Poland and Romania. Calling them "defensive" does not change the fact that those systems can be retrofitted with offensive cruise missiles. A quick look at a map would underscore why such moves were so ominous when viewed through

**IIPA** INSTITUTE for PUBLIC ACCURACY  
Reliable Independent Sources for Breaking News

Kremlin windows.

Contrary to his 2020 campaign platform, President Biden has insisted that the United States must retain the option of first use of nuclear weapons. His administration's landmark Nuclear Posture Review, issued a year ago, reaffirmed rather than renounced that option. A leader of the organization Global Zero put it this way: "Instead of distancing himself from the nuclear coercion and brinkmanship of thugs like Putin and Trump, Biden is following their lead. There's no plausible scenario in which a nuclear first strike by the U.S. makes any sense whatsoever. We need smarter strategies."

Daniel Ellsberg -- whose book *The Doomsday Machine* truly should be required reading in the White House and the Kremlin -- summed up humanity's extremely dire predicament and imperative when he told the *New York Times* days ago: "For 70 years, the U.S. has frequently made the kind of wrongful first-use threats of nuclear weapons that Putin is making now in Ukraine. We should never have done that, nor should Putin be doing it now. I'm worried that his monstrous threat of nuclear war to retain Russian control of Crimea is not a bluff. President Biden campaigned in 2020 on a promise to declare a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons. He should keep that promise, and the world should demand the same commitment from Putin."

We can make a difference -- maybe even the difference -- to avert global nuclear annihilation. This week, TV viewers will be reminded of such possibilities by the new documentary *The Movement* and the "Madman" on PBS. The film "shows how two antiwar protests in the fall of 1969 -- the largest the country had ever seen -- pressured President Nixon to cancel what he called his 'madman' plans for a massive escalation of the U.S. war in Vietnam, including a threat to use nuclear weapons. At the time, protestors had no idea how influential they could be and how many lives they may have saved."

In 2023, we have no idea how influential we can be and



how many lives we might save -- if we're really willing to try.

Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and the executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. He is the author of a dozen books including *War Made Easy*. His next book, *War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine*, will be published in June 2023 by The New Press.

Reader Supported News is the Publication of Origin for this work.

**DON'T BE FOOLED, I'M STILL HERE!**

**Mask, vax & get boosted!**

Getting vaccinated and boosted makes you

**10x more protected from COVID-19**

than those who are unvaccinated.

Find a vaccine near you:  
**833-422-4255**

**MyTurn.ca.gov**

**NAACP**  
Modesto/Stanslaus  
Unit 1048

**NAACPMODESTOSTANISLAUS**

**NAACPMODESTOSTANISLAUS@GMAIL.COM**  
**NAACPMODESTOSTANISLAUS.ORG**  
**(209) 896-9196**

**KDUR** LAW OFFICES OF  
KELLY, DUARTE, URSTOEGER & RUBLE, LLP

Sharon E. Kelly  
Jeffrey R. Duarte  
Markus R. Urstoeger  
Megan E. Ruble

1600 G St  
Suite 203  
P.O. Box 0142  
Modesto, CA

Workers' Compensation and Social Security Disability Attorneys

Know your rights  
Call today (209) 521-2552

# Remembering Wounded Knee

By DAVID ROCKWELL

As many of my age remember, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the emergence of several movements pushing for societal change; included among these were the Black Power movement, the anti-war movement, women's liberation, gay rights, Chicano activism, and notably, for my own history, the American Indian Movement. Do we remember the occupation of Alcatraz Island for two years in 1969 by the American Indian Movement (AIM), then the Trail of Broken Treaties in 1972? The Indigenous demands focused on honoring the treaties so often broken by the US Government, as well as reforms in Indian-Government relationships, and revamped self-government of tribes throughout the country.

In early March 1973, within a week of the takeover of the tiny hamlet of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Oglala Lakota Reservation in western South Dakota by local Oglala Lakota people and AIM, I, as a young lawyer 1.5 years out of law school, answered a call for help from the leaders in that takeover to go to Pine Ridge to assist in representing people involved in that occupation, both in anticipated criminal cases as well as negotiating with the government on the demands that the occupiers presented.

When I arrived, US Marshals had surrounded the village, using armored personnel carriers provided by the US Army, armed with automatic weapons, demanding a complete surrender; media were barred from entering the village, which was the site of the mass burial of up to 300 Lakota, including men, women, and children, who had been massacred by the 7th Cavalry in December 1890. Along with other lawyers who had arrived, we set up the Wounded Knee Legal Defense Offense Committee (WKLDOC), to protect the rights and lives of the protesters. I stayed for three weeks, then returned in the fall for another 6 weeks; I also helped establish a support committee in the Boston area where I was living at the time.

Several other members of WKLDOC and I returned to



David Rockwell, center.

Pine Ridge at the end of February 2023 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the occupation and to honor those who participated in it. Events included sharing of memories, a pow-wow with drumming, singing and dancing, and a Four Directions Walk on the reservation, where groups from 4 villages converged on the mass grave site in Wounded Knee for speeches, singing and drumming. A common statement from the Lakota members was that February 27, 1993, was "Liberation Day" on the reservation.

The film *Warrior Women* ([warriorwomen.org](http://warriorwomen.org)) honors the women who bravely participated in the Wounded Knee occupation and the continuing activities of Native women for their rights.

The following article by Sand Brim, a legal worker and investigator for WKLDOC, who lived on the reservation for over a year after the occupation, explains some of the issues and events of that struggle and its aftermath.

## Wounded Knee and Today's Fight for Treaty Rights

By SAND BRIM, Portside

The 1973 Siege at Wounded Knee is the longest "civil unrest" in the history of the US Marshal Service. For 71 days, the American Indian Movement (AIM) and members of the Oglala Lakota (Sioux) nation were under siege in a violent standoff with the FBI and US Marshals equipped with high-powered rifles and armored personnel carriers. Two people were killed, over two dozen wounded. At stake, sovereignty and self-determination guaranteed through treaty rights.

Fifty years have passed but for American Indians the struggle for recognition of the nation-to-nation treaties continues to be seen as survival. At the end of February, young Indian leaders joined older activists to gather at Wounded Knee to commemorate the violent events that began on February 27, 1973, and renew their call for self-determination and recognition of their treaties. At the Commemoration Wounded Knee veteran leader Bill Means emphasized that the failure to honor these treaties stems from "continued acts of colonialism."

The Lakota Indians are not fighting for civil rights. Their

**The Lakota Indians are not fighting for civil rights. Their fight is for their land and those guaranteed rights of self-determination agreed to in the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty.**

fight is for their land and those guaranteed rights of self-determination agreed to in the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty. As one Wounded Knee veteran put it, "We were trying to get out of the system."

American Indians see their responsibility under the treaties linked to the health of the land and water. Lakota leader and Wounded Knee veteran Madonna Thunder Hawk explained, "When we step up as a people to protect land and water, what we stand on are our treaty rights."

To understand their struggle, you must understand the history.

The 1973 Siege at Wounded Knee is rooted in the ab-

rogation of the Ft. Laramie 1868 Treaty between the U.S. Government and the Great Sioux Nation. This Treaty sets aside a large swath of land west of the Missouri River and designates the Black Hills, sacred land of the Indians, as "unceded territory" for the "absolute and undisturbed use and occupation of the Indians." The American Indians justly understood the Treaty as the right to self-determination.

But the discovery of gold in the Black Hills by George Armstrong Custer in 1874 followed by the Battle of Big Horn in 1876 galvanized the illegal confiscation of Indian lands and the enforcement of the reservation system. After failed attempts to convince the Tribes to cede the Black Hills, the Government simply took the land as an Act of Congress via

the 1877 Dawes Act. It was an egregious violation of the 1868 Treaty and set the stage for the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, where as many as 300 unarmed Native Americans were slaughtered. Nearly half were women and children.

Not until 1980 did the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledge that the taking of the Black Hills was illegal, and compelled compensation, today estimated to be at over one billion dollars.

But the Lakota People have rejected the Court's decision. They are clear. The Black Hills are sacred and not for sale.

For the Lakota, this fight for survival, the preservation of their nation and its land, were the central demands of the siege at Wounded Knee. During the negotiations the local Oglala leaders were frustrated with the Justice Department's refusal to grasp the central issue of the Treaty. Gladys Bissonette, a revered Oglala activist admonished the Government negotiators, "In the past there were a lot of violations of the sacred treaties . . . This is real. We're not playing here. So all you people that go back to Washington, think real good, because our lives are at stake. It concerns our children's children, the unborn."

Oglala Lakota County is one of the poorest counties in the United States. The Lakota people live in extreme poverty. Their children were subjected to cultural genocide through forced assimilation in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. Their life expectancy is nearly six years less than white Americans. But they were not poor before their land and resources were



taken. The Lakota understand Indian poverty as a direct result of colonialism.

Much has been written about the aftermath of the 1973 siege, including the murders of 60 AIM sympathizers and activists in the following year, known as the Reign of Terror, carried out by a local vigilante group self-titled "Goon" (Guardians of the Oglala Nation). U.S. District Court Judge Fred Nichols viewed this as the FBI colluding with vigilantes to target AIM sympathizers. The continued imprisonment of Leonard Peltier despite universal calls for clemency - even by the prosecutor - demonstrates the FBI's intent to eliminate Indian activists even at the cost of truth.

At the end of the nine-month trial of AIM leaders Dennis Banks and Russel Means the jury polled unanimously to acquit. But an illness of one juror prevented the required courtroom polling. Judge Nichols then simply dismissed the charges. "[T]he misconduct by the government in this case is so aggravated that a dismissal must be entered in the interests of justice," he wrote. "The waters of Justice have been polluted."

The new young Indian leadership is educated both in traditional ways and at American colleges and universities. They call for solidarity with other colonized peoples of the world. And they identify the continued denial of self-determination and pressure to assimilate as an ongoing strategy of cultural genocide. They easily traverse both worlds, but they do not accept the label of "American". They are members of their respective Indian Tribal Nations. And return of their lands under the treaties remains their priority. Oglala Lakota leader and N.D.N. Collective President Nick Tilsen adds, "The Waters of Justice have absolutely been polluted. The issue of the Black Hills is one of the longest unresolved legal, political,

## The Lakota understand Indian poverty as a direct result of colonialism.

treaty and human rights matters in the History of the United States. This president says he's about a reckoning with the past and healing forward yet no effort has been made by the White House to have open dialogue about the return of Public Lands in the Black Hills. It's time to talk about Land Back. If this country wants to authentically engage a restorative and just healing process with this country's Indigenous peoples, it must start with the return of stolen indigenous lands back into indigenous hands. That's our ask, it's very clear return all public lands in the Black Hills to the Lakota. It will halt the mining claims and projects that are polluting the water and destroying the environment and move us all closer to justice."

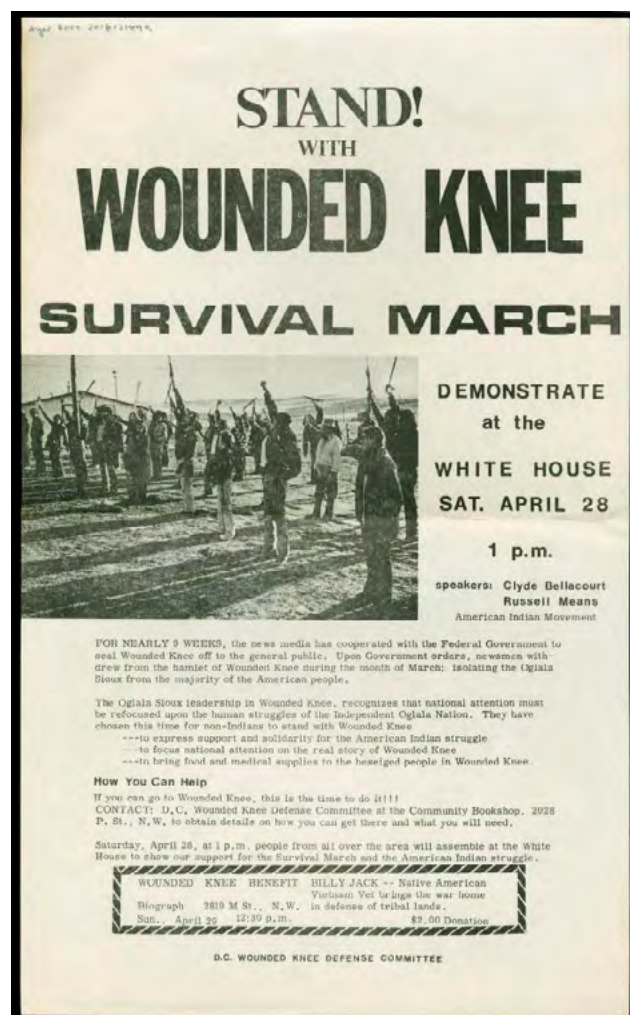
Corporate extraction of critical metals and minerals from American Indian lands and the growing impact of the climate extremes give impetus to their demands for the return of their lands.

These are warriors of a new era committed to the protection of their land, their waters, and their people, and they are fueled by the urgency of climate change.

"The waters of justice have been polluted."

The fight continues.

[Sand Brim was at was at Wounded Knee 50 years ago. She stayed two years on the reservation collecting evidence for the Federal Trials. She just returned from the 50-Year Commemoration.]



Rest In Peace, Alfa!

Visit MoSt at <https://www.mostpoetry.org/>



**By Tom Portwood**

# I

Jarred by recurring seizures  
My head throbs from last night's barrage  
I wake, benumbed, hesitant to rise  
But I swing my legs over the side of the bed  
Hear Bentley barking on the walkway  
Start again, buoyed by the sound of querulous mallards

The geese returned in the cold of the afternoon yesterday -  
I think of them ten minutes later as I spoon yogurt into a  
cup  
Peek out the venetian blinds to see if they've returned  
again this morning.  
Their absence had been grieved by us for weeks

The egret, too, has disappeared  
Frightened off by the freak hail storm  
That must have clobbered its nest.

This is the season for brokenness                      though

Suzanne tosses off her days at chemo  
As if they were inconveniences hardly to be mentioned;  
Cooks up savory bean soup for Sally and me,  
Finds joy in these simple acts  
Of neighborliness.

This is the third time Suzanne has dug in against cancer. She's not about to let it get her down now.

Ours is a tiny village  
Here, beside the pond

Some of us are past seventy  
But one of us drives a garbage truck  
And another tends graves in a cemetery  
While the fellow round the corner works in health care  
“‘It’s been tough,” he admitted to me on Saturday  
“But after three years of COVID, things are looking  
better.”

Ours is a tiny village

One mom homeschools her kids  
And three moms wear hijabs  
A neighbor's just been told he has Parkinson's

We all have our stories  
Our aches and our worries  
Our beliefs and our dreams  
COVID has somehow knitted us together  
Made us a patchwork family

And this is the season for brokenness

## II

Tyler walks by, the stray kitten following him. “Donny’s half-blind,” he says, “Yeah, that one eye’s frosted over. We’ll have to watch out for him.” Donny’s the oldest duck on the pond – the Mayor of the place. Tyler and I look out at the water, silent as we watch Donny paddle off alone.

Soft-hearted as Chaplin's Tramp, Tyler feeds the kitten chunks of tuna in a bowl he puts by his front door. The kitten chases the ducks as they flutter off to the water. Tyler chuckles, "Go for it!" he shouts, as feathers fly.

Gusts of wind whip through the wispy willow branches – it is winter still, and rain is coming.  
A DEWALT sliding saw whines for hours outside Gracie's old apartment  
Slate-shaded clouds loom in the west.

The days of Gracie living here are past now;  
After she took that fall, broke her femur.  
The workmen bicker among themselves as they install new  
flooring in the apartment that once was hers. That she lived  
and breathed there; cursed, laughed, cried inside those  
walls – all but forgotten.

But Sally remembers, calls Gracie without fail, tacks true  
north for her friend, listens to, laughs along with Gracie -  
sequestered now in memory care.

Sally tells me that Gracie remembers our neighbor Marlene, dead now these fourteen months from COVID; always remembers to say hello to her old neighbors back on Floyd.

This is the season for brokenness  
For the world always is a tiny, fragile village  
And brokenness happens so suddenly  
Sometimes so quietly

But Audrey and her son left Valentine's candies on  
doorsteps  
And Sally still makes her rounds with the mail  
Or drops by with a slice of cherry pie, Bentley in tow  
And we know the first day of spring will bring ducklings to  
the water  
Ours is a tiny village  
Here, beside the pond

We will watch in awe as the seasons turn  
As sunsets yawn above the shopping center on Coffee  
Road  
Go on doing what we can

Doing what we can.

## Mouth Forms Roses

Mouth forms roses from the flower fire  
crimson ones, hue of blood  
petals' edges stir rivers of air  
six directions of sound  
locking in space

Spiraled tendril  
leaks onto brow  
in emphasis  
teases out focus  
a hair-brained scheme

Say something different  
before it drowns

If it begged I would have done it  
it only tugged from behind  
lanterns lay mumbling along the path  
muting stars  
go with me once under a full eclipse  
a blue moon even

*First published in In the Grove, Fall 2005,  
by In the Grove Press*

## Synesthesia

Turn the lights on loud  
so I can hear the G sharp of your body  
vibrate my eyes  
Blue is always two  
Three is not green  
but teal, the sound of duck  
I wear my earmuffs inside the gallery  
my blindfold, when the guitar dances  
Mud is a prelude  
sunrise a coda  
The smooth touch of your envelope  
roses my nostrils  
Tears fall in chords  
Over the Altamont  
a trail of head beams  
plays the Rolling Stones

## This poem

Spoke to me before it reached your eyes, your ears  
Spoke to me in language I recognized and in which I was  
fluent  
It could only be broadcast. I could not translate.  
This poem flows now in your perception, in rivers, in  
eddies,  
In ways that I cannot know  
This poem is a concrete of metaphor, of simile  
It stays as it is written, until it is read.  
I lay it aside, you lay it aside

Same words laid aside  
It surfaces in a thin volume in the dollar bin in Kensington  
In the estate sale of a friend  
In an unexpected reading at the Barkin' Dog Grill  
It surfaces as itself, as it has always been  
A message in a vessel from the ocean of all things  
One amongst millions, yet firmly itself

## What is your time worth?

Patterns repeat in rhythm  
chore and ritual mix  
questions impose  
what are your days for?  
for whom are your offerings?  
you have practiced the licks  
the perfect posture of line or lyric

Still, on some high branch  
those sweetest fruit wait  
will you stretch your reach  
or climb a steady ladder?

Once picked, can you consume, digest  
transmute one life into another?  
the virtuoso plays again and again  
etudes of hope that lean towards mastery  
plucks the exact spot on a string  
that explodes your heart

## First Rain: October, Modesto, California

First rain  
craving of roots satisfied into swelling  
it is darker, sweeter smelling  
mud slows the pace  
runner must watch her step  
notice the rainbow of oil in the gutter

California is nature's fool  
had James\* known of her when he wrote  
of patience for the early and the late rain\*  
here where the early rain appears in autumn  
where the last shall be first in the spring

All the tiny grasses sprout now  
comforted with leaf fall  
here roses bloom in the evening of the year  
and we toast the harvest of water

Have you known a child who did not grow on time  
whose roots were dry and wanting  
have patience for the early and the late rain  
linger in the valley

\*James 4:7 Behold the farmer waits for the precious fruit  
of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early  
and the late rain

## One Thin Stick

One thin stick  
makes a counter ripple  
tiny waves merge into vees  
move in new direction  
echo formations of geese, shifting course

It takes a small gesture  
to cleave the stoic flow  
to waken a gathering  
only a throw  
a release, an offering  
surface tension shifts  
reflections alter

Here in the late afternoon  
nuzzled at the foot of day  
a quiet drama of rearrangement  
plays out in midstream

## Karen Hansis Baker: A Distinctive Voice of the Valley and Pillar of Our Poetry Community

My name is Karen Hansis Baker. I can tell you what I do  
and have done, who and what I am associated with, but that  
will only be a rough sketch of who I am, which in essence  
remains a mystery even to me.

So, for the rough sketch, I promote poetry as a member  
of the Board of the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center, coordi-  
nating their annual MoSt Poetry Festival. I am a member of the  
National League of American Pen Women. I write with sev-  
eral poetry groups. In 2021 I co-edited a 30-year anthology for  
our MeterMaids poetry group. It is entitled *A Circle of Voices*. My  
work was published in the *More than Soil, More than Sky* anthology, several poetry journals,  
and in my chapbook, *Vocal Exercises in Stone*.

I attend a dream group, foster five feral cats, and live with  
my daughter in Modesto. My favorite way of sharing my work  
is in a small group as I feel that poetry is intimate and a perfect  
mode of conversation. I enjoy taking photographs of images  
hidden in tree trunks, rusted park grills, and lake water. Two  
of my favorite places are Asilomar Beach at Pacific Grove  
and Camp Nawakwa family camp in northern Wisconsin.

I take my cue from Emily Dickinson to “dwell in possibil-  
ity.” If I don't get lost, you can join me there.



# Great Programs on KCBP 95.5 FM, The Voice of the Valley

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

PSAs in English and Spanish broadcast multiple times a day, produced by the West Modesto Community Collaborative.

## PROGRAMS

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

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

**Vib'n with the West Modesto Collaborative** - Karlha Davies and Jasmine Corena. Engage, Educate and Advocate on behalf of the West Modesto Community. Showcases Voices of the West Modesto Community - Wednesdays, 7 pm.

**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.

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

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

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

## LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

**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/kcbp-wotv> and on Spotify.

**People Not Profit** - with Pegasus Formerly *Peril and the Promise*. No new episodes. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp-peril>.

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

## Local Music Programs

**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 Sunday.

**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.

Weekdays (Monday - Friday)

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

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

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

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

**Sojourner Truth** - 4:00 pm. Interviews, panels focusing on issues that affect people of color.

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

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

## Children's Programming

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

**The Children's Hour** - Sundays 3:00 pm.

## 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.

**Got Science** - 4:00 pm Sundays.

**Find a complete programming schedule on our website,** [www.kcbpradio.org](http://www.kcbpradio.org)

**PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY RADIO STATION: Donate** here: <https://kcbpradio.org/donate/> Please consider a recurring monthly donation.



# Homeless — Where your money goes, Part IV: The rising costs of cruelty

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

*In June, 2022, the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury released a report on homelessness noting that despite increasing costs, homelessness has gotten worse countywide. The report cited lack of focus and accountability among a myriad of agencies as critical factors in failed efforts to manage the county's growing homeless population. Stanislaus County is not alone in failure. Throughout the entire state of California, a major negative influence has been the willingness of state and local leaders to blame homelessness on the homeless, despite overwhelming contrary evidence. ed*

Very early on, when state and local authorities confused a humanitarian crisis with an outbreak of stubborn loitering, there may have been reason to believe facts, research and simple inferences would prevail over dogma, fictitious memes and political dysfunction. Many years and billions of misspent dollars later, state and local leaders persist in failed tactics for managing homelessness. In fact, with few exceptions, they seem more committed to criminalizing it than ever.

There was time when a body on the sidewalk or the sight of a disabled person stranded on the corner of a busy city street would have evoked compassion, concern, and an emergency response. Today, such sights attract less attention than a speed bump. We have become so habituated to the sight of people in distress it no longer moves us.

California's residents have become resigned to government dysfunction. In a chilling reversal of values, they've allowed authorities to punish sick, disabled, traumatized and destitute people for severe housing shortages, broken systems of care, and growing indifference to human suffering. During a winter featuring pelting rainstorms and freezing temperatures, more people than ever are spending their days and nights on the cold, hard ground.

...the claim that drug abuse and mental illness are the fundamental causes of homelessness falls apart upon investigation. If mental-health issues or drug abuse were major drivers of homelessness, then places with higher rates of these problems would see higher rates of homelessness. They don't. Utah, Alabama, Colorado, Kentucky, West Virginia, Vermont, Delaware, and Wisconsin have some of the highest rates of mental illness in the country, but relatively modest homelessness levels. What prevents at-risk people in these states from falling into homelessness at high rates is simple: They have more affordable-housing options.

Rather than admit we have a housing shortage and a severe deficit of health care professionals and infrastructure, state and local officials have offered no correction to misleading memes about "bad choices" and people who "don't want help." Instead of acknowledging that homeless numbers have grown despite billions of dollars spent on sweeps, congregate shelters and inappropriate law enforcement, authorities in Stanislaus County and elsewhere continue to repeat that help is available "for anyone who wants it."

The City of Modesto has a shortage of police officers so severe that it is offering a tiered hiring bonus for officers who join the local force that could amount to as much as \$25,000

each. Part of the problem is the work burden imposed on law enforcement resulting from failed systems of care for the mentally ill, physically disabled and addicted members of the homeless population.

One veteran Modesto officer has described himself as, "a social worker with a gun." Unfortunately, the default option for law enforcement when dealing with homeless people isn't assistance, and the reason is simple: Real assistance is too often unavailable. Instead, the usual response to a complaint involving homeless people is a citation, often for loitering, "refusal to leave the premises," or some other misdemeanor.

No decent human being wishes to punish sick and disabled people squatting in public places when they have nowhere else to go, but that has become the "duty" of local police officers who thought they had signed up to fight crime and keep the peace. No wonder they've become demoralized enough to seek work elsewhere.

Homeless numbers continue to grow even as costs for law enforcement, sweeps, and jail time increase. Nonetheless, despite the costs and negative outcomes, the public has become habituated to criminalization even of the sick, disabled, and destitute:

As the situation has deteriorated, particularly in areas where homelessness overruns public parks or public transit, policymakers' failure to respond to the crisis has transformed what could have been an opportunity for reducing homelessness into yet another cycle of support for criminalizing it. In Austin, Texas, 57 percent of voters backed reinstating criminal penalties for homeless encampments; in the District of Columbia, 75 percent of respondents to a Washington Post poll said they supported shutting down "homeless tent encampments" even without firm assurances that those displaced would have somewhere to go. Poll data from Portland, Seattle, and Los Angeles, among other places, reveal similarly punitive sentiments.

As the costs of criminalizing homelessness rise — billions upon billions of dollars — so does our tolerance for cruelty. Ultimately, the cost of cruelty is far more than any measure of dollars. When cruelty becomes the norm — and kicking the sick, the disabled, and the destitute when they're down is nothing if not cruel — it represents a warping of the human soul and a descent into barbarity.

Humanity is more a practice than a catechism. When we stop practicing compassion, charity, and empathy in favor of cruelty, careless waste, and self-justification, the result is a loss of humanity and civic virtue, especially when the



Graceada Park, Modesto, December 2022

most vulnerable among us are demonized and objectified as something less than human.

Those who persist in demanding solutions miss the point. Homelessness is a humanitarian crisis that must be treated as an emergency, not as a problem requiring an immediate solution. We don't refuse to treat cancer because we haven't yet isolated a cause or causes for it; instead, we do our best to mitigate its effects while continuing to look for causes and cures.

The immediate needs of the sick, disabled and destitute on our streets are the fundamental needs of humans everywhere: a safe place to lay their heads, toilets, running water, and food. We have more than enough resources to provide people with safe ground camping and these fundamental necessities. What we lack is the willingness to face facts and admit the truth: We have thousands among us who need help now, most of them through no fault of their own. In their time of need, we have chosen to punish them, not because they've done wrong, but because they have far too few advocates and there is too little political or monetary gain to be had from helping them.

Humanity is one of the most fragile outcomes of civilization, much more easily abandoned than practiced. Once we become habituated and indifferent to the suffering of the poorest and most vulnerable members of our own communities, we're in danger of losing the better parts of human nature to its dark side.

The sick, disabled, traumatized and destitute need help now, not years from now when we finally have enough housing, enough qualified health professionals, and enough infrastructure. Thus far, we've failed, not because we lack sufficient resources, but because we've wasted those resources on repeated cycles of criminalization and punishment that do nothing to reduce the numbers of people with nowhere to go.

There's time to recover from this period of cruel lunacy. The practice of charity covers a multitude of sins.

# calendar

*Help keep our readers informed. We urge people participating in an event to write about it and send their story to Connections.*

## april 2023

CHECK WITH MEETING HOSTS. ONLINE MEETINGS MAY BE PLANNED.

**MJC Science Colloquium Fall 2023** Schedule. Wednesdays 3:15 - 4:15 pm (recorded for later viewing on Science Colloquium YouTube). Science Community Center, Room 115, Modesto Junior College West Campus. Parking permit needed. **April 5:** Nicolas Tobin, MJC, Instructional Support Technician, Horticulture. **MJC Horticulture Program.** Learn about MJC's horticulture program and plant nursery, current plant trends and what goes into developing new, successful plants.

**MAPS** (Modesto Area Partners in Science: free MJC science programs on Fridays in MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 pm. **April 14: Blow Your Mind Botany.** Joe Medeiros taught college botany and ecology at MJC and Sierra College and was the first Great Valley Museum Director. Joe will review how humans are 100% dependent upon plants. He will compare our five senses to the twenty of plants and share recent research demonstrating sophisticated plant communications (within their own and between other species) and how they mutualistically partner with all other living groups to literally direct ecological stability within all sunlight-driven ecosystems.

**April - May: Plein Air Artist Susan Rossmann's** art featured at the Kruse Lucas Art Gallery, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Mondays - Fridays (holidays excepted), 525 Tully Rd., Modesto. Info: 209-529-9111.

**The Prospect Theatre** has continuing offerings: Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2022-2023-season/>

**5 WED: VIGIL: STOP ERASING PEOPLE & HISTORY,** 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm, McHenry & J. St., Modesto.

**6 THURS: Peace/Life Center ZOOM** Monthly Board Meeting, 6:30 pm. Email [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org) for login.

**8 SAT: Saturday in the Park With Poetry.** April is National Poetry Month. Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center offers free outdoor event, Noon to 1:30 pm, Davis Community Park, 2701 College Ave., Modesto. Host Salvatore Salerno, poet laureate of Modesto. See article, this issue. Visit MoSt at <https://www.mostpoetry.org/>

**16 SUN: The State Theatre** and Modesto Film Society **Casablanca.** 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/casablanca-042023/>

**22 SAT: Earth Day at Graceada Park,** Modesto, 10 am – 4 pm.

**30 SUN: Café Shalom,** Congregation Beth Shalom, 1700 Sherwood Ave., Modesto. 9 am to 1 pm. Food, tours, music, bake shop, more. Tickets: <https://www.cbsmodesto.org/whats-happening/events/>, 209-571-6060.

## LOOKING AHEAD

**May 13: Stanislaus Service Center's Equity Team presents East of Salinas.** The State Theatre, 1:00 pm. <https://thestate.org/films/stanislaus-service-centers-equity-team-presents-east-of-salinas-052023/>

**June 23-25: Peace Camp** returns!

## REGULAR MEETINGS SUNDAYS

**Dungeons and Dragons,** Noon. Central California LGBTQ+ Collaborative and Resource Center, 1202 H St., Modesto.

**Modesto Vineyard Christian Fellowship,** 10:00 am at the MODSPOT, 1220 J St. Call or text 209-232-1932, email [modestovineyard@gmail.com](mailto:modestovineyard@gmail.com); All Welcome.

**IMCV weekly Insight Meditation** and dharma talk, 8:45 am -

10:15 am, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely; donations welcome. All are welcome. For more information, please email [charlie@imcv.org](mailto:charlie@imcv.org). Our mailing address is IMCV, P.O. Box 579564, Modesto, CA 95357.

**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship** of Stanislaus County meets in person and on Zoom every Sunday at 10:30 am at 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto. Info: 209-788-3720; [www.stanuu.org](http://www.stanuu.org)

**Food Addicts Anonymous** in Recovery. Sundays 6:30 pm, 2467 Veneman Ave. Modesto. Info: Emily M., 209 480-8247.

## MONDAYS

**The Compassionate Friends,** Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter is meeting by Zoom on the second Mondays at 7:00pm. Bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are invited to participate in this support group for families whose children have died at any age, from any cause. Call 209-622-6786 or email for details: [tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com); <https://www.modestoriverbanktcf.org/>

**Suicide Loss Support Group:** Friends for Survival meets every third Monday at 7 pm. Details: Norm Andrews 209-345-0601, [nandrews6863@charter.net](mailto:nandrews6863@charter.net).

**Walk with Me,** a women's primary infertility support group and Bible study. 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm the first and third Mondays of each month. Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email [WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com](mailto:WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com) or call 209.577.1604.

**ONGOING Silver & Gold Support Group** for mental health and wellness. Catering to the needs of the LGBTQ+ Community. (Age +55). Every Monday 1pm-3pm at the Central California LGBTQ+ Collaborative, 1202 H St., Suite D Modesto. Contact Kellie Johnson, 209.918.0271 or Sandra Vidor, 209.859.4299.

## TUESDAYS

**Womxns Support Group** for Womxn in all stages of life. Join us in a safe and judgment free environment where you can give and receive support for the many issues that we struggle with as Womxn. Every Tuesday from 1 pm-2 pm at the Central California LGBTQ+ Collaborative, 1202 H St., Suite D, Modesto CA (Ages +18). Contact Sandra Vidor- 209.652.3961 or Kellie Johnson 209.918.0271

**Climate Action Justice Network**-Stanislaus meets the first Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Link- <https://tinyurl.com/CJAN-FirstTuesday>

**Teen Tuesdays** every week from June-August, 2-5 pm., **Central Valley Pride Center,** 400 12th St. Peer Support, Games & movies. Safe space for teens to socialize, work together on projects, and learn about LGBTQ history. Each week will be a little different as we want YOU (youths) to guide the direction this group will go!" Info: Maggie Strong, Political Activist Director/ GSA Liaison, [mstrong@mo pride.org](mailto:mstrong@mo pride.org), 209-284-0999.

**First Tuesday - LGBTQ+** Ages 12-14, 5-7 pm activities and support. Second Tuesday- LGBTQ+ Ages 15-17, 5-7 pm activities and support. Third Tuesday-Friends and Family, 5-7 pm Discussion and emotional support. All at Central California LGBTQ+ Collaborative and Resource Center, 1202 H St., Modesto.

**Attention Veterans:** Join us for Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am

**NAACP Meeting.** King-Kennedy Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto, 3rd Tuesday @ 6:30 pm. 209-645-1909; email: [naacp.branch1048@gmail.com](mailto:naacp.branch1048@gmail.com)

**Exploring Whiteness & Showing Up for Racial Justice** Meetings, Fourth Tuesday, monthly 7:00 p.m., Central Grace Hmong Alliance Church, 918 Sierra Dr., Modesto. Info: <https://www.facebook.com/events/247655549018387/>

**Pagan Family Social,** third Tuesdays, Golden Corral, 3737 McHenry Ave, Modesto, 6:00 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

**Tuesday Evening Funstrummers** Ukulele Jam. Songbooks provided. 6pm to 8pm, 1600 Carver Rd., Donation. 209-505-3216, [www.Funstrummers.com](http://www.Funstrummers.com).

**IMCV weekly Insight Meditation** and dharma talk, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely, donations welcome. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: [info@imcv.org](mailto:info@imcv.org)

**ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS,** Every Tuesday, 7 pm at 1320 L St., (Christ Unity Baptist Church). Info: Jeff, 527-2469.

## MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

**Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS:** Held THE FIRST WEDNESDAY of the month at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five points), 4:00-5:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 529-5750.

**MEDIA:** Listen to **KCBP 95.5 FM** Community Radio, the “Voice of the Valley” also streaming at <http://www.KCBPradio.org>

**PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING,** FIRST Thursdays, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom. Email Jim Costello for login information, [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)

**PEACE/LIFE CENTER MODESTO,** 829 13th St. Call 529-5750. We'll get back to you with current info on activities. NOTE THE CENTER'S NEW ADDRESS.

## WEDNESDAYS

**The GAP.** A place of support for Christian parents of LGBTQ+ or questioning kids every Wednesday 6:30pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church 1528 Oakdale Rd. Instagram: Thegapmodesto

**Ongoing meditation** class based on Qi Gong Principals. Practice a 3 Step Guided Meditation Process I have been doing for over a decade. Fun and Easy. JOIN ME! Donations accepted but optional. Call 209.495.6608 or email Orlando Arreygue, CMT RYT, [orlando@arreygue.com](mailto:orlando@arreygue.com)

**Merced LGBT Community Center** offers a variety of monthly meetings and written materials. Volunteers, on-site Wed-Fri, offer support. Ph: 209-626-5551. Email: [mercedboard@gay-centralvalley.org](mailto:mercedboard@gay-centralvalley.org) – 1744 G St. Suite H, Merced, CA. [www.mercedlgbtcenter.org](http://www.mercedlgbtcenter.org)

**Merced Full Spectrum** meets the second Wednesday of every month, 6 p.m. 1744 G St., Suite H, Merced <http://www.lgbtmerced.org/> Merced Full Spectrum is a division of Gay Central Valley, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. <http://www.gaycentralvalley.org/>

**GLBT Questioning Teen Support Group** (14-19 years old). 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, College Ave. Congregational Church, 1341 College Ave., Modesto, 7 – 9 pm. Safe, friendly, confidential. This is a secular, non-religious group. Info: call 524-0983.

**TRANSGENDER SUPPORT GROUP,** 2nd & 4th Wed., 7:30 to 9 pm. Info: (209) 338-0855. Email [info@stanpride.org](mailto:info@stanpride.org), or [tgsupport@stanpride.org](mailto:tgsupport@stanpride.org)

**MINDFUL MEDITATION:** Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7:30 - 9 pm. Info: Anne, 521-6977.

## THURSDAYS

**Let's Talk Coffee.** LGBTQ+ Senior (age +55) Coffee Meet up! Every Thursday @ 1 pm at Queen Bean, 1126 14th St., Modesto. Weekly social group to provide connectedness and community inclusion for LGBTQ+ Senior Citizens. Refreshments, snacks provided. Contact Steven Cullen, 559.799.0464.

**CA10 Progressive Coalition** Monthly Meeting, third Thursdays. Inclusive group of progressive activists to share resources, ideas, and information in order to support all the great organizing work happening in the Valley! Feel free to invite trusted allies. Meet-up and social hour: 5:30 pm-6:30 pm. Meeting: 6:30 pm-8:00 pm. Follow group on Facebook. Info: Tim Robertson, [tim@nvlf.org](mailto:tim@nvlf.org) **Laughter Yoga,** Every other Thursday at The Bird's Nest, 422 15th St., Modesto. The dates are February & March 7th & 21st, April 4th & 18th, May 2nd & 16th. 5:30pm-6:30pm. \$15.00 per class. To register, call or text Nicole, 209-765-8006 or visit [www.nicoleottman.com](http://www.nicoleottman.com)

**Attention Veterans:** Join us for Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am

**IMCV Grupo de Meditación en Español,** cada semana 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (edificio trasero al final del estacionamiento este de UUFSC). Ofrecido libremente, las donaciones son bienvenidas. Info: Contacto Vanessa, 209-408-6172.

**LGBTQ+ Collaborative** Meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of the month, unless noted. Evening meeting, 1pm to 2 pm, Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St., Suite 2, Modesto, CA. Information: John Aguirre at cell/text - (559) 280-3864/ e-mail: [jpmamodesto@gmail.com](mailto:jpmamodesto@gmail.com)

**Green Team** educational meetings the 3rd Thursday of each month, 10 to 11 am, Kirk Lindsey Center, 1020 10th St. Plaza, Suite 102, Modesto. [www.StanislausGreenTeam.com](http://www.StanislausGreenTeam.com)

**3rd Thursday Art Walk,** downtown Modesto, third Thursdays, 5 to 8 pm. Info: <http://www.modestoartwalk.com>

**VALLEY HEARTLAND ZEN GROUP:** every Thurs 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2310 Woodland Ave. Meditation. Newcomers welcome. Info: 535-6750 or <http://emptynestzendo.org>

**Pagan Community Meeting,** 1st Thursdays, Cafe Amore,

3025 McHenry Ave, Suite S., Modesto, 8 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

## FRIDAYS

Friday 7:30-9:30 pm (Sept thru May) **International Folk Dancing** with Village Dancers, Carnegie Art Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock \$7. No experience or partner needed. 209-480-0387 for info.

**Overcoming Depression:** small group for men & women. Every Friday, 7:15 pm. Cornerstone Community Church, 17900 Comconex Rd, Manteca, CA 95366, (209) 825-1220.

**Funstrummers:** A Fun-loving Ukulele group gets together live to practice and play. Play along with us or work up to playing out in gigs. Friday mornings, 10am to Noon at the Telle Classrooms, Trinity Presbyterian, 1600 Carver Rd., Modesto.

**Latino Emergency Council (LEC)** 3rd Fridays, 8:15 am, El Concilio, 1314 H St. Modesto. Info: Dale Butler, 522-8537.

**SIERRA CLUB: Yokuts** group. Regular meetings, third Friday, College Ave. Congregational Church, 7 pm. Info: 300-4253. Visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts> for info on hikes and events.

**MUJERES LATINAS,** last Friday, lunch meetings, Info: Cristina Llatino, 549-1831.

**HISPANIC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL,** 3rd Fridays at noon, 1314 H St., Modesto 95354. Questions? Yamilet Valladolid, [yamiletv@hotmail.com](mailto:yamiletv@hotmail.com)

## SATURDAY

**TransForward Group** meets at the Queen Bean every Saturday at 1 pm. 18+. Info: 209-408-8848.

First and Third Saturdays - **Gay Men's Group,** Noon. First and Third Saturdays- Positive Support Group for folks living with HIV. All at Central California LGBTQ+ Collaborative, 1202 H St., Suite D, Modesto. Call 209-408-8848.

**12-Step/Buddhist Meeting** starts with a 30-minute meditation and then open discussion. Held monthly every second Saturday, 4:30 to 6:00 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto at the UUFSC in Sarana (small building, rear of the east parking lot). Freely-offered donations welcome. Information: 209 606 7214.

**Free Community Drum Circle** every third Saturday, 3 pm, Deva Café, 1202 J. St., Modesto. No experience or drums necessary to participate. All levels welcome. <https://drum-love.com/>

**Refuge Recovery:** A Buddhist Approach to Recovery from Addiction. @Friends Coming of Age., 1203 Tully Rd., Ste. B., Modesto. Saturdays 8-9 am. FREE (donations accepted). Info: [RefugeRecoveryModesto@gmail.com](mailto:RefugeRecoveryModesto@gmail.com)

**Divine Feminine Gathering.** Join us for a time of ritual, song and conversation as women come together to celebrate one another and the Divine among us and within us. 3rd Saturday of the month, 3:30-5:00 p.m. Stockton, CA. Contact Rev. Erin King, 209-815-0763, [orkingenne@gmail.com](mailto:orkingenne@gmail.com)  
**So Easy ~ So Good:** Vegetarian/Vegan/Wannabe Group. Potlucks, guest speakers, field trips, activist activities, movie nights, etc. Third Saturday of every month. Info: Kathy Haynes (209) 250-9961 or email [kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com](mailto:kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com)

## DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS: Tenth of each month.

Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to Jim Costello, [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)  
Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.