

## 'A Shame for the Children,' Says Amanda Gorman

*"One parent could get my poetry banned from classrooms. And yet one country can't ban assault rifles from massacring them," noted Gorman, who recited her poem, The Hill We Climb, at President Joe Biden's inauguration.*

By **BRETT WILKINS, Common Dreams**

Amanda Gorman, the first-ever National Youth Poet Laureate, reacted Tuesday after a South Florida school banned elementary students from reading the poem she recited at President Joe Biden's 2021 inauguration following the complaint of a parent who has repeatedly espoused white supremacist and anti-Jewish views.

"I'm gutted," Gorman said in a [statement](#) posted on Twitter. "Because of one parent's complaint, my inaugural poem, [The Hill We](#)

[Climb](#), has been banned from an elementary school in Miami-Dade County, Florida."

"Book bans aren't new," she continued, "but they have been on the rise—according to the [American Library Association], 40% more books were challenged in 2022 compared to 2021."

"The majority of these censored works are by queer and non-white voices."

Common Dreams reported last month that laws passed in Republican-controlled states have led to nearly 1,500 book bans nationwide during just the first half of the 2022-23 school year. This followed a [record number of book bans](#) last year, according to the American Library Association.

"What's more, often all it takes to remove these works from our libraries and schools is a single objection," Gorman added. "And let's

be clear: Most of the forbidden works are by authors who have struggled for generations to get on bookshelves. The majority of these censored works are by queer and nonwhite voices."

While Gorman's poem can still be read by sixth, seventh, and eighth-graders at Bob Graham Education Center in Miami Lakes, students in grades K-5 are barred from reading or reciting the widely acclaimed work, which promotes unity, reflection on the past, and hope for the future of the United States.

The restriction was enacted after Daily Salinas, a mother of two students at the school, lodged a complaint challenging five works—Gorman's poem, plus The ABCs of Black History, Cuban Kids, Countries in the News Cuba, and Love to Langston—over what she claimed are references to critical race theory, "indirect hate messages," gender ideology, and indoctrination.

"One parent could get my poetry banned from classrooms. And yet one country can't ban assault rifles from massacring them," Gorman [noted](#) on Twitter.

In her complaint, Salinas—who erroneously attributed Gorman's poem to "Oprah Winfrey"—objected to pages containing two passages of The Hill We Climb.

In a Monday interview with the Miami Herald, Salinas [insisted](#) she "is not for eliminating or censoring any books," but wants materials to be age-appropriate and for students "to know the truth" about Cuba—a socialist dictatorship with a [higher literacy rate](#) than the United States.

The Herald made no mention of Salinas' ties to far-right and white supremacist groups. A [Twitter thread](#) posted Tuesday by Miami Against Fascism shows Salinas rallying with the Proud Boys, a neo-fascist group that promotes and perpetrates political violence, and [Christopher Monzon](#), who allegedly assaulted

anti-racist counterprotesters at the deadly 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Miami Against Fascism also posted video showing Salinas and members of the far-right group Moms for Liberty—a Florida-based pressure group sometimes referred to as "Klanned Karenhood" for its crusade ban books in schools across the United States—interrupting a July 2022 Miami school board meeting.

Salinas also shared social media posts promoting white supremacist and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, including [Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#).

The Miami Lakes school's restriction of Gorman's poem comes amid relentless attacks by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis—who on Wednesday [officially declared](#) his candidacy for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination—and other GOP state officials on educational freedom from kindergarten through the university level.

DeSantis has [replaced key state education officials](#) with right-wing allies who toe his "anti-woke" line, and has been accused of stoking a climate of fear in which educators have [removed books from classroom libraries](#) to avoid running afoul of bans on titles dealing with race or LGBTQ+ issues.

Notable figures who rushed to defend Gorman include Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, a Democrat, who [invited](#) the 25-year-old poet to recite The Hill We Climb before a public audience, and the ACLU, which [tweeted](#): "Schools should be fostering growth and the exchange of ideas—not preventing students from learning and understanding different perspectives."

"These unnecessary book bans join a host of other attempts to silence us," the civil liberties group added. "We must fight back."

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## Wear Orange Weekend



From **End Gun Violence Michigan**

June 2 - 4 is Wear Orange Weekend, starting with National Gun Violence Awareness Day on Friday, June 2. This movement to address gun violence started with the shooting death of teenager Hadiya Pendleton on a

Chicago playground only one week after she had marched in President Obama's second inaugural parade. Her friends chose to turn their grief into action and to commemorate her life with this movement. They chose the color orange as the color hunters wear in the woods to protect themselves and others.

Each year, we ask people to Wear Orange on the first Friday of June (this year June 2) and to join in events around the country over that weekend to honor Hadiya and the thousands of gun violence victims in our country.

So get your orange ready. Get an orange bandana or ribbon or something, and wear that. Please wear orange and encourage others to do so..

Post photos of yourself in orange and tag [#WearOrange](#) and [#EGVMI](#).

[nstreodpoShc1cca05a0f51ut075au:im5M896uaAa13M3m22y04mu0m](#)

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

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

## 38th Annual Peace Camp Registration is Open!

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.

### Peace Camp Registration

**FULL WEEKEND** 2 nights, 5 meals, workshops & activities

Adult (18+): After May 31 - \$100

Youth (4 -17): After May 31 - \$70

Child (0-3): FREE

**PARTIAL WEEKEND** 1 night, 4 meals, workshops & activities

Adult (18+): After May 31 - \$80

Youth (4 -17): After May 31 - \$50

Child (0-3): FREE

**SATURDAY DAY** 3 meals, workshops & activities

Adult (18+): After May 31 - \$45

Youth (4 -17): After May 31 - \$35

Child (0-3): FREE

**Registration:** <https://www.jotform.com/form/230625713663051>

### 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. Volunteers and campers run the camp, 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.

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 to get the latest updates, contact Megan Parravano (information provided below).

### About Camp Peaceful Pines

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.

**For more information:** Megan Parravano, 209-497-7220, [meganparravano@gmail.com](mailto:meganparravano@gmail.com)

## 5th Annual Kids Connect Community Celebration!

By **MICHELLE DUNN**, Child Support Supervisor, Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services

In celebration of Child Support Awareness Month in August, Stanislaus County Department of Child Support in partnership with United Way and Modesto Junior College invite you to participate in a FREE informational booth at the 5th Annual Kids Connect Community Celebration. The goal of this FREE family event is to highlight services provided by the local Child Support program and connect families to valuable resources in the community to assist in the future success of all children and families.

This year, the backpack giveaway for children will return (while supplies last). Due to organizations like yours, this event has succeeded in prior years as we promote Child Support Awareness Month while highlighting the many family-centered nonprofit agencies and supportive businesses throughout the community. Over 50 agencies participated in the 2022 event, including various County departments, along with approximately 650 attendees.

**Date:** Friday, July 28th  
**Time:** 4 pm – 7 pm (set up time 3 pm)  
**Location:** Modesto Junior College, 435 College Ave, Modesto

For booth participation, email [Outreach@stancodcss.org](mailto:Outreach@stancodcss.org) for a booth registration form and return it via Email or Fax by Friday, July 7, 2023, Fax: 209.556.4484. We encourage all participating organizations to include a child-friendly activity at your booth. You may also host your own prize giveaway. A table and 2 chairs will be provided per agency. The vendor area will be shaded by trees; however, please bring your own pop-up tent for guaranteed shade.

## Be informed!

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

## The Cesar Chavez Community Celebration Committee Invites You to Our Next Community Celebration

Our guest speakers will make you cry and laugh, but most important, they will inspire & empower you.

To reserve a spot or a table of 8, call Maggie Mejia at (209) 303-2664.

Table of 8: \$200.00

Table of 8, students, seniors, veterans: \$160.00

Table sponsor VIP: \$250.00. Includes name in the program and recognized by Master of Ceremony (MC).



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Working for **peace, justice**  
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# Healthy Alternatives to Violent Environments (HAVEN): Offering Safety to Those in Need Since 1977

By TOM PORTWOOD

HAVEN is a catalyst for individual empowerment and societal change: advocating for those impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, or human trafficking and working to end gender-based violence.

It was only weeks into the pandemic and people were dying by the thousands across the globe. Most of us here in the Valley hunkered down in our homes as best we could – isolation was the goal, after all.

But as society quickly locked down, May Rico recognized a looming crisis in the making for those experiencing domestic violence. Ms. Rico, the longtime Executive Director of HAVEN, understood all too well that abusers could take easily advantage of their victims under such circumstances.

“Isolation is one of the tools controlling people use to keep people under their control – and with the pandemic, the disease was doing it for them,” Ms. Rico explained recently. “All of the safety valves that someone might have had without the pandemic – like going to work or school where you could escape your abuser – all the different connections where in the past you could conceivably seek help – those were suddenly gone.”

But like so many other heroic individuals who continued to do their jobs into the teeth of the pandemic’s worst months, Ms. Rico and her staff at HAVEN never stopped providing services to those seeking shelter from their abusers – either in the agency’s own facility or in nearby hotels; and continued serving the community as comprehensively as they always had in the past, albeit with a few new technical wrinkles, such as using Zoom for counseling sessions and group therapy.

“One thing about our Rape Crisis Center,” Ms. Rico pointed out. “During the pandemic, some Rape Crisis centers in California stopped responding in person for sexual assault exams for different reasons. But our county never did. Our county continued responding to victims of rape and sexual assault by providing sexual assault exams all through the pandemic. And our advocates were walking into hospital emergency rooms alongside everyone else who was showing up for COVID treatment.”

“Remember, the hospital was a scary place to be for a while. But our advocates showed up there to meet face to face with victims, and I am very proud of them for doing that, and very proud of the program manager we had at the time for working with the hospitals to find out what their protocols were and to ensure that our staff felt comfortable in that setting. I am also grateful that hospitals continued to let us use their facilities because that wasn’t always the case in other counties in the state.”

With the pandemic seemingly now in the rear-view mirror, Ms. Rico notes that “we have gone back to mostly in-person work but with a few changes. We learned that we could serve

clients that we weren’t able to before, and are relying on technology now to provide remote counseling and remote case management. And our support groups are still running on Zoom – that’s something that the people who access support groups have expressed works for them. Even if we are out of the pandemic, it can still feel kind of scary to be in a room shoulder to shoulder for two hours with people you don’t know.”

With roots dating back to 1977, HAVEN has a long history as well as a strong philosophical commitment to adapting to the needs of our community. It has also always provided a wide array of services that are available to everyone experiencing domestic violence, sexual abuse, or human trafficking, including both adults and children. One of its core strengths lies in its adaptability to crisis, as evidenced by its performance during those bleak days when COVID changed so many old assumptions.

“I want everyone in our community to know that we are here,” Ms. Rico said, “and that we do our best to meet the needs of people who come to us – that means *everyone* who is experiencing these issues regardless of gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, or immigration status.”

“People think of us only as a shelter, but only about 12 % of our services are residential services” she continued. “Our mission statement is a good place to start, because it gives equal weight between intervention and prevention. We will never end violence if all we’re doing is working with victims. To end violence you have to do things which change the societal structures in our culture that lead to violence.”

The venerable agency recently underwent a name change to further underscore its commitment to the entire community.

The official name of the agency is now **Healthy Alternatives to Violent Environments** – although the long familiar HAVEN is the acronym the agency still goes by. Ms. Rico suggested that, following discussions with both the staff and board, “we came to the determination that we needed to change our name to something that represented the inclusivity of the populations we were trying to serve – *all those* those impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.”

Indeed, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence notes on its website that one in three women and one in four men have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner and details a plethora of other data to show how prevalent domestic violence and sexual assault are in our society.



Although only about two percent of the agency’s clients are men, Ms. Rico hopes that men will be more comfortable in accessing HAVEN’s services in the future. “It is important to understand that a man who is being abused has the same need for safety and the same need for safe space as a woman and it may be more difficult for him to reach out because of the stigma around male-gendered socialization and the expectation of being able to protect yourself,” Ms. Rico stated. “There are barriers there for men that aren’t necessarily there for women, especially if the abuser is a woman, because people will chuckle about it. If you are non-binary, or if you are Trans, you have layers and layers of barriers before you might feel safe enough to access services.”

Ms. Rico concluded by describing just how devastating the trauma of experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault can be for survivors:

“When someone experiences trauma, something about them changes - the brain is diverted from whatever path of learning or expansion or growth that it was on, and it is now dealing with this injury or threat instead – and something halts. It changes something when people experience trauma or violence. And for children, whom we think of as being so resilient - what would they have been like if they hadn’t experienced that trauma so early in their lives? And if we are talking about one in three women and one in four men experiencing that type of trauma, that type of hijacking, that type of diversion - that’s a lot of people. We’ll never know what the next day might have brought them that is now forever changed.”

“I want community members to know that we are always there for them - and how important their support is to the work that we do. We need that community support if we are to be the organization our community needs us to be.”

**If you need help:**

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

**Call the HAVEN office at (209) 524-4331**  
(Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm)

**Or call HAVEN’s 24-hour crisis line at:**  
(209) 577-5980 Toll-free 1-888-45HAVEN

## The Hill We Climb

When day comes we ask ourselves,  
'where can we find light in this never-ending shade,'  
the loss we carry,  
a sea we must wade?  
We've braved the belly of the beast.  
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,  
and the norms and notions  
of what just is  
isn't always just-ice.  
And yet the dawn is ours  
before we knew it,  
somehow we do it.  
Somehow we've weathered and  
witnessed  
a nation that isn't broken  
but simply unfinished.  
We, the successors of a country  
and a time  
where a skinny Black girl  
descended from slaves and raised  
by a single mother  
can dream of becoming president  
only to find herself reciting for  
one.  
And yes, we are far from  
polished,  
far from pristine,  
but that doesn't mean we are  
striving to form a union that is perfect.  
We are striving to forge a union with purpose,  
to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors,  
characters, and  
conditions of man.  
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us  
but what stands before us.  
We close the divide because we know, to put our future  
first,  
we must first put our differences aside.  
We lay down our arms  
so we can reach out our arms  
to one another.  
We seek harm to none and harmony for all.  
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:  
That even as we grieved, we grew;

that even as we hurt, we hoped;  
that even as we tired, we tried;  
that we'll forever be tied together, victorious,  
not because we will never again know defeat  
but because we will never again sow division.  
Scripture tells us to envision  
that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree  
and no one shall make them afraid.



If we're to live up to our own time  
then victory won't lie in the blade  
but in all the bridges we've made.  
That is the promise to glade,  
the hill we climb  
if only we dare it,  
because being American is more  
than a pride we inherit —  
it's the past we step into  
and how we repair it.  
We've seen a force that would  
shatter our nation  
rather than share it  
would destroy our country if it  
meant delaying democracy.  
And this effort very nearly  
succeeded.

But while democracy can be periodically delayed,  
it can never be permanently defeated.  
In this truth,  
in this faith we trust,  
for while we have our eyes on the future,  
history has its eyes on us.  
This is the era of just redemption  
we feared at its inception.  
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs  
of such a terrifying hour  
but within it we found the power  
to author a new chapter,  
to offer hope and laughter to ourselves.  
So while once we asked,  
'how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe,'  
now we assert,  
'how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?'  
We will not march back to what was  
but move to what shall be:  
a country that is bruised but whole,  
benevolent but bold,  
fierce, and free.  
We will not be turned around  
or interrupted by intimidation  
because we know our inaction and inertia  
will be the inheritance of the next generation.  
Our blunders become their burdens.  
But one thing is certain:  
If we merge mercy with might,  
and might with right,

then love becomes our legacy  
and change our children's birthright.  
So let us leave behind a country  
better than the one we were left with.  
Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,  
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.  
We will rise from the gold-limned hills of the west,  
we will rise from the windswept northeast  
where our forefathers first realized revolution,  
we will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern  
states,  
we will rise from the sunbaked south.  
We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover  
in every known nook of our nation and  
every corner called our country,  
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,  
battered and beautiful.  
When day comes we step out of the shade,  
afame and unafraid.  
The new dawn blooms as we free it.  
For there is always light,  
if only we're brave enough to see it,  
if only we're brave enough to be it.

## 'A Shame for the Children,' Says Amanda Gorman

from page 1

In her statement Tuesday, Gorman explained that "I wrote *The Hill We Climb* so that all young people could see themselves in a historical moment."

"Ever since, I've received countless letters and videos from children inspired by *The Hill We Climb* to write their own poems," she said. "Robbing children of the chance to find their voices in literature is a violation of their right to free thought and free speech."

"What can we do? We must speak out and have our voices heard," Gorman stressed. "That's why my publisher, Penguin Random House, joined PEN America, authors, and community members in a lawsuit in Florida's Escambia County to challenge book restrictions like these."

"Together this is a hill we won't just climb, but a hill we will conquer."

"Together this is a hill we won't just climb, but a hill we will conquer," Gorman asserted.

Gorman was referring to a lawsuit [filed last week](#) claiming Escambia County School Board book bans are unconstitutional. (Read more on page 11)

"It's quite apparent what [book bans] are about: It's an effort to erase certain segments of our population, to marginalize particular stories, to prevent kids from seeing themselves in the books they find on the shelf," PEN America CEO Suzanne Nossel [said](#) during an interview on MSNBC last week.

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## Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center Announces Stanislaus County's Inaugural Youth Poet Laureate

**Faith A. Delgado** of Turlock, a junior at Pitman High School, was selected as the Inaugural Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate. She will serve a one-year term, participate in several engagements throughout the year, and receive a \$500 honorarium. **Janelle Yulo**, a junior at Modesto's Johansen High School, and **Zoe Byron**, a freshman at Oakdale High School, were both finalists.

"I am thrilled that the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center created this program to honor youth poets in our community. Faith Delgado is an excellent choice as our first Youth Poet Laureate," shared Gillian Wegener, MoSt Poetry Center president. The Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate is a program of the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center (MoSt Poetry), in partnership with Stanislaus County Office of Education, Stanislaus County Library, Modesto Junior College's School of Language Arts and Education, and Stanislaus Library Foundation.

This program celebrates youth voices that are committed to artistic excellence, civic engagement, and social impact. The Youth Poet Laureate position has been recognized by the

Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors with a county resolution for National Poetry Month acknowledging this new role.

In the inaugural year of the Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate program, we received an encouraging response of 15 applicants from students across the county. Student applicants represent the communities of Modesto, Oakdale, and Turlock. City of Modesto Poet Laureate Salvatore Salerno served as a judge along with fellow community members and champions for poetry: Dr. Theresa Rojas, poet, artist, and MJC professor; Amy Bultena, artist and SCOE Arts Coordinator; Jessica Geiss, Children's Librarian at Salida Regional Branch of the Stanislaus County Library; Angela Drew, poet, author, and spoken word artist; Dr. Gillian Wegener, Assistant Superintendent for Oakdale Joint Unified High School District and City of Modesto past poet laureate; and Mariah Ring, Lead Youth Support Specialist, Stanislaus County Youth Empowerment Project STAR Program.

Applicants for the Youth Poet Laureate program submitted an application, an artistic statement/biography indicating civic engagement and leadership background, and original poems. A panel of judges critiqued this work on content, voice, and craft. Leadership and performance were also considered in determining the young person who will represent our communities as Youth Poet Laureate.

Please join Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center in celebrating Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate Faith A. Delgado at an event at the Stanislaus County Library this summer, date TBA. You will hear original poems from the finalists and meet the newly selected Youth Poet Laureate. To learn more, visit [www.mostpoetry.org/contests/ypl2023/](http://www.mostpoetry.org/contests/ypl2023/)



## Graffiti Car Art Exhibit

**Kruse Lucas Art Gallery** is hosting a **Graffiti Car Art Exhibit** to celebrate the upcoming Graffiti Parade and Car Shows. The exhibit will feature the photography of **Rick Raef**. Rick began photographing local Graffiti events to capture the celebration of California's car culture. All proceeds from the sales of his work will be donated to the Graffiti Classic Car Museum.

His work will be on exhibit June, July, and August at Kruse Lucas Imports, 525 Tully Road, Modesto, 9 a.m.- 5 p.m., Mondays through Fridays except holidays. 209-529-9111.

Friday, June 9th is the 2023 Graffiti Car Parade in downtown Modesto. The Festival Car Show will be Saturday and Sunday, June 10th & 11th at Modesto Junior College West.



## What is the Climate Justice Youth Summit?

By **BIANCA G. LOPEZ**, Co-Founder/Project Director, Valley Improvement Projects (VIP)

Our youth summit is a youth-led event organized by our Climate Justice Action Now (CJAN) youth coordinators. The Summit will take place in Modesto and is open to all Stanislaus County youth ages 12-24 on **Friday, July 28th, 2023**. Our goal is to inspire young people in Stanislaus County to discuss local, climate, and environmental justice issues while highlighting and uplifting youth voices and providing them with tools to directly affect change at a local level.

The youth summit will include workshops, entertainment, collective art projects, food, leadership opportunities, friendly contests, and more. We anticipate 100 participants!



## How can you help make this event a success?

Make sure the youth in your life don't miss out on this opportunity! Our youth organizers are still seeking local support to make this a fun and successful event. There are various ways in which you can support our efforts, please see the list below for details. Donations are tax-deductible.

- Volunteer!
- Connect us to free fruit or other healthy food items.
- Make a monetary donation.
- Donate eco-friendly swag to give to all participants (100)
- Host a fun activity during Lunch (makers space, planting, art, music, etc.
- Send us literature or flyers for youth activities you would like us to share with our participants (100 copies).

Email: [valleyimprovementprojects@gmail.com](mailto:valleyimprovementprojects@gmail.com); Web: [valleyimprovementprojects.org](http://valleyimprovementprojects.org)



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# Q&A: Understanding Homelessness in California & What Can Be Done

By SARA KIMBERLIN and MONICA DAVALOS,  
[The California Budget & Policy Center](#), March 2023.

Having a place to call home is the most basic foundation for health and well-being no matter one's age, gender, race, or zip code. But many thousands of individuals in California each year experience homelessness and its destructive effects. Polling shows that [Californians continue to rank homelessness as one of the most serious challenges](#) facing the state, and policymakers have paid increasing attention to this issue in recent years. Understanding the scale, impact, and drivers of homelessness in California can help guide effective policy solutions and action to end this crisis.

## How does homelessness affect the people who experience it?

Homelessness has devastating effects on the individuals who experience it because having a home is a basic necessity to maintain health, work, school, and dignified living conditions. Lack of stable housing seriously disrupts individuals' ability to obtain or keep a job or to make sure that children are able to attend and focus on school. Homelessness exposes individuals to serious health risks and makes it difficult to take care of one's health and access health care, and therefore homelessness can exacerbate chronic or acute health conditions. In fact, adults experiencing homelessness often [have health problems and difficulty with daily living activities that are more typical of people 20 years older](#). Unhoused individuals have also faced serious [health risks throughout the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

This devastation to people's lives is why homelessness in California is a crisis that requires urgent attention by federal, state, and local leaders.

The stress of homelessness can also seriously harm individuals' mental well-being. Research shows that the trauma of experiencing homelessness can cause people to [develop mental health problems for the first time](#) and can worsen existing behavioral health challenges. Longer time spent without a home is linked to higher levels of mental distress and more damage from coping behaviors like substance use.

This devastation to people's lives is why homelessness in California is a crisis that requires urgent attention by federal, state, and local leaders.

## How many people in California experience homelessness?

When Californians experience homelessness, urgent action is needed, because no one should be without a home. According to the most recent point-in-time data, as of January 2020 [there were 161,548 people in California experiencing homelessness](#) on a given night. The majority of these individuals – about 70% – were unsheltered, meaning that they were living on the street, in their vehicle, or in other places not meant to serve as homes.

Another way to understand how many Californians experience homelessness is to consider how many people received homelessness services (like shelter or outreach) over the course of a full year. [More than 270,000 homeless individu-](#)

[als across the state received some kind of services](#) during calendar year 2021, and the total number receiving services likely increased the following year. This number is larger than the point-in-time number because many people who fall into homelessness at some time during the year return to stable housing relatively quickly, and the point-in-time count only captures the number of individuals experiencing homelessness on one night of the year.

## Who experiences homelessness in California?

People of all ages and backgrounds fall into homelessness, and Californians experience homelessness in every county of the state. The majority of unhoused individuals are single adults, but an important share are also families with children and unaccompanied and parenting youth. A substantial share of single adults experiencing homelessness in California are older adults.

There are deep racial inequities in who experiences homelessness in California, with individuals who are [Black facing a greatly disproportionate risk](#) of homelessness, as well as American Indian or Alaska Native and Pacific Islander individuals. The number of Latinx Californians experiencing homelessness also increased substantially in the most recent point-in-time count. These disparities reflect the effects of [structural racism and inequitable treatment and access to opportunities](#) in education, employment, health, the justice system, and other domains.

In addition, there are disparities in experiences of homelessness by gender identity and sexual orientation. In terms of gender, the majority of unhoused Californians are male. Individuals who identify as [transgender or gender-nonconforming are more likely than cisgender individuals to be unsheltered when they experience homelessness](#). Among youth, those who identify as [LGBTQ+ are especially likely to experience homelessness](#), in many cases as a direct result of family rejection of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

## MORE IN THIS SERIES

See our [5 Facts: Who is Experiencing Homelessness in California?](#) to learn more about California's diverse unhoused population.

## What are the key drivers of homelessness in California?

Many systemic challenges rooted in classism, racism, and sexism that harm individuals and families put people at greater risk of becoming homeless at some point in their lifetime.

The severe shortage of affordable housing — particularly housing that is affordable to people with the lowest incomes — is the number-one driver of California's homelessness crisis. For Californians with the very lowest incomes — those categorized as “extremely low-income” under the definition used for most state and federal housing policies — there were [only 23 housing units that were affordable and available for every 100 renter households](#) as of 2020. Statewide, an esti-



California Budget  
& Policy Center

estimated [1.2 million new affordable homes are needed by 2030](#) to meet the housing needs of Californians with low incomes.

Because affordable housing is in such short supply in California, many [renters with low incomes must pay much more than they can afford](#) for housing, so that even a minor financial emergency can cause them to be unable to cover the rent and face the risk of eviction and homelessness. Black and Latinx renters are especially likely to face unaffordable housing costs, reflecting the effects of explicitly and implicitly racist policies and practices in housing, employment, and other arenas.

Other factors have also contributed to California's homelessness crisis, including the [decades-long trend of stagnant wages](#) for lower-wage workers and [past failure to fund adequate mental and behavioral health services](#) to meet needs in the community. The shortage of deeply affordable housing, however, is a fundamental driver of the crisis.

## What public systems and supports can address the needs of people experiencing homelessness or play a role in preventing homelessness?

Many different local, state and federal public systems and services intersect with homelessness in important ways.

[Nearly 1 in 8 Californians did not have enough resources to meet their basic needs](#), according to the most recent California Poverty Measure data. This reflects the high cost of living in many parts of the state. In addition, the share in poverty is expected to increase for 2022, as pandemic-era public supports like the expanded federal Child Tax Credit expired. For all individuals experiencing homelessness, public supports that help people meet basic needs are important both to prevent and exit homelessness. These supports include but are not limited to: cash supports like SSI/SSP and CalWORKs, refundable tax credits like earned income tax credits (EITCs) and child tax credits, nutrition assistance programs like CalFresh and WIC, and Medi-Cal health coverage.

While only a minority of unhoused individuals struggle with serious mental health or substance use disorders, [behavioral health services](#) are vital supports for maintaining stable housing over the long term for those individuals.

Among youth, abusive or neglectful family situations can cause young people to leave their homes and become homeless, pointing to a role for the child welfare system in preventing and addressing youth homelessness.

Domestic violence can also be the trigger that pushes individuals into homelessness, especially women and mothers with children. Services that directly address the experiences and needs of domestic violence survivors are important to prevent and address homelessness for these individuals.

The justice system has an impact on many unhoused individuals as well. This is both because of [laws that criminalize homelessness](#) (e.g., laws that make public camping punishable by citation or arrest) and because individuals who have

a conviction record or are reentering the community after incarceration face [daunting barriers to securing and maintaining stable housing](#). These factors compound challenges in helping individuals find safe, affordable housing.

### What are effective, evidence-based ways to address homelessness?

Extensive research shows there are several evidence-based approaches that are effective in helping people successfully exit homelessness and maintain stable housing.

For all individuals experiencing homelessness, interventions that use a [“housing first” approach have a strong track](#)

[record of success](#). Housing first — as its name suggests — focuses on moving people into permanent housing as the first priority, before focusing on meeting other needs or connecting with other services.

For the minority of individuals who are chronically homeless and have serious physical or mental health challenges, [supportive housing](#) — or permanent housing paired with case management and support services — is an approach that [research shows is effective in enabling individuals to exit homelessness](#) and achieve housing stability. About one-third of Californians experiencing homelessness on a given night are chronically homeless with serious health challenges.

Having a place to call home is the most basic foundation for health and well-being no matter one’s age, gender, race, or zip code.

Housing vouchers, shallow rental subsidies, and targeted programs for specific subpopulations — such as veterans, homeless youth, or domestic violence survivors — are [additional tools to help individuals successfully return to stable housing](#).

Interim housing, like motel stays, emergency shelters, and tiny homes, can also be necessary short-term strategies to get people off the street so that they are not unsheltered. These options can contribute to solving homelessness if coupled with services that focus on moving individuals into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

### State funding to address homelessness has recently increased, but the number of people experiencing homelessness did not decrease. Why is that the case?

Effectively addressing homelessness requires a system of housing and services with enough capacity and investment to meet the needs of all Californians who are experiencing homelessness in every region of the state. Building that capacity requires investing in proven effective approaches at a scale that meets the need — and then providing reliable ongoing funding so that effective efforts can be sustained. Partnership between the state, federal, and local governments is important to mobilize the resources needed for impact at scale.

California first dedicated significant state dollars to address homelessness [only a few years ago](#), and state investments have primarily consisted of one-time funding. The 2021-22 state budget first included a [multi-year commitment of \\$1 billion annually to support local homelessness efforts](#), with intent to continue “based on performance and need.” In addition, there were [significant investments](#) in housing supports for special populations, such as families with children, and support to acquire and develop housing specifically to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. The 2022-23 state budget [further built on these investments](#), including maintaining the \$1 billion support for local homelessness efforts and incorporating \$1 billion to expand bridge housing for individuals experiencing homelessness with serious mental illness.

These recent increases in state funding have not been accompanied by a drop in the number of Californians experiencing homelessness. Why? The COVID-19 pandemic is a key factor. Both health and economic effects of the pandemic

have directly affected homelessness services and put more individuals at risk of homelessness.

At the start of the pandemic, to protect the [health of vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness](#) — and public health more broadly — policymakers and service providers pivoted remarkably quickly to implement [new models](#) of non-congregate shelter, with California leading the way in developing innovative new approaches. Launching these new models required significant up-front investment of time and funding, which was necessary in the short-term to protect the health of individuals, and is expected to produce sustained payoff by building a [safer and more effective long-term model for interim housing](#).

At the same time, the economic effects of the pandemic have put more Californians at risk of falling into homelessness. Since the start of the pandemic, [rents have increased significantly](#). Record-high inflation more generally has pinched household budgets, and [Californians with the lowest incomes have been hit the hardest](#).

Given these significant pandemic headwinds, the recent increases in state funding to address homelessness have likely played several vital roles. These include preventing many unhoused Californians from experiencing severe health effects or dying from COVID-19; preventing a substantially larger increase in the number of Californians experiencing homelessness; and building California’s long-term capacity to address homelessness more effectively.

When addressing a complex challenge like homelessness — particularly in the shadow of a global pandemic — [progress takes time, and sustained commitment by policymakers is critical](#). Maintaining and building on recent state budget investments to address homelessness, to meet the full scale of need, can enable California to achieve a functional end to homelessness. The experience of homelessness for Californians would then be rare, brief, and non-recurring for individuals and across communities.

At the same time, the widespread shortage of affordable permanent housing continues to drive Californians into homelessness. As a result, it is also critical to invest in expanding the state’s supply of affordable housing, especially rental housing affordable to households with the lowest incomes. [Both housing development and tenant-based rent subsidies can play a role](#) in making more housing available that is deeply affordable.

Bottom line: Ending homelessness is possible, but persistence is required. There are many opportunities for the state to leverage its resources to ensure all Californians have a home.

Support for this report was provided by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

[The California Budget & Policy Center](#) is a nonpartisan research and analysis nonprofit committed to advancing public policies that improve the lives of Californians who are denied opportunities to share in the state’s wealth and deserve the dignity and support to lead thriving lives in our communities. 1107 9th Street, Suite 310, Sacramento, CA 95814. (916) 444-0500

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# Aileen Jaffa Memorial Youth Poetry Contest Winners 2023

By LYNN M. HANSEN, Letters Chair,  
Modesto Branch of NLAPW

On May 13, 2023, the Modesto Branch of The National League of American Pen Women (NLAPW) in collaboration with Modesto/Stanslaus Poetry Center (MoSt) announced the Aileen Jaffa Memorial Youth Poetry Contest winners and hosted a celebration reading at the Carnegie Center for the Arts in Turlock, California. This yearly contest is conducted in memory of Aileen Jaffa, a long-time Pen Women member.

Contest Chair Lynn M. Hansen received entries from students enrolled in Kindergarten through Highschool in Stanislaus County. Student winners read their poems to an audience of admiring parents, friends and teachers. Cash awards for First, Second, and Third prize certificates as well as Honorable Mention Certificates were provided by MoSt Poetry Center while two grand prize cash awards were provided by the Modesto Branch of NLAPW. The Grand Prize Winner for grades 7-12 was Lauren Bowman, grade 12, for her poem "Phosphenes," and the Grand Prize Winner for grades K-6 was Ellie Bowman, grade 6, for her poem "Tempestuous Waters." Modesto Branch President Lisa Bruk presented the grand prize winners with certificates and cash prizes.



**Left: Grand Prize Winners L to R: Louise Kantro, VP for NLAPW, Modesto Branch; Ellie Bowman K-6 Grand Prize Winner; Lauren Bowman, 7-12 Grand Prize Winner; Lynn M. Hansen, Aileen Jaffa Youth Poetry Contest Chair for MoSt Poetry Center**

**Bottom: All Aileen Jaffa Poetry Contest Winners**

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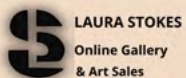
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## Gun Violence Demonstration

By CAROLE STARK

**Date:** Thursday, June 8

**When:** 10:00 a.m.

**Where:** Representative Tom McClintock's office, 1020 15th St. Modesto.

**Contact:** Carole Stark

Tom McClintock will not be there, but we will speak with his staff. He is a heavy lift since he is not in support and thinks criminals are the problem and that they can get guns despite



laws; therefore, law-abiding folks are at great risk. Therefore, no ban. We need to pressure him.

Bring friends. Wear orange since June is Gun Violence Survivor Awareness Month and is the first anniversary of Uvalde and Buffalo. Let me know if anyone is a survivor or knows someone and would feel comfortable speaking. I can bring 2 people in with me when we meet with staff. We are also demonstrating in support of the national sit-in in D.C. that week.





Poet Bonita Gill:  
Bringing Humor,  
So Much More To  
Her Poetry

A Gathering of Voices is featuring the work of Bonita Gill for the first time in this issue of Stanislaus Connections. We are very pleased that she has shared several of her fine poems below.

When I was young, I sometimes wrote poetry but was always more interested in painting. This was until I joined a writer’s group in the Bay Area. Since moving to Glencoe in Calaveras County, where I and my husband have lived for the last twenty-four years, I have joined writing groups and found I am not sure which I enjoy more, my painting or my writing. It does seem, though, that I write more than I paint.

I began to attend writer’s conferences held by writers and poets, including MoSt’s yearly poetry conference, which I look forward to all year, writing for, entering the competition, and loving seeing my poem included in the chapbook.

I particularly enjoy writing humor, current events, politics, people in the news and history, and stories. I often sign my poems and stories B. Gill or bee-gee (if I hope that a particular piece is humorous), but I am called Bonnie or Bonita. I have a BA in Art from San Francisco State University.



gratitude list  
30 things

- 1. spell cheque
- 2. dictionary
- 3. Thanksgiving
- 4. turkeys eating
- 5. dogs and cats
- 6. come and go
- 7. doing the work
- 8. weep and moan
- 9. doctors/money
- 10. drugs/pain
- 11. coffee/Ambien
- 12. once again
- 13. grudges/crushes
- 14. loss of hope
- 15. tissue/tears
- 16. growing old
- 17. porch swing squeaks
- 18. crickets sing
- 19. loneliness/longing
- 20. understanding
- 21. long time
- 22. day ends
- 23. failure/resurrection
- 24. begin again.
- 25. Needs be–
- 26. A quiet tongue,
- 27. a deaf ear,
- 28. a blind eye,
- 29. memories.
- 30. hello/goodbye

b gill

A View of a Review

It doesn’t get any better than this,  
thought Graham Greene  
as Nanny placed the dead pug  
below his feet into the pram.

If he could have spoken,  
he may have asked  
“Is that all there is?”

Since he could not, he grew.  
First into a boy, and then into a man.  
He never stopped to tell his parents  
that he had not asked to be born.

Nightshade, aspirin– suicide  
would have been his drugs of choice  
but even Russian roulette was doomed.  
The gun only contained blanks–

That he was manic as the Stones  
were to sing about more than  
a half-century later, was supplemented  
with bennies, alcoholism, and sleeping pills.  
“These will do the trick!”, he tried to think.

He consumed ‘great vats of alcohol’–  
the Country’s drug of choice, and:  
while in Vietnam, opium. Loads.  
And sex.

But we won’t go there.  
As author, Richard G. (no relation) said–  
“He said it wasn’t his fault.” He was  
after all afflicted with the terrible  
‘bipolar boredom.’

In adrenaline addiction, perhaps  
he indulged in the excitement of war.  
The Mau-Maus were simply  
a must-see. Crocodiles were a big plus  
and leper colonies, ‘spot-on.’

In Catholicism Graham found  
the drug of ‘normalcy’.  
It was, I feel, a sure sign that  
he was crazy. It was an *artsy*  
thing to do, at the time, and quite  
*the* fad– biting the ‘pope’s nose’.

As an unconfident atheist of  
Roman Catholic dregs–  
obsessed by sin, he finally made  
the cover of *Time* magazine  
with his biographic article titled  
*Adultery Can Lead to Sainthood.*

Well. How *novel* for our hero  
to end up with two wives  
he must kill himself over.  
Eternity in hell will be  
a cheap price to pay, in his well  
known novel, *The Heart of  
the Matter.*

B. Gill  
March 29, 2021

This poem was written just slightly  
tongue in cheek after reading a  
review of Richard Greene’s new biography  
of Graham Greene titled *The Unquiet  
Englishman*

The Blood He Deems So Sweet

Perhaps bloodletting became unfashionable around the time when doctors realized it was a good idea to wash their hands.	from the surgery, (alas), before he strangely incised Jonathan Strange.	Childe Harold & his sister Claire did not produce good humours on such occasions.	was brought forth forth to tidy the whole bloody thing.	of dissipation’?”  Aye, Horatio– <i>let not</i> thy blood in sorrow but gratitude, that ye haf drunk s’ many pints that ye may give.
Curious as it seemed, bloodletting <i>remained</i> fashionable as Gilbert Norrell, (gentleman) needed <i>not</i> to wash his hands– contaminated though they were by cadaverous germs	Of course, back then, no one had heard of germs. The sight of the lancet or leech was not mesmerizing. It seemed to only induce weeping, especially in children. The procedure had become <i>too much</i> of a good thing.	Father & Mother tried to soothe the children with gentle caresses– to no avail.	Byron tsked-tsked. “Thou art the epitome of <i>Namby-Pamby</i> – he said, <i>Childe Harold</i> though thou be.” (And answering himself since no one else did), he said:	B. Gill September 29, 2021
		Calamity became actuality when the leech	“I say– what would young Charlotte think? Be ye ne ‘satiated with the pursuits	



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

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## PROGRAMS

**Sunday Cruising** with your host, DeeJayRig! Oldies hits from 1959 to 1999 – Sundays, 5:00 p.m.

**Faithful Fridays** – inspirational music and thoughts – 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.

**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/kcbpwotv> and on Spotify.

**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)

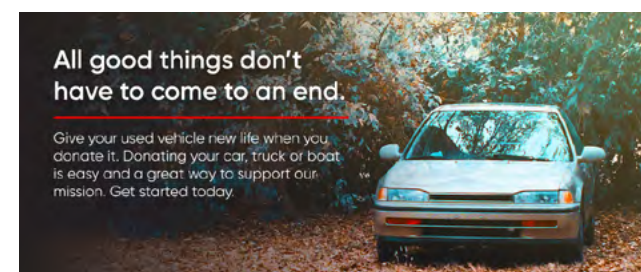
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# Pen America Files Lawsuit Against Florida School District Over Unconstitutional Book Bans

## Lawsuit Asserts Escambia County School Board Unlawfully Removes or Restricts Access to Books on Race, Racism and LGBTQ Identities.

(PENSACOLA, FL) — Free expression organization [PEN America](#), alongside publisher Penguin Random House, authors, and parents of children affected by the unconstitutional book bans carried out by Florida's Escambia County School District and School Board, [filed suit](#) today in federal court asking for books to be returned to school library shelves where they belong.

Ensuring that students have access to books on a wide range of topics and expressing a diversity of viewpoints supports a core function of public education, preparing students to be thoughtful and engaged citizens. In contravention of these basic principles, the lawsuit alleges, Escambia County has set out to exclude certain ideas from their school libraries by removing or restricting books, some of which have been on the shelves for years—even decades. This lawsuit brings together authors whose books have been banned, parents and students in the district who cannot access the books, and a publisher in a first-of-its-kind challenge to unlawful censorship.

According to the lawsuit, the school board's [removal and restriction of access](#) to books discussing race, racism, and LGBTQ identities, against the recommendations of the district review committee charged with evaluating book challenges, violates the First Amendment. By ignoring these recommendations, the school district made clear that its interests are in censoring certain ideas and viewpoints, not pedagogy, and that it is willing to allow an extremist minority to substitute its political agenda for the judgment of educators and parents.

The lawsuit further contends that the school district and school board are violating the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution because the books being singled out are disproportionately books by non-white and/or LGBTQ authors, and often address themes or topics related to race or LGBTQ identity.

"Children in a democracy must not be taught that books are dangerous. The freedom to read is guaranteed by the constitution," said Suzanne Nossel, CEO of PEN America. "In Escambia County, state censors are spiriting books off shelves in a deliberate attempt to suppress diverse voices. In a nation built on free speech, this cannot stand. The law demands that the Escambia County School District put removed or restricted books back on library shelves where they belong."

"The targeted book removals

we are seeing in Escambia County are blatantly unconstitutional attempts to silence and stigmatize," said Nadine Farid Johnson, counsel and Managing Director of PEN America Washington and Free Expression Programs. "The government should not foster censorship by proxy, allowing one person to decide what ideas are out of bounds for all."

"Books have the capacity to change lives for the better, and students in particular deserve equitable access to a wide range of perspectives. Censorship, in the form of book bans like those enacted by Escambia County, are a direct threat to democracy and our constitutional rights," said Nihar Malaviya, CEO of Penguin Random House. "We stand by our authors, their books, and the teachers, librarians, and parents who champion free expression. We are proud to join forces with our longtime partner PEN America."

The authors involved in the suit, all of whom have either already had their books removed by the district and/or restricted from student access, include author and children's book illustrator Sarah Brannen, young adult fiction authors David Levithan, George M. Johnson and Ashley Hope Pérez, and children's book author Kyle Lukoff.

"Young readers in Escambia schools and across the nation deserve a complete and honest education, one that provides them with full access in libraries to a wide range of literature that reflects varied viewpoints and that explores the diversity of human experiences," said Ashley Hope Pérez, author of *Out of Darkness*, one of the books targeted by the school district. "As a former public high school English teacher, I know firsthand how important libraries are. For many young people, if a book isn't in their school library, it might as well not exist."

Plaintiffs Lindsay Durtschi and Ann Novakowski are parents of children who attend Escambia County schools, seeking to ensure their children have access to the books they wish to read and that they are exposed to different viewpoints and experiences so that they will be better prepared to engage with people who are different from them.

"Without diverse representation in literature in school libraries and inclusive dialogue in the classroom, we are doing irreparable harm to the voices and safety of students in Florida," said Lindsay Durtschi, an Escambia County parent and plaintiff. "Our children need the adults in their lives to stand up for the promise of inclusion and equity."

The plaintiffs are represented in the lawsuit by [Ballard Spahr LLP](#) and [Protect Democracy](#).

For the past two years, PEN America has tracked the growth of a nationwide educational censorship campaign to impose ideological control over the freedom to read, learn, and think. This campaign — dubbed the "Ed Scare" by PEN America — is evident in the rapid spread and passage of [educational gag orders](#) and the unprecedented rise of [book bans](#). Since January 2021, 306 educational gag order bills have been introduced in 45 different states, and 22 have become law in 16 states. And beginning in the 2021-22 school year, book bans have become an increasingly common feature of public schools, toppling 4,000 individual bans from July 2021-December 2022.

### About PEN America

PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect open expression in the United States and worldwide. We champion the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world. Our mission is to unite writers and their allies to celebrate creative expression and defend the liberties that make it possible. Learn more at [pen.org](#).

Contacts: Suzanne Trimel, [STrimel@PEN.org](mailto:STrimel@PEN.org), 201-247-5057; Jonny Levenfeld, [jlivenfeld@westendstrategy.com](mailto:jlevenfeld@westendstrategy.com); (202) 704-4535

## Will California Realize Reparations to Its Black Residents?

By SONALI KOLHATKAR

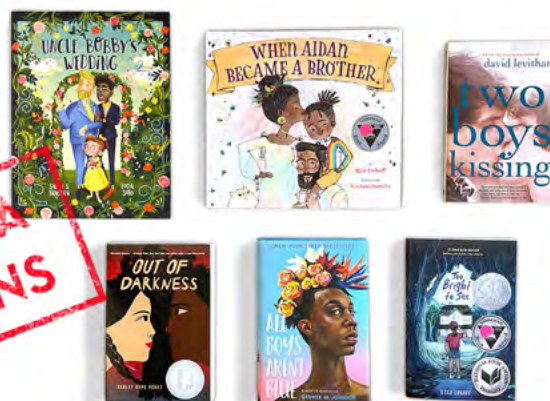
The California Reparations Task Force is readying its final report to the state legislature by July 1st. California lawmakers in 2020 passed AB 3121, establishing this first-of-its-kind task force to determine the scope of harm and potential for redress to the state's Black residents. The group of nine spent two years conducting hearings and gathering testimony.

One member of the task force, Lisa Holder, told YES! Magazine in 2021 that the group's goal was to make "evidence-based recommendations" drawn from two years of gathering testimony and documenting the harms arising from "the original systems of oppression, like slavery and Jim Crow segregation, and the continuing and ongoing systems of oppression that we're seeing in institutional racism and structural racism."

The task force is sending its interim report, which includes suggested financial compensation, to the state legislature for debate and approval.

Holder, who is President of the Equal Justice Society, spoke with YES! Racial Justice Editor Sonali Kolhatkar about the report in an interview on *Rising Up With Sonali*.

[Read the story.](#)



STAND WITH THE BANNED  
OF ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FL

PEN America, et al. v. Escambia County School District, et al., 2023.



# calendar

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

## june 2023

**MJC Science Colloquium** Fall 2024 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. TBA

**MAPS** (Modesto Area Partners in Science: free MJC science programs on Fridays in MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 pm. Fall schedule TBA.

**Kruse Lucas Art Gallery** hosts a Graffiti Car Art Exhibit featuring the photography of Rick Raef. All proceeds will be donated to the Graffiti Classic Car Museum. Kruse Lucas Imports, 525 Tully Rd., Modesto, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays except holidays. 209-529-9111.

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

**7 WED: VIGIL – SAVE DEMOCRACY**, 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm, McHenry & J. St., Modesto.

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

**8 THURS: Gun Violence Demonstration**, 10:00 a.m. Representative Tom McClintock's office, 1020 15th St. Modesto. Wear orange. Contact: Carole Stark, (209) 341-9204.

**9 FRI: 2023 Graffiti Car Parade**, downtown Modesto.

**11 SAT: Graffiti Festival Car Show**, Modesto Junior College West.

**18 SUN: The State Theatre** and Modesto Film Society present Matinee. 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/matinee-062023/>

## LOOKING AHEAD

**June 23-25: Peace Camp** returns. Registration information on p.2

## ONGOING

**Great Valley Museum** of Natural History: Classes for children. Museum exhibits and store open Tues. to Fri., 9 am to 4:30 pm. Info: 575-6196. Call for info about classes.

**Mistlin Gallery:** Exhibits by local artists; home of the Stanislaus Arts Council. Visit [stanislausarts.org](http://stanislausarts.org) for schedule and information. Open Tues. - Sat.

**A.R.T.S. Educational Resource Center:** All things recycled free arts materials for teachers, scout leaders, childcare, artists for their projects. Open M - F 8 to 4:30, 917 Oakdale Rd. Modesto, Media Center behind Ross Store. Volunteers needed. Info: 567-4516.

**Central Valley Democratic Club.** Monthly meetings. Zoom. Contact [jean.cvdc@gmail.com](mailto:jean.cvdc@gmail.com) for information.

**Childrens Story Hours** Stanislaus County Library: Modesto, WiggleWorms! Program for children age 2 and younger and their caregivers; combines age-appropriate stories and movement activities that promote essential pre-reading skills. Preschool StoryTime, Cuentos en espanol. Times vary. Info: [http://www.stanislauslibrary.org/tk\\_kids\\_storytime.shtm](http://www.stanislauslibrary.org/tk_kids_storytime.shtm)

## REGULAR MEETINGS

### SUNDAYS

**D&D Champions Group**, Noon. Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, 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.

**Unity of Modesto** meets in person every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. at 2467 Veneman, Modesto. Information: 209-578-5433

## MONDAYS

**Queer Cuts**, last Monday of the month, 10 a.m., Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto, 209-408-8848.

**The Compassionate Friends**, Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter meets on the second Mondays at 7:00 pm at 2201 Morill Rd., Riverbank. 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.

## TUESDAYS

**Women's Support Group for Women** 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+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto (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@mopride.org](mailto:mstrong@mopride.org), 209-284-0999.

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; For ZOOM link, visit <https://www.naacpmolestostanislaus.org/> 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

## 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.

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.

## 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@gaycentralvalley.org](mailto:mercedboard@gaycentralvalley.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)

## THURSDAYS

**LGBTQ+ Senior** (age +55) Coffee Club Every Thursday @ 1 pm. Weekly social group to provide connectedness and community inclusion for LGBTQ+ Senior Citizens. Refreshments, snacks provided. Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto. Call 209-408-8848.

**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.

**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, art galleries open – take a walk and check out the local art scene. 5-8 pm every third Thursday of the month. Info: 529-3369, [www.modestoartwalk.com](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 Thursday, Cafe Amore, 3025 McHenry Ave, Suite S., Modesto, 8 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

## FRIDAYS

**Trans Support Group**, 1 pm, Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto. Call 209-408-8848.

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. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mej3gD0ZD40&list=LLB8YI9zZg660qHCXGoC6ojQ&index=1>

**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 Villego, 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

First and Third Saturdays - **Gay Men's Group**, 1 pm. Positive Support Group for folks living with HIV, 12 pm. All at Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, 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 UUFC 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, 11 am to 12:00 pm, Gallo Center for the Arts, 10th & I 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)

## 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.