



stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable future

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CENTER
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Sounds of the Valley Fundraiser for KCBP Radio 95.5 FM Your Community

ModestoView will be hosting a virtual fundraiser for Modesto's community radio station KCBP 95.5 FM on Saturday, March 20th starting at 12 pm on our Facebook page.

13 local artists will be performing including MAMA winners The Poorhouse Millionaires, The Flowers, Patty Castillo Davis along with Third Party, Blues Box Bayou Band, Koala & the Golden Boy, Erik Andersen, VOdesa, Ben Phelps, ICK, Middle Road, CT Rogers and Mark Cappalanti.

ACTION: Tune in and enjoy the music but give what you can to KCBP Radio. Just go to www.kcbpradio.org and click the "Donate" button. You can donate by phone by texting the "donate" to 209-806-4172. Another way is to send a check with the word "Radio" in the memo section made out to the Modesto Peace/Life Center, O.O. Box 134, Modesto, CA 95353.

MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER ANNUAL MEETING

BY ZOOM

Saturday, March 13, 2021

EMAIL JCOSTELLO@IGC.ORG
FOR LINK

9:00 AM — Business Meeting:

- Financial Report
- Committee Reports
- Nomination of Board Members
- Discussion:
- Action plans, ideas and strategies

11:00 AM — Adjournment

Wendy Byrd, "Agitator for Justice"

Wendy Byrd receives the Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Award

By **MARIANNE VILLALOBOS**

Each year, at the Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration, the Martin Luther



King, Jr. Legacy Award is announced, recognizing an individual or group for their persevering work on behalf of underserved people in our county, work that reflects Dr. King's vision of building the "Beloved Community."

As in so many other ways, 2021 is not a normal year and the event could not be held in person, but rather, was presented on-line to the community on February 27. Instead of a well-known guest speaker, this year's program highlighted individuals who are making life in our community better. Given that focus, it was even more appropriate that the recipient of the 2021 Legacy Award was Wendy Byrd who has spent the last three decades contributing her talents and motivating others to improve life for all in our community.

As are so many Californians, Wendy is a transplant. She was born in Toledo, Ohio, raised in a two-parent home with three sisters and shaped by her family, church, sports, teachers, mentors and other role models. She earned a bachelor's degree from Cameron

University, Lawton, Oklahoma, and in 1989, was the first African American to earn a master's degree in Behavioral Sciences from that university.

Wendy's professional and personal contributions to our community began in 1989 when she was commissioned by the Modesto City Council to head a study to find alternatives to cruising. For the next decade, she served as Teen Services Supervisor for the Modesto City Parks and Recreation Department. In that capacity, she forged agreements between the City of Modesto, the Police Activities League (PAL) and city and county schools to develop after-school programs for at-risk youth, evening basketball and late-night entertainment for youth and young adults, as well as promoting the renovation of the Maddux Youth Center.

From 2000 to 2013, Wendy served as the Modesto Junior College (MJC) Director of

continued page 5

Emergency Rental Assistance available

Stanislaus County, the City of Modesto, and the Stanislaus Regional Housing Authority have partnered to implement a local Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) supported by funds from the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the State of California. The ERAP will assist households unable to pay rental and utility arrears accrued due to the COVID-19 pandemic between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

Stanislaus County and the City of Modesto received a combined amount of approximately \$16.4 million from the federal government for distribution to those who are eligible and can demonstrate a need and anticipate receiving a combined total of approximately

\$19.5 million from the State of California. In total, approximately \$35.9 million will be made available to Eligible Households communitywide. The ERAP funding is restricted to Stanislaus County residents.

ERAP defines an Eligible Household is defined as a renter household in which at least one or more individuals meets the following criteria:

- Has a household income at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (*AMI), which is the unadjusted median income levels derived from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)



on an annual basis for each jurisdiction adjusted solely for household size.

- Qualifies for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19.
- Demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

For program information or to apply, please visit: www.stanrentassist.com, call 1-877-211-7826 or dial 2-1-1 and ask about the Stanislaus County Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

INSIDE CONNECTIONS

HAPPENINGS.....	2
SOLUTIONS.....	3
GREEN TIPS.....	4
MLK LEGACY AWARD.....	5

BLACK SUPPORT.....	6
WHITE FEAR.....	7
NO MORE DEATHS.....	8
COMMUNITY RADIO.....	10
RIP ALAN DAVIS.....	11

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If you do not have Adobe Reader, download it free from <http://www.adobe.com/downloads/>

Modesto Junior College Science Programs for the Community

MAPS offers free, informative and engaging community science programs.

7:30 pm, participate by logging on to <https://www.mjc.edu/instruction/sme/maps.php> to sign up for notification of the link. Archived MAPS talks: <https://share.yosemite.edu/view.aspx?i=1E7L>



Friday, March 19: Ed Clifton, The Legacy of the Carboniferous. 7:30pm.

An insightful examination of the Carboniferous Period – a critical period in animal evolution that set the stage for not only humans, but most of the terrestrial animals extant today. <https://youtu.be/RyvFcCJbU5U>,

<https://tektite2020.com/ed-clifton.html>

SCIENCE COLLOQUIUM: Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC via Zoom. Access the program: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmaymqgHqzxhsAa0RJmYwVg/>. When the live program appears, click on it. Mar 10: Derek Madden, MJC Biology Professor, Science and Art of Yoga: A Monkey-Human Connection. Dr. Madden will discuss how his research on monkey arthritis led him to study yoga as a Scientist.



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KOALA & THE GOLDEN BOY • BEN PHELPS

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Homeless: Sacramento picks up Modesto's Fumble

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

It wasn't long ago that Modesto and Stanislaus County had managed to get more than 400 people off the streets, out of the parks, doorways and alleys, away from the banks of our rivers and into a controlled environment where outreach workers, volunteers, and law enforcement officers could provide supervision and services at an estimated cost of \$13 per day per person.

One of the immediate results of permitting homeless people to camp in designated locations was a significant reduction in "quality of life" crimes associated with homelessness, including petty theft, trespassing, and creating a public disturbance. First at Beard Brook Park, then under and around the 9th Street Bridge at the Modesto Outdoor Emergency Shelter (MOES), Modesto and Stanislaus County offered a model approach to homelessness that brought observers from around the state. Then Modesto and the county shut everything down.

This January 19, roughly one year after Modesto closed MOES, the Sacramento City Council voted 8 to 1 to approve a new "safe ground" ordinance which would permit groups of up to 80 people to shelter in "tents, cabins, or similar structures" at designated sites throughout the city. Critics of the Sacramento plan, like critics of camping everywhere, argued that camping is "not a solution." These same critics ignore two obvious realities: (1) Camping, permitted or not, is an ongoing and growing current event and (2) They themselves have no other "solutions" to offer.

Sacramento's approval of sheltering in "tents, cabins,

or similar structures" represents an acknowledgement of realities most cities and counties have yet to face. Among those realities is the acute housing shortage throughout the state. Another is the prohibitive cost of providing even so-called "affordable" housing. A third is the simple fact that no housing is affordable for people with no money.

Objections to permitted camping invariably focus on drug use by residents. What these objections ignore is that drug use occurs whether or not camping is permitted — it's just harder to monitor and there's less likelihood of treatment and recovery when camps and homeless people are scattered and on the move.

Some argue that when homeless people are permitted to camp they will become complacent and fail to "improve" and become self-sufficient. These kinds of arguments ignore factors like physical and mental disabilities, mental illness, advanced age, addiction and a host of other impediments to self-sufficiency that afflict homeless people to a much higher degree than people who are housed. They also ignore the scarcity of jobs that pay living wages.

Prior to the pandemic, authorities in Modesto and Stanislaus County were advocating a new homeless policy that included "accountability." They were vague about the exact meaning of accountability, probably because no one had really thought about the problem of defining accountability for a homeless person, especially one who is disabled, mentally challenged, mentally ill, or elderly.

Most likely, accountability will include punishment for violations of city ordinances prohibiting camping or



trespassing. Stanislaus County Supervisor Jim DeMartini recently referred to homeless people as "bums" and said they should be in jail.

In fact, most homeless people have been in jail numerous times. Veterans of homelessness save their warrants, then turn them-

selves in when the weather gets bad; it's a good way to get out of the elements during winter. They usually put on a little weight as well, because of regular meal times. When their jail time is up, they return to homelessness.

Jail time costs the public over \$100 per day, does nothing to promote self-sufficiency, and adds another "crime" to the perpetrator's record, making employment even less likely than prior to imprisonment. It does get people off the street, sometimes for as long as 90 days. It is not, however, a "solution."

In fact, objecting to designated campsites because they're not a solution is like objecting to applying a tourniquet to stop hemorrhage. For the homeless, sanctioned camping is a necessary step toward the graduated housing options that will at some time alleviate the homeless crisis.

The likelihood of sufficient housing for homeless people in the near future is near zero, especially for those with no income. Recent studies suggest a surge in homelessness due to the economic effects of Covid-19. Do local authorities really think they can continue objecting to camping while jailing people for the crime of poverty or job loss during Covid?

Isn't it time for decent public bathrooms in Modesto? Is this the one?

By **JAMES COSTELLO**

Isn't it past time to provide decent public bathrooms, not only for the homeless, but for citizens and visitors?

There is a bathroom that might meet such a need. It is called the Portland Loo.

Apparently, quite a few cities have found this bathroom to work well for its civic needs, including the city of Portland Oregon where it originated.


Readers of Stanislaus Connections, councilmembers, supervisors, Focus on Prevention: please visit <https://portlandloo.com/> and see what you think. Stanislaus Connections welcomes your comments. Email jcostello@jgc.org

Note: the author has no financial interests in the manufacturer of this product. He just thinks they look cool and, more importantly, appear to be quite functional.



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The Stanislaus Homeless Advocacy and Resource Enterprise (SHARE) believes that all people deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, including people experiencing homelessness in our community.

Get involved.



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Is a Pallet House Right for Modesto's Homeless?

Pallet is a social purpose company on a mission to build equal opportunity access to housing and employment. For the more than half a million people facing homelessness across the United States, durable, portable, and affordable shelters are a stepping stone out of personal crisis and into a life of stability — because a shelter changes everything.

For more information, visit <https://www.palletshelter.com/>

A demonstration of a Pallet House was held in downtown Modesto on Tuesday 3/2/2021 sponsored by SHARES (see article this issue).



Green Tips: Be a Citizen of Planet Earth

By **TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL**

'Tis the Season for all good men, women and children to awake, be aware, and Do Acts of Kindness for self, others, and Mother Earth.

Education and study are supposed to broaden one's horizons, grow awareness, and lead to activism. The world's great religions and philosophies speak to how humans can best be in the world.

We have been staying in place, observing both great acts of kindness and great nightmares of injustice in the world toward others and our Mother, Planet Earth.

There is movement to stem COVID-19 in a timely fashion to allow for less virus spread and mutation. So step one is to be part of the vaccination process in order to have an opportunity to be out in the world. In the process or stepping out in the world, we can continue personal intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical self-care, leading to a boost

of our share of Golden Rule activism toward others and our Mother, the Earth.

The message from all the wake-up calls — COVID, violence, natural disasters, political and family divisions — as I would interpret it. Be in the world, of the world, open to and accepting of your place in the world, and actively work toward good in the world.

Environmentally, that would mean lessening your carbon foot print. Through consuming less fossil fuel energy, using alternatives to poisons and other materials that compromise air, water and soil quality, providing your own bags and boxes (which the stores will let you pack without their help), buying products that use less unnecessary packaging, voting green, encouraging local, state and federal legislators and officials to put the environment first, and countless other activist options, we can start turning this earthly home back into a habitable place for ourselves, our children, and our children's children.

Now is no longer the time to sit back, wait and see, and maybe raise your voice. Now is the time to be an active citizen of Planet Earth!



Watch The 27th Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration

Premiered virtually on Saturday, February 27, 2021, this year's event celebrates many of the people in our own community doing their work in the spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Wendy Byrd, President of NAACP-Stanislaus, received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Award.



Some of you may have had problems with the Zoom transmission. If you missed it or would like to see it go to the YouTube link below to see the outstanding video created by Wes Page.

A special Thank You to MJC's Michael Sundquist and Ty Helton for their work in broadcasting it, and to Judge Rubén Villalobos for his excellent job as MC.

<https://youtu.be/elg9Nguwosg>



Coal in California?

On Friday, March 19 learn about the presence of coal in California! Known as a "dirty fuel," coal dust can cause severe health complications, typically to already marginalized communities. Hear about where coal is currently running through and the battles to stop this. We'll cover the organizing and legal campaigns of the Bay Area and Delta regions, the problems with coal, and what you can do about it!

Jacob Klein (pronouns: they/them) is the Regional Coal Organizer for Sierra Club, Mother Lode, Redwood, and San Francisco Bay Chapter. In previous positions, they've worked on issues of LGBTQ inclusion, anti-racist organizing, and community building. They live in Oakland on unceded Huchiun Ohlone land.

To attend this ZOOM event, email YokutsSierraClub@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page to see all our upcoming events at @YokutsSierraClub



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Modesto Symphony Youth Orchestra Virtual Spring Concert

Hosted by Ryan Murry

Tune in live and watch the Modesto Symphony Youth Orchestra's virtual Spring Concert! This concert will feature both MSYO orchestras performing movements from Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 and Dvořák's "New World" Symphony as well as three MSYO student soloists!

Thursday, March 18, 2020 At 7pm. Watch on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDqqnzZUwwk&feature=youtu.be>

Visit the MYSO at <https://www.modestosymphony.org/>



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Wendy Byrd, “Agitator for Justice”

from page 1

Student Development and Campus Life. Her work was instrumental in helping students finance and develop the Mary Stuart Rogers Student Learning Center where she served as manager until retiring in 2013. She also taught a leadership development course at MJC and developed cultural diversity programs with the aim of strengthening understanding and positive relationships between groups.

Wendy’s work in community service, social justice and civic engagement extends far beyond her professional career. She is a graduate of Leadership Modesto (2005) and the American Leadership Forum (2009). She was an inaugural board member of the Education Foundation for the Stanislaus County Department of Education and served on the Stanislaus County Mental Health Advisory Board and the Stanislaus County Equal Rights Commission. She was president of the local NAACP chapter from 2006 to 2010 and again from 2016 to the present and is a member of the National Coalition of Black Women.

She has been honored by the Stanislaus County Women of the Year, the King Kennedy Community Spirit Award, California State Black Caucus Advisors Commission, has received Congressional recognition, as well as numerous other honors.

In the course of her professional and volunteer work, Wendy has also organized many community events, perhaps the most recent being the Virtual Community Town Hall on Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement.

Marian Martino, also a senior fellow of the American Leadership Forum, Great Valley Chapter (2009), has worked with Wendy over the years and describes her as always upbeat, optimistic realistic and highly effective. She says that Wendy is an “exquisite bridge builder” in that her authenticity and calmness allow people to listen with the respect they feel from Wendy. Marian has observed Wendy to be equally effective with young people and law enforcement, adding that in some potentially tense moments, she has seen Wendy calmly, quietly, suggest more effective behavior. After the George Floyd killing, Marian and others in the Great Valley Chapter looked to Wendy’s leadership to develop a successful series of on-line sessions on race for the Senior Fellows designed “to challenge ourselves as leaders in the community.”

But what motivates Wendy to do all this? For me, her formula is embedded in the keynote speech she gave for the 2021 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration at the Revival Center of Modesto (available on YouTube.com at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2csbwAWu8sQ>). Wendy told me that she spoke “off the cuff,” as many of the thoughts she had planned to share had already been expressed by other speakers. Yet Wendy’s speech was inspired and has many important messages for us.

First, pointing out that the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday is unique in its designation as a National Day of Service, she emphasizes that rather than simply recalling what Dr. King did, each of us should ask ourselves what we can do and what we are going to do. She borrows Reverend Joseph Lowry’s image of the washing machine agitator whose function it is to shake the dirt from the clothing. Wendy does not shy away from controversy and points out that like the agitator, in order



to make change, we must confront the issues. But what is special about Wendy, is that she can “agitate in a good way,” by confronting issues that need to be addressed, working toward positive change and still retaining friendships. And to accomplish that, she says, it is necessary to build relationships; to “build bridges before you need to cross them.” For example, she points out that it is important to get to know the police chief before there is a problem so that you can sit down and work together when the problem arises. And those who know Wendy can attest that this is how she handles things.

For Wendy, her work is also about faith: “In order to be in the Civil Rights business, you have to be God-centered.” Her faith leads to compassion and to action, and ultimately to change. She compares the civil rights marches led by Dr. King and others to the marches last summer inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement. The marches of the 1960s led to civil rights legislation and the marches last summer have led to a heightened awareness of the need to deal with police brutality.

Wendy attests to the importance of grass roots organizing in working from the bottom up; that when each one of us takes ownership of the problem, then each of us can also take ownership of the solution. For me, this recalls a saying of Rabbi Tarfon, “It is not your responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but you are not free to desist from it either.” In Wendy’s words, “Civil Rights is like a set of stairs. One step leads to another step, but we can’t sit back and expect other people to be the builders of those steps. This is something we all can do.” And she points out that we must realize that we are all in this together. We need to really see each other; to see “the me in you,” thus making it hard to hurt others, recalling the phrase the “love is the only thing that conquers hate.”

Wendy told me that her speech on Martin Luther King Day was hard to deliver, coming as it did just twelve days after the insurrection of the Capitol, an act so clearly about race and white supremacy; a rebellion of many who felt they were losing their white privilege. She said that George Floyd was an eye opener about police brutality and January 6 was an eye opener about domestic terrorism. In light of that, it was hard to avoid being negative and, as she listened to the other speakers, she raised a silent prayer.

In her prayer for the right words, Wendy found the exact words we all need to hear. She closed with a message of hope. Referencing Dr. King again, she quoted, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy.” And, as Wendy pointed out, this past year has provided us with challenge and controversy in abundance, resulting in creative solutions such as successful interactions through Zoom and the discovery that much work could be done from home. She suggests that as we emerge from COVID-enforced isolation, we should not simply return to the life we had before, but rather heed the lessons learned in order to create a better life. Wendy’s expectations are that we won’t be focused on standing on the shoulders of Dr. King and other civil rights leaders but that we will focus on strengthening our own shoulders so that we can do the heavy lifting.

If Wendy is an “agitator for justice,” in Reverend Lowry’s term, she is the most charming and compelling agitator I have known. She does, indeed forge relationships and friendships, build bridges, and empower others to do more than we think we are capable, creating that grass roots force for change that is so needed in our community and across the nation.

3 ways Black people say their white co-workers and managers can support them and be an antidote to systemic racism

By Jennifer R. Joe, Professor of Accounting, University of Delaware & Wendy K. Smith, Professor of Business and Leadership, University of Delaware

President Joe Biden committed the U.S. government to racial equity by issuing four executive orders on Jan. 26 that seek to curb systemic racism. In the orders, he cited the killing of George Floyd in 2020, which sparked months of protests and prompted many U.S. companies to likewise commit themselves – and hundreds of billions of dollars – to helping Black Americans overcome institutional discrimination.

Shortly after the protests began last year, we hosted a panel that addressed this very topic. Held on Juneteenth, the webinar featured four Black women – including one of us – who poignantly shared their own frequent encounters with racial bias in job interviews, shopping for clothes and even working with their peers.

A common question we got from the predominantly white audience was some variation on “How can I be an ally?” That is, a lot of people wanted to know what they can do as friends, colleagues and managers to support African Americans in overcoming ongoing discrimination and bias and achieving success.

This prompted us – business scholars with a keen interest in diversity, one white, one Black – to try to find an answer to these questions of how white people can support their Black colleagues. So we interviewed five successful Black professionals and the mostly white “allies” they said were instrumental to their achievements to see if we could find an antidote to racial bias in the workplace.

How The Conversation is different: We explain without oversimplifying.

Three themes stood out from this ongoing research, which we plan to submit for peer review.

Systemic bias

Racism often seems embedded in the fabric of Black people’s everyday lives. And it’s not just being treated differently by the police, which was the impetus for the 2020 protests.

Black people even experience bias from well-meaning schoolteachers, neighbors, colleagues and managers. Small acts of reckless disregard build toward broad racial disparities.

Therefore, we sought to understand the small acts of resolute connection that could shift the tide toward greater justice and equity.

Using our own networks, we reached out to five Black professionals in a range of industries – financial services, packaged foods and sports management – who were all in executive roles in their organizations. We asked them to think of the individuals who were instrumental to their success and describe the specific support these people offered to help manage explicit or implicit moments of discrimination. Next, we interviewed the eight allies they identified – seven white, one Black.

These 13 in-depth interviews yielded key patterns about the simple ways to address racial bias that defy conventional

wisdom. Unlike research that relies on surveys to get representative viewpoints, a qualitative approach allowed us to gain a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the factors and variables in these relationships that made them powerful.

Reciprocal relationships

Consistent with social exchange theory, we found that these relationships worked best when there was a partnership and both parties benefited.

People of color said they did not want to be objects of pity. Even the question “What can I do?” implies a power dynamic – someone in power reaching out to someone in need.

The people of color we spoke to found the strongest support when their allies recognized their talents and helped them apply these talents more effectively in the workplace. And that support was more authentic and trustworthy when both parties benefited from the relationship and learned from each other.

The Black professionals we interviewed said that they were already performing at a high level and trying to prove themselves invaluable, which made colleagues and managers who benefited from their efforts seek to promote them in the organization. The allies likewise said they supported Black workers because they saw their talent.

For example, one ally reported seeing that the dominant white macho culture in his organization did not appreciate his female Black colleague’s talent and was limiting her success. When he moved to a new company, as soon as he saw an opportunity he actively recruited her. The new role involved much more responsibility than her previous positions, but he convinced her that she could do it.

She told us that his ongoing support in the position encouraged her continued success. The relationship focused on talent, not pity, and benefited both parties.

Don’t avoid uncomfortable conversations

These relationships were not careful or guarded; they were straightforward and honest.

Past research has found that white supervisors often avoid giving critical feedback to Black subordinates and peers out of a fear of being viewed as biased. Yet it can be more biased to say nothing. Avoiding difficult conversations can impede a young professional’s upward mobility.

People of color need advice from more experienced individuals on how to successfully navigate racism traps that may exist in the workplace. They might be unaware that some of their actions or approaches are being perceived negatively in the office. These difficult conversations can strengthen relationships.

For example, an ally observed that although it was difficult, she considered it a managerial responsibility to tell her Black colleague that he was not meeting her expectations. Another ally reported explaining to a junior Black colleague

that proving you are right to a supervisor may not always be beneficial if it harms your long-term career prospects.

These difficult but honest conversations helped shape the person of color’s conduct and laid the foundation for lifelong trusting connections.

Connect outside of work

Finally, it made a big difference to the people of color we interviewed when an ally tried to get to know them better as a person, not only in terms of work.

People are more productive at work when they feel that colleagues see them with nuance – with unique passions, talents and interests – rather than pigeonholing or stereotyping them based on race or gender. It also becomes a lot easier to champion and advocate for someone you know well.

But as a result of real or perceived racial barriers, Black professionals often report feeling anxious during work-related social engagements, in part because they say they don’t understand the rules. Black and white professionals also tend to move in different social circles outside of work.

Our interviewees said a key antidote to this came when allies made an effort to connect outside of work. Whether over a cup of coffee or a home-cooked meal, these social encounters allowed relationships to flourish and stereotypes to diminish.

One white ally we interviewed reported realizing that she often had white colleagues to her home for dinner but had never invited a Black colleague. So when discussing her vacation plans – a seven-day chartered Alaskan fishing trip – with a Black woman who worked in the same office, she discovered her co-worker’s husband loved fishing and invited them on the trip, where they bonded and formed a friendship.

Doing this doesn’t require becoming friends. It only means closing the “psychological distance” that can separate people along racial lines at work.

A simple antidote

Black people in the U.S. are faced with a world that can make them feel both empowered and vulnerable. Recent scenes at the U.S. Capitol just two weeks apart sum up this jarring narrative.

On Jan. 20, Kamala Harris took the oath of office on the Capitol steps as the first Black vice president – and only hours later swore in the first Black senator from Georgia. Contrast that with images exactly two weeks earlier of white supremacists storming that very same building.

Americans face great challenges on the road to a more inclusive society. To be sure, addressing institutional racism requires systematic interventions by companies and substantial policy changes by the government. But our research suggests they also could use something simpler from their colleagues, managers and others in their lives: genuine relationships.

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Dear Nice White People: What are you afraid of?

By AUSTEN CHANNING BROWN

As someone who pursues racial justice as a speaker and writer, I am regularly faced with questions- immediate, emotional questions. Sometimes they are questions folks have been sitting on for a while- especially when the question is situational. But for the most part, I hear the questions before there is a filter, before they've been completely thought through. So if you have heard me live or virtually, you know I do not give short answers to questions. And I don't want to. I give loooong answers because I want to offer folks not just a quick response, but a framework, examples, context, metaphors.... anything I can do to deepen our learning together. But in doing this, I sometimes run the risk of accepting the premise of a question that should be challenged.

For example, before the pandemic I gave a lot of lectures at Christian colleges. And almost without fail, a student would ask, "Can you make the connection for me between the Gospel + race + justice." Because this is an extraordinarily common question from white evangelicalism, I often responded with examples or a list of authors who have been addressing this topic forever. I mean, the list is long, folks. But there was one day, when a student asked with all the earnestness he could muster (and I am a sucker for students who lean all the way in while I'm speaking or who laugh at my jokes), so I was ready to give him a 10-minute master class. And just as I started to move backward to the white board behind me (I mean I was about to lay it out, yall), I paused. I realized there was something about the premise that needed to be challenged. This is what I said instead:

"I get this question a lot, and I want you to know there are many wonderful books written on this topic. You should check out Brenda Salter McNeil, Lisa Sharon Harper, Drew Hart, Jemar Tisby. If you want to go further back you should read James Cone or Howard Thurman. And if you want to talk about the relationship between white evangelicalism and (in)justice there's another set of books devoted entirely to this topic. But what I want to tell you is that I only get asked this question at predominately white, Christian institutions. The Black church doesn't ask this question, because by the time we get to the second book of the Bible there is a whole story dedicated to God freeing the enslaved. And this is important. I want you to understand that while you may be "wrestling" with the connections, there are people of color in this room and far beyond who have never known any other kind of Gospel except one that easily and obviously encompasses social justice."

I needed to challenge the premise that the connections between the Gospel + race + justice are difficult to find, or require "wrestling" at all.

I share all of this because I've come to fully realize that there is another question I receive without fail from nice white people in corporations, nonprofits, schools and churches that I need to start addressing differently.

Here is the question: How can I overcome my fear of speaking up?

Dear Nice White People, it's time for you to honestly answer the question, "What are you afraid of?" because there is a reason you are scared to speak up and it's not some vague notion of inability.

Of course the question is not always framed this exact way. [See also: How can I start using my voice as an ally? What do I do in xyz situation? In what ways can I be an ally to my coworkers of color?] But regardless of how the specific words change, the premise of the question typically remains the same, which is: I am scared to speak up, and I need to know how to overcome my fear.

I am no longer accepting the premise of the question.

Dear Nice White People, it's time for you to honestly answer the question, "What are you afraid of?" because there is a reason you are scared to speak up and it's not some vague notion of inability.

Let me get you started.

You are afraid to speak up because you know there will be repercussions for doing so. How do you know this? Because you have been watching it happen. You are not afraid of a ghost in the closet or a monster under your bed. You are not a child afraid of some intangible, imaginary outcome. You are afraid of being on the receiving end of the oppression you have witnessed.

You are afraid they will talk about you, the way they currently talk about your Black, female co-worker.

You are afraid that you will no longer be invited to the secret white people meetings where decisions are being made.

You are afraid that you will fall out of the good graces of those with power.

You are afraid that you will be labeled "the problem," the person who is "not a team player," the one who is going to ruin a good time.

You are afraid of not being invited, of not being favored, of not being liked because there are benefits for being liked.

You are afraid of challenging the system, the supervisor, the policy, the conversation because you have participated in the destruction of others and now you are afraid that you, too, will be destroyed.

If you are afraid, then you know there is danger in speaking out. And if you think it's dangerous, you have either been complicit or you have been a willing participant in allowing others to face that danger alone.

You see, Nice White People, you have believed your lie longer than anyone else. You have believed that you could maintain the status quo, reap the benefits thereof, and if you

are nice to people of color perhaps they won't notice. But we can see you. We can see you better than you can.

We can see how you always manage to fail up. We can see how you use niceness to make yourself feel better about the injustice(s) you've witnessed. We can see how you have taken positions, created positions, skipped over qualifications and done all manner of systems changes to get what you want when what you want is whiteness. We have seen how you manage to find your voice when you are asked to praise the system or enforce the system or justify the system.

And your weaponizing of niceness is so complete that you get mad at us, when we reject your niceness. You are mad when you apologize privately for something done publicly and your apology is rejected. You are mad when no one makes you feel better for confusing the only two people of color in your department for the fourth time. You are mad when no one wants to have coffee with you to discuss how your niceness sickens them. You are mad when you don't get a pat on the back for your niceness. You are mad because we see your niceness for what it is- a desire to believe you are good, even as you uphold a system that oppresses.

... the core issue is that you don't want to speak up because you know it will cost you. If you really want to be in solidarity with Black people, it's time to answer the question: What are you afraid of?

And then I come speak at your MLK celebration, and suddenly your niceness takes the form of shyness, frailness, an inability to know how to speak up, a feigned ignorance that allows you to believe that the reason you won't speak up is because you don't know how... when the core issue is that you don't want to speak up because you know it will cost you.

If you really want to be in solidarity with Black people, it's time to answer the question: What are you afraid of? Release all the bullshit answers about your own frailty and get honest. Your hands are dirty. And they won't ever be clean unless you start being honest about the dirt you've been involved in or witness to.

Your niceness serves only you.

<https://austinchanning.substack.com/p/dear-nice-white-people>

Be informed!

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

Left To Die: Call To Action

A new report from No More Deaths and La Coalición de Derechos Humanos, *Left to Die: Border Patrol, Search and Rescue and the Crisis of Disappearance*, finds that Border Patrol systematically ignores and mishandles the search and rescue emergencies of migrants, who are funneled into dangerous and remote terrain by the agency's policy and practices. The report also finds that Border Patrol obstructs family and community search efforts, leaving thousands to die.

Every year, Congress gives more than \$25 billion dollars to ICE and CBP to profile, jail, deport and terrorize immigrants. Their records of abuse and consistent rejection of oversight and accountability demonstrate that these enforcement agencies are beyond reform.

To end the crisis of death and disappearance in the borderlands we must decriminalize migration, demilitarize the border and defund Customs and Border Protection, the agency that causes people to become missing and leaves them to die.

Take Action by supporting community-based search and rescue efforts & joining the [#DefundHate](#) Campaign to demand Congress defund Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).



What you can do:

Donate to [community-based search and rescue groups in the borderlands](#)

Demand that Congress defund Customs and Border Protection with the Campaign!

Sign the petition bit.ly/DefundHatePetition

Contact your elected officials with the tools below:

[Find your representative](#)

[Find your senator](#)

Sample Script:

"Hello, my name is [_____] and I'm a constituent of [congressional member's name]. I thought you would be interested in a new report that analyzes Border Patrol's search and rescue response system. The report is called *Left to Die: Border Patrol, Search and Rescue, and the Crisis of Disappearance*.

The report provides overwhelming evidence that Border Patrol's emergency response system is plagued with systemic and deadly discrimination, routinely ignoring and mishandling life-threatening emergencies and fueling a crisis of

death and disappearance. It's clear that the agency is unfit to be involved in search and rescue efforts.

I'm calling on [Member of Congress] to oppose funding increases for border and immigration enforcement. Instead of using public funds to criminalize migration and militarize the border, we demand that you exhibit leadership and call for drastic cuts in funding for ICE and CBP. This includes cutting funds for "smart border" technologies that only serve to further militarize an already hyper-militarized border, endangering the lives of migrants."

No More Deaths (NMD) was founded in 2004 in Tucson, Arizona. Its mission: to end the death and suffering of migrants on the US-Mexico border by mobilizing people of conscience to uphold fundamental human rights. The group's work includes providing aid in the desert, providing aid in Mexico, documenting and denouncing abuse, searching for the disappeared, helping get belongings back, running a bi-weekly legal clinic for undocumented community members, and alliances with border communities. NMD is a ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson. Call (520) 333-5699 or visit www.nomoredeaths.org.

By the Numbers....

- Over the past year, No More Deaths volunteers and staff:
- Placed over 15,000 gallons of water on migrant trails in the southern Arizona borderlands. In addition, 2,100 cans of beans and countless trail snacks, socks, and blankets have been placed along migrant trails (Note: COVID-19 protocols have reduced our water drops since March);
- Bonded out 48 clients from ICE immigration jails (or on humanitarian parole) through our Emergency COVID-19 Bond Fund, since March;
- Assisted over 200 clients to become U.S. citizens (since 2015, No More Deaths' legal clinic has assisted 1,500 individuals in becoming citizens);
- Helped over 250 people apply for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status;
- Helped 529 people recover \$185,839 from their jail accounts after being deported to Mexico with uncashable checks/ debit



Submission Opportunity: The Modesto Poem

By Sarah J. Stevenson

In honor of Modesto's 150th anniversary, MoSt invites you to contribute to a community collaborative poem! Write a quatrain (a four-line poem) celebrating what you love or appreciate or think is pretty true about Modesto. Everyone of all ages and poetic experience levels is welcome to submit. Send your Modesto poem to info@mostpoetry.org with Modesto Poem in the subject line. The deadline is **March 8, 2021**, but why wait that long. Send your Modesto poem in today!

Help spread the word! Share this with your family and friends! Even people who don't live in Modesto but have a connection to Modesto are welcome to jump in and submit!

One quatrain per person, please, and we at MoSt reserve the right not to publish any quatrain that includes profanity or negativity beyond the scope of this project. We like honesty, but we won't publish insult or injury.



UN Head Decries 'Senseless and Suicidal' Destruction of Nature

BY BRETT WILKINS, STAFF WRITER, *Common Dreams*

"Human well-being lies in protecting the health of the planet," said Secretary-General António Guterres. "It's time to reevaluate and reset our relationship with nature."

As the United Nations on Thursday released a report on the triple emergency of the climate crisis, the destruction of wildlife and habitats, and deadly pollution, the head of the world body sounded the alarm on what he called humanity's



"senseless and suicidal war on nature."

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) report, entitled *Making Peace With Nature*:

A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity, and pollution emergencies (pdf), was introduced by Secretary-General António Guterres at U.N. headquarters in New York.

"I want to be clear. Without nature's help, we will not thrive or even survive," said Guterres. "For too long, we have been waging a senseless and suicidal war on nature. The result is three interlinked environmental crises—climate disruption, biodiversity loss, and pollution—that threaten our viability as a species."

"Human well-being lies in protecting the health of the planet. It's time to reevaluate and reset our relationship with nature. This report can help us do so."

Among the report's recommendations are carbon taxes; a redirection in the nearly \$5 trillion in annual worldwide subsidies to sectors including fossil fuels, mining, industrial agriculture, and fishing "toward alternative livelihoods and new business models;" and re-envisioning indicators of economic performance so that the value of mitigating the climate emergency, preserving ecosystems, and reducing pollution count—not just GDP.

Additionally, the report asserts that "changes in patterns of consumption are critical to transforming food, water, and energy systems and can be achieved through altered norms in business and cultural practices."

"Changing the dietary habits of consumers, particularly in developed countries, where consumption of energy- and water-intensive meat and dairy products is high, would reduce pressure on biodiversity and the climate system," the report states. "These habits are a function of individual choices but are also influenced by advertising, food and agricultural subsidies, and excess availability of cheap food that provides poor nutrition."

Robert Watson, the report's lead author, told Al Jazeera that "vested interests" were thwarting many of the policies and actions needed to make peace with nature.

"We have subsidies for agriculture, for energy, for fossil fuels that are perverse," said Watson. "They encourage the use of fossil fuels. They encourage the use of bad agricultural practices."

"If we can get the business community to work with governments around the world, I'm optimistic we can start to move in the right direction," he added.

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2021/02/18/un-head-decries-senseless-and-suicidal-destruction-nature-new-report-urges-systemic>

POET: Gary Thomas

Gary Thomas grew up on a peach farm outside Empire, California. Prior to retirement, he taught eighth grade language arts for thirty-one years, and junior college English for seven—sharing and discussing at least one poem every day with his students. He has presented poetry workshops for state-wide organizations, festivals, and conferences. He has had poems published in *California English*, *In the Grove*, *Time of Singing*, and *The Comstock Review*, among others, and in the anthologies *More Than Soil*, *More Than Sky: The Modesto Poets* and three of the *Collision* anthology series. He is currently vice president of the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center.

**Not the Same Beauty**

Effortless, almost. Although she once told me she was never sure she could be called pretty. From her mother, never. Her near-fiancé, repeatedly and in ballpoint on air-mail vellum.

On a ladder, older than when she wrote him back the last time. Sanding and painting eaves and soffits of her father's apartment just before she moved to hers. Paid by the hour. A nest egg for a renter's studio. Her own dressing table.

With a husband who struggled to keep up, to tell her in a way she could believe that she had always had that kind of allure that charmed, captivated, that altered like the facets of her garnet birthstone, could grind, polish, or reflect of all souls around her.

On an airplane to her mother's funeral, catching her reflection in the seatback screen when it blackens for the captain to announce descent. Studying the stubborn crimps and ripples, the shine she always had. *Not the same*, she tells herself, *but my sister will say I'm presentable no matter what. And I am.*

**Rough Draft of a Ballad
About Some Borderlands**

Out here between
dry riverbeds we
pipedream about
some lilt left
in the music
of sand augers

Comfort & hunger's
truth swizzle with
dust and desire
till real &
sublime peekaboo
as future tenses'
frontier

We wax into
coyotes under
a berserk moon
that scatters
mad fluorescence
on our fissured
skin & flawed
souls

In this season
of hourglasses
and rusty bayous
we take our
muses to task
ask for better
voices other red
winds to chase

We howl
countrywestern prayers
for strength sufficient
to dance alone
then to blend
conversation
with candlelight in
rooms left fallow
by us for
us to approach
each other in
an evening
built of blinks
& blue soughs
when the world
looks to settle
in and just
won't

Levain

1.

Four days for the wild yeasts to be coaxed
by plain flour fresh water into bubbles

the aroma of vinegar and belt leather
Then casting away of most of it more

flour and water to feed it another day or
two as it doubles trebles resembles

something preternatural protoplasmic even
neonatal until the oven reaches 400 and

the oven's maw opens to accept our oblation
of the ordinary Patience truly begins when

the door shuts and a new fragrance arises like
whole wheat prayer We make sure the butter

is sufficient for the next ceremonies of coming forth:
admiration blended with wonder for the advent of

two loaves cooling the long knife as it slices our
common nourishment steam still exhaling as proof

that this life continues that what we spread now
extends this small plain sign of grace

2.

A few days for the wild virus to catch and cling
to the creatures who fed it the odor of fear

as the new year casts away the first casualties
us and what we thought we knew of what

we should do not fight or flight this time
but the real or the rumors broadcast masked

mating calls of jingoes patrioteers other
scoundrels whose gullets scourge the truth with their heat

but miss the plague Meantimes we shelter place
our faith in sacraments of research contact those we love

again again again make pastry and poetry if we can
find the flour fresh water *le mot juste* to start hope

like anything that rises into what can be passed around
Even as the blight demands to spread this minute

into months of loss we persist because we have known
mercy in other dark hours and must attend to grace extended

Our lives are levain Our love is vital Our witness is steam



TIME TO HEAL: Building mutual respect with our divided citizens

By **RICHARD ANDERSON & JAMES COSTELLO,**
Modesto Peace/Life Center

The Modesto Peace/Life Center has been considering starting or becoming involved with some kind of moderated discussion groups or organizations dedicated to healing our polarized society. An introduction was **Civic Saturdays** recently held by the Stanislaus Community Foundation.

One model is **Braver Angels** that “seeks to depolarize American politics through grassroots organizing. Our volunteer leaders (supported by a small staff) leverage Braver Angels programs and a unique organizing structure to impact community life and American institutions.”

Another is **Living Room Conversations**, a conversational model developed by dialogue experts in order to facilitate connection between people despite their differences, and to identify areas of common ground and shared understanding. “Within this model, we have developed over 100 conversation guides on all sorts of topics that can otherwise be tense to talk about with friends, strangers, and even loved ones of differing backgrounds and political persuasions.”

A third effort is **Everyday Democracy** whose “process includes core elements of community organizing, facilitated meetings with small groups that later come together, and a connection between dialogue and action.”

A fourth is **Make America Relate Again:** <https://www.makeamericarelatepodcast.com/episode-1> In one episode Gregg interviews Kim, a liberal, who banters with Nick, a Libertarian: <https://www.makeamericarelatepodcast.com/s2ep3-transcript>. Richard Anderson has been working

on the idea of a series of interviews that could be broadcast by MYTV26 and KCBP Community Radio and archived on YouTube.

Let us begin the healing.
Stanislaus Connections will keep

readers updated as we proceed.

ACTION: Send your ideas to Richard Anderson, andersonr@yosemite.edu or to James Costello, jcostello@igc.org



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Listen to Local Programming on KCBP 95.5 FM, The Voice of the Valley

Listen on 95.5 FM or streaming
on www.kcbpradio.org

NEW PROGRAM:

KeeHive – LaKiesha McDonald talks to women who have overcome great odds. Mondays & Wednesdays, 7:00 am

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 – Mondays, 8:00pm; 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 Leah Hassett – 8:00pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays, 9:00am. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp-wotv> and on Spotify.

The Peril and the Promise with Pegasus – Wednesdays, 9:30 pm; Saturdays, 2:30 pm; Listen here also: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp-peril>

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

Where We Were – Fascinating local history with Felton Daniels. Monday & Thursdays 9am. Friday 8:30pm; Sunday at 11:00am & 4:30 pm.

The Ralph Nader Hour – 4:00pm Saturdays.

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

Local Music:

Modesto Area Music Show with Middagh Goodwin – Mondays 5:00pm; Fridays 9:00pm & Saturdays 6:00pm.



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

This is SKA with Middagh Goodwin – Tuesdays, 9 pm; Fridays, 11pm; Sundays, 6 am.

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

Weekdays (Monday - Friday)

Various musical programs during the noon hour: Oldies, Jazz, Old Piano.

Thom Hartmann – 2:00pm

Sojourner Truth – 4:00pm

Democracy Now! – 7:00pm.

Flashpoint Magazine – 10:00pm.

Children's Programming

Confetti Park – Saturday's 8:00am; & Sunday's 12:30pm.

The Children's Hour – Sundays 3:00pm.

Find a complete programming schedule on our website, www.kcbpradio.org

What programming do you like or would like to hear? Contact us at programming@kcbpradio.org or call (209) 353-3066. Help put “Community” into community radio!

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<http://stanislausconnections.org/>

Homeless: RIP Alan Davis

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

Alan Davis, the wheelchair-bound amputee who became a familiar presence in downtown Modesto over the last two years, died February 1. We may never know the cause. It took some accomplished sleuthing by homeless volunteer Frank Ploof just to discover Davis's whereabouts after he disappeared earlier this year from an assisted living home in Empire. Shortly thereafter, Ploof learned that Davis had passed away at Memorial Hospital.

Ploof had first found Davis near 17th and G Streets in downtown Modesto in September of 2019, after a tip about the disabled man from outreach worker Randy Limburg. At the time, Davis said he had been homeless for about twenty years, mostly in Sacramento.

Though he seemed confused about where his surgery occurred, it was learned later he'd been sent to Modesto to recover after amputation of his left leg because of crowded rehabilitation facilities in Sacramento. Davis said he was 54 years old.

As Davis's condition deteriorated, Ploof and Limburg were able to move him into a tent at the Modesto Outdoor Emergency Shelter (MOES) that October. Though Davis had said he'd been consuming a pint and a half of alcohol per day on the streets, once at MOES he never asked for a drink. "It's not allowed here," he said, when asked why he abstained.

Davis seemed to thrive at MOES. His one leg, badly scabbed and bleeding when he was found, was tended and wrapped by a nurse, one of many volunteers who visited MOES regularly. It healed nicely. He seemed to enjoy being among people, and managed to use a handicapped-equipped Porta-Pottie with relative ease. Frank Ploof made sure Davis was able to get showers at Dean Dodd's mobile shower shuttle.

When MOES shut down late in 2019, Davis was admitted to Stanislaus County's low-barrier shelter in the Salvation Army's Berberian Building nearby. Shortly thereafter began a pattern that was to be repeated until his death — a pattern of disappearing into the streets.

Davis began wandering away from the low-barrier shelter not long after he was placed there. He was always found near frequent downtown haunts. When asked why he'd left, Davis would say that he had trouble with the bathroom facilities.

The county low-barrier shelter is very well equipped with handicapped-accessible bathrooms and toilets, which are much more easily accessed than the Porta-Potties at MOES were. Nonetheless, Davis offered the same reason for leaving after several wanderings and subsequent returns facilitated by Frank Ploof and other volunteers. He always said he couldn't use the bathroom facilities and had soiled himself.

At one point, despite much searching, Davis couldn't be found for weeks. When he was once again relocated downtown, near 10th Street Place, he was a double-amputee.

Davis didn't seem to know why his remaining leg had been taken off, and confidentiality laws make it virtually impossible to find out. All anyone was able to learn was that after the amputation, Davis had spent a few days in a motel. Then he was back on the streets, legless.

Thenceforward, Alan Davis made the rounds from the Berberian low-barrier shelter, Stanislaus County's Behavioral

Health Recovery Services, a county-contracted respite shelter, and the care facility in Empire. Wherever he was, he always returned to the streets.

What little we know of Alan Davis's life was gleaned over time by volunteers and Davis's own reports, which may or may not be reliable. We know that before he arrived in Modesto he had been diagnosed as seriously mentally ill. Davis said he had been employed at least twice, once at a



store that sold tires. He said he had been unwelcome at home once into his late teens.

When he was found in 2019, Davis's face was contorted by deep furrows of pain. It's impossible to know how much he endured once on the streets shortly after losing his leg to a surgical saw, but it must have been a severe assault on his senses.

Nonetheless, Davis always answered "Fine" when asked how he was. From the very beginning, he had to be persuaded to leave the streets. He seemed happiest at MOES, and toward the end of his life, when he was found once again in downtown Modesto, he said, "I wish they still had MOES."

Frank Ploof did his best to keep track of Davis, and was stunned when he found him downtown again, just before the record-setting rainstorm of January 27.

"He was all-bundled up and near the Gallo Theater," said Ploof. "I asked him how he got there, and he said he'd taken a cab."

That was the last time Ploof saw Davis, and subsequent calls to the home in Empire led him to Memorial Hospital, and, after over a week's inquiry, the news of Davis's death.

That Davis was unable to take care of himself became clear early on, even while he was at MOES. Though he qualified for disability payments, Davis had no idea he was eligible, and even after he began receiving automatic deposits, seldom knew he had money.

He did well at MOES, probably because he was in a

friendly community and benefitted from regular visits by volunteers, including health professionals. He also did well at the Stanislaus Recovery Center, where he was under continual supervision. By that time he had accumulated enough money to afford an electric wheel chair, which seemed to buoy his spirits tremendously.

Nonetheless, whenever Davis was in congregate living and permitted to wander, he did. Those who didn't know him will apply the usual clichés to his death, "he chose homelessness, he fell through the cracks," or "it's the drugs."

In fact, Alan Davis had very few choices in life, and most were apparently driven by severe mental illness. He used alcohol on the streets, but given the unrelenting agony of his



situation, who wouldn't? Those familiar with our system of care realized long ago that there aren't any cracks — there is only a gaping black hole waiting at the end of a series of ricochets from one failed project to the next.

Most anyone even casually acquainted with homelessness knows that our growing homeless population isn't the result of people suddenly waking up and "choosing" to be homeless. They also know that there's enough wealth in the nation to provide those same people shelter, even if it means designating permitted campsites.

Nicholas Kristoff wrote recently about his childhood friend Mike Stepp, who was also homeless and mentally ill: "Mike was a good man whom America left behind." Alan Davis was also a man who was left behind, not just to endure decades of life on the streets but also the agonies of homelessness just days after having his legs sawed off.

May he rest in peace.



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

MARCH 2021

CHECK WITH MEETING HOSTS. ONLINE MEETINGS MAY BE PLANNED.

Science Colloquium, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC via Zoom. To access the program, click <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmaymqgHqzxhsAa0RJmYwVg/>. When the live program appears, click on it. Mar 10: Derek Madden, MJC Biology Professor, Science and Art of Yoga: A Monkey-Human Connection. Dr. Madden will discuss how his research on monkey arthritis led him to study yoga as a Scientist.

MAPS (Modesto Area Partners in Science): free science programs. Live presentations via Zoom. Link provided before each talk on the MAPS website a few days of the presentation. 7:30 pm, Link to Zoom: <https://modestoscience.wordpress.com/schedule/>. Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VF-q-egRrQk>. Friday, **March 19: Ed Clifton, The Legacy of the Carboniferous**. 7:30pm. An insightful examination of the Carboniferous Period – a critical period in animal evolution that set the stage for not only humans, but most of the terrestrial animals extant today. <https://youtu.be/RyvFcCJbU5U>, <https://tektite2020.com/ed-clifton.html>

VIRTUAL FILMS are available at the State Theatre! Visit <https://thestate.org/virtual-screenings/>

The Prospect Theatre has continuing offerings: Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2020-2021-season/>

3 WED: VIGIL: NO VIGIL in MARCH.

4 THURS: Peace/Life Center ZOOM Monthly Board Meeting, 6:30 pm. Email Jim Costello for login information, jcostello@igc.org

18 THURS: Modesto Symphony Youth Orchestra Virtual Spring Concert, 7 pm. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDqqnzZUwwk&feature=youtu.be>

22 MON: Black and/or Jewish dialogue: “Slavery and Freedom.” A facilitated conversation between members of the local Jewish and Black communities to learn about each other and build ongoing connections. 7:00 p.m. Live streamed on Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8426523610>

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

Village Dancers are not dancing in person but have a Zoom class, every Sunday 3:00-5:00 PM (PST). Lessons and reviews every week are given in international folk dances and are led by different teachers from around the Valley. People from England to Taiwan, New Hampshire to Oregon, Arizona to Denair join us each week to exercise in their own homes to interesting music. Email Judy at JudyKropp40@gmail.com to receive the Zoom number and password.

Modesto Vineyard Christian Fellowship, 10:00 am at the MODSPOT, 1220 J St. Call or text 209-232-1932, email 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. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: info@imcv.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 Chapter is meeting by Zoom on the 2nd Monday at 7p.m. Bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are invited to participate in their 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; <http://www.tcfmodesto-riverbankarea.org>

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

Monday Morning Funstrummers Beginner Ukulele Lessons. Modesto Senior Center. 10:45am to Noon. Free Scenic and Bodem.

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 (September only meeting 9/15/14 due to Labor Day). Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com or call 209.577.1604.

Silver & Gold Support group for our senior LGBT communities’ unique concerns and experiences. A group that will understand and accept you where you are. For LGBT folks over 50 yrs. old. Every Monday at 3 pm to 4 pm at various locations in Modesto. Info: Steven Cullen/Facilitator. Cell/text - (559) 799-0464. Email: stevencullen@sbcglobal.net

TUESDAYS

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, 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; email: 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.

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

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: SUSPENDED, 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, 720 13th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750.

MEDIA COMMITTEE of Peace/Life Center. Meetings TBA.

PEACE/LIFE CENTER MODESTO, 720 13th St. Call 529-5750. We’ll get back to you with current info on activities.

WEDNESDAYS

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

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: merced-board@gaycentralvalley.org – 1744 G St. Suite H, Merced, CA. 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, or tgsupport@stanpride.org

Mindful Meditation: Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7 - 9 pm. Info: Anne, 521-6977.

Compassionate Friends Groups, 2nd Wed., 252 Magnolia, Manteca.

THURSDAYS

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

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

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

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

Third Thursday Art Walk, Postponed until further notice. <http://www.modestoartwalk.com>

The Book Group, First & third Thursdays. College Ave

UCC Youth Bldg., Orangeburg & College Ave., 3:30 – 5:00 pm. Info: mzjurkovic@gmail.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

Game Night and Potluck, third Friday of each month. For 21+ only. Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St., Suite 2, Modesto. 7 pm to 10 pm. Info: John Aguirre, (559) 280-3864; jpmamodesto@gmail.com

Friday Morning Funstrummers Band Rehearsal. Donation 9:15am to Noon. College Avenue United Church of Christ, 1341 College Ave., Modesto. 209-505-3216, www.Funstrummers.com.

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

SATURDAY

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

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

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 kathyhaynesESG@gmail.com

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

Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org
Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.