



# stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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## Al Gore: Snowden Revealed 'Crimes Against the Constitution' The former vice president takes aim at NSA surveillance during public lecture

By **ANDREA GERMANOS**  
Staff writer, Common Dreams

Former Vice President Al Gore said that the "outrageous" and "completely unacceptable" surveillance revealed by National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden showed possible "crimes against the Constitution."

Gore made the comments Tuesday in a public lecture entitled "Technology and the Future of Democratization" at McGill University in Montreal, *The Canadian Press* reports. <http://www.theprovince.com/news/Gore+predicts+lawmakers+will+rein+gov+ernment+surveillance/9134922/story.html>

The "absurd" lengths the government is

going to in its surveillance don't work, Gore told the university crowd. "When you are looking for a needle in a haystack, it's not always wise to pile more hay on the haystack."

Denouncing the dragnet surveillance Snowden exposed, Gore added, "I say that as someone who was a member of the National Security Council working in the White House and getting daily briefings from the CIA."

This was not the first time Gore has voiced criticism of the NSA's surveillance programs; in an interview with the *Guardian* in June, he said that the agency's bulk collection of U.S. citizens' phone records "in my view

Al Gore . . . . . continued on pg.11

## An online pledge that might actually change the world

By **JESSICA MURREY**

Washington, DC - Genocide, school shootings, rape... it's easy to express outrage after the fact. It is obvious that senseless violence is wrong. But what about the root cause?

Bias. Fear. Hate.

They are alive and kicking in every community. None of us is off the hook.

It could be towards people of different ethnicities, religions or ideologies. Or maybe you just think people who eat at McDonalds are ignorant. Or you think people who refuse to eat fast food are stuck up.

If we want to end violent conflict, we must eradicate prejudice, understand life in one another's shoes and see conflicts as opportunities - not threats. We must discover constructive solutions to our mutual problems, rather than letting our relationships - or even the government - shut down.

This is the thinking behind Join the Search, the global movement to end violence. United Network of Young Peacebuilders, the Peace and Collaborative Development Network, and dozens more local youth organizations are already onboard. By International Day of Peace 2014, we're aiming to get one million people to take the pledge to end violent conflict and join the movement.

Violent conflict means physical and sexual violence, but it also includes verbal abuse, bullying and systematic discrimination. Violent conflict is a root cause of hunger, poverty, low education and poor healthcare. It disrupts trade for decades and destroys the environment.

Eighteen of the world's hungriest countries experienced recent violent conflict. While varying from conflict to conflict, civilian deaths in war have increased in the last century, up to 90 percent of all deaths, with the vast bulk of these being women and children. The total cost to contain violence is U.S. \$9.5 trillion, equal to 11 percent of global GDP.

It has to end.

It starts with you and me, but it's got to go global. Join the Search strives to raise awareness about the impact of violent conflict, shift

attitudes on how relevant and preventable violent conflict is, and empower a network of people with the skills to handle conflict in their own lives.

That's why my Marine and pacifist friends both took the pledge. It's not about being a doormat. It's not about changing your beliefs or who you are. It's about changing your response to conflict. It's about having the skills to create constructive dialogue in heated situations, with uncomfortable topics.

We're all wary of clicktivism. So how does signing a pledge online help us end violent conflict? Each month pledgers receive one email with: 1) A Join the Search challenge to exercise their conflict-solving muscles, 2) an inspirational story from the field, showing peacebuilders in action and 3) an invite to a virtual event with amazing speakers all over the world.

Each month the JTS Challenge will dare us to better ourselves by pushing us to look outside our own selective scope. The movement provides loads of opportunities to connect with other pledgers all over the globe, giving us a chance to understand violent conflict in a different context or country. When you put it all together, that is a mass of people on every continent equipped to constructively deal with conflict on both an individual and global level.

If a million people thought twice before writing off the other side, led their communities to constructive solutions during troubling times, and believed that ending violence was possible, think of how the world could change.

It starts with you and me. Take the pledge today. Visit <http://www.sfcg.org/jointhe-search/>

\*Jessica Murrey is the Communications Manager at Search for Common Ground.

This article, first posted on The Huffington Post on 7 November, is published with permission in the Common Ground News Service (CGNews).

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### Annual Modesto Peace/Life Center Holiday Party Potluck & Song Circle

Saturday December 14, 2013  
6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

At the home of Dan & Alice Onorato  
1532 Vernon, Modesto

Bring your festive spirit and food to share!  
Information: 526-5436

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## International conference: "Moving Beyond Capitalism"

Capitalism is in crisis. Backed by arms, it dominates and threatens humanity and the planet. Survival now means putting ourselves before profit. What economic and social practices go beyond gender, race, class divisions to empower the many instead of enriching the few? To answer, the Center for Global Justice invites thinkers and doers from the global North and South to bi-lingual discussions of the practical global task of "moving beyond capitalism."

The Center for Global Justice is mounting a major international conference on "Moving Beyond Capitalism." The idea of the conference is that many people in both the global North and the global South are developing practices and institutions that point toward a future alternative to actually existing capitalism; seeds of a new economy. We want to bring together activists and academics who are making another world happen.

The conference will occur **July 29 to August 5, 2014** in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

Among the featured speakers are David Schweickart (his ideas on economic democracy are widely discussed), Gar Alperovitz (author *What Then Must We Do?*), Gustavo Esteva (de-professionalized Mexican intellectual), Margaret Flowers & Kevin Zeese (Occupy activists and members of the Green Party Shadow Cabinet), Camila Pineiro Harnecker (Cuban economist and leading cooperative advocate), Fernando Sanchez Cuadros (Peruvian economist), and Ellen Brown (Public Banking Institute).

We invite you to complement prophesy by addressing problems of transformation, commenting on solutions or proposing new ones, and sharing organizing results. Summaries of individual or group submissions are due by December 31, 2013; full descriptions (or papers) by April 30, 2014.

**Center for Global Justice** ([www.globaljusticecenter.org](http://www.globaljusticecenter.org)), is an international network of educators and activists, is devoted to "research and learning for a better world."

*Send descriptions and address queries to* [admin@globaljusticecenter.org](mailto:admin@globaljusticecenter.org)

Phone in Mexico: (52) 415 150 0025 from US 347 983 5084. <http://www.globaljusticecenter.org/wp-content/Call2013.pdf>

## Modesto Sound offers internship program

By BRENDA FRANCIS

Modesto Sound offers an internship program called The Job Circle. It is open to students from any school in the area and is supported by volunteers, grants, and donations. Students learn skills that are useful at any job such as verbal and written communication, teamwork, general job etiquette, plus skills specific to the audio industry. This internship becomes a work and college application reference.

The Job Circle is similar to the Circle of Life. At Modesto Sound new interns receive mentoring from experienced interns. Later they will be the experienced ones mentoring others. This keeps the program sustainable and lively. We welcome new interns, volunteers, and sponsors!

Find out more at Modesto Sound's "Get Involved" web page <http://www.modestosound.com/get-involved/index.html>

Here is a video link of an intern talking about her experience at Modesto Sound. <http://youtu.be/p2rlTGPjO0U>

Visit Modesto Sound at <http://www.modestosound.org>

## Valley Improvement Project

Valley Improvement Projects' (V.I.P.) mission is to improve the quality of life of under-represented and marginalized residents of California's Central Valley, by promoting social and environmental issues through youth outreach, education, technology, and art. Our organization values the rights to be free from environmental destruction and access to clean air, water, land, and food for all, just as we believe that public policy should be shaped by the people it directly affects.

V.I.P. utilizes technology, social media and the arts to conduct outreach in our local parks, churches, and community members' households which has allowed us to recruit interested youth and supporters. We inform through the use of educational materials, workshops, and discussions held in our local San Joaquin Valley neighborhoods, which are under-represented communities.

Weekly/monthly/regular events at VIP, 400 12th St., Suite 14, Modesto, CA 95354, phone (209) 589-9277.

- Office/Drop-in Hours: Monday-Friday 4pm-8pm and Saturday-Sunday 12pm-4pm
- Last Sunday of the month at 4pm: V.I.P. General Assembly (open meeting to discuss/propose projects, etc.)
- 2nd Sunday of the month at 4pm: Mid-Month Meeting (check-ins/updates from General Assembly)
- 1st Friday of the month at 7pm: Know Your Rights/ CopWatch Training and discussion
- 2nd Friday of the month at 7pm: Dinner and a Movie Night (potluck, film screening, and discussion)
- 3rd Saturday of the month from 10am-4pm: Really Really Free Market and Bicycle Workshop
- Every Wednesday at 6:30pm: Mindful Distress Meeting (Secular/Autonomous meetings focusing on Mental Health/Harm Reduction/Self Management)

Valley Improvement Projects is a project of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit. Visit V.I.P. at <http://valleyimprovementprojects.org/about>. Email: [valleyimprovementprojects@gmail.com](mailto:valleyimprovementprojects@gmail.com)

Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/ValleyImprovementProjects?ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/ValleyImprovementProjects?ref=br_tf)

## Video and Discussion Evening at the Modesto Peace/Life Center

By JOHN LUCAS

At the last Peace Vigil, Sandy Sample and I were thinking about how we used to show videos at the Peace Center years ago. From that discussion, it was decided that I would see if there was any interest in doing this again. I am thinking about reviving this event again on monthly basis, probably starting in January of 2014.

We would meet once a month, show a video then discuss afterwards. As I see it, the videos' topics would deal with peace, social justice, or environmental sustainability, but we are open to suggestions. If you have suggestions about preferred days or times or have any videos that you would loan to us to use in this way, let me know.

I want to start a contact list of those interested. If you would like to be on the list, email John Lucas at [lucasjal@sbcglobal.com](mailto:lucasjal@sbcglobal.com) or call me at 209-765-3813.

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# John McCutcheon returns in a benefit concert

By KEN SCHROEDER

John McCutcheon returns in a benefit concert for the Modesto Peace/Life Center on **Tuesday, January 14 at 7 p.m.** at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave. Annually, for thirteen years now, John has entertained, inspired and moved us with his songs, stories and humor.

In 2004 our old friend John Morearty, peace activist from Stockton, said, "In these times, we all need hope and joy. John McCutcheon sings to us."

Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$23 at the door and youth 18 and under are \$5. Groups of 10 or more are \$15 per person. Tickets can be purchased by check or cash at the Brethren Church, 2301 Woodland Ave., 523-1438 or at Beads of Contentment, 1028 J St., Modesto, 523-6335. Out-of-towners can call the church to arrange to purchase tickets by mail. John McCutcheon concert tickets are a meaningful holiday gift.

Please consider becoming a sponsor of the concert. You will receive tickets to the concert, your name in the program, and reserved seating. Five levels of sponsorship are available:

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

For information on sponsorships, contact Ken Schroeder, (209) 569-0321, kschroeder70@yahoo.com

# Potluck Song Fest Saturday, Dec. 14

By DAN ONORATO

You like adventure in your food? A mix in your music? Good people with lively conversation? Doing a kind deed? Chances are you nodded yes to at least three. So you're ripe, ready, overdue probably, for a good party. And we've got just the thing for you—the Peace/Life Center's annual Holiday Party at the Onorato's on Saturday evening, December 14, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

It's a potluck, so that's where the adventure comes in. But judging from past experience, the luck is a sure thing. Bring one of your favorite tasty dishes and a beverage—enough to share, and you'll make eyes dilate, mouths salivate, and stomachs leap like Irish step dancers in a trance.

As for music, we'll sing merrily, from "Christmas is Coming" to "Light One Candle," from "Study War No More" to "Froggy Went a Courtin'," from "La Bamba" and "Joe Hill" to "Step by Step" and "We Shall Not Be Moved" and many more. Master musician and troubadour John Poat, lead singer for the local band "Wooden Nickel," will help us soar in song as well as merriment.

Lively, congenial conversation will be the thread that weaves from one to another throughout the evening, tying us together more closely into the community that enriches our

lives and gives us strength when we most need it.

And the good deed? This year, at the suggestion of Jana Chiavetta, we'll begin a new tradition: *we ask everyone or every family to bring with them a gift, a new book for a child (K-1 to K-6)*, that Jana will distribute at Wilson Elementary where she teaches. Eighty-nine percent of the kids at Wilson qualify for free or reduced meals at school, and 20% come from families whose parents didn't graduate from high school. The majority of the students at Wilson score below proficiency on state tests in English and math. The likelihood is most of the children don't have many books in their homes.

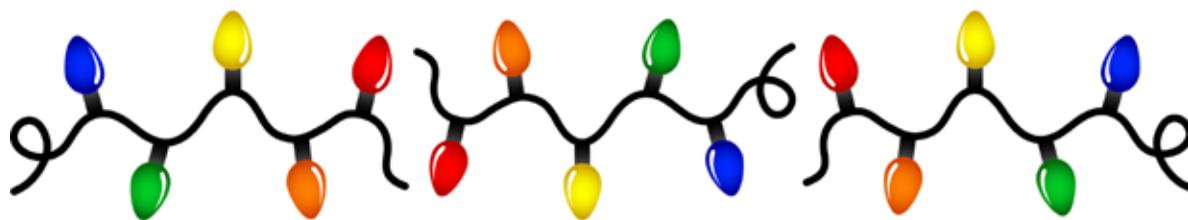


Thus, this extra touch at this time of year when the spirit of giving generously is so palpable.

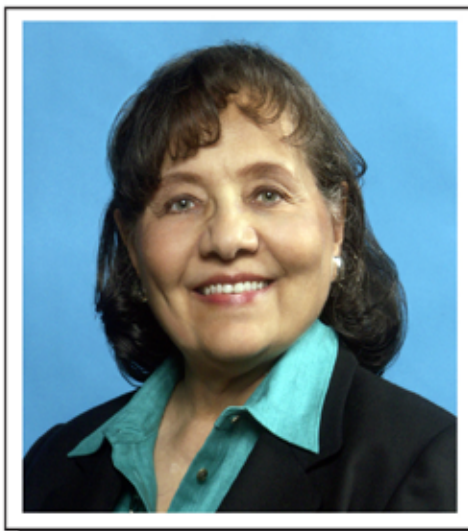
So mark you calendar now, imagine the culinary magic you'll add to our feast, start exercising your vocal chords, and have fun picking the book that will bring a happy smile and grateful heart to a child at Wilson School.

We look forward to a memorable evening.

**ACTION:** The party's at 1532 Vernon Avenue, Modesto.



## Keynote Speaker: Civil Rights Activist DIANE NASH



**SATURDAY, February 1, 2014**

*Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration  
with Diane Nash*

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435 College Ave., Modesto

- 6:00 p.m. - Doors Open
- 7:00 p.m. - Free program

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City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Dept.; Modesto Junior College; ASMJC; Modesto Peace/Life Center; California State University, Stanislaus; Rockwell, Kelly, & Duarte, LLP. *Sponsors needed. Email jcostello@igc.org, or call 537-7818.*



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209-529-5750.

# Worth the “Weight”

By JENIFER WEST

It’s taken me awhile to come to terms with it. Maybe that’s because it happened gradually enough that I didn’t notice it at first. Or because I didn’t want to see it. I mean, I *really* didn’t want to see it. But when I could no longer fit into my roomiest clothes – even my beloved overalls – I had to admit it: I’ve put on a few. Ok, more than a few. Admittedly, I’ve always been pretty small. In fact, I never weighed enough to be able to donate blood. And I *loved* the way I looked. But people have been telling me that I look healthier, these days.

I’ve been trying to believe it.

It all started with the unfortunate convergence of a change of medication and a few too many candles on the old birthday cake. I’ll admit to being in denial at first, and then angry – very angry. I’ve carried the same weight, within 5 pounds or so, for my entire adult life – a good 25 or 30 years. So when the numbers on the scale headed north, I was absolutely indignant.

There’s so much pressure on women to be unhealthily thin, these days. As I write this, there are not one but two articles online wherein female celebrities are showing off, and garnering much attention for, their newly thin physiques. (One of them even endured an on-air comment from a talk show host, praising her for “keeping her b\*\*bs”!) And there’s certainly been a lot of buzz in recent months about the quickest way for women to get back to their “pre-pregnancy weight” – and incredible pressure to do so within weeks of giving birth!

Fortunately, there’s a counter-movement afoot. A super-model, alarmed by the increasing prevalence of eating disorders in girls at younger ages, recently published an article showing an un-retouched photo of herself, along with the “glamorized” version of the same photo, which was minus some bodily folds and wrinkles. In the article, she emphasized that the photos in magazines are always touched up, resulting in completely unrealistic, unhealthy, and often anatomically impossible images. She encouraged girls (and women) to pursue healthy, physically active lifestyles, which will naturally help them to maintain an appropriate weight. She also stressed the fact that numbers are just numbers – whether they apply to one’s dress size, shoe size, or, say, the price of a fresh, juicy apple.

So I’ve finally resigned myself to it, and recently invested

in clothes that work better with this new body I’m wearing. While I started out kicking and screaming (and more than a little depressed), this process has actually helped me to accept it – and, I have to admit, even begin to embrace it. Turns out I do like being a little “curvier”, because clothes actually seem to work a little better for me – albeit in a larger size. And it’s funny, but when we “graduate” from one size to the next, we actually look better in the larger size that we’ve grown into. I always thought it was the other way around – wearing bigger clothes, I assumed, would make one look bigger, while wearing a smaller size would force one to “hold it in”, making one look smaller. But it really doesn’t – it just makes you look like you’re wearing clothes that are uncomfortably too small.

Actually, updating my wardrobe has turned out to be liberating, and even fun. It’s been quite some time since there were new, up-to-the-minute clothes in the closet. And fortunately, there’s a nice range of colors and styles in the stores these days, which will work for a variety of shapes and sizes.

Finding footwear that works, too has been part of the equation. Those of us who need wider shoes often find it challenging to find something fashionable that works with a professional look, without causing us to hobble in pain by lunchtime. Of course I understood that, but until I found a couple of different styles of boots, I never realized how much my limited shoe choices have limited what I can wear, which in turn has limited how I present myself to the world. The full impact of that was a surprise, and one I’m very glad to have remedied!

Another not-too-surprising plus is that when I’m dressed a little better, I actually feel more professional, and find that I’m even a bit more effective at work. Of course, as the old expression says, clothes don’t “make the man,” but they definitely don’t hurt, either! If you don’t believe it, just check out the video of Jim Wolf, a 54-year-old homeless veteran whose free “makeover” has motivated him to begin to work on turning his life around. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a6VvncgHcY>)

For most of us, the passing of time leads inevitably to the addition of a pound or ten. But if we stay focused on living healthy and becoming the best we can be, we just may come to realize that the numbers, whatever they are, aren’t important. It’s who we are that really carries the “weight”.



## Poinsettia care

By ANNE of GREEN GARDENS

Poinsettias have been a holiday tradition in the U.S. since the 1920s. This tropical plant originated in Mexico and prefers warm temperatures.

To keep your poinsettia looking well, place it away from drafty areas like the front or back door. When the plant is exposed to cool temperatures, the effects may not show for a few days. So if leaves start to darken, think back on what may have happened a few days before. If you bought it on a shopping trip then left it in the car for a few hours while you were at the mall, you may have unknowingly killed it.

Check poinsettia soil every day or two with a finger. Keep soil moist but not wet. When watering, remove the decorative sleeve and allow water to drain before replacing. Indoor temperatures should range between 60-70 F to keep your plant healthy. Be gentle with plants, as mishandling causes leaves and branches to ooze a milky sap (which can cause skin irritation in some people).

Are poinsettias toxic? In the 70s a rumor that a 2 year old ate the colorful bracts (leaves) and died has never been proven. Like most houseplants, poinsettias are not a snack for your child or pet. According to the Society of American Florists (SAF), the poinsettia is the most widely tested consumer plant on the market today and research has proven the plant is **not** toxic.

So rest easy knowing your pets and/or children are in no danger from this gorgeous and exotic plant. Did I mention easy to care for? It’s enough to want to make you fill your whole house with them. If you want to find out more information on keeping them alive past the holidays, check out my post “Poinsettias: A history” at <http://www.anneofgreengardens.com/2010/12/poinsettias-a-history/>

Visit Anne on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Anne-of-Green-Gardens/173294856040550>





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# Green Tips for a Green Planet: Festive, Frugal and Safe Holiday Lighting and Heating

By **TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL**

December in the USA is a month of special holidays – Chanukah (Nov. 27 to Dec. 5), Buddhist Bodhi Day (Dec. 8), Catholic Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12), Winter Solstice and Pagan/ Wiccan Yule (Dec. 21), Christmas (Dec. 25), African American Kwanzaa (Dec. 26-Jan.2), and New Year's Eve. There is even a Human Rights Day on December 10 our readers may want to include as you further “peace and goodwill toward all”.

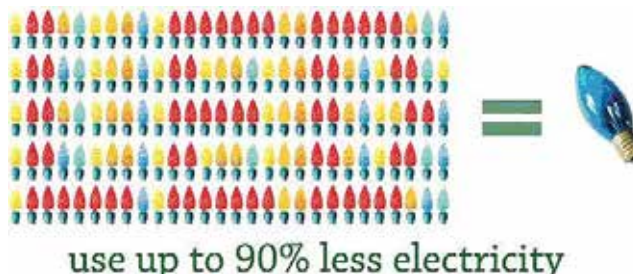
Good news! It's easy to minimize the extra energy costs and maximize the safety of that Yule log and those festive holiday lights with some wise green energy and safety tips from the California Consumer Energy Center and the California Department of Consumer Affairs:

1. Take inventory of those stored lights in your attic. The older strings use up to 10 watts per bulb and the C7 and C9 bulbs use 5 to 7 watts each! Replace the high watt strings with LED lights or mini-lights, which save up to 80-90 percent of your energy costs, are long lasting, cool to the touch, and can decrease the chances of home fires.

2. Use an automatic timer to turn lights on at night and off during daylight hours to avoid higher lighting costs. Be sure the time is rated to handle the total wattage of all lights plugged into it.

3. Before purchasing lights look for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) sign on the label, insuring they meet UL safety requirements. Make sure you are buying the correct set for indoor, outdoor or both, and be certain outdoor cords, plugs and sockets are weatherproof.

4. Check all lighting prior to decorating, and replace



the entire set if you find frayed wires, damaged sockets or cracked insulation.

5. Avoid overloading electrical circuits.

6. Keep electrical connections off the ground and wiring clear of drainpipes and railings to prevent risk of shock.

7. Use a ground fault circuit interrupter on each circuit to shut off the lights should current leaks through unnoticed frayed or damaged wires.

8. The National Fire Prevention Association attributes numerous home structure fires to improperly placed or faulty Christmas tree lighting, home heating issues and candles.

9. To avoid fires caused by lighting on trees be sure to keep trees well watered, while insuring that extension cords and light strings are out of the water. Be extra safe by turning tree lights on only when at home and awake, and keep a fire extinguisher nearby.

10. The risk of death in a home fire is cut in half, when a smoke alarm is installed. Be sure smoke detectors have new batteries and are in working order. Hint: a smoke alarm is a gift that shows you care.

11. The really safe and green alternative is to decorate the

tree the old-fashioned way with strings of cranberries and popcorn, and edible ornaments like gingerbread people and candy canes.

12. Home heating is the second largest cause of fires in the home and 40 percent of those are caused by buildup in chimneys and chimney connects. This is the time to call a chimney sweep to assure safe fireplace use.

13. Candlelight is romantic and holiday cheery, but consumers are cautioned they are a fire hazard, and scented candles have contributed to indoor air quality issues. Happily there are lots of battery operated real looking wax candles on the market these days.

14. Lighting can consume up to 25% of a homes electrical use. Consider helping Santa with stocking stuffers and/or gifts of compact LED or fluorescent light bulbs, which come in numerous sizes, shapes and wattages and use less energy than incandescent bulbs. Replace old halogen torchiere lamps with brighter, safer and more efficient fluorescent torchieres. If using the older torchieres, make certain they are at least 6 inches away from flammable materials.

15. Since the latest kitchen appliances use almost 50 percent less energy than those of a decade ago, ask Santa for that new stove, oven, refrigerator and/or dishwasher that you've been wanting/needng. They will be more efficient and save money on water, electrical and/or gas energy bills.

We at Connections wish you very happy, healthy, energy efficient and safe holidays. Be sure to look for kitchen energy saving Green Tips in the New Year <http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/index.html>

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## Calculators for a sustainable environment

By **JAMES COSTELLO**

Sara Morrin, a high school student in Atlanta, GA has put together a valuable website which contains not only a car payment and car use calculators but links to many calculators to help people reduce their energy footprints.

She writes:

Before a person can make even the smallest changes to their lifestyle, it helps to understand the environmental impact of certain choices. Online calculators are particularly helpful for figuring out how many resources a person uses and how big of an environmental footprint they have. Different calculators measure different areas. Some will figure out how much pollution a person's car contributes, while others measure the amount of paper a person uses. Other calculators look at the big picture and measure all areas.

Visit her website at <http://www.carpaymentcalculator.net/calcs/environmental.php>

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# Jerry Brown wants to be a Climate Leader - and to Frack for a Lot of oil

By **CLAIRE SANDBERG**, Truthout | News Analysis

California Governor Jerry Brown talks a big game on climate change.

Earlier this year, Brown released a 20-page consensus statement signed by 500 scientists from 44 countries calling for immediate and steep reductions in carbon emissions. Standing onstage beside NASA climate scientist James Hansen to unveil the document at a Silicon Valley tech conference this May, Brown warned that the window for meaningful action on climate change was quickly closing: "If it's like this five years from now, it's over," he told the assembled reporters.

Since then, Brown has signed new solar and electric car legislation and even traveled to Beijing to broker a nonbinding climate agreement with the Chinese government. The 75-year-old, third-term governor is fond of pointing to such a record and challenging national politicians to take California's lead. But if elected officials around the country follow Brown's example when it comes to fracking, all Brown's efforts to stop catastrophic climate change will be for nothing.

In August, Brown gave his blessing to a dramatic expansion of fracking in California's massive oil shale formations, which underlie a large area of the state from Southern to Central California. The fracking bill Brown signed into law, SB4, ensures that fracking will move forward unimpeded for at least the next two years, and exempts fracking from thorough review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the state's bedrock environmental law.

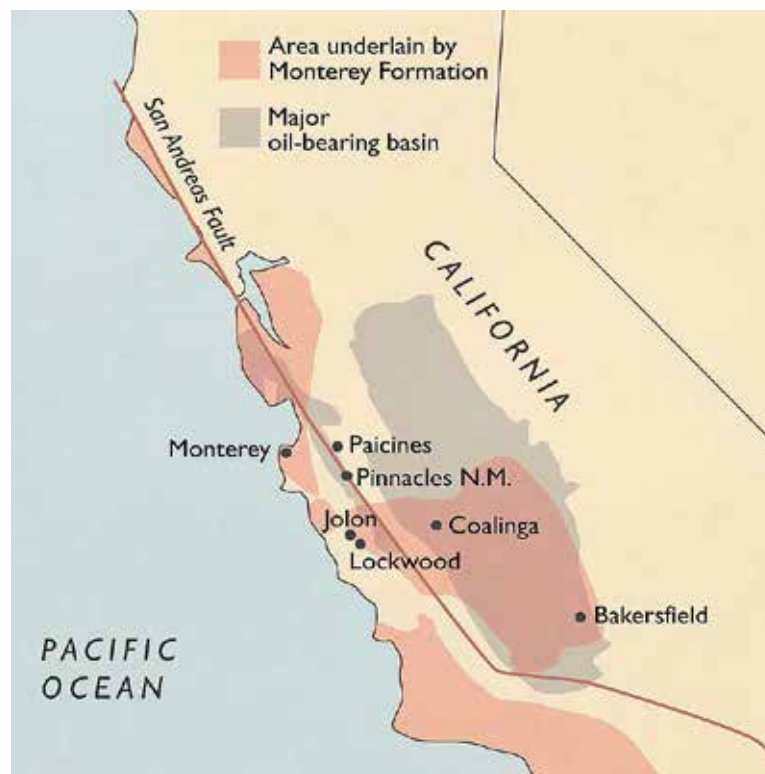
How Brown reconciles his stance on climate with his support for fracking has been the question environmentalists have challenged him to answer in recent months. The contrast was on full display in San Francisco on October 28, at the signing of another new climate pact, between California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. Inside the ceremony at the offices of Cisco Systems, Brown proclaimed global warming "the world's greatest existential challenge." On the street outside, anti-fracking protestors chanted, "Climate leaders don't frack!"

Brown addressed the issue at length, for the first time, after that event and then again on KQED's Forum the following day, in his most extensive remarks on fracking to date. In his statements, Brown revealed that, when it comes to fracking, he is not just out-of-step with other proponents of climate action, he is living in his own reality. The governor, who last year created a web site to expose climate deniers' lack of knowledge on global warming, in his recent comments failed to demonstrate a solid grasp of what is arguably the most important environmental decision he will make in his tenure in office - whether or not to allow fracking.

Most strikingly, Brown seemed not to know that fracking is already ongoing in California. "The key point here that most people have in their minds is fracking the Monterey

shale. Nobody's doing that. At best, it's several years, if it ever happens," Brown said on Forum.

But fracking is happening in California, including in the state's largest shale formation, the Monterey. The state Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources has not tracked fracking activity comprehensively, so the extent of the practice is hard to quantify, but companies like Venoco and Occidental Petroleum have boasted to their investors about their use of unconventional techniques like fracking. Occidental, the largest acreage holder of oil and gas mineral rights in California and the largest player in the Monterey Shale, told investors in July, "We've drilled approximately 1,300 unconventional wells in California since 1998. More than 1,000 of these have been in and around Elk Hills, includ-



ing the Monterey and other key shale plays."

Brown also appeared confused about what his own legislation on fracking does. He insisted, "[Fracking] can't happen until a major and the first serious scientific study to an environmental impact analysis that I required by a law I signed two months ago is done."

If Brown's statement were true, SB4 would be a de facto moratorium, which is what most anti-fracking groups in California pushed for this legislative session. In fact, SB4 actually mandates that fracking permits be approved until 2015 - preventing the legislature or Brown from implementing a moratorium or holding back new fracking wells, for any reason, for the next two years. A provision stating that the state "shall" approve new fracking wells was inserted late in the game under pressure from the oil industry.

Such a law is unprecedented, even with the spate of pro-

fracking bills that have passed state legislatures in recent months.

"I don't know of any other state that has a provision like this," said Kassie Siegel, senior counsel for the Center for Biological Diversity. "Completing environmental review before allowing an activity to go forward to ensure fully informed decision making is a bedrock principle of environmental law."

It's unclear at this point what it means for Brown's public stance on fracking to be based on such verifiably false premises.

Some have noted that Brown has taken \$2.5 million in campaign contributions and other funds from oil and natural gas interests. Occidental Petroleum's donations in particular stand out. Occidental is the largest oil and gas donor to the governor's Proposition 30 ballot campaign to raise taxes on the wealthy. Prop 30 was fought bitterly by corporate-funded PACs, but had the unexpected backing of California oil and gas.

The passage of SB4 has been good news for Occidental. In an October investor call, Occidental executives cited "more favorable permitting" as the impetus behind its plan to increase capital expenditures by \$500 million next year in California. "Most of this increase will be directed towards unconventional drilling opportunities where we have more than 1 million prospective acres for unconventional resources," said Occidental president and CEO, Steve Chazen.

Chazen demurred to say how much SB4 specifically had influenced Occidental's plans for 2014, but market observers have been far more blunt about the law's impact. One Reuters analyst recently wrote that SB4 "endorses fracking" and "brings widespread fracking in California a step closer."

Widespread oil fracking shouldn't sound like a winning plan for reducing carbon emissions, and it's not. The Monterey Shale alone is estimated to contain 15.4 billion barrels of oil, making it the biggest shale oil deposit in the United States - roughly twice the size of North Dakota's Bakken Shale. And unlike the Bakken, which produces light, "sweet" crude, the Monterey Shale is made up of thick, heavy oil similar in carbon density to petroleum from tar sands. Burning all of those 15.4 billion barrels would release 7.7 billion tons of carbon into the atmosphere. That's 17 times California's annual emissions, at 2010 levels, or one year's worth of emissions from the entire nation. For comparison, estimates put the carbon impact of the Keystone XL pipeline at 6.34 billion tons of carbon.

When pressed for an answer on the climate contradiction by the San Jose Mercury News, Brown dodged the question and pivoted to a discussion of the merits of natural gas as a potential bridge fuel, explaining, "This is a complicated

# A Bomb Dome

By **RICHARD ANDERSON**, Professor Emeritus of Microbiology, Modesto Junior College

Some things you just have to see for yourself!

An example was the crowning glory of my “biologist’s pilgrimage” to the Galapagos Islands to see a woodpecker finch use a cactus spine to get food-like the photo in my 1961 biology textbook. It claimed that this little bird with a spine in its mouth was using it as a tool to get food. Can a bird REALLY use a tool? At the very end of our day’s visit to one island, in flew a woodpecker finch. Close up, with perfect camera lighting, he performed his hyperactive poking and prodding with a tiny twig in his beak, and winkled out a fat bark larva! It brought me to tears.

In our trip today in Japan, we saw for ourselves that the Japanese Shinkansen (Bullet Train) really does perform superbly - and that droves of people eagerly use them. Made me think that we in the U.S. can too - if we have the vision and resolve to “make it so.”

But today’s pilgrimage was to see Hiroshima myself - both the site of one of the most egregious inhumanities to man, and the city whose obliteration my father says saved his life.

Of course in the 50’s I was raised with Dad’s war stories. He was deferred until 1945, since he had been making military



**A relic left as a reminder never to forget - the “A Bomb Dome” at Hiroshima- Photo: Richard Anderson, Nov. 5, 2013.**

aircraft exhaust systems, when all the planes had propellers. He was on a Navy troop transport late July when he noticed that the cruise he thought was taking him to Australia made a sharp starboard turn; he guessed where they were going. He was 28, the father of two and on his way to be an assault wave on Japan!

On Aug 6 and 9, atomic bomb blasts leveled Hiroshima

then Nagasaki. “They told Hirohito the next one was coming down his chimney,” Dad would say, then “They got what they deserved - they started it!”

There is no sense arguing with him, like pointing out that nuclear war is a hell within the hell of war. At 98 this December, he still knows what is true for him. We both know that far more people were killed by conventional war like the bombings of Dresden and Hamburg, firebombings of Tokyo, and the German assaults into Russia.

The specter of nuclear holocaust hung over us all right up till 1988 when Mr. Gorbachev oversaw the dismantling of the Soviet Union. Now it is tempting to forget that there are over 4,000 bombs ready-to-use and another 13,000 “in storage” worldwide.

I think nobody would seriously consider using nuclear bombs if they actually saw the effects of those 1945 bombs in person.

It is heartening that Japan has such a national emphasis on peace, so well exhibited at its Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. We, on the other end of those bombs, must “never forget” that atomic bombs must never be used again. Japan has not.

**ACTION:** Check out the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Museum site at [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/top\\_e.html](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/top_e.html)



## Global Survival 101: A multi-disciplinary course proposal

By **DAVID KRIEGER**

A missing element in the standard university curriculum is a course that provides awareness of the global nature and dangers of the world’s most serious problems and the attendant global solutions that are needed to solve these problems.

The most serious dangers confronting humanity are those that endanger species survival. Falling into this category are nuclear weapons with their potential for triggering an intentional or inadvertent nuclear war, and climate change resulting in global warming. These dangers are directly affecting the survival potential of the human species and other forms of complex life on the planet.

Other global dangers include population growth; pollution of the oceans and atmosphere; scarcity of safe drinking water; food shortages and famines; continued reliance on fossil fuels; creation of nuclear wastes; spread of communicable diseases; disparity in resource distribution; the ill-effects of poverty; international terrorism and war.

In today’s world, all borders are permeable to people, pollution, ideas and disease. No country, no matter how powerful militarily, can protect its citizens from the global threats confronting humanity. Without cooperation among nations, the problems will not be resolved and people everywhere and the planet will suffer. Destruction of civilization and extinction of the human species are within the range of possibility.

University students need grounding in the global dangers that confront humans as a species, as well as a sense of the interconnectedness of these dangers and the ways forward to solutions that can alleviate and reverse the dangers.

I propose the creation of a multi-disciplinary course entitled “Global Survival 101.” The course would be a founda-

University students need grounding in the global dangers that confront humans as a species, as well as a sense of the interconnectedness of these dangers and the ways forward to solutions that can alleviate and reverse the dangers.

tion for global concerns in the 21st century. I envision this as a mandatory course for all college students regardless of discipline that would be aimed at creating an awareness of global dangers, an understanding of their interconnected nature, and what courses of action would increase or decrease global well-being and improve the odds of human survival.

Course content could include:

1. The uniqueness of planet Earth
2. Global dangers
3. Species responsibilities
  - a. To pass the planet on intact to new generations
  - b. To take into account the rights of future generations
  - c. To be good stewards of the planet for ourselves and other forms of life
4. Nuclear weapons and the Nuclear Age
  - a. The power of our technologies
  - b. The flaws in nuclear deterrence theory
5. Climate change
6. Protection of the Common Heritage of Humankind

- a. The oceans
- b. The atmosphere
- c. The Arctic and Antarctica
- d. Outer space
7. Population growth
8. The right to clean water
9. Food insecurity and famine
10. Nuclear wastes
11. Epidemic diseases
12. Resource distribution and disparity
13. Poverty
14. International terrorism
15. War
16. Peace
17. Human rights and responsibilities
18. Changing our modes of thinking
19. A new global ethic: liberty, justice and dignity for all
20. Changing the world
  - a. The role of education
  - b. The role of the individual
  - c. The role of civil society
  - d. The role of technology
  - e. The role of the arts

David Krieger is President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

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# The Power of Stories

From Len and Libby Traubman

*“A story is the shortest distance between people.”*

— Pat Speight

*“Storytelling is a shared experience, and shared experiences are the basis of all relationships.”*

— J.G. “Paw-paw” Pinkerton

*“Stories simultaneously celebrate what is unique about us and provide bridges to what is common among us.”*

— The Storyweavers, Lucinda Flodin & Dennis Frederick

*“Storytelling can change a room. It can change lives. It can change the world.”*

— Gwenda LedBetter

*“Storytelling creates a pathway toward true ‘civilization.’”*

— The Storycrafters, Jeri Burns & Barry Marshall

**We are one human family** — neighbors forever — **with our shared story of Earth and us.** “The society of the planet” must get going, said educator Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), or “you don’t have anything.” Individual survival is an illusion.

Campbell says that the only vision, myth, or story “that’s going to be worth thinking about in the immediate future is one that’s talking about the planet. “Not the city, not (particular) people, but the planet and everybody on it.”

**OUR MYTH - OUR PLANET.** Joseph Campbell. 2-min video

<http://traubman.igc.org/earthmyth.swf>. Human success stories of life together surround us, if we seek them.

**ONE STORY - ONE SCHOOL,** Middle East (fiction) **UNDER THE SAME SUN** is the first full-length film by **Search for Common Ground** — <http://www.sfcg.org>

Early October, 2013, was the first film broadcast on the same day to large audiences on both Israeli and Palestinian television. The film tells the story of two businessmen — a Palestinian Muslim and an Israeli Jew — who set out to make money, and who end up forwarding peace. Their joint venture, a solar energy company, provokes profound hostility from members of their respective families and communities.

Understanding that the business will have little chance of success without peaceful, popular support, they mount a Facebook campaign that results in a groundswell of popular encouragement in both communities, for both their joint venture and for better coexistence.

Crowds of people awaken, express themselves, and insist on a political agreements that serve and dignify both peoples.

Beginning with face-to-face relationships, cooperation, and creativity between two, courageous individual citizens, the film shows what is possible, what can be.

Watch for upcoming screenings worldwide.

**Under The Same Sun.** Trailer — 1-1/2 min

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7S8EpU5HPRI>. For information about obtaining DVDs on a limited basis, write to Karen Zehr at [KZehr@sfcg.org](mailto:KZehr@sfcg.org)

Learn more about this historic film event: **Israeli, Palestinian TV to simultaneously air film about conflict.**

The docu-drama was shot in the West Bank and in east Jerusalem and stars actors from both Israel and the Palestinian Territories by Felice Friedson & Diana Atallah — The Media Line. The Jerusalem Post — 03 October 2013

<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Israeli-Palestinian-TV-to-simultaneously-air-film-about-conflict-327845>

**ONE STORY - ONE FARM**

Middle East (non-fiction) <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Israeli-Palestinian-TV-to-simultaneously-air-film-about-conflict-327845>

**Israeli Shaul David Judelman and Palestinian Ziad Abed Sabateen** plan to open an organic farm together. The rabbi and the Palestinian farmer are neighbors, partners — and increasingly, friends. They will sell vegetables and support both Palestinian and Jewish families in need.

**Difference Maker. A rabbi and a Palestinian farmer are neighbors, partners — and friends.** By Margarida Santos Lopes, The Christian Science Monitor — October 4, 2013

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2013/1004/A-rabbi-and-a-Palestinian-farmer-are-neighbors-partners-and>

These and hundreds of other success stories are preserved at <http://traubman.igc.org/messages.htm>

## FRACKING

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equation.”

The equation, however, is actually rather simple. As Brown knows full well, we’re already on track for serious climate impacts that can only be worsened by increased greenhouse gas emissions. The International Panel on Climate Change just affirmed what has become a rallying cry for climate activists by urging policymakers to start considering most existing fossil fuel reserves off limits. But that shift to a sane climate policy can only happen if elected leaders choose to stand with their constituents over their oil industry donors and reject the dirtiest, most-carbon intensive projects without equivocation.

The IPCC’s most recent report makes clear that Governor Brown’s legacy as a climate leader stands or falls on what he does next on fracking. If he issues a firm “no” to an industry that, left to its own ends, will jeopardize the ecological foundations of life on Earth, he may well be remembered as a bold climate champion. If, however, he stays the course and allows the oil industry to usher in a new fossil fuel boom in the Golden State, no one will remember him for solar panels or electric vehicles — only for the carbon pollution unleashed by the rush to frack California’s Monterey Shale.

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Claire Sandberg is an organizer and writer in Oakland, Calif. You can follow her on Twitter at @clairesandberg. <http://truth-out.org/news/item/19913-jerry-brown-wants-to-be-a-climate-leader-and-to-frack-for-a-lot-of-oil>

## The 25 most censored stories from 2012-2013 now online

From Project Censored

The presentation of this year’s Top 25 stories extends the tradition originated by Professor Carl Jensen and his Sonoma State students in 1976, while reflecting how the expansion of the Project to include affiliate faculty and students from campuses across the country and around the world—initiated several years ago as outgoing director Peter Phillips passed the reins to current director Mickey Huff—has made the Project even more diverse and robust. During this year’s cycle, Project Censored reviewed 233 Validated Independent News stories (VINs) representing the collective efforts of 219 college students and 56 professors from 18 college and university campuses that participate in our affiliate program and 13 additional community evaluators.

Those familiar with Project Censored’s work know that we define censorship as “anything that interferes with the free flow of information in a society that purports to have a free press.” This broader conception of censorship includes the subtle yet constant and sophisticated manipulation of reality by mass media. Such manipulation can take the form of political pressure (from government officials and powerful individuals), economic pressure (from advertisers and funders), and legal pressure (from the threat of lawsuits

**PROJECT CENSORED**

from deep-pocket individuals, corporations, and institutions). Censorship includes stories that were never published, but also those that get such restricted distribution that few in the public are likely to know about them.

By this standard, each of the news stories in our listing of the top 25 for 2012-13 is a censored story, whether the story has received no corporate coverage at all, or—in cases where the story has received corporate coverage—that coverage is partial in one or both senses of the term, i.e., incomplete and/or biased.

Although many of the Top 25 stories can be interpreted as emphasizing “what’s wrong” in the world today, we hope that our annual list is also understood as a celebration and appreciation of the good work that these independent reporters and news organizations do.

View the 25 most censored stories from: 2012-2013 here <http://www.projectcensored.org/category/top-25-censored-stories-from-2012-2013/>



## POET: Sy Margaret Baldwin

I was born and raised in an industrial town in the West Midlands of England, a town to which my parents had moved when the aircraft company for which my father worked relocated from the London area to escape the Blitz.

Other major events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century helped shape my family history—my mother's family lived near Newcastle, an area that was devastated by the Great Depression. When my grandfather, a signalman in the trenches of World War I, lost his job at the shipyards, together with thousands of others, he was out of work for several years. My mother, at age sixteen, arranged to work as a home help for a family in London, traveled there alone, and later found jobs in the city for her father and two older brothers. She remained a strong resourceful woman all her life.

I now live in the Sierra. From 1992 to 2008 I worked as a Wildlife Technician for Stanislaus National Forest. My poems have appeared in *Poetry Now*, *Tule Review*, *The Literary Bohemian*, *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, and other journals. My chapbook *Deerhoof Machete* was published by White Pine Press.



## White Scarf

—A Photo. Jewish History Museum, Amsterdam

The wind comes from the north  
and gathers strength across  
the flatness of the polders. In the gray  
light of dawn, trains slide over canals  
carrying long ribbons of faces.  
There are glimpses of life in the windows  
of seventeenth-century houses.  
In one, a vase of red tulips, in another  
a woman lost in reflection combing her hair.  
She pauses, her thoughts  
caught in the black and white  
net of the past.

There are no color photos.  
A small knot of people stand  
in a courtyard, pressed into a corner  
between massive brick walls.  
One arm is outstretched  
like a white scarf in a plea  
for ordinary life. A bleak  
wind rattles the shutters. Faces  
in the windows of the trains  
float like small colorless tulips  
held against the dawn.

## Saturn's Rings

She who was born between the wars  
and had escaped south out of the Great Depression  
with a fiery streak in her hair

now finds herself standing in the hall  
of her house excavating the contents of her handbag—  
not once, but three times—searching for whatever  
it was she thought it necessary to retrieve.

She looks up with a rueful smile. Last night,  
by satellite from 2.2 million miles away, images  
of Saturn's rings had arrived on her TV—and

they looked familiar. Something akin to interference  
or perhaps the ribbons of shadow  
thrown across her kitchen counter  
by the loose branches of the weeping willow.

But still, so much of the world seems to be speaking  
to her in code: in ring tones and electronic beeps,  
and little flashing red and green lights, while

she, a woman from the time of horses, must pause,  
listen again for the steady clip-clop of hooves.

First published in *Poetry Now*

## Uprooted

She runs through the broken china.  
She runs through the shattered glassware of

her home. She runs carrying the tongues  
of her five languages. She sees the long pink tongues

lolling out of the sides of the mouths of dogs  
as they run behind her catching the scent of her fear.

She sees the small unforgiving mouths of the guns.  
In the day she turns into the shadow of an animal.

In the night she runs through the mud of  
plowed fields, skirting all signs of habitation.

She crosses the borders—the ones  
that are always changing. She crawls under

the barbed wire of several wars. She asks  
the bushes why they can't make more shadow.

She asks the tongues of her five languages  
why not one of them can help her. She asks the flocks

of crows—eddy over the fields like the charred  
and blackened pages of a great library—

whose side they are on.

First published in *Calyx Journal*

## Tyneside

Last night I dreamt I was carrying  
the Edwardian teapot across the Tyne Bridge  
trailing the procession of mourners,

the hard breath of the horses  
that were pulling my great-great-grandmother's  
coffin over the swift current of the river.

Her hands appeared like tree roots crossed  
on her breast—as befitted a woman  
of some standing in the community.  
A black veil blinkered her eyes.

And it seemed all was as it should be  
except for the half-built ships lying dormant  
in the docks, and the sparrows darting away  
with nothing edible in their beaks.

As I walked across the bridge  
I cradled its body, its delicate spout,  
its flawless translucent throat, the teapot

that had never belonged to anyone  
on that hard-pressed side of the family.

# To Patriots Who Wish to Understand Militarization of America as Faced by JFK

Robert Kennedy Jr. has written the best analysis— see below— I have seen of how the military resisted and even negated JFK's efforts to design a nation that both met its international commitments while seeking world peace.

This history is important to understanding how power politics are very much part of the military tradition and illustrate that even today how a "pragmatic pacifist" (my term) like Barack Obama has had to move so slowly in modifying our overseas missions. RFK Jr. reports the disquieting view that the military was on the edge of direct disobedience to the Kennedy administration during the so-dangerous Cuban missile crisis. Kennedy was in great disfavor with much of the career military— he had stumbled in 1961 over the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuban by the CIA and nationals, he had done poorly in negotiations with Khrushchev in Vienna, yet was beginning to open doors to discussions with the USSR. His speech at American University in June 1963 should be read by everyone to see where JFK wanted to go, if he could deal with a largely hostile Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA (he had fired CIA chief Allen Dulles after the Bay of Pigs). Here is a key paragraph from that speech after JFK says "the most important topic on earth is peace":

*What kind of peace do I mean and what kind of a peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, and the kind that enables men and nations to grow, and to hope, and build a better life for their children — not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women, not merely peace in our time but peace in all time.*

My endorsement of RFK's analysis is based on lessons learned as a researcher/historian and my experience as an "Army Brat" for 20 years until my fathers retirement (during which time we lived in two occupied nations for about five years) and my service as a junior officer in the US Army, 1967-69, including a tour in Vietnam. During that tour I saw senior officers of the Intelligence system falsify reports to the President and Pentagon of enemy strength/intentions to present an image of "light at the end of the tunnel." For details, contact me for a copy of my memoir, *War Without Windows*, 1988, of that time—available for the cost of mailing.

No more war!

**Bruce Jones**

**Nov 22, 2013**

Read the entire RFK, Jr. article at <http://www.roll-ingstone.com/politics/news/john-f-kennedys-vision-of-peace-20131120>

## Memories of the day, written on November 21, 2013, by Bruce E. Jones:

The nation is engaged in retrospective of President Kennedy's assassination, with many remembering where we were on a day burned into our memories. For me, it was Friday at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, when Army ROTC

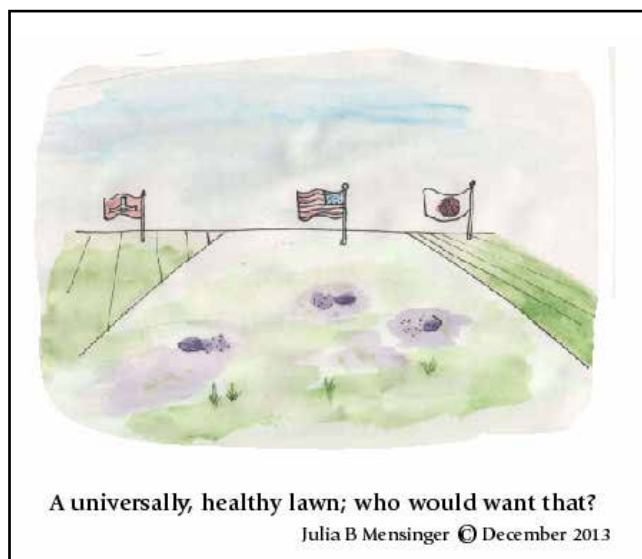


students wore their cadet uniforms for the weekly two-hour drill training. A day earlier, November 21, I had met Senator Ted Kennedy as he visited the campus.

On the 22nd, with a full schedule of classes, I had to wear my uniform all day long, including during work hours in the coat room at the Wisconsin Alumni Association Center. I saw a woman collapse into tears at the visitor's desk across from me in the lobby. As I ran over to help her, I heard the portable radio at her station reporting an attack on the President. I continued my shift at the coat room as a few somber visitors entered the center. One observed my uniform and said quietly, "You have a new Commander-in-Chief."

Kennedy had entered office with an inaugural speech that included this tough promise: "Let every nation know,... that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty." But we are learning that JFK in that final week was ready to bring home the small contingent of advisors already in Vietnam.

Lyndon Baines Johnson, the new Commander-in-Chief, was elected a year later by promising not to send "American boys" to fight someone else's jungle war. But in 1965, after passage of the infamous Tonkin Gulf Resolution, LBJ demonstrated he was the war hawk and began the tragic escalation. Had Kennedy not died on that day in 1963, the tremendous burden on America of the vast human, economic, and moral costs could have been avoided.



## AL GORE

from page 1

violates the constitution. The Fourth Amendment and the First Amendment – and the Fourth Amendment language is crystal clear. It is not acceptable to have a secret interpretation of a law that goes far beyond any reasonable reading of either the law or the constitution and then classify as top secret what the actual law is." <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/14/al-gore-nsa-surveillance-unamerican>

Also, earlier in June when the first headline on NSA surveillance broke, Gore tweeted:

In digital era, privacy must be a priority. Is it just me, or is secret blanket surveillance obscenely outrageous?

<http://ow.ly/IKS13> 6:39 PM - 5 Jun 2013

## NSA collecting phone records of millions of Verizon customers daily

Exclusive: Top secret court order requiring Verizon to hand over all call data shows scale of domestic surveillance under Obama administration. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/nsa-phone-records-verizon-court-order?view=mobile>

During his speech in Montreal, Gore echoed the comments he made to the Guardian, saying that that Snowden "has revealed evidence of what appears to be crimes against the Constitution of the United States." Yet the former vice president offered some optimism, saying, "I think you will see a reining in."

In addition to government surveillance, Gore slammed corporations' data mining to obtain customer information, charging, "We have a stalker economy."

"These times now call for young men and women such as you to shape the future and make it what it should be," Gore said.

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From Common Dreams, <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/11/07-3>

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# Culture shock: when a “gig” is not a “gig”

By DANIEL NESTLORODE

A friend from whom I have not heard in a while contacted me via Facebook recently, amazed at the changes in my life and my transformation from a work-a-day guy in the central valley of California to a stay-at-home dad in East Anglia. One of the things he asked about was culture shock.

The Oxford Dictionaries Online define culture shock as, “the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone when they are suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.”

To be sure I have felt a significant amount of cultural disorientation in a number of different circumstances and ways. To start with, accents can be opaque. I was playing a pub in Grays, Essex (SE England, not too far from London) not long after I arrived. A trip to the bathroom afterwards afforded one of the audience members to engage me in conversation. Two points of cultural difference here. 1) American men generally refrain from conversation in the bathroom. 2) I have no idea what this man said. It was very heavily accented and possibly slightly drunk, so I’m reasonably sure but not positive it was English. The actual content escaped me. I just smiled and nodded.

This kind of thing has happened more than once. Sometimes an Essex man will put it on thick just because he hears my American accent. I generally don’t rise to the bait. Sometimes, in the past, I felt horrible about the fact that my ear was not tuned to what I thought to be standard regional English. But my feelings of inadequacy disappeared when my friends confided in me that they often have trouble understanding their own countrymen. Apparently English accents change every 40-odd miles and can become incomprehensible at 3 times that distance. At least with regard to accents, Englishmen can feel a bit out of place in England.

The more you take for granted about your own culture, the worse your culture shock will be. If you take big things for granted, like the universal truth of your political point of view, then you will suffer greatly. But if you relax and allow that people have different ways of doing things in different countries, then you’re starting off on the right foot. At that point, it’s the little things that get you.

There are a few structural design annoyances, like concrete gutters, asbestos downspouts, open kitchen drains, cisterns in the attic, low ceilings, and external vents in every room instead of a vapor barrier around the house. All these rankle to one degree or another. But the thing that gets me the most at the moment is the use of the word “gig.”

Seriously. That’s the one.

You probably know this, but in the US “gig” is a synonym for “job.” A *New York Times* OpEd writer recently called the current economic climate the “gig economy.” Meaning that individuals are becoming more and more responsible for their own day to day employment. Thus when a musician goes to work she or he has a gig. “Gig” refers only to the work. So even if you’re a musician, as long as you’re not working the show, you’re not gigging. Thus audience members attend concerts and shows rather than gigs.

I find this appropriate and respectful of musicians in general. I like the distinction between roles of two different sets of people at a performance. It reminds us all, however subtly, that some people work these events, while the rest are their for the enjoyment of it.

But here in the UK the word “gig” is thrown around by everyone. Whether you are working it or not, if you are attending a musical performance, you are at a gig. Radio announcers here on the venerable BBC talk about “last night’s Billy Joel gig” or how great Show of Hands were at their

Apex gig in Bury St. Edmunds.

This has been crawling under my skin since I first arrived, and the problem is it’s getting more irritating rather than less irritating. I understand the enjoyment of feeling like you are part of the “in” crowd by using the slang of the people you admire. So I decided to try to discover why this particular little tiny cultural difference is so irritating.

The more I think about it, the more irritated I become. As I mentioned above, the distinction between the people providing the entertainment and the people being entertained is important. Some of us at the show are working. Some of us at the show are enjoying our leisure time. When the audience uses the word “gig” to describe the show, they are removing the original meaning of the word and replacing it with something that is not synonymous with work. Thus the distinction between those of working a show and those of us enjoying our leisure time at the show disappears.

This ultimately leads to the devaluation of the work musicians do to entertain an audience. And in an economic climate where corporately owned media in the US and the UK are now routinely requesting that their content providers give away their work [“It’ll be great exposure!”] that distinction becomes more important.

I may go on a British rant here pretty soon. We all need to recognize the contributions of content providers. These people who write, sing, perform, and design the media we all consume work hard at their craft and deserve at the very least a modicum of respect for that effort. That respect starts with acknowledging the work that content providers do and results in paying for the content they provide.

So, in this case, I am experiencing culture shock, and I don’t think it’ll go away soon.

## New census measure provides more comprehensive picture of families’ resources and costs, points to strategies for reducing poverty

From the California Budget Project

[<http://www.cbp.org>]

The official poverty statistics released annually by the Census Bureau are based on a comparison of families’ incomes to what some experts contend is an outdated, insufficient threshold – triple the cost of a basic food diet in 1963, adjusted for inflation. Last November, the Census Bureau introduced state poverty rates under a new supplemental poverty measure (SPM) that is intended to address some of the limitations of the official poverty measure.<sup>1</sup>

Under the supplemental poverty measure, California has the highest poverty rate of any state in the nation – 23.5 percent. The difference between California’s official poverty rate and its supplemental poverty rate is larger than in any other state – the share of Californians in poverty is more than 7 percentage points higher under the SPM than under the official measure.<sup>2</sup>

California’s high ranking under the supplemental poverty measure shows that even after factoring in a comprehensive array of resources, many of the state’s families are still struggling financially. The official poverty threshold provides an unrealistic picture of what it takes for a family to make ends meet in California, because it does not account for everyday

necessities in a family’s household budget – like transportation and child care. The SPM was developed with the aim of measuring a broader array of family resources and expenses to give a more accurate picture of poverty. For example, noncash benefits like SNAP (the federal food assistance program, known as CalFresh in California) and tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are included as income, while job-related costs, such as child care and transportation, and other basic expenses like out-of-pocket medical costs are subtracted from income. The high cost of housing in California is a key reason for the state’s much higher poverty rate under the SPM. The SPM’s thresholds for poverty are adjusted for geographic differences in housing costs, and California’s average fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is surpassed only by those of Hawaii and the District of Columbia.<sup>3</sup>

The supplemental poverty measure points to strategies for combating poverty. Census data that are released with the SPM show that our nation’s safety net programs have had a significant impact on lessening poverty. In 2011, public programs like Social Security, the EITC, SNAP/CalFresh, and unemployment benefits cut poverty nearly in half from what it otherwise would have been. In California, these programs

kept nearly 4 million people, including almost 1 million children, out of poverty between 2009 and 2011.

Policymakers, advocates, and other stakeholders can use the insights provided by the SPM at the state and local levels to help families escape poverty, adopting strategies such as increasing the number of eligible families who enroll in CalFresh. Although food assistance has been shown to alleviate the negative lifelong impacts of childhood poverty, participation remains low in California. The SPM provides strong evidence that federal and state investment in anti-poverty programs is critical in order to foster a broad-based recovery in California – one in which economic gains reach the lowest-income as well as the highest-income families.

The new Census data also show that California’s inflation-adjusted median household income – the income of the household at the middle of the income distribution – was \$57,020 in 2012. This means that the typical California household income last year was \$5,978 (9.5 percent) below what it was in 2006, the year before the recession started (Figure 3). While the median household income did increase between 2011 and 2012, this change was not statistically significant.

Read the full report at [http://cbp.org/pdfs/2013/130917\\_Census\\_Poverty.pdf](http://cbp.org/pdfs/2013/130917_Census_Poverty.pdf)



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

## ACTIONS FOR PEACE

### Sonora - Stockton

**SONORA:** Contact Alice at lewisalice090@gmail.com

**PEACE AND JUSTICE NETWORK OF SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY** (<http://www.pjnsjc.org>). Info: James Walsh, jwprod1956@clearwire.net

## DECEMBER

**Ongoing: MJC Modesto Area Partners in Science** 2013-2014 at MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132. 12/06: B. Lynn Ingram, *Atmospheric Rivers and Megafloods*. 1/24/14: Mark Aldenderfer, UVM, *Sky Caves of Nepal*. 2/28: Kevin Mitchell, UCM, *Chaos and Fractals*. 3/28: Judy Van de Water, UCD, *Autism and Immunology*. 4/25: Joel Hagen, TBD. More at <http://maps.events.mjc.edu>

**Ongoing: MJC Science Colloquium**, Wednesdays, Science Community Center Rm 115, MJC West Campus, 3-4 pm. Dec. 4: Dr. Ken Meidl, MJC Astronomer, MJC's World Class Planetarium and Observatory.

**8 SUN: Modesto Film Society** hosts *Meet Me in St. Louis*. 7 pm, State Theatre. Visit <http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/94>. Look for times for *It's a Wonderful Life*, *White Christmas*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* at <http://www.thestate.org/calendar/category/films?date=2013-12-25>

**14 SAT: Annual Holiday Potluck Song Fest.** A celebration of our Peace community at the Onorato's, 1532 Vernon Ave., Modesto. Bring your favorite dish and beverage to share, your merry Holiday spirit, and your eagerness to sing. See article this issue.

## LOOKING AHEAD

**January 14, 2014: John McCutcheon** in Concert for the Peace/Life Center.

**January 19, 2014:** The Motherlode Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee presents the **19th Annual MLK Birthday Celebration**. Keynote speaker: Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farmworkers Union with Cesar Chavez. At Sonora High School Auditorium, Shaws Flat Rd. and Washington St., Sonora, 2:00 pm. FREE. Info: Pat Cervelli, 209-928-3494.

**February 1, 2014: MLK Commemoration** with Civil Rights pioneer Diane Nash.

**Friday March 21, 2014: Peace Essay Contest Awards** and Reception.

## REGULAR MEETINGS

### SUNDAYS

**LifeRing Secular Recovery:** Sunday 10:00 am, Kaiser CDRP, 1789 W Yosemite Ave, Manteca. Support group for people living free of alcohol and drugs. Each person creates an individualized recovery program. We avoid discussion of religious or political opinions so our meetings can focus on sobriety skills. 526-4854, <http://goldendrippings.com/lifering/>

**Weekly mindfulness meditation** and dharma talk, 12:30-2:30 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC parking lot). Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <http://imcv.org/>

**LifeRing Secular Recovery:** Sunday 6:30 pm, Jana Lynn Room, 500 N 9th St, Modesto.

### MONDAYS

**LifeRing Secular Recovery Morning Mtg.** Monday 7:00 am. Deva Cafe, 1202 J St, Modesto.

**LifeRing Secular Recovery Women's Mtg.** Monday 6:30 pm, private home, 1905 Kienitz Ave, Modesto. Bonnie, 324-7095.

### TUESDAYS

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

**LifeRing Secular Recovery.** Tuesday 6:30 pm, Jana Lynn Room, 500 N 9th St, Modesto. 526-4854

**Ukulele class/play-a-long** led by Lorrie Freitas 6 p.m. Tuesdays, Trinity Presbyterian Church, 1600 Carver, Modesto. Suggested monthly fee \$25. Info: 505-3216.

**Weekly mindfulness meditation** and dharma talk, 6:30-8:30 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC parking lot). Info: Contact Lori for more information at 209-343-2748 or see <http://imcv.org/>

**PFLAG Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays** support group. 7 pm, 566-2468. First and third Tuesdays. Emanuel Lutheran Church, 324 College Ave., Modesto, <http://www.pflagmodesto.org>

**PFLAG Merced**, Second Tuesday, Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Park Way, Merced. 7 pm. Info: 341-2122, <http://s444531532.onlinehome.us>

**PFLAG Sonora/Mother Lode**, third Tuesdays of January, April, July, and October, 6:30 to 8 pm, Tuolumne County Library Community Room, 480 Greenley Rd., Sonora, Info: 533-1665. Info@pflagsonora.org, [www.pflagsonora.org](http://www.pflagsonora.org)

**Adult Children Of Alcoholics**, Every Tuesday, 7 pm at 1320 L St., (Christ Unity Baptist Church). Info: Jeff, 527-2469.

### WEDNESDAYS

**LifeRing Secular Recovery.** Wednesday 6:30 pm, Reynolds Room, 1700 McHenry Village

## 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), (NOTE TIME), 5:00 - 6:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 529-5750.

**CENTER TV:** News and interviews you won't find elsewhere on Comcast Public Access TV Ch 26, Wed. & Sat. 9:00 pm - 10 pm. Also: Listen to local Valley Community Radio KQRP 104.9 FM, <http://www.kqrp.com>

**PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING**, FIRST Thursdays, 720 13th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750.

**MEDIA COMMITTEE** of Peace Life Center. Meetings TBA. Call John Lucas, 527-7634.

**CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL MEETINGS:** Meets twice a month. New workers welcome. Call to confirm time and place. 537-7818, [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)

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

### FRIDAYS

**Occupy Modesto:** General Assembly meets each Friday, 5:00 - 6:30 pm at Modesto Peace/Life Center, 720 13th St. All interested members of the 99% are welcome. Time will change when it stays light later.

**LifeRing Secular Recovery.** Friday 6:30 pm. Jana Lynn Room, 500 N 9th St, Modesto. Every first Friday we alternate between a LifeRing & 12 Step speaker with a discussion following.

**Funstrummer Ukulele Band** every Friday, Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto. Begins 9:15 am. Suggested monthly membership fee \$25. Info: 505-3216.

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

**Village Dancers:** Dances from Balkans, Europe, USA and more. Fridays, Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock. 7-9:30 pm, \$5 (students free). Info: call Judy, 209-480-0387.

**Sierra Club:** Yokuts group. Regular meetings, third Friday, College Ave. Congregational Church, 7 pm. Info: 549-9155. Visit <http://motherlode.sierraclub.org/yokuts> for info on hikes and events.

**Mujeres Latinas**, last Friday, lunch meetings, Info: Cristina Villego, 549-1831.

**Hispanic Leadership Council**, 1st & 3rd Fridays at 7:00 am, El Concilio, 1314 H St. Other meetings at Terrace Cafe, Double Tree Hotel. Info: Yamilet Valladolid, 523-2860.

### SATURDAY

**So Easy ~ So Good:** Vegetarian/Vegan/Wannabee potluck/meeting every third Saturday of the month, 11:30 AM- 1:30 PM. Info: Kathy or Chris, 209-529-5360; email [kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com](mailto:kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com)

**SERRV:** Saturdays, 10 - Noon and after church Sundays or by appointment. Call Mary, 522-6497 or 523-5178. Gifts from developing countries. Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland, Rm. #4, Modesto.

**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.

Way, Modesto. Back of McHenry Village across from the Memorial Health and Education Center. Meeting offering support for people in relationships with people wrestling with addiction.

**Modesto Folk Dancers** All levels welcome. Raube Hall, Ceres (call for address), 578-5551.

**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 non-religious group. Info: call 524-0983.

**PFLAG Oakdale**, third Wednesdays, Golden Oaks Conf. Room, Oak Valley Medical Bldg., 1425 West H St., Oakdale, 7 pm. Info: [flagoakdale@dishmail.net](mailto:flagoakdale@dishmail.net)

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

**Mindful Meditation:** Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7 - 9 pm. Info: Stan, 549-7770, [stanhopcunningham@yahoo.com](mailto:stanhopcunningham@yahoo.com), or Anne, 521-6977.

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

### THURSDAYS

**Third Thursday Gallery Walk**, Downtown Modesto, downtown art galleries open--take a walk and check out the local art scene. 5-8 pm every third Thursday of the month. Info: 579-9913, <http://www.modestoartwalk.com>

**CVAN (Central Valley Action Network)** 3rd Thursday, 7-8:15 pm, Peace/Life Center 720 13th St. Contact: Jocelyn at [jocelyncooper@gmail.com](mailto:jocelyncooper@gmail.com) or 510-467-2877 or 209-312-9413

**The Book Group**, First & third Thursdays. College Ave UCC Youth Bldg., Orangeburg & College Ave., 3:30 pm. Info: [mzjurkovic@gmail.com](mailto:mzjurkovic@gmail.com)

**The Compassionate Friends**, Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter. 2nd Thursday of the month. Contact: Joanna Rose-Murray, 209-484-8276, [jrmcompassionate@gmail.com](mailto:jrmcompassionate@gmail.com), <http://www.tcfmodesto-riverbankarea.org>

**NAACP.** King-Kennedy Center, 601 S M.L. King Dr., Modesto, 7 pm, 3rd Thursdays. 549-1991.

**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.