Dr. Michael Eric Dyson to speak at the 25th MLK Commemoration

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration invites you to our 25th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration on Saturday, March 30, 2019. Dynamic lecturer, teacher and author, Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, will be our speaker at Modesto Junior College’s Performing Arts & Media Center, 435 College Ave. at 7:00 p.m.

Although Martin Luther King, Jr. died 51 years ago, his vision still uplifts and transforms countless people throughout the world. To keep that vision fresh and provocative locally, for the last twenty-four years a committee of community groups—the Modesto Peace/Life Center, the City of Modesto, Modesto Junior College, and California State University, Stanislaus have offered our community an inspiring Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration! This free event is wholly supported by donations like yours.

Sponsors at press time: City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Dept.; Modesto Junior College; Modesto Peace/Life Center; California State University, Stanislaus; Associated Students of Modesto Junior College; Modesto Teachers Association; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Ed Fitzpatrick, Valley Lexus; College Ave. United Church of Christ; Rockwell, Kelly, Duarte & Urstoeger, LLP; Double Tree by Hilton. Mocse Federal Credit Union; West Modesto King-Kennedy Neighborhood Collaborative. Sponsors needed! Contact Jim Costello, jcostello@ige.org to donate or co-sponsor.

The Modesto Peace/Life Center invites you to THE PEACE ESSAY CONTEST AWARDS CEREMONY FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Mary Stuart Rogers Student Center Modesto Junior College West Campus 2201 Blue Gum Ave, Modesto Top winners will read their essays!

Fallow Me to Water? Not Likely

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

For the better part of thirty years, Modesto’s Vance Kennedy has been trying to tell people we don’t have enough water. Now in his mid-nineties, Kennedy is a retired hydrologist who received the highest possible service award from the Environmental Protection Agency when he was with the United States Geological Survey.

In an announcement bound to foment even the usual furor over water issues, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) just gave an official seal of approval to Kennedy’s long-held claim. But the PPIC’s conclusion—that we need to retire at least 500,000 acres of farmland to balance our water needs—is bound to result in howls of outrage up and down the San Joaquin Valley.

Nonetheless, the evidence couldn’t be more obvious that we’ve gone beyond our limits in water consumption. First and foremost, consider groundwater. The new state requirement that we achieve sustainable groundwater basins by 2040 is ludicrous on its face. The only groundwater basin in the entire San Joaquin Valley that isn’t critically overdrawn is in Stanislaus County, and that aquifer has been in steady decline ever since the county’s eastern foothills were planted in thousands of acres of almond orchards.

The PPIC is absolutely correct that we need to fallow hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland to achieve sustainability, but which farmers will take the hit? As it is, we send millions of acre feet of precious surface water south to corporate farmers who long ago tapped all the local surface and groundwater and continue to demand even more.

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If you do not have Adobe Reader, download it free from http://www.adobe.com/downloads/
Peace/Life Center looking for volunteers

The Modesto Peace/Life Center needs volunteers to assist with projects, events, our radio project (radio knowledge, skills needed), fundraising, and administrative activities. No experience necessary. Experience in social media, Word, Excel, or other special skills are desired for some volunteer positions. We need volunteers for a few hours per week, or an ongoing commitment.

For more information, contact our volunteer/outreach coordinators: Susan Bower or Jocelyn Cooper at the Peace Life Center (209) 529-5750.
### 2019 Peace Essay Contest Winners, Finalists and School Winners

**Division I (grades 11 & 12)**

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<th>Award</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
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<td>Hon M</td>
<td>Mary Frey</td>
<td>Our Lady, Good Counsel</td>
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Hon M = Honorable Mention

* SW = School Winner, recognized for the top essay from a school that has submitted 10 or more essays in the Division

Send any name corrections to david.tucker@stanfordalumni.org
California: My Home
Makensi Turner
Peter Johansen HS, Nicole Evans, Teacher

California is a state which many people find themselves proud to reside in. Growing up in this state has taught me in ways that wouldn’t have been possible had I lived somewhere which was less ethnically diverse. I’ve been shown completely new languages and cultures which I find beautiful. Going to school with people of such varying ethnic backgrounds has shown me, on a small scale, how unique the human condition is. People live in completely different ways from one another. With such vast differences between them, it can seem hard to connect with someone when you know nothing about their culture. In the same sense, this variety has also brought me closer to people who are different from me. I now have a deeper understanding of how others live. This state has taught me compassion and respect for others. I’ve been shown time and time again that we are all connected and have similarities, even if, at first, it may seem unlikely. I am truly thankful that I live in a state which has inspired me to learn more about other cultures and peoples.

California, like any state, is not without its problems. A major issue facing California is the ever-increasing homeless population. The number of homeless people jumped to 14% between 2016 and 2017, according to the Annual Homeless Assessment Report. When compared to the data taken over the last seven years, which set the increase at only 9%, this number is truly shocking. California has the third highest homeless population in the country. This has been caused, in part, by the lack of affordable housing. In larger cities, where homeless populations tend to increase the fastest, the cost of housing is almost unimaginable. According to the Huffington Post, the average person in Los Angeles needs to make $74,371 annually in order to live comfortably in the city. The median income for people living in Los Angeles is only $48,682. This means that a large portion of the population is unable to afford basic necessities. When looking at this data, it isn’t hard to see why so many people are left homeless. Without money left over after rent and food, many people in larger cities do not have adequate savings. This means any accident could easily be catastrophic to their lives.

The task of tackling homelessness seems daunting only because the issue needs to be handled in several different ways to truly be effective. First, the current homeless population needs to be helped. The creation of no cost housing specifically designed for vulnerable homeless people is a possible solution. This would provide safety for the most at-risk groups of homeless people, such as: women with young children, disabled - both physically and mentally - and the elderly. As it would be unrealistic to provide housing for the entire homeless population at once, the people who are most threatened by homelessness should be helped first. In these housing developments, there should be qualified therapists present to provide support and aid. There should also be professionals to teach skills which will allow people to enter the workforce and become productive members of this society. In addition to helping the most at-risk sector of the homeless population, there needs to be increased aid available for those who are not in imminent danger due to homelessness. There should be help centers created in neighborhoods with a disproportionately high homeless population. These centers would provide much needed food and clothing under the condition that the homeless person receive free help from the same therapists and professionals assigned to the housing units. In addition to this, the centers would provide access to job opportunities in the community. Not only would the centers provide aid for the homeless, they also would have the potential to help the people with low incomes struggling economically.

To prevent future homelessness, the state of California needs to start taking action now. Recently, the state decided not to repeal the Costa Hawkins Rental Housing Act, which limits rent control in the state. Repealing this act would have allowed for California to provide more affordable housing options for its residences. In addition to an act like this, there should be increased legislature like this to ensure affordable housing to Californians. This could be in the form of the creation of apartments or neighborhoods which would be permanently sold and marketed as affordable. These houses would only be available to those who are truly in need of a low-cost housing alternative. These housing developments would be paid for partially from a tax on the people of California. By always having affordable housing, people who become unable to afford their current living situation will have an alternative to homelessness. These improvements would greatly benefit the entirety of California, not just those who suffer from homelessness. By decreasing the number of homeless people and increasing affordable housing, more Californians would be able to live successful lives and have the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful state we live in. By helping homeless people back into the folds of society, an eventual boost to the workforce would occur. This boost would help the economy and help fund other needed improvements to our state. An investment in the homeless population would be one which would positively affect our future.

By working to improve the quality of life in our state, California could effectively improve the quality of life for the rest of the world. This state could prove to other nations the possibility of successfully helping others while also keeping economic security. If this is shown, other nations would look to California as a model for success. We can show the world how to implement basic acts of human kindness on a large scale. The innovative actions California is willing to make in order to form a better society is one of the many reasons that make me proud to live in this amazing state.

Works Cited
**Science & Human Rights Coalition: 2019 Student Essay Competition**

Undergraduate and graduate students are invited to participate in the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Essay Competition.

This essay competition was created to inspire students to explore connections between human rights and science, engineering and the health professions. Students may write on any topic at the intersection of science and/or technology with human rights.

Read the Rules and Regulations

**What you need to know**

Submissions should be written in the form of an analytical or critical paper that raises thought-provoking questions. For example, potential essay topics might include: the applications of a scientific approach or a new technology to address specific human rights concerns; an analysis of synergies between human rights obligations and the social responsibilities of scientists, engineers and/or health professionals; or the ways in which full implementation of the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress may influence realization of other human rights. These examples are only provided to spark ideas: students are encouraged to write essays that reflect their own ideas, interests, and insights.

**Prizes**

Prizes will be awarded in the following categories: 1) Undergraduate student and 2) Graduate student.

The winning students will be recognized at the October 2019 Science and Human Rights Coalition Conference presented by the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition. Winners of the competition will receive a year of membership in AAAS and a one-year subscription to *Science*, as well as a travel stipend to attend the Coalition’s meeting, generously provided by the AAAS-Andrew M. Sessler Fund for Science, Education, and Human Rights. Students who receive prizes will be asked to support AAAS stewardship of the Sessler Fund by providing feedback about their experience in the competition. The winning essays will be considered for publication by the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program.

**How to Enter**

Submit your essay through the essay competition website which will be open 1 April 2019 through 30 April 2019. The essay may be submitted in either Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format. Read the rules and regulations at https://www.aaas.org/shr2019essay

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**Green Tips: Union of Concerned Scientists calls for action**

By TINA ARNPOLE DRISKILL

The Union of Concerned Scientists calls environmental, scientific and political activists to “fight back and win,” as the new Congress trail blazes “a path forward to blunt, and even reverse, the Trump administration’s assault on science.”

Dr. Jacob Carter, lead author of the UCS report “The State of Science in the Trump Era,” who has worked for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) during the Obama administration, explains why federal science matters to the general public, and sounds the call to action as a UCS scientist who analyzes government use and abuse of science for the UCS Center for Science and Democracy.

Scientists have heretofore been the go-to authorities to gather knowledge through a multi-disciplinary effort “to cure diseases, deter violent crime, or adapt to a rapidly changing environment.”

Sadly, “federal policies which have protected public health and the environment” through many administrations, such as The Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Consumer Product Safety Act and the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, have been under attack, and the current administration has undermined the process that guarantees scientific consideration when government formulates such policies.

Furthermore science-based air, water, chemical and species protections have been diminished, restrictions have been placed “on what science federal agencies can use when crafting policies,” political pressure has intensified on federal scientists, and “unqualified and conflicted individuals” have been appointed “to lead key science agencies” while numerous positions remain vacant.

The UCS asserts “American lives depend on federal science and the enforcement of science-based laws.” It warns that “disbanding scientific advisory panels on particulate matter and ground-level ozone will put more people at risk of asthma attacks, cardiovascular disease and lung cancer.

UCS also takes a stand against the recent Trump administration decision to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty with Russia entered into by Ronald Reagan, which has prompted the Smith-Warren No First Use Act, a one sentence measure stating, “It is the policy of the United States to not use nuclear weapons first.”

The UCS report makes a number of recommendations for Congress, most important of which is to pass a scientific integrity law that defends federal science from political interference. This law should include provisions that:

- ensure scientists’ rights to review and ensure the accuracy of public materials that rely on their work or use their name;
- prohibit political appointees and communications staff from editing scientific content of official documents;
- ensure scientists’ rights to publicly express personal views.

[These] recommendations carve out a path Congress can take to stop the administration from sideling science, but continued and sustained public engagement is also required. It is up to the general public to let elected officials know that their constituents care about science-based policymaking and ask them to step up their efforts to hold executive branch agencies accountable.”

**ACTION!** It is the organization’s hope that “UCS members and supporters will work with us, because there is a lot that we all can do to turn the tide.”

Visit https://www.ucsusa.org/

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**Help for upgrading to a cleaner burning device**

From the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District

Today [February 28] marks the end of the Valley’s 16th residential wood burning season. The Check Before You Burn Program takes place each winter from November through February and is designed to minimize the build-up of harmful fine particle pollution. Despite record-breaking wildfires at the beginning of the season, the remainder of the season was among the cleanest in recorded history.

Regional high-pressure systems often cause pollutants to become trapped in the bowl-shaped San Joaquin Valley, creating high concentrations of PM2.5 (fine particulate matter pollution) that build up very quickly at ground level, resulting in poor air quality. During a period of particularly poor dispersion, November’s Camp Fire generated some of the most significant smoke impacts ever experienced in the Valley. However, frequent winter storms immediately following the Camp Fire, combined with favorable weather patterns, a high level of cooperation by Valley residents and the use of much cleaner wood, pellet & natural gas devices, made possible by the District’s Burn Cleaner Program, all played pivotal roles in the vast improvement to wintertime air quality this season.

“District incentives have helped hundreds of our residents invest in cleaner devices,” said Samir Sheikh, the District’s executive director and air pollution control officer. “Such investments by the public along with those by Valley stakeholders, and a variety of other emission-reduction strategies, have resulted in cleaner air for every San Joaquin Valley resident.”

Residents interested in upgrading from an open-hearth fireplace or older wood stove, to a cleaner device, are encouraged to take advantage of the District’s Burn Cleaner incentive program, which provides $1,000 for certified wood/ pellet inserts, freestanding stoves or natural gas inserts. Low income residents are eligible for $2,500 to purchase such devices. An additional $500 is also available toward installation costs when choosing a natural gas device over wood or pellet.

Visit www.valleyair.org/burncleaner for program guidelines.

The District issues a daily wood-burning declaration, based on the air quality forecast for each county with one of three specific designations: “No Burning for All,” “No Burning Unless Registered,” or “No Restrictions, Burning Discouraged.” While no formal burning restrictions will be in place from now until November 1, 2019, the District discourages all residential wood burning.

Additionally, March through October is a great time to get clean burning devices registered ahead of next year’s wood burning season. Visit www.valleyair.org/CBYBregistration for details.

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**Rules and Regulations**

Read the rules and regulations at https://www.aaas.org/shr2019essay.
The Real Border Crisis

President Trump's policies targeting asylum seekers created a humanitarian crisis. It won't be solved by a wall.

By AMRIT CHENG, Communications Strategist, ACLU

On Jan. 8, Donald Trump gave the first Oval Office address of his presidency in which he warned of a “growing humanitarian and security crisis at our Southern border.” Since then, he’s threatened to declare a national emergency, described the border as a “major” and “massive” crisis, and even called the situation “an invasion.” For 34 days — the longest-running shutdown in history — the president refused to re-open the federal government unless Congress gave him $5.7 billion to build more border walls, record funding to jail an unprecedented 52,000 immigrants per day, and a wishlist of unconscionable legal changes specifically targeting the most vulnerable immigrants, including children seeking asylum.

I recently traveled to Tijuana, Mexico, with Lee Gelernt, lead attorney in the ACLU’s challenge to the Trump administration’s asylum ban, which tried to disqualify people from seeking asylum if they enter the United States at any place other than an official port of entry. The ACLU first successfully blocked the ban on Nov. 9, 2018. We were there to meet with Al Otro Lado, a California-based organization that provides legal services to migrants and refugees in Tijuana and is a plaintiff in our lawsuit.

Customs and Border Protection is one of the world’s largest law enforcement organizations, but it claims it doesn’t have “capacity” to process more than a handful of asylum seekers at a time. For context, CBP processes around 100,000 travelers at the San Ysidro Port of Entry each day, but it has only been accepting between 20-80 asylum seekers per day. As a result, there are around 5,100 people stuck in dangerous conditions in Tijuana who want to seek asylum or other protections in the U.S. but are facing an expected waiting time of up to 12 weeks or longer.

Our visit made one thing clear: The humanitarian crisis at the border is one created by President Trump’s own policies which target asylum seekers, and it won’t be solved by a wall.

What’s more, the president seems intent on making the situation worse. On Thursday, it was reported that the administration plans to turn back asylum-seekers from the border, forcing them to wait in Mexico while their asylum cases are decided in the U.S.

Here are three very real problems we observed at the border, all made worse by the Trump administration’s anti-asylum policies.

**Dangerous Conditions in Tijuana**

Our trip began at the San Ysidro port of entry at the California-Mexico border. We met Erika Pinheiro, the litigation and policy director for Al Otro Lado, on the Mexican side and went to a shelter run by a nonprofit organization called the Border Angels.

The shelter was small and dimly lit with rain leaking through the ceiling. The walls were closely lined with gray slab bunkbeds, and there was a hotplate in the corner by the window for cooking food. There were around 30 people staying there, although Erika said she’d seen as many as 80 on previous occasions. We also visited a “family shelter,” housed in a garage-like space with a concrete floor and corrugated metal roof. Around 50 small camping-style tents filled the space, where families slept.

Most of the shelters in Tijuana are run by churches and nongovernmental organizations, although there are around 2,000 migrants staying in a large government-run refugee camp called El Barretal, which is inside of an abandoned night club, about a 30-minute drive — or more than three hours on foot — from the San Ysidro border crossing. Thousands of migrants were previously staying at a large sports complex called Benito Juarez, which was much closer to San Ysidro.

The Mexican government says that Benito Juarez was closed because of heavy rains flooding the field, but many believe that they were moved to El Barretal, which is in a dangerous neighborhood, to make it harder for migrants to reach the border crossing.

Unsanitary conditions plague all the shelters. Nicole Ramos, border rights project director at Al Otro Lado, reported “squalid conditions” at Benito Juarez, with “many migrants, including pregnant women and children, sleeping in the dirt with only plastic sheeting to protect them from the elements.”

Many people crowded out of the shelters are forced to stay in tent encampments out on the street. At one such encampment, one man called out to me, gesturing to a small tent on the sidewalk and said, “Esta es mi casa,” — “This is my house.”

In addition to dealing with inadequate shelter, asylum seekers have also become targets for organized crime. In December, two Honduran teenagers were killed after leaving a youth shelter to travel to Benito Juarez.

Before that, 20 migrants were kidnapped outside Benito Juarez and transported to Sonora, Mexico, where they were forced to clean blood and biological waste from a warehouse, as reported by Al Otro Lado. After several days, they escaped through a window and attempted to return to Tijuana. Many of them, however, were recaptured, and the kidnappers began extorting money from their families for their release.

**Metering and Illegal Turnbacks**

The waiting times for asylum processing have increased, but not because border crossings are at an all-time high, as Trump has claimed.

Customs and Border Protection has been illegally turning asylum seekers away at ports of entry — an administration practice that is the subject of a lawsuit by Al Otro Lado and partners. Under both American and international law, people have the legal right to seek asylum and other forms of protection at the U.S. border. When someone expresses a desire to apply for asylum or a fear of returning to their country of origin, CBP is required to provide that person with an opportunity to seek protection, mandated by the Immigration and Nationality Act. CBP officers are not authorized to evaluate the individual’s asylum claims themselves or to turn people away. That responsibility belongs to asylum officers with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and, in some cases, immigration judges.

The ACLU’s Border Rights Center has documented instances of CBP stationing agents mid-bridge between the U.S. and Mexico at the border crossing over the Rio Grande in Texas and preventing people trying to seek asylum from approaching.

The administration has also been limiting the number of asylum seekers who are allowed to enter the U.S. each day — a tactic called “metering.” In the past, people were able to present themselves at a port of entry and begin the asylum process without delay. However, the Trump administration’s metering practice has created a huge backlog where thousands of people are now being forced to wait for months at the border, unable to access a port of entry to make an asylum claim.

**“La Lista”**

In place of proper and orderly access to the U.S. port of entry, a different system has arisen on the Mexican side of the
Border Crisis continued

border in Tijuana: “la lista,” or the list, which is managed in part by a self-organized committee of asylum seekers. Each night, Mexican immigration officers lock the notebook in a safe and then return it to the list managers the next morning. Handwritten in a notebook, this list keeps track of who is next in line to apply for asylum in the United States.

Every morning, people gather in El Chaparral plaza, which sits at the base of the pedestrian bridge between Tijuana and the San Ysidro Port of Entry in California, to listen for their names. At some point in the day, U.S. border officials tell Grupos Beta, an arm of Mexican immigration services, how many people they will process that day. The Mexican agency then relays that information to the list managers.

Among other things, the list itself is not without bias. Erika and Nicole have seen instances in which the list managers refused to include asylum seekers who were trans, gay, or Black.

The list also explicitly leaves out a very vulnerable population: unaccompanied minor children, who are being not allowed to put their names on the list at all. Grupos Beta has told list managers that they cannot include children who do not have a parent or guardian present. Al Otro Lado, who regularly represents unaccompanied minors, has seen Mexican agents take unaccompanied children into custody when they try to get a number on the list or approach the port of entry directly.

“Esta es mi casa,” — “This is my house.”

Al Otro Lado has documented over 100 unaccompanied children stuck in Tijuana who wish to apply for asylum in the United States. Several of the children are LGBT and have faced severe persecution. Others have been forced to engage in child labor or have had families targeted for violence, also putting their lives at risk.

The final stop of our visit was to a youth shelter for children who made the journey to the border alone. The walls are painted bright orange. Inside around 50 youths, almost all boys and just a few girls, ranging from the ages of 12 to 17, were gathered in the common space to meet with us. The majority of children had traveled from Honduras, but there were also some from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico.

Erika and another lawyer introduced themselves, letting the group know that later in the week attorneys would be visiting the shelter to consult with them individually on their cases.

The majority of the kids wanted to seek asylum, but when Erika asked how many had a number on the list, only one hand went up.

In an address on Jan. 19, President Trump decried the “humanitarian and security crisis,” with children being exploited by drug cartels and migrants in need of medical care. None of these problems can be fixed by a wall.

If he truly wants to find solutions, he needs to end his policies that target asylum seekers.


Equity on The Mall

Equity on the Mall is an annual day of democracy in action to close the divide between the San Joaquin Valley residents and policymakers. Organized by the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation and community partners, Equity on the Mall includes a powerful program at the west steps of the Capitol with remarks by elected representatives and community leaders, music, spoken word and an equity platform on some of the most pressing issues impacting communities in the San Joaquin Valley. The Valley is Rising!

Teachers and Students—We Need YOU at Equity on the Mall 2019! Many students in the San Joaquin Valley have never visited their State Capitol in Sacramento. Equity on the Mall is an ideal opportunity for students and their teachers to visit the Capitol to experience this powerful day of democracy together! Come join our rally on the west steps of the Capitol to hear from your policymakers and community leaders about the issues that matter to you. Be a part of this growing movement by raising your voices to call on our state leaders to step up and be bold in supporting the San Joaquin Valley.

After the rally, tour the historic Capitol building and attend our annual briefing with state leaders. Equity on the Mall will be an experience you and your students will never forget!

WHEN: March 6 — 9 A.M. To 3:30 P.M.
WHERE: California State Capitol
REGISTER ONLINE NOW!
The Costs of War

The Costs of War Project is a team of 35 scholars, legal experts, human rights practitioners, and physicians, which began its work in 2011. We use research and a public website to facilitate debate about the costs of the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the related violence in Pakistan and Syria. There are many hidden or unacknowledged costs of the United States’ decision to respond to the 9/11 attacks with military force. We aim to foster democratic discussion of these wars by providing the fullest possible account of their human, economic, and political costs, and to foster better informed public policies.

Some of the Costs of War Project’s main findings include:

- Over 480,000 people have died due to direct war violence, including armed forces on all sides of the conflicts, contractors, civilians, journalists, and humanitarian workers.
- It is likely that many times more have died indirectly in these wars, due to malnutrition, damaged infrastructure, and environmental degradation.
- 244,000 civilians have been killed in direct violence by all parties to these conflicts.
- Over 6,950 US soldiers have died in the wars.
- We do not know the full extent of how many US service members returning from these wars became injured or ill while deployed.
- Many deaths and injuries among US contractors have not been reported as required by law, but it is likely that at least 7,800 have been killed.
- 21 million Afghan, Iraqi, Pakistani, and Syrian people are living as war refugees and internally displaced persons, in grossly inadequate conditions.
- The US government is conducting counter-terror activities in 76 countries, vastly expanding the counter terror war across the globe.
- The wars have been accompanied by erosions in civil liberties and human rights at home and abroad.
- The human and economic costs of these wars will continue for decades with some costs, such as the financial costs of US veterans’ care, not peaking until mid-century.
- US government funding of reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan has totaled over $170 billion. Most of those funds have gone towards arming security forces in both countries. Much of the money allocated to humanitarian relief and rebuilding civil society has been lost to fraud, waste, and abuse.
- The cost of the Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria wars totals about $5.9 trillion. This does not include future interest costs on borrowing for the wars, which will add an estimated $8 trillion in the next 40 years.
- The ripple effects on the US economy have also been significant, including job loss and interest rate increases.
- Both Iraq and Afghanistan continue to rank extremely low in global studies of political freedom.
- Women in Iraq and Afghanistan are excluded from political power and experience high rates of unemployment and war widowhood.
- Compelling alternatives to war were scarcely considered in the aftermath of 9/11 or in the discussion about war against Iraq. Some of those alternatives are still available to the US.

From Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs
111 Thayer St., Brown University, Box 1970, Providence, RI 02912-1970, costsofwar@brown.edu

Spike Lee: “...let’s all be on the right side of history…”

“The word today is irony. The date, the 24th. The month of February, which happens to be the shortest month of the year, which also happens to be Black History month. The year, 2019; the year, 1619. History, her story. 1619, 2019, 400 years. Four hundred years, our ancestors were stolen from Africa and brought to Jamestown, Virginia, to be enslaved. Our ancestors worked the land from morning to night. My grandmother [unintelligible] lived to be 100 years young, who was a Spelman College graduate, even though her mother was a slave. My grandma, who saved 50 years of Social Security checks to put her first grandchild, she called me “Spikey poo,” put me through Morehouse College and NYU Film. NYU! Before the world tonight, I can praise our ancestors who helped build this country into what it was today along with the genocide of its native people. If we all connect with our ancestors, we will have love wisdom, and regain our humanity. It will be a powerful moment. The 2020 presidential election is around the corner! Let’s all mobilize, let’s all be on the right side of history. Make the moral choice between love versus hate. Let’s do the right thing! You know I had to get that in there. “The word today is irony. The date, the 24th. The month of February, which happens to be the shortest month of the year, which also happens to be Black History month. The year, 2019; the year, 1619. History, her story. 1619, 2019, 400 years. Four hundred years, our ancestors were stolen from Africa and brought to Jamestown, Virginia, to be enslaved. Our ancestors worked the land from morning to night. My grandmother [unintelligible] lived to be 100 years young, who was a Spelman College graduate, even though her mother was a slave. My grandma, who saved 50 years of Social Security checks to put her first grandchild, she called me “Spikey poo,” put me through Morehouse College and NYU Film. NYU! Before the world tonight, I can praise our ancestors who helped build this country into what it was today along with the genocide of its native people. If we all connect with our ancestors, we will have love wisdom, and regain our humanity. It will be a powerful moment. The 2020 presidential election is around the corner! Let’s all mobilize, let’s all be on the right side of history. Make the moral choice between love versus hate. Let’s do the right thing! You know I had to get that in there. ”

Spike Lee won the Oscar for best adapted screenplay for BlacKkKlansman.
Poet: Ingrid Keriotis


Empathy

Can the wildness in all of us that sometimes shouts or scorns show itself instead in ecstatic love?

for rain-washed leaves, great grey mountains on the horizon, every child’s gaze?

Wildness is ours when we grasp each other in night-time fervor, when we surrender our bodies, let them drop slowly into dreams.

Once asleep, I travel roads I’ll never see, search for oil-streaked birds by a sullied sea, crouch with mothers in darkness beneath the mahogany trees of another continent.

Close your eyes. Be awake in another’s body for a moment, feel her blood as it circles through intricate veins. Look: when it falls, it blooms red, just like yours.

Remedial

He wrote about what it felt like when her fist hit the skin of his face. The girl beside him described how her stepfather had pushed in spite of her resistance and one young man said his mother called him every bad name he had ever heard and some that were new.

These people were supposed to have been parents, parenting.

I had expected to teach the topic sentence, the use of a transitional phrase, how to write an essay so smooth it could flow logically to a natural end.

When I left for home, I could not bear to carry my bag beside me so instead I hugged it close, desperate to keep their stories out of the rain.

Up Late Reading

Wendell Berry

I can’t sleep. Why not start being alive right now at 12:30 a.m. with Berry’s wood drake and wild things, his day-blind stars and still water?

And I’m up late with all the times I’ve kissed you all the grassy hills I’ve wandered days of soaking rain coming from an open palm of sky, the utter allure of an egret hunting in the marsh at the side of a busy highway.

And how about this? That the sun hasn’t disappeared for good that a page of words can feel like a lover with a soft mouth

That a book can open everything when just a minute ago you were alone in all the world.

The Orchard

“You went from parched to overflow in the blink of an eye.” -Anne Lamott

Like wood catching fire on a bed of smoke, almond blossoms suddenly appear and every time I foolishly think I can capture the moment.

This is what stuns me most as I stand at the roadside: that each year I think it will be different.

That I might be able to hold that sight full in my chest: the sun and breeze, even the wild impulse to climb on top of my car for the best view and the mad dash across a two-lane highway with my camera.

Rising up from green valley and grey trunk, the precise blur of thousands of white petals pulses in me, the full catastrophe of spring.
Meanwhile, farmers everywhere keep pumping groundwater whenever drought conditions reduce their deliveries of surface water. Who will stop them? And in many places, groundwater is the only source of water for farms.

The mystery of how AG behemoths in the southern San Joaquin Valley keep farming can be answered with the age-old adage that “water flows uphill toward money and power.” Though they have no historic northern California water rights, the money and power they’ve accumulated have enabled corporate giants like J.G. Boswell and Stewart and Lynda Resnick’s Wonderful company to keep farming long after they’ve overdrafted the resources in their own regions; Resnick alone uses 400,000 acre feet of water per year, about two-thirds the consumption of the entire city of Los Angeles.

The Resnicks have cornered the market on high value pistachios, in part because much of the soil in the southern San Joaquin Valley where they farm is too salty for almonds; pistachios are more salt resistant.

In fact, the southern San Joaquin Valley seems like the most likely place to fallow land for many reasons, not the least of which are the depleted groundwater supplies (which have resulted in tremendous land subsidence), the accumulation of salts in the soil, the lack of historic water rights, and the mounting effects of global warming.

However, the southern Valley is also where there are very high concentrations of money and power. Those realities are usually enough to defy reason, Mother Nature, and the commonweal.

Another factor in the water balance equation is the number of people in the Valley who lack safe drinking water. Ironically, many of them are poor farmworkers who live in towns where the water, “looks like piss and smells like egg.”

Newly elected Governor Gavin Newsom has made bringing safe water to all Valley citizens a priority, but that will entail costs for infrastructure and battles over who has superior water rights.

Another complicating element is the need to restore the collapsing ecosystems in both the Valley and the San Joaquin Delta. Over 95% of the Valley’s historic wetlands have been destroyed, and the Delta is increasingly damaged by intrusion of salt water as more and more water gets diverted south, most of it from the Sacramento River. In an average year, water diverted south from the Delta amounts to 5.1 million acre feet.

Ironically, wetlands are nature’s way of mitigating the effects of flooding and also important sources of groundwater recharge; it makes sense to restore them for those reasons alone. But bringing back wetlands will also mean retiring farmland, and unless they’re very well compensated, farmers will take to the courts before giving up their lucrative returns from nuts and vines.

Ultimately, the obvious need to fallow farmland and balance our water needs will almost certainly be adjudicated in the courts, where the wealthy and powerful have tremendous advantages. Balancing the scales of justice would require widespread public support for a sustainable future, not just for farming in the San Joaquin Valley but also for an environment that has been severely damaged by unsustainable demands on water.

Whether the people of the San Joaquin Valley will rise to the challenge of protecting their own water remains to be seen. A major reason for the current dire situation has been the failure of Valley citizens to take on their responsibilities for ensuring public resources are subject to wise use policies. And unless the public does get involved, we can expect water to flow uphill, in an ongoing tragedy of the commons.

From The Valley Citizen.

**Operation 9-2-99 Clean-Up**

By CHRISS GUPTILL

I would like to thank everyone who came out and participated in our latest river cleanup on February 16th. This was our 48th cleanup event and we were able to completely clean Bellenita Park, the Tuolumne River, and the Carpenter Bridge area. Sixty-five volunteers filled a 40 cubic yard dumpster, removed 5 tons of trash and debris, 5 tires, 5 shopping carts, and did an outstanding job of returning this entire area to a state the community can be proud of and can recreate along.

Here are some during and after photos from the cleanup and here is a story that Fox 40 came out and did about the cleanup. We had a ton of Davis high students, The Enochs Environmental Club, and the CCC crew from Stockton that joined us once again.

Check out the totals from our 48 cleanups. Here is a brand new website with map of the Tuolumne River Regional Park and the Dry Creek and Tuolumne Riverside Trails that runs along the our park, creek, and river for hiking, biking, running, and paddling. It is a great place to recreate both in and along the Tuolumne River and it is open to recreation.

Special thanks Phil McKay with DFW Natural Resource Volunteer Program, Lt. Stanfield with MPD for the officer support, Vicki Rice with the City of Modesto for recycling the tires, the city parks department for the bags and opening the restroom, Del Ambris with Cost Less Foods who helped return the shopping carts, and Edgar Garibay with the Tuolumne River Trust.

We have a lot more work to do and we need as many volunteers and partners as we can get. Spread the word via social media. Tell a friend, a family member, a church or club classmate or team member, a neighbor, or a co-worker that we need them. Direct them to the website at http://tinyurl.com/operation9-2-99 Have them sign up on the form to receive reminders via e-mail. I hope to see a lot more people at our Saturday, March 9th, 2019 cleanup as we continue to combat blight in our parks, waterways, and open spaces and promote recreation opportunities in its place. Check out the details on the website or the links below to see the difference we are making.

Thank you,

Website - http://tinyurl.com/operation9-2-99. If you are interested, join or donate to our partner the Tuolumne River Trust here.
Study: Illness and Medical Bills Cited as Significant Contributors to Bankruptcy

From Physicians for A National Health Plan

Researchers found no evidence that the ACA reduced the proportion of bankruptcies driven by medical problems; insurance offered little protection to middle-class Americans.

Medical problems contributed to 66.5% of all bankruptcies, a figure that is virtually unchanged since before the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), according to a study published yesterday as an editorial in the American Journal of Public Health. The findings indicate that 530,000 families suffer bankruptcies each year that are linked to illness or medical bills.

The study, carried out by a team of two doctors, two lawyers, and a sociologist from the Consumer Bankruptcy Project (CBP), surveyed a random sample of 910 Americans who filed for personal bankruptcy between 2013 and 2016, and abstracted the court records of their bankruptcy filings. The study, which is one component of the CBP’s ongoing bankruptcy research, provides the only national data on medical contributors to bankruptcy since the 2010 passage of the ACA. Bankruptcy debtors reported that medical bills contributed to 58.5% of bankruptcies, while illness-related income loss contributed to 44.3%; many debtors cited both of these medical issues.

These figures are similar to findings from the CBP’s medical bankruptcy surveys in 2001 and 2007, which were authored by three researchers in the current study (Himmelstein, Thorne, and Woolhandler), and then-Harvard law professor Elizabeth Warren. As in those earlier studies, many debtors cited multiple contributors to their financial woes.

The current study found no evidence that the ACA reduced the proportion of bankruptcies driven by medical problems: 65.5% of debtors cited a medical contributor to their bankruptcy in the period prior to the ACA’s implementation as compared to 67.5% in the three years after the law came into effect. The responses also did not differ depending on whether the respondent resided in a state that had accepted ACA’s Medicaid expansion. The researchers noted that bankruptcy is most common among middle-class Americans, who have faced increasing copayments and deductibles in recent years despite the ACA. The poor, who were most helped by the ACA, less frequently seek formal bankruptcy relief because they have few assets (such as a home) to protect and face particular difficulty in securing the legal help needed to navigate formal bankruptcy proceedings.

Relative to other bankruptcy filers, people who identified a medical contributor were in worse health and were two to three times more likely to skip needed medical care and medications.

Dr. David Himmelstein, the lead author of the study, a Distinguished Professor at the City University of New York’s (CUNY) Hunter College and Lecturer at Harvard Medical School commented: “Unless you’re Bill Gates, you’re just one serious illness away from bankruptcy. For middle-class Americans, health insurance offers little protection. Most of us have policies with so many loopholes, copayments and deductibles that illness can put you in the poorhouse. And even the best job-based health insurance often vanishes when prolonged illness causes job loss – just when families need it most. Private health insurance is a defective product, akin to an umbrella that melts in the rain.”

In the article, the authors note that “medical bills frequently cause financial hardship, and the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau reported that they were by far the most common cause of unpaid bills sent to collection agencies in 2014, accounting for more than half of all such debts.”

The study’s senior author Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, an internist in the South Bronx, Distinguished Professor at CUNY/ Hunter College and Lecturer in Medicine at Harvard commented: “The ACA was a step forward, but 29 million remain uncovered, and the epidemic of under-insurance is out of control. We need to move ahead from the ACA to a single-payer, Medicare for All system that assures first-dollar coverage for everyone. But the Trump administration and Republicans in several states are taking us in reverse: cutting Medicaid, threatening to gut protections for the more than 61 million Americans with pre-existing conditions, and allowing insurers to peddle stripped-down policies that offer no real protection.”

Study co-author Robert M. Lawless, the Max L. Rowe Professor of Law at the University of Illinois College of Law noted: “In the Supreme Court’s words, bankruptcy is a fresh start for the ‘honest but unfortunate debtor.’ Our study shows that for many bankruptcy debtors, the misfortune continues to come from the way we pay for health care. Bankruptcy may provide a fresh start, but it comes at a high financial and emotional cost for those who file. Filing for bankruptcy can stop the financial bleeding that the healthcare system imposes but curing that system’s ills is the only lasting solution.”

Physicians for a National Health Program is a single-issue organization advocating a universal, comprehensive single-payer national health program. PNHP has more than 21,000 members and chapters across the United States.

Physicians for a National Health Program

Fellows & Youth Leadership Academy

Applications are now being accepted for eight one-year journalism fellowships with the Carter Center’s Mental Health Program. These fellowships aim to enhance public understanding and reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with mental health and substance use conditions and in their communities and the world.

The Leadership Academy is designed to develop leaders who have the skills to positively influence and impact themselves, their peers and their communities using the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The intense two week on campus experience prepares youth, ages 13 – 18, to be influential leaders and change agents for their schools, communities and the world.

The two-week camp includes:
• A Civil Rights tour of Alabama
• Small group facilitation
• Interactive modules
• Learn to code
• Create nonviolent video games & apps
• Produce short films and music videos
• Learn to utilize Dr. King’s principles to combat bullying
• A 12-month follow-up plan with monthly in-person and virtual meetings

The Leadership Academy fee is $350. Nominate a student for the Academy here: Nomination Form

Register your student for the Academy here: Application (A non-refundable deposit of $25.00 is required for each application.)

Apply for a scholarship to attend the Academy here: Scholarship Application

For more information email leadershipacademy@theking-center.org or call (404) 526-8913.
TUESDAYS

Attention Veterans: Join us for Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Cord Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am NAACP Meeting, Christ Unity Baptist Church, 601 ‘L’ St., Modesto, 3rd Tuesday @ 7 pm. 209-645-1909; email: naacpbranch1048@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/24765549018387/

Pagan Family Social, third Tuesdays, Golden Corral, 3737 McHenry Ave., Modesto, 2nd Tuesday, 5:00 p.m. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.


IMCV Weekly Insight Meditation and dharma talk, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, 2172 Kienan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UFSFC east parking lot). Offered freely, donations welcomed. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see https://imcv.org/. Email: info@imcv.org

ImcV Community Meeting. Contact for info: 562-9951290.

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: mercedgay@gmail.com, info@mercedlgbtc@gmail.com.

Merced Family Folk Dances from Balkans, Europe, USA and more. Fridays, Carnegie Art Center, 200 N. Broadway, Merced, CA 95340, 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm, $5 (students free). Info: Call 209-480-0387.

Sunglasses for the Blind and low vision. First Friday, 204 12th St., Suite 2, Modesto, 7 to 10 pm. Info: John Aguirre, (559) 280-3864; jagnagle@yahoo.com

**DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS** Tenth of each month. Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to Jim Costello, jcstello@iyc.org

**MODesto PEACE LiFE CENTERS ACTivITIES**

**MODesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS** held the FIRST WEDNESDAY of the month at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Call the Center for info: 529-5750.

**MEDIA:** Listen to Peace/Life Center radio, KCBP 95.5 FM streaming at http://www.KCBPradio.org and at 95.5 FM, 2 pm to 2 am.

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

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

**FRIDAYS**

Game Night and Potluck, third Friday of each month. For 21+ only. Central Valley Pride Center, 1341 1st St. Modesto, 7 pm to 10 pm. Info: John Aguirre, (559) 280-3864; jagnagle@yahoo.com


Latino Emergency Council (LEC) 3rd Fridays, 8:15 am, El Concilio, 1314 H St. Modesto. Info: Dale Butler, 522-8357.

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

Sierra Club: Yokuts group. Regular meetings, third Friday, College Ave. Congregational Church. 7 pm, 300-4253. See http://www.sierrClub.org/mother-lande/yokuts for info on hikes and events.

MUjeres Latinas, last Friday, lunch meetings, Cristina Villegas, 549-1831.

Hispanic Leadership Council, 3rd Fridays at noon, 1314 H St., Modesto, 95354. Questions? Yamil Valladolid, yamil@hotmail.com

**SATURDAY**

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 together come to celebrate another and the Divine among us and within us. 3rd Saturday of the month, 3:30-5:00 pm. Stockton, CA. Contact Rev. Erin King, 209-815-0783, okenting@gmail.com

So Easy ~ So Good: Vegetarian/Vegan/Wannabe Group, 4th Thursday, 5:30-8:30 pm. Free movie nights, etc. Third Saturday of every month. Info: Kathy Haynes (209) 250-9961 or email kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com

**Friday, March 21, 2014:**

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Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.