

Debunking the Lies Politicians Say About Immigrants

Rebuilding the U.S. immigration system to be both functional and humane requires dismissing harmful myths and inflammatory rhetoric in favor of truth and facts.

ERICA BRYANT, Associate Director of Writing, the Vera Institute of Justice

As critical elections approach, voters are being bombarded with harmful myths, misrepresentations, and outright lies about people who are immigrants. More than 45 million people living in the United States were born elsewhere. Despite their proven contributions to communities nationwide, people seeking office call them “invaders” and make campaign promises for the “largest domestic deportation operation in history.” Inflammatory talking points about “border security” and the “migrant crisis” come from candidates across the political spectrum.

What is missing from this rhetoric is simple: the truth. The United States has failed to align its immigration laws and practices with 21st-century realities, leaving a system that is cruel, dysfunctional, and widely criticized. Bringing the country’s approach to immigration in line with the needs of the moment and building an immigration system that is both functional and humane will require serious effort. False information distracts from the solutions that we know work.

Here’s the truth.

It is perfectly legal to request asylum. People who come to the United States border to ask for help are not breaking the law.

Asylum is a form of protection that allows people to remain in the United States and avoid deportation back to a country where

they fear persecution or harm because of their identity, religion, or political beliefs. Under both U.S. and international law, people who face danger in their homelands have the right to go to other nations to seek safety and to have their requests for asylum considered.

Asking for asylum is not a “free ticket” into the United States.

Applying for asylum is a long and complex process. Asylum cases completed in fiscal year 2019 or later took an average of 5.2 years to resolve, according to unpublished analysis of government data conducted by Vera. Currently-pending removal cases have been on the docket for an average of

1.9 years. Dangerous conditions around the world have forced record numbers of people to flee their homes and seek safety. This increase in need, exacerbated by a decades-long lack of investment in infrastructure and capacity to humanely process asylum claims, has created an enormous backlog in processing requests. Vera’s unpublished analysis of government data showed that, as of January 31, 2024, there were 3,353,199 cases pending removal proceedings in the United States.

Undocumented people have far lower crime rates than U.S. citizens.

Political candidates often falsely link undocumented people to crime in the United

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States. Yet an extensive study of crimes in all 50 states and Washington, DC, from 1990 to 2014, found that undocumented immigration does not increase violent crime. A study of arrests in Texas found that, relative to undocumented people, U.S.-born citizens are more than twice as likely to be arrested for violent crimes, 2.5 times more likely to be arrested for drug crimes, and more than four times more likely to be arrested for property crimes. Another study in Texas

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It’s Not Too Late to Register for Peace Camp

The Modesto Peace/Life Center’s 39th Annual Peace Camp in the Sierras will take place on June 21-23, 2024. Spend a weekend in nature building community and working toward peace, justice, and a sustainable environment through nonviolent action. You’ll enjoy workshops, good food, singing, crafts, a talent show, recreation, and stimulating people of all ages in a beautiful mountain setting.

Melanie Berru will present at the main workshop for Peace Camp. As a sociology professor at Modesto Junior College, she champions the power of the people, infusing her teachings with passion and purpose. Ms. Berru serves not only the general MJC student body but also is a dedicated EOPS and Bridge faculty member, an Umoja support faculty, and a Rising Scholar faculty member. Beyond the confines of the classroom, she extends her reach into the criminal justice system, teaching incarcerated students the transformative power of self-awareness

and societal understanding. With two decades of community engagement and activism, she embodies the belief that true learning transcends academic boundaries and requires action. A proud Chicana from the Central Valley, her lifelong goal remains rooted in nurturing great possibilities within the community that nurtured her.

About Peace Camp: Peace Camp officially opens with supper at 6:00 pm on Friday and closes after breakfast and the morning gathering on Sunday. The camp is run by volunteers, and campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and work around the camp. Families and individuals of all ages are welcome. Minors under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. The camp fee covers the program, food, and lodging for the weekend. Partial scholarships and day rates are also available. Donations for scholarships are appreciated.

About Camp Peaceful Pines: Peace Camp is held at Camp Peaceful Pines, on Clark Fork Road off Hwy. 108 in the

Stanislaus National Forest. The Camp features a kitchen/mess hall, bathroom facilities with showers, rustic cabins, and platform tents. A cabin with special needs may be requested. Depending on the number of campers, cabins may be shared.

REGISTRATION IS STILL OPEN.

To register, visit peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp, or to volunteer or be added to the Peace Camp 2024 Interest List, contact Megan Parravano, at 209-497-7220, meganparravano@gmail.com.



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Wear Orange!

Wear Orange will be taking place June 7-9, 2024. Join us in honoring survivors and building community with those working to end gun violence.

Why Wear Orange?

On January 21, 2013, Hadiya Pendleton marched in President Obama’s second inaugural parade. One week later, Hadiya was shot and killed on a playground in Chicago. Soon after this tragedy, Hadiya’s friends commemorated her life by wearing orange, the color hunters wear in the woods to protect themselves and others. Wear Orange is now observed every June. Thousands of people wear the color orange to honor Hadiya and the more than 43,000 Americans are killed with guns and approximately 76,000 more are shot and wounded every year.

We wear orange for a future free from gun violence.

This year, we once again unite in our call to end gun violence as we come together for **Wear Orange**. We honor the communities shattered by gun violence alongside the more than 120 people who are shot and killed and hundreds more who are wounded and traumatized every day in our country.

We deserve more than to live in a country where firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States. But as incidents of gun violence have grown, so too has the movement to stop it. By participating in Wear Orange online and in your community, we will organize, advocate, and rally for safer communities. Together, we can build a future free from gun violence.

Visit Wear Orange at <https://wearorange.org/>



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Education Without Boundaries: Teaching College Behind Bars

By **MELANIE BERRU**, Professor of Sociology

I am a firm believer in the indomitable power of the human spirit and the profound significance of second chances. As an educator, I witness firsthand the remarkable transformations that occur when individuals are afforded new opportunities within the realm of education. Presently, I teach in the Reentry and Enhanced Alternatives to Custody Training Center (REACT), a Modesto detention facility aimed to breaking the cycle of recidivism through educational and social programming. Through the Rising Scholars Program, Modesto Junior College extends college courses to incarcerated individuals. As a professor of sociology, I teach an introduction to sociology course within this facility. Higher education possesses immense potential to profoundly influence the lives of students in a fundamental and radical manner.

For many, community college serves as the epicenter of life-altering change. As the, late, esteemed bell hooks asserted, the college classroom holds the potential promise of genuine, transformative change—a space where students can challenge established narratives of identity and envision new possibilities for themselves in the world. As educators, we possess the ability to create an environment of critical thinking, fostering a sense of belonging and significance. Through our curriculum and approach, we can cultivate a fertile ground for transformative learning, dismantling outdated mental paradigms of self and social structures.



Sociology, as the systematic study of society, social groups, interactions, and social structures, naturally prompts us to question the social fabric of our existence. It encourages us not only to comprehend but also to critique the social structures and institutions that shape our lives. As civil rights activist Ella Baker aptly observed, “oppressed people, whatever their level of formal education, have the ability to understand and interpret the world around them, to see the world for what it is, and move to transform it.” This ethos underpins my decision to teach at a community college, where we serve a diverse array of nontraditional students disproportionately affected by socio-economic disparities, racial inequalities, familial challenges, and for some, past incarceration.

While teaching behind the walls, I cannot overlook the profound negative impact that many of my system-impacted students experienced during their K-12 years within the confines of traditional education. For them, school seemed as if it was yet another space that they felt that they did not belong, leading them to believe school wasn’t meant

for them. Recognizing this, I was deeply impressed by their decision to undertake what initially seemed like an insurmountable challenge to enroll in a college course while incarcerated. It became not only a challenge for them but also for me, as I committed to accompanying them on a journey that respected them as learners and, more importantly, as individuals with a genuine desire to acquire knowledge. I did not want to mess this up. I had to get this right- for them.

This article serves as a tribute to honor the awe-inspiring resilience of students who, as one of my former Rising Scholar students poignantly expressed, choose to use their time rather than allowing their time to use them. The Rising Scholars at REACT consistently demonstrate a remarkable level of respect towards both myself and their peers, adhering to a code of conduct that enriches our learning environment. They display an unwavering commitment to academic excellence and engage in rigorous introspection, challenging societal norms and envisioning a brighter future for themselves. Lecture discussions that typically span an hour and a half on the outside often extend to double or triple that time within these walls, as students eagerly delve into the depths of sociological inquiry. Witnessing the profound impact of sociological theories on personal narratives is both humbling and emotional. These students courageously confront their pasts, utilizing education as a catalyst for healing and personal growth. As one student stated, “Practicing self-acceptance means accepting exactly who you are and the things you have done. It means forgiving yourself and seeing yourself through the mistakes and learning from them. It is imperative to be better not just for ourselves but for those around us that deserve the best version of ourselves (Student 1, N4).”

Teaching from a liberation standpoint empowers incarcerated individuals to recognize the societal forces that influenced their decisions and inspires them to advocate for change. Behind these bars lie immeasurable reservoirs of life, beauty, talent, and potential—attributes too often overlooked by mainstream society. This article serves as an invitation to invest, support, and provide opportunities for second chances. To say that I am proud of them would be an understatement. Genuine learning has the power to transform lives, and throughout this academic year, many have attested to this truth. One student’s testimonial particularly resonates: “please understand that this course

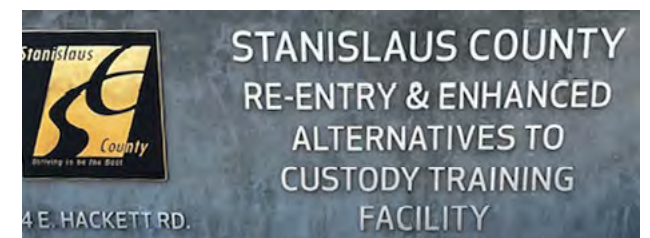


and yes, you, have been what has caused me to decide that this is a real reason to return to MJC when I get out (of jail) and earn my certificate which will allow me to gain a place in society where I can help others. With this course, I will be better equipped to help others with the truths needed to be free (Student 2, N4).” Together, let us recognize the inherent worth and potential within every individual, regardless of their circumstances. Let us embrace the transformative power of education to cultivate hope, resilience, and redemption.

If you or a loved one is system-impacted and aspires to pursue higher education, I encourage you to reach out to Student Worker/Mentor David Lujan or the Director of the RISE Up Center, Glen Stovall, at Modesto Junior College at (209) 575-6847, stovallg@mjc.edu. This program offers a supportive campus community, priority registration, book vouchers, and a host of other invaluable resources.

In Solidarity,
Professor Melanie Berru.

For inquiries regarding the discipline of sociology or the teaching system-impact on students, contact, berrum@mjc.edu



Greetings from the Tuolumne River Trust!

We're thrilled to present our 2024 State of Parks magazine, a compilation of inspiring stories, programmatic milestones, and critical updates related to the state of parks and access to the Tuolumne River and the Greater Yosemite Region.

Read the full magazine at tuolumne.org/stateofparks

In this edition, you'll find:

Rich histories of recreation and parks in California
Updates on the current status of park access, new parks, and future projects.

Personal narratives from the field told by TRT staff, volunteers and community members.

Over the next few weeks, we'll be spotlighting some of these amazing stories, so stay tuned!

Become a TRT Member and receive the magazine in your home!

Did you know that by becoming a member of the Tuolumne River Trust, we will mail you a copy of State of Parks? When you join our community as a member, you can receive the printed magazine and many other perks!

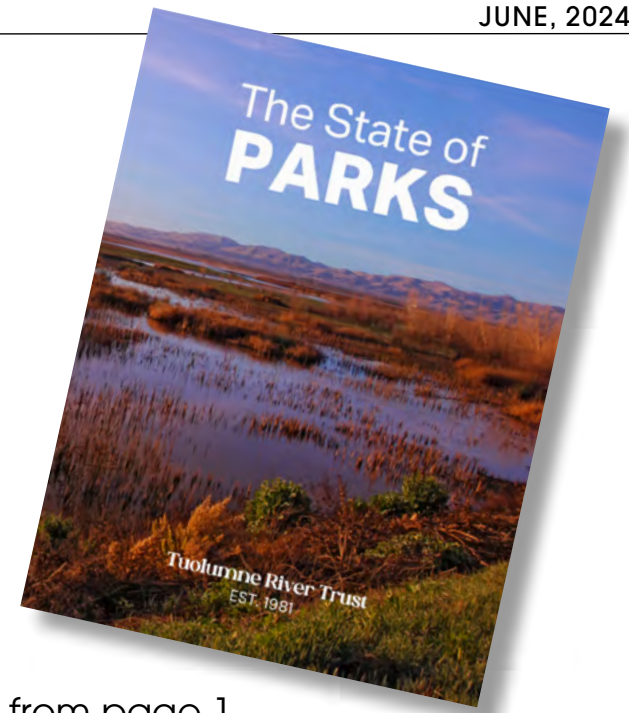
Join us today!

We're grateful for your support and enthusiasm. Together, we're making a difference for the Tuolumne River and the Greater Yosemite Region.

Happy reading!

Tuolumne River Trust

P.S. State of Parks was printed with California's recognized leader in eco-friendly printing on 100% recycled paper.



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found that the criminal conviction rate for undocumented immigrants was 45 percent below that of native-born Texans. Immigrants of any legal status are typically found to be less involved in violence than native-born Americans.

Undocumented people pay taxes and help prop up social security by paying into the system—without receiving benefits.

Undocumented people pay an estimated \$31 billion dollars in federal, state, and local taxes each year, including billions of dollars into a social security system from which they can draw very few, if any, benefits. The Social Security Administration (SSA) itself estimated that it collected \$13 billion in payroll taxes in 2010 from workers without documentation, while only disbursing about \$1 billion in payment attributable to unauthorized work. In a 2013 report, SSA estimated that “earnings by unauthorized immigrants result in a net positive effect on Social Security financial status generally. . . We estimate that future years will experience a continuation of this positive impact on the trust funds.”

Virtually no fentanyl has been seized from people seeking asylum.

Fentanyl overdoses are increasing in the United States, and real solutions will require investments in treatment and preventative health care infrastructure. Instead, far too many politicians seek cheap political points by falsely blaming people seeking asylum at the southern border for this serious problem. In fact, virtually no fentanyl has been seized from people seeking asylum. In 2023, 93 percent of fentanyl seizures occurred at official border crossings or legal checkpoints. Nearly all of these seizures involved people permitted to cross the border, and more than 70 percent were U.S. citizens.

People with pending immigration cases show up to their court hearings.

Evidence clearly shows that, over the past two decades, most immigrants have shown up for the immigration court hearings that determine whether they have legal standing to remain in the United States. They do not slip into the country

and disappear, as some political leaders claim. In fact, those who attend immigration court outside detention, on what are known as “non-detained” dockets, almost always continue to appear for their hearings when they are able to secure legal representation. There is no need to confine people in costly and inhumane immigration prisons.

Not all people at risk of deportation cross the border without documentation. Visa holders, long-term permanent residents, and even U.S. citizens are at risk.

While the spotlight often shines on people who cross the southern border without documentation, there are many ways that people can face the threat of deportation in the United States. Indeed, there are 22 million people in the United States who are at risk of being separated from their families and sent to countries where they may face danger. Tens of thousands of children who were adopted from outside the United States, for example, do not have documentation and are vulnerable to deportation because their complex citizenship paperwork was improperly filed. Additionally, more than one million people were brought to the United States as children by parents who entered the country without documentation or overstayed their visas. And, in 2022, more than 850,000 people from countries around the world overstayed their visas, making their continued presence in the United States unauthorized. Lawful permanent residents, current visa holders, and even U.S. citizens have been subjected to the risk of deportation and forced to defend their right to remain home with their families and in their communities.

Many people at risk of deportation actually have a legal right to remain in the United States—but are deported anyway.

Unlike in criminal court, people facing deportation in immigration court are not entitled to an attorney if they cannot afford one. Immigration attorneys can cost thousands of dollars, making them unaffordable for many. As a result, people seeking asylum, longtime legal residents, parents of U.S. citizens, and even small children are forced to appear in immigration court without an attorney to protect their rights.

This makes it much more likely that they will be deported, even if they could have established a legal right to stay in the United States. The Fairness to Freedom Act, which was introduced in Congress last year and would establish a right to federally funded attorneys for all people facing deportation, would help fix this injustice.

Immigrants participate in the labor force and start businesses at higher rates than the native-born population.

One in six people in the United States workforce are immigrants. In fact, immigrants participate in the labor force at a higher rate than the U.S.-born population. Immigrants are also more likely to start businesses than native-born U.S. citizens. Furthermore, millions of people in the United States are employed by immigrant-founded and immigrant-owned companies.

People in the United States view immigration as a positive that benefits the country, and they support protections for people fleeing danger.

The majority of the public believes that immigration brings benefits to the United States, including economic growth and enriching culture and values. Nearly three-quarters of people polled said that people immigrate to the United States for jobs and to improve their lives, and more than half say that the ability to immigrate is a “human right.” Multiple polls show that the majority of people in the United States support protections for people who are trying to escape persecution and torture in their homelands. According to one Pew Research Center poll, 72 percent believe that accepting civilians trying to escape war and violence should be an important goal of U.S. immigration policy.

The United States has much work ahead to reform its dysfunctional and often cruel immigration system. This November, and beyond, voters need to reject lies that demonize immigrants and demand policies that treat each person with dignity and fairness, no matter where they were born.

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The Rise of Homelessness Among California's Older Adults: How Policymakers Can Ensure Older Adults Stay Housed

By **MONICA DAVALOS**, California Budget & Policy Center

KEY TAKEAWAY

California's homeless population is aging rapidly, with adults 50+ making up nearly 40% of those needing shelter. Without swift and intentional policy action, California faces a future with a growing number of unhoused older adults as the state's population ages.

Every Californian deserves an affordable, dignified, and accessible home, regardless of their age, ability, race, gender, or economic status. Yet thousands of Californians — increasingly composed of older adults age 50 and over — continue to fall into homelessness faster than our systems can house them. During the course of the 2022-23 fiscal year, local California homeless service providers made contact with over 215,000 adults without children needing to find a home or search for other life-sustaining services — and even more were likely served by the end of 2023. Of these, 85,310 — nearly 40% — were adults age 50 and over. While experiencing homelessness at any age is severely destructive to an individual's well-being, older adults are the fastest-growing population experiencing homelessness and the largest share of individuals who are encountering homelessness for the first time in their lives. Without swift and intentional policy action, California faces a future with a growing number of unhoused older adults as the state's population ages.

Understanding the diverse characteristics, circumstances, and tailored interventions unhoused older Californians need is key to effectively addressing their housing needs and solving homelessness across the state.

“Older adults” refers to individuals who are age 50 and over. This determination was made to parallel current research on older adults at risk of or experiencing homelessness. It also acknowledges the increased physical and behavioral health vulnerabilities that are being experienced by unhoused individuals aged 50 and over which have been traditionally seen in older populations and require tailored interventions.

1. Older Californians Are a Large Share of the Unhoused Population

Unhoused Californians age 50 and over comprised 40% of adult-only households who connected with the homelessness response system in the 2022-23 fiscal year. Yet older adults account for only 34% of the state's entire population.

Research identifies two main cohorts that are driving the growth in older adult homelessness:

- Individuals who became unhoused earlier in life and have consequently faced heightened vulnerabilities that led to prolonged periods of homelessness.
- Individuals who have encountered homelessness for the first time at an older age.



California Budget
& Policy Center

- Prolonged economic hardship and insufficient wages have also prevented many from building savings or retirement accounts, leading to economic insecurity among older Californians. Adults without children are also ineligible for many cash-based safety net programs as they typically target people with children.

Available programs often have minimal benefit amounts that are even lower for adults without dependents. Some program benefits vary by county (particularly for General Assistance/General Relief), have time restrictions, strict asset limits, and may require an age threshold or a physical/

Prolonged economic hardship and insufficient wages have also prevented many from building savings or retirement accounts, leading to economic insecurity among older Californians.

developmental disability. Nationally, inadequate rental assistance funding also prevents more than 4 in 5 low-income, non-elderly adult households without children from obtaining the support they qualify for. Regardless of the circumstances leading to homelessness for older adults, it is clear that there is an urgent need for amplified, targeted safety net and housing interventions at various points to ensure aging Californians can remain in their homes.

2. Stark Racial Disparities Persist in California's Unhoused Older Adult Population*

Older Black, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander Californians disproportionately experience homelessness in California. While Black Californians age 50 and older make up roughly 5.4% of the state's population, they comprised over 1 in 4 (26%) older adults who made contact with homeless service providers in the 2022-23 fiscal year. Disparities are also evident within Indigenous and Pacific Islander communities, with Indigenous individuals being almost six times as likely and Pacific Islanders twice as likely to connect with the homelessness response system. Separate data from the state's point-in-time counts reflect homelessness increased among Latinx Californians across the whole population, which captures older adults as well.

The stark racial disparities parallel the broader racial disparities observed in California's unhoused population, underscoring that people of color bear the disproportionate

and harmful impacts of homelessness. These disparities reflect the enduring effects of intentional racist policies that created educational, housing, economic, and health barriers for people of color — all of which directly affect an individual's ability to obtain and sustain stable housing, especially at older ages.

Racist institutionalized practices, such as redlining, government-sanctioned displacement, and predatory practices, have placed generations in positions that make it harder to obtain housing and economic security.

Discriminatory practices have also caused Black and other communities of color to face the highest risk of justice system involvement, familial disruptions, and traumatic experiences which can cause and exacerbate homelessness throughout a lifetime.

3. Most Unhoused Older Adults Have a Disabling Condition

Most older adults experiencing homelessness reported having a disabling condition (72%) in the 2022-23 fiscal year. Disabling conditions include physical, mental, or emotional impairments that are long continuing, significantly impeding an individual's ability to live independently, and could be improved with housing. It also captures people with developmental disabilities. Research demonstrates many unhoused individuals experience health conditions and mobility limitations prematurely, often decades before housed adults of the same age. The striking differences reflect the detrimental health effects experiencing homelessness has on the lives of Californians, especially as they age. This pivotal factor underscores the need for policy interventions to be both accessible and tailored to the diverse demographic of older adults starting at age 50.

Unhoused Californians face steep barriers to medical access, face daily safety concerns, and often have limited access to basic necessities such as consistent meals, proper medication storage, and sanitation. Even temporary homeless shelters are often not equipped to accommodate older individuals with complex medical or mobility conditions. Combined, the lack of access to care, medical support, and appropriate housing exacerbates negative health outcomes. Experiencing homelessness ultimately limits the opportunity to live a long, healthy life and reach older ages, which is reflected by higher mortality rates in unhoused populations when compared to their housed counterparts.

Ensuring older unhoused Californians with disabilities have appropriate housing and care is largely achievable through scaling supportive housing. This effective, evidence-based intervention combines robust housing interventions with wraparound supportive services to meet the medical, physical, and behavioral health needs of unhoused Californians with disabling conditions.

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Older Adults from previous page

4. Most Unhoused Older Adults Have an Income Source — But It's Not Enough

Most unhoused older adults who made contact with homeless service providers in the 2022-23 fiscal year reported having at least one source of income. These older adults had a median total monthly income of \$1,000 — an amount that cannot cover fair market rent for a studio apartment in nearly 70% of the state's counties, let alone other basic living expenses like food, utilities, and transportation.

The top three reported income sources were Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (median = \$1,037), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) (median = \$1,040), and General Assistance (median = \$221). All of which reflect the very low incomes and high rates of disabling conditions among the unhoused older adult population. Additionally, nearly 25% of individuals with an income source reported having income from work.

The limited state and federal aid available to adults without children, low-income seniors, and people with disabilities cannot cover the high cost of housing and other basic needs in California creating vulnerabilities that can lead to homelessness. Benefit amounts are insufficient and often have strict asset limits, placing Californians who depend on these supports in severe economic hardship. In 2022, only 24 housing units were affordable and available for every 100 extremely low-income renter households, which older adults on fixed incomes often fall into. The misalignment between safety net income supports and housing costs highlights the urgent need for significant investments in accessible, affordable housing and cash supports to prevent homelessness among older adults.



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5. High Housing Costs Drive Homelessness Among Older Californians

The severe shortage of affordable housing in California, leading to skyrocketing housing costs, is the primary factor pushing older adults into homelessness. In 2022, over half (52%) of all older adult California renters were housing cost-burdened, paying more than 30% of their total income in rent, and nearly 1 in 3 (29%) were severely cost-burdened, paying more than 50% of their income in rent. Older Black California renters faced the highest rates, with over 60% paying unaffordable housing costs. Older Californians of color broadly are especially vulnerable to housing insecurity as they are more likely to be renters and consequently do not have home equity to potentially fall back on. Nearly half (45.7%) of older Black Californians are renters, followed by older Latinx (37.1%), other Californians of color (29.6%), and Asian Californians (26.1%).

The increased share of Californians of color in renter households reflects discriminatory policies that have perpetuated the racial wealth gap and limited access to housing and other opportunities, leading to adverse outcomes in later life. As housing costs comprise a significant portion of their income, older adult renters — especially those with low or fixed incomes — are left with fewer resources for essentials like transportation, medicine, and food. This precarious situation can be the tipping point into homelessness due to minor financial setbacks, medical expenses, or rent hikes. Ultimately, California's housing shortage places older renters in situations where they have to pay more than they can afford, exacerbating housing and economic insecurity.

Policymakers Can Ensure All Older Adults Have a Home

Older Californians are neighbors, parents, grandparents, and invaluable members of our communities who deserve access to an affordable, accessible, and dignified place to call home, regardless of their background or ability. As state and federal policymakers consider choices that will affect California's unhoused and vulnerable communities, it is important to understand the unique housing, economic, and health conditions older unhoused adults face. By doing so, policymakers can act on proven policies and interventions that can help solve homelessness among older adults, including:

- Increasing affordable rental housing and supportive

Nationally, inadequate rental assistance funding also prevents more than 4 in 5 low-income, non-elderly adult households without children from obtaining the support they qualify for.

housing to ensure that all Californians have access to an affordable home that is designed to meet the needs of diverse types of households, including older adults, single workers, and people with disabilities.

- Expanding and targeting additional financial support for Californians without dependents, low incomes, and disabilities through boosting Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment, General Assistance, and refundable tax credits.
- Directing resources for rental assistance and homelessness services, including emergency and shallow rental subsidies, housing vouchers, and rapid-rehousing efforts to ensure people can remain in their homes during times of financial crisis or quickly exit homelessness.
- Continuing to strengthen California's aging network and initiatives to connect housing and healthcare systems by leveraging efforts such as CalAIM housing supports and California's Master Plan on Aging.
- Protecting renters through expanding, enforcing, and funding legal aid and eviction protections.
- Policymakers can work towards a California where experiencing homelessness is a brief and rare occurrence and where everyone has a safe and stable home.

*For more see Danyelle Solomon, Connor Maxwell, and Abril Castro, Systemic Inequality: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation: How America's Housing System Undermines Wealth Building in Communities of Color (Center for American Progress, August 7, 2019), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/systemic-inequality-displacement-exclusion-segregation/> and California Department of Justice, California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, The California Reparations Report (2023), <https://oag.ca.gov/ab3121/report>.

For tables, graphs, and complete references, visit the [California Budget & Policy Center](#).

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L to R: Lisa Bruk, President of NLAPW, Modesto Branch; Angel Li, Grade 7-9 Grand Prize Winner; Addison Paden, Grade K-3 Grand Prize Winner; Lynn M. Hansen, Aileen Jaffa Youth Poetry Contest Chair for MoSt Poetry Center and NLAPW, Modesto Branch.

Aileen Jaffa Memorial Youth Poetry Contest Winners Celebrate

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

On May 11, 2024, the Modesto Branch of The National League of American Pen Women (NLAPW), in collaboration with Modesto/Stanislaus Poetry Center (MoSt), hosted the Aileen Jaffa Memorial Youth Poetry Contest winners' celebratory reading at the Carnegie Center for the Arts in Turlock, California.

This yearly contest is conducted in memory of Aileen Jaffa, poet, artist, sculptor, former agricultural reference librarian at UC Berkeley, and past President of the Piedmont/Oakland Branch of the National League of American Pen Women.

Contest Chair Lynn M. Hansen received 81 entries from students enrolled in Kindergarten through high school in Stanislaus County. Twenty student winners read their poems to an audience of admiring parents, friends, and teachers. Cash awards for First, Second, and Third prize certificates, as well as Honorable Mention Certificates plus a booklet of student-winning poems, were provided by the MoSt Poetry Center, while two grand prize cash awards were provided by the Modesto Branch of NLAPW. This year, Faith Delgado, Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate, assisted in handing out certificates to the contest winners.

The Grand Prize Winner for Grades 7-12 was Angel Li, Grade 8, for her Tanka poem "Pleasant Dreams," and the Grand Prize Winner for grades K-6 was Addison Paden, Grade 2, for her Acrostic poem "Dresses." NLAPW Modesto Branch President Lisa Bruk presented the grand prize winners with certificates and cash prizes. After the reading, student poets, their teachers, and their families enjoyed a reception with refreshments provided by the MoSt Poetry Center.

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

By STELLA BERATLIS

Zoe Byron, a sophomore at Oakdale High School, was selected as the Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate for 2024-2025. She will serve a one-year term, participate in several engagements throughout the year, and receive a \$500 honorarium.

Cameron Cendejo, a junior at Pitman High School, was a finalist.

"Congratulations to Zoe Byron, the newest Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate. I know that she'll carry the poetry torch high, continuing the excellent work that inaugural Youth Poet Laureate, Faith Delgado, began this past year. Thank you to program coordinator Stella Beratlis and to all the judges for their work on this, and congratulations again to Zoe," shared Gillian Wegener, MoSt Poetry Center president. The Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate is a program of the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center (MoSt Poetry), in partnership with Stanislaus County Office of Education, Stanislaus County Library, Modesto Junior College's School of Language Arts & Education, and Stanislaus Library Foundation.

This program celebrates youth voices that are committed to artistic excellence, civic engagement, and social impact. The Youth Poet Laureate position was recognized by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors with a county resolution for National Poetry Month in 2023, acknowledging this new role.

City of Modesto Poet Laureate Salvatore Salerno served as a judge along with fellow community members



Modesto-Stanislaus
Poetry Center

and champions for poetry: Sam Pierstorff, poet and MJC professor; Amy Bultena, artist and SCOE Arts Coordinator; Jessica Geiss, Children's Librarian at Salida Regional Branch of the Stanislaus County Library; Tina Curiel-Vega, poet and author; Dr. Gillian Wegener, Assistant Superintendent for Oakdale Joint Unified High School District and City of Modesto past poet laureate; Faith Delgado, inaugural Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate, and Mariah Ring, Community Outreach Specialist, Stanislaus County Youth Empowerment Program.

Applicants for the Youth Poet Laureate program submitted an application and an artistic statement/biography indicating civic engagement and leadership background along with original poems. A panel of judges critiqued this work on content, voice, and craft. Leadership and performance were also considered in

determining the young person who will represent our communities as Youth Poet Laureate.

ACTION: Join Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center in celebrating new Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate Zoe Byron at an event in early August, date TBA. You will hear original poems from the new youth poet laureate and honor outgoing youth poet laureate Faith Delgado. To learn more, visit www.mostpoetry.org/contests/ypl.



WINTER'S PEOPLE

By Tom Portwood

*Corner of McHenry and Standiford, Modesto, California.
I wrote this poem in December 2012. So many things
have changed in the world and in Modesto since then...
but suffering on our streets persists...*

Call us winter's people
Flesh and bone, heartbeat
Eyes yellowed, half-shut, nostrils flared and runny
Shivering under soiled windbreakers
thin rags of throwaway clothes
Hungry

Couple of scraggly mutts tethered to shopping carts
belly-empty like us
They snooze the day away on the weedy sidewalk
this desolate slab of concrete their home
sometimes our only buddies in this life

Silence devours hours
Contemplation of past mistakes, moments of trespass
Memories of vanished faces
How things might have been different
How we'll find our next good meal -
always on the sharp edge of our unspoken prayers

Boredom's a slim luxury
Cups of coffee bought by passing strangers
The odd Big Mac, piece of pizza
Tortured swirls of cigarette smoke
What we thought would be impermanent
Is anything but

Night collapses on us black as death
Temperatures plummet, winter's solstice turns
carnivorous
We take shelter against the back wall of the Circle K
Hunker down in the best way we know how...
Together

Many Thanks to Sal Salerno – Outgoing Modesto Poet Laureate, 2020-2024

Sal Salerno holds an M.F.A. from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is retired from having taught Drama and English at Davis High School in Modesto. He has been president of Stanislaus Audubon Society since 2010, and he is currently Poet Laureate of Modesto (2020-24). His latest book is *Letters from Long Hazard Lane*. *A Gathering of Voices* is very pleased to feature four of his fine poems in this issue of *Stanislaus Connections*.

DIFFERENT IN KIND, AND BY DEGREES

Bullock's Oriole is a colorful thing,
splashed with orange and black
and white upon the wing;
those who know have told me
the male that arrives at the prospect place
sweetly sings in his proving time,
yet the female sings more prolifically
than her adequately music-rich partner.
Perhaps you know someone in that range.

Lazuli Bunting is a stunning thing,
daubed in orange and blue
and white along the wing;
those in the know informed me
young males arrive without a song,
but create by catching the fragments
of the older males around;
the song they stitch will stick for life.
You know someone, maybe, in that range?

Bushtit, a seemingly plain-feathered thing
of charcoal tones overall, with high,
thin, descending notes to sing,
has a fascinating way, as written for me,
of a few adult offspring
remaining with their parents
to help and raise their siblings.
Could be, you know someone in that range?

Even such natural-born alien things
different in kind before our sight
connect by a lineage of molecules
across our gap by some degrees,
a seeming-wide that lessens when
we know it from our questing minds
and feel it in their showing fields.

– Salvatore Salerno

AN ENIGMA ROYALE after Poe's "An Enigma"

Perhaps there is a chain of meaning in a sonnet,
Or maybe just a concatenation of words;
Either way, don't bet any "dear names" on it,
As most are only intricate baubles
Kinked up so tightly, their chains wind wordily;
In the end, the reader sees just foibles.

Nevertheless, meaning something *despite* itself
Grows from a feverish fiddling with words.
Here is *something* that aims for the top shelf,
Or at least used for this Fête of the Absurd.
Rearing its puzzling head, this poem proclaims,
Rather like a herald who worships the Impish Self,
Of the genius whose immortal title you may divine:
Read the first link of every clanking line.

– Salvatore Salerno

SITTING AROUND A FIRE

The group of four had a shining today
deep in the woods, away from their homes.
Sunlight, dissolved to charcoal tones,
called for the ritual to come to play.

They lay the wood in a circle of stones,
silently, patterned in the right way.
The four huddled around in the circle
at the warm, safe distance away.

Above, the stars glistened on, one by one.
Afar, the owls called on, one after one.

One of the four tossed a flickering match
into the tinder, and a ruddy sprig of spray
hissed and cackled as it turned wood
to a red and golden curtain display.

The four as one, having spoken all day,
let their candles of speech flicker low;
one by one, each had the fire
take them by reverie in its sway.

They stare at flames, as if able to read
what their managed fears would say,
as their ancestors did, long before -
it is, and will be, a mystery play.

The group of four, still in a closed array,
hear no help, see no god, in the flames,
yet feel its ancient warmth from
its and their own passionate decay.

– Salvatore Salerno

THAT WILD RESOLVE

I am Thomas Hardy for an instant
from that image of an instance
when he sat on a stone in woods,
paper in hand, gazing into his distance.

I come back to my self-same state
on a stone like that, in woods like those,
book in hand, fitting the same pose,
and after my brief wishes, I wait.

*Give me a song that is not human,
Give me a motion no-one can make.*

I gaze long at a hole in the sky.
There is no bird where one should be,
no song nearby that one could hear.
It's a small solace that, by and by,

a bright song came later to my ear,
and the bird that called came flying by,
for Hardy then seemed very near
and appeared to whisper just for me,

*Of him, one may say,
"He strove that such innocent creatures
should come to no harm,
but he could do little for them,
and now he is gone."*

How many fewer birds there are
since Hardy and his sad regrets;
how many holes in the sky and trees
I know, so I leave the stony woods

to immerse in the maddening crowd,
search for problem threads to solve
where songs are muted by the loud,
and weave again with a wild resolve.

– Salvatore Salerno



Great Programs on KCBP 95.5 fm, the Voice of the Valley

Streaming on www.kcbpradio.org

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

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

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

SCIENCE

Radio Ecoshoek – the latest scientific information on Climate Change – Saturdays, 9:00 am.

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

Big Picture Science - 1:00 pm Sundays.

Planetary Radio – 2:30 pm Sundays.

PROGRAMS

Ukraine 2.4.2 - a collaboration between Anne Levine, WOMR, the Pacifica Network, and Kraina FM, a 26-city radio network in Ukraine that arranges weekly cutting-edge and exclusive interviews with key people in Ukraine – Thursdays, 10:00 am.

Beethoven to Bernstein - Classical music ranging from Beethoven to Bernstein. Big hits from well-renown composers - Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Ravel, Copland - and many more, mostly in the form of orchestral, chamber, and piano music - Saturdays, 10:00 pm.

The Not Old – Better Show - fascinating, high-energy program of big-name guests, inspiring role models, interesting topics, with entertaining host and former Modestan, Paul Vogelzang – Fridays, 2:00 pm, Saturdays, 12:30 pm.

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

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

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

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

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

Sojourner Truth - 4:00 pm – Tuesdays. Interviews and panels focus on issues that affect people of color.

Democracy Now! - 7:00 am, Monday thru Friday. Reporting by veteran journalists Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez.

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

Alternative Radio – 4:00 pm, Mondays. Interviews with prominent political and social people.

Julian Taylor's Jukebox – 4:00 pm, Thursdays and Fridays. Eclectic, contemporary music.

Nuestra Música – 4:00 pm, Tuesdays. Eclectic, Latin-flavored music with a beat!

LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

Triumphant Tuesdays – Noon, Tuesdays. Inspirational thoughts & music with Catrice.

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

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

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

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

I-On-Modesto - John Griffin interviews local people who reveal their inspiring stories. Mondays & Fridays, 10 am and Wednesdays at 9 pm.

Arts of the San Joaquin Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - Mondays, 8:00 pm; Tuesdays, 9:00 am & Wednesdays, 8:00 pm. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp> and on Spotify

Women of the Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - 8:00 pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays, 9:00 am. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbpwotv> and on Spotify.

Modesto Sound - California Audio Roots Project (CARP) – Tuesdays 5:30 pm, Wednesdays 11:30 am, & Sundays 11:00 am & 4:30 pm.

Sunday Cruisin' with your host, DeeJay Rig! Oldies hits from 1959 to 1999 – Sundays, 5:00 p.m.

Faithful Fridays – inspirational music and thoughts with Catrice – Fridays, 7:00 p.m.

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

Mars Radio – Hip-Hop Show - Music, interviews from local & regional artists - Fridays, 8:00 pm. A new, second show plays on Saturday nights at 8:00 pm, with a third at 8:00 pm Sundays.

Modesto Area Music Awards (MAMA) with Middagh Goodwin – Mondays 5:00 pm; Fridays 9:00 pm & Saturdays 6:00 pm.

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

This is SKA with Middagh Goodwin - Tuesdays, 9 pm; Fridays, 11 pm; Sundays, 5 am to 7 am.

I'll Take You There - A musical journey with Modesto's El Comandante - Saturday, 5:00 pm; Sundays, 9:00 pm.

Penny Bloods – Fun, Victorian melodrama radio plays, often performed by local actors, written by Arnold Anthony Schmidt, CSU, Stanislaus. As scheduled.

PSAs in English and Spanish produced by the West Modesto Community Collaborative.

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

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Will Water Districts Fail to Deliver on Historic Contract?

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

Earlier this year, Louis Brichetto was having breakfast with a local cattleman who mentioned having seen the Brichetto name on a historical water contract he had been reviewing along with some of his own old contracts. The casual remark got Brichetto's immediate attention.

Brichetto's roots in Stanislaus County's Oakdale region go back well over 150 years. His great grandfather made the nine-month trip from the eastern United States around Cape Horn to San Francisco in 1859, lured by the promise of gold in the Sierra Nevada. Paul Brichetto soon realized – as did few other entrepreneurs of the time – that money was to be made providing the gold seekers with the food they needed to keep on digging. According to George Tinkham's History of Stanislaus County,

“When the whole country between Stockton and Oakdale was almost a continuous wheat field – save for the cattle ranches – and held by the ranch kings of “Octopus” fame, Paul Brichetto, then operating a little garden of leased land on the outskirts of Stockton, decided he would do a little prospecting.... Later, in Oakdale, he learned the geography of the country with reference to the mining camps and the towns that served as their feeders and supply centers, and he well knew that a miner was always hungry for fresh green stuff, and that money was free in mining camps, and he at once bought his pick of the bottom land...” [and] “... made vegetables the backbone of his young industry. His wagon began to call at farmhouses, and soon he had many wagons, and they pushed their way far up the mountains, and returned from Grayson's, Sonora, Angels Camp and other famous camps with gold dust and nuggets that represented a rich profit.”

Water had been in the forefront of Louis Brichetto's mind ever since he had switched from raising cattle to growing almonds and walnuts in 2004. When he planted orchards outside Oakdale Irrigation District (OID), Brichetto believed that he'd be able to get surface water from both OID and nearby South San Joaquin Irrigation District (SSJID). Both districts often had surplus water, which they sometimes sold to out-of-district buyers to the south.

As the nut boom burgeoned, more and more landowners in the rolling hills of eastern Stanislaus County converted their cattle lands to orchards. The entire region received a seismic shock in 2013, when Trinitas Partners, owners of over 7,000 acres in eastern Stanislaus County, were annexed into OID ahead of other appellants for OID surface water, including Louis Brichetto.



Not long afterwards, in 2014, California enacted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which required local agencies “to develop and implement groundwater sustainability plans to avoid undesirable results and mitigate overdraft within 20 years.” At the time, many who followed water issues in the San Joaquin Valley believed the groundwater basins would be completely depleted well before the 20-year deadline for achieving sustainability. That's already happened at many places in the southern part of the Valley. Closer to home, Brichetto has measured severe drops in groundwater levels on land he owns both within and outside OID.

Intrigued by the possibility that an old contract for water might be worth more than the gold that brought his great grandfather to California one-hundred sixty-five years ago, Brichetto delved into the old records his cattleman friend had alluded to. He was stunned to learn that one of the contracts was for the Threlfall Ranch, a property that had been in his family since the early 1900s. Furthermore, the contract stipulated that the price for the water in the contract was listed at \$1.50 an acre.

Once it was clear that OID and SSJID had no intention of fulfilling their contractual obligations, Brichetto was forced to hire an attorney whose specialty is contract law.

Brichetto immediately made informal inquiries at OID and SSJID, the two irrigation districts named in the contract. In the process, he learned that a neighboring ranch had been receiving water based on an almost identical contract all along. At the time, Brichetto figured that his ranch hadn't received the water due to an oversight. It was, after all, a very old contract.

However, when Brichetto made an informal appeal to the two districts for water deliveries based on the contract, he was rebuffed. It may be the rejection was based on Brichetto's role in litigation involving both districts' previous attempts to sell water outside the region. Brichetto and others successfully opposed the sales, arguing they

violated elements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). OID and SSJID have a long history of delivering local farmers water below the cost of delivery while selling water to buyers farther south to make up for the cost deficits.

Once it was clear that OID and SSJID had no intention of fulfilling their contractual obligations, Brichetto was forced to hire an attorney whose specialty is contract law. He also issued a formal statement regarding the impasse with OID and SSJID. In part, it reads as follows:

“It's unfortunate that the OID & SSJID are attempting to shirk their contractual obligations that they acquired in July of 1910 when they purchased the Tulloch System and its pre-1914 water rights as well as assuming the Stanislaus & San Joaquin Water Companies' contractual water obligations. This is contract case law that has been upheld by a California Supreme Court decision that can't be reversed by the lower courts.”

Louis Brichetto would much prefer to use surface water for his thirsty almond and walnut orchards in eastern Stanislaus County, where groundwater is too often the only option. He has a long history of purchasing surface water whenever available. He's especially alarmed that the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) recently rejected local agencies' and associations' groundwater sustainability plans. In so doing, DWR warned that the state could take over local groundwater management unless the plans are brought into compliance with state requirements.

“SSJID & OID have historically relied on water sales and abandonments to balance their budget instead of charging their farmers the actual cost of delivery for their high-quality surface water. The Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Basin is now critically over-drafted and the Modesto Sub-Basin should be categorized by the DWR as critically over-drafted, in my opinion,” wrote Brichetto.

“As an in-district and out-of-district grower, I would like to see the districts charge the full cost of surface water delivery for in-district and 125% the cost of delivery for the out-of-district but in sphere of influence buyers when water is available. Overall, this region is truly blessed with the Oakdale Irrigation District, South San Joaquin Irrigation District, Modesto Irrigation District, Turlock Irrigation District, and Merced Irrigation District.”

Whether or not Louis Brichetto's long opposition to out-of-the-region water sales has been a factor in rejection of what looks like an iron-clad contract may in the end be irrelevant. He's got the contract, his neighbor receives water on an almost identical contract, and, most of all, history seems to be on his side.



Be informed!

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

calendar

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

June 2024

Cal Pride Events Calendar. See page 5. Visit <https://calpride.org/>

The Prospect Theatre: 23/24 season has continuing offerings. Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/>

1 SAT: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society presents *American Graffiti* at 1 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/american-graffiti-062024/>

4 TUES: VIGIL: PEACE-ISRAEL-GAZA at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:00-5:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org NOTE DAY & TIME CHANGE.

6 THURS: Peace/Life Center ZOOM Monthly Board Meeting, 6:00 pm. Email jcostello@igc.org for login.

16 SUN: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society presents *Hairspray* at 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/hairspray-062024/>

21-23 FRI-SUN: Annual Modesto Peace/Life Center Peace Camp. Registration open. Melanie Berru featured speaker. See article p.1.

LOOKING AHEAD

Tuesday August 6: Annual Hiroshima Remembrance. Location TBA.

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

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

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

IMCV weekly Insight Meditation and Dharma Talk, 8:45 am - 10:15 am, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely; donations welcome. All are welcome. For more information, please email charlie@imcv.org. Our mailing address is IMCV, P.O. Box 579564, Modesto, CA 95357.

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

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

MONDAYS

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

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

Walk with Me, a women's primary infertility support group and Bible study. 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm the first and third Mondays of

each month. Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com or call 209.577.1604.

TUESDAYS

Women's Support Group for Women in all stages of life. Join us in a safe and judgment-free environment where you can give and receive support for the many issues that we struggle with as Womxn. Every Tuesday from 1 pm-2 pm at the Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto CA (Ages +18), (209) 408 8848. If less than 18, encourage bringing a chaperone. Contact Sandra Vidor - 209.652.3961 or Kellie Johnson 209.918.0271. **This event moves to Wednesday on March 20.**

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

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

First Tuesday - LGBTQ+ Ages 12-14, 5-7 pm activities and support. **Second Tuesday- LGBTQ+ Ages 15-17,** 5-7 pm activities and support. **Third Tuesday-Friends and Family,** 5-7 pm Discussion and emotional support. All at Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Modesto, (209) 408-8848.

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

NAACP Meeting. King-Kennedy Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto, 3rd Tuesday @ 6:30 pm. 209-645-1909; For ZOOM link, visit <https://www.naacpmoestostanislaus.org/> email: naacp.branch1048@gmail.com

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

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

Tuesday Evening **Funstrummers Ukulele Jam.** Songbooks provided. 6pm to 8pm, 1600 Carver Rd., Donation. 209-505-3216, www.funstrummers.com.

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

WEDNESDAYS

Begins March 20: Women's Support Group for Women in all stages of life. Join us in a safe and judgment-free environment where you can give and receive support for the many issues that we struggle with as Womxn. Every Wednesday from 12 pm-1 pm at the Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto CA (Ages +18). If younger than 18, encourage bringing a chaperone. (209) 408-8848. Contact Sandra Vidor-209.652.3961 or Kellie Johnson 209.918.0271.

Retired Public Employees Association. All seniors welcome! Meetings every third Wednesday. Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave. 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. Call (209) 324-2060. Pay \$8.00 and order from the menu.

The Almond Blossom Sangha meets on Wednesdays, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm, Zoom, and sometimes hybrid, for meditation and Dharma discussions. Call Anne at 209-404-4835 for more information.

The GAP. A place of support for Christian parents of LGBTQ+ or questioning kids every Wednesday 6:30 pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church 1528 Oakdale Rd. Instagram: [thegapmodesto](https://www.instagram.com/thegapmodesto)

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

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

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

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

PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING, FIRST Thursdays, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:00 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom. Email Jim Costello for login information, jcostello@igc.org

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

Merced LGBT Community Center offers a variety of monthly meetings and written materials. Volunteers, on-site **Wed-Fri**, offer support. Ph: 209-626-5551. Email: mercedboard@gaycentralvalley.org - 1744 G St. Suite H, Merced, CA. www.mercedlgbtcenter.org

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

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

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

THURSDAYS

Let's Talk Coffee. LGBTQ+ Senior (age +55) Coffee Meet up! Every Thursday @ 1 pm., Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Modesto. "Weekly social group to provide connectedness and community inclusion for LGBTQ+ Senior Citizens. Men, women, and gender non-conforming individuals encouraged, refreshments and snacks provided. Contact Steven Cullen, 559.799.0464.

CA10 Progressive Coalition Monthly Meeting, third Thursdays. Inclusive group of progressive activists to share resources, ideas, and information in order to support all the great organizing work happening in the Valley! Feel free to invite trusted allies. Meet-up and social hour: 5:30 pm-6:30 pm. Meeting: 6:30 pm-8:00 pm. Follow group on Facebook. Info: Tim Robertson, tim@nvlif.org

Laughter Yoga, Every other Thursday at The Bird's Nest, 422 15th St., Modesto. The dates are February & March 7th & 21st, April 4th & 18th, May 2nd & 16th. 5:30pm-6:30pm. \$15.00 per class. To register, call or text Nicole, 209-765-8006 or visit www.nicoleottman.com

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

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

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

Green Team educational meetings the 3rd Thursday of each month, 10 to 11 am, Kirk Lindsey Center, 1020 10th St. Plaza, Suite 102, Modesto. www.StanislausGreenTeam.com

3rd Thursday Art Walk, downtown Modesto, third Thursdays, 5 to 8 pm. stroll to art displays and galleries. Info: <https://visitmodesto.com/arts-entertainment/#art-walk>

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

Pagan Community Meeting, 1st Thursday, Cafe Amore, 3025 McHenry Ave, Suite S., Modesto, 8 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

FRIDAYS

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

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

UKULELE ON FUNSTRUMMER FRIDAYS. Every Friday morning from 9 am to 10:30 am Play Along Easy Songs from the Funstrummers Songbooks of over 500 songs. Funstrummers Performing Band Practice from 10 to noon and afternoon gig. Unitarian Church, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto, 209-505-3216 for details. Donations accepted. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mej3gD0ZD40&list=LLB8Y19zZg660qHCXGoC6ojQ&index=1>

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

SATURDAY

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

First and Third Saturdays - Gay Men's Group, Noon to 2 pm. **First and Third Saturdays - Positive Support Group** for folks living with HIV. All at Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto. Call 209-408-8848.

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

Free Community Drum Circle every third Saturday, 11 am to 12:30 pm, Gallo Center for the Arts, 10th & I St., Modesto. No experience or drums necessary to participate. All levels welcome. <https://drum-love.com/>

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

Divine Feminine Gathering. Join us for a time of ritual, song and conversation as women come together to celebrate one another and the Divine among us and within us. 3rd Saturday of the month, 3:30-5:00 p.m. Stockton, CA. Contact Rev. Erin King, 209-815-0763, orkingenne@gmail.com

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.