

## 27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL STOCKTON EARTH DAY FESTIVAL



**Sunday April 26th  
10am to 4pm**

Stockton's Earth Day Festival has a long history of helping people recognize the importance of caring for our earth and natural resources. Through educational programs and other activities, the all-volunteer Earth Day Festival committee has helped share this vision with thousands of people each year. The festival has grown over the years but it remains true to its mission of education, conservation and recycling. We are grateful for the volunteers, sponsors, schools and community organizations that help make this a remarkable annual event. Festival filled with fun and free activities!

"BEE AWARE..." is the theme of this year's annual Earth Day Festival on Sunday, April 26th, from 10 am to 4 pm at Victory Park, behind Haggin Museum in Stockton. This is the premiere environmental event in all of San Joaquin County, and as always, the focus of the day long festival is to educate you about taking care of our natural resources – the earth, air and water. With global warming, conservation and other environmental issues taking a spotlight in the world these days, we expect a crowd hungry and eager to learn how to take care of their environment. It is a fun day for families, and best of all, admission is free.

The Festival will have dozens of informative, interactive booths, displays and exhibits, plus there will be plenty of great food and exotic crafts. Local area schools will be teaching you how to take better care of our earth with a variety of hands-on activities, and environmental organizations will educate you about the important issues that impact you and how you can make a difference. Community agencies will help you live a healthier, more positive life, and green businesses will assist you in making changes to your home and workplace. Over 100 vendors will border the oak trees and cross the grass field at Victory Park, making this Earth Day Festival the biggest ever. Close to 10,000 people attend this event annually.

Join the hundreds of cyclists who will bike around the neighborhood as part of the Family Fun Bike Ride and Parade. Costumed children, adults and bikes are encouraged, so wear your wildest environmental look. Or participate as a drummer in the Drum Circle that traditionally closes the Festival on a percussive high note. Make it your annual renewal of your commitment to make a global difference. See you there.

### Contact us:

2015 Earth Day Festival, PO Box  
4123, Stockton, CA 95204

stocktonearthday@gmail.com.

On the web: <http://www.livegreensanjoaquin.co>

## Earth Day Happenings

Earth Day Festival is truly a celebration of fun and educational opportunities for the entire family. From live music and dance to fun ways to go green. Plan now to enjoy the festival.

### 2015 EARTH DAY ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE

Time	Main Stage
11:00 am- 11:55 am	Hardly Deadly (jam and rock)
12:00 pm - 12:25 pm	Los Dazante Del Puerto (Folklorico dance troupe)
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Brubeck Institute Jazz Quintet
1:35 pm - 1:50 pm	Teacher Scholarships /Announcements
1:50 pm - 2:40 pm	Simple Creation (Pop/Raggae)
2:45 pm- 3:10 pm	Kara Mogow African Drum and Dance Group
3:10 pm - 4:00 pm	Washboard Monkeys (bluegrass)
4:00 pm - 4:30 pm	Organic Drum Circle

### FOOD DONATION FOR STOCKTON EMERGENCY FOOD BANK

Please bring canned or boxed food to donate to Stockton Emergency Food Bank.

### GENTLY-USED CLOTHING DRIVE

On the day of the event, please be sure to donate any gently-used clothing to the the Gospel Center Rescue Mission vendor booth.

### YOGA AT THE PARK

Calling all yoga instructors, students of all levels, whether you're a beginner or have practiced yoga for many years. Join instructor Jodee Nosanow Eatmon for a yoga session to begin the Earth Day Festival. Bring a yoga mat or towel, water, and wear comfortable clothing Let's join together with the intention of healing our bodies as the first step to healing the planet. Yoga instructors, please call JoDee at 688 - 6040.

### FAMILY FUN BIKE RIDE

A fun activity each year is the Family Fun Bike Ride. The bike ride registration is free and begins at 10:30am. The 1.5 mile family ride starts at 11am from Victory Park and travels throughout the neighborhood and along the waterways. A snack and drink will be provided for registrants. Prizes for decorated bikes will be awarded. Stockton's Volunteers In Police (VIP) will be leading the ride/parade. Plan now to gather your family and friends and join this fun activity. Call Annette DePauli at (209) 329-5443 for more information.

### PASSPORT EARTH

Young people are clearly concerned about the health of our planet, often becoming leaders in recycling, restoration and conservation efforts both as classroom projects and in their own homes. The Earth Day Festival is engaging young people in learning more about ways to help the environment. Collect signatures at booths throughout the Earth Day Festival, look for answers to questions about protecting our planet and enter a raffle for a backpack stuffed with goodies at the Passport Earth booth.

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Stockton, CA

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### SAVE THE DATES

APRIL 26 EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

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## Editors Letter

BRUCE GIUDICI

The season of spring is a time of hope and belief in the opportunity for positive change. The tools we have are many; armed with factual information and visionary leadership, good things can happen. And in times of crisis (drought, police violence, war), positive actions can break through the

logjam of profit-driven inertia and apathy. The current water crisis in California has us looking at the validity of water rights and the over-contracting of our always marginal water source. The many police shootings in Ferguson, Cleveland and beyond (including Stockton) have started a questioning process that will continue. And nuclear arms talks with

# Persistence needed

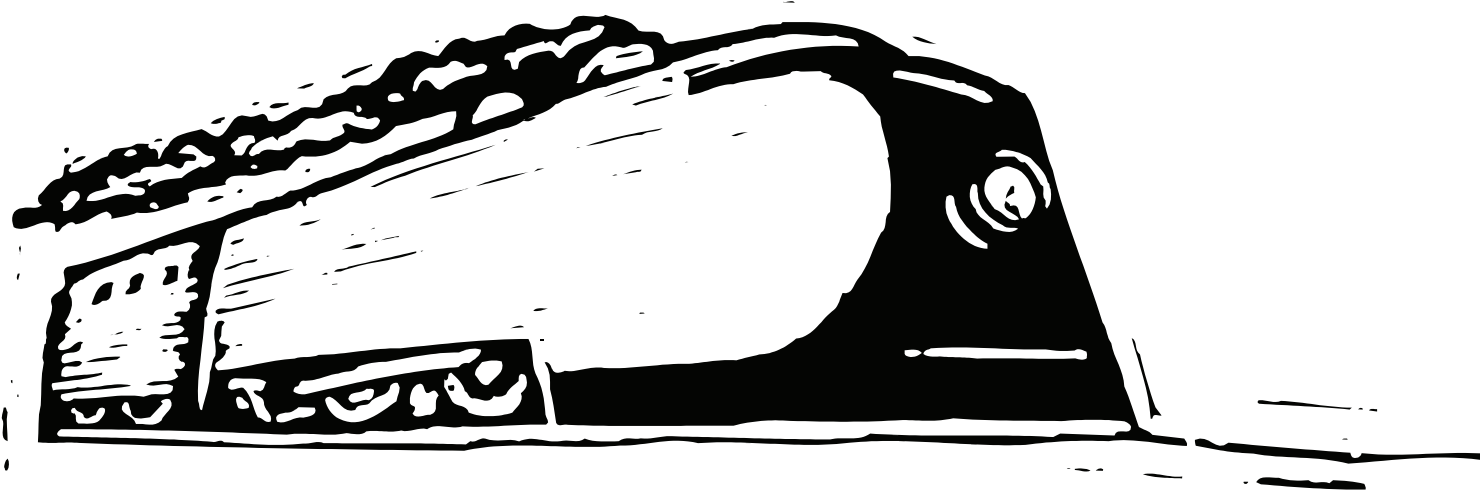
Iran will come to completion in the coming months. In all of these processes, citizens have a potential voice to effect positive change. For many other issues included in this Connections (bee protection, herbicide use, student loan affordability, campaign finance disclosure), we can contact public officials to make our voice heard. On larger issues - like the impending trade agreement and national tax policy, a larger movement of peoples may need to be more

dramatic and vocal.

In whatever area you choose to take part, be aware of your individual importance in the process of making positive change. In the times when these issues appear too overwhelming to even approach, the first step is always the hardest. You'll need to decide to do something different, something interesting and worthwhile. When I think of the first Stockton Earth Day Festival we celebrated in Oak Park in 1989, we who

started it believed Stockton needed an environmental educational event. So, we gathered a small group of strangers with a single interest to put on a small event. Now, 27 years later, Stockton still has that need - and that small seed of an event has grown to something extraordinary. All that was needed was a good idea, a few good people and persistence. Keep up the good work whatever you do - and Happy Earth Day.

## The people's budget to un-rig failed economic system



**"The People's Budget reverses the past few years of extraordinarily sharp cuts to federal spending, which have held us back from a full recovery,"**

DEIRDRE FULTON

Offering a sustainable alternative to regressive federal budget proposals put forth this week by the Republican majorities on Capitol Hill, the Congressional Progressive Caucus on Wednesday released *The People's Budget: A Raise for America*, which aims to "level the playing field" for low- and middle-income Americans. Surrounded by constituents the proposal is designed to help, leaders of the CPC unveiled the budget blueprint at a Washington, D.C. press conference at noon EST:

"The People's Budget fixes an economy that, for too long, has failed to provide the opportunities American families need to get ahead," the document reads. "Despite their skills and work ethic, most American workers and families are so financially strapped from increasing income inequality that their paychecks barely cover basic necessities. They earn less and less as corporations and the wealthy continue amassing record profits. It has become clear to American workers that the system is rigged." The CPC budget, in turn, attempts to un-rig that system by:

- creating new jobs

increasing the minimum wage

- reversing harmful cuts to safety net programs (and then bolstering those same supports)
- implementing new tax brackets for those who earn more than \$1 million annually
- providing debt-free college to every student
- enacting a price on carbon pollution and investing in renewable energy
- allowing states to transition to single-payer health care systems and
- funding public financing of campaigns to curb special interest influence in politics.

Among other things, the proposal would allocate \$820 billion for infrastructure and transportation improvements and enact short-term economic stimulus measures that would create 4.7 million jobs in 2015. "And the CPC insists that the rich and corporations pay their fair share of taxes," writes Robert Borosage, of the Campaign for America's Future, in an op-ed published Wednesday. "It would create new tax brackets for those making a million or more. *The People's Budget* raises the estate tax for the super-wealthy. It taxes

the income of investors at the same rates as the income of workers. It terminates deferral, which allows multinationals to avoid taxes on money they report as earned abroad."

Overall, the provisions included in the CPC budget contrast sharply with the austerity policies embraced by the right-wing. "*The People's Budget* reverses the past few years of extraordinarily sharp cuts to federal spending, which have held us back from a full recovery," said Thomas Hungerford, an economist who analyzed the proposal for the Economic Policy Institute. "It is a forward-looking, evidence-based document that would set us on track to a full, durable recovery from the Great Recession."

In comparison with GOP budget plans, the CPC's ambitious proposal is "about as close to common sense as Congress gets," declared Katrina vanden Heuvel at the *Washington Post*. "With few exceptions, Republicans are committed to slashing the basic functions of government and programs that support education, food stamps, energy and R&D to avoid asking corporations or the wealthy to contribute even one more dime in taxes," she wrote. However, she continued: "What the CPC budget shows is what Washington too often suppresses: There is an alternative. We can afford to build a society that reflects the values and priorities of most Americans. We only have to choose to do so."

Source: *Common Dreams* 3/18/15 <http://www.commondreams.org>



## CONNECTIONS

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"The Peace and Justice Network is a nonprofit educational organization committed to the vision of a world in which the equality of all persons is achieved, basic needs are met, conflict is resolved nonviolently, and the earth's resources are shared responsibly for the well-being of all her inhabitants and all future generations."





## Delta Flows

# Temporary urgency, permanent extinction?



TIM STROSHANE AND BARBARA BARRIGAN-PARRILLA

Releasing his latest Delta water quality order late on March 5th, Tom Howard, executive director of the State Water Resources Control Board, added a loophole allowing state and federal water contractors reliant on Delta exports to tell the state and federal water project operators they need more health and safety water supplies. State and federal operators must merely *inform* the State Water Board they will export more from the Delta to meet those claims for water. This is a loophole you can drive a Mack truck through. Clearly the busloads of farmworkers paid to attend the February 18th Water Board workshop by Westlands Water District provided the necessary political theater for Howard and the Board to change the original exports limit. Indeed, Howard acknowledged the political theater in the order: “The human face of suffering, tied to lack of drinking water and loss of jobs, was clearly evident at the February 18 workshop,” he wrote in the revised order. He weakly justified the new loophole on the grounds that “unconditional approval of intermediate exports would tip the balance too far in favor of exports, with resulting unreasonable effect on fish and wildlife.” But the revised order has the same practical effect.

The projects’ drought contingency plan for 2015 estimates that their customers have indicated a need for health and safety-related water supplies of 510,000 acre-feet. To date in 2015, the projects have together already pumped over 699,000 acre-feet, about 84 percent of which Bureau records indicate has been stored at San Luis Reservoir west of Los Banos as of March 12th. It is not known how much of these exports are for health and safety purposes and how much is to satisfy farm demand south of the Delta.

The contingency plan also calls for operating the state and federal systems to “lessen critical economic losses” to agricultural, municipal and industrial uses without identifying what those uses are, something the Water Board did not push back on. Supplies would be made up through “voluntary water transfers...to the extent possible...” though no estimates were available from the plan on how much water would be available from transfers.

So far state and federal exports amount

to about 35 percent of last year’s exports with barely 17 percent of 2015 under our belts. They’re on pace to continue mismanaging their supplies should it turn out 2016 is another dry year. Howard also acknowledged that, “all of the proposed changes are likely to have a negative effect on fish and wildlife.”

As a result of Water Board and water project actions last year, fish populations are at record low levels and cannot be considered resilient at all. The Delta smelt index is at an all-time low. The Longfin smelt index is at the second lowest level recorded. American shad, striped bass and threadfin shad are at near record low levels.

Exports also negatively affect aquatic resources through hydrodynamic changes in the Delta. This caused fish and much of their food supplies to be sucked to the massive export pumps near Tracy. And as water quality deteriorates further for fisheries that are barely hanging on, it will also deteriorate further for Delta agricultural and municipal uses.

Further, last year, loss of temperature control below Shasta Reservoir and upstream of the Delta killed 95 percent of winter-run and a high percentage of spring-run Chinook salmon on the mainstem. The remnant populations of these fish that survived are now in the Delta and need additional protection, Howard acknowledged in the revised order. He publicly apologized for these catastrophic losses back on February 18th.

The Board has abdicated its public trust obligations in the face of contrived political theater from south of Delta water contractors. Mr. Howard’s order ignores Restore the Delta’s suggestion at the February workshop that the Board target any additional export water for these supposed health and safety needs to communities with the hardship cases the Board heard about. Mr. Howard is trying to appear like he’s making the water projects and their contractors ‘earn’ more exports. But the order lets the contractors and the projects tell the Board what those needs are. It’s just like PG&E telling the public utilities commission which judge it wants to hear its rate case. That’s the textbook definition of a captured regulatory agency.

Source: *Restore the Delta Blog* 3/16/15  
<http://restorethedelta.org/blog>

## CSPA

# Supporting Delta water standards for the future

DENISE ZITNIK

In a supplementary filing to the State Water Board, CSPA submitted supporting information in opposition to weakening Delta flow and water quality standards as requested by the Department of Water Resources and the Bureau of Reclamation on January 27. CSPA submitted records showing increases in San Joaquin Valley farm production and income even during times of drought. In addition to the comments CSPA also submitted one letter rebutting claims by DWR and the Bureau that reduced standards won’t harm fish, and a second letter showing how water that is supposed to be saved by reducing Delta standards can easily benefit irrigation deliveries without improving any conditions for fish.

### CSPA BACK BEFORE THE STATE WATER BOARD

The State Water Board held a workshop on February 18, 2015 to hear comments on its February 3 Order that relaxed Delta flow and water quality standards in the Delta. The Department of Water Resources, Bureau of Reclamation, and various other water agencies argued for increasing Delta exports even during times of low Delta inflow and outflow. In opposition, Bill Jennings summed up by recounting the decline of fisheries over the past thirty years and the results of failure by the Board to enforce standards in dry years, when those standards are already too weak. Comparing the operators of the state and federal projects to Goldman Sachs (sellers of unbacked securities), Jennings called on the Board to hold a hearing on Delta standards during drought and to create a legacy of protecting the public trust.

### CSPA OPPOSES WEAKENING OF DELTA STANDARDS

The State Water Project and Central Valley Project have doubled down on last year’s disastrous rollback of Delta flow and water quality standards. The Department of Water Resources and the Bureau of

Reclamation, operators of the state and federal projects, submitted a Temporary Urgency Change Petition to the State Water Board on January 27, 2015.

On February 3, 2015, the State Water Board granted the same reductions in Delta standards that it granted during last year’s drought conditions, but denied a request that would have allowed additional south Delta pumping under conditions of reduced Delta outflow. On February 13, CSPA filed an Objection, Petition for Reconsideration, and Petition for Hearing in opposition to the Change Petition and Change Order. The filing describes record low numbers of Delta smelt and the loss of salmon in the Sacramento River that occurred as a result of last year’s reduction of Delta standards. Included with the Objection are a series of documents that demonstrate the decline of Delta fisheries over the past several years. In the short term, CSPA advocates for a simple action: maintain Delta standards during the drought.

### AS DELTA SMELT PLUMMETS TOWARDS EXTINCTION, NEW RULES ALLOW INCREASED KILL

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (CSPA) and California Water Impact Network (CWIN) issued a press release on Monday, January 26, 2015 criticizing a decision that will allow government pumps to kill twice as many endangered Delta smelt than was previously permitted. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved the Bureau of Reclamation’s request to increase the Delta Smelt “take” limit only two days after learning the population abundance of Delta smelt has collapsed to historical new lows. “As goes the Delta smelt, so goes the Delta,” said Bill Jennings, the executive director of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance. “The crisis isn’t limited to the smelt. All the (Bay/Delta’s) pelagic species are in trouble.”

Source: CSPA releases 2/27/15 <http://calsport.org>

## Talking It Through

EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • CULTURE

Peace & Justice Network Sponsors two Half-Hour Shows:

“Let’s Talk” documentaries of important community meetings and events. **Mondays, 6pm.**

“Talking It Through” hosted by Sammy Nuñez features live discussions of important community issues, especially with your people. **Mondays, 6:30pm.**

Both shows are produced by Peace & Justice volunteer Vince Kotecki on SJTV: Stockton, Lodi and Manteca cable channel 26.

For up to the minute listings of current shows, see our website [www.pjnsjc.org](http://www.pjnsjc.org), click on Talking it Through.

# Tax Day 2015: seven things you should know about taxes

## 1. You are an investor in our nation and your tax dollars come back to your community.

Your taxes fund health care programs, clean drinking water, education, the national weather service, highways and bridges, and national parks, among many other things. Federal dollars flow into your state and then down into your own neighborhood. Across the nation, about 30 percent of state revenues come from the federal government. To see how federal money impacts your state, visit State Smart.

<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/smart>.

## 2. You pay the federal government's bills.

Around 80 percent of all federal tax revenue comes from the paychecks of Americans, through income taxes and payroll taxes. Almost half of all federal revenues come from individual income taxes: taxes you pay on income from work, investments, and more. Income taxes are what the April 15 Tax Day is all about. Additionally, about one third of all federal revenues come from payroll taxes that pay for programs like Social Security and Medicare, and may show up on your paycheck as "FICA." Corporate income taxes make up only about 11 percent of federal revenue, down from a high of almost 40 percent in 1943. That means regular people like you are the primary bill payer for the U.S. government – and that's why the federal budget belongs to /you /and to all Americans.

## 3. Where did your 2014 income taxes go?

Want a personalized tax receipt based on taxes you paid for 2014, including how much you paid for programs like SNAP

(food stamps), nuclear weapons or renewable energy? Visit our tax receipt.

<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/interactive-data/taxday/>

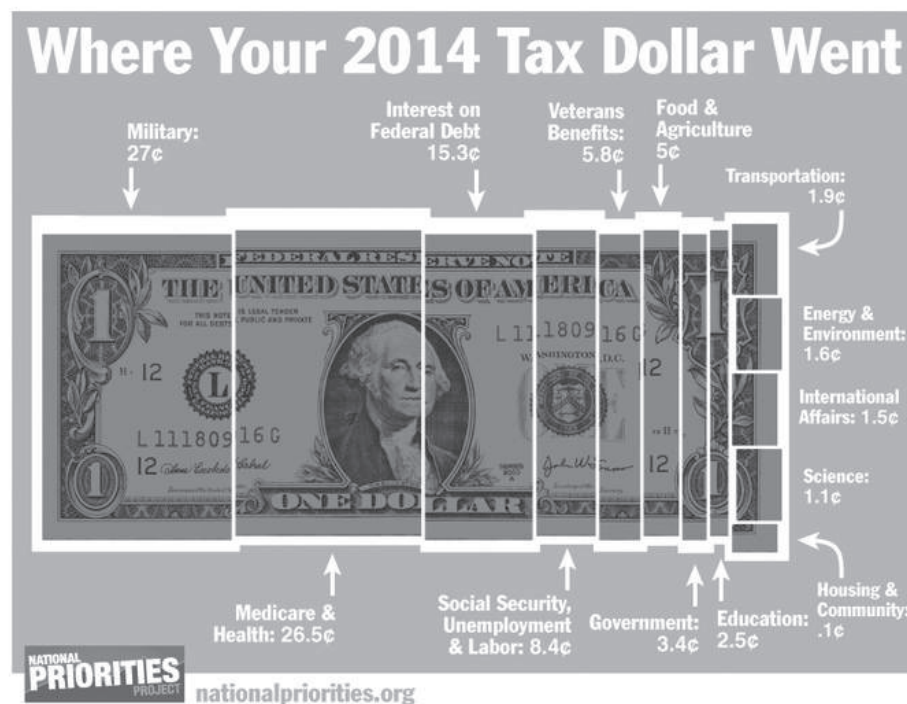
## 4. We don't all pay taxes equally. Not even close.

In theory the tax code is progressive, meaning those who make more money pay higher tax rates – yet in practice that's not always the case. As Warren Buffett made famous, billionaires sometimes pay lower rates than middle-class workers. And some corporations, like Bank of America and Citigroup, have gotten away with paying zero federal income taxes, even when they make billions in profit. And that's because the tax code is chock-full of tax breaks.

## 5. Our tax code is full of special tax breaks – tilted heavily in favor of the rich.

Ten of the largest tax breaks that together totaled more than \$750 billion in tax savings in 2013 overwhelmingly benefited the top 1 percent of households, with 17 percent of the benefits going to those top earners. That's in part because tax deductions – one important type of tax break – are far more likely to benefit the wealthy than middle- and low-income folks, because deductions only offer savings to taxpayers who /itemize /deductions on their tax return. Only 16 percent of households making between \$25,000 and \$30,000 itemize tax deductions, while nearly 100 percent of those making over \$200,000 do.

## 6. But, some tax breaks go straight to working families.



Most tax credits are "nonrefundable", meaning it is possible for them to reduce your taxes down to zero, but they can't also result in the Treasury sending you a check on top of that. But a couple of tax credits are "refundable," meaning after your taxes have been reduced to zero, you still may get a check. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) are refundable, and are widely seen as effective anti-poverty measures, helping to combat inequality. While such measures alone won't eradicate inequality, they're important – and widely supported – tools in the fight against inequality.

## 7. Tax breaks as designed are often inefficient.

Lawmakers often use the tax code to achieve goals like promoting manufacturing or reducing the cost of health care. But the tax code isn't always effective at achieving these kinds of goals. For instance,

Washington devotes billions in spending to financial aid for college students, while a variety of tax breaks do the same thing. But while Pell grants and other direct aid are largely effective at reaching low-income students, tax breaks are far more likely to reach wealthy families who may be less in need of aid.

Source: National Priorities Project release 3/1/15, <http://www.nationalpriorities.org>. NPP, 243 King Street, Suite 246 Northampton MA, 01060, (413) 584-9556 [info@nationalpriorities.org](mailto:info@nationalpriorities.org)

# The beating down of middle America

PAUL BUCHHEIT

There's something perversely wrong with a society that creates \$30 trillion in new wealth while putting six million more children on food stamps. The mainstream media rarely publishes facts like this. The super-rich keep building up their own numbers, as quietly as possible. And our leading members of Congress have little need for numbers, except for budget cuts and the strings of zeros at the end of their campaign contributions. But numbers have the power to reveal the dramatic fall of the middle class over the past 35 years.

## 1. 138,000 kids were homeless while 115,000 households were each making \$10 million per year

Recent data has shown that the richest .1% (115,000 households) have each increased their wealth by an astonishing \$10 million per year. As they counted their money on a frigid night in January, 138,000 children, according to the U.S. Department of Housing, were without a place to call home.

## 2. The average U.S. household pays \$400 to feed and clothe Walmart, McDonalds, and other low-wage workers

The Economic Policy Institute reports that \$45 billion per year in federal, state, and other safety net support is paid to workers earning less than \$10.10 an hour. Thus the average

U.S. household is paying about \$400 to employees in low-wage industries such as food service, retail, and personal care. Walmart's well-advertised \$1 raise will cost the company about \$1 billion a year. Its profits last year were about \$25 billion. The sordid tale gets even worse, as told by a PBS report: Walmart has spent about \$6.5 billion per year on stock buybacks to enrich investors, approximately the same total annual amount billed to taxpayers for food stamps, Medicaid, housing, and other safety net programs for the company's underpaid employees.

## 3. As \$30 trillion in new wealth was being created, the number of kids on food stamps increased 70%

Before the recession, 12 out of every 100 American children got food stamps. After the recession, 20 out of every 100 American children got food stamps. That's nearly a 70 percent increase, from 9.5 million kids in 2007 to 16 million kids in 2014, at the same time that U.S. wealth was growing by over \$30 trillion. Even with that incomprehensible increase in wealth our nation was not able to ensure food security for millions of its most vulnerable citizens.

## 4. Despite the decline in food security, the food stamp program was cut by \$8.6 billion and the money paid to corporate agriculture.

As more and more children go hungry, the largest agricultural firms continue to take taxpayer money to

supplement their billions in profits. The 2014 farm bill cut \$8.6 billion (over the next ten years) from the food stamp program, of which nearly half of all participants are children. Meanwhile, \$14 billion is annually paid out to the largest 10 percent of farm operators.

## BEATEN UP, BROKEN DOWN

The mainstream media highlights the resurgent economy, the booming stock market, and the drop in unemployment. But the stock market has enriched only about ten percent of America, handing them millions of dollars since the recession, while the newly available jobs are well below the skill levels of college-trained adults and often without health care and retirement benefits. Too many once-prosperous Americans are beaten up and broken down, waiting in vain for our elected leaders to stop the redistribution of our national wealth.

PAUL BUCHHEIT IS A COLLEGE TEACHER, AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF US UNCUT CHICAGO, FOUNDER AND DEVELOPER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATIONAL WEBSITES (USAGAINSTGREED.ORG, PAYUPNOW.ORG, RAPPINGHISTORY.ORG), AND THE EDITOR AND MAIN AUTHOR OF "AMERICAN WARS: ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES" (CLARITY PRESS). HE CAN BE REACHED AT [PAUL@USAGAINSTGREED.ORG](mailto:PAUL@USAGAINSTGREED.ORG).

Source: Common Dreams 3/16/15 <http://www.commondreams.org>





# Food, ag and climate

IAN FITZPATRICK

Food production is responsible for a big chunk of global greenhouse gases, while climate change is already having a significant impact on food production. It's also the site of struggle between a small handful of big agribusiness corporations seeking to shore up the control of global food production and distribution systems at the expense of small scale farmers who have been practicing agroecology and food sovereignty for generations. So it's worth covering some of the basics to work out how we can articulate a progressive, just, and sustainable vision of agriculture ahead of the UN climate talks in December.

Today, six companies control 60% of the world's commercial seed market, and ten fertilizer companies account for more than 40% of their global market. The largest four traders control around 90% of global grain, and five companies account for half of global coffee trade. When a handful of companies control such a large proportion of any sector of the economy, they act like a cartel, reducing competition and making huge profits. Those at the bottom of the food chain—the peasants, family farmers, and rural workers—find it increasingly hard to earn a living. In 2013, Monsanto and Syngenta made profits of \$2.5 billion and \$1.6 billion, respectively. That's more than the \$3.2 billion the World Food Programme has estimated would be needed to feed the world's 66 million hungry school-aged children.

The rules that control how our food system works are written by and for large corporations rather than the millions of people who produce and consume food. Governments, donors, and development agencies have been active agents in this corporate power grab, pushing for aid and policy reforms that promote industrial agribusiness as the main means of solving global poverty and hunger. But only agroecology and food sovereignty can end hunger.

## AGROECOLOGY NOW

Very broadly, agroecology is the science of sustainable farming, as well as a political movement that aims to improve the food system. Fundamentally, agroecology is about shifting the way our food system—land, seeds, markets, and labor—is controlled by big business. Food sovereignty is about the right of peoples who produce, distribute, and consume food to be at the center of decisions and policies that shape their food systems. Food sovereignty, therefore, provides the framework within which agroecological systems and techniques should be developed.

Agroecology is not a marginal practice carried out by a handful of farmers. It is already widely utilized by farmers across Africa and helps to feed millions of people. In many cases the techniques are inexpensive, simple, and effective, which means there has been little commercial interest in researching, developing, and distributing them. But the evidence is unequivocal: agroecology can increase food yields, income, employment, agricultural biodiversity, health, and nutrition, and it can help to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

One study, based on research in 57 developing countries, showed that farmers switching to sustainable methods increased their yields on average by 73%. An analysis of 40 agroecological projects, covering almost 13 million hectares in twenty African countries, demonstrated that crop yields more than doubled as a result of these approaches, with the additional benefits of carbon sequestration and reductions in pesticide use and soil erosion. Finally, research by the UN showed that switching to agroecological methods has increased yields across Africa by 116%, and by 128% in East Africa, compared to conventional farming.

But agroecology is not simply about



growing more food. It goes beyond the simplistic notion of "food security," since as the sociologist and writer Raj Patel points out, "it's possible to be food secure in prison." Agroecology is also about providing sustainable livelihoods, protecting biodiversity, addressing climate change, and benefitting women. And the evidence shows that it leads to gains on all these fronts and others too. It hands power back to communities and farmers by giving them control over the resources needed to grow food, and by enabling them to decide what and how to grow.

Despite the significant political and economic barriers preventing agroecology from being more widely adopted, there is a growing movement across the world calling for food sovereignty and agroecology to challenge corporate power in the food system, and to feed communities and build resilient livelihoods.

At Global Justice Now, we campaign for a world where resources are in the hands of the many, not the few. We champion social movements and propose democratic alternatives to corporate power. We need a complete shift in who controls our food system. Power must be taken away from corporations and put back into the hands of the people and communities that produce and consume food. Only a movement of people calling for food sovereignty and agroecology will create this sort of change.

IAN FITZPATRICK IS A FOOD SOVEREIGNTY RESEARCHER WITH GLOBAL JUSTICE NOW HTTP://WWW.GLOBALJUSTICE.ORG.UK/

Source: *This Changes Everything* 3/8/15  
<http://thischangeeverything.org>

## New research endorses 'rooftop revolution' as simple, local solar solution

LAUREN MCCAULEY

The future of solar energy, often envisioned as an island of reflective panels amid an ecologically sensitive desert outpost, may have a more simple, and more local solution. A Stanford University study published earlier this week found that utility-scale solar development built alongside existing infrastructure, on rooftops or in backyards, may be more than enough to power whole communities.

The research, published

in *Nature Climate Change*, modeled land-use efficiency in California, a global solar energy hotspot. The study examined how urban areas could be made more efficient by developing more localized sources for renewable energy.

"The quantity of accessible energy potentially produced from photovoltaic (PV) and concentrating solar power (CSP) within the built environment exceeds current statewide demand," the study found. Common criticisms of large solar arrays are that

they can pose a threat to wildlife and crowd out other land uses. "Our results show that we do not need to trade these places of environmental value for the production of renewable energy as ample land and space exists elsewhere," said Rebecca Hernandez, study lead author and an environmental earth system scientist at Stanford. "Additionally, developing renewable power generation in places close to where it is consumed reduces costs and loss of electricity associated

with transmission."

Further, Hernandez notes, rooftops, vacant lots and industrial sites within urban areas are ideal for solar development, as they pose the "least environmental conflict." The abstract points out that such development "may be an overlooked opportunity for meeting sustainable energy needs in places with land and environmental constraints."

Source: *Common Dreams* 3/18/15  
<http://www.commondreams.org>



## Mainstream Media = Truth?

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# Why America lacks credibility in the Middle East



MUSA AL-GHARBI

To hear politicians and beltway pundits tell it, credibility in international relations boils down to this: Do others believe that the United States is willing and able to follow through on its word?

Actually, this is a sloppy and often pernicious way to think, leading policymakers to senselessly commit themselves to failing policies (like enforcing a “red line,” for instance) for the sake of “maintaining credibility” – and actually undermining it in the process.

Credibility is not about resolve. Strategic credibility is actually about assuring partners that things will work out well for them if they throw their lot in with you. This perception plays a pivotal role in determining whether others will support or resist U.S. interests abroad.

The primary way agents establish themselves as credible is by making good decisions, which means forming and executing policies that generate positive outcomes for the relevant stakeholders. The stronger an agent’s track record, the more likely others will be willing to get behind them – that is, the more credibility they will have. Incidentally, this is the secret to ISIS’ success: Regardless of how distasteful many find their methods and ideology, they have established themselves as one of the most effective forces at seizing territory from the governments of Iraq and Syria, making tangible progress in restoring a caliphate, and resisting the prevailing international order.

America, on the other hand, has a serious credibility problem in the Middle East. The results of U.S. interventions in the region have been consistently catastrophic: Whether in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, or Syria, direct U.S. involvement is usually followed by an erosion of state governance, the empowerment of exploitative sub-state and non-state actors, and a dramatic rise in violence, civil tension, and unrest.

American indirect involvement, meanwhile, tends to empower corrupt, oppressive, and undemocratic forces – such as in Pakistan, Egypt, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. In terms of achieving positive outcomes, America simply has absolutely no credibility in the Middle East.

However, character is also important: Moral credibility means a nation’s intentions and motivations are more likely to be trusted.

Strategic and moral credibility are interrelated: Consistently generating good outcomes goes a long way toward bolstering one’s reputation. Even if the methods for achieving an objective seem questionable, they tend to be justified retrospectively if things turn out all right. In the interim, people are much more willing to extend the benefit of doubt to those with a strong track record of success. Conversely, moral credibility can help make up for occasional bad outcomes – an agent is afforded slack when things go awry if it’s perceived as being genuinely well-intentioned.

However, when there are glaring inconsistencies between a government’s declared aspirations (say, promotion of

democracy and human rights) and their means of realization (imposing Western socio-economic models at the expense of indigenous self-determination) – especially when paired with a general failure to realize stated objectives (producing chaos rather than order, be it liberal or otherwise) – these generate suspicion about its real intentions and motives.

## HYPOCRISY UNDERMINES “RESOLVE”

Part of what contributes to America’s cycle of diplomatic and military failures in the Middle East is an underlying distrust of the United States among most Arabs, which inspires widespread ambivalence or resistance to U.S. efforts in the region. The source of this deficit has nothing to do with U.S. follow-through or resolve, as foreign policy hawks love to allege. One can be consistent with regards to backing up threats, etc. while still being a hypocrite in the moral sphere.

Indeed, this is precisely the problem America faces. After decades of supporting the region’s dictators with arms and money, Washington has now formed a coalition with both the surviving local autocrats and the Middle East’s former imperial powers to “bring democracy” to Syria and (once more) to Iraq. Is it any surprise the “Arab street” is mistrustful?

It further fuels skepticism when America attempts to fight ISIS – a group largely empowered by previous U.S. support for other non-state actors in Iraq, Libya, and Syria – by training and arming new, ineffective, and unpopular proxy militias. Moreover, these new groups are often aligned with, and trained in, Saudi Arabia – the power most responsible for proliferating the ideology embraced by the so-called “Islamic State.” It seems disingenuous when the U.S. condemns Russia for funding non-state actors in Ukraine, or Pakistan for doing so in Afghanistan, or Iran in Lebanon – even as America expands its own support of insurgents in Syria.

The Arab public is outraged when U.S. policymakers decry human rights violations elsewhere while continuing to support Israel and shield it from international accountability for its occupation of the West Bank or its wars on Gaza. And it doesn’t help at all when the Obama administration, among other failings, declines to prosecute clear and grievous infractions like torture by its own intelligence agencies, while calling for regime change in other countries for the same sorts of infractions.

When American representatives lecture others about upholding the very international rules and norms the U.S. government systematically and unapologetically violates through its drone strikes and mass surveillance, enhanced interrogation, and extraordinary rendition programs, others will not take American rhetoric or ideals seriously.

These glaring contradictions imbue the entire ethical project with a cynical hue – undermining not just American credibility, but the general value of moral discourse on the world stage more generally. This breakdown, in turn, disrupts consensus building and cooperation, threatening the long-term viability of the rules-based international order Americans sacrificed so much in years past to establish and preserve.

## CHANGING THE DYNAMIC

But there is good news: The United States can simultaneously bolster its moral and strategic credibility by adopting a more sensible foreign policy. The first step will be to adopt more modest aspirations and pragmatic strategies in order to avoid making problems worse. Within this narrower framework, the United States should strive to adopt the same policies it promotes for others.

If Washington wants to stem the growth and proliferation of non-state actors, for example, the U.S. should stop funding them as well – and should pressure its allies to follow suit. Instead, Washington can provide material and logistical support to the relevant state actors to help these governments first contain the spread of ungoverned zones and then gradually reclaim control over lost territories. (Of course, this

support should be contingent on a basic respect for human rights.)

Rather than orchestrating another destabilizing regime-change in Syria, furthermore, the United States should aspire towards gradual, viable, and meaningful reform of the state – which will require an inclusive diplomatic approach regarding the Baathist government and its foreign patrons, as well as a piecemeal agenda for rehabilitating the state and its institutions. In the short term, this means prioritizing peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction in support of a negotiated settlement rather than trying to force polarizing elections in the wake of a violent uprising.

But perhaps most significantly, if America wants to promote democracy in the Middle East, it should start by rethinking the levels and types of aid afforded to Israel and the region’s autocrats absent substantial political reform.

All of these measures would undermine extremist groups, both materially and ideologically, by enhancing Arabs’ self-determination while advancing international law and order. As a result, this approach could generate much better results with significantly less investment and blowback. Perhaps more importantly, these policies would help rebuild America’s credibility by building a better world – in the Mideast and beyond.

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# Iraq, Libya...Iran? US activists mark war anniversaries with Spring Rising



"Yes, the US overthrew Saddam Hussein, but it also destroyed the nation's infrastructure and tore asunder the societal fabric."

Iraqis had died from war-related causes since the US-led invasion in 2003.

While military contractors made out like bandits, US taxpayers wasted \$1.7 trillion dollars on the Iraq war, money that could have funded healthcare and education here at home. American families lost 4,488 of their loved ones, with tens of thousands of veterans suffering from PTSD and other war-related maladies.

Yes, the US overthrew Saddam Hussein, but it also destroyed the nation's infrastructure and tore asunder the societal fabric. By disbanding the entire Iraqi military and bureaucracy, and supporting a sectarian Shia government, the US created a power vacuum -- a space for ISIS to seize power. ISIS currently controls a huge swath of Iraq, some 13,000 square miles, and wreaks havoc on the predominantly Shia's population by carrying out ethnic cleansing, taking women as slaves, beheading children, and displacing entire communities.

## LIBYA

Libya is a similarly tragic tale. When the peaceful protests against Muammar Gaddafi were met with government violence, an armed rebellion emerged that called for military help from the West. With NATO's help in this "humanitarian intervention," Gaddafi was overthrown in October 2011. A summary of the intervention in the prestigious journal Foreign Affairs concluded: "By any measure, NATO succeeded in Libya. It saved tens of thousands of lives from almost certain destruction. It conducted an air campaign of unparalleled precision, which, although not perfect, greatly minimized collateral damage. It enabled the Libyan opposition to overthrow one of the world's longest-ruling dictators. And it accomplished all of this without a single allied casualty and at a cost -- \$1.1 billion for the United States and several billion dollars overall -- that was a fraction of that spent on previous interventions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq."

Today, Libya is considered a "failed state" run by extremist militias and two opposing governments vying for power. Ex-rebel commanders, former exiles, Islamists, tribal leaders are all fighting for control, leaving no authoritative government or legitimate institutions.

Before the "liberation," Libya was the richest country in Africa. It provided all Libyans with free healthcare and education. Today Libyans have almost no functioning public services, with daily blackouts and water shortages.

On the anniversaries of these two epic failures in Iraq and Libya, anti-war activists gathered for four days of actions from March 18-21. They protested the past interventions, the present-day US participation in wars in the Middle East and the possibility of a new war with Iran. "As people are being killed by the Empire every day, billions of dollars that could be used for education, housing, healthcare, and sustainable and clean forms of energy are being poured into these Imperial wars for the profit of a few and the heartache of many," said Spring Rising organizer Cindy Sheehan, a mother whose son was killed in Iraq.

The activities included a "spring cleaning of Congress," where activists will march into the offices of the most hawkish members of Congress, dusting off the cobwebs of war and

the fingerprints of military contractors. They took a bus tour of warmakers and their enablers, including the Pentagon, the FBI, the lobby group AIPAC and the right-wing American Enterprise Institute. The gathering culminated at a rally at the White House on Saturday, March 21.

## AN AFTERWORD:

In an interview with VICE news, for the first time President Obama admitted that ISIS was a "direct outgrowth of al-Qaida in Iraq that grew out of our invasion." He called it an example of "unintended consequences." But his conclusion that we should "aim before we shoot" was off the mark. A more accurate conclusion is that we shouldn't shoot at all, we shouldn't invade other people's countries and try to socially engineer their societies to ally with our economic interests.

On our trip to Iraq under Saddam Hussein in 2003, in hushed voices, a group of women told us that they wanted to be freed from the oppressive regime they were living under. But with the US invasion pending, they pleaded with us, "Go home and tell your government that our liberation will not come on the wings of US bombs or from the barrels of US guns."

Go home and tell your government that we will liberate ourselves." If only our leaders would listen.

MEDEA BENJAMIN, COFOUNDER OF GLOBAL EXCHANGE AND CODEPINK: WOMEN FOR PEACE, IS THE AUTHOR OF DRONE WARFARE: KILLING BY REMOTE CONTROL. HER PREVIOUS BOOKS INCLUDE DON'T BE AFRAID GRINGO: A HONDURAN WOMAN SPEAKS FROM THE HEART, AND (WITH JODIE EVANS) STOP THE NEXT WAR NOW (INNER OCEAN ACTION GUIDE).

Source: Telesur 3/19/15 <http://www.telesurto.net/>

MEDEA BENJAMIN

March 19 marks two gloomy anniversaries: the 12th anniversary of US invasion of Iraq and the 5th anniversary of the NATO intervention in Libya. Both overthrew Arab dictators; both left the local people in such horrific straits that many of them look back with nostalgia to the days of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qaddafi.

I was in Iraq with a dozen of my CODEPINK colleagues a month before the US invasion in 2003. While we found a country wracked by 13 years of draconian Western sanctions and a people scared to openly criticize Saddam Hussein, we also found a middle class country with an extremely well-educated population where women made up the majority of university students and participated in all aspects of public life.

I'll never forget my first conversation with an Iraqi woman in Baghdad, Eman Khammas. "Oh, you're from the United States," she remarked in perfect English. "Who is your favorite black woman poet? Do you like Nikki Giovanni or June Jordan or Alice Walker?" Taken aback, I asked how she knew about these women. "I studied them when I was doing my English degree at the University of Baghdad," she replied somewhat condescendingly, as if that were common knowledge.

Today Khammas and her family are refugees, as are millions of Iraqis who were forced to flee the violence unleashed by "Operation Iraqi Freedom." By 2007, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said that the number of people fleeing Iraq reached 2 million and that within Iraq there were an estimated 1.7 million internally displaced people. With the civil war raging today, that number has only increased, as have deaths. An academic study published in 2013 found that nearly half a million

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# Power from the people

FLORENCE JAUMOTTE AND CAROLINA OSORIO BUITRON

Inequality has risen in many advanced economies since the 1980s, largely because of the concentration of incomes at the top of the distribution. Measures of inequality have increased substantially, but the most striking development is the large and continuous increase in the share of total income garnered by the 10 percent of the population that earns the most—which is only partially captured by the more traditional measure of inequality, the Gini coefficient. The Gini is a summary statistic that gauges the average difference in income between any two individuals from the income distribution. It takes the value zero if all income is equally shared within a country and 100 (or 1) if one person has all the income.

While some inequality can increase efficiency by strengthening incentives to work and invest, recent research suggests that higher inequality is associated with lower and less sustainable growth in the medium run, even in advanced economies. Moreover, a rising concentration of income at the top of the distribution can reduce a population's welfare if it allows top earners to manipulate the economic and political system in their favor.

Traditional explanations for the rise of inequality in advanced economies are skill-biased technological change and globalization, which have increased the relative demand for skilled workers, benefiting top earners relative to average earners. But technology and globalization foster economic growth, and there is little policymakers can or are willing to do to reverse these trends. Moreover, while high-income countries have been similarly affected by technological change and globalization, inequality in these economies has risen at different speeds and magnitudes.

As a consequence, economic research has recently focused on the effects of institutional changes, with financial deregulation and the decline in top marginal personal income tax rates often cited as important contributors to the rise of inequality. By contrast, the role played by labor market institutions—such as the decline in the share of workers affiliated with trade unions and the fall in the minimum wage relative to the median income—has featured less prominently in recent debates. In a forthcoming paper, we look at this side of the equation.

We examine the causes of the rise in inequality and focus on the relationship between labor market institutions and the distribution of incomes, by analyzing the experience of advanced economies since the early 1980s. The widely held view is that changes in unionization or the minimum wage affect low- and middle-wage workers but are unlikely to have a direct impact on top income earners.

While our findings are consistent with prior views about the effects of the minimum wage, we find strong evidence that lower unionization is associated with an increase in top income shares in advanced economies during the period 1980–2010, thus challenging preconceptions about the channels through which union density affects income distribution. This is the most novel aspect of our analysis, which sets the stage for further research on the link between the erosion of unions and the rise of inequality at the top.

## CHANGES AT THE TOP

Economic research has highlighted various channels through which unions and the minimum wage can affect the distribution of incomes at the bottom and middle, such as the dispersion of wages, unemployment, and redistribution. In our study, however, we also consider the possibility that weaker unions can lead to higher top income shares, and formulate hypotheses for why this may be the case. So the main channels through which labor market institutions affect income inequality are the following:

### WAGE DISPERSION

Unionization and minimum wages are usually thought to reduce inequality by helping equalize the distribution of wages, and economic research confirms this.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

"We also find that deunionization is associated with less redistribution of income and that reductions in minimum wages increase overall inequality considerably."

Some economists argue that while stronger unions and a higher minimum wage reduce wage inequality, they may also increase unemployment by maintaining wages above "market-clearing" levels, leading to higher gross income inequality. But the empirical support for this hypothesis is not very strong, at least within the range of institutional arrangements observed in advanced economies. For instance, in an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development review of 17 studies, only 3 found a robust association between union density (or bargaining coverage) and higher overall unemployment.

### REDISTRIBUTION

Strong unions can induce policymakers to engage in more redistribution by mobilizing workers to vote for parties that promise to redistribute income or by leading all political parties to do so. Historically, unions have played an important role in the introduction of fundamental social and labor rights. Conversely, the weakening of unions can lead to less redistribution and higher net income inequality (that is, inequality of income after taxes and transfers).

Bargaining power of workers and top income shares: Lower union density can increase top income shares by reducing the bargaining power of workers. Naturally, top income shares are mechanically influenced by what happens in the lower part of the income distribution. If deunionization weakens earnings for middle- and low-income workers, this necessarily increases the income share of corporate managers' pay and shareholder returns. Intuitively, the weakening of unions reduces the bargaining power of workers relative to capital owners, increasing the share of capital income—which is more concentrated at the top than wages and salaries. Moreover, weaker unions can reduce workers' influence on corporate decisions that benefit top earners, such as the size and structure of top executive compensation.

To study the role of unionization and the minimum wage in the rise of inequality, we use econometric techniques over a sample including all advanced economies for which data are available and the years 1980 to 2010. We examine the relationship between various inequality measures (top 10 percent income share, Gini of gross income, Gini of net income) and labor market institutions, as well as a number of control variables. These controls include other important determinants of inequality identified by economists, such as technology, globalization (competition from low-cost foreign workers), financial liberalization, and top marginal personal income tax rates, as well as controls for common global trends in these variables. Our results confirm that the decline in unionization is strongly associated with the rise of income shares at the top.

While causality is difficult to establish, the decline in unionization appears to be a key contributor to the rise of top income shares. This finding holds even after accounting for shifts in political power, changes in social norms regarding inequality, sectoral employment shifts (such as deindustrialization and the growing role of the financial sector), and increases in education levels. The relationship between union density and the Gini of gross income is also negative but somewhat weaker. This could be because the Gini underestimates increases in inequality at the top of the

## The 3 biggest myths blinding us to the economic truth

ROBERT REICH

1. The "job creators" are CEOs, corporations, and the rich, whose taxes must be low in order to induce them to create more jobs. Rubbish. The real job creators are the vast middle class and the poor, whose spending induces businesses to create jobs. Which is why raising the minimum wage, extending overtime protection, enlarging the Earned Income Tax Credit, and reducing middle-class taxes are all necessary.

2. The critical choice is between the "free market" or "government." Baloney. The free market doesn't exist in nature. It's created and enforced by government. And all the ongoing decisions about how it's organized – what gets patent protection

and for how long (the human genome?), who can declare bankruptcy (corporations? homeowners? student debtors?), what contracts are fraudulent (insider trading?) or coercive (predatory loans? mandatory arbitration?), and how much market power is excessive (Comcast and Time Warner?) – depend on government.

3. We should worry most about the size of government. Wrong. We should worry about who government is for. When big money from giant corporations and Wall Street inundate our politics, all decisions relating to #1 and #2 above become rigged against average working Americans.

Source: Robert Reich's blog 3/11/15 <http://robertreich.org>

income distribution.

We also find that deunionization is associated with less redistribution of income and that reductions in minimum wages increase overall inequality considerably. On average, the decline in unionization explains about half of the 5 percentage point rise in the top 10 percent income share. Similarly, about half of the increase in the Gini of net income is driven by deunionization.

### FUTURE RESEARCH

Our study focuses on unionization as a measure of the bargaining power of workers. Beyond this simple measure, more research is needed to investigate which aspects of unionization (for example, collective bargaining, arbitration) are most successful and whether some aspects may be more disruptive to productivity and economic growth.

Whether the rise of inequality brought about by the weakening of unions is good or bad for society remains unclear. While the rise in top earners' income share could reflect a relative increase in their productivity (good inequality), top earners' compensation may be larger than what is justified by their contribution to the economy's output, reflecting what economists call rent extraction (bad inequality). Inequality could also hurt society by allowing top earners to manipulate the economic and political system.

In such cases, there would be grounds for governments to take policy action. Such action could include corporate governance reforms that give all stakeholders—workers, managers, and shareholders—a say in executive pay decisions; improved design of performance-related pay contracts, especially in the risk-happy financial sector; and reaffirmation of labor standards that allow willing workers to bargain collectively.

FLORENCE JAUMOTTE IS A SENIOR ECONOMIST AND CAROLINA OSORIO BUITRON IS AN ECONOMIST, BOTH IN THE IMF'S RESEARCH DEPARTMENT. THIS ARTICLE IS BASED ON A FORTHCOMING IMF PAPER BY THE AUTHORS.

Source: *Finance & Development*, March 2015, Vol. 52, No. 1 <https://www.imf.org>





# ACLU sues Obama admin over drone kill list

SPENCER ACKERMAN

As the US debates expanding its campaign against the Islamic State beyond Iraq and Syria, the leading US civil liberties group is intensifying its efforts to force transparency about lethal US counterterrorism strikes and authorities.

Mid March, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a disclosure lawsuit for secret Obama administration documents specifying, among other things, the criteria for placement on the so-called "kill list" for drone strikes and other deadly force.

Information sought by the ACLU includes long-secret analyses establishing the legal basis for what the administration terms its "targeted killing program" and the process by which the administration determines that civilians are unlikely to be killed before launching a strike, as well as verification mechanisms afterward to establish if the strike in fact has caused civilian deaths.

The suit, filed in a New York federal court, also seeks basic data the Obama administration has withheld about "the number and identities of individuals killed or injured" in counterterrorism strikes, according to the ACLU filing. In February 2013, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, who favors the drone strikes, estimated they had killed 4,700 people.

"Over the last few years, the US government has used armed drones to kill thousands of people, including hundreds of civilians. The public should know who the government is killing, and why it's killing them," Jameel Jaffer, deputy legal director for the ACLU, told the Guardian.

The ACLU suit proceeds after the Obama administration disclosed none of the lethal counterterrorism documentation through a Freedom of Information Act request the civil liberties group launched in October 2013. According to the new lawsuit, the departments of state, justice and defense, as well as the CIA, have stonewalled the ACLU's requests for nearly 18 months.

Recent legal history suggests the ACLU is in for an uphill court struggle. The Obama administration, which has called itself the most transparent in history, has thus far repelled or delayed ACLU lawsuits for disclosure around drone strikes and the 2011 assassination of Anwar al-Awlaki, a US citizen and al-Qaida propagandist. Additionally, the administration is fighting the ACLU on the legality of its bulk surveillance

"His White House portrayed the acknowledgment of the strikes as a transparency milestone, but the administration still refused to disclose the processes and legal memoranda underpinning the speech."

activities and to prevent the release of thousands of graphic photographs detailing Bush-era torture by the CIA and military.

Yet the administration has seen the courts chip away at its blanket denials of documents sought by the ACLU. Most of the intelligence community's disclosures of surveillance memos since Edward Snowden's revelations have followed the administration's courtroom losses to the ACLU and other civil-liberties groups. In June, the second circuit court of appeals forced the Department of Justice to release much of a critical 2010 memo blessing the killing of Awlaki. (The ACLU is seeking the release of 10 more major intelligence memos related to targeted killing.)

Colleen McMahon, the federal judge who initially denied that memo's release in 2013, ruled against the ACLU with regret, writing that loopholes in transparency laws benefitting the government left her "stuck in a paradoxical situation" that she likened to Alice in Wonderland. Since the new lethal-force lawsuit is related to the Awlaki one, McMahon may be the federal judge who hears it.

## ACCOUNTABILITY NEEDED

The new ACLU suit seeks to pierce the veneer of assurances by President Obama that the drone strikes and other lethal counterterrorism practices his administration has embraced have been restricted. Obama announced he was raising the still-undisclosed standards for launching drone strikes in May 2013 and insisting on "strong oversight of all lethal action". He said future strikes would require "near-certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured". His White House portrayed the acknowledgment of the strikes as a transparency milestone, but the administration still refused to disclose the processes and legal memoranda underpinning the speech.

While estimates indicate that the drone strikes, launched by both the CIA and the military's Joint Special Operations Command, have declined since Obama's speech, a November report by the human-rights group Reprieve found that Obama's drone strikes had killed 1,147 people in pursuit of only 41 men, prompting questions about the rigor of the process employed by the administration to launch attacks.

Obama's 2013 speech and the drone-strike decline also occurred before the 2014 rise of the Islamic State and the renewed US war in the skies over Iraq. Not only are Predator and Reaper drones used in airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, but the administration's desired legal authorization against Isis would permit global targeting of the jihadist army and its far-flung affiliates – which now include Boko Haram in Nigeria as well as allies in Libya, the Sinai peninsula and beyond.

That authorization "wisely does not include any geographical restriction", argued the new defense secretary, Ashton Carter, in congressional testimony last week, "because [Isis] already shows signs of metastasizing outside of Syria and Iraq".

Jaffer told the Guardian there could be no "legitimate justification" for persistent official stonewalling on civilian casualties and the procedures by which people, including US citizens, can find themselves on a secret government "kill list".

"The categorical secrecy surrounding the drone program doesn't serve any legitimate security interest. It serves only to skew public debate, to obscure the human costs of the program, and to shield decision-makers from accountability," Jaffer said.

Source: The Guardian UK 3/16/15 <http://www.theguardian.com/>

# Petraeus case shows hypocrisy of whistleblower crackdown

NADIA PRUPIS

The U.S. government's "hand-slap" treatment of former CIA director David Petraeus, who in 2012 leaked classified military information to his biographer and mistress, Paula Broadwell, stands in stark contrast to the Obama administration's aggressive crackdown on whistleblowers like Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, Jeffrey Sterling, and John Kiriakou—and should be the turning point away from such policies.

So says renowned Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, who was charged under the Espionage Act for disclosing secret U.S. military documents related to the Vietnam War in 1971. Snowden, who leaked a trove of classified NSA documents to journalists, now also faces prosecution under the Espionage Act.

Speaking to Trevor Timm at the *Guardian* on Thursday, Ellsberg

noted that the "actual charges against [Edward Snowden] are not more serious, as violations of the classification regulations and non-disclosure agreements, than those Petraeus has admitted to, which are actually quite spectacular."

According to the indictment against Petraeus, he handed over to Broadwell eight "black books" containing classified information designated Top Secret and Sensitive Compartmented Information—a level higher than Top Secret—and included "identities of covert officers, war strategy, intelligence capabilities and mechanisms, diplomatic discussions, quotes and deliberative discussions from high-level National Security Council meetings ... and [his personal] discussions with the president of the United States."

On Tuesday, Petraeus pleaded guilty to a single misdemeanor charge of "unauthorized removal and retention of classified material."

Under the parameters of the plea deal he made with the Justice Department, prosecutors will recommend two years probation and no jail time.

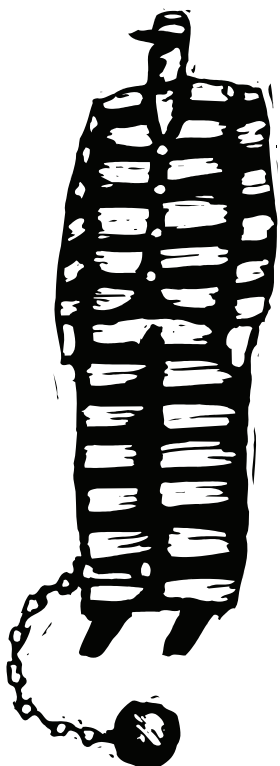
Timm writes: "Compare that to the actions of Chelsea Manning, who is serving 35 years for leaking classified information. As Ellsberg noted: 'Chelsea Manning had access to SCI every day... where she worked in Iraq. She chose to disclose none of it, nothing higher than Secret'. There is also the case of Jeffrey Sterling, convicted last month of leaking classified information to New York Times journalist James Risen, 'having first revealed it to Congress, as I did,' Ellsberg continued." Sterling was also convicted under the Espionage Act and will be sentenced later this year. Manning is serving 35 years in prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Timm continues: "Ellsberg says Sterling's 'violations of security regulations were in no way more

serious than what Petraeus has now admitted to', and that, while it's too late to do anything about his conviction, the judge should take the Petraeus plea bargain into account at his sentencing. 'If disclosing the identities of covert agents to an unauthorized person and storing them in several unauthorized locations deserves a charge with a maximum sentence of one year,' Ellsberg said, 'then Edward Snowden should face not more than that same one count.'

"The government had the chance to hold Petraeus out as an example on the same felony Espionage Act charges they've leveled (unfairly) against every conscientious whistleblower they've indicted," Timm concludes. "Their answer? Leaking should no longer be a felony. Let's make sure we hold them to that, and not only for CIA Directors."

Source: Common Dreams 3/6/15 <http://www.commondreams.org>





# Oil trains suck

THOMAS S. BLOCK

More crude oil was shipped in 2013 than in the previous five years combined. The Natural Resources Defense Council concurs with many other agencies and groups that there are few (if any) safeguards in place to protect communities and the environment from accidents resulting from "the race to move millions of barrels of crude by rail." Upgrading equipment and the proliferation of planned crude-by-rail terminals in California to 40 terminals, including one in Stockton, will place nearly four million Bay Area and Central/San Joaquin Valley residents at increased risk. The state's Interagency Rail Safety Working Group estimates that metro areas including Sacramento can expect several mile-long trains passing through per day. Presently, at least 21,000 freight trains pass through Stockton's BNSF freight yard each year. An increase of freight traffic containing tanks of crude oil at both the UP and BNSF yards in Stockton would increase crude oil carcinogenic contaminants such as benzene, hydrogen sulfide, ethyl benzene, toluene, xylenes, naphthalene, methylnaphthalene, alkanes, organometallic compounds containing chromium, mercury, nickel, etc., and increase particulate matters such as black carbon to over eleven tons of particulate matter per year. Much of this toxic air contamination is so microscopic that it can enter the bloodstream. Plus, the summertime heat vaporizes the crude faster while it migrates further. These trains should be feared since each tank car contains the equivalent of two million sticks of dynamite. This group also reminds California residents that there were 182 oil spills in the state in 2013.

The proposed terminal in Stockton is a rail-to-barge facility and tank farm that can transship 70,000 barrels per day of crude oil to Bay Area refineries through the Port of Stockton. It is quite coincidental that the 70,000 barrels per day amount of crude-by-rail that will be delivered to Stockton is the planned capacity for the new Benicia facility. As Benicia's refinery is changing from marine to rail delivery, Stockton is gearing up for rail to marine deliveries to the Bay Area offering "flexibility" and avoiding potential rail traffic congestion in the Bay Area. The Targa facility will be the first marine oil terminal approved in California in the last 15 years.

Supposedly, the "benefits" of the concurrence of the Benicia-Port of Stockton projects will not change Stockton's status as a high risk community and "influence" the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District as other governmental agencies have been "influenced" even as particulate matter and other contaminants increase! The "air-polluting boat deliveries of up to 25,555,000 barrels of crude per year to the refinery" at Benicia would be transferred to Stockton and the possible 26,100,000 barrels it will receive per year as it moves the crude from rail to storage facilities to barges. Furthermore, to what facilities in the Bay Area will the barges be delivering their crude and how will that improve the air quality in the Bay Area that the Benicia project was to affect? It must also be stated that, referring to the Benicia EIR study, the "result in 'significant and unavoidable' cumulative rise of nitrous oxide emissions" in the Bay Area from train deliveries will be transferred to Stockton and the San Joaquin Valley!

## RUNNING THROUGH CITIES

The Valero Refining Company has published an environmental impact report (EIR) supporting the change from marine to rail delivery at its Benicia refinery. This change includes increased rail traffic in California to Benicia estimated at two 50-tank car trains per day of flammable crude oil. These trains will be passing through Davis, Sacramento, and Roseville on their way to Benicia. As these trains pass through Davis, the railroad tracks on which they travel will be within 1/2 mile of approximately 25,000 people and as they pass through Sacramento, the trains will be within 1/2 mile of 135,000 residents of the capital, a very substantially increased risk. Not to worry, though. According to Christopher Barken who formulated all the numbers in the EIR report, the impact of the increased traffic would be "negligible" and that only a single accident would occur approximately every 111 years. It would be pertinent to be directed to the statistics on which he bases the probabilities that he is projecting because of the dramatic contrast to recent incidents. One wonders if Mr. Barken factored into his calculations the derailments at the refinery on Nov. 5, 2013 and May 17, 2014 or if he took account of the history of accidents there. Then, too, one wonders if Mr. Barken's past association with the Association of American Railroads and his recent research for the AAR has any influence on his calculations. State Senator Lois Wolk acknowledged, "I seriously question whether the EIR has adequately evaluated the true risk of an accident or spill involved with this project." She, then, concludes more bluntly that Mr. Barken's estimation "defies logic. . ."

Oakland, Davis, and Berkeley have joined many other cities and communities throughout the US and have passed legislation opposed to the transportation of hazardous materials within their jurisdictions. Sacramento and Davis have held rallies opposing the use of rail lines to carry crude within their city limits. Roger Lin, attorney for Communities for a Better Environment said that while regulations passed by local governments can be rejected based on the commerce clause, "I feel that if as many cities as possible do this, it sends a great message -- a very positive message -- to the federal government." And Oakland took a further step by approving a fossil-fuel divestment bill urging its pension funds to dump their dirty-energy stocks. The following question, here and now, is, "What will Stockton's government do?" In June 2014, the Sacramento Bee unambiguously wrote, "Allowing these 'bomb trains' to rumble through our communities approaches criminal recklessness, and should be stopped. Big business does not -- or at least should not -- dictate the direction we take as a nation." Support from Stockton's City Council should be a no-brainer. The question is what type of action should Stockton take?

*From a presentation before Stockton, CA City Council  
Concerning the Rail Industry 7/15/14*

# Halt 'bomb trains'

ANDREA GERMANOS

With the flames from the most recent oil train derailment just extinguished, a spotlight hovers over the risks associated with what some have dubbed "bomb trains." In the past month alone, there have been four such disasters in the United States and Canada:

- On February 14, a CN Rail freight train carrying crude from the Alberta tar sands derailed near Timmins, Ontario, causing seven of the cars to burst into flames.
- On February 16, a CSX train carrying Bakken crude from North Dakota derailed Mount Carbon, West Virginia, triggering an explosion and fire.
- On March 5, the fiery derailment of a BNSF train carrying crude struck near Galena, Illinois.
- On March 7, a fiery derailment involving a train carrying tar sands crude hit northern Ontario again, this time near Gogama.

Further highlighting the risks is a recent analysis by the Department of Transportation predicting an average of 10 derailments per year. The incidents—and exponential increase in the transport of oil by rail—have sparked calls for more stringent regulation and safer ways to transport fossil fuels. But environmental voices on both sides of the border say that is a fundamentally flawed way to approach the problem, and that the derailments should serve as a wake-up call for ending our fossil fuel addiction.

Mollie Matteson, a senior scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity, stated that the Obama administration has failed to take the necessary action to prevent these trains from harming wildlife and communities.

"The fact that these trains are still moving on the rails is a national travesty," said Matteson. "The next explosive wreck — and there will be more, so long as nothing changes — may take lives, burn up a town or level a city business district, and pollute the drinking water of thousands of people. Enough is enough."

And the answer is not to use the rail disasters as motivation for more pipelines, said Matt Krogh, ForestEthics extreme oil campaign director. "There is no safe way to transport extreme tar sands or Bakken oil by train or pipeline," he stated.

Henry Henderson, Midwest Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council and former Commissioner of the Environment for the City of Chicago, agrees. He called the "fiery mess in Galena... one more wake up call for Americans" and said that industry's seizing the derailments to call for more pipelines "reflects a cynical, false choice."

"If we are serious about reducing the risk of moving oil through our communities—we need to focus on using a lot less of it," Henderson said.

The Council of Canadians stated that the federal government needs to put a halt of these "bomb trains," noting that even those car models deemed to be safer shown themselves to be no safeguard to these fiery disasters.

Mark Calzavara, Ontario, Québec and Nunavut organizer for the Canadian organization, said, "It's time to put people's lives ahead of profits, and for the government to stop allowing unsafe trains to travel through our communities, neighborhoods and environment."

David Dayen writes at *Salon* that such oil train disasters "haven't ruined a major population center yet only through dumb luck; and we haven't cracked down on this treacherous practice only because of the enormous power of the industry." And that power, he adds, has allowed the fossil fuel industry to externalize its true costs—like those resulting from damages from oil train derailments.

"Oil appears 'cheaper' than solar or wind, because these costs never come into account. But solar power doesn't blow up while being carried through a major city on a train. And if we want to seriously talk about what kind of energy we can afford in the future, that has to enter the conversation," Dayen concludes.

Source: Common Dreams 10/10/15 <http://www.commondreams.org>

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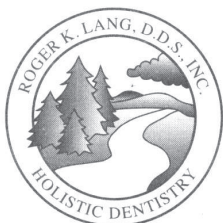
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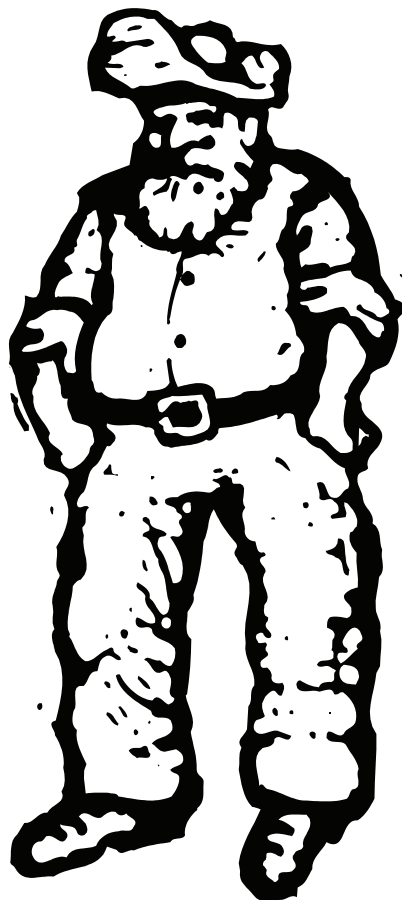
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# The "Hindenburg Trap": dump oil, coal & gas stocks if you want to retire



JUAN COLE

What is the actual value of the oil, gas and coal fields owned by big energy corporations, which gives them their stock price and allows them to be counted as assets for borrowing purposes? The real value of those hydrocarbon resources is zero. Or actually it is much less than zero, since there are likely to be a lot of liability lawsuits and

insurance claims for severe environmental and property damage. Coal, oil and gas are now where the cigarette companies were in 1990, on the verge of getting hit with massive penalties. Big Coal and Big Oil are dead men walking.

The only thing that stops the entire world economy, including that of the United States, from collapsing is that investors continue to pretend that what I just said is not true. Because of this pretense, some people will go on making a lot of money with hydrocarbon investments in the short and perhaps even the medium term. Much investment and assignment of value is a matter of confidence.

But the confidence is misplaced. If you are still fairly young and you or your pension fund bought a lot of petroleum or gas or coal stocks in hopes of retiring on them, think again. You will lose your shirt.

Worse, because so many loans and other investments are anchored by the supposed value of coal, oil and gas, the world is walking an economic tightrope and the gentlest of breezes could knock it off into a crisis that would make 2008-2009 look like a minor hiccup.

In particular, if a sizable ice shelf breaks off in the Antarctic, you could see a sudden sea level rise that would panic the public and possibly lead some countries to outlaw things like coal and gas.

The Bank of England is doing a big study of this problem, which economists call that of "stranded assets." That is a fancy phrase for when you invest in something that suddenly loses its value. For instance, say you invested in Blockbuster Video Entertainment, Inc., when people used to rent DVD's of movies from brick and mortar stores. In 2006 it seemed a good stock to buy— it had 9,000

stores and 60,000 employees (almost as many as there are coal miners). And then streaming video came along. Stranded asset. Blockbuster went bankrupt in 2010 and survives only as a streaming service of Dish satellite television, which bought it and was gradually forced to liquidate all the stores.

The same thing will happen to coal, oil and natural gas, for two big, inexorable reasons. First, burning hydrocarbons is fatal to the health of our planet— in terms of the energy it releases, it is like setting off atomic bombs constantly. After a while, that would take a toll. Second, other far less destructive ways of generating electricity are every day becoming cheaper and more efficient, especially wind and solar.

That coal as an industry is a bad investment should be obvious. The Obama Environmental Protection Agency has decided finally to start actually enforcing the Clean Air and Water Act, and has also claimed the right to regulate states' carbon dioxide emissions (in which it has been upheld by the Supreme Court). Most coal plants will likely close over the next five years. Can you say, Blockbuster Video? I'd dump those coal stocks, like yesterday, or call my pension fund and make them drop them.

Of course, there was already a social conscience argument against investing in coal, which is dirty— burning it emits mercury (a nerve poison) and other dangerous pollutants and makes people sick. It also causes acid rain. And it is a major emitter of carbon dioxide, the deadliest poison of all. It is a horrible thing.

Let's consider what has happened in Iowa just since 2005.

In 2005, wind generated 4% of Iowa's electricity. Coal was responsible for a

whopping 79%, about 4/5s.

In 2013, wind generated 28% of Iowa's electricity. Coal had fallen to only 59%.

Given those trend lines, in such a short period of time, does coal look like a good investment to you? Or does wind? Especially since we know what the EPA is planning for coal.

Coal isn't just competing with wind. The conservative Deutsche Bank has just concluded that in 14 states of the US, solar power is now as inexpensive as that from coal and natural gas. Right now. That is, it would be crazy to build a new coal plant today when you could generate electricity just as cheaply with solar.

And get this: by 2016— next year! — Deutsche Bank concludes that solar will be competitive with coal and natural gas in all but three or four states. And that is not an argument based on subsidies for solar. It will be as inexpensive as coal-generated electricity just purely on a market basis (in fact, it will be even cheaper, since there are massive government subsidies for coal, gas and oil).

Critics say that the wind dies down sometimes and the sun doesn't shine on half the earth at night. This problem is referred to as that of "intermittency." But it isn't an insoluble problem. For one thing, the wind often blows more at night, so turbines can take up the slack from solar plants. For another, there are now molten salt solar installations that go on generating electricity for six hours after sunset. As batteries improve in efficiency and fall in price (both things are happening already, big time), the problem of intermittency will fade into insignificance, likely within a decade.

Source: Informed Comment 3/8/15 <http://www.juancole.com>

## Al Gore: 'punish climate-change deniers' and 'put a price on carbon'



COLE MELLINO

The South by Southwest (SXSW) Festival in Austin, Texas runs from March 9 to 22, as a massive film, interactive and music festival that is nearly 20 years old. The festival brings together designers, developers, investors, entrepreneurs and politicians for panels and discussions about technology and innovation.

For the third time in the last few years, Al Gore, founder and chairman of the Climate Reality Project, spoke at the festival on Friday. Naturally, his interactive discussion focused on addressing the climate crisis. The former vice president focused on

the need to "punish climate-change deniers, saying politicians should pay a price for rejecting 'accepted science,'" said the Chicago Tribune.

Gore said forward-thinking investors are moving away from companies that invest in fossil fuels and towards companies investing in renewable energy. "We need to put a price on carbon to accelerate these market trends," Gore told the Chicago Tribune, referring to a proposed federal cap-and-trade system that would penalize companies that exceeded their carbon-emission limits. "And in order to do that, we need to put a price on denial in politics."

He called on the tech-

minded SXSW crowd, which is dominated by Millennials, to harness technology to launch a grassroots movement to tackle climate change and call out climate deniers. "We have this denial industry cranked up constantly," Gore said. "In addition to 99 percent of the scientists and all the professional scientific organizations, now Mother Nature is weighing in."

Years from now, Gore said the next generation will look back at us and ask: "How did you change?" according to Macworld. "Part of the answer may well be that a group of people came to South by Southwest in Austin, Texas in 2015 and helped to make a revolution," Gore said.

Gore wanted these young, tech-savvy attendees to start a grassroots movement using social media like they did when "net neutrality was threatened or when the Stop Online Piracy Act threatened to blacklist websites that offered so-called illegal content," said Macworld. That means signing petitions to fight climate change, utilizing social media to call out climate deniers in Congress and streaming the Live Earth Road to Paris concert on June 18, an event designed to draw attention to the climate talks in Paris this December.

Source: EcoWatch 03/17/15 <http://ecowatch.com/>



## CSERC

# 2014 Grazing report for the Stanislaus Forest



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One of the key things that the CSERC staff does during their summer fieldwork are surveys of mountain meadows in the Stanislaus National Forest. These wetland habitats are hotspots for diversity for plants and animals, as well as important components of our high-country watershed health. They are also sensitive habitats with soils that take thousands of years to develop, and are incredibly vulnerable to degradation from livestock grazing impacts.

Our staff surveys over 50 meadows every year to identify where stronger livestock management is needed to maintain the health of these precious habitats. Staff conducts grass utilization surveys (following strict Forest established guidelines), and takes before- and after-grazing photos at each of these meadows so that short and long-term damage at each location is clearly identified. Issues we share with Stanislaus Forest staff in our annual report include meadows where the vegetation is grazed beyond pre-determined Forest standards, contamination of water from fecal coliform and other disease causing bacteria, and the erosion and degradation of soils, streams, springs, and other key wetland features from hoof pocking, trampling, and sloughing.

Below are three meadows which were included in our 2014 report; each exemplifies many of the key issues CSERC documents every season.

Hull Meadow 2014, pre grazing.

Hulls Meadow 2014, post-grazing  
*Before and after Hulls Meadow 2014:*  
Extensive overgrazing by livestock and soil degradation.

### BEAR TREE MEADOW

Bear Tree Meadow is in the Highland Lakes grazing allotment, located just outside of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. It is one of the key tributaries to the North Fork Mokelumne River, with year round flow from several springs. This area is consistently overgrazed ever year, with special fen habitat and streambank damage exceeding standards adopted by the Forest Service. Unfortunately this year was no exception, with heavy overgrazing and significant damage to wetland resources documented.

### WET MEADOW SPRINGS

Wet Meadow Springs is in the Lower Hull Grazing Allotment, and is an exceptionally wet meadow that hosts rare and sensitive plant species and a large fen complex (fens are a rare wetland habitat that can take 1,000 years to develop one inch of soil). This year staff documented extensive livestock pocking and trampling of the soils in the fen. Despite forest direction to protect recovering burned landscapes post-Rim Fire, our staff documented heavily overgrazed conditions of stringer meadows just down stream



of Wet Meadow Springs, within an area that burned at high intensity. Soil degradation was extreme, watershed and creek health were severely damaged, and almost no vegetative recovery in the burned riparian areas occurred.

### LOWER THREE MEADOW

Lower Three Meadow is in the Herring Grazing Allotment, and is supposed to be off-limits to grazing in order to protect the breeding habitat of rare amphibian species found there. As in other years, CSERC staff documented and reported on extensive livestock and packstock damage to streambanks and heavily overgrazed conditions, despite Forest instructions that Three Meadows should be fenced and not grazed..

Source: CSERC 2014 Grazing Report March 2015, CSERC, PO Box 396, Twain Harte, CA 95383. (209) 586-7440 <http://www.cserc.org>

# California's bees are in trouble



Bees are responsible for one in every three bites of food we eat – and a tremendous contributor to California's agriculture – yet they are in serious trouble because of the rampant use of bee-toxic pesticides like neonicotinoids. That's why we're thankful that California Assembly Member Levine recently introduced a bill (AB 1259) that would give California's bees a safe haven by prohibiting the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on state-owned or state-managed lands, including spray applications of the pesticide, pre-applications to young plants,

and the planting of seeds coated with the chemical. The bill is a beacon of hope for pollinators, and it's essential for more legislators to take a stand and protect these important species.

Bees are responsible for pollinating many of the state's crops, everything from increasing yields in strawberries, to essential pollination of the multi-billion dollar almond industry. But bees face a growing problem from almost inescapable pesticide use. Creating safe havens on public lands and protecting bees is not only essential to the livelihood of beekeepers, but also to the success of our state's agricultural and ecological systems. Neonicotinoids, as well as their cousin "systemic" pesticides, are linked to bee kills and poor pollinator health, as well as effects on bee navigation, reproduction and communication.

In the absence of federal leadership, California legislators must take steps to protect pollinators from pesticides linked to their decline; now is the time to act. California can continue to lead the way by taking steps to protect bees and other pollinators from hazardous pesticides, starting with passing AB 1259.

*Action: Urge your Assembly member to support AB1259, to give California's bees a safe haven.*

Source: Center for Food Safety release 3/16/15 [www.centerforfoodsafety.org](http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org)



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# Long-awaited Rim Fire reforestation plan proposes massive herbicide spraying



Prior to developing its proposed reforestation actions in the Rim Fire, the Forest Service bent over backwards to engage a wide range of interests in collaborative workshops and discussions. CSERC openly praised the Forest Service for investing extra time and resources into bringing scientists and reforestation experts to reforestation workshops. They shared study information about natural pre-management forest conditions and how open, park-like, fine-scale mosaic forests could mimic the natural historic forests that grew so successfully despite frequent wildfires.

Accordingly, CSERC had high hopes for the long-awaited release of the Rim Fire Reforestation Scoping Plan. The initial detailed proposal describing how conifer seedlings would be planted on national forest lands within the Rim Fire. While some aspects of the reforestation plan definitely show willingness by the Forest staff to try new strategies, there are a number of major disappointments that cause CSERC and other local conservation groups to be deeply disappointed in the plan that is currently on the table.

## MASSIVE HERBICIDE USE PROPOSED

On the good side, the Forest agreed to only apply spot spraying around each planted conifer seedling and to use the least controversial herbicide (glyphosate) to kill off bushes, grasses, ferns, and other plants that might compete with the young conifers. On the bad side, the massive scale of herbicide treatment proposed is truly staggering. Even though the Forest Service is fully aware that there is strong opposition from the public to widespread chemical treatments on public lands.

As now proposed, herbicides would be sprayed for site preparation on 21,732 acres before the conifer seedlings are planted. Then to release those planted conifer seedlings, over the following five years the Forest Service proposal allows 1 to 3 additional herbicide spray treatments on every acre. Assuming an average of just two such additional

treatments, that would add roughly 43,500-acres-worth of release? chemical treatments.

To treat noxious weeds on just under 5,000 acres, the plan proposes the use of much more controversial chemicals that would not just be one spray treatments, but could include yearly applications to prevent seed production and eventually eliminate the weed seed banks. Assuming just two treatments, that adds up to another 10,000 acres worth of herbicide spraying.

With those conservative assumptions, the Forest's plan allows at least 75,000 acres worth of chemical treatments to be applied within the burned landscape. Or, put more simply, on roughly 30,000 acres within the fire boundaries, the Forest would apply chemicals 2 to 5 times on each acre.

## DENSE FIRE-VULNERABLE TREE PLANTATIONS PLANNED

Despite listening to the science presentations that underscored the reduced risk of destructive wildfires if trees grow in a fine scale, park-like scattered pattern across a forest landscape, forest reforestation planners propose dense, highly vulnerable tree plantations where trees (such as in the picture) are closely packed together.

Within areas managed for strategic fire purposes, tree plantations would contain 194 to 303 trees per acre, with the broad mid-slope areas having 210 to 250 trees planted on each acre. Outside of the strategic fire management areas, the Forest Service proposes to plant conifer seedlings on the broad mid-slope areas at 257 to 303 trees per acre.

Put simply, blanketing the burned landscape with trees planted 12 feet to 14 feet apart and attacking competing plants with chemical sprays will result in uniform rows of tree farm conditions. Tree branches after just the first 10 years will be touching or nearly touching the branches from adjacent trees, resulting in a solid block of dense, overstocked rows of conifers that will be ripe and ready to be destroyed by the next wildfire that whips a crown fire through those continuous fuels.

## CSERC URGES A MORE NATURAL, FIRE-RESISTANT PLANTING PROGRAM

Through collaborative discussions within the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) group, CSERC learned that there are differing perspectives by conservation group members and by forest industry group members. But despite those different priorities, there was general support for the concept paper that the YSS produced for Rim Fire Reforestation. One YSS concept recommendation was to avoid dense stocking of conifers that would make the reforested areas highly susceptible to the next wildfire. The YSS concept recommendation was to plant tree seedlings in such a widely scattered or clumped manner that the trees would be more resilient to fires and at least partially resilient to warmer, drier climatic conditions.

A second point was to use glyphosate herbicide treatments only where deemed truly needed for tree survival, rather than everywhere. There was agreement even from the conservation community that some sites with bear clover pose high risk of competition to young trees. But many areas without bear clover may not need herbicides for conifers to grow successfully. Yet the Forest proposes to spray chemicals around every tree on every acre, and not just once, but potentially as many as 3 or more times.

CSERC strongly believes that there is a middle-ground, less controversial, more natural reforestation strategy that can still result in the same number of trees being planted (over 6,000,000 conifer seedlings). But it would reduce wildfire risk and be more natural to have a forest planted with a fine scale mosaic pattern rather than a moderately dense tree farm. It also would be preferable to scale back herbicide use significantly so as to regrow trees amidst already growing vegetation rather than wiping out so much of the already growing vegetation.

The best available science has revealed in recent years that pre-management forests were far more open and park-like than what is currently being proposed by this initial reforestation plan. A win-win middle ground approach may end up with substantial blocks of 200-300 trees being planted per acre so as to give pro-forest interests confidence that there will be plenty of future wood production. Some advocates for densely stocked mature forests may also see high stocking as desirable.

But a win-win middle ground approach may also mean that not just the top of ridges should be open and park-like. Reducing the planned stocking levels across many of the mid-slope areas will be far more likely to reduce the connectivity of fuel created by plantation trees. And it would certainly reduce the competition for water by crowded trees.

CSERC looks forward to working with both the diverse members of YSS and the Forest Service staff to further explore ways to reduce the two main controversial aspects of the current plan. We are eager to see a balanced final plan get designed, approved, and quickly implemented.

If you would like to read through the Reforestation Scoping Package, visit <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45612>.

To submit comments to the Forest Service on the Reforestation Plan:

- send them by April 13th electronically to: [comments-pacificsouthwest-stanislaus@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificsouthwest-stanislaus@fs.fed.us) with the Subject: Rim Reforestation. Names of commenters will be part of the public record.

- Or mail your comments to: Stanislaus National Forest, Attn: Rim Reforestation, 19777 Greenley Road, Sonora, CA 95370

Source: CSERC Homepage <http://www.cserc.org>. CSERC, PO Box 396, Tiwan Hart, CA 95383. (209) 586-7440



## Book review

# Beyond Reform: Essays Call for a Sweeping Reassessment of Incarceration

DAVID GILBERT

The Roots of Mass Incarceration in the US: Locking Up Black Dissidents and Punishing the Poor

**Edited by Mumia Abu-Jamal and Johanna Fernandez**  
*Socialism and Democracy*, Vol. 28, No. 3, November 2014

Prison populations have exploded in the United States, with a nearly eight-fold increase in the number of people behind bars from 1970 to today. In the initial decades of that breathtaking ascent, Black radical organizations, along with other groups spearheading systemic change, were devastated by, among other things, government counter-intelligence operations.

One result is that today there are dozens of political prisoners incarcerated for their stands against repression. Some are Prisoners of War (POWs) from the just liberation struggles of Black, Native American, Puerto Rican and Mexican people. Some of these prisoners have been held for more than 40 years. The cancerous growth of mass incarceration and the lethal repression of revolutionary groups are neither accidental nor unrelated.

The scandal of mass incarceration in the United States is finally getting some public attention, with a few damning statistics frequently cited: The United States, with 5 percent of the world's population, holds 25 percent of the world's prisoners; and while African Americans constitute 15 percent of illicit drug users, they are 75 percent of those in prison for drugs. While this new exposure is welcome, the mainstream discussion fails to get at the roots of the problem and therefore can't begin to address the depth of the changes needed.

In the November, 2014, special issue of *Socialism and*

Democracy, "The Roots of Mass Incarceration in the US: Locking Up Black Dissidents and Punishing the Poor," provides a penetrating analysis of a range of the issues involved and points toward the steps that are needed to turn around these horrors. Not surprisingly, the most trenchant essays in this collection come from those who have been in the trenches - those who have been fighting this monster for decades, especially the several pieces written by political prisoners and ex-political prisoners. This publication couldn't be more timely and relevant, as the mighty river of the Black Lives Matter movement flows across and brings new life into the country.

"The Roots of Mass Incarceration in the US" was edited by scholar/activist Johanna Fernandez and Mumia Abu-Jamal, the political prisoner who has been held in Pennsylvania since 1981 (and is a stellar journalist and superb writer). Their introduction is a brilliant essay: Right in the first paragraph, they hit the nail on the head, writing that in the wake of the advances of the 1960s, the US launched "the frenzied reaction to the black freedom struggle that set the stage for today's hyper-incarceration of poor urban black and brown communities." They go on to elaborate on a number of key, but rarely highlighted, issues - including the deleterious impact on the children and communities of those ripped away to jail, and the ways in which the system dehumanizes people at home while similarly invading, torturing and killing abroad....

In addition to emphasizing how mass incarceration and the locking up of dissidents are used to enforce an oppressive system, this collection includes analyses of resistance. The inclusion of several current and ex-prisoner activists as authors speaks volumes in itself. Historian Heather Ann

Thompson contributes an essay, "Lessons from Attica: From Prisoner Rebellion to Mass Incarceration and Back," that gives a gripping account of the 1971 Attica prison uprising and the state's response with a brutal massacre that killed 39 human beings and tortured many more. She explains that government officials knew that to achieve full control over the criminal justice system they would have to crush the prisoners' rights movement.

Thompson mentions a recent resurgence of struggles, with mass prisoner hunger strikes in California, Georgia and other states - a development worth a major essay in its own right. Given the pivotal role of state repression in maintaining overall social control, "what happens in our nation's prisons happens, ultimately, to all of us." Thompson calls on all who want to achieve social change to actively support prison struggles....

If you're looking for a collection that provides a cogent core analysis, understands mass incarceration's realities - not statistically, but rather in terms of our epic political struggles - and roots the problems in the very nature of the social system, then this *Socialism and Democracy* special issue is an outstanding and essential read. The volume demonstrates why we need to go beyond various reform proposals - valuable as they are - to a much broader struggle for change.

DAVID GILBERT IS AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST POLITICAL PRISONER WHO HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY ABOUT THE CRIMINAL INJUSTICE SYSTEM, MOST RECENTLY IN HIS PAMPHLET, "OUR COMMITMENT IS TO OUR COMMUNITIES" (KERSPLEBEDEB, 2014). INCARCERATED SINCE 1981, HE IS NOW HELD IN THE AUBURN, NY, CORRECTIONAL FACILITY.

Source: Truthout 3/8/15 <http://truth-out.org>

## Republicans Are Sinking the Hopes of an Entire Generation



ELIZABETH WARREN

Last year, I introduced a bill that would allow people getting crushed with student loan debt to refinance their loans down to today's lower interest rates.

More than 700,000

people signed petitions in support of the plan. Every Democrat, every Independent, and three Republicans voted to move the bill forward. But the rest of the Republicans filibustered the bill, so it didn't pass.

Since last year, nearly

a million more borrowers have fallen behind on their payments. Altogether, students are now struggling with \$100 billion MORE debt than they were a year ago.

Student loan debt was an economic emergency

last year - and now that emergency is getting worse. That's why I'm reintroducing the Bank on Students Emergency Loan Refinancing Act. Join me in telling the Senate Republicans: Student loan refinancing can't wait another year.

Our proposal is simple: Refinance outstanding student loans down to 3.9% for undergraduates, and a little higher for graduates and PLUS loans.

This single change would give borrowers across the country a chance to save hundreds - and for some, thousands - of dollars a year.

That's real money that these borrowers could put toward paying down the balance on their debt, saving for a home, buying a car, starting a small business - money they can put toward building a solid future.

We should have done this a year ago, but Republicans said no. They refused to even debate the bill. They said there were other, better ways to tackle

"The Republicans can't just close their eyes and pretend this isn't happening. By refusing to act, they are sinking the hopes of an entire generation."

student debt - but then the Republicans did nothing - nothing except filibuster the only student loans bill on the table.

I don't kid myself: Refinancing loans won't fix everything that's wrong in our higher education system. We need to cut the price of college, to reinvest in public universities, to shore up federal financial aid, to crack down on for-profit colleges, and to provide better protections on student loans.

But let's start with the \$1.3 trillion in outstanding student loan debt.

Let's start by cutting back on the interest payments that

are sinking young people and holding back this economy. Tell the GOP: Let's start with Bank on Students.

The Republicans can't just close their eyes and pretend this isn't happening. By refusing to act, they are sinking the hopes of an entire generation.

It's time for Congress to step up and fix this problem, before it drags down another million Americans, and another, and another. It's time to refinance student loan debt.

Source: Reader Supported News 3/22/15  
<http://www.readersupportednews.org>





# Cruel and inhuman: UN slams US as only nation that sentences children to die in prison

SARAH LAZARE

A United Nations human rights expert strongly condemned the U.S. on Tuesday for being the "only State in the world that still sentences children to life imprisonment without the opportunity for parole," thereby imposing cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment. Juan Méndez, the Special Rapporteur on torture, made the comments in a report to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva—building from his previous censure of cruel incarceration practices in a nation that locks up more people

than any other country in the world. Méndez noted that the U.S. practice of imposing life sentences on children in cases of homicide violates international law on numerous fronts, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. "Life sentences or sentences of an extreme length have a disproportionate impact on children and cause physical and psychological harm that amounts to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment," he wrote. Such prison sentences are widespread. Approximately 2,500 people in the U.S. are currently serving life sentences without

parole for crimes allegedly committed as juveniles, the Sentencing Project finds.

These sentences reflect—and reinforce—racial disparities in U.S. society. "White juvenile offenders with African-American victims are only about half as likely (3.6%) to receive a [juvenile life without parole] sentence as their proportion of arrests for killing an African-American (6.4%)," the Sentencing Project notes. However, the injustices do not stop there. Méndez blasted another policy that is rampant in U.S. jails and prisons: holding people under the age of

18 in solitary confinement. "In accordance with views of the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and the Committee on the Rights of the Child," wrote Méndez, "the Special Rapporteur is of the view that the imposition of solitary confinement, of any duration, on children constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment or even torture."

Méndez's statements follow his previous call for a ban of all long-term solitary confinement—of any person, at any age—which he has described as torture. Méndez has repeatedly

expressed concern about the rampant imposition of long-term solitary confinement in U.S. prisons, particularly in California, which has seen repeated prisoner hunger strikes over this and other abusive practices. Mohamed Shehk, communications director for Critical Resistance, told *Common Dreams* that the Special Rapporteur's latest report highlights "just one aspect of a system that continues to lock up people and destroy communities."

"Of course life without parole for children should be abolished," said Shehk. "Life without parole for anyone

should be abolished. This is a system that throws people away in prisons and jails and completely ignores any kind of global call to end that practice, even though it completely contradicts international law—which the U.S. claims to hold so dearly."

Source: *Common Dreams* 3/10/15  
<http://www.commondreams.org>

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## US criticizes Venezuela's rights record despite backing repressive regimes

Barack Obama has upped the ante in his aggressions against Venezuela. The U.S. president claimed early March that the democratically-elected Venezuelan government poses a "threat to national security," due to a full compliment of alleged human-rights abuses. Before announcing imposing financial sanctions on top Venezuelan officials, Obama claimed "... the Government of Venezuela's erosion of human rights guarantees, persecution of political opponents, curtailment of press freedoms, use of violence and human rights violations and abuses in response to anti-government protests, and arbitrary arrest and detention of anti-government protesters, as well as the exacerbating presence of significant public corruption, constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

Yet this preoccupation with human rights becomes perplexing when one considers that many of the chief recipients of U.S. aid (a combination of military and economic assistance) support or employ highly-questionable practices to prop up their regimes.

Israel and Egypt, who receive some of the highest military financing from the US, have both been in the spotlight for a whole host of human-rights abuses in the past months, while Saudi Arabia, which Obama sycophantly labelled as the U.S.'s "greatest ally," has a long history of violent state repression. Colombia, the tenth overall highest recipient, and the highest in Latin America, has jails crammed with political prisoners.

### U.S. ARMS THE ISRAELI WAR MACHINE

Aside from Afghanistan, which the U.S. has poured staggering amounts of money and blood into over the last decade to fund a messy war, Israel tops the chart as most deserving of U.S. aid, receiving \$3.1 billion, according to the most recently-available figures. Israel is also the highest net receiver of U.S. aid since World War II.

The 50-day conflict between Israel and Gaza last year once more brought Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's human rights abuses hurtling to public attention. 2,200 Palestinians were killed in the war, almost a quarter of whom were children. A further 100,000 lost their homes. The Israeli military reported 73 casualties.

A recent report by Physicians for Human Rights revealed that Israel's army used "heavy explosives ... in residential neighborhoods, resulting in multiple civilian casualties."

Another reported tactic was targeting the same area twice in short succession, so those giving aid to the people hit in the first round were killed themselves in the second. This assault, merely the latest in a growing chorus of allegations of Israeli war crimes on Palestinian territories, is being examined by the International Criminal Court. But U.S. funding is set to continue.

### EGYPT'S JAILING OF JOURNALISM

Also in the top four U.S. aid recipients is Egypt. In his denouncement of Venezuela, Obama cited "curtailment of press freedoms" as a basis to declare a national emergency. But in Egypt, where the government is gifted \$1.4 billion by the U.S., at least six journalists have been killed since al-Sisi took power in July 2013 while reporting anti-government protests. At least 12 reporters are in Egyptian prisons on jumped-up criminal charges, unlike in Venezuela, where none are.

"Referring journalists to military tribunals and condemning them to heavy sentences sets a dangerous precedent and will eventually prevent journalists from reporting independently in sensitive areas involving the military," the rights group International Federation for Human Rights said in a report published on Egypt.

Furthermore, more than 15 people were killed in Egypt in January in anti-government protests marking the 4th anniversary of the popular uprising that toppled former dictator Hosni Mubarak in 2011 alone, adding to the list of police brutality there.

### "COURAGEOUS" SAUDI ARABIA BEHEADED DOZENS IN 2014

Saudi Arabia is also no stranger to targeting the press. The regime sentenced liberal blogger Raif Badawi to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in prison for insulting Islam in his blog. While the oil rich Arab nation does not feature highly on the U.S. list of donors, Obama made clear his support and admiration for the regime with a message of condolence when the medieval King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz passed away. He hailed the monarch's "vision" and "courage" and and saluted the departed despot's commitment to the sacred "partnership" between the U.S. and the Saudi kingdom.

The "courageous" king oversaw a country brutally repressed by laws against crimes including adultery,

homosexuality and political opposition to the regime. Each carry capital punishment, such as public stoning. The Kingdom beheaded 83 people in 2014, with four killed in the first week of that King Salman assumed power following the death of King Abdullah.

### COLOMBIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

One of the triggers of the U.S. declaration appears to have been the imprisonment of some right-wing politicians in Venezuela, charged with seeking to incite violence and their involvement in coup plots.

The contrast with Colombia is stark. Colombia gets \$644 million from the U.S. kitty. Colombia also has hundreds of political prisoners in "overcrowded jails," says Justice For Colombia. Trade unionists, student activists, community and indigenous leaders, human rights defenders and academics "all imprisoned for their opposition to the Colombian regime."

And while the current government is making steps towards ending more than 50 years of violent conflict in Colombia, state atrocities remain well within living memory. Those include the 2008 "false positives" case, when soldiers, paid \$500 for each guerilla they killed, murdered 22 innocent men from the town of Soacha, and dressed them up in rebel uniform before claiming their prize.

Likewise, despite the ongoing crisis around the 43 forcibly disappeared Mexican students, Obama met with Mexican President Pena Nieto in January at the White House, where not a word of condemnation was made about the tens of thousands of disappeared afflicting the US ally. In fact, Mexico continues to receive hundreds of millions in US aid.

In spite of all these blatant and well-publicized human rights abuses, these countries continue to receive large sums and support from the U.S. Venezuela, on the other hand, which in 2012 was elected the United Nations Human Rights Council for the first time with 154 votes, is deemed a threat.

The hypocrisy of the U.S. in funding actions abroad, while having the highest prison population in the world at 2,228,424, and whose police force is continually criticized for murdering innocent black and Latino people, appears to know no bounds.

Source: *teleSUR* 3/10/15 <http://www.telesurto.net>



# Congressional Progressive Caucus offers a real alternative on trade



"It [The TPP] has been negotiated by and for and with the global corporate and bank lobbies, not by and for the American people."

ROBERT BOROSAGE

Fast track is designed to grease the skids for passage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement that is still being negotiated behind closed doors. Postponing the debate on fast track gives opponents another month to build opposition. It gives Republican leaders and the administration a month to line up every vote so that once introduced, it could be voted on overnight. They're hoping to fast-track fast track.

The month does provide time for a long overdue serious national debate on our global trade and tax policy. The U.S. has racked up an unimaginable \$6.75 trillion in trade deficits since 2000. Good jobs have been shipped abroad, tens of thousands of manufacturing companies have packed up and moved, and those that stay use the threat of leaving to undermine wages here at home. The trade deficit – over \$500 billion in 2014 – contributes directly to the sluggish recovery that most workers have yet to benefit from. It is estimated that if we simply balanced our trade, it would generate 4.2 million jobs directly and another 2.1 million from the consumer demand those new workers would generate. Our trade deficit with China – over \$320 billion in 2014 – is the largest imbalance in the annals of history. And now the trade deficit in high technology products with the Chinese is growing to new records as well. Our trade policies are literally trading away our future.

Yet to date, the debate over TPP and fast track has produced more heat than light. The president and his allies keep puffing the treaty's potential to increase exports without mentioning what it will do for imports. They keep arguing the treaty will have the strongest labor rights provisions ever, while ignoring the fact that Vietnam, designated as the major low-wage producer in the deal, doesn't even allow independent trade unions. They portray past treaties as successful, while claiming this one is different. Opponents tend to rail against various aspects of the still secret deal that has far more to do with rigging the rules for foreign investors than lowering tariffs. But objectors are often scorned as protectionists, Luddites who simply want to shut America off from the rest of the world.

This week, the Congressional Progressive Caucus broke

through this mire, releasing its "Principles for Trade: A Model for Global Progress." The principles lay out elements of an alternative trade strategy, one built to benefit workers, not investors, and to serve the public interest, not the special interests of global companies and banks. The CPC seeks more trade, but on terms that will strengthen working families, not sabotage them.

The CPC's first principle is that the U.S. should commit to balanced trade. The CPC would have the U.S. announce the goal of restoring balanced trade, and create the policies needed to achieve this.

The CPC principles then elaborate, upending the thrust of current trade negotiations. Instead of the focus being on protecting foreign investors and cutting elaborate deals for various corporate interests, the CPC argues that trade accords should "put workers first," contain labor protection provisions that can be enforced, by the Congress itself if necessary. All trade accords should require that signatories adopt the domestic labor rights as provided by core International Labor Organization conventions. This would require the U.S. to strengthen its labor laws as well.

Any agreement should prohibit currency manipulation, the central tactic of China and other mercantilist nations to capture markets.

Any agreement should provide a floor under environmental protections, while enabling countries to raise their standards above the floor. This is a stark contrast to current provisions that enable multinationals to collect damages if tighter environmental standards impacts their potential future profits.

Any agreement should enable countries to pass consumer protection measures without challenge. Trade accords would be prohibited from superseding domestic food and safety standards, financial regulations, and other consumer policies.

Any agreement should enable strong Buy America provisions in government contracting, and their equivalent for other countries. Surely taxpayers should have the right to use their taxes to give preference to domestic producers, not to foreign manufacturers.

Any agreement should secure affordable access to essential medicines and health services. The backroom deals

driven by Big Pharma to protect and extend their patents make medicines too costly for many. No trade accord should delay access to affordable generic drugs.

Any U.S. trade accord should uphold the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Trade accords should be an instrument that promotes basic human rights, not undermine them.

Most important, the CPC would terminate the creation of a private court system for foreign investors. The current Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions give a foreign investor the right to sue a government in a specially created private court system. A small throng of high-priced lawyers serves as both advocate and arbiter. There is no appeal. Companies have sued for damages from countries strengthening their environmental laws, curbing cigarette packaging, deciding to shut down dangerous nuclear plants. This appalling subsidy to foreign investors – domestic corporations have no such protections – exemplifies the effects of backroom deals that serve corporate interests, against the public interest.

The CPC would also strengthen trade adjustment assistance, so that workers displaced from their jobs and communities devastated by plant closings would gain the assistance they need to get back on their feet.

All of these principles are basic common sense. All are elements of a trade policy that represents the interests of the American people, as opposed to the interests of global corporations and investors. If accepted they would provide a framework for expanded trade in which workers both here and abroad would benefit. If refused, we could continue to trade with various countries, but without locking ourselves into trade deals that steal our jobs, undermine our wages and trample our courts.

Yet the TPP agreement now in negotiation clearly violates each of these principles. It has been negotiated by and for and with the global corporate and bank lobbies, not by and for the American people.

So the CPC insists that trade authority – the so-called fast track bill – protect the Congress' ability to set the standards for negotiation. Their principle would replace fast track with an authority that would give Congress the power to determine WHO the U.S. will negotiate with, and create mandatory objectives on WHAT must be included or not included in any agreement. The trade authority would require a prior congressional vote on whether those conditions have been met BEFORE the president could sign the treaty. It would also require that legislators have access to the ongoing negotiations including various draft texts.

In contrast, the authority that Hatch wants to fast track through Congress has none of these protections. The TPP has been under negotiation for six years. Congress had no say in who is at the table or what is included. If it set conditions now, they would be ignored. The Congress has no right to vote before the president signs.

Instead, under fast track, legislators would have 20 hours to debate a many thousand-page bill, packed with special interest deals. They would have no right to amend. The president will have already signed. Congress would only have an up-or-down vote on whether to approve a treaty that they know little about or embarrass a president by defeating it.

How can a nation rack up nearly \$7 trillion in trade deficits? Give our global policies over to the multinational banks and corporations, let them cut the trade deals in secret, and slip them through Congress on a fast track. The CPC shows there is an alternative. Now the question is simply which side your legislator is on.

ROBERT L. BOROSAGE IS THE FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE AND CO-DIRECTOR OF ITS SISTER ORGANIZATION, THE CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE.

Source: Campaign for America's Future Blog 3615 <http://ourfuture.org>>





# Do corporations really need more rights? Why fast-track for the TPP is a bad idea



DAVID KORTEN

President Obama is currently pressing members of Congress to pass Fast Track authority for a trade and investment agreement called the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). If Fast Track passes, it means that Congress must approve or deny the TPP with minimal debate and no amendments. Astonishingly, our lawmakers have not seen the agreement they are being asked to expedite.

The TPP is presented as an agreement to increase U.S. exports and jobs. But what is really at stake is democracy—in the United States as well as in the 11 other Pacific Rim countries that are parties to the TPP.

Given past agreements on which the TPP is modeled, including the North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA), TPP provisions will likely have significant implications for nearly every aspect of American life—including intellectual property rights, labor and environmental protections, consumer safety and product labeling, government procurement, and national resource management. Given the way these agreements are crafted, we can be quite certain that the implications will favor corporate profits over human well-being. And once the agreement is approved, its provisions will trump national and local laws, including the U.S. Constitution, and will not be subject to review or revision by any national legislative or judicial body—including the U.S. Supreme Court.

It is expected that the TPP will include an Investor State Dispute Settlement provision that gives foreign corporations the right to sue governments for lost profits due to laws—such as environmental standards and safeguards for workers—they claim deprive them of revenue they might otherwise have received. Such claims are settled in tribunals comprised of trade lawyers whose identities are secret. The rulings of these tribunals pre-empt national laws and the decisions of national courts and are not subject to review by any national judicial or legislative body.

Also in the mold of NAFTA and similar previous pacts, the TPP is being drafted in secret. The main players at the negotiating table are trade officials from the party countries and representatives from the world's largest global corporations.

Since negotiations began in 2005, the public, press, and

members of Congress and their staff have been denied access to the TPP meetings and to drafts of the agreement. In stark contrast, according to a 2014 report by *The Washington Post*, 566 advisory group members can view and comment on proposals. Of these members, 480 represent industry groups or trade associations and dominate the most important committees.

The secret gatherings of unelected government officials and corporate representatives in which agreements like the TPP are negotiated have become de facto transnational legislative bodies, drafting international laws the democratically elected legislative bodies of signatory countries then rubber stamp.

Because such sweeping provisions supersede the U.S. Constitution, one might expect that their approval by the U.S. Congress would require the same high bar as a constitutional amendment. At a bare minimum, approval should be subject to the same review, debate, and approval process considered essential for any normal piece of legislation. Yet our elected representatives have time after time voted to approve such agreements under expedited rules that trade away the rights of people in favor of the rights of global corporations.

President Obama recently appeared on Seattle's KOMO TV news making the claim that the TPP will expand U.S. exports, thus creating jobs and opportunities for small businesses. President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, and President George W. Bush all made the same promises on

similar previous agreements.

But expanded trade not only means more exports; it also means more imports. Previous similar agreements have produced greater growth in U.S. imports than growth in U.S. exports. The result is a net loss of jobs, especially industrial jobs with good pay and benefits, and the closure of many small businesses. President Obama's assurance that this time will be different carries little credibility, based on this historical experience.

These agreements are written by global corporations such as Wal-Mart, Monsanto, Goldman Sachs, Citibank, ExxonMobil, British Petroleum, HSBC, and JPMorgan. These companies are not in the business of creating jobs and benefiting small businesses. They are in the business of maximizing their own profits. In regard to small businesses, the agenda is to capture their markets, buy them out, or squeeze them to the bone as captive suppliers and contractors.

Because these trade and investment agreements are not in the public interest, their corporate and governmental sponsors go to great lengths to keep the negotiations secret. If the TPP provisions were truly beneficial, there presumably would be no need to press the members of Congress to expedite approval under Fast Track rules before the public and members of Congress have seen the text.

Members of Congress will surely receive copies of the TPP documents before their final vote on the actual agreement. But these agreements are typically more than a thousand pages of detailed legalese meaningful only to experienced trade lawyers. If past experience is any guide, our lawmakers will have little time to read the agreement, let alone do a meaningful assessment of its implications or discuss it with constituents before it is called to a vote.

The time has come to end the use of international agreements to strengthen corporate rule. In the case of the TPP, passing no agreement is better than passing one that undermines democracy, economic justice, the environment, human health, and small business. We have no need of stronger protections for corporate rights. Rejecting Fast Track will create the opportunity for a long-overdue public conversation on a new framework for international trade and investment agreements that strengthen democracy, hold global corporations accountable to the public interest, secure worker rights, raise working conditions, and strengthen environmental protections in every signatory country.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus has just released a report called "Principles for Trade: A Model for Global Progress." The principles it outlines provide an excellent starting point for such a conversation (see page 16). As the vote on Fast Track approaches, this is a good time for citizens to call for a national and global public conversation about economic policies that put the interests of living people, living communities, and living Earth ahead of corporate profits. It is also the right time for each of us to let our members of Congress know where we stand on Fast Track and the TPP and that we are paying close attention to how they vote. We can have democracy and a prosperous, just, and sustainable human future. Or we can have corporate rule. We cannot have both.

DR. DAVID KORTEN (LIVINGECONOMIESFORUM.ORG) IS THE AUTHOR OF *AGENDA FOR A NEW ECONOMY*, *THE GREAT TURNING: FROM EMPIRE TO EARTH COMMUNITY*, AND THE INTERNATIONAL BEST SELLER *WHEN CORPORATIONS RULE THE WORLD*.

HE IS BOARD CHAIR OF YES! MAGAZINE, CO-CHAIR OF THE NEW ECONOMY WORKING GROUP, A FOUNDING BOARD MEMBER OF THE BUSINESS ALLIANCE FOR LOCAL LIVING ECONOMIES, PRESIDENT OF THE LIVING ECONOMIES FORUM, AND A MEMBER OF THE CLUB OF ROME. HE HOLDS MBA AND PHD DEGREES FROM THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND SERVED ON THE FACULTY OF THE HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL.

Source: YES! Magazine 3/10/15 <http://www.yesmagazine.org/>

"The time has come to end the use of international agreements to strengthen corporate rule. In the case of the TPP, passing no agreement is better than passing one that undermines democracy, economic justice, the environment, human health, and small business."



**Saturday, May 9 | 6:30am - 3 pm**

## Best Ride Ever Bicycle Ride

San Joaquin Bike Coalition and Lange Twins Winery host the new & improved 4th annual Best Ride Ever Ride, spanning from 6:30am - 3 pm May 9, starting from Lange Twins Winery, 1525 E. Jahant Road, Acampo. This year your registration fees include an event t-shirt and we have added a fourth route.

Our route options are a 25km, 50km, 100km, or 100 mile ride through the beautiful Lodi wine region and Sierra Foothills. Each route will be fully supported with aid stations that will contain everything you need to complete your ride in comfort, including PB&J sandwiches, orange slices, energy bars and GUs, as well as plenty of water. We will also have SAG vehicles patrolling each route to help in case you have any mechanical issues. The ride will end with free wine tasting from the award winning Lange Twins Winery, a delicious lunch, live music, and a raffle with a plethora of prizes.

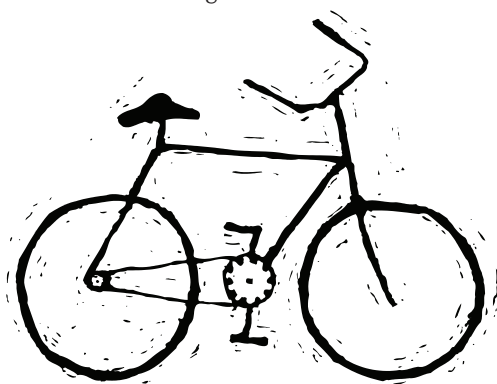
The 25km route is a nice mild ride with no elevation gain, and will lead you through the wineries of Acampo and Woodbridge

while everything is in bloom. This route can easily accommodate cruisers and new to the sport cyclists.

The 50km route continues East through rolling hills covered in lush grape vines through the charming small towns of Clements and Lockeford. This route includes a small amount (approximately 300 ft) of elevation gain.

The 100km route not only takes you through the Lodi wine country, but serves up over 2,000ft of climbing and tours both Lake Comanche and Lake Pardee. Our newest ride is for our hardcore century riders. This ride will follow the same route as the 100km route up to Lake Pardee, but then turns East and takes in the challenging Stoney Creek Rd climb up into Jackson before turning around and heading back to lack Comanche. This route serves up an impressive 4,500ft of climbing. Not for the faint of heart. Registration is just \$35, we hope to see you there.

For more information, please contact Daniel Wallmark, dtwallmark@gmail.com; or phone, 209.327.3985



**Sunday, April 12**

## NY Chamber Soloists A wind quintet that performs like the wind

The New York Chamber Soloists have maintained a unique niche in the chamber music world for over five decades. With more than 250 works in their repertoire, the Chamber Soloists have made a valuable contribution to the musical life of this country and have helped to expand the audience for chamber music. These are world class musicians with years of experience performing together.

The Wind Quintet and Piano will be in Stockton, April 12 at the Faye Spanos Auditorium. This is a unique concert experience from chamber music artists whose programming innovations

have included Bach's complete Brandenburg Concerti in a single concert, "Paris in the '20s," an American Classics program, the complete Mozart horn concerti and song cycles, cantatas and operas from Monteverdi to Aitken. They have added substantially to the catalog of 20th-century chamber works, with more than 25 compositions written for them by such significant composers as Gunther Schuller, Mario Davidovsky, Ezra Laderman, and Mel Powell. The group has also commissioned works for children, including Ferdinand the Bull from noted American composer Hugh

Aitken and compositions based on Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Gerald Fried and Tania French.

The ensemble has compiled an impressive record of repeat engagements in North America and abroad, including eleven European tours, six Latin American tours, and numerous tours of Asia and the South Pacific. In the United States, the Chamber Soloists have appeared frequently in New York City at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Lincoln Center, in Washington at the Library of Congress, the National Academy of Sciences, the Kennedy Center and the National Gallery of Art,

at major universities across the country from Boston to Berkeley and at the Mostly Mozart, Sun Valley, and Caramoor Festivals. Recent performances include those at the Casals Festival, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Mondavi Center at UC-Davis, Royce Hall at UCLA, the Phillips Center at the University of Florida, and the University of Arizona.

Tickets for this fabulous concert are \$25 and are available in the lobby of Faye Spanos Concert Hall at UOP starting at 2:00 pm, 30 minutes before the concert on April 12, 2015 or on our website at [www.chambermusicfriends.org](http://www.chambermusicfriends.org).

Students of any age are admitted free with ID.

The audience is invited to meet the musicians at a reception following the concert.

Friends of Chamber Music concerts are presented in cooperation with Pacific and its Conservatory of Music and the Season Sponsor, The Webster Foundation. For a brochure or more information about the FOCM annual series, please call 209-956-2858 or visit [www.chambermusicfriends.org](http://www.chambermusicfriends.org).

# Earth Day Celebration

BOOTHs, Food, and FUN

## Live Music

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## Utica Park, ANGELS Camp

## SUNday, April 26, 11-6

More info. 293-4379 [fringe54@volcano.net](mailto:fringe54@volcano.net) or 795-6536





# APR/MAY CALENDAR

Editor's note: if your event isn't listed, let us know. Send all copy to: [bgiudici@caltel.com](mailto:bgiudici@caltel.com) by the 10th of every month.

## SUN, MAR 29

Red Rhino Orphanage Project Walk-a-Thon, 1 pm. St. Mary's High School track, 5648 N EL Dorado St., Stockton. Walk in support of Kenyan orphans at our 9th annual Walk-a-thon. If you'd rather not walk there's still a lot to enjoy including good food and music, a lively soccer match, and a high-spirited water balloon fight. Free. (209) 269-8000.

## MON, MAR 30

Women's a Cappella Vocal Workshop, 7pm, Unitarian Church, 2737 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Unleash your inner diva. Women of all ages and vocal ranges are welcome to attend a FREE vocal coaching workshop in a cappella 4-part harmony. Learn the basics, and sing a song or two together. Free. 209-466-2623 or [deltaharmonyxpress@gmail.com](mailto:deltaharmonyxpress@gmail.com)

Brian Kendrick Big Band at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

## MAR 16-APR 10

Joy Spring exhibit featuring painter Kara Maria, 9 am - 4:30 pm. M-F. Kara Maria's work combines abstraction and representation to address subjects including the impact of human culture on the natural world, and the effect of technology on our psyches.

## THURS, APR 2

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm. All welcome. 467-4455  
Simon Rowe Latin Project with Joe Mazzaferro at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

## SAT, APR 4

Figures in Paint & Pencil Workshop, 2-4 pm, Jagged Lines of Imagination Academy, 2232 N. El Dorado, Stockton Come to watch, draw, paint, and create one Saturday a month at JLI's Figures in Paint & Pencil workshop series, brought to you by the Art Club. Come and expect to get paint on yourself. Free. 209-382-7848

## MON, APR 6

Women's a Cappella Vocal Workshop, 7pm, Unitarian Church, 2737 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Unleash your inner diva. Women of all ages and vocal ranges are welcome to attend a FREE vocal coaching workshop in a cappella 4-part

harmony. Learn the basics, and sing a song or two together. 209-466-2623 or [deltaharmonyxpress@gmail.com](mailto:deltaharmonyxpress@gmail.com)  
Jam Sessions at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID  
Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm. Family Resource & Referral Center, 509 W. Weber Ave., Stockton.

## THURS, APR 9

Langham/Fryer Pyramid Quartet at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

## FRI, APR 10

Nearly New Sale, 10 am - 4 pm, Danner Hall, Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton  
Get some great deals for a steal. Apparel for women, men and children - in all sizes  
Shoes - in many different sizes  
Handbags Scarves Accessories Home Decor / Holiday decor Candles Frames Lamps Bedding & Bath Skin care/ Fragrances and more....raising funds for the Delta College's Fashion Program. Free admission. 209-712-9719.

## APR 10-12

### APR 16 -18

Condemned, 8 pm, Long Theatre, 1041 Dave Brubeck Way, Stockton. Live theatre, an original student film, and documentary photography come together in the trans-media storytelling event of the year. University of the Pacific's Department of Theatre Arts immerses itself in the "across media" phenomenon that is emerging across the nation as an innovative form of storytelling. By combining three well-known platforms of narrative - theatre, film, and photography - Condemned emerges in a three-dimensional portrait about the struggles of homelessness. General \$12, Senior/ UOP faculty and students \$10. 209-946-2116.

## SAT, APR 11

Zoo After Dark, 6:30-8:30 pm, Micke Grove Zoo, 11793 N. Micke Grove Rd. Lodi. Brings together the best parts of a camping trip: creative activities, exciting wildlife, sounds of the night under a starry sky, and hot cocoa and marshmallow toasted S'mores all topped off with fireside storytelling. For date night or the perfect family outing, it does not get any better than this fun-filled after hours program. Open to children ages 5 and up. Registration is required-

-register online today. Parking is included in registration. Registration may be completed online through midnight the Thursday before each program date. Limited space is available. \$12 non-member, \$10 zoo member. (209) 331-2138.  
Stockton Symphony Classics V concert: Ravel, Orff - Stockton Symphony Classics V concert with guest artists: Jessica Siena, soprano; Daniel Ebbers, tenor; Ralph Cato, baritone as well as the combined choruses from the Stockton Chorale and Youth Chorale, University of the Pacific, and San Joaquin Delta College. 6 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$25-63

## MON, APR 13

Langham/Fryer Pyramid Quartet at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

## TUES, APR 14

UOP Concert Band, 7:30 pm. Performances include music from light classics to show tunes. Faye Spanos Concert Hall 3511 Pacific Ave, Stockton \$8 general, \$5 UOP faculty & staff, FT students free with ID.

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

## THURS, APR 16

Live Music at the Haggin with The West Winds Quartet - Pat Lindenburg-flute; Becky Secor Edgerton-oboe; Paul Edgerton-clarinet; and Marie Miebrecht-bassoon.. 7 pm. Haggin Museum, Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton, CA. \$8 adult, \$7 senior over 64, \$5 youth 10-17. Under 10 free with adult. (209) 940-6300

## FRI, APR 17

Spring Dance Concert: "World Wind" - The Dance Department and the Yameci Dance Company invite you to attend Delta's 2015 Spring Dance Concert, "World Wind", directed by the Elly and Willie award-winning Valerie Gnassounou-Bynoe. This dance program is an exciting suite that tackles specific issues that have led to a change in our community at large or in the world. Whether the change is social, political, psychological, or other, we use the medium of dance to tell the story. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, Stockton. \$12 general, \$10 students

## SAT, APR 18

Symphonic Wind Ensemble

Concert, 6:00 pm. Performances include music from light classics to show tunes. Faye Spanos Concert Hall 3511 Pacific Ave, Stockton \$8 general, \$5 UOP faculty & staff, FT students free with ID.

## MON, APR 20

Brubeck Intitute Jazz Quartet at Take 5 Jazz at the Brew. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID

## SAT, APR 25

Na Hoku Mai Kanoelani's 12th Annual Ho'ike". 6 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5100 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adult \$15.

University Symphony Orchestra Concert, 7:30 pm. Performances include music from light classics to show tunes. Faye Spanos Concert Hall 3511 Pacific Ave, Stockton \$8 general, \$5 UOP faculty & staff, FT students free with ID.

## SUN, APR 26

Earth Day Festival San Joaquin County, 10 am - 4 pm, Victory Park, 1001 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. The theme, "Bee Aware..." will be the focus of the event. The Festival will have an array of informative, interactive booths, demos, displays and exhibits. Local area schools will be teaching how to better take care of our Earth with a variety of hands-on activities, and environmental organizations will provide education about the important issues and how we can make a difference. Over 100 vendors will border the oak trees and cross the grass field at Victory Park, including purveyors of some great food. Come join us for yoga in the park, local music and entertainment, delicious, healthy food and fun learning activities and exhibits like Passport Earth. It's a fun day for kids and families, and admission is free. 209-483-5199.

Central Valley Youth Symphony, 3:00 pm. Performances include music from light classics to show tunes. Faye Spanos Concert Hall 3511 Pacific Ave, Stockton

## TUES, APR 28

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

## FRI - SUN

### APR 29 - MAY 17

The 39 Steps. Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 7:30 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton. Mix a Hitchcock masterpiece with a juicy spy novel, add a dash of Monty Python and you have The 39 Steps, a fast-paced whodunit for anyone who loves the magic of theatre! This Tony Award-winning treat is packed

with nonstop laughs, over 150 zany characters (played by only 4), and on-stage plane crash, handcuffs, missing fingers, and some good old-fashioned romance! \$15 - \$25. 473-2424. [www.sctlivetheatre.com](http://www.sctlivetheatre.com)

## SAT, MAY 2

In the Doghouse fundraiser for animals. 11am - 3 pm. Whirlows Tossed & Grilled, 1926 Pacific Ave, Stockton Supporting local animal rescue groups (Animal Protection League, ACT Spay & Neuter Clinic, Pets & Pals) doghouses made, bought and donated by local businesses and people will be won by purchasing \$1 each raffle tickets. Over 50 other raffle prizes will be available. Approx. 40 booths for both pet and people products there for your shopping pleasure. Picasso the skateboarding dog will be on paw to perform. Pets available for adoption that day as well. 209-474-1118.

Figures in Paint & Pencil Workshop, 2-4 pm, see April 4.

## SUN, MAY 3

84th Annual Strawberry Breakfast, benefitting the UOP Center for Community Involvement, 8:30am to 12:30pm, Regents Dining Room and Lawn on Campus. Join us for warm scones, eggs & fresh, homemade strawberry jam! Bring your friends and family as we raise funds to make tutoring available to learners in our community. Tickets are \$14.00 for adults and \$12.00 for students and children. 209.946.2444.

## MON, MAY 4

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm. Family Resource & Referral Center, 509 W. Weber Ave., Stockton.

## WED, MAY 6

Delta Band Talent Showcase. 7 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5100 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adult \$8, student/ senior \$5.

## THUR, MAY 7

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm. All welcome. 467-4455

## THUR-SUN

### MAY 8-17

Kiss Me, Kate, Fri-Sat 8 pm, Sun 2 pm. What do you get when you combine Shakespeare's classic battle of the sexes with the iconic music of Cole Porter? A hilarious, melodious, and sophisticated romp th at you won't forget. Tillie Lewis Theater, SJDC, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. . \$15/\$13.

## SAT, MAY 9

Best Ride Ever Bicycle Ride, 6:30am - 3 pm. Lange Twins Winery, 1525 E. Jahant Road San Joaquin Bike Coalition and

Lange Twins Winery to host the new & improved 4th annual Best Ride Ever Ride. Registration is just \$35, we hope to see you there! For more information, please contact Daniel Wallmark, [dtwallmark@gmail.com](mailto:dtwallmark@gmail.com); or phone, 209.327.3985 (see p 18)

## SUN, MAY 10

Mother's Day at Micke Grove Zoo, 10 am - 3 pm. 11793 N. Micke Grove Rd, Lodi. There are few better ways to celebrate mom's special day than with a trip to Micke Grove Zoo on Mother's Day. We'll be celebrating the moms of all species with games, crafts, and fun educational activities. Guests will get to learn interesting facts about all of our animal moms and compare their own parenting stories! Included with zoo admission (\$5 for guests 14+, \$3 for guests 3-13, free for children ages 2 and under; parking excluded). (209) 331-2138.

## TUES, MAY 12

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

## WED, MAY 13

Choral Finale Concert: Made In America 7:30 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, Stockton. \$8 adult; \$5 student/ senior over 61, children 12 & under free with admission ticket. 209-954-5209

## SAT, MAY 16

Children and Youth Day at Pixie Woods, 10 am - 3:30 pm. in Louis Park, 3121 Monte Diablo Avenue, Stockton. Enjoy free admission to the 26th annual Children and Youth Day at Pixie Woods along with a day of activities, games and entertainment for children and families. Community resource agencies and local businesses will spotlight their services. This years theme is Western Fun so plan to join us and rope in some family-friendly fun! Sponsored by Family Resource and Referral Center and the City of Stockton, Community Services Department. 209-461-2602.

Zoo After Dark, 7:30-9:30 pm, Micke Grove Zoo, 11793 N. Micke Grove Rd. Lodi. See April 11

## THURS, MAY 21

Live Music at the Haggin with the Washboard Monkeys. American Roots Music at its finest! Upbeat and danceable rockabilly, swing, blues and jigs, all played with an acoustic bluegrass flair. Enjoy original music and songs you know, though you've never heard them played quite like this. 7 pm. Haggin Museum, Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave,

## AB 700, the 2015 California DISCLOSE Act introduced

The Supreme Court's Citizens United decision unleashed unlimited, anonymous corporate spending on campaigns. Over \$640 million was spent on California ballot measures in 2012 and 2014, almost all by donors hiding behind misleading names like "Stop Special Interest Money Now" or "Californians Against Higher Health Care Costs".

A new effort to give voters the information they need by requiring significantly greater transparency in political ads was launched with the introduction of the 2015 California DISCLOSE Act by Assemblymembers Jimmy Gomez and Marc Levine. The 2014 version was endorsed by more than 400 organizations and leaders, and 80,000 Californians who signed petitions urging the legislature to pass it. "The goal of this legislation is to press for greater transparency at who's trying to hide behind these magnificently titled political committees, expose their true identities and motivations," said Assemblymember Jimmy Gomez (D-Northeast Los Angeles). "Voters deserve to know."

AB 700 requires the top three funders of ballot measure ads to be shown clearly and unambiguously on the ads themselves. Most importantly, it requires that the funders disclosed on ads be the original sources of the contributions to the committee that paid for the ad, even if funders try to hide behind multiple layers of committees or organizations.

AB 700 builds on the progress achieved by the 2014 version of the California DISCLOSE Act, SB 52 (Leno-Hill), which passed the Senate on an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 28-11, and then passed all its Assembly committees. The authors and sponsor agreed not to call for a final Assembly vote in order to have more time to address stakeholders' concerns. AB 700 will address their concerns while being just as strong as SB 52. "It is important that the voters know the real source of political spending," said Assemblymember Marc Levine (D-San Rafael). "PACs and independent expenditures result in voters getting bombarded with mail, commercials, and advertisements. AB 700 will help inform voters on who is truly trying to influence their vote."

The need for serious reform of disclosure on political ads is skyrocketing. Over \$640 million was spent on ballot measures alone in the last two election cycles in California according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

### Friends for Peace

## The new kids on the block

Hi! We are Friends for Peace and we would like to introduce ourselves. We started as a group of friends planning an International Day of Peace celebration in Stockton. We talked to the Peace and Justice Network board about our plans and they invited us to join them. So we are now members of the Peace and Justice Network and happy to be here.

More specifically, the core group of Friends for Peace is Barbara Heiser, Joy Hope, Israel Hurtado and Judy Wollam. Many others helped create International Day of Peace in Stockton, and we hope that more will join us as time goes on.

The first annual Celebrate International Day of Peace in Stockton was held Sept. 21, 2014. Almost 150 people came together in meditation around noon at a dozen locations. That was followed by a Community Rhythm Circle and a Peace Potluck at New School Aikido. It was great to see that many people coming together as a peace-minded community.

We realized this summer, as our plans

took shape, that a once a year event was not enough; we need other activities to keep the energy flowing. Our mission came out of that realization? Make Every Day Peace Day.

We have a number of projects started to achieve our mission, they are listed below. If you would like to participate in any of these activities, please send a note to [www.friends4peace.stockton@gmail.com](mailto:www.friends4peace.stockton@gmail.com). We'd love to have you aboard.

#### FRIENDS FOR PEACE PROJECTS

##### **Celebrate International Day of Peace in Stockton**

The date of this celebration next year is Sept. 20, 2015. Planning has just started. More information will be forthcoming but you can mark your calendars now!

##### **Peace Essay contest.**

Recognizing the importance of fostering thoughts of peace in young people, we are

Most of it was spent by committees hiding their true funders by using misleading names like "Stop Special Interest Money Now" or "Californians Against Higher Health Care Costs". For 2016, billionaires have already pledged to spend nearly \$1 billion nationally, most of it hidden behind Dark Money groups.

Californians from all major political parties have overwhelmingly stated their support for greater disclosure. A poll by the Public Policy Institute of California in October 2013 found 84 percent of likely California voters favored legislation to increase public disclosure of funding sources in initiative campaigns. Those in favor include 80 percent of Republicans, 81 percent of Democrats, and 85 percent of Independents. "We are thrilled that Assemblymembers Gomez and Levine are taking the lead to pass this crucial transparency legislation into law," said Trent Lange, President of the California Clean Money Campaign, sponsor of AB 700. "There is a growing movement of Californians demanding the California DISCLOSE Act because people are tired of being deceived about who pays for political ads. They will be with Assemblymembers Gomez and Levine every step of the way."

*Action: Attend the California Clean Money Action Fund's meeting of San Joaquin County working group to help pass AB 700, the California DISCLOSE Act. We need YOU to help get this bill passed. Our working group meetings are on the third Thursday's of every month at 6:30pm. The next one is April 16 - at the Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Road, Stockton.*

Source: California Clean Money Campaign release, [www.CAdisclose.org](http://www.CAdisclose.org). The California Clean Money Action Fund is a non-profit, non-partisan 501(c)(4) organization that is the political advocacy arm of the 501(c)(3) California Clean Money Campaign. The California Clean Money Action Fund has been fighting for legislation and ballot measures to limit the undue influence of Big Money in California politics since 2006. All our support comes from individuals and non-profit foundations, with no funding from corporations or unions. Also, check out [www.YesFairElections.org](http://www.YesFairElections.org)

## APR/MAY CALENDAR

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

Stockton, CA. \$8 adult, \$7 senior over 64, \$5 youth 10-17. Under 10 free with adult. (209) 940-6300

#### TUES, MAY 26

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

#### FIRST MONDAY

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm, Towers Building, 509 W Weber Ave, Stockton. [ccgmemb@gmail.com](mailto:ccgmemb@gmail.com)

#### FOURTH MONDAYS

Delta Sierra Club meeting, 7 pm. Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 7 pm program with social time following. All welcome.

#### SECOND TUESDAYS

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7 - 9 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

#### THIRD TUESDAYS

CA Disclose group - getting the money out of politics. 6:30 - 8:30 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

#### FOURTH TUESDAYS

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7 - 9 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

Second Thursdays  
Single Payer San Joaquin meeting, 6:30 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford

Rd, Stockton. [bailey\\_hcasj@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bailey_hcasj@sbcglobal.net)

Stockton Astronomical Society, 7:30 pm. Olson Hall, Room 120, UOP, Stockton.

#### THIRD THURSDAYS

Central Valley Wellstone Progressives, Meeting info: Rose Roach, 209-474-8496

Second Saturdays  
Live Music, Emerson Coffee-house, temporarily on vacation

#### FOURTH SATURDAYS

Greater Lodi Area Democrats (GLAD) Breakfast 8:15am, meeting 8:45am, Richmaid Restaurant, 100 N. Cherokee Lane, Lodi, info 209-747-8339 or [Cindy.harris.ca@gmail.com](mailto:Cindy.harris.ca@gmail.com)

#### MONDAYS

Student jam sessions hosted by the Pacific Jazz Combos, 7-9 pm, Valley Brew, 157 Adams St, Stockton. Free.

#### THURSDAYS

Peace demonstration, 4-5 pm, edge of Delta campus on Pacific, across from Macy's. Free parking at mall. Weekly since 2003. We have signs, or bring your own. We get LOTS of honks! Info 464-3326. Take Five Jazz club, 7 - 9 pm, Valley Brew

#### SATURDAYS

Crosstown Freeway Farmers Market, under the freeway between El Dorado & San Joaquin, Stockton. 7 - 11, or when sold out. 943-1830

A big thanks to our long-serving distributors!!

management. Hopefully we'll come up with some messages that are as good as? Have you hugged your kid today??.

[www.friends4peace.stockton@gmail.com](mailto:www.friends4peace.stockton@gmail.com)

The contact list at this email address is being used to broadcast a calendar of Friends for Peace activities as well as holistic healing and metaphysical activities in and around Stockton. If you would like to be added, send us an email at that address.

*How can you get in on the fun? Participate in our events and/or volunteer to help us create events. And like most non-profits, we welcome sponsors.*

Namaste,

FRIENDS FOR PEACE

creating an elementary school peace essay contest. A private foundation has donated cash prizes. This year we are targeting two schools for our pilot contest.

##### **Peace Meditation**

The first Sunday of each month from 11:30 AM - noon at New School Aikido, 1010 W. Fremont, Stockton.

##### **Peace Candle.**

A peace candle is being circulated through the community to promote mindfulness. We ask that participants light the candle for at least 5 minutes each day while focusing thoughts on peace within and without.

##### **Radio Messages.**

On the radio we intend to promote peace by delivering simple messages about stress management, stress relief, and anger