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In the Central and Sacramento Valleys of California, the fallow land—estimated to be 800,000 acres -- has paled to the dun color of dust, trees in the orchards gesturing with bare branches or dropped sideways as if fatally wounded. The valley's farm workers, small farmers and businesses endure the heat with silent desperation as the drought grinds on through the summer.

The grip of California's water crisis can be seen on the face of John Bledsoe, a local Sacramento farmer who raises pigs. He's a small farmer, a friend of the homeless and low income community, donating meat

whenever he can. At Sacramento's mid-town farmer's market on a recent Sunday, his face is lined with worry as he describes the impact of the drought. "The water table has dropped 68 feet," he said. "If we don't get rain next year, I don't know if we can survive."

Statewide, at least 20,000 farm workers will lose their jobs this year, as farmers cut back on production due to lack of water. At Durst Organic Farms north of Sacramento, Jim Durst reports that he had to cut back on the number of seasonal workers because he didn't have enough water to plant zucchinis this year, a crop that usually

helps sustain employment through the spring and early summer.

With fields left unplanted, the impact of the drought will reverberate through Central Valley communities, with school districts losing funding as families stay on the move, looking for work, with rising food prices (beef is projected to rise by 40 per cent, milk by 50 cents per gallon) and a five billion dollar loss in revenue to farms, trucking and food processing. Food banks are bracing for the need to supply families as a primary, not secondary, food source.

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California Activists Protesting Money in Politics Declare Victory

By Dan Bacher

On July 3, 2014, activists from the group "99Rise" announced the close of their successful twelve-day occupation and civil disobedience campaign at the Capitol in Sacramento to get the corporate money out politics.

The unprecedented campaign resulted in 47 arrests, 2 legislative victories, and a private meeting with Governor's Jerry Brown staff to discuss the corrupting influence of big money in politics, according to a statement from the group.

"We're in a time when corporations have more rights and have a louder voice than the people, as proven by recent Supreme Court decisions and the inability to pass legislation limiting corporation campaign contributions," said Paulina Gonzalez of Oakland, who was one of the five arrested on July 2. "I am here to send the message that corporations aren't people and that money is not free speech. This is the People's House and we have to take back our democracy."



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Marchers outside CA Capitol. Story Photos Courtesy Reporter

Thirsty for Justice

By Cathleen Williams

The great wheel of California water is planetary, turned by westerly winds that lift humid air masses from the Pacific Ocean. As this air rises and cools, it brings winter's cold wet rainstorms to the coasts and valleys of the state, and snow to its mountain slopes. In the summer, a dome of high pressure blocks the transfer of moisture – recurrent dry spells, like the historic drought now gripping the state, as well as floods, demonstrate the variability of this great wheel, now becoming more extreme with global warming.

California's water cycle has long been bent to the needs and desires of powerful interests – to name some of the major players, these interests include the cities like Los Angeles whose demand for water is fueled by land speculators and developers, heedless of rational water-wise planning; near-desert agribusiness empires in counties like San Joaquin and Kern who depend on publically subsidized water delivery from Northern California; the oil corporations which require millions of gallons of water for fracking oil and natural gas; and Silicon Valley, which itself uses 2% of California water for microchip production. The subsidized water – delivered at great public expense – can then be sold for the benefit of billionaires like Stuart Resnick, part owner of San Joaquin's Westlands Water District.

As the statewide Environmental Justice Coalition for Water states in its 2005 report, *Thirsty For Justice*, "every aspect of the state's enormous water infrastructure—from how the water flows from river to faucet and irrigation ditch, to how agriculture, industry, and cities pollute waterways—is influenced by political structures that systematically exclude the diverse needs of California's low-income, communities of color..."

Twenty two million Californians depend on water from contaminated sources, which must be purified at public

expense, and up to two million Californians, mostly in low income communities throughout the state, from San Diego to the Central Valley and the Bay Area, have little-to-no access to safe drinking water. Like the tens of thousands of homeless people in the state, they must buy their water in plastic bottles.

At the same time, salmon and other keystone species face extinction from water diversion and pollution. The Sacramento Delta, and even the bountiful Salinas Valley, lettuce bowl of the nation, have experienced saltwater intrusion miles inland on an unprecedented scale. How can water, essential to all life, have become a commodity that can be wasted and recklessly devoured for private profit on this scale?

Colin Bailey is the Sacramento-based director of the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, a diverse statewide coalition for water justice. "We are bringing together the communities and organizations that can change this system. For example, the recent passage of AB 685, which establishes a human right to water for drinking and sanitary usage is a bill which our members and allies helped shepherd through the legislative maze. This is a crucial step. Now we are working to implement it."

When asked how the movement for water justice can possibly succeed against the entrenched interests that profit from the present system, he answers, with a grin, "Our constituency is everybody else," he says, "all of us who face the catastrophe. The assumptions underlying California water policy and infrastructure date back to the 19th century, when the supply of water was assumed to be unlimited, and water rights were based on land ownership – to the exclusion of all others. It's not sustainable, politically, environmentally, or socially.

"We implement our mission through the creation of new institutions, like the coalition itself, to anchor and sustain the movement for water justice. We're involved

in providing technical assistance, input into planning, leadership and community development. We are developing constituencies, and we are looking forward to independent political candidates who are not tied to patronage systems like the oil industry.

"It's a complex problem that requires public awareness, education, and action. Take the multi-billion dollar bond measure that will be placed on the ballot in the next election cycle. On the one hand, the bond measure does provide unprecedented new funding for the small water systems on which many low income communities are dependent. On the other, it's a huge corporate giveaway – major players who will benefit include LA MWD, Silicon Valley (Santa Clara County), Westlands Water District, and Kern County.

"Imagine creating sacrifice zones in the Delta where you divert high quality drinking water through expensive infrastructure at tax payer expense, for the primary benefit of a handful of corporations, including enterprises in the San Joaquin Valley which grow water intensive crops like almonds for export to China's and India's growing middle class. We are socializing the costs of construction and the consequences of environmental degradation, and delivering subsidies for private benefit. As a state and a society, we will have to come to some hard decisions about which uses of water are legitimate and which are not."

The Coalition is now working to create local networks and developing a call to action for Californians to get engaged and organized. In Sacramento, you can get in touch through sacvalley@ejcw.org. "We're in touch with the people in Detroit, too," Colin adds, "there they are marching in the streets to prevent the shut off of water to folks who can't afford their water bill because of hard times. They are marching under banners declaring that water is a human right. This has never happened before."

"The Three Sources of California Water"

1. Six major systems of aqueducts and infrastructure redistribute water within California, most dependent on the melting snow and rushing rivers of the High Sierra:

The State Water Project, operated by the California Department of Water Resources, delivers water from the Feather River watershed through the Oroville Dam and Reservoir system; it is then pumped from the Sacramento Delta to the North Bay aqueduct for delivery to Napa and Solano Counties. It is also diverted through the 444-mile-long California aqueduct to agricultural irrigation districts, mostly in Kern County in the San Joaquin Valley. Water from the Delta flows through the South Bay Aqueduct for delivery to Alameda and Santa Clara counties; it is pumped up to the San Luis Reservoir, a storage facility jointly operated by the SWP and the federal Central Valley Project. Branches of the aqueduct serve coastal cities, and ultimately the water is pumped over the Tehachapi mountains for northern Los Angeles County, Riverside, and Mojave Desert cities.

The Central Valley Project, a federal project launched in the 1930's, has transformed the Central Valley into one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. Operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, it diverts water from five major rivers, including the Sacramento (Shasta Dam), the American (Folsom

Dam) the Stanislaus (new Melones Dam) and the San Joaquin (Friant Dam). Water is moved through this system to Bakersfield, through the Delta-Mendota canal; pumping plants at Tracy bring Delta water into the canal.

In addition to these two statewide systems, the Los Angeles Aqueduct, completed in 1913, brings water from the Eastern Sierra to the city of Los Angeles. A number of Colorado River systems deliver water to the Imperial Valley and southern cities, sometimes through sales by the powerful Municipal Water District (MWD) of L.A.

Finally, the Tuolumne River/Hetch Hetchy system delivers water to San Francisco, and Mokelumne Aqueduct delivers water to the East Bay.

2. The second source of California water is riparian (streamside) or surface water which can be pumped and diverted by adjacent land owners for their own use. The State doesn't actually know how much surface water riparian rights holders are pumping out of water ways, or how it is being used, and it is largely unregulated and subject to unlimited use, as long as it waters adjacent land. An exception to this limitation was granted to

water rights holders who established their claims before 1914. These "senior rights holders," include the Municipal Water District of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, and other major cities, rural water districts, and corporations, such as the state's biggest entity, PG&E, and the Hearst Corporation. These entities, half of which are corporations, can irrigate private lands, operate dams and reservoirs, generate hydroelectric power, and sell water without limit and without oversight. The 24 entities with these senior "grandfathered" rights use more than twice the water that is delivered through the state's vast and extensive system of dams, canals, and aqueducts.

3. The third source of California water is ground water – which accounts for 40% to 60% of the annual Californian water supply. Landowners can drill wells into aquifers, porous gravels that hold water, without limit. (The top of an aquifer is called the "water table.") Aquifers have been subject to extreme overdrafting, causing salt water intrusion and the subsidence of land; in parts of San Joaquin Valley, the ground has dropped eight feet. Ground water has been contaminated with industrial pollutants as well as agricultural run-off from fertilizers, pesticides, and animal waste. Currently, a bill to regulate ground water, authored by California Assemblyman Roger Dickenson, is pending in the legislature.



California Activists Protesting Money in Politics Declare Victory

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State Senators Darrell Steinberg, Ted Lieu, Carol Liu Mark Leno, Hannah-Beth Jackson, Jerry Hill, Jim Beall and Assembly members Mike Gatto, Jimmy Gomez and Roger Dickinson announced their public support for 99rise and acknowledged the corruption that results from money in politics, according to the group.

Curt Ries, 99Rise spokesman, summed up the victories that the group and its allies achieved over the past 12 days:

“We walked 480 miles from L.A. to Sacramento with two simple demands for our state leaders: that they publicly acknowledge the crisis of corruption and take immediate action to end it,” said Kai Newkirk, co-founder and organizer with 99Rise. “Twelve days and almost 50 arrests later, we feel confident that those demands have been met and that the people have been heard.”

All three of their legislative demands: AJR 1 (to call for an amendment of the U.S. Constitution to remove big money from politics); SB 1272 (an initiative that will allow voters to weigh in the Citizens United Supreme Court decision that declared corporations to have the free speech rights of individuals) and SB 52 (known as the Disclose Act; it will require political advertisements to list the three top donors of the ad)- have been advanced since the marchers arrived in Sacramento on Sunday, June 22.

The revolving door between corporate interests, water contractors and state government that is the result of corporate money's overwhelming influence in California politics was demonstrated last September when Governor Jerry Brown appointed Laura King Moon of Woodland, a lobbyist for the state's water exporters, as chief deputy director of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR).

Moon was a project manager for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan since 2011 while “on loan” from the State Water Contractors, a non-profit association of 27 public agencies from Northern, Central and Southern Cali-



Protestors at Sit-in in the Capitol Rotunda

fornia that purchase water under contract from the California State Water Project.

And Moon's appointment was just one of the many examples of the revolving door between corporations and state government that have infested politics in California during the Schwarzenegger and Brown administrations. These examples include:

- The resignation of State Senator Michael J. Rubio in February 2013 to go work in a “government affairs” position for Chevron. Rubio, who was leading the charge to weaken the landmark California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and make it more friendly to corporations, claimed he resigned in order to spend more time with his family. ([http://www.dailykos.com/...](http://www.dailykos.com/))
- DWR's hiring of Susan Ramos “on loan” from the Westlands Water District, the “Darth Vader” of California water politics, to serve as “a liaison between all relevant parties” surrounding the Delta Habitat Conservation and Conveyance Program (DHC-CP) and provide “technical and strategic assistance” to DWR. ([http://www.indybay.org/...](http://www.indybay.org/))

Documents obtained by this reporter under the California Public Records Act revealed that Ramos, Deputy General Manager of the Westlands Water District,

was hired in an “inter-jurisdictional personal exchange agreement” between the Department of Water Resources and Westlands Water District from November 15, 2009 through December 31, 2010. The contract was extended to run through December 31, 2011 and again to continue through December 31, 2012.

- The failure of Katherine Hart Johns, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board member, to report her husband's separate property interest in his lobbying firm, California Resource Strategies, Inc., on her 2006, 2007, and 2008 annual Statements of Economic Interests. The California Fair Political Practices Commission fined Hart Johns only \$600 for this overt conflict of interest, in a classic example of how violators of state ethics and environmental laws often get off with a mere “slap on the wrist.” ([http://www.sacbee.com/...](http://www.sacbee.com/))
- The hijacking of “marine protection” in California by Catherine Reheis-Boyd, President of the Western States Petroleum Association (WSPA). Reheis-Boyd chaired the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative Blue Ribbon Task Force to create alleged “marine protected areas” in Southern California and served on the task forces for the Central Coast, North Central Coast and

North Coast. ([http://yubanet.com/...](http://yubanet.com/))

The oil and gas industry is the largest and most powerful corporate lobby in Sacramento. A report released on April 1, 2014 by the ACCE Institute and Common Cause reveals that Big Oil has spent \$143.3 million on political candidates and campaigns nearly \$10 million per year and more than any other corporate lobby over the past fifteen years. ([http://www.indybay.org/...](http://www.indybay.org/))

But Big Oil exerts its influence not just by making campaign contributions and serving on government regulatory panels, but also by lobbying legislators at the State Capitol. The oil industry spent \$123.6 million to lobby elected officials in California from 1999 through 2013. This was an increase of over 400 percent since the 1999-2000 legislative session, when the industry spent \$4.8 million. In 2013-2014 alone, the top lobbyist employer, Western States Petroleum Association, spent \$4.7 million.

Nor can we overlook one of the greatest scandals to hit environmental politics in recent years - the 10 month federal prison sentence that a federal judge in May imposed upon Ron LeValley of Mad River Biologists, the former co-chair of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative Science Advisory Team for the North Coast, for his role in a conspiracy to embezzle over \$852,000 in federal funds from the Yurok Tribe. In February, LeValley pleaded guilty to a single federal charge of conspiracy to commit embezzlement and theft from an Indian Tribal Organization (18U.S.C. §§ 371 and 1163) in the complex scheme in collaboration with former Yurok Forestry Director Roland Raymond. According to court documents, LeValley submitted more than 75 false invoices between 2007 and 2010 in payment for “work” on northern spotted owl surveys that was never performed. The link to the indictment is available at: <http://noyonews.net/>

Farm to Every Fork: A People's Movement

By Cathleen Williams

One long leg propped up on a shovel, Ron Rutherford of Sacramento's Oak Park neighborhood pauses in his Sixth Avenue garden to talk, something he loves to do, occasionally breaking into a broad gap-toothed smile and shaking his dreadlocks for emphasis. Nearby, a faded sign leaning against the wooden fence reads "Garden of Peace." Plump with straw, a pair of jeans and plaid shirt serves as a scare crow. There is no gate. You can just walk in from the street.

Today, Ron is sketching his vision of growing plant based food in this historically African American neighborhood, where the nearest supermarkets are more than a mile away. The cheapest and easiest to get to are the cut-rate stores along Stockton Boulevard, where they toss the produce and spotted fruit into wilting piles. On the corner of Sixth Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard, across from the garden, a battered bright yellow mini-mart sells chips, cigarettes and beer behind the grated windows.

It's a late summer day. The season's harvest has wound down, corn stalks cut and stacked on the hard soil. Smell of straw and dust. Cherry tomatoes, red and gold, caught in tangled vines, overwhelming their collapsing bamboo frames, verdant until the cold arrives with the fall. In the dry furrows, a line of ruffled swiss chard ready to harvest; basil starting to raise flowering crowns; shoulder-high stalks where pale blossoms coil out, the pod to become a pointed okra, saved for seed. The squash hide beneath mounds of gigantic leaves. They will hold until October. A sense of transition, of weedy ruin and of beginning again.

"Well," Ron says, "at some point in my life it was time to find me a spot, to put down roots, to look at what was left. Time to start trying, to stop thinking. So, back in 2008, I started my first local garden, got into a relationship with an acre of ground.

"Then I noticed that here in Oak Park, changes in the neighborhood – demolition of housing, redevelopment, all that – had left large lots open. I saw people who were overwhelmed, scared, hadn't been tutored. There was no passing of information. Now this is in a situation where babies aren't getting food and water.

"To dig up ground – the raw challenge of loosening the soil – there's no immediate gratification. Yet to plant a seed – that's the greatest lesson you can learn in life. You know, 'the blessings of God from the fruits of labor.' You gotta know when to plant, and what to plant, you gotta wax and wane, look up at the moon. You gotta grow from seed. Otherwise, the learning curve is not there. You gotta make something out of nothing.

"You keep planting, so your harvest is continuous. Spring and summer: squash, tomatoes, beets, swiss chard, okra. Fall and winter: overwintering sweet peas, potatoes, spinach, romaine lettuce, cabbage, kale, collards. That's the meaning of sustainability.

"Let me tell you how I came to this. In Coleman Station, Georgia, the Rutherfords lived on small farms, plowed with mules, actually worked forty acres. There were three Rutherford brothers, Matthew, Joseph, Albert: my father's grandfather and two great uncles. All worked on the railroad, got carried North to the turn-around in West Springfield, Massachusetts. They joined the Great Migration of our people around the turn of the century. They broke the color barrier, founded the Baptist Church in Springfield. Each bought seven acres, twenty-one in all, in the Connecticut Valley. They had that yearning for field crops, tobacco and corn.. Grew cabbage, yams, packed them in straw, kept them in a cool place under 55 degrees all winter. You have that short growing season in New England – seven months. That's where I spent my summers as a boy, until I-95 was bulldozed through.

"My father's grandmother, Virginia Rutherford, married Albert, one of the brothers. She came North from Georgia for the education, called Mama by everybody, loved and famous in her day for the family's self-reliance, and the help they gave to others.

"Now on my mother's side, they never went through slavery. Sailed to Boston from England, indentured servants. Of course on both sides of my family, these women washed the floors of the big Edwardian houses, North and South. Her family moved to Holyoke, Massachusetts, a textile town, powered by turbines from canals on the Connecticut River.

"I myself witnessed big changes. My grandmother's sister, Myrtle, lived in the Bronx, the family got moved out into

high rise projects in Co-op City when the Bronx was torn up. Even there we had gardens on the roof. I used to eat dirt: "Myrt," I would say, "I'm eatin the dirt."

"I moved west to San Francisco after some experience as a horticulturist in Baton Rouge, where I went to Southern University. From 1977 to 1988 I helped open up The Frederick Douglass Community Garden in the Fillmore District, supported by the Arts Commission and SF League of Urban Gardeners. We had 3 square blocks between Webster, Fillmore, Steiner Streets. And I also worked as the youngest Watermelon Man in San Francisco, picking watermelons and selling them from a truck on the corner.

"It was hard times. People were leaving the neighborhood, forced out by redevelopment. But the people in public housing – lots of knowledge in those fingers. People who had lost their land, who were broken hearted. We took the empty lots back. We got soil from Golden Gate Park, filled up Old Maud, the dump truck, with shovels. We took seeds from the Laguna Honda Hospital green house, kinda with permission. We brought them out and gave them away. We had only 5 people in '77, grew to 35 people by '88. Muralists and gardeners. With Prop 13 tax cuts, we lost the funding. With gentrification, we lost the land.

"When I moved here, I thought, 'I have something to retrieve.' And now that this Garden of Peace is going – I truck in loads of compost all winter – people are starting to come around, offering to work.

I'd like to co-ordinate a soup kitchen, set up work days in the garden, provide a stipend, start a tool bank. Make a good meal of plant based food right here, then you take home some produce.

"Under the poor people's banner of Martin Luther King Jr., I'd like to work with the Sol Collective, Food Not Bombs, The California Grange, Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, local schools, other groups. I joined the Farm to Every Fork coalition this spring to plan our food justice dinner on September 13 and move this movement forward. Let's make the urban garden an oasis of community."

Ron Rutherford is still a Watermelon Man. In season, from July into September, on a western corner of McClatchy Park, you can visit his big farm truck, the one with slatted sides, stacked with melons – in August this year, the watermelons were weighing 50 pounds or more, red and yellow, both. You'll see him in the shade with his son Anthony, who is starting college in the fall. Somehow the intersection feels like a country road, right there, the traffic slowed, the drivers calling out greetings from behind the wheel.

Stop and drink in the wisdom, carve up a giant melon, big enough to invite the guys playing dominoes at picnic tables in the park to share a slice. Get the juice all over your face and sticky fingers. As Americans, our history is in our memories, and our future. in our visions. Farm to *Every Fork!*



Anthony and Ron Rutherford (Ron on truck)

The Struggle for Housing

by Regina Range

I am a single mother who has raised 4 children on the low income way of life due to life's circumstances. But this story goes to the root of the issues we have now. Today, our housing programs are in great danger.

The federal government played a major role in creating homelessness by cutting tens of billions of dollars from affordable housing programs beginning in the early 1980s. Relying on the market to deliver affordable housing has only worsened the problem.

Since then, every federal plan to address homelessness has primarily focused on "fixing" homeless people rather than the broken housing system. This approach – part of the broader war against the poor ushered in by Reagan – has institutionalized a vicious cycle of homeless policy. As a result, millions of people live without housing in the US- every year – including one million children.

The recent corporate bailout in 2008 cost taxpayers over \$800 billion — a sum that surpasses the entirety of funding allocated for homeless assistance and affordable housing over the last three decades.

Until we recognize housing as a human right and enact policies and budget allocations that reflect that right, along with quality education, economic security, and health care, we will not end homelessness. The Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), based in San Francisco, is calling on the federal government to:

- 1) Restore federal affordable housing funds to comparable 1978 levels;
- 2) Turn empty buildings into housing;
- 3) Improve living conditions in existing affordable housing;
- 4) Put moratorium on demolitions without replacement and right of

return; and

- 5) Stop criminalizing homelessness. (See, Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) fact sheet).

In 2012, HUD's budget is \$37.4 billion, a decrease of \$3.7 billion from the 2011 budget of \$41.1 billion. Additional cuts in 2013 reduced funding for Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8) by \$938 million, and public housing maintenance by 6% as well. Only one out of four eligible households will receive a housing voucher ("Section 8") or some other type of federal rental assistance, and there are long waiting lists for assistance in nearly every community around the country.

Currently, there are \$2 billion in cuts from housing assistance and community-development programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The funding for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) could fall to \$190 million which is 34% below the amount provided

in 2012. This program helps support emergency shelters and temporary financial and other types of assistance for at-risk people to avert homelessness or enable them to move from shelters into permanent housing.

How will people survive with the cuts to the programs for the poor? Welfare to work programs are not sustainable any more. The shelter system is on its last legs, not having enough funds to help a family become stable.

My own daughter who is a single mother of a 2 year old has been the model of the meltdown of services and the strength it takes just to find housing. While trying to continue her education, attending the local community college, and coping with poverty, she has applied for all the grants and funding available, and is now on her way out of a shelter. She has found an affordable apartment only because she has kept up and joined others in the struggle for housing. Thanks to the Western Regional Advocacy Project for their recent updates.

Just Food

by Paula Lomazzi

Food, Housing, Water all necessary to our lives, all fairly abundant around us, but requiring more and more effort to retain our fair and just portions. Food security and equity is not a given result of our more mainstream food delivery system, though we are coming to terms with our need for change. And we are making many of the changes necessary for more food secure and just communities.

Charity Kenyon, of Slow Food Sacramento shared this vision, "A food secure community would welcome urban gardening, gleaning, and cottage food production that enables renters as well as homeowners to grow and share the seasonal bounty that can be produced all year round in the Sacramento region. It would build the infrastructure that would allow small producers to aggregate and sell or donate to local institutions including schools, hospitals, prisons, and jails as well as food banks, grocery stores, restaurants, and cottage food producers. It would be full of chefs, farmers, gardeners, and teachers who would inspire and educate the next generation about good, clean, and fair food for all."

Food security and equality go hand in hand with sustainability and food justice. More food should be grown locally, always keeping in mind care for the workers, the distributors and the land, and ensuring no one is excluded from having healthy foods.

Poverty is the main cause of exclusion from access to healthy foods. A greater task would be to end poverty, but currently we are making great strides towards ensuring equitable access to food. We know what is working and what needs to be done.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, is one of the biggest federal programs that helps ensure access to healthy foods for those experiencing poverty. "Market Match" is an innovative California healthy food program that matches a portion of customer's CalFresh (SNAP) purchases at farmers' markets. This program also benefits small farmers and markets in economically depressed areas. There have been attempts to drastically cut the federal food stamp program, while this program and the Market Match program should be expanded to ensure everyone has access to

healthy foods and to promote our economy.

In the Farm to Fork movement, the need for inclusion is being acknowledged and model programs are being implemented. Farm to Family is a program of California Association of Food Banks that helps to distribute produce donated by farms to food banks across the state. Yolo County has a program called "Shared Harvest" spearheaded by Jim Dursts and Tom Muller, where farmers and ranchers support the Food Bank of Yolo County through donations of commodities or money. SHOC, in partnership with Slow Food Sacramento, is hosting the Farm to EVERY Fork dinner during Sacramento's Farm to Fork week in September that will include an equal number of guests that couldn't otherwise afford to attend a Farm to Fork event.

"Food Deserts" are neighborhoods where there is a lack of grocery stores and often with an abundance of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores that sell prepared foods. They are more often in poor urban neighborhoods. Since residents are unable to afford traveling to far away

grocery stores, they usually opt to shop for food at these less healthy local sources. Reinvestment in these neighborhoods would be an optimal solution, but meanwhile efforts towards bringing healthy choices to the food desert and those living in poverty are being mounted. There are food banks which are more and more including fresh fruits and vegetables in their give-away bags and boxes. Community and personal gardens are springing up in vacant lots across the city. Food carts and trucks make their rounds down residential blocks. Churches and community groups, such as Food Not Bombs, share meals on the streets and in parks. Gleaner groups pick fruit trees around town and redistribute the harvest to those in need. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) delivers weekly boxes of fresh produce by subscription to individuals directly from a farm.

It's a foodie revolution, and a celebration of abundance and sharing, as we move closer to a state of Food Equality. It's a perfect step towards the bigger vision of income equality and an end to poverty. Is that too lofty a goal?

The New Illiteracy: Ignorance of Science

www.chongonation.com

by Chongo

If you have ever wondered why education is a right, rather than a privilege or a commodity, it is for the simple, obvious reason that children should not be cheated. To see things differently requires that one be either highly uneducated, or simply cruel.

Mid-term elections are at hand. Being mid-terms, fewer people will vote. This will present political opportunity for the clever, and by default, opportunity for those whose goals are the revival of ideas that have long out-lived their day. In a progressively more modern world it will serve only to threaten the physical security of that world in the future, not only that future within our part of that world, but ultimately that future as it will evolve for the rest of the world, too, especially in consideration of the fact that we have a military that is substantially larger than that of the rest of the world combined.

Political decisions made here and now can flatly affect events in the future everywhere, dramatically. Decisions that voters make in the approaching mid-term elections will also ultimately shape events in the future everywhere. The quality of these decisions will depend in large part upon the quality of the public education that those making these decisions receive in their youth. Whereas quality costs, that quality will depend a great deal upon how much is invested in public education, or conversely, how little – which is the point here. Investing less, the quality of voter decision-making declines. This is especially true as our world becomes more dependent upon technology, and the deep and broad understanding of science that underlies it becomes widespread common knowledge – that is, at least among some.

The preceding article, “Mob at the Gates,” addressed events punctuating the European decline into illiteracy with the onset of the dark ages, as the population of Europe became uneducated, remaining so for a thousand years. Luckily, the Renaissance came, leading to modern science, and eventually, to modern technology and our modern world. Political tradition, corruption, religious interests, and the unconstrained exploitation of the other weaknesses of unbridled consumerism presently threaten this

achievement, in what may be the most significant way, by threatening the quality of the education of the nation’s children, because these interests have stakes only in the near future, NOT the long-term. Hopefully, this attitude is obvious to those whose fortunes lie in the longer term, and likewise, that they are moved to take action in the one certain way that they can, by voting in the mid-term.

How we Americans vote will reflect the extent of our concern for this extremely critical issue, because if we Americans ever come to lack educated adults in our own country, then we will have to import them from more educated countries, or leave our fate to the less educated. This very thing is happening in many states throughout the country: the eroding of education in science, through defunding of education and political effort to force faith-based ideas into public schools, and in particular, into the science classroom, in service to the religious and business community—over that of the child. As a consequence of their efforts over the past decades, the new Illiteracy is becoming what is common in America. Scientific ignorance is widespread, indeed, a source of pride for some among the young.

In education, the United States ranks seventeenth in the world, behind sixteen other countries, all secular, all modern, and most of which, if not all, have socialized medicine for all. Our country is just ahead of Russia in education, which, by the way, happens to have socialized medicine for all. The U.S. does not. In particular, health care is denied to the poor in the upcoming list of states contributing LEAST to public education. These states share a common political perspective and often their voters share common cultural attitudes.

According to a recent accounting that included all of the fifty U.S. states, Utah spent the least per pupil on public education, less than all forty nine others, their investment in each amounting to only about sixty percent of the national average, a fact which surely must make many who are proud of that state, like for example, ex-presidential candidate George Romney, prouder still, for spending so little on the children whose parents cannot afford private school. Its neighbor, Idaho, very

similar in many ways, came in a very, very close second place. Surely as a consequence of sharing so long a border with Texas, Oklahoma naturally ranked high, following in third place. Fourth was another Utah neighbor, Arizona. Fifth was Mississippi, a unique state where black people can proudly vote Republican without having to hide it. It was followed by another state that, like Mississippi, was once part of the heart of the Confederacy and a state where white people can openly legislate racism without having to hide it, that is, North Carolina. Seventh place was another Utah neighbor, a state renowned for its enormous prison industry and the corruption that comes with it, namely, Arizona, finally followed by its rival in both, Texas, a state that of course would never be shamed by not being among those states spending the least on its young. Another once Confederate state, Tennessee, was ninth. Finally, not to be excluded from a list of states stealing from its children, Florida makes it in at tenth, still well under the national average, spending only slightly more than first place Utah for each of its students.

You might notice – and you would be quite accurate in so noticing – that there is not a single blue state among the list above; which are all red states that all swing right to the right, and to be most clear, all swing to the far right. This is because raising poor people to vote in a way consistent with right wing goals (with fleecing the unknowing among these goals), that is, to educate people little enough that they vote in their own worst interest, requires that a great lack of education be widespread and commonplace, especially any kind of education in modern science. Underfunded education and the likely dislike for education in general that are so often its inevitable consequence must start when voters are children. In this way they will never learn to want to learn new ideas, and hence never be in a position to change their thinking, by learning differently, as they unknowingly learn not to change in the process not learning. This is, of course, because the more educated people become, especially as they become more educated in science (as opposed to engineering, for example), then the less likely that they will be to vote in a reactionary way: right wing (again, engineers being the frequent exception).

Many people retain tribal-like adherence to political ideas based upon their dedication to political identity characterizing their actual identity, wanting children to grow up identifying themselves in the same way, wanting them to vote the way that their identity requires them to want. A LACK of education clearly serves this purpose best by restricting the options. It also maintains the illusion among older voters that they never need be faced with children having greater wisdom than them, albeit at the price of these children’s exclusion from modern scientific ways of thinking (e.g. empiricism), while inhabiting a world where such ways of thinking are progressively overtaking the future, again, albeit to these children’s ultimate exclusion and resulting disenfranchisement. Such considerations have no more importance in right wing thinking than being genuinely truthful about the certainty of global warming; put another way, if no immediate effect is noticeable, then no reason exists to care, or if any effect is, then either assign all responsibility elsewhere, or claim that remedy is impossible (with either yielding the same result).

If we are to keep the right from continuing to do the damage that they are doing, voters must recognize that the right wing serves a wealthy few. Moreover, many of these voters, by virtue of lacking education, vote right wing as a consequence (the correlation is direct in our culture). So, if enough voters do not turn out to vote this November, we face two more years of dysfunctional right wing obstructionism in government, but this time, with the same approval as this right wing congress enjoyed over the past two years, despite any prolonged spike in the right wing die-off. And all of this will be because not enough voters made the effort to vote against idiotic people and idiotic ideas, even though both are actively laying waste the nation’s future, if not the world’s as well, and in particular, stealing this future from all of its children, especially those who are still yet to be born, again, especially from them.

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Injunction Requested Against New Sac County “Panhandling” Ordinance

By Sally Ooms

As anyone who is looking for a job in this economy knows, it's rough out there. But, if you are down on your luck and soliciting money in public places for your own welfare, it's called panhandling. If Sacramento County has its way, that way of earning money will be essentially illegal.

While there is a challenge in court, the county is poised to enforce an ordinance that creates large buffer zones between solicitors and potential donors at places where solicitors commonly ask for money, food or work. At first blush, the ordinance seems to address the “safety and welfare of the general public” by making it illegal to solicit in an aggressive or threatening manner. Most panhandlers would agree that people should not be followed after saying no. Nor should they be accosted at ATMs, have obscenities hurled at them or feel physically intimidated.

But this is a different matter for peaceable panhandlers who non-aggressively hold signs up and appeal for personal donations. Their restrictions will now include staying 35 feet away from a driveway to a shopping center, retail or business; not standing near a vehicle occupant who is within 200 feet of an intersection; not straying within 50 feet of any public transportation vehicle stop or within 35 feet of any entrance to or exit from any financial institution or automated teller machine; not standing on any median strip or going near any motor vehicle occupant stopped at a gasoline station or pump. In other words: just about everywhere in an urban business area.

More significant, however, is a clause in the ordinance under exemptions stating “Nothing in this ... shall be construed to prohibit soliciting for charitable purposes in compliance with the requirements set forth in ... this Code.” Sacramento attorney Mark Merin says that distinction makes the ordinance unconstitutional. “This ordinance is vulnerable because it has the exemption for charitable organizations. This is a free speech issue.”

Merin and the ACLU have petitioned the court to issue a preliminary injunction to restrain enforcement of the newly adopted ordinance. The complaint says that “Sacramento County’s anti-panhandling law is invalid on its face.”

For one, ACLU and Merin’s document reads, “solicitation of donations in public is a form of non-commercial speech fully protected by the First Amendment.” And, “Individuals who seek donations for their own personal needs and survival are entitled to the same degree of constitutional protection as persons who solicit for other causes. ‘Panhandlers’

and persons who ‘beg’—categories singled out by the Ordinance—are not relegated to some lower rung of the First Amendment.”

Merin, a well-known Sacramento civil rights champion, says any restriction that is content-based has to meet with strict scrutiny. A struggling mother is just as entitled to ask you for alms as a save-the-whales organizer is entitled to ask you to sign a petition, or a Girl Scout is free to ask you to buy cookies. “If the ordinance is to be selectively enforced, then it is unconstitutional as applied,” he says.

People who violate the ordinance more than two times within a six month period will be found guilty of a misdemeanor. Merin details how expensive for taxpayers the legal process will be if people are arrested for solicitation, even if each person is kept in custody just 30 days.

Sgt. Lisa Bowman, media relations representative for the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Department says they are aware of the litigation. She says the county has agreed to a 60-day period of non-enforcement so the police can “prepare people. Officers will give warnings ... until the period is up in September.”

But the plaintiffs in the complaint include homeless people who rely on donations for their basic needs. All plaintiffs “will face the choice of risking criminal penalties or choosing to give up their First Amendment right to seek donations free from unconstitutional restrictions,” reads the complaint.

For Merin, the “much bigger issue is why we have panhandling,” why so many people are dependent on it for their livelihood and “put in the position of imposing on others. We don’t have a society that honors helping those who are less fortunate,” he says. “Programs for public welfare and public housing



Angie at Arden Fair Mall
Story Photos Courtesy Reporter



have been cut out, along with job training programs. Rich people don’t want to have to pay taxes. There is insatiable greed.”

The safety net is shredded, he says, and we are not a society that “gives things out. If you are poor, it’s your own fault. You are told to take responsibility for yourself. Tell a mother with three children and no place to go to take financial responsibility.”

Old people are especially vulnerable, he says. “I walk around my neighborhood and see at least 20 people sleeping in doorways who are elderly or infirm.”

One of these could easily be Angie, a 63-year-old panhandler who spends two or three hours a day at the exit to Arden Fair shopping center. She still lives in a house her father built near the shopping center. The home is no longer hers but she is allowed to sleep on a couch.

She has no family left. Her sister, mother and brother died within two weeks of each other. “I have all the death certificates and took care of the funerals,” she says. “I have nobody to ask for help. I don’t like to ask for help out here but I have a hard time getting by every day.”

Angie is slight and in ill health but keeps smiling at the people lined up to leave the mall. She can’t spend too much time out on the pavement in the 95-degree heat because she has high blood pressure and has had a “slight stroke. I’m on my last leg.”

She says the police know her and don’t bother her, except for one who hassles her and gives her tickets. “If she would just talk to me, she might not be so bitter,” Angie says.

In general, she says people who drive by are not mean spirited, although one person sprayed her with pepper spray. “But a lot of good people have been in

the same boat and can relate. They give me food and stuff.”

A man who does not give his name, puts down his “Just Hungry, Thank you, God Bless” sign and sits in the grass near a Howe Street intersection. He panhandles to support himself and his wife who was “deemed incompetent” in 2008. He received guardianship and lives with his mother-in-law for now.

He cannot understand how it makes sense to arrest people for what he refers to as ‘signing.’ “It will clutter up the judicial system severely.”

Sometimes people pick him up to do work for them. He is grateful but still is looking for a full-time job. It’s a circular problem because looking for a job cuts down on the time he must spend asking for money and then he is short of food. He dreams of buying a farm near Elk Grove where he could be self-sufficient.

When asked what he would do if he could no longer solicit money, he said “I would be up _____ creek, Really bad. We wouldn’t be eating.”

A young man near a McDonald’s in the county holds a sign that is humorous if self-deprecating: “Dirty, Broke and Ugly.” Occasionally he flips to the other side: “Addicted to Food.” Although he is from Sacramento, right now he is just passing through on his way to what he hopes is another migrant job. He has come from Northern California most recently and plans to check out jobs near Davis.

He agrees with attorney Merin that not being able to sign is a freedom of speech issue and hopes the county rescinds its ordinance. People out here aren’t ugly to him, he says. “It’s the bureaucrats that are ugly.” He has traveled 32 states doing migrant jobs. “But this is the toughest job I’ve ever had.”

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HOMELESS RESOURCES

Night Shelters

Salvation Army: 12th and North B St. 30 days per year: Dormitory living, C&S: Dinner, breakfast clothing for residents: Men/Women: Sign-up SA patio weekdays at 1PM. 442-0331

St. Johnis Shelter: Women and Children. 4410 Power Inn Rd. Call between 10am & 3pm for space availability. 453-1482

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannan St. Beds for Men Only, sign up 6:30pm at mission, Newcomers/Referrals have priority. 7:30pm Chapel Service with meal afterwards, 6am breakfast for residents. Showers / shaves 9-11am & 1-2:45pm. open to all homeless men: 447-3268

Next Move (formerly SAEHC) 24 hr Family Shelter; Families, single adults with children who have no other resource: Womenis Refuge; single women, no children: Call for screening/space availability 455-2160

Day Shelters

Friendship Park: 12th St. & North C: Weekdays 7am - 2:30pm: open to anyone: Many services

Meals

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannan St.: 7 days, Evening meal, Men/Women: Church service 7:00pm required, dinner following 8:30-9:15pm. Sunday 11am service, lunch at noon. 447-3268

Loaves & Fishes: 1321 No. C St.: Lunch every day 11:30am-1pm. Tickets available 7 am- 12:30 pm at Friendship Park weekdays: at 8 am on Saturday and 10am on Sundays.

WomenisCivic Improvement Center: Seniors Only: 3555 3rd Ave. 11:30-12:30 lunch M-F 452-2866

Food-not-Bombs: serves free food in Cesar Chavez Plaza, 9th & J St., every Sunday 1:30 pm. All Welcome.

Foundation of Faith Ministries 2721 Dawes St. Rancho Cordova. Every 4th Sat. 3-5 pm All Welcome.

Glory Bound Street Ministry 4527 Parker Ave. Sundays; breakfast 11:30 am after 10 am church service; dinner 6:30 pm after 5 pm church service: Fridays; dinner 7 pm after 6 pm church service. Must attend services. 452-7078

Women & Children

Maryhouse: 1321 No. C St. suite 32: Breakfast for Women and children 8am-9am. Day shelter 8am-3pm weekdays for women and families.

Wellspring 3414 4th St.: T&Th full breakfast: M-W-F continental breakfast for women and children. 454-9688

Free Clothing

Sacramento Food Bank: 3333 3rd Ave. (at Broadway) 10am-2pm Mon - Fri. 456-1980

Union Gospel Mission: 400 Bannan St. Men: M-Sat 9-11am or 1-2:45pm: Women and Children: Thurs. 9 am signup, 9:30-10am bible study, 10 am - 12 pm shop. 447-3268

Glory Bound Street Ministry 4527 Parker Ave. Clothes Closet, Sundays 11:30 am all welcome. 452-7078

Medical

Mercy Clinic: For homeless adults, children: Nurse's office in Friendship park 7:30am & 12:30pm. 446-3345

Sacramento Dental Clinic: 4600 Broadway (Primary Care Bldg) Walk-ins 8 am - 12:30 pm 874-8300

Mental Health

Guest House, 1400 N. A St.: Homeless Mental Health Clinic, M,W,Th,Fri., 8-11:30am Tues 8-11:30am only. Mental Health evaluation, medication if needed. Housing referrals for mentally ill, GA refs, SSI aps, refs to A & D counseling: 443-6972

TLCs Intake Offices: 1400 N. Ai St. Bldg. A: Adults 18 yrs & up; Referrals to transitional living programs, independant living, mental health support services; SSI/SSDI application assistance; Walk-ins 8-11am M-F 440-1500

Genesis: Professional Counseling for life problems. Referrals. 401 12th St. (DeLaney Center). 699-1536

Youth Services

Diogenes: youth 16-21 yrs old. Hot Line call 1-800-339-7177

California Youth Crisis Line:
1-800-843-5200

Crisis Intervention

WEAVE: Services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children. Referrals to court mandated battery intervention programs, Safe house, 24 hr. crisis line: 920-2952

AIDS / HIV

AIDS Housing Alliance provides residential care, transitional housing & permanent housing services to homeless persons living with aids. 329-1093 weekdays.

CARES (Center for AIDS Research, Education and Service): 1500 21st ST. Serves people with HIV and AIDS. Medical care, mental health, case mgmt, health ed and regional prevention/ed classes. 443-3299

Breaking Barriers: Homeless Outreach Program provides direct services to people living with AIDS and HIV. Transportation to social services, medical appointments, job interviews, and housing assistance. 447-2437

Harm Reduction Services: 40001 12 Ave.; High risk outreach; HIV, Hep-C testing; case management for HIV; free medical clinic, needle exchange. 456-4849

Alternative Test Site: Free anonymous testing, Wed /Thurs. Call for appt. 874-7720.

Legal Aid

Disability Rights, CA: Free legal services for people with disabilities. Call for appt. toll free: TTY:(800)776-5746

Tommy Clinkenbeard Legal Clinic: 401 12th St. (DeLaney Center) Free legal assistance and advocacy for problems related to homelessness. 446-0368

Legal Services of Northern California, Inc: 515 12th St. (at E ST.) M-F 8:30am-12pm, 1pm-5pm. Problems with public benefits, landlord / tenant, divorce clinic. Call for appt. 551-2150

Welfare Rights: 1901 Alhambra Blvd. (2nd floor) M-F 9am-5pm: AFDC, Food Stamps, Workfare and Medical rep at hearings. 736-0616

Social Security Disability / SSI Lawyer Free Consultation (916) 658-1880

Veterans

VA Outreach: 1-800-827-1000
Homeless VA Coordinator:(916) 364-6547



About SHA

The Sacramento Housing Alliance is a network of concerned citizens who promote decent affordable housing for low income households and homeless people through advocacy and participation in public discourse.

For more info, or if you would like to participate, please call:

(916) 455-4900

<http://sachousingalliance.org>

1800 21st Street Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95811

The SHA does not itself provide or manage housing.

Mather VA Social Works: help getting DD-214, any vet. (916) 843-7064

Sacramento Veterans Resource Center
7270 East Southgate Dr. 393-8387

Miscellaneous

Francis House Center: 1422 C St. 9:00-noon walk-in - direct services resource counseling, vouchers for IDs, Dvr Licenses, Birth Certs, Transp Assistance; noon-3:00 - appts for in-depth resource counseling; by appt: Senior/Disability/Verteranis advocacy, notary service. Job Development Center open 9am-3pm MTU-W-F and noon-3pm Th. Motel vouchers for qualified families. 443-2646

Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services: 3333 3rd Ave. (south of Broadway) Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 10am-1:30pm, and Wed 4pm-7pm. 456-1980.

Social Services: 28th & R ST. M-F 7:30am-5pm. Call for asst. 874-2072

Employment Development Department (EDD): 2901 50th St. (at Broadway) M-F 8am-5pm. Unemployment, job services. 227-0300

Medi-Cal: 1-800-773-6467, 1-888-747-1222. Or see DHA eligibility workers 1725 28th St. 916-874-2256

Social Security Office: 8581 Folsom Blvd (East of College Greens Lite-rail stop) M-F 9am-4:30pm 381-9410: Natl line 1-800-772-1213

211 Sacramento

Dial 211
for tele-info & referral service

Health Rights Hotline:
551-2100

Welcome to Homeward:

Please help us make a difference!



Homeward Street Journal has been publishing since 1997 as a non-profit project of the Sacramento Homeless Organizing

Committee, which is a member of the Sacramento Housing Alliance. The paper's mission is to alleviate miscommunication between communities by educating the public about housing and poverty issues, and by giving homeless people a voice in the public forum. Homeward also informs homeless persons of shelter and occupational assistance, and acts as a creative self-help opportunity for those individuals who wish to participate.

The opinions expressed in Homeward are those of the authors, and not necessarily the Sacramento Housing Alliance or SHOC or Homeward.

Submissions and Editorial Policy

We welcome any participation or contributions: Articles, poems and other writing can be submitted at our office in Friendship Park, or mailed to the address below.

All writing submitted for publication will be edited as necessary, with due respect for the author's intent. The editors will attempt to consult with an author if changes are necessary, however, the paper will go to print with the story as edited if the author is unavailable.

All Letters to the Editor must be signed to be published. If the writer wishes to remain anonymous s/he should so state, but the letter must still be signed.

Poetry and graphics will not be edited, either the paper will publish the submission or not.

In submitting articles to the paper, authors give their permission to print their submissions in accordance with the above stipulations, as well as possible reprinting in NASNA member papers, with due byline. Any requests for stories outside the above three will be referred to the author.

Subscriptions are available with a \$20 contribution. Make checks out to SHOC (Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee).

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