

SONOMA COUNTY

peace press

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- ▶ The Truth About the Ukraine Crisis
- ▶ Do Black People's Lives Matter in Sonoma County?
- ▶ So. Co. Commission on Human Rights
- ▶ We Are Here to Honor Our Son

and more...



"...thinking of the mothers
escaping terror in Ukraine,
Syria, Yemen, Sudan,
Latin America..."

– Sallie Latch, artist

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SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Deadline for June/July issue: May 16, 2022

Email articles in MSWord to peacentr@sonic.net

(put PEACE PRESS in all caps on subject line)

Word limit up to 700 words (negotiable).

Shorter pieces welcome about local actions and events.

Authors are encouraged to delineate fact from opinion and wherever possible to substantiate their facts with references. Include ways readers can engage with the movement for peace and social justice.

We welcome poems but limited to approx. 30 lines.

EDITING POLICY

The Editorial Collective selects articles that serve the movement for peace and justice in a positive way. Articles are edited for clarity, syntax, grammar, length and spelling. If needed, authors will be contacted to assist with editing. Submissions must contain author's name, address, phone number, word count and a brief – one or two sentence bio. Decisions about editing fall within these guidelines and are the final judgment of the Peace Press editorial collective.

Articles are the opinion of the author unless otherwise noted.

CALENDAR ITEMS

Events on topics of social justice, environmental, and related items to be placed in the PJC weekly email calendar, can be sent to peacentr@sonic.net

Include CALENDAR (in caps) on subject line.

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To receive the PJC weekly Social Justice e-newsletter, or to schedule an appointment, contact us through our website: PJCso.org

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GETTING CENTERED

A Change is Gonna Come...

Shekeyna Black

“Let us aim to harvest peace.

Let us exhaust ourselves in ploughing the stony ground.”

– Modern prayer from Turkey from the book, *Life Lines: 365 Meditations and Inspirations on Love and Peace.* (copyright 2002)

The Peace & Justice Center is seeking a part-time Administrator for 20 hours per week. Additionally, we are accepting applications for an Administrative Assistant and a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advocate for two shifts per week of three hours each. The job descriptions for both positions can be found [here](#).

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month or SAAM. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, “SAAM has also branched out to Spanish-speaking audiences as well, with campaigns in recent years that include Spanish content. Whether that is resources that cover the same information from the English campaign in Spanish, a different theme and style of resources, or a combination of the two, [SAAM en español](#) has helped even more communities get involved in prevention.”

Friday, April 22 is Earth Day. According to [earthday.org](#), “The Earth Day 2022 Theme is Invest In Our Planet.” Visit the website for Earth Day updates and events. Locally, the City of Santa Rosa is



Former PJC Board member, Jack Wikse removing the weeds from the PJC parking lot.

hosting an in person Earth Day event this year on Saturday, April 23rd in Courthouse Square from 11:00am to 2:00pm. Visit: [Santa Rosa Earth Day-2022](#) for more information.

May 1st is [International Workers Day](#). Here is a suggestion, “If you’re feeling a bit more politically inclined, you could attend one of the many rallies or marches organized in many cities worldwide dedicated to raising awareness about wages and working conditions.”

Locally, [Comité VIDA](#) and the May 1st Coalition has organized an Immigrant Rights Day of Action for International Workers Day. The key demands are:

- Immigration Reform for All
- 5 Demands for Farmworkers during Fires
- Respect and Dignity for Workers at Amy’s Kitchen
- End Sheriff Collaboration with I.C.E.

Meet at Amy’s Kitchen, located at 2330 Northpoint Parkway in Santa Rosa on Sunday, May 1st at 1:00 pm. March to Old Courthouse Square in downtown Santa Rosa. There will be speakers and a presentation by [ALMAS](#) Theater (Alianza de Mujeres Activas y Solidarias, Women’s Action and Solidarity Alliance). See page 11 for more details.

Shout-out to the people who helped with our February 28 hot soup and bread delivery to homeless encampments. The event was spearheaded by PJC Board Member, Audrianna Jones. A delicious and nutritious chicken noodle soup chock full of vegetables was lovingly prepared by Ron Woodman who spent several hours cooking the 32 Quarts of soup. Members of the PJC Board, Steve Devereux and Rebel Fagin along with Eve Navarro, sliced, buttered and toasted the loaves of donated bread. Then, shifts of the Board Members and other Volunteers went out to deliver the hot meal with bottles of water to 60 people on a cold winter night. They were also able to deliver some warm clothes and a few sleeping bags. Great big THANK YOU to Tim Vallery, the Chef from Ferrari Carrano who donated the to-go soup containers.

Also, we greatly appreciate Jack Wikse who spent some time removing the weeds from the PJC parking lot in March.

We are re-envisioning the Peace & Justice Center and would love to hear from you on this matter. Send us a message via the contact page on [our website](#). 🌱



Volunteer Ron Woodman making Chicken Noodle Soup for people in houseless encampments.

Perspective on Ukraine from a Palestinian-American

Therese Walrath

Speech Given at the Demonstration for Ukraine at Courthouse Square, March 6

We are here because we truly believe that war is NEVER the answer between nations or peoples in dispute. Like you, I have seen the pictures in the media, showing devastated families, crying mothers trying to shield and comfort their children, whose confused little faces are full of questions, old men and women trying to keep up, dragging suitcases behind.



Local Veterans for Peace attended the Rally to Stop the Bombing of Ukraine. Photo: Terry Connelly

I'm a mother and a grandmother and I can hardly imagine the anguish and pain of those Ukrainian women I've seen in the news, leaving behind their men and their country, both of which they may never see again. Hard to believe our eyes when we see the effects of bombs dropped in civilian areas, devastation in neighborhoods where children used to play. Imagine that. Have we learned anything from the wars of the last century? Or even from conflicts of the last two decades all over the world which have displaced so many innocents from their homes, most notably in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and so many other places?

I am Palestinian by birth, and months after I was born my family had to flee the war and massacres which displaced us and countless others into a neighboring country, never to return to live in our beloved Palestine. So much cruelty and injustice in this world which often fuel more hatred, bitterness, and conflict.

Yet, I am learning to resist the temptation to be carried away by the prevailing nar-

rative about what is happening in Ukraine and Russia and why it is happening. I AM a grateful American, well – most of the time, deeply grateful for opportunities this country has given me and my family. But I am beyond trusting what comes out of the mouths of US spokespersons, both Whitehouse and pentagon, or our allies and our sensationalist media.

Let me tell you how I view what is happening today in this current conflict. But before I do, I want to be sure you hear me

when I say that I ethically and morally object to what Vladimir Putin has done/is doing in Ukraine. It's barbaric and can never be justified. You may disagree with me, but as I see it, NATO and the US must carry their share of responsibility

for this war. In an article by Norman Solomon I recently came across, he quotes historian David Gibbs who says:

"It is worth recalling how much the NATO alliance has weakened world security since the end of the Cold War, by inflaming relations with Russia. It is often forgotten that the cause of the current conflict arose from a 1990 US promise that NATO would never be expanded into the former communist states of Eastern Europe. Not 'one inch to the East,' Russian leaders were promised by the US Secretary of State at the time, James Baker. Despite this promise, NATO soon expanded into Eastern Europe, eventually placing the alliance up against Russia's borders. The present-day US-Russian conflict is the direct result of this expansion."

I'm not a fan of Putin, but it seems sensible to me, to have pressed for diplomacy and negotiations immediately. I'm neither a historian nor a politician, but I do know some things. Is it not ultimate arrogance and, as we continue to see pictures of unnecessary death and devastation, very dangerous to

continue to operate from the throne of: "Do as I say, not as I do?" What about following the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you. I know I'm an idealist, but don't you agree that honest listening and negotiating is better than all the arms shipments the West is sending to the Ukraine, which inevitably will fall into the hands of the wrong people as has happened in Afghanistan, Iraq, and many other places?

Andrei Tsygankov, professor of international relations at San Francisco State University, said the following, BEFORE the bombing began:

"Whatever plans Russia may have with respect to Ukraine and NATO, conflict resolution greatly depends on the West. A major war is avoidable if Western leaders gather confidence and the will to abandon the counterproductive language of threats and engage Russia in reasoned dialogue. If diplomacy is given a fair chance, the European continent may arrive at a new security system that will reflect, among others, Russia's interests and participation."

Is a NATO allied Ukraine of more value



A sign at the rally demanding end to the war and end to the cause of the war. Photo: Terry Connelly

than all the human suffering and devastation, and the thousands of lives destroyed? History tells us that despots rise and fall, as do empires.

Perspective on Ukraine...see page 3

Deceitful Sales

On Sunday, March 6 the Peace & Justice Center held a peace rally in Courthouse Square in support of the people of Ukraine. Somewhere shy of 200 people attended. Technical problems drew the focus of the organizers away from the event itself and into resolving these issues. As well as great speakers, there were two or three organizations tabling there. At one a white man and a white woman with an eastern European sounding accent, people we'd never seen before, were selling t-shirts and other items allegedly in support of the people of Ukraine.

A number of event attendees bought these items to support the Ukrainians. Some paid for them with debit cards or credit cards. When they got their bank statements, they discovered that the money had gone to TRUMP MAGA STAND New Orleans, LA USA. The people staffing this table lied to people in order to use this crowd to raise money for Trump the only way they could, through deceit. There's no evidence to support the idea that any money they acquired went to the Ukraine. You might want to

have a chat with these folks if you see them at other events.

This has never happened to us before. Usually groups that table have flyers for events, membership forms, petitions, information and maybe buttons, books or other items for sale on the side. Their focus is



Person at right selling T-shirts and other items at the Rally for Ukraine. It was later revealed that the money was going to a MAGA organization. Photo: Terry Connelly

on organizing, not marketing. What we're going to do in the future is try to work primarily with organizations we know. When new ones show up, we'll vet them as best we can. There are limits on what we can or want to do at a free, public event. Some people want us to ask for vendor's licenses and call the cops. We don't want to go that road. Instead, we want to build community for it is through community that we exist. 🌱

Perspective on Ukraine... from page 2

I have another issue and painful comparison with the way the West and the US are responding to this war. And I preface what I want to say with my agreement with all the sanctions placed on Putin and the oligarchs, but also, sadly, on the people of Russia, some of whom are protesting this war and are paying the price for it.

Being a Palestinian-American engaged in helping to bring justice to the decades long struggle and conflict in Palestine/Israel, I wonder about the double standard the US and the West in general most often employ. Why was the world largely silent when Israeli airplanes were dropping US made bombs on civilians in Gaza in May of last year? Or when the Saudi backed forces were dropping bombs – again, US made – on the people of

Yemen? Could it be because the Gazans and the Yeminis do not have blue eyes and blond hair? Think about it.

I read some days ago that the International Criminal Court, the ICC, in the first few days of the bombing, sent representatives to Ukraine to collect evidence of war crimes committed by the Russian military, which I applaud. But why is it that the same ICC court still hasn't done anything about the war crimes committed by the apartheid government of Israel against its occupied indigenous Palestinian population? This, even after three major human rights organizations have done extensive research and have publicly announced that Israel is an apartheid state. Yes, three prominent human

Perspective on Ukraine...see page 4

'chosen battles'

by Katrina Phillips

and so your words
scatter
like bones
thrown across the floor
telling me my future
in puzzles and whispers.
a knuckle and a tear
I wish I could hear
you better.

I put my ear to the ground
to listen for impending armies
ready for triage..
the endless swarm
of tragedies
needing red blood cells
prosthetic legs and plastic spleens
but there is only silence.

speak to me
in words I can understand
and I will
concentrate on learning your language

somewhere in the middle
of the desert
we can finally meet,
our hearts the common denominator.

no pacts, no treaties
let us solve this
without the use
of our skeletons.

our bones
were never meant
to be thrown.

The Truth About the Ukraine Crisis

Barry Barnett

Crass media in the West would have you believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin is (the latest) Hitler. But Putin's comment on the eve of his 2/24/22 invasion of Ukraine was much more rational: "I was surprised how the West would not budge one millimeter in respecting our security concerns."

Maybe Western "diplomats" should have taken his concerns more seriously. But promising Ukraine would not join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was termed a "non-starter" by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Some observers

I am not an apologist for Putin, nor for any war. I wanted to give the correct context for this conflict — and publish info generally not carried by the corporate press.

suggested the US wanted Russia to invade Ukraine (see below) — to increase mega-profits for the death merchants — and to breathe down Russia's neck at all its borders.

Breaking the US' 2/9/90 promise to Russia (then the USSR) not to expand the NATO military alliance eastward, threatening Russian borders, NATO added a whopping 14 former Soviet republics or satellites as members — all of them former members of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact.

The danger of Putin placing Russia's nuclear forces on high alert seems to have not fazed the masters of war — who, after all, manufacture these ultimate weapons.

Corporate media are agreed on rewriting history — ignoring all US and NATO provocations, solely focusing on Russia's "hostilities," and beginning history with its annexation of Crimea on 3/18/14.

The situation is complex, but the key is an accurate understanding of history.

A good place to begin is the US' support for anti-Russian militias that succeeded in overthrowing the democratically elected government of Viktor Yanukovytych and replacing it with a pro-Western one. In Nov. 2013, protests in Kiev's "Maidan," (the capital's Independence "Square"), led to

the Euromaidan, a populist uprising against corruption that was usurped by violent neo-Nazi militias, then violence by police.

A 2/6/14 Reuters article revealed a leaked conversation indicting Obama (and former Bush-Cheney) officials in deciding a new pro-Western government for Ukraine.

In the late Jan. 2014 phone call, US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt discussed ousting Yanukovytych and replacing him with Arseniy Yatseniuk — which is exactly what transpired, on 2/27/14. Russia threatened to intervene to maintain security as early as eight years ago, because it accused the US of arming rebels who went on to overthrow the Ukrainian government (all true). The US refused to allow Ukraine to remain neutral — and still refuses.

In 2012 and 2013, Yanukovytych was negotiating with the European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a sizable loan, lower tariffs, and security agreements.

But the result was less money and more austerity, while Russia offered Ukraine a \$15 billion loan and natural gas prices lower by nearly 1/3 (without corporate privatization), to keep Ukraine in its orbit.

Yanukovytych accepted Russia's offer, and the Ukrainian parliament voted for it, triggering the Maidan protests — and the US took advantage. It is fairly well known that Reuters quoted Nuland in the call as saying, "Fuck the EU" (for not being tough enough on Russia). She was forced to apologize, but the US' role, and the Nazi makeup of the most proactive force in the revolution, have been consistently downplayed or ignored. 13,000 people died in the resulting Ukrainian Civil War. And the US got its way: Germany had agreed to close the Nordstream 2 Pipeline from Russia if Ukraine was invaded, and now Ukraine has to pay higher prices for its natural gas (from the West).

The 2014-15 Minsk Agreements, drafted to end civil strife, were broken again and again.

I think Putin could have postponed invasion pending more negotiations that were talked about too late. Now that war is actually a deadly reality, perhaps accepting Putin's four demands will stop the carnage: 1. Ukraine ends all military action, 2. writes in its constitution that it will not join NATO

nor the EU, 3. recognizes Crimea as Russian territory, and 4. accepts independence of the two Eastern breakaway regions in the Donbas (Ukrainian spelling Donbass), Donetsk and Luhansk.

There is some indication that these "non-starters" are being reconsidered.

I am not an apologist for Putin, nor for any war. I wanted to give the correct context for this conflict — and publish info generally not carried by the corporate press.

Sources: KPFA news, Feb.-Mar. 2022; The US is Culpable in Today's Ukraine Crisis, The Space Worm, Substack 3/3/22; Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, Wikipedia; Minsk Agreements, Wikipedia; A US-Backed, Far Right-Led Revolution in Ukraine Helped Bring Us to the Brink of War, Branko Marcetic, Jacobin 2/7/22. 🌿

Barry Barnett is a political and environmental activist and author, health professional, and musician. You can read his writing on [counterpunch.org/archives/author's name](https://counterpunch.org/archives/author's-name), and on Patreon.com/BarryBarnett, with ~100 articles, humor/satire, poetry, and political fantasy stories, all free of charge to read. Feedback welcome at barrymuse123@gmail.com.

Perspective on Ukraine...

from page 3

rights organizations — Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Israeli human rights organization B'tselem — have all announced that Israel is without doubt an apartheid state.

I believe it's time. It's time that we end the deadly game of racism. It's time that we open our hearts and our doors to all human beings fleeing for their lives, fleeing for a safer and better life for themselves and their children, whether they are Ukrainians or Hattians, or Mexicans. Just like my family fled 1948 Palestine.

It's also time that we listen to the concerns and fears of other peoples and nations. That we stop demonizing them for not bowing down to us, the remarkable and — at the same time — often arrogant and cruel empire we have become. We need to stop meddling in other nations' affairs and then building walls, psychological or real, to protect ourselves when they try to escape the destruction of their communities caused by our corporate greed and power. Let's instead all work earnestly and commit ourselves to do what is necessary to bring about justice and peace to all living beings on our planet, no exception. 🌿

Why Are Some Refugees Welcome While Some Are Not?

Sallie Latch

Watch as millions of Ukrainians struggle to escape the Russian terror in their homeland. We sympathize with their fears and agonize over the lives lost and those ruined. I'm reminded of the refugees I met in 2016 when I had gone to Samos, Greece to help the Syrian, Pakistani, Afghani, Palestinian, and Africans who arrived there. They were people who had escaped poverty, death and violence in upheavals in their countries and were searching for peace and safety. What they found on arrival in Samos was a detention camp. Instead of a warm welcome they were locked up, sometimes sent back home to certain death.

Politicians took advantage of what became known as the "refugee crisis." They bowed to the basest instincts of a population that didn't want those strangers in their land, those people with odd headdresses, a foreign culture and religion. They whipped up hatred in the hopes of

garnering votes. They got votes. The Right Wing grew. Conditions for the refugees became unbearable.

During my eight months stay on Samos, I interviewed many refugees. I heard their stories of escape and near death experiences while traveling thousands of miles through mountains and deserts, trying to avoid wild animals, including the police who were constantly on the lookout for them. Hunger, freezing cold, thirst, imprisonment, and sickness never left them. Avoiding death was a constant effort. So was the need to pay off often deceitful smugglers in hopes of obtaining a safe arrival. Many times this never happened.

Often the small, unsafe overcrowded boats carrying the men, women and children from Turkey to Samos didn't make it and capsized at sea. Sometimes whole families disappeared. If they did arrive safely, they were taken immediately to the detention center where they were kept for an indeterminate time; lockups often depended on

political decisions made by men in well-tailored suits in air conditioned offices in some far off country.

It should become obvious that the people I've referred to are all Brown or Black; not White and blue-eyed like the desperate Ukrainians who are welcomed with open arms across Europe and the US. Volunteers are rushing to help them and fundraisers are rampant. NATO and the US are providing Ukraine with over a billion dollars in humanitarian aid and weaponry. There are no detention camps for them. What a contrast to the arrival received by the Middle Eastern, African, and South Asian peoples.

Given the ugly history of racism and bigotry, it's reasonable to suspect that the Ukrainians are treated as they should be because their skin color and culture are more acceptable to people of similar characteristics. The brown and black skin and cultures of the Syrians, Africans, Afghans, Palestinians, and Pakistanis as well as Latinos,

Yemenis, and Haitians are not acceptable. As a result, millions are lingering on streets, under bridges and in overcrowded, dangerous, flimsy tent cities devoid of needed humane care, justice, and hope. The difference in the way Brown, Black, and White brothers and sisters are treated only brings shame. For the good of all, this must be changed. There is no time to waste.

While I was in Greece, I was asked by the Schwarz Foundation of Munich, Germany, to put my interviews into book form which I did. You can learn more about the realities of being an unwanted refugee if you read *HEAR ME* by Sally Latch, available through Amazon and Lulu.com. 📖



Do Black People's Lives Matter in Sonoma County?

Written in collaboration of five organizations

The recently released 2021 Portrait of Sonoma Report paints a bleak picture of disparate life expectancy gaps. Black people's life spans are reduced by living here. To understand the context of this report, it must be noted that no data on the Black/African American community was collected for the previous 2014 report. The reason previously given by county officials was that Black/African Americans in Sonoma County are "statistically insignificant." While Black people may make up a lower demographic of the total population at 2.1% (US Census Bureau) than some of our Bay Area neighboring counties, there are over 10,000 Black folks spread throughout the county. Much work went into ensuring that data was collected on this community for this report. This is a call for swift action for a community in dire need of support.

The systems that specifically deny advancement in the areas of health, economics, education, employment, housing, generational

We call on the county and cities to allocate the necessary funding to address these disparities and work with existing organizations like the NAACP and Sonoma County Black Forum to bring equity based programs to the community.

wealth and life expectancy must be addressed. We know that anti-Blackness and discrimination have been enshrined in our country's policies by design since its founding. We know that discriminatory vehicles such as redlining, racialized real estate steering and denial of loans, mortgages and affordable housing were built into the function of our federal, state and local governments with the passing of the New Deal at the end of the Great Depression. We know that Black homeownership is [lower now](#) than before the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. We know that Sonoma County, with its founding history of pro-Confederacy and an exploitative, agricultural plantation system, has displayed this same story of bias and racism against Black people. The result of this is that these interlocking systems of racism are reducing lives, well below the state and federal human development index. In short, racism is a public health crisis in Sonoma County, and should be declared as such.

Sonoma County's Black residents have a lifespan ten years shorter than any other racial and ethnic group in the county and have lower educational attainment rates than the county average. The Sonoma County human development index HDI score for Blacks has decreased from 4.68 to 3.99, well below the California HDI score of 5.85 and the US HDI score of 5.33. Black residents of Sonoma County live over three years fewer, on average, than Black Californians. Nearly fifteen years separate the life expectancies of Black (71.0 years) and Latino (85.5 years) residents. Black renters face the highest housing burden in the county at 68%. Two in

three Asian and white households in Sonoma County own their own homes, double the rate of Black households (34%). Black and Native American people are over-represented among Sonoma County residents who are unhoused. Black residents are about 2% of Sonoma's population while Native Americans make up under 1%, yet these groups constitute 6% and 9% of Sonoma's homeless population, respectively. Black children and young adults are enrolled in school at a rate 6 percentage points lower than the Black statewide average. Black residents have the lowest rate of school enrollment at 69.3%. Among Black residents, drug overdose deaths were five times higher in 2020 than the average in 2017 to 2019.

Many have struggled for justice and fought for visibility on these issues, but it took Black officials who no longer work for the county to bring some of this data forward for the first time in its history. Black lives have mattered so little to Sonoma County that no one bothered to look. Former Health Department Services Director Barbie Robinson had already identified through the 2020 California Policy Lab Report that Black people are three times as likely to be [high utilizers](#) of multiple systems, and that we are disproportionately represented within the unsheltered population. Former Economic Development Board Director Sheba Person-Whitley, also the author of the County's [Racial Equity](#) Pillar in the Strategic Plan, identified that Black people occupy just 0.8% of home owner-occupied housing units compared to 88% white. Despite all of the data, the Board recently chose to allocate the least amount of funding to the Racial Equity and Justice

Pillar in its five year Strategic Plan. Who will take accountability for these conditions and allocate funding and programs to address the fact that Black people's lives are in danger here?

Sonoma County is upholding conditions which reduce the life expectancy for Black people. Other counties in the state are paying attention to the dire need for racial equity and justice and implementing programs that strive to heal the generational divides, investing in Black futures. San Francisco's [Dream Keeper](#) Initiative and San Diego's [Black Home Buyers](#) Grant Program are tangible examples of commitments to equity. Despite over a year of lobbying and engagement from Black leadership and partnership with the Bay Area Black Health and Housing Task Force, Sonoma County has yet to take action on the dismal results of the 2021 Portrait of Sonoma. Black people are dying faster than anyone else in Sonoma County. That isn't equity. It's an injustice. We are being failed by this county. We call on the county and cities to allocate the necessary funding to address these disparities and work with existing organizations like the NAACP and Sonoma County Black Forum to bring equity based programs to the community. 🌱

In Solidarity,

[NAACP Santa Rosa-Sonoma County Branch](#)

[Sonoma County Black Forum](#)

[Blacks United](#)

[North Bay Black Chamber](#)

[Petaluma Blacks for Community Development](#)



Katrina Philips & Kathleen Finigan

Throughout the seemingly endless lockdowns due to Covid-19 in the past two years the Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights (CHR), galvanized under the past Chairs, D’Mitra Smith and Jerry Threet, and today forges ahead as a Band of Peaceful Warriors for Justice led by current Chair Katrina Phillips.

“The primary purpose of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is to promote better human relations among all people in Sonoma County through education, advocacy, and by initiating action that fosters the

Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights

recognition of, and appreciation for, the diversity of our community.”

Some of the main issues the Commission have been working on are immigrant rights, rights of the disabled, rights of the unhoused and the deep seated racism that has driven this country since the land was stolen from The First Peoples.

Throughout the extremely cold winter the Commission worked with Acts of Kindness and Homeless Action! to help save lives. Heather Jackson of Sonoma County Acts of Kindness was the first recipient of our monthly Community Spotlight award in May 2020, whereby the Commission honors someone from the community who is doing exemplary work in the community for the community.

Other honorees have included Elizabeth Quiroz and Lisa McQuaid, Redemption House of the Bay Area (both survivors of

human trafficking working to help people currently being trafficked), Jennifer Petruska, Fire Pet Rescue and Reunification, a 100% volunteer organization that has helped rescue and reunite thousands of pets since the Tubbs fire to the present throughout Northern CA, and Kirstyne Lange of NAACP Santa Rosa for her endless work in race relations and equity.

CHR (with amazing cosponsors: NAACP Santa Rosa, ACLU, CLEAN, North Bay LGBTQI Families and NBOP) will host a SOCO Sheriff Candidate Forum on April 7, 2022 at 6:30pm via Zoom and FB live. Register here to attend: bit.ly/SOCOSheriff22

CHR meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month via Zoom and are open to the public. We are here to help anybody whose rights have been violated. [Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights](https://www.sonoma-county.org/chr). email: socochr@sonoma-county.org 📧

Braver Angels for Unity

Mary Munat

Framing the problem: Braver Angels is a bipartisan citizen’s movement to unify our divided nation. By bringing red, blue and other Americans together into a working alliance, we’re building new ways to talk to one another, participate together in public life, and influence the direction of the nation.

- We have become two Americas, each angry at the other, and neither trusting the other’s basic humanity and good intentions.
- We view our political opponents as uninformed, misguided, or stupid or bad people whose ways of thinking are both dangerous and incomprehensible.
- We see tremendous diversity on “our side,” and we see the “other side” as monolithic.
- We live in echo chambers that reinforce

our views, and tend to make them more extreme.

- Many of us have banished “the other” from our lives.
- This level of civic rancor threatens our democracy.
- Often people avoid discussing political views; “walking on egg shells.”
- Many people experience some level of hopelessness or despair as a result.

And a solution – What is Braver Angels?

- In our founding, leadership, finances and core programming, we are evenly split between liberals and conservatives.
- Our approach is informed by the Braver Angels Pledge:
 - As individuals, we try to understand the other side’s point of view, even if we don’t agree with it.

- In our communities, we engage those we disagree with, looking for common ground and ways to work together.
- In politics, we support principles that bring us together rather than divide us.
- Supported financially by membership dues (\$12/year) and by contributions from foundations and individuals.

Red/Blue Workshops

- 7 conservatives and 7 liberals/progressives spend a day listening to and learning from each other, rather than arguing, debating, or persuading.
- The idea is to see if we can better understand our experiences, beliefs and differences, explore any points of common ground, and get to know each other a little bit.

These workshops produce measurable results:

- less stereotyped thinking about the other side
- more trust in the good intentions and basic humanity of those on the other side. 📧

We Are Here to Honor Our Son

Marni & Chris Wroth

On May 12, 2017, five heavily armed men entered a motel room at the Budget Inn in Rohnert Park. In that room they brutally tortured, and then suffocated, an unarmed man who was experiencing a mental health crisis. That man was Branch Wroth, our son.

Despite his disorientated mental state, Branch realized the cruel intent of the heav-

Torture, aka pain compliance, is now institutionalized practice of police departments in over 8,000 law enforcement jurisdictions in America.

ily armed men – and he immediately pleaded for his life. “Please don’t kill me.”, he begged of them. In response to his plea for his life to be spared, two of the men grabbed his arms. Fearing for his life, Branch lunged toward the motel window. The five attackers then tortured him for several minutes, inflicting as much pain as they could.

To cause him severe and intense pain, one of the attackers punched him in the face and head over a dozen times with his closed fist. Another attacker shocked him several times with 50,000 volts from an electrical firearm. Another attacker hit him again and again with a heavy metal flashlight – on the back, ribs, and legs. Then, after they had beaten and tortured him for several minutes, they suffocated him and he died. Did they catch the thugs who did this? Yes.

The five attackers were all part of a well-known gang. They call themselves the Rohnert Park Police. The gang’s employer, who paid the attackers to torture and kill Branch, is the Rohnert Park City Council.

Branch’s mother and father filed a federal wrongful death lawsuit against the thugs and their leaders. In October of 2018, a federal judge facilitated a mandatory settlement conference between Branch’s parents and the City of Rohnert Park. At that conference, Branch’s parents offered to settle for a single dollar – but only if Rohnert Park would reform their police department. The federal judge set up a meeting between the Wroth lawyers and the City of Rohnert Park to discuss police reform. The City of Rohnert Park decided not to have the meeting, and it never happened.

On June 20, 2019, a jury of ten people

unanimously agreed that the murder of Branch was horribly wrong. The court ordered the City of Rohnert Park to pay Branch’s parents four million dollars. Rohnert Park appealed the verdict and won a new trial because of unclear jury instructions given by the judge. Another settlement conference was mandated. Branch’s mother suffered a stroke 12 days before the mandated conference.

Knowing that age and health were concerns of Branch’s parents, Rohnert Park attorneys pointed out that they could extend litigation for at least five years – regardless of the outcome of the upcoming trial. Consequently, Branch’s parents agreed to settle for two million dollars.

The Blue Thug gang continues to torture routinely in Rohnert Park. The Oxford English Dictionary defines torture as ‘the act or practice of inflicting severe pain on someone as a punishment, or to force them to do or say something, or for the pleasure of the person inflicting the pain.’ In other words, inflicting severe pain to get them to comply. In police

jargon, this is called “pain compliance.” Torture, aka pain compliance, is now institutionalized practice of police departments in over 8,000 law enforcement jurisdictions in America. You can easily find the torture techniques that were used to kill Branch. They begin at Section 303.1 in the Rohnert Park Public Safety Manual.

Over 35 years ago, while working at Napa State Mental Hospital, Branch’s father was sent to a required three-week training called ‘Management of Assaultive Behavior.’ Hospital staff learned how four staff members, acting as a team, can control an assailant’s arms and legs, and safely restrain even the strongest assailants, using techniques called ‘mechanical manipulation.’ Trainees were told to avoid applying pressure to the patient’s chest or upper back – to avoid suffocation. None of the gang members who killed Branch had training in mechanical manipulation. One of the killers said that a police trainer told him that positional asphyxiation (suffocation) is a myth.

Rest in Peace, Branch. You are remembered and honored. Those who killed you are being exposed to all. 🕊️

10th Anniversary of Women’s Spaces Radio Show on KBBF 89.1FM

Congratulations to Elaine B. Holtz and Kenneth Norton co-producers of the radio show, “Women’s Spaces,” celebrating their 10th year on KBBF 89.1FM. Elaine has a long history with KBBF coming on the air first from 1977 to 1981 at the time when women’s music was coming of age. She chose as a theme song, “The Woman in Your Life is You,” sung by Alix Dobkin which can be heard at the beginning and end of the shows.

Both Elaine and Ken are excited about their upcoming Earth Day Show which will air on Monday April 18, 2022 – Earth Day is April 22. Ken will be sharing his first Earth Day Experience in 1970.

Ken reports it was a smoggy day in Los Angeles when on February 20, 1970, as a kickstart to the era of ecological concern from a Humanities course, organized the student-funded, The Survival Faire and the purchase of a new orange Maverick to bury in a grave dug on the campus after a solemn funeral procession through downtown San Jose.

Students and scholars of colleges and universities around the nation were concerned over the environmental impact of automobile exhaust and pesticides. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin found much willingness around the country to found the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. The Survival Faire was such a memorable event with street theatre that the New York Times reported on it <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/02/21/archives/survival-theme-of-fair-0n-coast-students-at-san-jose-state-bury-new.html>

The show airs live every Monday from 11-12 pm and replays Monday evening from 11-12 am. Elaine can be reached at elaineholtz@gmail.com.

When Being Organic Just Isn't Good Enough

Rebel Fagin

Amy's Kitchen is a highly successful producer of tasty, easy to prepare, vegetarian foods. This makes them quite cool in the eyes of many consumers and it has paid off. They are reportedly the sixth largest manufacturer of frozen meals in the country. In 2020 they enjoyed \$600 million in sales. Production averages have risen from 21,000 plates a shift to 25,716. Yet this success hasn't come without a cost.

Early this year Amy's line-workers began organizing for worker safety. Their claim is that Amy's management had pressured injured workers to stay on the production line after reporting injuries and that Amy's has failed to provide reasonable accommodations for injured workers. One worker, Ines De La Luz, was told to remove an arm brace she'd been prescribed to deal with repeated stress injury. Following her becoming a candidate for corrective surgery, Amy's eliminated her position.

"There are a lot of days that I think that I'm good for nothing, that my life will never be the same and I'll never live without pain again."

De La Luz is one of five Amy's employees, former and current, who've filed an OSHA complaint addressing health and safety issues. The complaint states that workers do not have access to restrooms or drinking water during their shifts. The complaint alleges that this was due to "pressure to maintain line speed" as production increased. While production went up, wages did not. The complaint also describes "locked fire exits, worn-out floor mats and a lack of training for lifting and operating heavy machinery."

Management denies this. Chief People Officer, Mike Resch, says they encourage employees to raise any safety complaints so that they can be fixed. CEO Andy Berliner told the Press Democrat that Amy's was founded as a work place caring for "the whole person". Amy's management claims that they respond to injuries quickly. Workers claim that they have to prove injuries with a doctor's note from the medical provider the company works with, Concentra. Workers say the doctors downplay their injuries.

Workers are organizing to try to address health and safety concerns with a future goal of forming a union with the Teamsters. Teamsters 665 is helping them by advocating for workers during their Cal OSHA complaint investigation and actively helping organize the work place. Amy's workers want CEO Andy Berliner to meet with them and their advocates from 665 so that both parties can discuss ways to end needless injuries and put safe guards in place so these injuries don't reoccur. Berliner has met with some selected workers without their advocates. He has yet to meet with any of the workers named in the OSHA filing.

Every Friday workers dress in green and rally at the entrance to Amy's Kitchen to try to build a union. There are also a few anti-union forces picketing opposite them. Tension and division amongst workers follow. This is the perfect setting for union buster Lupe Cruz of Quest Consultants, a business he founded in 2019. Amy's

hired him to "teach" the workers about unions. Among labor organizers, Cruz is a well-known union buster specializing in Latinx dominate workplaces. When management hires a consultant to "teach" about unions, they generally overstate the costs and ignore the benefits.

To learn more, go to [Amy's Kitchen Workers on Facebook](#) where you can sign a support petition calling for safer working conditions, better health care and a living wage. If you don't do Facebook you can [find the petition here](#) to show your support.

Sources: NBCnews.com 1/17/22, Press Democrat 1/17/22 & 2/24/22, sf.eater.com 1/31/22, email interview with Matthew McQuaid of Teamsters 665, teamsters.org., Bohemian 2/16/22. 🌱


Early Spring

by Michael Browne

Today,
 The sun seems returning to its apogee
 It's spring I see
 And
 The thing most loved
 Is that the raking light
 Coming through the studio window
 Striking the wall of memories
 Brings to me
 Pictures
 Of dear ones brightly lit
 As they stand in a long ago summer garden.
 She's gone now,
 The 'how' of it
 Still heartbreaking
 And
 He,
 A brother,
 As we old men move
 In a reverse
 Of time past
 And
 Lovingly tell ourselves
 Why we cannot let go of love.

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PHOTO: TERRY CONNELLY

Concerned members of the community gathered in Santa Rosa’s Courthouse Square on March 6, to show support for the people of Ukraine and listen to diverse viewpoints of speakers. This is a quote from Therese Walrath’s speech that day: “Whatever plans Russia may have with respect to Ukraine and NATO, conflict resolution greatly depends on the West. A major war is avoidable if Western leaders gather confidence and the will to abandon the counterproductive language of threats and engage Russia in reasoned dialogue.” 🌿

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY IMMIGRANT RIGHTS DAY OF ACTION

MAY 1, 2022

MAY DAY MARCH TO OLD COURTHOUSE SQUARE • SANTA ROSA

1 PM • MEET AT 2330 NORTHPOINT
PARKWAY, SANTA ROSA

Immigration Reform for All
5 for Farmworkers in Fires
Respect + Dignity for Workers at Amy's Kitchen
End Sheriff Collaboration with ICE



WITH SPEAKERS AND A THEATRICAL PRESENTATION BY ALMAS THEATER

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS DAY OF ACTION

The May 1st Coalition, workers rights groups, immigrant rights groups, labor unions and community organizations invite the community to participate in the Santa Rosa May 1st International Workers Day march and rally. Meet at 1:00 pm, Sunday May 1st, outside of Amy's Kitchen at 2330 Northpoint Parkway, Santa Rosa. We are advocating for:

- Immigration Reform for All
- 5 Demands for Farmworkers during Fires
- Respect and Dignity for Workers at Amy's Kitchen
- End Sheriff Collaboration with I.C.E.

After a brief rally in solidarity with Amy's Kitchen workers, the march will begin. Going East on Northpoint Parkway towards Stony Point Rd. We'll continue North on Stony Point Rd towards Sebastopol Rd., then head East on Sebastopol Rd toward Olive St. We will head North on Olive St. (which becomes Railroad St.) toward West 3rd St. We will then head East on W. 3rd St. to Old Courthouse Square and gather there for a rally with speakers and will conclude with a theatrical presentation by ALMAS Theater Group. For more details you may contact Luis at (707) 294-5005 or Comité VIDA at: bit.ly/ComiteVida

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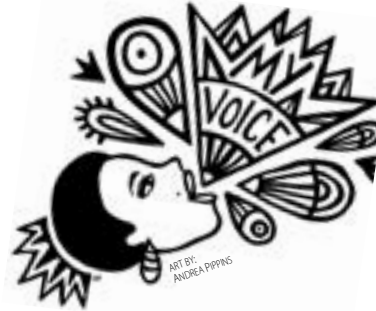
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Join the Network Call List: 583-9168**Alternatives to Violence** – Presents experiential workshops in personal growth in the community and prisons. 545-1798**Comité VIDA** – Defends the human and civil rights of immigrants. 523-1740, circsc@yahoo.com,**Daily Acts** – Offers sustainable solutions rooted in the power of inspired daily actions. 789-9664, dailyacts.org**Fukushima Response** – works to inform about the Fukushima melt downs, monitor the consequences, advocate for the shut down of Diablo Canyon. fukushimaresponse.org. 823-9203**Green Party of Sonoma County** – sonomagreenparty.org**Green Sangha** – Spiritually engaged environmental action. info@greensangha.org**HPEACE** – Health Professionals for Equality and Community Empowerment. hpeacesonomacounty.wordpress.com**Healdsburg Peace Project** – Peace and social justice action group, Healdsburg. 431-1129, healdsburgpeaceproject.org**Hate Free Petaluma** Progressive organization.www.facebook.com/hatefreepetaluma/**Homeless Action** – Advocating for people without shelter. 795-2890**Indivisible Goups** – All the groups are on Facebook.**Indivisible Sonoma County:** indivisiblesoco.com**Indivisible Petaluma:** indivisiblepetaluma@gmail.com, or follow on Twitter at @IndivisibleLuma**Indivisible Sebastopol:** indivisible.wsc@gmail.com**Indivisible Healdsburg****Indivisible Windsor****LezResist!** was formed to be a visible and unified Lesbian presence in support of each other, and to stand in solidarity with the many communities, causes, and policies under attack by the current U.S. administration. Info @ LezResist@gmail.com.**Listening for a Change** – Programs support listening and oral history to create a caring community. 578-5420, listeningforachange.org**MEChA de Sonoma** – Student group that focuses on issues affecting the Chicano/Latino community. info@mechadesonoma.org**Metta Center for Nonviolence** – Works to promote non-violence worldwide and to build a nonviolent culture. 774-6299**MOVES-Minimizing Occurrences of Violence in Everyday Society** – Stresses nonviolence as the answer to society's violence. 524-1900**NAACP - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People** – Seeks to eliminate racial hatred, racial profiling and discrimination. 978-1327**National Women's History Project** – coordinates observances of Women's History month around the country. 636-2888, nwhp@aol.com**North Bay Jobs with Justice** – organized for better conditions and a living wage for workers. Email: northbayjobswithjustice@gmail.com, Website: northbayjobswithjustice.org, www.facebook.com/nbjwj Ph: 346-1187**North Bay Organizing Project** – a regional community organization. www.facebook.com/NorthBayOrganizingProject 318-2818**North Coast Coalition for Palestine** – Brings greater awareness to the plight of the Palestinian people and works to end US military support for Israel. 575-8902. www.nccpal.org or find us on Facebook.**NOW of Sonoma County** – local chapter of the National Organization for Women. 545-5036**Occupy Sonoma County** – Embraces the egalitarian, deep democracy principles of the Occupy Movement with a regional strategy for effectively organizing county-widesocial justice campaigns that are globally relevant. 877-6650, OccupySonomaCounty.org**Organizing for Action:** Progressive organizing project. 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Info: 595-0320 or SonomaCountyCAN@gmail.com (email preferred).**Sonoma County Coastal Hills:** gardens@mcn.org**Sonoma County Nonviolence Training Collective** offers free trainings in methods and principles for progressive social change and peace. soconvtc@gmail.com.**Sonoma County Resistance** via change.org**Sonoma Solidarity with Standing Rock** – Supporting indigenous rights and fossil fuel resistance. SonomaSolidarity.org, facebook.com/SonomaNoDAPL. 792-4422.**Sonoma Valley Peace & Justice** – Peace and social justice group for Sonoma Valley. audreyvh@sbcglobal.net**Sunrise Movement, Sonoma County Hub** – Our hub believes in the power of mobilizing youth, taking direct and indirect action, building political power, civic engagement, and partnerships. More info: www.sunrisesoco.org and facebook.com/SunriseSoCo**SURJ (Showing Up For Racial Justice, Sonoma County)** – facebook.com/SURJSonomaCounty**United Farm Workers** – 1700 Corby Ave., Santa Rosa 528-3039**United Nations Association** – Builds public understanding and support for the United Nations. Facebook**Veterans for Peace** – Organization of vets working together for peace and justice through nonviolence. 536-6002**Women in Black** – Women who stand in silent vigil to protest war and human rights abuses.**Women's Justice Center** – Advocacy for victims of rape, domestic violence, and child abuse, particularly in the Latina community. 575-3150, justicewomen.com*Democracy is NOT
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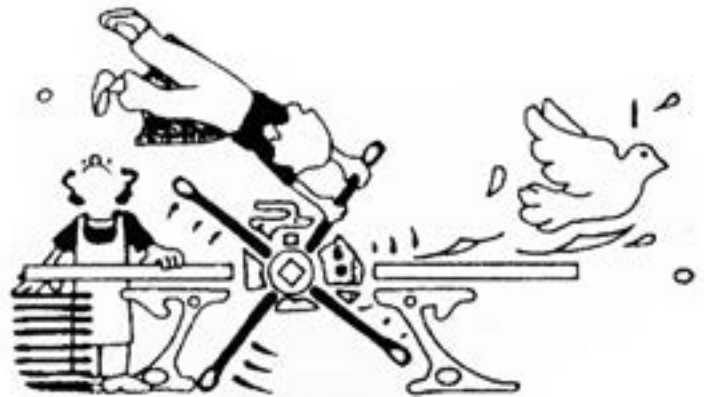
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