

SONOMA COUNTY

WHAT'S INSIDE?

peace press

Publication of the Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County

FOR JUSTICE SO THAT ALL MAY LIVE IN PEACE

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SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Deadline to submit articles for the Oct/Nov 2023 issue, is September 5.

Email articles with title on the document, in MSWord to zenekar2@gmail.com
(put PEACE PRESS in all caps on subject line)

Word limit up to 900 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 social justice to inspire and motivate readers to positive action. 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 peacejusticesonoma@gmail.com
Include CALENDAR (in caps) on subject line.

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Office hours: 1-4 PM, M-F. Best to call ahead to ensure volunteers are available when you visit. To receive the PJC weekly Social Justice e-newsletter, go to: PJCso.org

Your Peace & Justice Center Needs You

by PJC Board of Directors

Hello friends and neighbors. Our Spring Appeal is doing well and we want to thank all of you for sending in your contributions, it helps us provide for what people need, but it's not enough. Your Peace & Justice Center needs more than money. Your Peace & Justice Center needs you. Become a volunteer and offer your services at a variety of events. You'll be enriched by being a part of the peace & justice team. If you think you have leadership skills you might want to join the Board of Directors or the Advisory Board. All of these groups need your help. You can also help by joining the Peace Press collective as a writer or editor. Your Peace & Justice Center needs you.

As fire season roars through California and rent relief expires, many people in our community need support. The Peace & Justice Center can help. If you go to pjsoco.org and drill down you will come to the Resource Guide. Here you'll see listings for aid in housing, legal assistance for fair housing laws, income/rent/bill assistance, hot and to go food services, grocery and pantry assistance, domestic

violence survivor resources, hygiene resources, pet food assistance, mental health resources, transportation resources, labor/employment services, student/education services, and health resources. If you need help in these general areas then go to pjsoco.org and study the resource list. This may lead you to the specific provider you need. It is one way the Peace & Justice Center serves the community.

Another way we serve the community is by offering our space for events to members and affiliated groups. So far this year, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, Movimiento Cultural de la Union Indigena, David Rovics, Healthcare For All Working Group and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women organization have all held successful events at the Center and you can too. Contact us by going to our home page, pjsoco.org, and hitting contact us at the top of the page. After all, it's your Center. People are using it to present information about issues of peace and social justice. We publicize these events on pjsaoco.org. Find one you're interested in and come on out and support these activists who are supporting our common goal for a better world of peace through justice. 🌱

Digesting Violence – When Will We Ever Learn?

by Susan Collier Lamont

"I think the real danger in our society is that we have digested and held in our bellies so much violence that it becomes hard to be moral." – Arundhati Roy

If you want to honor the dead from tomorrow's wars, they'll be at your neighborhood playground growing up in a country in a perpetual state of war.

In 2011, the Santa Rosa Police Department displayed a SWAT vehicle and semi-automatic weapons at a family event in a public park. Children as young as four were encouraged to pick up those weapons. An AK-47 is too heavy for a four-year-old, so officers helped them. Now, think of the children the US is grooming for tomorrow's wars.

Moral injury is the psychic injury created by taking part in something that violates one's soul, something contrary to one's values. This country tries to influence those values so that one's actions as a soldier won't be in conflict. Therefore, boys are brought up in a culture of war as play – to normalize it – toy soldiers or video games or a *Top Gun* movie. Later, some of them go to war, only to return bringing physical or emotional violence and alienation with them.

PTSD can be a physical reaction to something as simple as the backfiring of a car throwing one back to a street in Iraq or a MASH unit in the jungle. PTSD may be what caused Erick Gelhaus to see the toy gun in Andy Lopez' hand and to shoot him within seconds, without being threatened, as deposition testimony has shown. We try to keep the war "over there," but it finds its way home.

Locally, 13-year-old Andy was killed for carrying a toy gun, a gun that looked something like the gun officers placed in the hands of children at our local park. It's time to make the connections.

During my years at the Peace & Justice Center, I was making connections between issues, but nothing pulled them all together

so clearly as the killing of Andy Lopez. Andy lived in a world that didn't have his best interests at heart. In his short life, he dealt with poverty, racism, national borders used to exploit and demonize, a future offering lower wages and fewer opportunities for employment, a school-to-prison pipeline. While corporate criminals went free, he was told it is criminal to join a gang.

And the gun? Andy had the misfortune to be a child in a culture that glorifies guns, war and violence, and tempts children with aisles of war toys and screens filled with gore. And, when he picked

The poet David Whyte has said that to be young now, to understand, despite the rhetoric, how little you are valued and how little the world has to offer you, must be to be in a perpetual state of existential despair.

up on all the messages sent his way, the county used that to justify killing him. And who killed him? A man who had returned from multiple tours of duty in a war zone. Two very different victims of war, but both victims, nonetheless.

And politicians will tell you, with straight faces, that America loves its children despite conditioning them to be cannon fodder and/or killers. The poet David Whyte has said that to be young now, to understand, despite the rhetoric, how little you are valued and how little the world has to offer you, must be to be in a perpetual state of existential despair.

Back when soldier mutiny in Vietnam, and war resistance at

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Cluster Bombs Kill Innocent People, Children

by A.A.Nagy

The US is further escalating the war in Ukraine by sending weapons of mass destruction, including cluster bombs with multiple bomblets in a sh which disperse. The small explosive devices often don't detonate as they land and can kill innocent people when picked up at a later time. Children pick them up out of curiosity and it can explode as they handle them.

Signatory countries have agreed not to use, produce, transfer or stockpile cluster bombs, and to destroy those in their inventories. The US, Russia and Ukraine have not signed that agreement. There is pushback to the US decision to send cluster bombs, from US ambassadors and from nations around the world.

Open Letter to President Joseph R. Biden and to his National Security team

It is with a sense of dismay and disappointment that the undersigned learned that your administration has decided to supply cluster munitions to the Ukraine military. The rationale for this step is that Ukraine was running out of artillery ammunition at a crucial point in its counteroffensive and these cluster munitions would seriously hamper Russian military operations. While we fully endorse US support for the valiant people of Ukraine in their fight against Russian aggression, this decision reverses a long standing commitment on the part of the United States not to furnish cluster munitions to other countries. Moreover, it is completely inconsistent with commendable US and NATO condemnation of Russia's own use of cluster munitions in its war of aggression against Ukraine.

Having served under successive administrations as US envoys to Cambodia, a country that still suffers from land mines and other unexploded ordinance (XO), we have witnessed firsthand the economic damage and human toll inflicted by unexploded cluster munitions decades after their employment. During the Vietnam War, in the 1960s and 1970s, millions of cluster munitions were dropped on Cambodia, mostly in the east and northeast of the country. As a result of this use, year after year, the people of Cambodia have suffered, with death, and dismemberment is

a fact of life in many rural areas. The majority of the casualties from these pernicious munitions are children. Over the past two decades, the United States has spent over \$130 million to locate and neutralize UXO in Cambodia, and it's reported that we have committed to providing over \$6 million for demining efforts until 2025. In the meantime, UXO continue to kill and injure some 100 people per year in Cambodia.

Now we witness yet another region at war. The United States and its NATO allies seek to support Ukraine in its efforts to repel the Russian invader, a support we commend and endorse. But our witness to the damage that cluster munitions continue to cause the people of Cambodia, decades after the end of the war, tells us that whatever the short term tactical advantage on the battlefield, the long term consequences will be severe. Even if the cluster ordnance failure rate has been reduced, we anticipate that more noncombatant death and damage will result from the use of cluster munitions, with Ukraine becoming yet another area where the world will have to spend millions to undo the damage. The United States will share moral responsibility for the unintended consequences that will certainly occur – the killing or maiming of innocent Ukrainian men, women and children and the contamination of Ukraine's rich farmland for decades to come.

We respectfully request that you reconsider this decision and seek to support Ukraine's legitimate efforts to defend itself through other means than using cluster munitions. We all recognize that the costs of this immoral war will be a terrible burden for the people of Ukraine for years to come. The United States should not contribute further to that burden with cluster munitions.

*Sincerely, Charles A. Ray, (Ambassador 2002-2005),
Kent M. Wiedemann (Ambassador 1999-2002),
Joseph A. Mussomeli (Ambassador 2005-2008)*

Tell Congress that Cluster Bombs are not evil only when Russia uses them. ✂

[Sign the RootsAction petition.](#) To learn more, go to: [Cluster Munition Coalition website](#) and their [Facebook page](#).

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home, were at their height, we thought we might be getting a handle on this. We thought people were waking up and rejecting war as the primary forum for international relations. What we didn't know is that the military had changed its training of soldiers to make them more accepting of violence. This is detailed in Lt. Col. Dave Grossman's book *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. The US Defense Department knew and accepted that this would increase the violence on our streets and in our homes.

Additionally, the powers-that-be know how to play on fear. September 11 was exploited to justify an ever-tightening noose in this country. And, despite decades of U.S. violence around the world, people are being told (and believing) that other countries are led by maniacs and bullies, but ours fosters peace.

Violence is the key organizing principle, as MLK, Jr. recognized – the threat of it from others, the guarantee of it from the US. This makes what was once unacceptable, acceptable: The militarization of law enforcement, the erosion of civil liberties, the creation of the

security state, perpetual war.

And getting back to the children? Where once the photo of a young Vietnamese girl running down the road, her back on fire, helped spur us to demand an end to that war, we are now so inundated with photographs of children's bodies floating in the Mediterranean or lying in pools of their own blood in schools, that we sigh for a moment, feel helpless and then, on to the next one.

We claim that past systems of justice – cutting off a hand for stealing a loaf of bread, hanging for minor offenses – were barbaric. But we watch officers shoot unarmed people in the streets, some of whom have committed no crime or minor ones, and we don't seem to understand that we are ourselves barbaric. We watch on our cellphones, in the comfort of our living rooms, front row seat to the hanging.

So, where does this leave us? I've been told that I'm much too depressing. But I believe very strongly that you can't solve a problem until you really understand it. This allows for two things. First,

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My Experience as a Youth Organizer

by Nathan Ross

Growing up with the Trump administration, the Black Lives Matter movement, global warming induced wildfires, and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic, my introduction to politics came very early on. It's hard to keep a kid sheltered from current events when they're happening all around you. Because of conditions like this, I've noticed a growing sense of political disillusionment with my generation. When I started organizing with the Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA), there were many people I spoke to who were concerned about the same issues I noticed. However, many of these people felt like they couldn't make a real impact. Because of this, a majority of my peers shied away from organizing and opportunities for involvement. While I sympathize with feelings of despair about our future, my experience organizing has shown me that there is genuine hope to be found in the struggle for a better world.

If you're reading this publication right now, I imagine you're pretty worried about the general direction in which the world is going. In the United States, it seems we're continuing the same old policies; an economy built for the wealthy and further austerity measures for the working class. Many of us see the need for a new system, by

A lot of work needs to be done in order to take back power for the people. Workers need to be organized, people need to be educated, unhoused need to be given shelter, the oppressed need to be liberated, and much more.

and for the people, but it can feel impossible to create any "real" impact. While it may seem this way, I've been shown firsthand the power of collective action through starting a chapter of the YDSA at my high school. Without this movement of young, though admittedly inexperienced, activists to collaborate with and learn from, I wouldn't have had any hope of making a difference. I went from feeling atomized and alone to having a vast network of support and resources. With this support, I was given the invaluable opportunity to assist in projects like tenants unions, protest organizing, door knocking campaigns, and other actions that worked to shift power back into the hands of the people.

Through this, I was able to learn both from my experience and the knowledge of more seasoned local organizers. Working with



Nathan Ross giving a speech in front of the Supervisors' building during a demonstration for David Palaez Chavez.

local groups has given me crucial insight on the actual process of organizing, and has left me much more capable of working on my own campaigns. A particular organization that deserves recognition is North Bay Organizing Project. Working with their team of experienced and dedicated organizers, I learned that there was real potential in organizing on a local level. Through the small victories we've achieved, I've found inspiration to continue my activism as I go off to college, and fight for a better future for as long as I can.

Sometimes, when I speak to people interested in becoming activists, I'm asked what someone should do in order to start getting involved. For me, this has always been a tough question; I don't think there's a "right" way to do activism. When I started my YDSA chapter, I had nearly zero training, experience, or even basic knowledge on how to effectively organize a campaign. I made plenty of mistakes, and I wasted a lot of my time pursuing projects that just didn't work out. At the same time, I was able to work on so many more projects that I could've only dreamed of previously. I attribute every success I had to nothing but sheer persistence. So, for those of us who are looking to get involved, my advice is to start wherever you can. A lot of work needs to be done in order

to take back power for the people. Workers need to be organized, people need to be educated, unhoused need to be given shelter, the oppressed need to be liberated, and much more. You may not be able to help with all of these issues, but I'm willing to bet that you can help with at least one. When enough of us come together and each do what we can, you'll find that a lot gets done. ✨

2023: Year of the Strike – CA is Ground Zero

by Jonathan Melrod

Daily, we read press reports on union resurgence, particularly in California. In southern California, working people, many of whom are immigrants and people of color, have become the vanguard of the American labor movement. About *half* of big strikes this year took in California.

UNITE HERE!

In early July, 15,000 members of Unite Here Local 11—cooks, room attendants, dishwashers, servers, bellmen, and front-desk agents (workers often invisible to hotel guests), walked out at hotels in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Unite Here, negotiating since April, is pushing for higher pay – a \$5 immediate hourly increase and a \$3 boost annually for three years. For Unite Here members, the high cost of living in the LA area has forced them to live increasingly further from their workplaces, saddling them with hours-long, expensive commutes, exacerbated by lack of public transit and high gas prices. (Both endemic to capitalism.)

Demand for contractual benefits to subsidize workers' housing costs have been rejected by hotel management, which has charged Unite Here with exceeding “accepted boundaries” of contract negotiations, which is what the owning class cried when major CIO industrial unions were organized in the 1930s.

UC strike

The University of California system suffered the largest higher education strike in US history. In mid-November, 36,000 graduate student workers and 12,000 other academics, disrupted research, and classes across 10 campuses. Even for newly minted UAW organizers, the union representing UC workers, the militancy and breadth of the 6-week work stoppage was a welcome, if not surprising, show of determined collective action.

Even though the strike won concessions like increased pay, some negotiators dissented, arguing the agreement did not provide sufficient pay and benefits to members beleaguered by California's insane cost of living. Additionally, a substantial portion of the rank and file expressed dissatisfaction and are already looking to the future to increase their 2024 bargaining power.

Nurses' Strike

In a historic year for nurses' strikes, over 21,000 registered nurses and nurse practitioners at 21 Kaiser Permanente facilities, represented by CA Nurses Association/National Nurses United, held a two-day strike in November to protest the administration's refusal to address ongoing concerns about workplace health and safety and chronic short staffing. The strike at Kaiser facilities in northern California, registered as one of the biggest private sector nurses strikes in US history.

In an interview for the Peace Press, chief nurse and strike leader Cyndi Krahn commented, “I'm so proud of our nurses. Along with members of our community, they stuck together, were willing to take on the Kaiser system, and focused much of the strike on non-economic issues like patient care and working conditions.”

Entertainment Workers Shut Down Hollywood

In a seismic stand-off between labor and entertainment moguls, many of whom take home hundreds of millions a year, 160,000 TV and screen actors, after voting 98 percent to strike, joined 11,500 members of the Writers Guild on picket lines. Anger over pay sent

both to the streets. The strike is a historic showdown with major implications for the future, which led bargaining to break down over fears of a tech-dominated industry.

Strikers are demanding a greater share of streaming revenues, a technological innovation that has changed the nature of the entertainment business. Moreover, the looming issue of technology has broad implications – screenwriters fear studios will use AI (artificial intelligence) to generate scripts and actors worry that technology could be used to create digital replicas of their likenesses (or that performances could be digitally altered) without compensation or their approval.

The Damocles Sword of AI threatens yet unknown consequences for numerous trades, such as coders/programmers, writers, financial



Unite Here Local 11, hotel workers demand higher wages to keep up with the cost of living.

professionals, legal workers, researchers, customer services, data entry and analysis. Over decades, the working class has experienced “technological advances” that diminish workers' pay and eliminate millions and millions of jobs. A lot is riding on the outcome of the battle over AI in the entertainment strike and the resolution may provide a hint of what new technology will mean for broad swaths of workers.

The Great UPS Showdown

What might have turned into the most seismic class confrontation of our generation and the largest strike against a private employer – UPS vs. Teamsters – reached a tentative agreement just days before picket lines went up. In the last election, a *reform slate* was elected to lead the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, putting to bed any legacy remnants of the Jimmy Hoffa days.

During the last five years, UPS experienced historic growth, nearly doubling annual operating profits from \$7.4 billion in 2018 to \$13.9 billion in 2022. These soaring profits directly result from Teamsters' labor, blood, and sweat as workers toiled through the loss of coworkers during the COVID-19 pandemic. And yet, with the inflation rate ballooning exponentially to 8.6% in May, highest in 40 years, Teamsters saw their purchasing power plummet as *all US workers struggle* to pay for necessities such as housing, food, and gas.

Leading up to contract expiration a newly reinvigorated leadership threw down the gauntlet, making clear that without a contract

2023 Year of the Strike...see page 14

To Make Rent Affordable: Raise the Wage Floor

by Martin J. Bennett

Low-income renters in the Sonoma Valley and across the county are on edge due to skyrocketing rents and stagnating wages. Forty percent of county residents are tenants, and for nearly half, rent is unaffordable. They pay more than 30 percent of their income for rent. Almost one quarter are severely rent burdened, meaning these tenants spend more than 50 percent of their income on rent. Consequently, low-income renters experience overcrowding, displacement, long commutes, and eviction.

According to a United Way of California 2023 report, more than 25 percent of Sonoma County households do not earn sufficient income to pay for necessities, including food, housing, child care, healthcare, taxes, and miscellaneous expenses. Ninety-six percent of these households are working poor and include at least one adult reporting income from work. Disproportionately these low-income households are young people, immigrants, and Latinos.

In addition to affordable housing construction lagging far behind demand, one of the fundamental causes of the housing crisis is a generation of widening inequality. Between 1980 and 2020, according to the most recent US Census data, inflation-adjusted wages for the bottom 60 percent of workers in the county increased slightly, by

children and to pay for necessities without relying on any public assistance.

Hence, much more funding is needed to offset the expansion of low-wage employment. Increased state funding is unlikely this year because of the budget deficit, but to fund affordable housing the legislature is considering a bill to tax short-term vacation rentals. However, the funding shortfall is massive, given the dire need. The California Housing Corporation estimates that the state is currently funding just 16 percent of affordable housing units necessary to meet the target goals of local governments across the state.

Nonetheless, building new affordable housing is costly, and permitting and construction can take years. The fastest way to make housing more affordable and to enable low-income residents to live where they work is to boost wages. One approach to increasing wages is to raise the state minimum wage, currently \$15.50 an hour. Hawaii has increased its minimum wage to \$18 an hour, to be phased in by 2028. A California ballot initiative has qualified for the November 2024 general election that would raise the state minimum to \$18 an hour by 2025. Los Angeles is considering Living Wage legislation for large hotels and most workers at LAX airport that would raise wages to \$30 an hour by 2028.

The fastest way to make housing more affordable and to enable low-income residents to live where they work is to boost wages.

eight percent. However, during that same period, wages fell by nearly three percent for the lowest 20 percent of county wage earners, while for the top 10 percent, wages spiked by more than 35 percent.

Then, between 2000-2020, median rents climbed 28 percent, but renter incomes grew by just 10 percent. The California Department of Finance reports that over the last five years, Sonoma County has experienced a net loss of about 23,000 residents, many of whom (both renters and homeowners) relocate to more affordable housing markets in Mendocino, Lake, Solano, Sacramento, and Eastern Contra Costa counties.

A 2023 Generation Housing report indicates that commutes roughly double for severely cost-burdened renters who move to more affordable housing markets. Such longer commutes cost money, as well as contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Transportation is responsible for 60 percent of total county emissions.

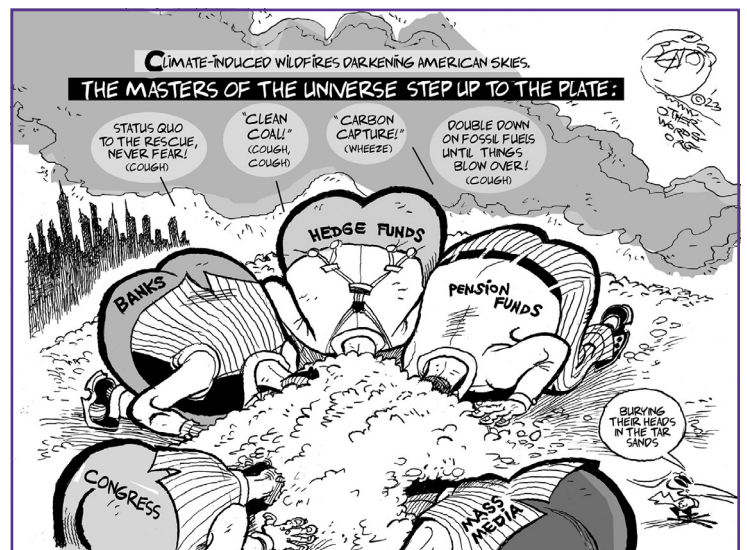
Moreover, severely cost-burdened renters are twice as likely to live in overcrowded housing, adversely affecting their children's academic achievement and associated with increased infections and mortality from infectious diseases such as COVID-19. Half the severely cost-burdened tenants also struggled with food insecurity last year. They were twice as likely to skip medical and dental appointments as households that could afford the rent.

Future job growth trends are deeply troubling. The California Employment Development Department estimates that between 2016-2026 more than two-thirds of the jobs created in the county will pay less than a livable wage of \$31 an hour or an annual household income of \$126,946 in 2023, as calculated by M.I.T. economists for two parents each working full-time to support two

Another way to raise wages is for workers to organize a union. According to the UCB Labor Center in California, union workers earn, on average, 13 percent more or \$5,800 more annually than nonunion workers. Moreover, union workers are much more likely to receive comprehensive and affordable employer-provided healthcare benefits and guaranteed defined-benefit pensions compared to nonunion workers.

At the Fairmont in Boyes Hot Springs, 250 workers are organizing to affiliate with UNITE HERE Local 2. Brookfield Asset Management, an \$800 billion private equity firm, owns the Fairmont. Wages and working conditions are inferior to those of union workers at other Fairmont hotels in the Bay Area. At the Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn, housekeepers earn \$21 an hour and demand the same hourly pay, \$28 an hour, made by unionized housekeepers at the Fairmont San Francisco. 🙌

Martin J. Bennett is Instructor Emeritus of History at Santa Rosa Junior College and a consultant for UNITE HERE Local 2.



We Can Come Together for Affordable Housing Solutions

by Ramon Meraz

About eight years ago, I went back to school and changed careers, after decades in Wine Country hospitality, because I saw the need to plan for a better, healthier, more equitable, and more affordable community. Now my job is to educate people about Generation Housing and promote positive action in our community regarding housing. I believe in Generation Housing because, while studying at Sonoma State University Urban Planning Department, I learned that city development is about prioritizing the human experience over mere infrastructure, laws, or plans.

What is Generation Housing?

Generation Housing shares the belief that the lack of affordable housing can be changed with a strong pro-housing movement powered by the voices of our community. Transportation and zoning laws have historically been influenced by racism, classism, and special interests. This has resulted in homogenous neighborhoods that prioritize cars and expensive single-family homes, making housing less affordable and restricting the development of duplexes, apartments, and mixed-use dwellings in many areas.

Today, we feel the consequences of these decisions in the absence of decent public transportation options, which forces people to rely heavily on cars, and the scarcity of affordable housing on expensive land that keeps going up in value every year, leading to an average price of an “affordable” housing unit to over \$700,000. Generation Housing works to create change by endorsing affordable projects, developing policy to remove structural barriers to housing, working on financing solutions to bridge the funding gap, and working to increase political and public will for housing.

How much Housing do we need?

In our 2021 report, *How Much Housing Do We Need*, we found that Sonoma County has a two-decades long deficit of roughly 38,000 homes that should have been built to support population growth, but were never built. The large majority of the deficit in homes we see today, 73 percent, has disproportionately affected lower-income households who have been unable to secure affordable housing. This shortfall has resulted in various issues, such as rising housing prices, increased homelessness, and a strain on local infrastructure and services.

Making the Rent: The Human Price of Housing Cost Burden

In 2023, Generation Housing released “Making the Rent: The Human Price of Housing Cost Burden,” a report that captures the effect of rising housing costs on the well-being of Sonoma County residents. Nearly half of all households in Sonoma County are cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing, while almost a quarter percent of all households is extremely cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 50 percent of their income for housing. Sonoma County’s households with lower incomes (under 80 percent area median income) fare much worse – about three quarters are cost-burdened, and nearly half are severely cost-burdened. The results of the research done in our report portrays a dynamic picture of a household’s budget – shining a light on the sacrifices, decisions, and compromises necessary just to make the rent.

In this report we can see how, when housing costs exceed this threshold, it puts a strain on household budgets and reduces the

amount of money available for other essential expenses, affecting overall well-being and quality of life, forcing households to go without those other needs, which can include healthy food, medicine, dentist/doctor visits, extracurricular activities for children and much more.

Even in cases where families have two or more sources of income they still find themselves paying more than one-third of their income on housing. This situation leads to financial stress and leaves families with fewer resources for other necessities and opportunities that contribute to their health and prosperity.

The lack of affordable housing options not only affects individuals and families but also has broader societal implications. Adequate and affordable housing is a fundamental human need, and when it is lacking, it can lead to issues like homelessness, decreased economic mobility, poor average health, and social inequality.

What can People do?

Housing conversations too often begin with technical and complicated language, but Generation Housing is working to create free educational resources, to increase fluency in housing conversations and solutions. Our website has educational YouTube Videos

In 2023, Generation Housing released “Making the Rent: The Human Price of Housing Cost Burden,” a report that captures the effect of rising housing costs on the well-being of Sonoma County residents.

and links, and our newsletter include updates and even a glossary. The public can also find our endorsement page and learn about upcoming projects that we endorse and why are we endorsing them. For example, people can learn about the 1650 West Steele Lane three-story, 36-unit multifamily housing development with four deed-restricted affordable units. This Generation Housing project is currently being appealed and at risk of not moving forward because a small but vocal opposition has requested additional parking at the expense of housing units.

If people want to support this project, they can sign up for our action alerts. They are specific to where people live. They’ll get updates whenever housing is on the agenda of the city or town about which that they select to be notified. For example, on July 25 we called for action on the Sebastopol Planning Commission Item 7: Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Project Kickoff. This project will update the city’s transportation policies, to be in line with a state law aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles driven per person. We provided agenda, staff report and instructions to participate in person or via zoom.

We encourage everyone to become members of Generation Housing and attend our free house parties, held on the third Thursday of the month. Minimum suggested yearly membership is \$5, but adding your voice to ours is invaluable. 🌿

Ramon Meraz is the Community Engagement Coordinator for Generation Housing.

SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Join the ‘Out of the Darkness’ Walk



by Sarah Spalding and Christina Cappello

Here in Sonoma County, we want to cultivate a culture that’s smart about mental health. Addressing a leading cause of death in our community, suicide, is one of the first steps.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. Our local chapter will be hosting the Sonoma County Out of the Darkness Walk in Rohnert Park this September, an important community gathering that is one of hundreds of AFSP events being held in the United States during National Suicide Prevention Month.

There is no cost to attend, though funds raised at the Out of the Darkness Walk will provide care and support to those who’ve lost loved ones to suicide, as well as education programs, advocacy, and scientific research that will help us learn more about how to save lives from this leading cause of death. Everyone is welcome to attend, whether you are walking in memory or in support of a loved one or in honor of your own mental health journey. Friendly dogs on leash are welcome.

This event gives people the courage to open up about their own connections to the cause, and serves to foster a culture that prioritizes mental health. Friends, family members, neighbors, and co-workers walk side-by-side, supporting each other and in memory of those we’ve lost. Sonoma County’s Out of the Darkness Walk will take place on Saturday, September 23, on the campus of Sonoma State University, and will begin at 10 a.m. More detailed information regarding this event can be found here: afsp.org/SonomaCounty.

Established in 1987, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is a voluntary health organization. Since its founding, the organization has grown from a grassroots network of researchers and volunteers into a national movement with chapters in all 50 states. One of seven AFSP Chapters in Northern California, the Greater San Francisco Bay Area Chapter volunteers and staff oversee events, programs, and services in 16 counties. Suicide is the

twelfth leading cause of death in California. Its bold goal is to reduce the annual US suicide rate 20 percent by the year 2025, which equates to thousands of lives saved.

Throughout the year, our local Sonoma County group attends many community events, including Santa Rosa Pride, Santa Rosa’s Wednesday Night Markets, the Petaluma Music Festival and more, spreading a message of hope and providing resources and information about suicide prevention, AFSP, and our upcoming community walk. If you have seen us at any of these events, you may recall decorating a rock with us with a message of hope, healing, and remembrance. These rocks will all be decorating this year’s Out of the Darkness Walk route.

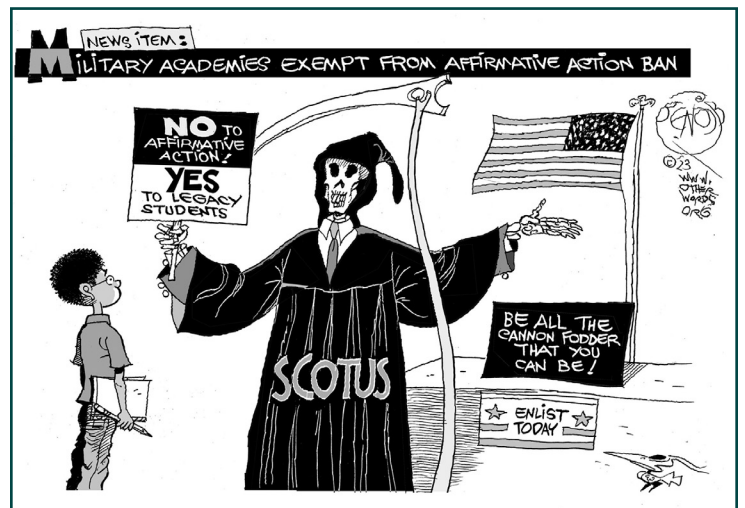
“Bringing our local community together in a safe place to bring awareness to suicide prevention and mental health has led me to a passion to continue this work in Sonoma County,” said Sara Mitchell, Out of the Darkness Walk Co-Chair and General Manager at PsychStrateiges.

Last year marked the first in-person Walk held in Sonoma County since 2019 and recorded one of the highest numbers of registered participants in our Walk’s history. This year, we ask you join us in helping this event grow even bigger.

If you would like more information about our local group, please reach out to Sara Mitchell at sonomacountyoutofthedarkness@gmail.com. If you are interested in learning more about AFSP, please visit: afsp.org.

Talk saves lives—whether you are suffering from suicidal thoughts, or you’re concerned about someone and you assume you are the only person who will reach out. If you are in crisis, please call or text 988 for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text TALK to the Crisis Line at 741741. 🙏

Sarah Spalding is the Volunteer Coordinator and a member of the Walk Committee for Sonoma County’s Out of the Darkness Walk. Christina Cappello is the Area Director for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Greater San Francisco Bay Area Chapter.



Sage Casey Foundation Advocates for Urgent Mental Health Care

by *Rebekah Schmitt*

If you're like me, you probably have compassion for all the need you see in the world today, but you are also balancing that with your own life issues. Your family, a demanding job, a social life—and the list goes on. If you throw a medical emergency, job loss, or losing a loved one in... it gets exponentially harder to find the bandwidth to spend on social causes, even when you really care. Still, I am coming to chat with you about September being dedicated to Suicide Prevention Month. Bear with me.



Sage Casey learning to play the accordion.

County Honor Band, and were also learning to play the accordion. They played lead roles in *Mulan* and *Lion King* in their school drama productions, and were elected vice president of student council.

Sage was a kid that made friends wherever they went. One that noticed when someone was alone, and reached out, and noticed when someone wasn't okay and made a point of connecting with them. One day someone lashed out at their trans best friend at school, and instead of lashing back, Sage took to social media and quietly organized a silent protest. The entire student body, and many of the staff, wore rainbow colors and held hands with someone of the same gender the next day, to show support for the LGBTQ+ students and allies. It was a powerful display.

When Sage couldn't attend the Women's March in January 2017, they decided to make their own poster and T-shirt, with an inside out T-shirt and markers and supplies they had at home, and go for a walk and hold a One-Person-March on a corner in Rohnert Park, alone. I am still in awe of the courage that took, and so proud. Sage was known as the kid with a great sense of humor and a ray of sunshine in any room. They were everyone's friend. They were an honor student and successful at everything they took on. Which is

Six years ago, I lost my 14-year-old child, Sage Casey, to suicide. Sage (they/them) was an eighth grade student at Hillcrest Middle School, and a percussionist with an all non-binary and female Jazz band called the Green Blues. They also played in the Sonoma County Junior Symphony and the Sonoma

exactly why it completely gutted an entire community when Sage took their own life on May 1, 2017.

As a culture, we have a stigma attached to suicide that keeps us at a comfortable distance from it—because it is scary. Suicide remains the second leading cause of death among young people aged 10 to 24 (Hedegaard, Curtin, & Warner, 2018) and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are at significantly increased risk. The Trevor Project estimates that more than 1.8 million LGBTQ+ youth (ages 13-24) seriously consider suicide each year in the US, and at least one attempts suicide every 45 seconds. Yet, we are still afraid to use the word. We know it happens to other people, just not us. It happens to that dark, isolated person, to the loner, strange, depressed kid with no friends. It doesn't happen to that bright, ray of sunshine with rainbows in their hair, the one who cracks jokes and is everyone's best friend. It doesn't happen to the kid with a heart of gold and a bright future. It doesn't happen to a kid who you know is struggling, who is in therapy, who is getting help, who has involved parents, who are on top of it and close to their kid. It doesn't. It can't.

It did. It does every day.

And that is why I am here writing this. Because I don't want it to happen to anyone else. Sage felt like the exception to the rule to so many people. But they are not. Stories like Sage happen every day. And unless we change how we treat mental health and the stigma around suicide prevention in our culture, in our communities, in our homes—it will keep happening. That is why a whole lot of people who were so greatly affected by the loss of this amazing human being, founded Sage Casey Foundation. We are doing what we can, in our own community, and as far as our reach can stretch, to change the conversation. We may be a little pebble, but we're a really shiny rainbow-colored pebble. And little pebbles make ripples that eventually cause waves so much bigger than the eye can see.

We have learned that it is important to let people know that it's safe to TALK about mental health, and suicide. Once you open that door, people know you are a safe place, and there are so many people (youth, adults, ANYONE) that do not have a safe place to talk. Another key factor is access to affirming spaces, which is why access to our kids at school and educating our teachers and administrators is so important.

We make these resources available for schools and counseling centers as well as doctors' offices. You can request them for free in a Rainbow Bag through our website. We do school visits to speak to GSA or Pride Clubs as well as to teacher groups upon request. We have provided Rainbow Bags to student groups and veterinary clinic staff in the past. We are open to helping however we can, wherever we can make a difference.

To date, we have been able to do all of this outreach free of charge by fundraising and through generous donations from supporters, but it does take a huge amount of resources. We gratefully accept donations at SageCaseyFoundation.com. 🌈

Rebekah Schmitt is a single mom to two kids, one living and one not, and a pug-mastiff named Cosmo.

Christian Nationalists Push at the Library, Community Pushes Back

by Rebel Fagin

June 7 homophobic protesters showed up to demonstrate against Drag Queen Story Hour at the Petaluma Library. June 12 Petaluma Proud Boys trashed the Brew, a popular and outspoken coffee house in Santa Rosa that sports rainbows year-round, before the Proud Boys went on to drop off gay-hate flyers at Santa Rosa Junior College and several businesses nearby. Clearly reactionary forces feel threatened by LGBTQI people.

To celebrate Pride month, the Sonoma County Library offered four days of Drag Queen Story Hour at four different branches. When some repressive Christians at the Victory Outreach Church heard about this, they created a group called Save Our Sonoma. They said this was to protect the children. Protecting the children has been used as an excuse to prevent inter-racial marriage, integrated schools, gay marriage, gay adoptions and now, storybook time. Repressive forces repeatedly use children as an excuse to crush those they fear. Anti GLBTQI activism is certainly not limited to Sonoma County. So far this year over 500 anti-LGBTQI and anti-Trans laws have been introduced nationally with nearly 50 becoming law.

To promote their agenda Save Our Sonoma organized a protest, which was met with counter protests. They did this at four different branches of our public library over the weekend of June 17 and 18. I attended the final demonstration at the central branch as a counter protester. Their demonstration outside of the library was scheduled for 2:30 p.m. Story time inside was scheduled for 3:00 p.m.

Going to the counter protest didn't know if I'd be alone or not. When I arrived at 2:30 p.m. there were perhaps 20 Christian Nationalist and at least 60 counter demonstrators, including people from the

Party for Socialism and Liberation, North Bay Organizing Project, KWTF radio and countless others. Many were sporting some kind of rainbow. Save Our Sonoma said they were protecting our children from gay groomers. Of course, this is nonsense as there are no gay groomers.

For about an hour they chanted how Jesus loves us and that's why we should hate the sin of trans life, I think. They had very few cogent arguments. I asked one of the Christian Nationalists how many drag queen story readers had been arrested for child molestation. There were none. Then I asked the same question about the clergy. I got prayed at. The Christian Nationalists chanted and prayed at people. We chanted back. While they claimed to be protecting the lives of children, we were protecting the rights of all people, some of who are trans or gay children. Although people were sometimes chest-to-chest, there was no violence. After some 45 minutes the Christian Nationalists retreated across the street. By that time there were six of them. Story hour continued unin-

terrupted and pre-sexual children marveled at the glittery magic of the drag queen storyteller.

Since then, those protests the Victory Outreach Church applied for funds under AB 1664 to build a fence around their church. They will receive two payments of \$200,000 each for their fence. These funds were intended to protect houses of worship from gunmen. Victory Outreach Church assaults our library with the intent of shutting down story time and then plays the victim.

When human rights are under attack what do we do is stand up and fight back.

Some places you can turn to for support include Trans Life at translifeconference.org, Positive Images at posimages.org and Sonoma County Pride at sonomacountypride.org

Source for the update: KPIX on YouTube 7/10/23. 🌈



Protesters threatened to show up for Drag Story Time Saturday, July 22 at the Guerneville library, but they never materialized. Parents with little children and other supporters filled the library's conference, while counter protesters remained peacefully outside. As usual, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence came in full regalia, as did the librarians, and everyone had a glorious time. (photos: Lois Pearlman)



Literacy Is a Human Right

by Celeste Winders

According to the United Nations, human rights are defined as “...inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status... include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.”

When we think of human rights we tend to think of food, water, shelter, but we historically have not considered literacy. It’s time to shift our thinking and include literacy as a human right afforded to all, because to lack literacy denies access to the basic things needed to survive in today’s society.

In the film “The Right To Read,” literacy rights activist Kareem Weaver stated, “Our country has always prioritized reading. Always. Either to intentionally include or exclude certain people.”

Literacy has been a tool used to catapult predominantly white males toward success, while simultaneously used as a weapon to oppress by denying others access to literacy, such as the criminalization of reading for African Americans in the United States slave codes. Later, forcing Black voters to demonstrate the ability to read in order to access the right to vote, while simultaneously denying education to the Black community; — a powerful tool of oppression inflicted on Black Americans. A more hidden version of this continues today in the literacy data of K-12 public education by racial demographics where there is clear disproportionality of BIPOC students who are multiple grade levels below in reading than those of their white peers. BIPOC students are graduating functionally illiterate and are dropping out of K-12 education at disproportionate rates.

The ability to read is not predetermined by race or ethnicity. Instead there is an intentional, historical and political denial of access to literacy that continues to target BIPOC students generation after generation. By viewing literacy as a Human Right, we do the necessary work to reverse the centuries of harm and weaponization of literacy in this country. We intentionally create paths to reading built on justice, making what has been wronged, right again.

The Nation’s Report Card (a congressionally mandated public education project) analyzed the national K-12 testing data and found that there was no significant change in the score gaps of student demographics since 1992, meaning that while overall scores fluctuated over time, the gaps between demographics remained the same. This provides important context for the 2015 data from the American Council on Education which determined that more than one-third of all Black, Hispanic/Latino and American Indian/Alaska Native 12th graders fell below the basic achievement level for reading compared to one in five White and Asian 12th graders. This means the achievement gap is disproportionate by race/ethnicity and the gap is consistent over the course of decades. This data is pre-COVID therefore the cause for this achievement gap is not the pandemic.

What this tells us is that despite decades of talking points by departments of education and politicians, as a nation we still have not

addressed literacy as a fundamental human right afforded to all people, and prioritized access to functional literacy for all. Our country has treated literacy as something that some get to have, and others simply do not. Those who do not are trapped in poverty cycles, pipelined to prison systems to be used as unpaid labor through the 13th Amendment, are houseless, suffer from higher rates of depression and are otherwise denied the right to freedom, work, education and the necessary access to basic survival that literacy brings people.

The inability to read makes it difficult to even be poor, especially in a pandemic era when access to services moved to predominantly (and during COVID exclusively) online written formats instead of in-person case management. If one cannot read at a functioning level, how does one apply for food stamps, MediCare, housing subsidy, food banks, shelters, disability, unemployment and cash assistance? No matter how much a person wants to work, how do they fill out the most basic job application? Then there is the shame that is attached to the inability to read, shame that drives so many people to desperately avoid any situation where they are expected to read and write in front of others, shame that can even lead to suicide. Those

Literacy has been a tool used to catapult predominantly white males toward success, while simultaneously used as a weapon to oppress by denying others access to literacy, such as the criminalization of reading for African Americans in the United States slave codes.

who cannot read suffer in silence not having basic needs met. They suffer because as a society we have failed them and we didn’t have to. We have had the solution all along, but as a nation have chosen to ignore it. The time has come to embrace the solution, embrace the science of reading and invest in equity and justice work.

Justice requires we let go of ego and defensiveness and make decisions not based on fear of blame, but instead based on compassion. We must use the science of reading which is centuries old. We must invest in literacy in our K-12 schools and in adult education for the adults whom the nation failed and denied the literacy they have the right to obtain. While building child and adult literacy, we must provide the necessary support to ensure that those who lack the ability to read are able to fully access public services. Our starting point in this work is to declare literacy a human right, and we are starting that work here in Sonoma County. At the June 27, 2023 meeting of the Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights, the commission approved a resolution declaring literacy a human right. This resolution will move forward to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors for approval at the August 22, 2023 meeting, in time for National Literacy Month in September. I encourage the community to attend and to support the right to read for all as a human right. Let’s do better than equity, let’s do justice work ensuring everyone is able to access all that the right to read ensures. 🙌

Celeste Winders is a non-attorney advocate, Sonoma Valley school board trustee, parent of 4 (3 with disabilities) and lifelong social justice advocate.

KPFA 2023 Board Election: My View

by Virginia Browning

I happen to listen to KPFA radio 94.1 FM, KPFA.org. Why in the name of Jah or Jinglebells – radio? Even more, why KPFA? Breakfast, lunch, & dinner-fixing – radio –relevant, quick, can be so good. With some background in community radio, I helped enable dialog in conservative Utah. Connective, informative, fun. But KPFA, PLO radio? Sure I’ve heard that. Despite that for years KPFA mostly walked a careful two-state line on Israel, some felt any perceived critique of Israel was treason, so switched off the whole KPFA kaleidoscope. Even other media now report that Israeli leaders torching fields and homes are way out of bounds. Aside from that issue, KPFA is encyclopedic and extremely rich in riveting personal histories that open far beyond the personal. Also some music is to melt arthritic implacables. [Stream and archives are online](#). Listen to some alternative views. Skip six minutes of semi-corporate news or listen with a grain of salt (and vote for “Rescue Pacifica” calling for improvement**).

KPFA’s 2023 Local Station Boars Election

KPFA, one of five Pacifica Network stations and some 220 affiliated stations, is holding an election for its local station board (LSB), from which are elected directors of the larger network. If you’ve given \$25 to KPFA between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023 or completed three hours of eligible volunteer work to the station (not likely since COVID), you’re eligible to vote this year. You should receive instructions by email in August. If not, you can write to NES@pacifica.org or see elections.pacifica.org. More information about the KPFA Local Station Election and candidates, [here](#). Some question this elected board structure. I think the structure needs improvement.

BUT right now, if we leave it to KPFA’s board majority, I fear we will get more shows such as the new nine hours a week of slickly preened “Background Briefing” – a proudly CIA/FBI and Washington-consensus infested show promoting weapons transfers worldwide (like the world needs more of that?). You can get that on a whole range of other stations, including several you probably think of as “public.” We need something with an alternative viewpoint (which I grant you might find a tad of around here if you don’t blink). Increasingly, KPFA offers this style, placing “progressive” crumbs strewn among the poison seeds. Effective propaganda generally mixes truth, half-truth, distortion, omission, and removal of some context and perspective.

Pacifica Network, you might have heard, is in dire financial health. Yes, as usual, but more than usual. Radio everywhere is holding on by a thread – except right-wing radio, waiting in the wings to snap up near corpses. Disaster Capitalism.

Issues: Programming informed by community needs, strengthened by community participation. KPFA airs stunning programs and too few know it. Moving to digital. Greener? Cheaper? Hackable?

Community involvement and dialog can only increase the good. True community radio says “It’s possible.” Training and coordination by all workers there, paid and not, should move KPFA into the more lucrative, in fact, progressive era. KPFA has an outsized role in the larger direction of Pacifica, which is partly why it’s so dishonest to hear locals bashing their “parent” (Pacifica) when they have for the most part caused the problems.

Some KPFA Treasures

Hard Knock Radio, Anita Johnson: segments of Mumia, Davey D’s lyrically profound insight – Letters and Politics, Mitch Jeserich’s calm deep eye-contact questions: California, A Slave State, several wonderfully offered Daniel Ellsberg tributes, Education Today with incisive interviewer and longtime activist intellect Kitty Kelly Epstein, Project Censored, curated by experienced hosts and media students all over. These and many others, music from rare treasure Art Sato: In Your Ear, or deep honorable Avotcja: Bebop, Cubop and the Musical Truth. A gorgeous variety of music.

Mostly, I don’t want the whole network to be run by dishonest people out to cannibalize it.

Mostly. I don’t want the whole network to be run by dishonest people out to cannibalize it.

I’ve heard “Rebel News” volunteers have re-grouped to air a masterful mix of news now on KPFA despite the slasherating. Go volunteers. Many of us at KPFA, including some of us quite experienced in news gathering, volunteered to help only to be turned away in favor of a cadre of select paid staff controllers. We should be working together (and it’s cheaper!).

Sheding Some Light on KPFA

How the Seizure of a Radio Station Led to the Seizure of \$305,000 from KPFA, dissidentvoice.org

Why didn’t KPFA defend its journalist? [Daniel Borgstrom](#)

Proposal for mediated network-wide involvement to improve the bylaws by listeners, staff, community members, in an inclusive manner. [Go to Daniel’s Free Speech Zone](#). 🙌

Virginia Browning has recorded, condensed, and aired news – about the environment and the military economy at a community radio station in Utah, understanding the enormous power of open media, she has listened closely to, and watched politics, at KPFA for 20 years.




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Policy of Misogyny – Afghanistan Under the Taliban

by Barry Barnett

Women and girls are having a tough time in Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power August 15, 2021, after a devastating 20-year war with the United States and its allies.

Women's rights – even women's safety – have been set back two decades or more. It is considered the worst repression of women and girls anywhere in the world. Females are not allowed to go out without male accompaniment. They must keep their heads and hair covered. Girls and women are not allowed to even receive "higher" education (beyond sixth grade), or work under certain conditions. Afghanistan is the only country in the world to ban females from secondary and tertiary education. The Taliban will not even allow foreign female United Nations workers or those from any non-governmental organizations to help relieve the dire situation throughout the country.

Millions of Afghans are facing food insecurity. The population of Afghanistan on June 20, 2023, was 42.67 million. The World Food Programme states that 19.9 million Afghans are not consuming enough food, with 6 million in danger of starvation. Acute malnutrition is affecting almost half of children under 5. One quarter of pregnant and breastfeeding women need lifesaving nutrition support in the next year. The country is on the brink of economic collapse, with the local currency at an all-time low and food prices on the rise.

After such a long, destructive conflict, huge numbers of those with physical and mental health issues urgently need medical and psychological care. Unfortunately, females are only allowed to see women doctors. Women are permitted to work in some fields, but job losses among women have skyrocketed.

There had been many advances in human and civil rights in the past 20 years. But in the past two years, the de facto authorities have dismantled the legal framework. Women can work to some extent – but only according to Sharia law, whose injunctions include women being separated from men. Authorities of theocracy have told investigators and aid workers that the international community must not interfere in the internal affairs of the state. Women who peacefully protest against this extreme institutionalized gender-based discrimination face threats, harassment, arbitrary detention, and even torture.

But it is up to the international community to act, not just advise. Visiting UN human rights experts report alarming "widespread mental health issues and accounts of escalating suicides among women and girls." They said numerous women shared their feelings of fear and extreme anxiety, describing their situation as "a life under house arrest." Islam has been the primary or state religion since being introduced in the seventh century, but the current theocratic state imposes religious interpretations not agreed upon by the vast majority of Afghans.

Who interprets Sharia ("path to watering place") and makes sure these rulings are enforced? Supreme Leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundza has ordered Afghan judges to rigorously apply Islamic

law. "Strictly enforce Sharia law... For those cases in which all the conditions of the Sharia have been met, you must apply the full range of penalties." Judges are constrained to follow the supreme leader's rulings.

Virtually all religions have progressive movements adapting belief and practice to modern life, and fundamentalist ultra-orthodox sectors, which interpret their scriptures literally and apply their proscriptions as in ancient times. The Taliban are known for strict application of the laws of Sharia, including the punishments. Some images of street flogging of both men and women have been published since the return of the Taliban. Their interpretation of Sharia law means corporal punishment for the most serious offenses, which for them include adultery and sex outside of marriage, false accusation, theft, banditry, rebellion, and even drinking alcohol and apostasy.

Facts such as these *should not lead to Islamophobia or prejudice against Islam or Muslims*. Extreme interpretation of the Quran and severe, politically motivated sentencing in places such as Saudi Arabia and Iran are *not* representative of modern interpretation and

Sonali Kolhatkar, author of Bleeding Afghanistan, is co-director of the Afghan Women's Mission... her US-based nonprofit works with the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)... they are working under dangerous conditions to improve the rights of women.

practices of the vast majority of peaceful Muslims. *Jihad*, when expressed as violence against targets considered infidels and heretics, is a very extreme interpretation by a small minority of Muslims. Jihad can mean the spiritual struggle within oneself.

Also remember that groups like al-Qaeda ("the base") grew out of the US support for the mujahideen ("those engaged in jihad") in trying to defeat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and that ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) emerged out of al-Qaeda in Iraq in response to the 2003 US invasion.

What about amelioration of this dire situation? Sonali Kolhatkar, astrophysicist, Pacifica Radio journalist, and author of the book, *Bleeding Afghanistan*, is the co-director of the Afghan Women's Mission. She talks about her US-based nonprofit that works with the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), and how they and other organizations in the country, and the women who struggle there, are working under dangerous conditions to improve the rights of women. For what it's worth, the UN Human Rights Council calls on the Taliban to restore human rights to women, and urges the international community to put pressure on the Afghan government.

US Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction John Sapko reports that billions of taxpayer's dollars are unaccounted for, and likely went "into the coffers of the Taliban and Afghan terror

Policy of Misogyny...see page13

Policy of Misogyny... from page 12

groups, thanks to poor oversight. Thus, we may be funding the Taliban. US Pres. Biden could consider cutting funding to Afghanistan - a total of over \$8 billion since Aug. 2021, by far the most of any country or agency. This would cause additional widespread suffering, but could bring the current government to a virtual standstill. The UN could follow suit.

With women being banned from virtually all public places, and men having all the power over females, we must add whatever organizing and actions we can to groups in the US and Afghanistan who are working assiduously in perilous situations to change the level of oppression of females there.

Sources: UN News, Afghanistan: Women tell UN rights experts, 'we're alive, but not living,' Human Rights 5/5/23; The return of the Taliban to hardline Sharia law, Jacques Follorou, Le Monde 11/6/22; Taliban may be getting bulk of US aid sent to Afghanistan, Leo Shane III, Military Times 4/19/23; countrymeters.info/ Afghanistan population 2023; Afghanistan emergency, World Food Programme; Kitab Al-Hudud (The book pertaining to punishments prescribed by Islam): Translation of Sahih Muslim, Book 17; KPFA radio 6/22/23; Google and Wikipedia Arabic translations; Application of Sharia by Country, Wikipedia. 🙌

Barry Barnett is a progressive author and activist, health professional, and musician, living on the left coast of the US Empire. His writing is on counterpunch.org/archives/author's name, and on his website, with ~100 political and environmental articles, animal rights, poetry, political fantasy stories, and much satire/humor, at Patreon.com/BarryBarnett.



Digesting Violence – When Will We Ever Learn?... from page 2

that you will find that almost everything you are being told is a lie. You don't get to be president or senator or congressperson without having learned the art of deception. The ultimate power is the ability to get people to accept that what is good for the elite is good for them as well and inevitable. Most people who live in the United States believe that there is no real alternative to this system, including its violence.

And the second thing? Now, you're free.

Once you realize that you're being told lies to benefit someone

else, you're free to imagine everything else that is possible. Have we then solved the problem? No. Will we solve this problem before it's too late? I don't know, but it's time for a detour from the proscribed path. We can take the road not taken and teach our children their value as human beings among other equally valuable living creations and not cogs in a machine. It's time to let our imaginations work the magic of which we are capable but have forgotten we possess. 🙌



Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights

The purpose of the Commission on Human Rights is to promote better human relations among all people in Sonoma County through education, mediation, cooperation with County and community agencies, and by initiating action that fosters the recognition of and an appreciation for the cultural diversity of the community.

Monthly meetings on the 4th Tuesday. [See schedule here.](#)
Email: chr@sonoma-county.org • [Website](#)



NAACP
Santa Rosa – Sonoma County

Become a member of the local chapter



PO BOX 3964, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Phone: 707.536.1047
Email: naacp.srsc1074b@gmail.com
Website: naacpsantarosasonomaco.org
Facebook: facebook.com/naacpsonoma
Instagram: instagram.com/naacpsonoma
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Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights

PROCLAMATION IN SUPPORT OF GUARANTEED HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

WHEREAS every resident in Sonoma County deserves high-quality healthcare, and

WHEREAS the ever-increasing costs of care, which are further elevated due to the pandemic, challenge already strapped municipal budgets, and

WHEREAS the pandemic has led to the loss of employer-sponsored health insurance—showing the shortcoming of tying health insurance to employment, and

WHEREAS the vast majority of households and small businesses in Sonoma County would save money under a single-payer healthcare system and physicians would be able to focus on efficiently providing the best care possible for all residents, and

WHEREAS the County of Sonoma spends in excess of \$87 million annually on health insurance for current employees and retirees—much of which could be redirected to other county priorities if those insurance costs were covered under a federal or state single-payer system, and

WHEREAS single-payer initiatives such as the federal Medicare for All Act of 2023 and the state’s CalCare bill (AB 1690) would provide health insurance that covers all necessary medical care including prescription drugs; hospital, surgical and outpatient services; primary and preventive care; emergency services; reproductive care; dental and vision care; and long-term care; and

WHEREAS both the federal Medicare for All Act of 2023 and the state CalCare bill will guarantee that all residents of Sonoma County will be fully covered for healthcare without co-pays, deductibles, or other out-of-pocket costs, and would save millions in taxpayer dollars now spent on premiums that provide often inadequate health insurance coverage for government employees, then

NOW LET IT BE RESOLVED that the Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights, do hereby urge the U.S. Congress and the California State legislature to pass legislation to create a single-payer system that will provide all residents with universal, comprehensive, and equitable health coverage.

2023: Year of the Strike... from page 3

the rank-and-file would be shutting down UPS. To punctuate the readiness of the union to walk if no acceptable contract was on the table, Teamsters held mass ‘practice pickets’, parking lot rallies and t-shirt days to demonstrate solidarity.

In the words of newly elected reform president O’Brien prior to the tentative agreement, “we call on all rank-and-file UPS Teamsters to take up the task of organizing our fellow workers into a unified force prepared to hit the streets on August 1st for the largest strike against a private employer in US history.”

Seeing the unity and militant determination of the Teamsters’ membership, UPS was confronted with little option but to cave and agree to many of the union demands, setting an example for all workers of what solidarity can accomplish.

The tentative 5-year agreement includes immediate raises for all UPS employees, as well as elimination of a lower paid class of delivery driver and installation of air conditioning units in new delivery vans for the first time. All UPS employees will receive a \$2.75 an hour raise this year, and a \$7.50 an hour pay increase over the next five years.

Importantly, pay for part-time workers, who make up about half the workforce, will now start at \$21 an hour, a notable boost from the current \$16.20 an hour starting wage. Additionally, the tentative agreement establishes a Martin Luther King Jr. paid holiday and a ban on driver facing cameras in the truck cabs and restricts forced overtime on drivers’ scheduled days off.

Jonathan Melrod, author of *Fighting Times – Organizing On the Front Lines of the Class War*, will be in a Labor Day Conversation at Barnes & Noble, 700 4th St. in Santa Rosa, Thursday, Aug. 31, 6 pm. Learn more at jonathanmelrod.com and facebook.com/jonathan.melrod

Saturday August 19, 2023 10am to 4pm **Resurrection Church 303 Stony Point Rd Santa Rosa**

NATURALIZATION FAIR!

Have your N-400 Application for U.S. Citizenship completed at no cost thanks to our generous community! USCIS filing fees covered for those who qualify.

- Appointments available at 10am, 12pm, and 2pm
- Pre-Registration Required
- To Register, contact VIDAS at 707-523-1740
- Must be eligible to apply for citizenship and have all supporting documentation
- Refreshments provided!

ENGAGE YOUR GOVT.**Sonoma County Supervisors** (707) 565-2241District 1 - Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.orgDistrict 2 - David.Rabbitt@sonoma-county.orgDistrict 3 - Chris.Coursey@sonoma-county.orgDistrict 4 - James.Gore@sonoma-county.orgDistrict 5 - Linda.Hopkins@sonoma-county.org**State Senator Mike McGuire**

50 D St., Ste. 120A, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

(707) 576-2771, Fax: (707) 576-2773

Senator.McGuire@sen.ca.gov**Assemblymember Stephanie Nguyen**

District Offices, 9250 Laguna Springs Drive

Suite 220, Elk Grove, CA 95758,

Tel: (916) 670-7888

Capitol Office: State Capitol

P.O. Box 942849, Sacramento, CA 94249-0010

Tel: (916) 319-2010

Assemblymember Jim Wood

50 D Street, Suite 450, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

(707) 576-2526, Fax: (707) 576-2297

California Assembly Website: assembly.ca.gov**U.S. Representative Jared Huffman**

1630 Longworth Office Bldg.

Washington, DC 20515

202-225-5161, 202-225-5163 (Fax)

Nearest local office:

999 Fifth Ave., #290, San Raphael 94901

415-258-9657, 415-258-9913 (Fax)

U.S. Representative Mike Thompson

231 Cannon Bldg., Washington D.C. 20515

(202) 225-3311, Napa (707) 226-9898

Fax: (202) 225-4335, Santa Rosa (707) 542-7182

Fax (707) 542-2745

m.thompson@mail.house.gov**U.S. Senator Alejandro Padilla**

112 Hart Senate Office Bldg.

Washington, D.C. 20510

(202) 224-3553, S.F. (415) 403-0100

Relay Fax: 202-224-0454

padilla.senate.gov/content/contact-senator**U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein**

331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.

Washington, D.C. 20510

(202) 224-3841, S.F. (415) 393-0707

Fax: (202) 228-3954

feinstein@senate.gov**California Gov. Gavin Newsom**

State Capitol, Sacramento, Ste. 1173, CA 95814

(916) 445-2841, Fax: (916) 445-4633

governor@governor.ca.gov**Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis**

State Capital, Rm. 1114, Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 445-8994, Fax (916) 323-4998

Citizen Comment: (202) 456-1111

(A 1-minute call before 8 am costs 29 cents;

caller's message is recorded for reference

of public opinions)

Congressional Switchboard

(202) 224-3121

President Joseph R. Biden

1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500

(202) 456-1111, Fax: (202) 456-2461

president@whitehouse.gov**Sonoma County Social Justice Groups**ALL PHONE AREA CODES ARE (707)
UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE**350 Sonoma County** – Engaging our community in the work of 350.org to solve the climate crisis. 350sonomacounty.org**ACLU Sonoma Co.**, working to preserve individual working rights and liberties. sonomaaclu.org**Allies Safety Network** – compiling a phone chain/helpline to build a safety network for those at risk of harassment to provide a supportive presence in situations of hateful threats. Join the Network Call List: 583-9168**Alternatives to Violence** – Presents experiential workshops in personal growth in the community and prisons. 545-1798**The Climate Center** – Rapid Response Team, benderjane613@gmail.com, 707-291-5988 or info@speakeasies.biz, 707-494-9495. theclimatecenter.org**Comité VIDA** – Defends the human and civil rights of immigrants. 523-1740, cirsc@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!** A visible unified Lesbian presence in support of each other, and stand in solidarity with the many communities, causes, and policies under attack by the US administration. Info @ LezResist@gmail.com.**LGBTQ Connection, Napa & Sonoma Counties** – Sonoma County, 714 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95401, 707-582-0552, emerson@lgbtqconnection.org**Listening for a Change** – Programs support listening and oral history to create a caring community. 578-5420, listeningforchange.org **MEChA de Sonoma** – Student group that focuses on issues affecting the Chicano/Latino community. info@mechadesonoma.org**Los Cien** – advances belonging, trust and equity by engaging with community, facilitating honest dialogue, elevating Latinx pride and power in So.Co. loscien.org**Metta Center for Nonviolence** – Works to promote and build a nonviolent culture worldwide. 774-6299**MOVES-Minimizing Occurrences of Violence in Everyday Society** – Stresses nonviolence as the answer to society's ph. 524-1900**NAACP - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People** – Seeks to eliminate racial hatred, racial profiling and discrimination. naacpsantarosasonomaco.org Email: naacp.srcs1074b@gmail.com 707.536.1047**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, deepdemocracy principles of the Occupy Movement with a regional strategy for effectively organizing county-wide social justice campaigns that are globally relevant. 877-6650, OccupySonomaCounty.org**Organizing for Action:** Progressive organizing project. Contact Linda Hemenway: whatisworking@gmail.com or 707-843-6110 and Facebook**Peace Alliance** – Mission is to campaign for a cabinet-level US Department of Peace. 838-8647, maggik3@sonic.net, thepeacealliance.org**Peace Roots Alliance** – We seek to create a peaceful, just and sustainable world for future generations. 765-0196, Linda@peaceroots.org**Petaluma Blacks for Community Development** – [facebook.com/pb4cd](https://www.facebook.com/pb4cd)**Petaluma Progressives** – Grassroots, political education and action group. Producers of the Progressive Festival. 763-8134, info@progressivefestival.org**Praxis Peace Institute** – Peace Education organization, 939-2973, praxispeace.org**Progressive Sonoma** – Peaceful Resistance Network.An umbrella association to network Sonoma's local progressive action groups. peacefulresistance9.wixsite.com/progressivesonoma. Facebook at Peaceful Resistance Sonoma**Project Censored/Media Freedom Foundation** – Publishes the top 25 most censored news stories each year. Mickey@projectcensored.org. projectcensored.org**Racial Justice Allies** – Developing anti-racist practices among white social justice activists. 795-2890 racialjusticeallies@gmail.com, www.racialjusticeallies.org**Sonoma County Black Forum:** Our mission is to lead, serve, and thrive, by promoting positive community and youth engagement events. Monthly meetings. sonomacountyblackforum@gmail.com**Physicians for a National Health Program, Sonoma County (PNHP)**. In support of single payer health insurance. 763-1925. sngold@juno.com. pnhpca.org.**Sonoma County Climate Activist Network (SoCo CAN!)** Groups and individuals working address and reverse climate change. Meet in months with a 5th Monday, 7-9 PM at the PJC. 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](https://www.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](https://www.facebook.com/SunriseSoCo)**SURJ (Showing Up For Racial Justice, Sonoma County)** – [facebook.com/SURJSonomaCounty](https://www.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**VIDAS - Vital Immigrant Defense Advocacy and Services** 576 B St Suite 1C, Santa Rosa, CA 95401, vidaslegal.org Sonoma County, Napa County, Solano County Providing Low-Cost, Immigration Law Services, Advocacy, and Community Education. (707) 523-1740, Spanish/English, Monday-Friday 9am-1pm and 2-5pm**Legal Assistance 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.comFor additions or changes, email zenekar2@gmail.com type "PEACE PRESS" on Subject line.*Let the politicians know
you're watching them.*

Add Your Voice to the Vision of the Peace & Justice Center



Let us know what issues the PJC can assist with, and how you can help the Center

Contact us if you would you like to use your skills to help the Center advance by:

- ▶ Serving on the Board
- ▶ Joining the Peace Press Collective
- ▶ Helping to maintain and expand our social media
- ▶ Assisting at Center Events
- ▶ Helping with grant writing
- ▶ Fundraising or Donating to the Center
- ▶ Sponsoring our bi-monthly Peace Press Newsletter

Please call (707) 575-8902 or visit PJCso.co.org

SONOMA COUNTY RENTERS ASSEMBLY
 Sunday, September 17
 2-6PM • Unitarian Universalist
 Congregation, Santa Rosa
 547 Mendocino Ave 95401

Know Your Rights trainings
 Build Solidarity with other tenants
 Snacks Provided

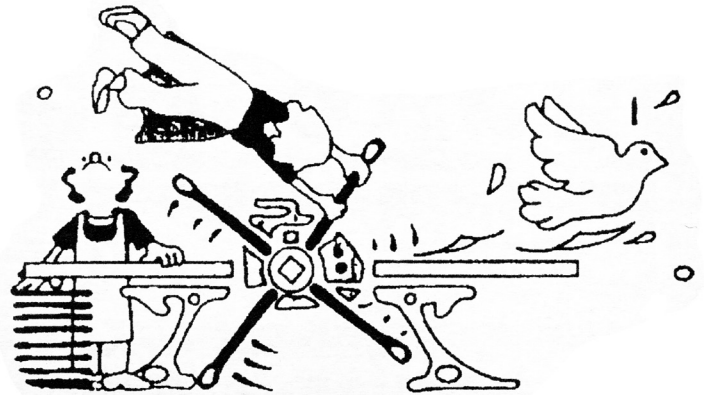
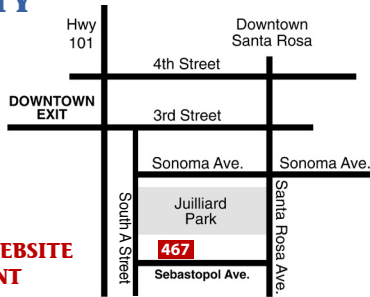
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PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER OF SONOMA COUNTY

467 Sebastopol Ave. Santa Rosa, CA 95401 (707) 575-8902

peacentr@sonic.net
PJCso.co.org

CONTACT US THROUGH OUR WEBSITE TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT



JOIN THE PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER OF SONOMA COUNTY

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Yes, I want to be a member of the Peace & Justice Center and receive one year of the Peace Press

Please check one: I am renewing my membership. I am a new member. How I learned about the Center:

Annual Membership Dues, tax deductible (includes the bimonthly Peace Press mailed to your address for one year).

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Return by mail or fax to Peace & Justice Center. Thank you for your membership! Visit PJCso.co.org for activities and hours.