



THE **GRIZZLY**

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The publication for California politics and perspectives

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Grizzly Staff

Managing Editor: Andre Santana

Contributing Editors: Kevin Hile and Cynkay Morningsong

Art: Isaac Ing (cover), Matthew Vitale (advertisements)

Editor’s Note

Dear Readers:

Welcome to the inaugural edition of “The Grizzly”. This is a new publication that is interested in the concept of Independence for California. I have noticed ever since the Independence movement has ramped up in California, a lot of misinformation has been spread about the concept. Considering that 1 in 3 Californians support independence for California, the purpose of this platform is to ensure the debate of independence is covered fairly for the 32% of Californians that have questions about the incredibly complicated concept. “The Grizzly” may not agree with everything that is written in this platform but, will always try and speak on all of California issues and give unique perspectives. As independence affects almost every issue in California, this publication has decided to focus on California politics and perspectives along with issues of independence. “The Grizzly” will experiment and transform over the next year trying to be a voice of the independence debate, hearing from our readers and allowing many of you to write in your opinions every month and talk about issues you care about. I am still figuring out the format and the issues our readers care about, I respect your patience over the next year as figure out the format, we hope you enjoy the publication and read every month.

Thank you

Andre Santana

Managing Editor

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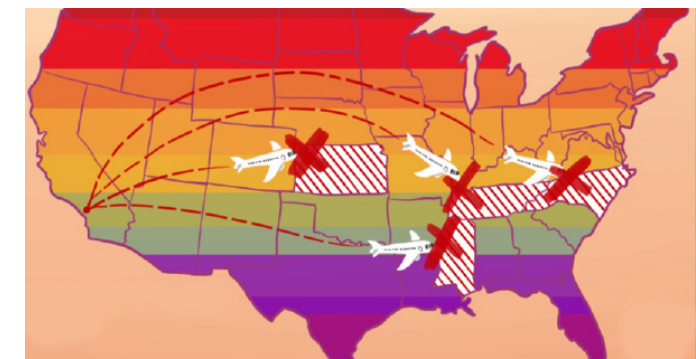
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California Boycotts States That Discriminate against the LGBT Community

By Kevin Hile



(Source: David Wolfe)

On January 1, a travel boycott took effect following the California Legislature’s approval of AB 1887, a bill that, according to the legislation, prohibits “state agencies, departments, boards, authorities, and commissions, including an agency, department, board, authority, or commission of the University of California, the Board of Regents of the University of California, and the California State University” from using state funds to travel to selected states that have passed discriminatory laws against the LGBT community.

Initially, four states were targeted in the travel boycott: Kansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee. On June 22, four more states were added: Alabama, Kentucky, South Dakota, and Texas.

All eight states have passed laws that do one or more of the following:

- 1. Repeal existing local and state laws protecting against discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation or expression.
- 2. Discriminate against same-sex couples and their families.
- 3. Create exemptions that allow for discrimination

based on sexual or gender identity or expression.

Some examples of this include Kentucky’s SB 17, which permits student organizations at schools and colleges to ban classmates from their ranks based on gender identification and sexual orientation; Texas’ HB 3859, which allows foster care and adoption agencies to discriminate against LGBT parents (similar laws were passed in South Dakota and Alabama); and Mississippi’s HB 1523, which gives practically free license for any individual or business, including state government employees, to discriminate against LGBT people for “religious” reasons.

In a statement published on California’s Department of Justice website, Attorney General Xavier Becerra asserted, “While the California DOJ works to protect the rights of all our people, discriminatory laws in any part of our country send all of us several steps back. That’s why when California said we would not tolerate discrimination against LGBTQ members of our community, we meant it.”

The California National Party supports this position. Chair Theo Slater recently said that his party stands behind “any move on the part of California that will save taxpayer dollars from being spent in distant regions of the U.S. that don’t share our inclusive California values.”

What impact will this ban have on the targeted state? Actually, very little, financially speaking. Mostly, it is a political gesture and social statement made on behalf of Californians. The boycott also has some exemptions that take some of the teeth out of it. It does not prevent state

money to pay for travel when it is necessitated for litigation purposes, when it involves the enforcement of California law (i.e., e.g. revenue collection, audits), when it is necessary to comply with federal law, when required for job training, or when related to issues regarding health, safety, and welfare of those working for state agencies and other bodies.

And, of course, it does not apply to individuals who travel using their own money for personal or business reasons.

Some of the states on the receiving end have thumbed their political noses at California’s boycott. The Tennessee Senate, for example, issued a resolution that, in part, states: “[W]e urge and encourage the Governor, the Speaker of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to communicate with fellow governors and legislative leaders and urge these state officials to refrain from imposing moral judgment on their sister states as California has done in order to prevent escalating foolishness.” (Senate Joint Resolution No. 111.)

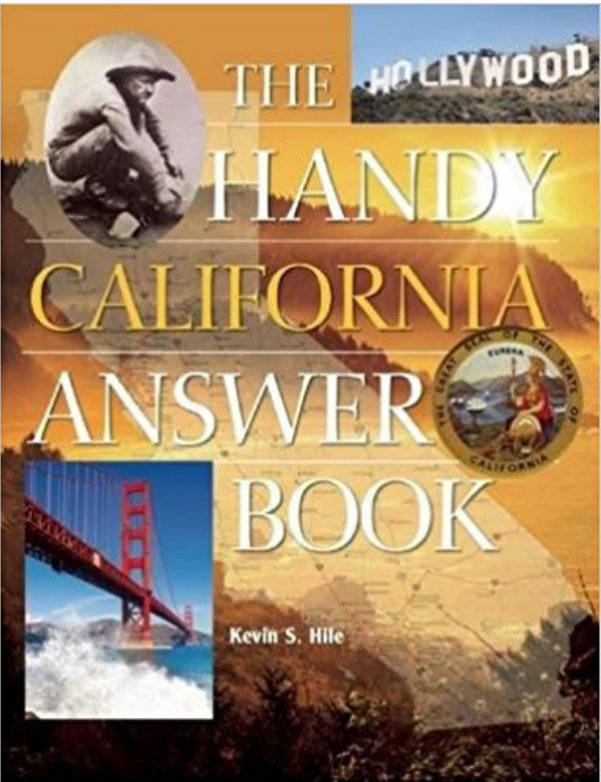
Apparently, legislators in Tennessee are irony impaired, since they ask states not to make moral judgments even as they themselves make moral judgments against the LGBT community.

The CNP Platform seeks to add language to the state constitution protecting the rights and freedoms of its people “regardless of race, religion, orientation, gender, class, or other status.”

It would be refreshing if other states shared the sentiment that every citizen deserves equal consideration under the law.



Kevin Hile is a freelance writer and editor based in Cathedral City, California. He has authored books on California like *The Handy California Answer Book*



From Paris to California – Climate Change Is Every-body’s Business.

The President of the United States has made a big mistake. By pulling out of the Paris Climate Agreement he has shown the world that he is not interested in “making America great,” but that he is abdicating his responsibility as a world leader. It is now up to states and local governments to take up the challenge of limiting climate change and work toward building a safe and healthy world for future generations of Americans.

On December 12, 2015, 197 countries agreed to the essential elements of the Paris Agreement to combat climate change and to “accelerate and intensify actions and investments to ensure a sustainable low carbon future.” The primary goal of the agreement is to minimize the rise in temperatures globally by limiting the carbon emissions of developed countries while also helping more vulnerable countries reach their goals as we deal with the consequences of climate change.

The essential elements of the agreement include:

- Limiting global temperature change to less than 2 degrees Celsius (about 3.5 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Halting the increase of annual greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) as soon as possible.
- Maintaining clear and transparent communications among nations regarding emissions, what countries are doing to minimize emissions, and how they are adjusting their economies to operate with minimal adverse environmental consequences.
- Conserving and expanding carbon sinks such as forests and other natural and artificial reservoirs of GHGs.
- Cooperating on both market and non-market levels to support sustainable development.
- Exploring ways for humans and natural systems to adapt to any unavoidable effects of climate change. Assisting vulnerable countries that will face the greatest impact from climate change in both financial and technological areas.
- Fostering greater public awareness

through education, training, participation, and access to information.

- Monitoring progress every five years.

The increase in global temperature is expected to impact California in several ways. Approximately 85% of Californians live and work in coastal communities. Sea level is projected to rise anywhere from 20 to 55 inches by the end of this century, causing widespread flooding and threatening \$100 billion in property and infrastructure. Coastal erosion will significantly impact our economy. Saltwater will contaminate the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta, threatening wildlife and drinking water for 20 million people. This will likely impact farmland in low-lying areas.

Higher temperatures will cause the Sierra snowpack to melt faster and earlier, overwhelming our reservoirs and causing floods and water shortages.



California Gov. Jerry Brown, left, exchanges memorandum of understanding with China's Science and Technology Minister Wan Gang after the Clean Technology signing ceremony at a hotel in Beijing, Tuesday, June 6, 2017.

AP Photo/Andy Wong

Forests will be impacted as higher temperatures affect tree survival and growth, making them more vulnerable to fire and disease.

The resulting droughts, higher temperatures, saltwater contamination, and increased risk of pests poses a serious threat to our agricultural industry. Production declines could lead to food shortages and higher prices.

Higher temperatures will result in increased demand for electricity, perhaps as much as 60% more than our current usage. This will also degrade our air quality, putting the health of our residents at significant risk.

Climate change will adversely affect the delicate balance of our plant and wildlife habitats and impact the ability of our ecosystems to support clean air, water, fish, timber, and the other goods and services necessary to our economy and quality of life.

Fortunately, Governor Jerry Brown has intensified his efforts to reduce California's influence on climate change. By advocating to strengthen and extend our state's landmark cap-and-trade program, requiring companies to buy permits to release greenhouse gasses, and working with environmental and industry groups, he is working to bring California into alignment with the Paris Agreement, even as the federal government drops the ball.

It is in the best interest of all Californians to do our part to limit our carbon footprint. Some simple ways you can help include:

- Eating a locally grown, organic, plant-based diet as much as possible.
- Don't overuse heating and air conditioning. Sweat a little or put on a sweater.
- Line dry your clothes. They will last longer, smell sweeter, and you will cut your energy costs.
- Opt for public transportation. Vote to expand these systems so they will be more widely available.
- Reduce, reuse, recycle!
- Other ways, such as: add solar panels, install energy efficient appliances, insulate your home better and/or replace old windows and doors with vinyl, double-pane windows and insulated doors, purchase fuel-efficient cars (hybrids or even electric), filter tap water instead of buying bottled water, don't idle your car engine; don't use gas-powered mowers or leaf blowers (I could go on....)
- Visit climateneutralnow.org to learn more!
- Follow this column in the future to learn more about the state of our environment and more ways that you can help to minimize the effects of climate change on future generations.



Cynkay Morningsong is a freelance writer based in Sonoma County, CA. She can be contacted as a freelancer at this link. <https://www.conversionfreelancer.com/>

Universal Healthcare, SB 562, and Anthony Rendon



(Source: CNA)

Late in the evening on Friday June 23rd, while most people were heading out for a night on the town, or heading away for weekend trips, the hopes for a single payer universal healthcare plan were dashed when speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon(D) announced that he would be keeping SB 562 in the Rules committee instead of allowing it to proceed with its scheduled vote. The timing of this announcement happens to coincide with the release of the Senate Mitch McConnell health-care bill that was splashed all over the headlines and would take away healthcare from 22 Million people. Giving out bad news on a Friday evening is an old political trick referred to as “taking out the garbage”. Politicians know that Friday evening is typically when the least amount of people watch the news and that if a story doesn’t catch fire over the weekend when most people aren’t following it, then there is a chance no one will notice it by Monday when all the regular news stories are watched normally. In the future notice that all big political initiatives are launched on Mondays if a politician is competent and knows what they are doing. Speaker Rendon was hoping to do the same thing,

which showed that he and the Democratic party had planned and premeditated this move during a crazy news cycle nationwide about Trump, Russia, and the Republican healthcare plan. Well, speaker Rendon was dead wrong about it may be slipping out of the news cycle where here in the Golden State 70% of Californians approve of universal healthcare. People are scared by the Republican healthcare bill some might call “deathcare”, that could cause thousands of deaths each year from treatable conditions according to a study from Harvard University(<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/healthcare/news/2017/06/22/434917/coverage-losses-senate-health-care-bill-result-18100-27700-additional-deaths-2026/>) , as it would allow HMO’s to drop sick people from health coverage, if they have preexisting conditions, people’s attention to Healthcare is at an all-time high.

Speaker Rendon has been receiving death threats and facing rallies held by the California Nurses Association to ask him to undo the damage he did to this bill. The California National Party (CNP) party chair Theo Slater, which has had universal healthcare boldly in their platform for a few years, has this as a goal for California, unlike the Democratic party, has commented and given a quote about Rendon’s action:

“Speaker Rendon profoundly disappointed both myself and the California National Party by shelving California’s best opportunity for passing Universal Single Payer Healthcare this session. When arduous work needs to be done to get an important priority for all Californians accomplished, the solution is never to kick the can into the weeds at the behest of big donors. Speaker Rendon needs to remember that he was elected to represent the people of Cal-

ifornia in our need for healthcare for all, not his rich donor friends in the health insurance industry who write him big checks at our expense.”

Rendon’s official argument makes sense for those just now interested in Universal public single payer healthcare; essentially his argument is how do we pay for it if it could cost double the entire state budget? For those people that have been interested in this issue for years this seems to just be an excuse. The state of California has been discussing and planning a version of Universal healthcare now for 25 years and the questions of how to do it and how to fund it have been answered multiple times in multiple ways.

Way back in 1992, California started its first legislative move on single payer healthcare when assemblymen Nick Petris started the first draft of a universal healthcare plan. Since then multiple Senate universal healthcare Bills called SB’s have been proposed in SB921, SB 840, SB 810, (SB) 2123, and now SB 562 and only once has it been proposed along with a universal healthcare ballot initiative called proposition 186 which failed in 1994. It’s worth noting that the Democratic party has held the California State legislature for 47 years now. The legislature has passed single payer bills 3 times only to be vetoed by Republican governors Pete Wilson once and Arnold Schwarzenegger twice. It’s as if they only can get their act together on this issue when we have Republican governors when they know it won’t pass. It seems that with supermajorities in both houses a Democratic Governor and a booming economy, the Democrats can’t seem to politically and financially find a plan to fund a universal healthcare initiative or even agree to make it an expressed goal in their platform. It is as if all this universal healthcare talk is some kind of false campaign promise they use to attract liberals and progressives that they have no real intention

on delivering on kind of like every politician’s stance on fixing schools. To this analyst it means one of two things is going on with the California Democratic party and single payer healthcare, either they are incompetent or, as Bernie Sanders said, they have been bought by big money corporations. It’s worth noting that Rendon has taken campaign donations from many organizations in the health industry that are against single payer 72k from pharmaceutical, 68k from private HMO’s. While nowhere in the political discourse should death threats ever be used, people might not be wrong in assuming the Democratic party is working against the interest of its constituents on healthcare. Also many economists and experts have found ways to tax the rich billionaires and millionaires or the big corporations like Google and Apple to pay for this plan and that a part in the ACA allows for each state to roll Medicare and Medicaid funding to be used into state run healthcare plans.



Andre Santana Managing Editor of “The Grizzly”. He is a longtime California native from Vacaville and parts of the Bay Area, he is an Army Veteran that serves as a public policy analyst for the CNP.



The 2017 California National Party Convention will feature special guest speaker and renowned activist Cindy Sheehan as well as panels, working groups, and National Leadership elections.



August 13th, 2017 10:00 AM
Betty Ong Rec Center
1199 Mason Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

Join us to help shape the future of our party and of California. Register here:
<https://californianational.party/2017-convention/>

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Hello everyone, I’ve volunteered to write a column on women’s issues, and this is my first one. Writing a first column is hard as there is a brand new landscape to map and explore.

I feel strongly about many of the issues we discuss in the California National Party, and while I wouldn’t feel comfortable running for office, I wanted to see how other women felt about it. Unsure where to start, I googled “women in politics” and found lists of the most influential women in the political realm. As I scrolled down, I came across an article from NPR last year about why more women aren’t in politics. This resonated with me, so it will be the subject of this article.

The NPR article focuses on a 2012 report written by an American University professor of government, Jennifer Lawless, and a Loyola Marymount University professor of political Science, Richard Fox. They did a study to determine what keeps women from running for office and found seven main barriers. Here they are:

- 1) Women are substantially more likely than men to perceive the electoral environment as highly competitive and biased against female candidates.
- 2) Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin’s candidacies aggravated women’s perceptions of gender bias in the electoral arena.
- 3) Women are much less likely than men to think they are qualified to run for office.

- 4) Female potential candidates are less competitive, less confident, and more risk averse than their male counterparts.
- 5) Women react more negatively than men to many aspects of modern campaigns.
- 6) Women are less likely than men to receive the suggestion to run for office — from anyone.
- 7) Women are still responsible for the majority of child care and household tasks.

These barriers, except the third, are things I’ve thought about and would say apply to me, especially the last one. This is not about what any partner does or doesn’t do, but a concern most women who are married, or are mothers, are likely to worry about more than most men who are married or have children would. It’s as much an issue of time commitment as it is anything else.

These reasons are troublesome because we need women to be involved in politics. The CNP needs candidates for everything from local to state level offices, working to advance our progressive party platform. If roughly 50% of potential candidates are uncomfortable putting themselves and their families through the process, then we need to understand that and find incentives for encouraging them to run, or show them other ways to become involved.

It occurred to me that many of these things are true for women in areas other than politics as well. Studies done in the workplace suggest that women do not apply for promotions unless they believe they already qualify for most, or all, of the required tasks of the job; whereas men are com-

fortable if they can do 50% or so. Women are socialized to be collaborators, men are socialized to compete. I realize these are generalizations, but they apply to much of the population.

At a conference, years ago, where then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell was speaking, someone in the audience asked him if he would consider running for President. He demurred, stating that his wife, Alma, would certainly cause him harm if he did. I remember thinking that I could understand where she was coming from, as well as his hesitancy. I also thought that anyone we would really want to have as President wouldn’t want the job, and anyone who really wanted the job wouldn’t be someone we wanted. I think this is a reflection not on the responsibilities of office, but in the horrible process that anyone running is exposed to along the way. I would not want to drag my family and friends through a political process which has become more about mud slinging and personal attacks than about discussing issues and how to solve them.

I don’t have answers to this problem. I don’t know how to encourage women to run for office as it is an individual choice with serious repercussions. But I would ask this... if this resonates with you, please let me know so we can continue the conversation. Get on the CNP Facebook page, Women for an Independent California, and join the discussion. Tell me what you think. Does this resonate? Does it seem wrong somehow? Do you have thoughts about it? Are there other reasons that stop you or motivate you? Are you a woman who has run for office? Are you someone who secretly thinks about it? Please come join the discussion. We want to hear from you and make you part of this conversation. And I’d like us to get to know each other better.

Thank you.



Joyce Tompsett contributing columnist for “The Grizzly”

Dear Middle America, We want a divorce

First, it's not only about Trump. We're just tired of fighting. We've been fighting for years, decades, really more like two hundred years. And it's the same old fight, over and over and over again. Trump just brought it to a head. Heck, for you Hillary probably just brought it to a head, didn't she? It doesn't matter which side you look at it from – the point is, we're all at the end of our rope with each other. Don't kid yourself that because you won this time things will be great again for you and stay that way. In four years, or eight years, or whenever, we're going to elect somebody that you'll hate even more than you hated Barack Obama. Because that's how it is in politics. Nobody ever stays in control for long. Nobody. Every few years one side or the other gets totally pissed off by the outcome.

Look at all the election maps of Red States and Blue States – the pattern doesn't really change much, does it? North vs South, urban vs rural, butting heads over and over again, hating each other, keeping the country in gridlock most of the time. It hasn't really changed, and it's never going to change.

But I keep hearing that you all voted for change. Well here's an idea for a real change: We want a divorce and we want it now. An amicable divorce, a friendly divorce, a divorce that stops all the fighting once and for all. No one's going to move out. We live in a really big house and we already live in different wings of it. There's a Northeast wing, a West Coast wing, and then the whole Middle of the house. That's you all. We're just going to close the doors between them and we'll all keep on going about our business. It will be good for everyone, and it will be really good for you. Here's why.

In your separated Middle America house you get to do whatever you want, and in our two wings of the house we get to do whatever we want. Without

you around, we'll quickly and easily have fully socialized medicine, clean energy, strong environmental controls, strong unions, higher taxes (and very high taxes on rich folks), public banking, strong equal opportunity laws, sensible gun control, real community policing, protections for all minorities, major infrastructure upgrades, strong voting rights, and foreign policies that seek to cooperate with the world. And yeah, we'll sit around the campfire and sing Kum-baya if we feel like it. Because without you around we can do whatever we damn well want.

OK, we get it now. We get that you hate all these things. You've made it very clear that you really, really don't want any of them. And you're really, really pissed at us for trying to force them on you. (You did a pretty good job of resisting, by the way. Obama wasn't hardly able to do diddly in eight years.) Well good news! After the divorce you won't have to deal with any of these things. None. And nobody will be trying to force anything else on you in four years, or eight years, or ever again.

You can do whatever you want. You want a country where everyone looks like you? You can have it. We'll take in anyone you want to get rid of. You want a government that thinks like you? You can have it. In California we just had a Senate race where only Democrats ran. You'll have your own Presidential races where the choice is between one conservative Republican and another even more conservative Republican. Good for you. You want no environmental restrictions? You can do it. We'll shed a tear when you start open-pit mining in Yellowstone, but we won't do a thing to stop you. You want to establish an Evangelical state religion? Go ahead! We won't have any say at all in what you do any more.

Just think about this for a minute. You won't have us always butting in with our political correctness, trying to tell you what to do. Think about how

great this is going to be for you.

And don't worry about losing us. You don't need us. All three sections of the house have major, viable economies. You've got the oil and the gas and the amber waves of grain. You can build pipelines. You have major seaports. You can drill offshore. You can build cars. You don't need either Wall Street or Silicon Valley. You already have your own versions of both, and they will get bigger. Relax, you're good.

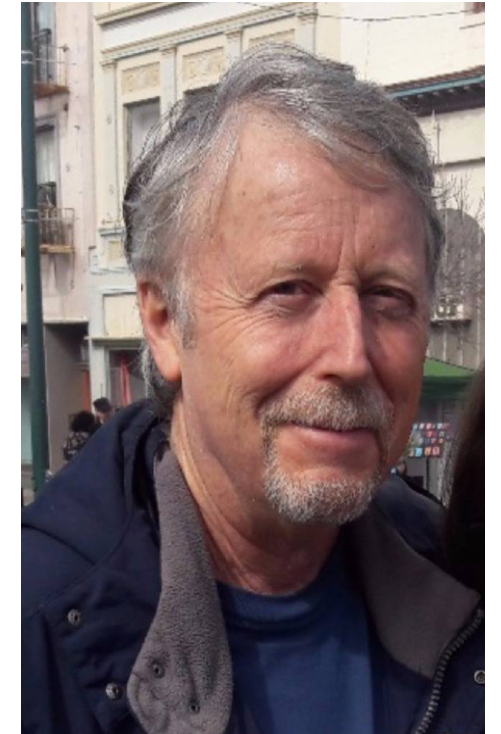
Don't worry about your security either. The USA has a military ten times bigger than that of any other country in the world. After dividing things up, all three of these newly divorced countries will have militaries at least three times bigger than those of China or Russia or North Korea, or whoever you're worried about. Relax, they ain't comin' to get us.

Bottom line: You'll have a big, powerful country all to yourselves.

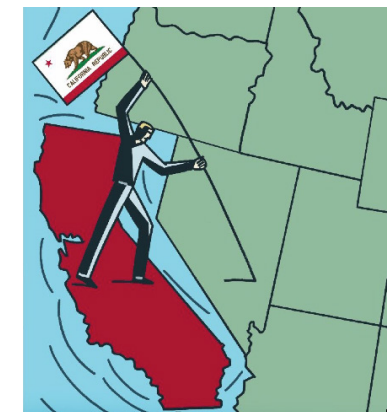
Now's the time for you to make this deal. You're in a good bargaining position. Don't wait for us to get back in power. (And keep in mind there's really nothing to stop us from just walking out any time, without your agreement.) Let's have the lawyers write this thing up, sit down and sign it, and be on our way. We can actually be friends again. Heck, we've always loved your music and your food, and even your accents when you're not arguing with us. Let's stop arguing. It's going to be great again for you, and for us too.

Your neighbors,

The Northeast and the West Coast.



Edwatd J Bachmann writes at the Citizenblaine blog. <https://citizenblaine.wordpress.com/2016/11/15/dear-middle-america-we-want-a-divorce/>



The stigma of living with a mental illness in California

Social stigma regarding mental illness is real, our current psychiatric system is inadequate, and yet there is always hope. I am thankful for the opportunity to share my story of recovery.

I have schizo-affective disorder; a thought disorder similar to schizophrenia, as opposed to a mood disorder like bipolar. The symptoms that are most troubling for me are negative psychotic effects, such as a lack of motivation, anhedonia, avolition, severe anxiety and depression, suicidal ideation, and a markedly decreased ability to plan and execute life goals.

Positive symptoms such as hearing voices, hallucinating, and various delusions were very troublesome when my condition first presented at the age of 28 and in the middle of law school. Over time I have developed powerful meditative techniques that dramatically reduce their sting. I am beyond lucky to have been blessed with this capacity.

Fortunately, I was able to secure prompt psychiatric and medical care through SF Mental Health and later Medi-Cal. My mother provided a phenomenally safe recovery space, and was beyond patient with me. She absolutely excelled at being a primary support person. I was also gifted with the insight that allowed me to aid in my own recovery. But even with all these lucky breaks, the devastating process of trial and error to find the right medication regime for my specific body chemistry led to several years of unemployment, even with a J.D. diploma hanging on my bedroom wall.

Problems with our mental health system are

numerous. Here are a few key observations.

First, lack of access to treatment is a huge barrier. The vast majority of people lack substantial wealth and must go through months of process and paperwork. These tasks are difficult for people without diagnoses -- daunting for those who have them. The process needs to be simplified and streamlined to avoid psychotic breaks which can turn violent and lead to costly involuntary commitments or incarceration.

Second, understanding is lacking in our society as these battles are fought inside the mind and are never seen. Behavior that appears sloppy, lazy, bizarre or irresponsible are too easily categorized as a character flaw, rather than a symptom. If I lost a limb my disability would be immediately recognizable -- not so with mental illness. Exchanges such as those supported by the CNP help people understand the insidious ways in which psychotic symptoms operate. 20 years ago, the HIV community was similarly stigmatized, but education improved our understanding -- I hold the same hope for mental illness.

Third, there is an acute lack of mutual decision-making between patients and clinicians regarding medication regiments. Many psychiatrists blindly prescribe powerful anti-psychotics with severe side effects (I gained 60 lbs in ONE MONTH when placed on Olanzapine). Psychiatry is an inexact science, and it is a long process to discover which specific medications works for an individual. Since many meds take 4-6 weeks before reaching full efficacy, there is a significant risk that a patient will discontinue meds due to

side effects, or be unable to provide relevant feedback to assist their clinicians. The lengthy amount of time between appointments exacerbates this issue. Often, doctors do not effectively explain risk/benefit analyses, nor do they display genuine respect for their patients and allow them to be involved in choosing medication regiments. This contributes to at-risk patients forgoing professional care in favor of self-medication through substance abuse, or by failing to seek treatment at all.

Finally, I find there is a bias against spirituality among clinicians. The old adage "Talk to God, you are religious, God talks to You, you are schizophrenic" is prevalent in our current system. While many delusional beliefs have religious overtones, clinicians must respectfully recognize that individuals who value spirituality and faith cannot simply excise that part of their beliefs with a psychological scalpel. For those whom faith and spirituality are important, seeking community and personal empowerment within such beliefs can be a phenomenal non-medical source of recovery. Not enough clinicians inquire what the "voices" are saying, or ask whether these experiences are healthy or harmful. The mere fact of a psychiatric symptom is often the impetus for a harsher medication regiment than is objectively justifiable.

In summary, substantially more funding for mental health care is necessary to promote access to care. The world needs to be educated that these illnesses are just as debilitating as brain injuries, cancer, etc.; and in terms of policy, a far greater emphasis must be placed on ensuring mutual decision-making between patient and clinician as standard practice. These policy goals will take time and money to accomplish, but they are attainable, and in the interest of a more just society it is our obligation to fight for such changes.

-Wesley Loofbourrow



Wesley Loofbourrow received his B.A. in Political Science from San Francisco State University and his J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law. Working with the Placer County Speaker's Bureau, he gives speeches on mental health awareness to a variety of audiences. He has been involved with the high school and college competitive debate communities for two decades as a competitor, coach and judge. Currently he volunteers with the Sacramento Urban Debate League coaching policy debate, and strongly supports SUDL's mission to expand debate into schools that historically have lacked access, funding, and quality coaching. He is also excited to be interning with the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations this summer performing legal research.



“Aliens”: The Myth of the American Biodome

By David J. Schmidt

In the 2009 film “District 9,” a spaceship full of alien refugees appears in the sky over Johannesburg. The South African government cruelly confines the extraterrestrials to internment camps, where the film’s main character meets some of the impoverished creatures. While the overarching message is one of compassion and understanding, the fact remains—in the world of “District 9,” the alien refugees dropped out of nowhere.

Many people view human immigrants the same way.

* * * *

“All right people, stay with the group, and remember: here at the Bio, we’re dependent on keeping homos balanced within the system!”

-Pauly Shore, “Biodome”

Listen to the immigration debate in any country with new arrivals—Australia, Canada, England, the United States—and you’ll find that it almost always centers on “what to do with them.” The phrase “illegal alien” is not only dehumanizing, but oddly fitting for the way many people view immigrants. Like the creatures in “District 9,” they seem to have just dropped out of the sky.

Folks on the far right claim that immigrants are a problem. Like the current occupant of the White House, they say they bring crime and disease. Liberals, on the other hand, support immigrants’ rights by arguing that they are a positive force, bringing economic growth and positive cultural values.

Reactionary forces argue for travel bans, deportations, raids, and detention. Progressive voices call for amnesty and legalization. The arguments on both sides of the aisle have one thing in common, though—all too often, they focus entirely on whether immigrants are good or bad for the country receiving them. The reasons why people migrate are almost entirely absent from the discussion.

When people do talk about the causes of immigration, it’s usually the xenophobes, repeating some version of the age-old “Their Country Sucks” myth:

“Their culture is corrupt and morally bankrupt.”

“Their economy is a mess because those people don’t

know how to run things.”

“Why do they have to come here? Why can’t they just fix their own country?”

The implication is that our country is a nice place to live because we are doing something right. We earned our prosperity through hard work and know-how, and they want to come take it from us. It’s as if our country exists beneath a solid glass dome, where everything we eat and drink and enjoy is the fruit of our own labors. If “those people” are poor, they must be doing something wrong; if we live well, it’s because we did things right here in our sealed environment.

This belief can be comforting for liberals and conservatives alike. Those on the right will feel justified in their anger and hatred: “How dare those aliens come take what’s mine?!” Those on the left can feel charitable: “Look how kind I am, sharing with these poor, unfortunate souls!”

However, the “biodome” argument—just like the Pauly Shore movie by the same name—is illogical, foolish, and just plain wrong.

* * * *

While the story of “District 9” is primarily one of compassion, it sidesteps an important historical reality. The actual shantytowns of South Africa did not appear out of nowhere—they were created. Through centuries of policies that deliberately created haves and have-nots, through political and economic forces that privileged one group and exploited another, poverty was manufactured.

The same can be said for immigration.

While humans have migrated ever since our species existed, today’s migrants are unique: most of them are political and economic refugees. The flow of migration follows a clear pattern: people leave countries that have been economically exploited and travel to the countries that bled them of their wealth.

Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano puts it succinctly in his book, *“The Open Veins of Latin America”* (translation mine):

“Our defeat has always been implicit in the victories of others; our wealth has always been used to produce our own poverty and feed into the prosperity of others...”

Immigrants aren’t invaders or freeloaders, and

they certainly aren't aliens: they are following the flow of capital. Wealth is bled out of certain regions of the world and into others. The economic policies that make some people prosperous force other people to migrate.

In future articles, we will go in-depth into the hidden cost of cheap products: the origin of the fruits and vegetables we eat, the clothes we wear, the electronics we buy. In most of the world, these things aren't produced by the prosperous people who consume them, "inside the dome"—they are made somewhere else. And most of the time, the people who produce them are paid a pittance. We will also be looking at what can be done to change this.

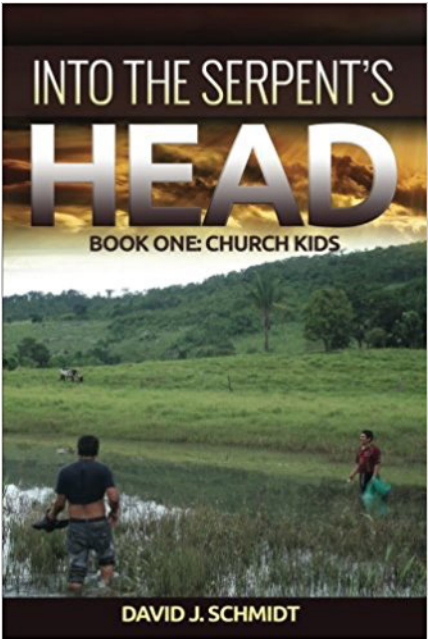
Here in California, there has been no better time for us to get a fresh start. Now is the time for us to define our economy as one based on solidarity and cooperation, one that respects the rights of working people everywhere. We have the chance to define who we are, not according to what the United States and their companies have done for centuries, but according to our own values.

Now is the time for Californians to do the right thing, to set an example. The world can't wait any longer.



David J. Schmidt is an author, translator, and proponent of immigrants' rights and fair trade. He has published several books in Spanish and English, including the series "Into the Serpent's Head," an account of his travels in the coffee-farming community of Oaxaca, Mexico. He splits his time between San Diego, California and Mexico City.

His personal blog is: www.donguero.blogspot.com



Read more about unfair trade and migration in "Into the Serpent's Head," available on Amazon.

Or find it on www.holyghost-stories.com



A Land Value Tax for California?

By Caleb Castaneda

Since 1978, the California legislature has had its hands tied by a ballot initiative known as Prop 13. This proposition limited the rise in valuation of properties and prohibited reassessment until the property was sold or built upon. But the initiative did not just constrict the use of *property taxes* to fund essential government services. It also required a legislative supermajority to levy any new tax at all.

Since Prop 13 passed, California has faced chronic underfunding of vital state services like education, fire-fighting, and infrastructure. It has also struggled to address the looming pension crisis. And, with the uncertain future of healthcare at the federal level, Prop 13 also serves as a barrier to state action on this vital issue. In its current form, Prop 13 puts the brakes on any effort to fund essential state services. Small wonder, then, that talk of reform, once anathema to both Democrats and Republicans, is now becoming mainstream.

Taxes are a necessary feature of any government. No one enjoys paying taxes, of course, but almost everyone sees them as necessary and is willing to pay taxes that are perceived as fair and effective. Where we disagree is almost never on *whether* taxes are necessary, but on what kind of taxation is most fair, and what rate will be least disruptive while bringing in the most amount of revenue.

What if there were a tax that is undeniably fair, hap-

pily falling disproportionately on those who are most able to pay it? What if, moreover, besides serving as a source of vital state revenue, that tax encouraged capital investment, discouraged inefficient use of land, and made home ownership more affordable by discouraging speculation? What if, moreover, it was impossible for the wealthy to avoid paying that tax by storing it overseas or looking for hidden tax loopholes? And finally, what if that tax had broad bipartisan appeal? Would such a tax be worth pursuing as part of a reform of Prop 13?

Such a tax seemingly exists, and economists have made all sorts of claims about its potential benefit to a society. Essentially, a land value tax is similar to a much more familiar tax, the property tax. Like the property tax, it taxes land. However, unlike its well-known cousin, the land value tax does *not* tax improvements to the land. Thus, a business or homeowner does not pay a higher tax for building structures, farming, or otherwise improving the land. This has the consequence that the owner of a vacant lot would pay the same tax as does the owner of a luxury hotel on a similar adjacent lot. The consequence of such a tax is that it rewards economically profitable development and penalizes speculation in land. Since speculation is penalized, land becomes more affordable. Luxury land-intensive uses, like golf courses, would pay far more under such a system, while persons who owned trivial amounts of land whose value is mostly tied up in improvements, like most residential homeowners, would pay significantly less. Since most large land

holdings are in commercial rather than residential hands, the overall tax burden would fall upon those most able to pay it. But those same companies would be rewarded for developing their land holdings more productively. Since land is impossible to move or hide, there is no way to evade the tax, so there is no need to worry about wealthy landowners shielding their holdings from the tax.

The land value tax is not a new tax at all, but rather has a long history. Adam Smith spoke favorably of a land tax.¹ But its greatest advocate came over one hundred years later, in the person of Henry George. George saw the growth of society and the value of land as being inextricably linked: humans are beings produced by the land, but the land only grows in value because of human activity upon it.² Since land is not created by humans, and thus not a product of human activity, George saw a tax on land as being superior to a tax on the products of human activity, and reasoned that taxing the value of land would be a tremendous economic stimulus.³ Since that time, many of our greatest thinkers have endorsed the land value tax as an essentially fair tax that does not harm economic development. Refreshingly, it has received accolades from different sides of the political aisle. On the political left, Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith is joined by such figures as Nobel laureates Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz in endorsing some version of a land value

1 Smith, Adam. *A Careful Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. London: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, 1812, p. 670.
2 George, Henry. *Progress and Poverty*. New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1935, p. 350.
3 Ibid.

tax.⁴⁵⁶ On the right, Nobel laureate Milton Friedman mused that “the least bad tax is the property tax on the unimproved value of land,” no small praise from an economist generally hostile to all forms of taxation.⁷ Recently, the land value tax was the centerpiece of the parliamentary campaign for the U.K.’s Labour Party. And, although Labour did not ultimately win the election, they shocked most observers by performing significantly better than expectations. This suggests that putting the land value tax before the electorate is not necessarily a losing proposition.

Of course, the land value tax is not ready for immediate implementation in California. Prop 13 still stands in the way. Moreover, further studies on the effects of the tax are still needed to learn exactly how much revenue the state could expect to receive at any given rate of taxation. Necessary protections may need to be written into the law to protect individuals and businesses from unintended results of the tax. Still, a tax with such a potential deserves more serious consideration from the legislature, and hopefully the current push to reform Prop 13 will make that possible.

4 Galbraith, John Kenneth. *The Affluent Society*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958, p. 44.
5 Moore, Michael Scott. *Pacific Standard*. “This Land is Your Land.” (Oct. 20, 2009).
6 Stiglitz, Joseph. “The theory of local public goods.” in Martin Feldstein and Robert Inman, *The Economics of Public Services*. London: Macmillan Publishers, 1977, pp. 274-333.
7 Friedman, Milton. “Is Tax Reform Possible?” Address given at the *Americanism Educational League* 51st Anniversary Dinner, Pasadena, CA, Feb. 6, 1978.



Caleb Castaneda,
Adjunct Faculty Professor of
Philosophy at Victor Valley College

California’s Future: A Path to Independence



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