Building Civic Participation in California's Central Valley

Getting to Know the Central Valley

Isao Fujimoto
with the assistance of Marilu Carter

This publication was made possible by a grant from The James Irvine Foundation

California Institute for Rural Studies
September 1998
BUILDING CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY

BOOK ONE

GETTING TO KNOW THE CENTRAL VALLEY

BY

ISAO FUJIMOTO

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF

MARILU CARTER

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COVER LINE DRAWING BY MARILU CARTER

SEPTEMBER 1998

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1542</td>
<td>Cabrillo lands at Point Loma (San Diego), claims California for Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1769</td>
<td>Presidio &amp; Catholic Mission of San Diego, 1st of 21 California missions</td>
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<tr>
<td>1776</td>
<td>Mission of San Francisco de Asis de los Dolores founded.</td>
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<td>1776</td>
<td>U.S. revolts against Britain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Mexico revolts against Spain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>Monterey is capital city of Alta California, Mexico.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>U.S. invades and conquers California, part of Republic of Mexico.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Gold discovered. California becomes a U.S. territory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>California claimed as a state by U.S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>American Civil War, California sides with the Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>Telegraph links New York to San Francisco.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>California Fruit Growers Exchange begins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Revolution in Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Panama-Pacific Exposition, San Francisco</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Associated Farmers of California founded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>President Roosevelt authorizes California’s Central Valley Project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Golden Gate Bridge completed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>U.S. enters World War II.</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>Bracero Program begins to import Mexican farm labor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Japanese-Americans interned in concentration camps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Bracero program imports 192,000 Mexican farm laborers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>California becomes most populous state in the U.S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Watts riot in Los Angeles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA) passed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Vietnam War ends.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Proposition 13 passed to lower property taxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Riots in Los Angeles, police beat Rodney King.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>CALIFORNIA BACK PAGE NEWS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>Kamia Indians destroy San Diego Mission, first serious revolt against missions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1776</td>
<td>Revolting against cruel treatment, Indians attack San Francisco.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Epidemics sweep the Central Valley, Native Americans depopulated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gives linguistic, cultural rights to <em>Alta California</em> Mexicans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>California Legislature taxes foreign miners $20 a month, enforced on Mexicans &amp; Chinese.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Native Americans driven from Sacramento Valley to reservations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>&quot;Mongolians (Chinese), Indians, and Negroes&quot; barred from California public schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Konkow, Yahi &amp; Maidu Native Americans die in forced march out of Sacramento Valley.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>Oroville guards, vigilantes, and U.S. Army massacre 3,000 Yahi Native Californians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Great drought, Mexican <em>Californio rancheros</em> decline in <em>Alta-California</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Transcontinental R.R. fills California-cheap East Coast goods &amp; jobless European migrants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Mussel Slough, marshals &amp; settlers die, dispute over railroad's pre-emptive claim.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Congress passes Chinese Exclusion Law, laborers cannot enter U.S. for 10 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Depression by railroad blamed on Chinese, riots against Chinese, Weaverville.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Union Colonel Allensworth begins Allensworth, African-American settlement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Revolution in Mexico, thousands of landless Mexicans driven north.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Ishi emerges in Oroville, the last survivor of the massacred Native California Yahi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Workers revolt in Wheatland, Yuba County, organized by Wobblies (IWW).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Alien Land Act prohibits Japanese from citizenship and owning or renting land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>37 major California farmworker strikes, from 1929 to 1935.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Growers join bankers, railroad as <em>Assoc. Farmers of Calif.</em> to destroy labor unions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>John Steinbeck writes &quot;The Grapes of Wrath&quot; about Dust Bowl migrant farmworkers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Japanese-Americans released from concentration camps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Bracero program imports 192,000 Mexican farm laborers in peak year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Cesar Chavez begins United Farm Workers Union.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Watts rebellion in Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>United Farm Workers march 300 miles, from Delano to Sacramento.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA) passed to protect farmworker rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Attempts to bring back &quot;Bracero Program&quot; as &quot;guest workers&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

Introduction 1
What is the Central Valley of California? 1

I. Four Perspectives of the Central Valley 4
Community 4
People 5
Environmental Setting 8
Economy 10

II. Frontstage and Backstage of the Valley 11
Communities 11
People 13
Environment 14
Economy 15

III. Patterns of the Central Valley 17
Cities: Rich and Poor 17
Patterns of Settlement 19
Environmental Patterns 20
Agricultural Economic Patterns and Trends 21

IV. Power and “Numbers” in the Valley 23
Communities and New Leaders 24
Numbers Count 24
Environment: Land and Water 28
Economy: Where does the Money go? 29

Summary 31
End Notes 32
Figures and Tables

California Frontpage Headlines  
inside front cover

California's Central Valley, map 3

Central Valley Cities that Doubled in Population  
1980-1990, table 4

Laundromat, city of San Joaquin, Fresno County, photograph 6

Irrigated Cotton Field, San Joaquin Valley, photograph 9

Logo, City of Reedley 10

Logo, City of Selma 10

Welcome Sign, Reedley, photograph 12

Central Valley Produce, Davis Farmer's Market, photograph 14

Fieldworkers, line drawing 16

City, line drawing 17

Patterns of Income: California's 10 Richest Cities, table 18

Patterns of Income: California's 10 Poorest Cities, table 19

Logo, City of Dinuba 22

Voting Records, 1998 Primary election,  
Selected Central Valley Cities, table 26

Dollar Bill, graphic 30

California Backpage News  
inside back cover
California’s 58 Counties

The Central Valley is highlighted
Introduction

This is the first in a series of booklets called Building Civic Participation in California’s Central Valley. This series is intended as a resource for those wishing to enrich civic culture in the Central Valley. In this first booklet we invite you to get to know the Central Valley with us. If you are already familiar with the Central Valley, we hope this booklet enhances your knowledge of this special region of California.

Throughout this booklet, we examine the Central Valley from four perspectives: its communities, people, setting and economy. In exploring these topics in regard to the Valley, we are guided by the following questions:

1) What’s obvious at first glance and what’s less obvious? What’s visible and staged “up front”? What’s hidden “backstage”?

2) What characterizes the communities, people, setting, and economy in the Valley? How do these characteristics compare with other regions of California?

3) How does power influence communities, people, setting, and economy? Where does power reside? How does money accumulate? Where does it go?

With these questions in mind, let’s get to know California’s Central Valley.

What is the Central Valley of California?

The Central Valley of California is an unfolding drama. Though many actors remain largely backstage, unnoticed by the public at large, the curtain is going up for the California show of the 21st century. Carol Whiteside, former Mayor of Modesto and current Director of the Great Valley Center, expressed the drama this way:
If San Francisco signified California for the 19th century and Los Angeles for the 20th century, the Central Valley will define California for the 21st century.¹

Understanding the Central Valley requires going backstage, as well as watching what is staged up front. In getting to know the Central Valley, we will identify and bring frontstage the various forces and actors of this California drama. The theater is a useful metaphor for understanding this unique region of the world.

The exact borders of the Central Valley have not been precisely defined, although they are usually referred to as a combination of county boundary lines and the physical features of the land. The Central Valley is that portion of California between the Coastal Ranges and the Sierra Nevada, extending north to Mount Shasta and south to the Tehachapi Mountains. Portions of 19 counties make up this Central Valley floor. Although Sacramento and Sutter Counties lie completely within the Valley floor, the other 17 counties include portions of the Valley and portions of high desert, foothills, or forested mountains. For instance, Placer County includes both mountainous Lake Tahoe and a portion the Valley floor in which agricultural production includes rice and walnuts, valued close to $48 million. It was that Valley portion of Placer County that in 1996 places it 40th in agricultural production out of California’s 58 counties.²

Extending over 400 miles through central California, the Great Central Valley, as it’s often called, is comprised of two valleys: the Sacramento and the San Joaquin. Together they form the Central Valley’s long, narrow contours, ranging 20 to 70 miles across, between the eastern Sierra Nevada foothills and the western Coastal Ranges. Created by Sierra Nevada uplift, the Valley holds the remains of five million-year-old seabeds. It also retains much of the clay, silt, sand,
California's Central Valley lies between the Sierra Nevada and the Coast Ranges.

soil, and gravel freed from surrounding heights. The Valley slopes uphill both north and south of the Delta, allowing water from the Valley's rivers to flow into the Delta. The only mountainous parts of the Central Valley are the Sutter Buttes, a small cluster of volcanic remains, 2,100 feet above sea level, 40 miles north of Sacramento.
I. Four Perspectives of the Central Valley

Communities
In the 19 counties of the Valley, 94 cities are on the Central Valley floor. They are located along Highway 99 on the north-south axis of the Valley’s long plain. Both Valleys, the northerly Sacramento and the southerly San Joaquin, contain two great rivers. The rivers flow towards each other, the Sacramento flowing southward and the San Joaquin northward. They meet in the middle region, the Delta, before meandering out of the Valley to the San Francisco Bay.

Cities stretch along the Valley floor from Redding in the north to Bakersfield in the south. Incorporated cities range in size from Fresno’s 406,900 persons to Tehama’s 420.³ Many Central Valley cities have very small populations and identify strongly with agricultural production. But the relative smallness of Valley populations is deceptive: many communities have experienced rapid population growth in recent years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>Increase</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avenal</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>9,800</td>
<td>+5,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceres</td>
<td>13,300</td>
<td>26,300</td>
<td>+13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corcoran</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>13,400</td>
<td>+6,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folsom</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>29,800</td>
<td>+18,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>+4,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parlier</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>7,900</td>
<td>+5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripon</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>+4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suisun City</td>
<td>11,100</td>
<td>22,700</td>
<td>+11,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>18,400</td>
<td>33,600</td>
<td>+15,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Population growth (see chart) increases the competition between housing developers, farmers, environmentalists, and agricultural land preservationists. Escalating population also affects community resources. It creates possibilities and pressures for services and jobs.

People

As dramatic as the increase in numbers of people in the Central Valley is diversity of their origins. Many people came to the Valley from afar, creating a transnational and world cultural milieu, especially during the rush for California gold in 1849. And today they continue to come. Raj Ramaiya, former Director of the American Friends Service Committee’s (AFSC) Rural Economic Alternatives Program, talks about International Friendship Day in Stockton. Developed in 1986 by Ramaiya and the AFSC, the annual fair grew out of the early 1980’s International Friendship Dinner. The fair now brings together as many as 10,000 people. Ramaiya explains:

*We have nearly 100 ethnic groups—Cambodian, Scottish, African American, Kenyan, Tahitian, Laotian, Native American, Eastern European, Middle Eastern, Assyrian, Hmong, Basque, Portuguese, Liberian, Mixtec, Guatemalan, Hindi, Vietnamese, Panamanian, Eastern Caribbean, Chilean, Norwegian, and Irish.*

Each year various cultural groups participate in the fair, dramatizing the population changes taking place in Stockton and surrounding areas—changes that offer the greater community a richness in the variety of cuisine, music, dances, attire, and art forms.

Stockton’s increasing cultural diversity is indicative of the growing diversity of the Central Valley as a whole. Five Valley cities—Merced, Fresno, Visalia, Tulare, Stockton, and Modesto—rank among America’s top 20 cities for numbers of non-
white, foreign-born persons. Sikhs from India’s Punjab region now produce nearly half of the peaches in the Yuba City area. On Main Street in the city of San Joaquin (Fresno County) an advertisement beckons in three languages: Spanish, Punjabi, and English.

Armenians established communities in Fresno and Fowler; Russians and Croatians, in Sacramento and West Sacramento. After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, many refugees from Southeast Asia settled around Merced and Fresno. Today’s Valley residents include Mexican, Lao, Mien, Lahu, Russian-Armenian, Sikh, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Thai, and Taiwanese. About 30,000 Hmong live in Fresno County, down from 35,000 a few years ago. Their contributions characterize new arrivals: hard work and intensive field cultivation by hand. In 1992, about 830 Southeast Asian families—Hmong, Lao, Mien, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Thai—operated small family farms on 3,579 acres in Fresno county. Since then, the number of these families engaged in small-scale farming has dropped to about 600. Some moved to Minnesota and Wisconsin; some frugally saved money to buy “mom and pop” stores or restaurants. Restaurateurs and consumers buy fresh produce daily from many Asian markets in the Valley.
Out of this diversity comes the spectacular variety of cuisine available in the Valley. To celebrated California classics, like Mexican tamales and enchiladas and crisp Chinese and Japanese vegetables, we may add Vietnamese avocado drinks and \textit{pho} (rice noodle) seafood soup and Punjabi clay-oven roasted chicken \textit{tikka masala}.

California is no stranger to diversity. In 1769, when the Spanish began to colonize \textit{Alta California}, more than sixty Native American tribes resided there.\textsuperscript{9} An estimated 100,000 Native Americans, speaking some 30 different languages, lived in the Central Valley prior to the arrival of the Spanish. Today, their Native American descendants are still active members of 103 federally-recognized California tribal groups.\textsuperscript{10} Except for Alaska, California claims the largest concentration of the nation’s 553 federally-recognized Native American groups. Of California’s 103 diverse native groups, nine live in the Central Valley, although the dynamics of cultural change defy neatly numbered categories. Classifying social groups varies widely, depending upon definitions of bands, sociopolitical units, “tribal” associations, complex political alliances, and language families.\textsuperscript{11}

Traces of many languages endure today as California place names. For instance, just to the north of the Central Valley, Shasta County retains its name from the native \textit{Shatasla}, \textit{Sastise}, or \textit{Tschasta} Nation. In the southern part of the Valley, the name, Tulare, originates from an Aztec word. The Spanish imported the word to refer to nearby \textit{tullin}, \textit{tollin}, or \textit{tule}, the cattail leaves that resemble swords. The city of Chowchilla is a Spanish corruption of the Yokut or Miwok word, \textit{Chauciles}. Similarly, Colusa comes from the Patwin word \textit{Coru}, \textit{Colussas}, or \textit{Colus}. Tehama is corrupted from the Wintun word \textit{tehama}, just as Yuba City is from the Maidu word \textit{Yubu}, \textit{Yupu}, or \textit{Jubu}. From their \textit{Alta California} heritage, many Valley place names retain their Spanish language designations: \textit{Fresno}, \textit{Modesto}, \textit{Sacramento}, and \textit{San Joaquin}. \textit{Acampo} signifies pasture;
Avenal (oat field), Dos Palos (two sticks), Escalon (stair-steps), Los Banos (the baths), Madera (wood or lumber), Manteca (lard) and Merced (grace).\(^{12}\)

**Environmental Setting**

The natural landscape of Central Valley has undergone a vast transformation in the last 200 years. When Europeans began settling in California, they brought with them plants and livestock from their own countries. These introduced species—clover, star-thistle, yellow-mustard, Johnson grass, wild oats, and foxtails, as well as horses and cows—quickly replaced the native plants and animals—needle grass, bluegrass, three-awn, grizzly bear and antelope—of the Central Valley. An estimated one-eighth of the plant species now in California have been introduced.\(^ {13}\)

Today the Central Valley accommodates a chance combination of conditions favorable for agricultural production—climate, water, soil, energy, technology, infrastructure, and labor. The resources of the Valley make possible California’s $26.8 billion agricultural industry. Largely dependent upon imported water, the economy of San Joaquin Valley’s Westside depends upon the interaction among communities, people, and environment.

Over the course of the 20th century, engineers dammed rivers, drained lakes, and drained wetlands of the Central Valley, turning these former lakebeds into land for farming. Some farms now cultivate land once beneath Buena Vista and Tulare Lakes in the San Joaquin Valley. Tulare Lake, once navigated by steamboat, was five-times larger in surface area than Lake Tahoe. A vast system was engineered to transform and redirect the natural course of its water. Today the Valley-long system contains over 1,200 dams, 15 pumping stations, reservoirs, and over 540 miles of aqueducts. It reaches into other western states to divert water into the Central Valley and southward to Los Angeles.
Three major northern California dams—Shasta Dam on the Sacramento River, Oroville Dam on the Feather River, and Whiskeytown Dam on the Trinity River—supply water to the Central Valley and the otherwise dry Westside of the San Joaquin Valley, as well as much of Southern California. Shasta, as one example, backs up the Sacramento River to store millions of acre-feet of water for regulated release into a 400-mile long aqueduct. Shasta and the Trinity River are stars of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation system. Oroville Dam is the star of the Department of Water Resources’ California Water Project. These are the premier dams in the Central Valley Project. Water also is fed through the Delta to the California aqueduct, where it is pumped uphill through a series of lift stations, as it flows south to Bakersfield, and is then lifted nearly two-fifths of a mile over the Tehachapi Mountains south to Los Angeles and the Coachella Valley and San Diego. The system operates like this:

Huge batteries of federal and state pumps suck water from every source available through a tumult of islands, levees, and channels before jacking it up into twin aqueducts exporting it to the fields and cities of Central and Southern California.¹⁴

Along the way to the southern Central Valley, the precious water is sometimes subject to degradation. On occasion tidal salt water from San Francisco Bay is nearly sucked into the giant Delta aqueducts. In certain amounts, salt is toxic to plants and humans. Water is contaminated not only by salt, but also by many agricultural activities that use nitrates, sulfates, pesticides, selenium in the soil, and fuels. Given the manipulation of natural systems, the phrase, “natural setting,” applied to the Valley, seems to some to be alien to its present condition.
Economy

For the last half century, California has been the nation’s premier agricultural state. Some 28 percent of the Valley’s workforce is employed in agriculture (statewide, the figure is ten percent). California agriculture produces a cornucopia of more than 350 different agricultural commodities, 75 of which lead national production. California produces more dairy products than any other state and over half the nation’s fruit, nut, and vegetable crops. Cities located at the heart of this abundance like to capitalize on specific commodities as “claims to fame.” On billboards, city logos, and welcome signs, they market their part of the Central Valley as a desirable destination or an attractive investment. The Yuba-Sutter area used to be called the “peach bowl of the world.” Mendota touts its world capital status in cantaloupes, Selma in raisins, Patterson in apricots, Ripon in almonds, and Reedley claims to be the world’s fruit basket. Valley fruit box labels depict luscious grapes or peaches framed by landscapes of green orchards, yellow sun, and blue mountain ridges. While boosting city images, these agricultural commodities of the Valley contribute the greatest share of California’s $26.8 billion farm cash receipts.

Despite this prodigious production and apparent wealth, a pattern of poverty and scarcity exists in the Central Valley. In spite of celebrated abundance, the Valley tolerates certain inequities of resources. It is not enough to notice the visible abundance of the land and the beauty of the landscape. It is necessary to ask questions about contrast and patterns underlying economic power.
II. FRONTSTAGE AND BACKSTAGE OF THE VALLEY

Understanding the Central Valley requires looking at unseen forces as well as those visible on the surface. It requires going beyond descriptive commentary to ask questions about what may be hidden below the surface. As in a drama, the Valley entertains actors and action "backstage," as well as visible elements on "front" stage. Let's take a look at examples of the Central Valley's front and backstages.

Communities

Welcome signs, city logos, and even Main Street itself represent the elements that are promoted as "front stage" in Central Valley cities. Reflecting the perceptions of those in power, city images and symbols are designed to promote a "positive" face for the community. Those who have power in the community select the images and pictorials that endow a place with a sense of identity. City symbols publicize the desirability of a place—the commodities produced there, as well as the striking aspects of geography, economy, and location. Sometimes location can even mean a place on the way to a better-known place.

Welcome signs also provide a front stage display for local community service clubs and organizations. These images, too, reflect the identity of those in power. For instance, city welcome signs traditionally disregard the symbols of ethnic "minority" service clubs. Although a section of Highway 99 was named "442nd Infantry Regiment," the sign fails to identify the 442nd as the most decorated unit in U.S. military history. It also fails to say that the 442nd was composed entirely of Japanese American soldiers, including many whose hometowns were in the Central Valley. Thus the attempt to recognize a minority group remains backstage. In Fresno County, the City of
Reedley broke with tradition. Reedley endorsed a welcome sign including Filipino associations and the Japanese American Citizens League.

Reedley’s welcome sign is a symbolic effort to include on frontstage the ethnic groups typically relegated “backstage.” In addition to Valley signs and symbols, the backstage takes on various forms of exclusion. The backstage may appear in the form of economic exclusion—worker shacks, migrant labor camps, low-income enclaves, poor white neighborhoods, and segregated ethnic communities. Sometimes the backstage is a place where English is acquired as a second language. Throughout the Valley and much of California, colonias—Spanish-speaking settlements in rural unincorporated areas—ghettos, and barrios exist as communities traditionally excluded from power and representation in office.

In Fresno County, however, more officials are being elected from diverse communities. The mayor of Parlier is Latino. Parlier is one of many Valley communities that has a majority
Latino population. Officials of most cities in Fresno County are
beginning to reflect the diversity of their populations. A 1997
survey of Parlier, by the California Institute for Rural Studies,
showed that the official 1990 Census of Population misrepresented
the population there because federal census-takers failed to count
accurately the ethnic background and the number of people living
in Parlier. The under-counted and uncounted represent one of
every five residents of Parlier removed from the frontstage.

Let’s take the City of Stockton as another example of “front”
and “back” staging. The city once printed a “See Stockton” tour
guide to acquaint visitors with its main cultural “sights.” The
official guide included downtown areas and the University of the
Pacific, but skirted the Filipino section, the Japanese Buddhist
Church, and California’s oldest and principal Sikh Temple. By
their exclusion from the official tour route, these sites of
Stockton’s cultural heritage remained “backstage” to visitors.

Although the stage changes according to audience
perspectives, those in positions of power have the authority to
arrange it. The front and backstage are arbitrary, depending upon
the viewer’s perspective. But if the viewer occupies a position
of power or authority, the stage can be set according to the belief
systems of those elected to office. The contrast between front and
backstage dramatizes the arrangements that include or exclude
certain communities in civic life. Whether in San Francisco, Los
Angeles, or the Central Valley, city officials reveal their bias by
showcasing only a select few communities for frontstage
presentation.

People
Those in power characteristically record history and current
events from their point of view. Local historians of the Central
Valley write about the dominant culture’s community founders as
“settlers” and “pioneers” while excluding the pioneering contribu-
tions of Native Californians and other diverse ethnic communities.
Mainstream historical accounts and current media coverage
typically exclude events recorded only in non-English languages. Although relegated to the media's backstage, events promoting diverse cultural heritage and ethnic associations enrich the civic culture of the entire Valley. Significantly Filipino, Japanese, and Mexican inter-village associations connect Valley residents with their pioneer-sending communities in the Philippines, Japan, or Mexico. Although some ethnic newspapers, television, and radio stations bolster upcoming events, the mainstream media often disregard ethnic sports leagues, bilingual and multi-lingual church services, fairs, festivals, bazaars, gospel music celebrations, obons, and quinceneros. While many ethnic ceremonies appeal to mainstream family interests and values, mainstream media reports them as back page, "backstage" events.¹⁹

**Environment**

The environment—the setting, landscape, and natural resources—also illustrates a contrast in the Central Valley between "front and back." Many images of the Valley promote

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*Fresh Valley Produce at the Davis Farmer's Market, August 1998*

*Marilu Carter*
it as environmentally attractive and picturesque: flat, well-cultivated landscapes and orchard rows; wealth of the natural resources; distant mountains framing the Valley; abundantly-irrigated fields; and lush fruits and vegetables. Omitted from these pretty landscapes of agricultural production are the faces of real people whose intolerably low wages make possible high profits and abundant, cheap produce. Produce is packaged in landscaped images—entirely devoid of the images of those who labor to get the produce to market.

In addition to the need for cheap labor, agricultural wealth depends on some resources that are non-renewable. Some water aquifers have been drained to an extent that land has sunk. In addition, many acres of arable land have been lost to salinity caused by dissolved salts brought in when arid land is irrigated. Some marginal land brought under cultivation has its own problems with salts.

A “backstage” social cost of public health and hospitalization accompanies the front staged production of great agricultural wealth. Increased use of petroleum products, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides are linked to public health problems. More chemical fertilizers, as well as additional animal wastes, increase the presence of dissolved nitrites in drinking water. Higher concentrations of nitrites are harmful to infants. To avoid this poor quality water, families who can least afford it buy bottled water for their children to drink. Controversy surrounds the identification of cancer clusters among children in part of the San Joaquin Valley. In Fresno and Tulare Counties, possible links to overused pesticides prompted farmers to form California Clean, an organization of growers who shifted to organic farming.

**Economy**

In January 1998, Ann Veneman, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) testified before the California Legislature on the superiority of California’s agricultural economy. She repeated the often-quoted superlatives:
California's farm income leads the nation at $26.8 billion; produces over 350 crops, accounts for half of the fresh fruits and vegetables in the nation, and exports one third of its production to international markets.

The San Joaquin region of the Central Valley plays the lead in California's role as the nation's agricultural producer. Fresno, Kern, and Tulare counties rank first, second, and third in value of agricultural production. In 1996 Fresno, Tulare, Kern, and Merced Counties led in the gross value of production for all commodities, including both crops and livestock products. Fresno, Kern, Tulare, and San Joaquin counties led for all crops. In 1997 Tulare, Merced, and Stanislaus led in milk production. Of 3,000 counties nationwide, six of the eight San Joaquin Valley counties have ranked among the top ten agricultural producers for over half a century. Though the larger size of counties in Western states, compared with counties of the Eastern and Mid-Western states, affects this ranking, there is no doubt of the Valley's longtime role as the nation's premier agricultural region.

The nation's top ranking agricultural economy depends upon an unusual combination of resources—climate, water, energy, soil, technological innovations and a continuous supply of cheap labor. The labor issue leads us to examine the significance of the backstage of the Valley's agricultural economy. Conditions under which people labor are unacceptable for the workforce in general. Such standard conditions as adequate housing, health benefits, living wages, safe working conditions, the amenities of toilets and facilities to wash hands, plus day care and retirement benefits are lacking or woefully inadequate for
agricultural laborers. A region of extraordinary wealth coexists at a great price: the social consequences of poverty and of illegal and substandard working conditions.

Dependent on a large labor force for short periods of time during fluctuating harvests, the Valley’s agricultural economy has developed a work force marked by transience and instability. The seasonal cycle of work makes it difficult for farmworkers to leave or to advance without education or the opportunity of skilled training. The Central Valley work force finds little incentive to leave the ranks of the unemployed because of inadequate wages and harsh working conditions of agriculture. As a result, an excess reserve of unemployed and working poor occupies the Central Valley. Paradoxically, counties that rank highest in income from our agricultural bounty also rank highest in welfare expenditures.20

III. PATTERNS OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY

In getting to know the Central Valley, it is important to ask questions about larger patterns. In this section, we examine patterns of poverty, diversity, environmental degradation, and land use. Identifying these patterns and relationships—how one thing is connected to another—will help us to understand both the past and future of the region.

Cities: Rich and Poor

There are many ways to see relationships between cities. We may classify cities, for example, by age (the number of years a city has been incorporated), by population size, by assets, or by lack of assets. The Valley’s

Rini Templeton
oldest cities, Sacramento and Stockton, were incorporated in 1850. Fresno, Marysville, Merced, Modesto, Tulare, and Visalia were all incorporated before 1890. In 1997 Citrus Heights (Sacramento County) became the Valley’s, and California’s, newest incorporated city.

Among the Valley’s least populated cities are Tehama (Tehama County); Gridley (Butte County); and Kerman and Kingsburg (Fresno County). The Valley’s five most populated cities are Sacramento, Fresno, Stockton, Bakersfield, and Modesto. Classifying cities provides a way to tally their common characteristics, to discover related patterns among them, to see larger perspectives, and to compare them with other regions in California or the U.S.

Some cities in California are wealthier than others. To show the comparative wealth of some cities, see the tables below. To determine if certain areas of California display patterns of wealth or poverty, plot the location of California’s richest and poorest cities and a pattern of distribution emerges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patterns of Income: California’s 10 Richest Cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Source: 1990 Census of Population</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atherton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belvedere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Altos Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portola Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palos Verdes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monte Sereno</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tables show that the wealthiest cities lie in two coastal areas of California: the San Francisco Bay region and the Los Angeles County region. In contrast, many of California’s poorest 50 cities lie within the Central Valley, indicating that it has the highest concentration of poor cities in the state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1990 Population</th>
<th>Median Family Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huron</td>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>$14,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Cove</td>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>$16,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parlier</td>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>7,900</td>
<td>$17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmersville</td>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>$17,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendota</td>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>6,800</td>
<td>$17,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Oak</td>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>4,300</td>
<td>$17,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelanto</td>
<td>Desert</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>$18,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlake</td>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>$19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquin</td>
<td>Central Valley</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>$19,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calexio</td>
<td>Desert</td>
<td>18,600</td>
<td>$19,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patterns of Settlement

Historically, California’s Central Valley has entertained a greater diversity of ethnic groups than any other rural region in America. For example, there are established communities of East Indian Sikhs in Yuba City, Filipinos in Stockton, Assyrians in Turlock, Swedes in Kingsburg, Mennonites in Reedley, and Hmong in Merced. Today one fourth of the Central Valley’s residents are immigrants. Examining this ethnic diversity for patterns of distribution reveals another aspect to cultural richness.

Portuguese settlement patterns illustrate how many Valley settlers maintain their ties back home. Portuguese from the
Azore Islands settled in the Valley close to other Azoreans and closest to their own islanders. Of eight sending-islands, Texiera, Pico, and Sao Jorge sent the most immigrants to the Valley. Azoreans are leaders in the dairy industry. In 1997, Tulare, Merced, and Stanislaus Counties led national milk production, thanks to the contributions of these dairy farmers. Throughout the San Joaquin Valley, Portuguese communities hold annual religious festeis. In the town of Gustine, for example, people come from as far as Portugal to participate in the Our Lady of Miracles Celebrations. Through these and other community events, the Portuguese link together regional distinctions, as festa queens from other Azorean settlements here join in each local celebration.

Other ethnic groups display similar settlement patterns in which immigrants from a specific village of origin tend to concentrate in a particular Valley community. Indigenous Mexican groups have for generations worked in California’s fields. A study of Mixtecos from the State of Oaxaca, Mexico, shows an array of transnational inter-community connections between Mixtecos from the sending village in Oaxaca paired with a settlement community in the San Joaquin Valley.22

Environmental Patterns

If high agricultural productivity is a sign of the Central Valley’s front stage, the backstage, by contrast, conceals patterns of environmental degradation. A chemically-dependent approach to agriculture is often harmful to the environment. The use of chemicals in California is high compared to the rest of the country. Just one-thirtieth of all U.S. cropland is in California. Yet California growers purchase one-ninth of all agricultural chemicals sold in the U.S.23

The consequences of this chemical approach to agriculture include drinking-water supplies polluted with nitrite ions from chemical fertilizers and, quite possibly, the appearance of cancer among children in rural communities. Another consequence was the harm to migrating waterfowl in the Kesterson wildlife refuge
in Merced County, although Kesterson now has been cleaned up. Though evidence is inconclusive to date, enough questions and concerns have been raised to encourage the search for safer and more sustainable methods of agricultural production.

Another environmental concern is irrigation itself, particularly for the semi-arid land that characterizes much of the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley. Historically, all great systems of irrigation eventually breakdown, according to Karl Wittfogel’s *Oriental Despotism*. The irrigation process that turns semi-arid and desert land into fertile soil involves a process that brings dissolved salts along with the irrigation water. Wetting the soil also brings up already-contained salts, adding to the total imported salts. The salts accumulate over time and eventually render the land incapable of supporting crops. The land lost to salinity is another cause for concern, a pattern that requires monitoring.

Yet another pattern characteristic of the Central Valley is the urbanization of farmland. Between 1982 and 1992, some 221,000 acres of Central Valley Farmland were paved over for urban uses. Paradoxically, this trend of urbanization is most pronounced in the state’s—and the nation’s—leading agricultural county, Fresno. In just two years (1994-1996), Fresno County lost 8,692 acres of farmland to urbanization. As far as anyone can tell, this trend will continue. By the year 2020, California’s population is expected to increase twenty million, from 33 to more than 50 million people. Seven million of that additional twenty million are expected to settle in the Central Valley.

**Agricultural Economic Patterns and Trends**

A range of farming methods is practiced in the Central Valley. Small-scale and large-scale farming represent contrasting patterns of economy. Scale of farming is defined by
who assumes responsibility of work, rather than by size of farm. Associated with the traditional New England yeoman type of small-scale operations, the family assumes the three primary responsibilities of farming: ownership, management, and labor. By contrast, in large-scale agriculture, these responsibilities become distinct divisions in which the roles of laborer, manager, and owner are assumed by different classes of people. The scale and approach is such that large-scale farming approximates what agricultural geographer, Howard Gregor, calls plantation agriculture. According to Gregor, plantation agricultural production operates on a scale so large that, even though various commodities are also produced in the area, a dominant “monoculture” prevails, producing for more distant markets, using advanced technologies, and employing laborers of ethnic backgrounds usually distinct from managers or owners.26

Whereas smaller-scale operations have prevailed on the Eastside of the San Joaquin Valley, plantation-scale agriculture characterizes the Westside. As the relative importance of smaller-scale farms diminishes, features of plantation scale farming are spreading east as well. Walter Goldschmidt’s classic 1947 study of Fresno County towns, Arvin and Dinuba, showed the impact of farm size on the quality of rural life.27 Dinuba, a community of small farms on the Valley’s Eastside, supported a thriving economy and civic life, in contrast to Arvin, a community of large-scale farms in the foothills.

The Westside is the region in which the Federal Central Valley Project and the California Water Projects run their course. The Westside is also the region in which more and more discussions regarding water marketing are taking place. It is the region in which property, rather than residence, confers voting rights in jurisdictions governing water use.
Another and perhaps more significant trend in California agriculture is the increase in acreage devoted to fruit, nut, and vegetable production. California today has more land planted to orchards and vineyards than ever in its entire history. From 1984 to 1996, the total amount of land devoted to these kinds of production increased by 513,293 acres.28 A consequence of this trend is the significant increase in the demand for manual labor.

IV. POWER AND “NUMBERS” IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

National Land for People, a nonprofit organization that improved the quality of Central Valley civic life, was founded by George Ballis. He had a favorite saying about the power needed to get things accomplished.29 He reminded community activists:

\[\text{If something needs to be done, there are three ways to go about it. One is to have money, second is to have clout, and third is to organize large numbers of people.}\]

Those “running the show” in the Valley, those in power, generally have the money or clout that comes with positions of authority and prestige. Ordinary people lack money and clout. Their best option is to organize into communities of interest so their numbers count. When people organize, their united power can sometimes offset that generated by money or clout.

The advantage of numbers became clear in the conflict between the Land Utilization Alliance and a proposal by the U.S. Department of Energy to build a nuclear research facility in the Stockton-Linden area. The Land Utilization Alliance had the “numbers”—a consortium of farmers, environmentalists, and community activists bound together by their opposition to a nuclear facility that would have claimed an area of prime farmland exceeding 50 square miles. Eventually the Department of Energy shifted the site to Texas, but it was abandoned because invading fire ants attacked power cables essential to the facility. The entire project has since been put on hold.
In Merced County, another conflict over power pitted the "numbers" of the Central Valley Environmental Network against the "big" money of politicians and The United Technology Company to establish a rocket fuel plant near Gustine. In Kings County, conflict occurred as a major waste management company tried to develop a toxic waste incinerator in Kettleman City. But the "numbers" again prevailed—a coalition of farm workers and environmental groups challenged the odds. In all three cases—each within the last decade—with numbers as their main resource, the will of the people in the community prevailed. These and related examples will be discussed in detail in the booklet on social movements and community action.

**Communities and New Leaders**

Today many communities are electing more officials from diverse ethnic backgrounds. There is an increase within many ethnic communities. In California communities especially, more Latino leaders are emerging. But is there a catch? It's one thing to acknowledge the presence and the visibility of such leaders; it's another to ask if these newly-elected officials are able to restore or improve community conditions. Look at Detroit and Cleveland. African Americans leaders—elected at last to political office—struggle to finance needed services while restricted by lost revenues. In many American cities, those in power—largely businesses, corporations, and traditional Euro-American enclaves—have abandoned central urban communities, moving resources, investments, and city tax bases moved to the periphery. Is there is a pattern in which minority leaders become elected under these weakened tax bases?

Given that many Valley cities are financially poorer than other California and U.S. regions, challenges await any newly elected leaders trying to tap into local wealth, ironically in the nation's wealthiest agricultural region.
Numbers Count

Accurate counts of people make a difference in potential social amenities. Being counted accurately means being included for benefits and opportunities. Many minority and low-income groups are lost in the counting and thus are unfairly represented in census tabulations. Legislative and local governments decide how to allocate funds depending upon numbers of people counted. Funding for public school budgets depends upon a count of the average daily attendance of students. For students who fail to appear at school, the school fails to receive funds. If certain residents deserve compensation in community mitigation, they must show how many people will suffer loss or accrue benefits.

Although an official federal census occurs every ten years, traditional methods of counting overlook segments of the population. The usual method of counting persons typically employs a census-taker going door-to-door, selecting houses that face the street. This method assumes that people live in conventional houses, but in many communities people reside in unconventional “back” houses. Some people are excluded from a census because they reside in sheds, in backyards, and in other unorthodox living quarters. In the 1990 Census, censustakers overlooked one-fifth of all residents living in Parlier (Fresno County).

The U.S. Census questions people about their “race”—“white” or “other.” A separate question asks about a person’s heritance and includes the option “Spanish/Hispanic.” This is confusing, since some Hispanics consider themselves “white,” some do not. Parlier, which is 92 percent Hispanic, had a 1990 U.S. Census count of a total of 9,181 persons. Of those 9,181 persons, 8,434 responded “Hispanic” and 4,797 “white.”
“Numbers” sometimes count as votes. Voting requirements, set by the State Legislature, offer a way to measure the civic involvement of communities. In the 1998 California primary election, several propositions affecting the fate of immigrant and minority groups appeared on the ballot. One proposition involved bi-lingual education; another, the political status of labor unions. These propositions might have attracted a significant voter turnout. However, in the city of Mendota, population 7,450 (Fresno County)—where most people speak Spanish—just 348 out of 1,903 registered voters cast ballots.30

Records from the Fresno County Registrar of Voters show similar disparities between those qualified to vote and those exercising this right. Although advocates are working to protect the rights of immigrants, the path towards active citizen participation includes becoming naturalized, registering to vote, voting, and running for office. Mendota is not alone in low voter turnouts. Other Fresno County cities with large Latino populations show a gap between the numbers of people

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### Voting Records, 1998 Primary Election, Selected San Joaquin Valley Cities

*Source: 1997 California Statistical Abstract, 1998 Fresno County Registrar of Voters*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>1997 Population</th>
<th>Citizens Eligible to Vote, Estimated</th>
<th>Registered Voters, 1998 Primary</th>
<th>Voted</th>
<th>Percent of Eligible Citizens-Voted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firebaugh</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>2,307</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huron</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>1,502</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendota</td>
<td>7,450</td>
<td>2,593</td>
<td>1,903</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Cove</td>
<td>7,750</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>1,558</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parlier</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>3,233</td>
<td>2,731</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who register and the numbers who vote. In Huron, voter turnout was 200 of 866 registered voters; in Orange Cove, 305 of 1,558; in San Joaquin 109 of 512. Out of every four registered voters, only one voted. Low voter turnout indicates a pattern of diminished civic participation. It indicates the work to be done to encourage more active players in civic life of their own communities.

How do people participate in civic life under a government of representative democracy? Some people wonder whether voting really makes a difference. The ballot is one of the strongest "voices of the people." It is a sign of the strength of a democracy. If a democracy is to work, the people must be able to participate freely. They must be able to express their beliefs to their representatives and to their community.

There are a number of ways to participate and to express beliefs. Under the U.S. Constitution these forms of expression are guaranteed to all citizens as "rights": (1) the right to vote, (2) the right to send letters to a "free" press, (3) the right to talk freely to others, (4) the right to assemble together, (5) the right to sign petitions, and (6) the right to form groups to accomplish goals together. Through all these rights the democratic system should operate to bind people and communities together. If people do not participate by using these rights, our democracy is weakened or is a democracy in name alone.

In addition to these formal rights, there are many other ways for people to participate in a democratic system. People even can access information on voting records. People can join or initiate civic clubs or associations. People can organize as nonprofit agencies, volunteer civic groups, and ethnic associations to improve their neighborhoods and schools. People can hold fundraising events to benefit the community.
Environment: Land and Water Ventures

Land and water are the key resources of Central Valley agriculture. How are these resources maintained? How are they financed? Are they financed by public money? Who controls these resources? The answers to these questions concern the future and fate of people living in the Valley.

Water continues to be a resource that very much determines the future of the arid Westside of the San Joaquin Valley. The water that makes this part of the Valley productive today was made possible by public funding of major dams. How much of the public benefits from its investment? At one time, just eight major companies owned two-thirds of the acreage in water districts then using water from the State Water Project. On this acreage, these eight corporations used 40 percent of the water from the State Water Project.

At the time Gerald Haslam wrote about this inequity in The Other California in 1990, he identified these corporate giants: Chevron U.S.A., Getty Oil, Shell Oil, Southern Pacific Railroad, Prudential Insurance Company, Tejon Ranch, Blackwell Land, and Tenneco. Though Southern Pacific, Getty Oil, and Tenneco have since sold their holdings, their departure does not change the economy in which the public largess benefited only a few. Furthermore, many corporate holdings exist within water jurisdictions in which voting rights depend entirely upon property or the value of property owned. Such restrictions benefit the few while diminishing civic participation.

The right to vote on water issues in the Valley sometimes occurs not as a personal right, but by right of property or wealth. Some water jurisdictions have no requirements on voting. Some water jurisdictions allow voting privileges for landowners only. Some water jurisdictions allow a number of votes based on the value of property owned. The current discussions of water marketing involve districts in the Central Valley. In some districts
those who own no land will be ineligible to vote on water issues.33
But in general, voting is open to those over 21 years of age, and
registered.

For the Valley as a whole, it has been estimated that “outside”
speculators own two-fifths of the agricultural land.34 Though not
widely reported in the press, the concentration of ownership and
outside control of utilized resources negatively influence the
economy of Valley communities.

Economy: Where does the Money go?
Who owns the land? Who owns what is produced on the land?
How does money accumulate? Where does money go? In this
final section, we discuss issues about ownership of land, labor, and
profits from agricultural production.

In the 1700’s when European-American immigrants began to
declare themselves free owners of “new” land, they cultivated
their claims into small farms. Some landowners continuously
expanded their land holdings after Native Americans were killed
off, used as slave labor, or driven like cattle to “reservations.”
Some landowners expanded their small farm holdings by using
cheap labor. There were many kinds of cheap labor to profit by:
indentured servants, sharecroppers, unskilled wage workers, and
imported labor from Mexico, China, Japan, and the Philippines.
“Free” land, slavery, and cheap labor enabled some landowners to
concentrate their holdings into large estates or plantations.

Although today there are many who still operate small family
farms, large landholders tend to consolidate their holdings through
corporate mergers and industrialized agribusiness. The issue of
land ownership continues to affect the social life of California’s
Valley. The conflict over community life and land ownership
continues today as wealthy investors and global corporations
compete for greater shares of California’s agricultural economy.
A past study of two towns in the San Joaquin Valley offers insights that are still relevant. In *As You Sow*, Walter Goldschmidt discussed retail business in Valley communities and the quality of community life. Measured by the “dollar volume of production of agricultural commodities,” communities with small farm populations support small, local businesses to a far greater extent than communities with large corporate farms. Goldschmidt studied the towns of Arvin (large farms) and Dinuba (small farms) affected by the scale of farm operations. He wrote:

*Dinuba has more enterprises, and they do a far greater total volume of business. The kinds of enterprises support family living and the quality of life in the local community.*

Though the spotlight focuses on crop production in the Valley, the post-harvest food industry draws many corporations and jobs to the Valley. Regardless of the company or industry, it is useful to ask these questions:

Where does your money “go” when you purchase something?
“Does it circulate to benefit your community or does it leave your community to benefit others?” In this age of global corporations and transnational operations, it makes sense to ask questions about what you buy—even pizza, ice cream, or Girl Scout cookies.

Let’s take the tomatoes used in making sauce for pizza. Del Monte Foods manufactures tomato paste in the Valley. If we, in our community, buy pizza or tomato paste, we can ask, “Where does our money go?” Our money goes far outside the community, outside the Valley, to Del Monte Foods’ corporate headquarters in
San Francisco. How does the money now in San Francisco benefit our local community in the Valley?

We can ask a similar question of the money we spend to buy ice cream at our local Baskin-Robbins franchise. Some of that money stays in the community to pay local teenagers to scoop out ice cream. But much of the profits go flying out of the community, across the Atlantic, to London to the corporate headquarters of the Allied Domecq Company, the parent owner of Baskin-Robbins.

How about the Girl Scout cookies you bought this year? Who are you really helping out besides the little girl who sold you the cookies? The boxes mention bakeries in the Midwest as the source of the cookies. Does the money go out of California to the middle of the U.S.? Not quite. The money flies out across the ocean again, this time to the Pacific, to Hong Kong. A billionaire there owns the bakeries that make Girl Scout cookies.36

Summary

We have introduced four topics—the community, the people, the setting, and the economy—to improve our understanding of a unique region, the Central Valley of California. The purpose of this series, Building Civic Participation in California’s Central Valley, is to provide a resource for those working to encourage citizen participation. This series will help develop civic culture in communities of the Central Valley.

Above all, the one thing to learn from this booklet is to ask questions. Asking questions will enlarge your understanding of a place. To begin, we suggest these questions as examples: What is visible up front? What is hidden? Is a thing we are examining related to something larger? How does a pattern in one region compare with patterns in other regions? What is power? What are different forms of power? How does money accumulate? The money generated in a community—where does it go? How do you participate in your community? What does “community” mean? Subsequent booklets will expand on these questions.
End Notes

1 Comments made at the first Central Valley Conference organized by the Great Valley Center in Sacramento, May, 1998, and at a meeting of the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship at its quarterly meeting in Modesto, June, 1998.

2 Practically every state agency delineates regional boundaries. In most of these agency maps, the Central Valley is a distinct entity, though its composition varies from agency to agency. The California Department of Tourism, for example, outlined the boundaries of “Twelve Californias” it promotes to tourists. Originally Sacramento County was included as part of its Central Valley region. The most recent map, however, moved Sacramento out of the Central Valley to the Gold Country. The area is the Central Valley floor (and the foothills below 500 ft elevation) between the coastal and Sierra Nevada Mountain ranges lying north to south between Mt. Shasta and the Grapevine. This definition eliminates some cities that are typically included if entire counties are counted as part of the Valley, but includes parts of Placer County that usually are included with the Gold Country. The 19 counties considered here have a total of 102 incorporated cities. However, eight cities are excluded as not part of the Valley floor. Those excluded are Paradise in Butte County; Auburn and Colfax in Placer County; California City, Ridgecrest and Tehachapi in the desert region of Kern County; and Benicia and Vallejo in Solano County. The latter two are considered part of the San Francisco Bay area.


6 In Conversation with Professor Thomas Gradziel, University of California, Davis, Department of Pomology, September 3, 1998.

7 The Southeast Asian Farmers in Fresno County Status Report, 1992, by Pedro Ilic, University of California, Cooperative Extension, Fresno, CA.

8 Updates on Southeastern farmers provided by Michael Yang,
Field Assistant to Richard Molinar, Farm Adviser, University of California Cooperative Extension, Fresno, August 5, 1998.

9 In conversation with Steven J. Crum, Associate Professor, Native American Studies, University of California, Davis, CA, August 5, 1998.


15 Veneman, Ann, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture, 1998. A decade ago, California boasted of 250 commodities. The Secretary’s claim for 350 reflects the contributions of our diverse array of recent immigrants. The increased varieties are related to the new specialty vegetables, fruits, and burgeoning preferences and interest in ethnic cuisine.

16 Selected logos from a study of images devised by all 471 incorporated cities of California. More than half the Valley’s cities have changed their logos, more than any of the other 11 regions of California. From the author’s “Agriculture and Community Identity: A Sense of Place Captured by California City Logos and Welcome Signs,” paper presented at Rural Sociological Society meetings, Des Moines, 1995.

18 The “See-Stockton” tour route refers to a map that the city had in the 1960s. It would be instructive to compare tourist promoting maps of other cities at different time periods.

19 Recognition is on the increase. The California Automobile Association, in its monthly publication VIA, now includes most of the Obon festivals held by Japanese American Buddhist temples. The state Department of Tourism publishes a calendar of the ethnic events it has identified.

20 Metropolitan Area Fact Book for 1982 shows that of the 10 counties receiving the greatest amount of public assistance, six are in the Central Valley.

21 The list was compiled from data collected in California Cities, Towns and Counties edited by Edith Horner, Information Publications, Palo Alto, 1995. Worth, a monthly published by Fidelity Investments, annually ranks the 250 wealthiest cities in the U. S. In its 1998 list, a third are in California, suggesting that rich California cities are rich by national standards as well.


23 Pesticide usage was calculated from the data in the 1992 Census of Agriculture.


28 Villarejo, Don. “Farming’s Future: More Production, Less

29 The National Land for People organization, based in Fresno, was founded by George Ballis. It fought for enforcement of the 1902 Acreage Limitation Act. This law justified the creation of the Central Valley Project with the understanding that federal water could be used for free by farms with up to 160 acres. Those farms holding in excess of this acreage would pay for the extra water or sell their land to provide opportunity for families to settle on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley. Without enforcement of the Act, the federal water project benefits the large farmer/landowner at the expense of small farmers.

30 From the Fresno County Registrar’s Office website: www.fresno.ca.gov

31 In conversation with Sally Medina of *El Colegio Popular*, Fresno, CA, August 1998.

32 Haslam, Gerald. *The Other California*. Santa Barbara: Capri Press, 1990. Haslam originally wrote an article titled “Water in the West” (*Aperature* magazine) which published his observations about who has access to the water of the State and Central Valley projects. This essay was included in his book subtitled, “The Great Central Valley in Life and Letters.”


36 The illustrations mentioned here also demonstrates how quickly ownership can change. The Girl Scout cookie story was part of a bigger article about a Hong Kong billionaire that appeared as a feature on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* in 1996. Since then the Chinese holdings have been bought out by Keebler, itself a former British biscuit manufacturer and now part of a Georgia Corporation.
ERRATA

"Getting to Know the Central Valley"
BOOK ONE

Errors are corrected as indicated in italics below:

**page:**

**Table of Contents**

*Environment*

2 **paragraph 2:** portion of the Valley floor

10 **paragraph 1:** Some 8 percent of the Valley's work force is employed in agriculture (Statewide, the figure is 3 percent.)

19 **chart:** "Patterns of Income: California's 10 Poorest Cities" Calexico

22 **paragraph 1:** omit "in the foothills," end of final sentence.

25 **paragraph 2:** The method of counting persons typically is done by direct-mail, which is sent to mailing lists of addresses.

**paragraph 3:** heritage

28 **paragraph 2:** At one time, just eight major companies owned two-thirds of the acreage in five water districts, using water from the California Water Project.

29 **top of page:** But in general, voting is open to those over 18 years of age, and registered.

35 **end-note 29:** Federal water is used at a cost, it is not free. Disregard rest of end-note, it contains incorrect information.