

Upcoming Virtual Programs

To sign up for these events, register online at our website <u>ierraclub.org/angeles/verdugo-hills</u> or send an email to <u>VerdugoHillsGroup@gmail.com</u>.

Monday, July 06, 2020 7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting - New Orleans

First Impression of New Orleans Presented by Evelyn Alexander. Join the Verdugo Hills Group for a virtual tour of this iconic American city. Enjoy seeing the French Quarter, the Garden District and the New WW II Museum. Enjoy impressions of a river boat ride on Mississippi; see southern plantations and the first parade of the Mardi Gras season among others, all from the comfort of your own home.

Monday, July 20, 2020 7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting - Rome to London

Impressions from a cruise from Rome to London presented by Annette Kargodorian. Come join us on our Oceania cruise from Rome to London! Along the way, we'll visit Florence, Toulon, Barcelona, Cartagena, Nerja, Malaga, Seville, Lisbon, Porto, Bordeaux, St. Emilion, and St. Malo. Have a glass of wine while you cruise through Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, and finish in London.

Burbank Recycling

By David Eisenberg

Trecently attended a Zoom meeting with Kreigh Hampel of the Burbank Recycling Center (<u>Recycle Center</u>). He gave us a summary of the issues in solid waste and recycling in Burbank. It is to be noted that these same issues and similar solutions are in every part of California.

In the 1980's Curbside recycling produced 6,000 tons with 0% contamination. Currently, Burbank collects 9,000 tons with 25% contamination. The total trash is made up of 15% Recycled (9,000 tons), 30% Green Waste (18,000 tons), and 55% Landfill (35000



tons). The source of City-collected recyclables is primarily residential (78%) and 22% commercial.

Recycling

The Recycling Center was temporarily shut down due to COVID. This will require an increase in cost due to more employees needed. Currently, Burbank spends \$45,000 on recycling. This is part of the collection fees. The virus has caused an increase in the use of plastics. Previously, plastics were sent to China, which no longer accepts them. Part of the issue is that each manufacturer has a different formula. So even if all of the plastic have the same number, the next product will be degraded.

Organic Waste and Compostables

Organic waste can be composted and used as mulch. This process avoids the production of methane that occurs if it is placed in a landfill. Organic waste can be dehydrated to lower shipping costs. Compostables can be processed, but there are issues. Because you cannot distinguish from non-compostable, there needs to be a continuous chain of custody. There is also the issue of PFAS Coatings on what would otherwise be safe. PFAS is found on many food wrappers and containers. Another problem is the amount of microplastics present.

At home, leaves and grass can be used as instant mulch. Burbank will also deliver a truckload of mulch. One use of mulch is Hugelkultur. This is the process of mounding up long inverted V-shaped piles of mulch and growing plants on the sides of the piles.

Corralitas Stairway Garden Approaches Maturity

By Michael Beck

Verdugo Hills' four-year old garden adoption of the Corralitas public stairway has finally borne fruit. About two thirds of the area has now fully rooted with drought-tolerant landscaping. This spring it bloomed beautifully, and now that summer is turning the surrounding hills a dull, dusky gray, our garden sports a full array of greens with some blooms lasting into June.

News & Notes



Panorama of the whole garden, with Delphine and Evelyn

A number of civic groups adopted other stairways in the Silver Lake area, but to our knowledge our Corralitas St. project is the only one to feature a garden. It is located near the junction of the Five and the Two freeways, just off Alessandro where Rosebud passes under the freeway to end at Corralitas. If you are ever in the area, we'd love you to stop by and take a look.

Local neighbors are noticing. When three of us worked there on Sunday June 14, (see photos), three of them stopped by to compliment us, with two saying they might be able to volunteer and a third offering a small donation. The garden sports a nice mélange of different species, two of which have grown so vigorously that we're needing to trim them back - the echeverias (look a bit like cabbage) and ice plant, which you can see Evelyn pruning in the photos.

Working in our garden is super satisfying and environmentally friendly. For me it offered a further benefit by firing up an interest in my own garden at home, which now looks the best it has in the 35 years I've lived



here in Glendale, and it's also drawing compliments from the neighbors.

If you should happen to feel inspired, do not hesitate to contact Delphine or me (See Directory) to join us sometime. The work pays high dividends in satisfaction.

Conservation Initiatives in Glendale By David Eisenberg

There are a number of conservation initiatives taking place in Glendale. Below, please find a summary of them. If you are reading an electronic version, you may click on the links provided. If you are interested in any of these (for more information or to help), please email <u>VerdugoHillsGroup@gmail.com</u>

Building Electrification

Homes are one of the largest sources of climate pollution, accounting for over ¹/₄ of California's greenhouse gas emissions. Electrification is one of the Sierra Club's major campaigns. To read more, click on the following link: <u>Building Electrification Action Plan</u>. **Gleaning Project**

Many homeowners have surplus harvests from their gardens. These are a project to collect and distribute this surplus to organizations helping the needy.

Keeping local clean energy projects on track

We were able to get all of our talking points included in the Glendale IRP. It is up to us to keep pressure to ensure implementation.

Establishment of a sustainability commission

At present, there is no one in charge of sustainability, although they are hiring for this position. Unfortunately, that position is part of Glendale Water and Power. We

News & Notes

are working for an independent citizen board that would advise City Council on sustainability issues.

Electrification of city's transportation fleet

Electric buses, trucks, cars, and motorcycles are all being tested by the city.

Waste reduction in city facilities

Glendale should look to itself while developing a city-wide solid waste plan.

Creation of an EPP (Environmentally Preferred Purchasing) plan for Glendale

Glendalewouldcreatealistofgreenresourcestobeused by City departments. Here is the CalRecycle description: <u>Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP)</u>

Verdugo Wash Study

The Verdugo Wash extends from the LA River to La Crescenta. The plan is to add trails and bike paths along the entire length. Glendale has approved \$250,000 for an initial study. The study will use state park bond funds. We are trying to keep the momentum going.

Greener Glendale Plan/Climate Action

The last update to this plan was in 2012 (<u>Greener Glendale</u>). It is time to update this plan.

Pedestrian Plan

The draft Pedestrian Plan (<u>Pedestrian Plan</u>) was presented in 2017. Action has stalled. We are working to restart the process.

Electrification of landscaping equipment

Gas powered equipment (mowers, leaf blowers, etc) is very polluting. A single commercial gas powered mower produces more pollution than 100 cars. These would be replaced with electric versions.

Thudding on "Unum"—The Intersection of Racism and Environmentalism

by Carol Henning

Writing about the artist Edward Hopper, Peter Schjeldahl says Hopper "speaks to our isolated states these days with fortuitous poignance." He observes that "E pluribus unum" a magnificent ideal, thuds on 'unum' every day throughout the land." Divisiveness reigns. Now, it is time to quote Albert Einstein: "A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

Maybe we humans should get over ourselves. As Allen Frances, professor emeritus and former chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at Duke University School of Medicine, observes in Twilight of American Sanity (William Morrow, 2017), "All of our most natural, inborn reflexes are preadapted to provide the skills needed to survive fifty thousand years ago....Our brains have been big enough to create an incredibly complex modern world, but not always flexible enough to respond optimally to the new challenges posed by it....Our strongest, quickest, and most gratifying motivations, as individuals and as a society, are stuck in a mode that optimizes short-term, selfish, hedonic gains—even though our current survival requires a model based more on thought than emotion; more on cooperation and altruism than self-serving; more on long-term satisfaction and contentment than short-term pleasure."

Edward O. Wilson, the influential naturalist, evolution theorist and author, began to study insects— "those little things that run the world"—when he was nine years old. He began his career by identifying and classifying every ant species in Alabama, his home state. By age 29, Wilson had achieved tenure at Harvard University for his work on ants, evolution and animal behavior. Now in his early 90s, Wilson stays active, writing, and studying the rebirth of Gorongosa Park in Mozambique. He insists that insects and humans have a lot in common. They share an instinct to build complex societies. "When you think about it, the creatures that dominate the earth are cooperative—ants, termites, humans," declares Wilson. Humans are part of the natural world. Among primates, we alone made the transition to being what Wilson calls "eusocial." This

NEWS & NOTES

means we are capable, even sometimes inclined, to work together with other humans to whom we are not related. The capacity to care what others think of us evolved after we became eusocial. What characterizes us, Wilson believes, is altruism. Like ants and termites, humans have collective as well as individual survival instinct. When an army of ants attacks a termite mound, individual warrior termites risk their lives to protect the collective. Everything humans love, Wilson argues, is the fruit of cooperation, e.g., sports, a concert by an orchestra, a congregation in a place of worship singing or praying together, a family birthday, an orgy.

So why are we in such a pickle? Human tribalism, Allen Frances explains, once had evolutionary survival value. Our hunting and gathering ancestors were completely dependent on their small group, economically and for security, and would die if banished or separated from it. "But living now on a shrunken earth, tribalism may be the most lethal baggage we carry forward from our past into our uncertain future." Wilson admits that the flip side of tribalism is brutal exclusion. It also leads to the polarization of society. Wilson tells us: "We live in a bizarre combination of Stone Age emotions, medieval beliefs and God-like technology." Needless to say, Godlike technology can be used, especially by humans with Stone Age emotions, to build high-tech dystopias.

Technology during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a wealth bonanza to the tech companies, a new paradigm for the privileged classes, and an even sharper class dichotomy. The drivers of racial health disparities are well-documented. People of color are more likely to live in neighborhoods with more pollution, unsafe housing and limited access to healthcare, nutritious food and economic opportunity. Systemic racism also affects health in more subtle ways. Arline Geronimus, a professor at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, coined the term "weathering" to describe the way discrimination wears away at the body, leading to early onset of chronic disease and other poor health outcomes, even when people improve their economic situation. Accelerated biological aging can be caused by exposure to stressors and the effort needed to cope with them in a structurally racist system such as ours. (Zoë Carpenter, "A Moment of Ethical Reckoning," *The Nation*, June 15/22, 2020)

Cheryl Farrell (LAist, June 12, 2020) wrote that she was born and raised in South L.A. but now lives in Thousand Oaks. Whenever she leaves her house, she puts on "the face" of normalcy. "This face expects suspicious looks from sales clerks as I enter a shoe store..." She admits: "Sadly, the face becomes an overused mask providing little protection from demoralizing assaults to human dignity." Mikaela Loach is an inclusive climate justice activist. Quoted in *Vogue*, June 8, 2020, she notes that more help is needed "so black folks have the time and energy to invest in creating climate solutions" instead of having to wear themselves out explaining their "existence to other people in predominantly white environmentalist spaces."

One of the best commentaries on the intersection of racism and environmentalism, and its effects on an individual, is an article by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. ("I'm a black climate expert. Racism derails our efforts to save the planet," Washington Post, June 3, 2020.) Johnson lists things she left unfinished, including a policy memo to members of Congress on accelerating offshore wind energy development in U.S. waters, because "America's boiling racism and militarization are deadly for black people." She explains that, "As a marine biologist and policy nerd, building community around climate solutions is my life's work. But I'm also a black person in the United States of America. I work on one existential crisis, but these days I can't concentrate because of another." She quotes Nobel Prize winning writer, Toni Morrison, who said distraction was an effect of racism. "It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being." How can one expect black Americans to focus on climate, asks Johnson, "when we are so at risk on our streets, in our communities, and even within our own homes?" With a soundtrack of police sirens, helicopters and flash guns, Johnson spent her time "checking on my people, staying informed, doom-scrolling" instead of working. But, she points out, "if we want to successfully address climate change, we need people of color" because diversity leads to better decision-making, but mainly because black and Latinx people are more concerned about climate change than white people. Why? They are

NEWS & NOTES

the ones who "disproportionately bear climate impacts, from storms to heat waves to pollution." Fossil-fueled power plants and refineries are much more likely to be situated in their neighborhoods. Johnson argues that, "this other intersection of race and climate doesn't get talked about nearly enough: Black Americans who are *already committed* to working on climate solutions still have to live in America, brutalized by institutions of the state, constantly pummeled with images, words and actions showing just how many of our fellow citizens do not, in fact, believe that black lives matter."

In Between the World and Me, Ta-Nehisi Coates writes: "America believes itself exceptional, the greatest and noblest nation ever to exist, a lone champion standing between the white city of democracy and the terrorists, despots, barbarians and other enemies of civilization." As such, the police departments of our country have been endowed with the authority to destroy black bodies. "It does not matter if the destruction is the result of an overreaction. It does not matter if it originates in a misunderstanding. It does not matter if the destruction springs from a foolish policy....the destroyers will rarely be held accountable. Mostly they will receive pensions. And destruction is merely the superlative form of a dominion whose prerogatives include friskings, detainings, beatings and humiliations." Coates segues to the destruction of this planet: "Plunder has matured into habit and addiction; the people who could author the mechanized death of our ghettos, the mass rape of private prisons, then engineer their own forgetting, must inevitably plunder much more.' Technology has freed the power-holders "to plunder not just the bodies of humans but the body of the Earth itself."

James Baldwin, telling about incidents in 1964 in Harlem, where he was born, wrote "A Report From Occupied Territory." A young, black salesman saw two policemen beating up a black child. When the young man asked why, the police started beating him. They took him to the police station, where they continued to beat him—so badly that one of his eyes was destroyed. Baldwin wrote: "I also know, in my own flesh, and know, which is worse, in the scars borne by many of those dearest to me, the thunder and fire of the billy club, the paralyzing shock of spittle in the face, and I know what it is to find oneself blinded on one's hands and knees, at the bottom of the flight of steps down which one has just been hurled." But, Baldwin sighs, "Occupied territory is occupied territory, even though it be found in that New World which the Europeans conquered, and it is axiomatic, in occupied territory, that any act of resistance, even though it be executed by a child, be answered at once, and with the full weight of the occupying forces."

What do occupying forces do? What have colonial empires always done? They kill or enslave indigenous people who get in their way. They grab land; they look for exploitable resources and cheap labor; they plunder. The colonization of the New World by the Old is often romanticized. The "unpopulated" virgin land offered a fresh start for each man and woman (as long as they were white Europeans). But "the United States was born with lofty utopian ideals that were daily contradicted by its grim daily realities," Allen Frances reminds us. Martin Luther King, Jr., maintained that the ideal of the frontier fed into multiple reinforcing pathologies: into racism, a violent masculinity and moralism that celebrates the rich and punishes the poor. "A constant fleeing forward allowed the United States to avoid a true reckoning with its social problems, such as economic inequality, racism, crime and punishment, and violence," insists Greg Grandin in The End of the Myth (Henry Holt and Company, 2019).

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. In a ceremony he invoked the arrival of enslaved Africans in Jamestown in 1619: "They came in darkness and they came in chains. And today we strike away the last major shackles of those fierce and ancient bonds." Jill Lepore reminds us that, five days later, "Watts was swept by violence and flames, following a protest against police brutality." ("The Riot Report," The New Yorker, June 22, 2020) In Watts, one of the poorest neighborhoods of Los Angeles, one out of three men had no work. The LAPD would stop black men for little or no reason, and, if they talked back, they got arrested. Left with an arrest record, they became unemployable. Martin Luther King, Jr., arrived in Watts almost a week after the riots started. At a community meeting, a man told him, "We won!" King asked him what he meant. Thirty-some people were dead. How could the man

CONSERVATION

say 'We won'? The response was, "We made they pay attention to us."

Framing the discussion about Ferguson, and all demonstrations that had gone before, there was "an overwhelming focus on black rage," observes Carol Anderson, chair of the African American Studies department at Emory University. Writing about Ferguson, she notes that, "Michael Brown's school district had been on probation for 15 years....It was the same with policing, housing, voting and employment, all of which carried the undercurrents of racial inequalityeven after the end of slavery, the triumphs of the Civil Rights Movement, and the election of Barack Obama to the presidency." What was really at work, concluded Anderson, was white rage. "With so much attention focused on the flames, everyone had ignored the logs, the kindling." She explains: "White rage doesn't have to wear sheets, burn crosses, or take to the streets [although now, more often, it does]. Working the halls of power, it can achieve its ends far more effectively, far more destructively." Anderson found that, "the trigger for white rage, inevitably, is black advancement....It is blackness that refuses to accept subjugation, to give up." (White Rage, Bloomsbury, 2016).

Robert Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at U.C. Berkeley, and Secretary of Labor in the Clinton Administration, contrasts two kinds of societies: those which center on social control and those which center on social investment. (Inequality Media Civic Action, on-line, June 21, 2020) Social control societies put substantial resources into police, prisons, surveillance, immigration enforcement and the military. Their purpose is to utilize fear, punishment and violence to maintain what they see as order. Social investment societies put more resources into healthcare, education, affordable housing, jobless benefits and children. Their purpose is to free people from the risks and anxieties of daily life and give everyone a fair shot at making it. Our current government epitomizes a social control society, but it has not suddenly appeared as the creation of an evil sorcerer. It is the legacy of the genocide of Native Americans and of slave patrols. It is the culmination of 40 years of increasing social control and decreasing social investment. Reich points out that spending on policing in

the U.S. has almost tripled since 1977. The United States now locks away 2.2 million people. That is a 500 percent increase from 40 years ago. Total military spending has leapt from \$437 billion in 2003 to \$935.8 billion this fiscal year. The more a society spends on social control, the less it has left for social investment. The U.S. now spends more money on prisons than on public schools.

As societies spend less on social investment, they turn to social controls to contain the anger and desperation of people who are marginalized or excluded. Richard Nixon's "war on drugs" increased arrests and incarceration for non-violent crimes. Also, a "war" needs soldiers to "defend" the homeland. Police have become militarized. The LAPD and county sheriffs rolling along my street recently, sirens screeching, looked more like invaders from Planet X, in all their military riot gear, than like human beings ready to "protect and serve." Bill Clinton's Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 put 88,000 more police on the streets. What was the reason for these "tough-on-crime" policies aside from the illusion that they would keep us safer? Part of the answer, claims Reich, has to do with widening inequality. "As the middle class collapsed and the ranks of the poor grew, those in power viewed social control as cheaper than social investment, which would require additional taxes and massive redistribution. Meanwhile, politicians used racism-from Nixon's 'law and order' and Ronald Reagan's 'welfare queens' to Donald Trump's more overt racist memes—to deflect the anxieties of an increasingly overwhelmed white working class."

Social controls require ever more oppressive means of terrorizing people who stand up against oppression, and they drain away the resources needed to build a better society. Reich tells us to start by defunding the police and investing in community. For the past five years, Black Lives Matter Los Angeles and its allies have been protesting the City's outsized funding of the police department. The City's budget originally proposed by Mayor Eric Garcetti included a \$200 million increase to go to LAPD overtime, despite decreases in crime. In this original budget, LAPD would have gotten 53.8 percent of the general fund, while other departments would have experienced furloughs, budget cuts and pay cuts. As of last week, 66,433 people in L.A. County were sleeping

CONSERVATION

on the streets, in their cars or in shelters. Instead of spending so much on police, L.A. could support housing subsidies and eviction protection. Instead of spending so much on police, L.A. could support job growth and small business recovery. A bigger police budget means less investment in community based drug and mental health treatment, education, libraries, community centers and parks. We who care about Griffith Park, for example, know that L.A. City's Department of Recreation and Parks is always underfunded. It is one reason why the Department and the Parks Commissioners often seem to grasp desperately at any project that promises to put money, even a modest amount, in park coffers. Thus, we get Halloween Horror Nights, theater, and maybe aerial trams, despite the damage these might inflict on the delicate ecosystems in Griffith Park.

Police are called to situations that could be better handled by advocates for the homeless, trained mediators, domestic violence prevention programs, and the like. The protests following the murder of George Floyd have resulted in money being cut from the LAPD budget and a statement by the L.A. City Council that its members support social workers being dispatched, instead of police, to non-violent incidents. Francis Yang of the Sierra Club said People's Budget LA is a call to action. "It is a turning point in the struggle for systemic change."

Is this also a turning point for the Sierra Club? Not really. In December of 2016, environmental leaders signed an accord pledging their allegiance to civil rights and social justice. Among the signatories, observed Brentin Mock (Outside online, February 27, 2017), was Michael Brune, "who in recent years has steered the organization toward rather bold stances on a range of issues that aren't traditionally recognized as 'green." Along with the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society and Earth Justice acknowledged that they needed to become more open and inclusive. Outdoor Afro founder Rue Mapp said, "We get to write a different and new narrative....We can stand on that narrative to create more...ways of talking about nature in terms of our own healing instead of talking about nature as a tale of our terror."

Hop Hopkins, the Sierra Club's Director of Strategic Partnerships, declares that racism is killing the planet. The ideology of white supremacy leads the way toward disposable people and a disposable natural world. "We're in this global environmental mess," explains Hopkins, "because we have declared parts of our planet to be disposable....The neighborhoods near where I live in Los Angeles, surrounded by urban oilfields, are considered disposable. The very atmosphere is considered disposable. When we pollute the hell out of a place, that's a way of saying that the place—and the people and all the other life that calls that place home—are of no value. Hopkins points to the Doctrine of Discovery. It said that any land "discovered by Christians was theirs because of the inherent inferiority of non-Christian peoples." This is the dark side of the frontier myth, and it continues today in slightly altered form. "...the richest people need for white supremacy to remain invisible so they can continue to plunder our planet. They need those sacrifice zones and the racism that justifies them, or they'll have nowhere to put their trash and pollution."

"We are playing a global endgame," says E. O. Wilson. The surviving wildlands of the world "and the bulk of the Earth's biodiversity within them.... The stabilization of the global environment they provide and their very existence are gifts to us. We are their stewards, not their owners." (excerpt from "Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life," *Sierra*, January/February, 2017).

Hop Hopkins tells us, "We as a society can choose a different way. Indeed we must....If we placed the public health and well-being of the many above the profits of a few, there wouldn't be a climate crisis." Wilson believes we must commit half the planet's surface to nature; otherwise we cannot hope to save the immensity of lifeforms that compose it. If we can do this, he promises, "people will have closer access to a world that is complex and beautiful beyond our present imagining."

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Volunteers Needed Verdugo Hills Group is looking for hike leaders, event planners/leaders, committee members, etc. If you would like to help in directing our wonderful group, please talk to our membership chair, JUDY ANDERSON

All links are live. You can email leaders or visit websites by clicking on a link. Email and Phone info is not available in the web version to protect privacy. To contact leaders or for more information on our Group,

email VerdugoHillsGroup@gmail.com.

Verdugo Views

Meetings

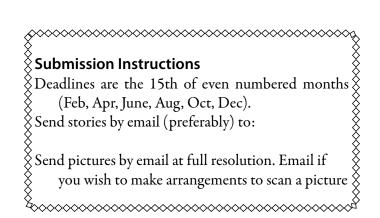
Verdugo Hills meets first Monday of each month except July and January. Meetings are located at the La Crescenta Library (2809 Foothilll Blvd—Enter in the back). Social Hour: 7 pm, Meeting: 7:30 **Web Page**

angeles.sierraclub.org/verdugo

Support Committee

(Directory of Support Committee and Leaders is on inside back page.)
Delphine Trowbridge Chair/Mailing/
Alternate Chapter Delegate/
Hospitality
David F EisenbergVice Chair/Newsletter Editor
Webmaster
Carol HenningCo-Conservation/
Chapter Delegate/Political
Charlotte FeitshansSecretary
Michael BeckClimate Change
Annette Kargodorian Treasurer
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Carol Henning, Michael Beck, Gene Paulin, Evelyn Alexander, Delphine Trowbridge, Judy Anderson, Charlotte Feitshans







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