



• THE SURVIVOR PROJECT •
Listening for a Change

Spring/Summer 2004

Vol 4 Issue #2



Please Save the Date!

Please join The Survivor Project at the Michel-Schlumberger Wine Estate for a late summer afternoon of wine, food, music and auction.

Sunday, August 29th, 4:00 - 7:00 PM

\$50 per ticket



Programs of The Survivor Project

The Survivor Project works to achieve its mission through two dynamic programs - *The Essence of Acceptance*, and *The Community Listening Project* - and an exhibit, *The Sonoma County Survivor Project*.

Each is a catalyst for change in achieving acceptance of diversity in our schools, neighborhoods and greater communities.

Essence of Acceptance uses the techniques of oral history and the arts in a comprehensive curriculum to teach empathy and awareness of our common humanity in secondary schools.

Community Listening Project trains members of diverse community cultural groups to take oral histories of members of other groups as a means to raise acceptance of diversity in the community.

Sonoma County Survivor Project is a traveling exhibit of photographs and oral histories of Sonoma County residents who survived a dramatic loss of human rights.

Community Listening Project **Workshops Prepare Interviewers to** **Make Connections with Neighbors**

The Survivor Project's newest program, the *Community Listening Project*, is in full swing thanks to an overwhelming response from the community. Currently, we have fifteen volunteers who have trained to become Workshop Leaders, and over eighty people who have signed up to attend one of our nine Interviewer Workshops.

Through the workshop, Interviewers learn to conduct oral history/journalistic style interviews with two or more people from diverse backgrounds. How one defines diversity may vary--It may be as simple as a teen interviewing an elder, or as complex as a Vietnamese American interviewing a homeless person. Culture, religion and race are included, but are not the only ways of defining diversity.

...continued on page 3

The Survivor Project Partners with Sonoma State University to bring Innovative Programming to Teachers



How better to increase the reach of the *Essence of Acceptance* program to teachers than through our California State University Extended Education program?

Dr. Les Adler, Survivor Project Board Member and Sonoma State University (SSU) Dean of Extended Education, Dr. Elaine Leeder, Dean of Social Science, Dr. Myrna Goodman, Director of the Center for the Study of the Holocaust and Phyllis Rosenfield, Executive Director of The Survivor Project, have been meeting to discuss what this might look like.

The Survivor Project's *Essence of Acceptance* program, offers an extensive curriculum for secondary school teachers. Each of the four sections helps teachers implement a project-based program that includes human and civil rights lessons, oral history techniques, a format to interview someone who has suffered a loss of human and/or civil rights, and implementation of reflective projects relating to the interview experience.

The Center for the Study of Holocaust and Genocide at SSU has been in existence for twenty-five years. The faculty has vast experience teaching historical and sociological content to help teachers better know how to make history lessons come alive with relevancy. SSU is the only state university with such a program and The Survivor Project is fortunate to be in partnership with the Center.

Relevancy is the key word here. It is imperative that we learn to apply lessons of the past to issues of today so that we're not doomed to repeat the sad consequences over and over again...

We are beginning to explore funding sources to create cooperative workshops for teachers. Long term, we are investigating the possibilities of video conferencing to make the *Essence of Acceptance* program available to an unlimited number of teachers throughout California.

Essence of Acceptance in the Schools

Use of the curriculum in Bay Area schools grows. For this academic year, teachers at Sequoia (12), Casa Grande (4), Sonoma Mountain (1) and San Antonio (2) high schools are in the second year of implementation. Teachers at Woodside (12), Petaluma (6) and Santa Rosa high schools (1) have been trained to implement the curriculum this year. Classes will be conducting oral history interviews this spring, and plan to continue using the curriculum in the following year.

It is imperative that we learn to apply lessons of the past to issues of today so that we're not doomed to repeat the sad consequences over and over again.

For the 2004-5 academic year, we are in the process of securing funding to bring the *Essence of Acceptance* to 25 teachers representing all Santa Rosa middle and high schools. It's a complex but exciting challenge to bring together teachers, administrators and funders to bring this important work into the public schools.

A Few Thoughts from Phyllis...



Just when you think maybe things are getting better, another hate incident or crime occurs that shakes one's core. Sadly, one doesn't have to read or listen long to today's news to hear of some terrible loss of human or civil rights...

For The Survivor Project, it's imperative that we find meaningful ways to respect and understand the rich and complex cultures among us. Our goal is to eliminate prejudice and intolerance in order to promote true acceptance of others. The Survivor Project's programs are designed to use the power of the human voice and the sharing of personal experiences to communicate important lessons of human rights and to bridge gaps between cultures and perspectives.

Sound ambitious? We are...But without the intense effort of working toward a fair and just world, where is hope? What is the future?

Our programs provide systemic solutions to dispel insensitive or intolerant behavioral patterns. We've created structured techniques that help community members develop empathy, understanding and communication with people who are different from themselves. We bring together people from diverse ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, generation, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds to share their life stories and personal experiences. Sharing these personal stories enables us to understand our differences and embrace our common humanity.

In order to implement our work, we need your investment. We simply can't do without it. Your financial support allows us to bring our programs into our schools and our community. The return on your investment is knowing that you have helped build a safe and vital community for ourselves and for future generations.

Phyllis

The *Community Listening Project* stimulates the asking of questions: Who is someone in my community who has a different life experience from mine? What are our differences and what do we have in common? What do you think about acceptance of diversity in our community? What are your ideas about how to make things better?

Workshop participants learn how to become both effective oral historians and journalists. Conducting formal, recorded interviews allows people from different backgrounds to come to know one another and to cross boundaries that are often hard to bridge without a for-



Workshop participants Sam Buman, Annette Simons, Blake Simons and Julia Brigdon

mat. The interviewing process offers a respectful structure that brings community members together to treasure their differences and embrace their common humanity.

All stories are recorded and, in the coming months, photographs of participants with excerpts of thought provoking passages from the interviews (in English and any other language spoken) will be featured on posters in public venues around Sonoma County. In addition, PBS television KRCB will air thirty second public service announcements between programming. These will feature a black and white photo of the interviewee as well as their audio quote.

This process of bringing awareness to voices and stories of normally unheard members of the community will enable Sonoma County residents to talk about and create innovative solutions to problems that face the community.

If you would like to participate as an Interviewer, Interviewee, or help with the *Community Listening Project* in another way, please contact our office.



*Board Member
Connie Coddling*

Connie Coddling's passion for human rights work began when she

was a small child in Sonoma County. While living in Forestville, her family lived in an apartment adjacent to railroad tracks. Nearby lived a Japanese American family with two daughters close to Connie's age. The three girls were best friends, and played together all the time, until one day, the Japanese American family was sent to an internment camp. Her mother explained that her friends were victims of war-time hysteria. In the meantime, Connie moved with her family to Santa Rosa, so she never saw them again. She never knew what happened to them, but their story has been an influence in her life.

According to Connie, one experienced an extremely high level of patriotism growing up during WWII. Consequently, people were exposed to a great deal of propaganda about the enemy. Connie remembers that language used to describe the enemy was very derogatory - Japanese people were referred to as "Japs" and Germans were lumped together as Nazis. It was very easy to get carried away with hatred towards enemy.

During that time, German prisoners of war were brought to Sonoma County to help with the apple harvest. One of the apple orchards was adjacent to her grandparents' property in Forestville, and Connie remembers that the POWs would wave to her, and her grandmother would take cookies to them. She would say, "These boys are so young. I know they miss their families." Connie's grandmother related to them as somebody's sons, and Connie never felt afraid of them. In retrospect, Connie was thankful for the influence of her mother and grandmother, who she feels were both ahead of their time.

Connie refers to her grandchildren as another reason she is involved in human rights work.

...continued on page 5



*Vice Chair
Hillary Costin*

Hillary Costin has always had the sense that being American means fighting

for justice, equity, freedom, and education. Her grandfather, who was the oldest of 10 boys, brought three of his brothers over to the United States. The rest perished in WWII. For Hillary, the lesson is if you don't take care of what you have, you could lose it.

Hillary grew up in Metuchen, New Jersey with her parents and two brothers. One brother now resides in San Francisco, and the other sadly passed away from AIDS in 1986. Hillary's family ancestry is Eastern European and Jewish. Her grandparents were immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia and came to the United States in the early 20th century. All her grandparents spoke with accents, which Hillary thought was normal.

Hillary's maternal grandfather grew up in Vitebsk which is the town where Marc Chagall grew up. Marc Chagall was supposedly a cousin, and his paintings are part of both Hillary's and her grandfather's memory. Her grandfather came to New Jersey from Russia via Shanghai to escape conscription by the Czar during the Russian Revolution. Both of her parents' grandfathers were self-sufficient and did whatever they needed to do to support their families, including building their own homes.

According to Hillary, the story of her grandparents seems to be the story of all immigrants - people came to this country and did what they needed to get by. Their children were hardworking, acculturated Americans, but they weren't educated. The third generation had the privilege to be educated. Hillary was the first person in her family to go to college. Hillary began her college education at Connecticut College and graduated from San Francisco State. She then received her law degree from Boalt Law School at UC Berkeley.

...continued on page 5

One grandchild is part Native American, and three are a combination of Hawaiian, Filipino and Chinese descent. Connie tells the story of her granddaughter, who was in pre-school when some of her friends teased her about being Japanese. She was in tears, because she not only knew who she was, but was proud that she was American Indian.

Because of her experiences, Connie believes it is important to start educating children about human rights early. She feels that people are not born with prejudice. Rather, it is a learned behavior. When values are taught in school and reinforced in the home, children gain a strong foundation, so they don't need to join in with other kids who are being hurtful to other children who are different from themselves.

Connie has been witness to the *Essence of Acceptance's* oral history experience in the classroom, and is a member of the *Community*

Listening Project Steering Committee. She has attended workshops, given presentations and is thrilled with the response from the community. It has reinforced her belief that with understanding, comes acceptance. She believes that world peace starts with relationship-building in one's own community.

Connie's vision for The Survivor Project is that it will receive enough community support to become not only sustainable, but will be able to grow. If it can keep expanding and more students and community members can experience the change that it can make, word will spread. Students can initiate change by themselves. For example, at Maria Carillo High School last year, students decided on their own that hate behavior wasn't okay at their school, and wanted to be known as a school of understanding. They were very vocal that people who commit hateful acts are only a small part of the community and don't represent them. Connie's ultimate wish is that programs like The Survivor Project will encourage more people to take a stand against intolerance.

"The Survivor Project gives value to the community because it provides a structure for discussions about basic human needs - dignity, respect, understanding and communication among people who have different backgrounds."

-Hillary Costin

When Hillary heard about The Survivor Project from Phyllis, she felt strongly supportive and compelled to participate. When she was in law school she had focused on civil rights, women's rights and children's issues. As a parent, her priority is to create the best possible education and cultural opportunities for her kids. For Hillary, these interests and goals intersect with the mission of The Survivor Project, which is about both.

Hillary has always been a strong advocate of democratic ideals. Therefore, helping to create a curriculum that encourages students to learn about democratic ideals such as civil and human rights is very important to her.

Hillary is supportive of private schools as she feels they encourage parent involvement, and provide room to be creative and responsive to students' needs, as opposed to public schools, which are more restricted by laws and standards. She was involved in the founding of

Sonoma Country Day School. Her kids were attendees and she was as stimulated by the creation of a new educational institution as her children were. She was also part of the impetus and conversation regarding the creation of Sonoma Academy.

Hillary has been involved in The Survivor Project for a number of years and has contributed greatly with her writing skills. She has experienced a lot of joy in working with Phyllis and helping to articulate the philosophy and process of The Survivor Project.

Hillary believes The Survivor Project gives value to the community because it provides a structure for discussions about basic human needs - dignity, respect, understanding and communication among people who have different backgrounds. When one starts a conversation about these basic necessities, one opens opportunities for further learning. Our current schools, governments, institutions and communities don't have vehicles for understanding, communication and crossing boundaries that The Survivor Project provides. Hillary's goal is to expel ignorance through conversation and education.

Speak Out

A Program of the *Community Listening Project*

In September, The Survivor Project will launch *Speak Out*, an exciting new teen video program that engages Sonoma County teens in addressing issues of intolerance, prejudice and discrimination. This program provides 16 to 18 year olds with a creative and powerful way of participating in the *Community Listening Project*, and challenges them to make a difference in their communities.

Over the course of the school year, twelve teens will create a series of public service announcements and a short documentary video based on interviews they conduct with a diverse group of community residents. The documentary and public service announcements will air on local television and radio, and will be presented by the teens at community events aimed at showcasing their work and inspiring community dialogue.

The program is rooted in the belief that, through service learning, young people can develop their own knowledge and self-identity, and have a profound impact on the world around them.

The Process

The twelve students selected to participate in *Speak Out* will be a diverse group from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds who have each exhibited both a sense of commitment to the program and passion for community issues, filmmaking or oral history.

Participants will work in small groups to conduct a number of interviews—with each teen functioning as interviewer, lighting/cameraperson and audio specialist at least once. With the aid of filmmaking advisors, teen participants will create short public service announcements (PSAs) based on the experiences and perspectives of several of the community members they interviewed. These will bring to light the very real consequences of intolerance and discrimination in the community.

The teens will then work as a collective group to create a short documentary video that weaves together the stories of the community members they interviewed, draws connections between the experiences of various population groups, raises key questions about critical issues in the community, and invites people across the community to come together to find solutions.

Community Partnerships

The Survivor Project is excited to have formed a partnership with Chops Teen Center, which is donating their facilities for use in the program, and KRCB to air the teens' completed work. We are also continuing to draw as many connections to other community organizations as possible, in order to recruit teens and get the word out about the program.

Asher Miller

The Survivor Project is pleased to introduce Asher Miller, who will direct *Speak Out*. Asher has worked extensively on a number of community technology and visual history nonprofit projects, including Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (www.vhf.org) and Plugged In (www.pluggedin.org), a community technology center in East Palo Alto.



Opportunities to be Involved

Like all of our programs, *Speak Out* depends on the support of people like you. There are a number of ways to help out, from volunteering to serve on the teen selection committee, to working hands-on in the program, to providing financial and/or in-kind donations. Please let us know if you are interested in being involved!

Thank you to Our Major Funders:

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Sam Sokolik
Rudy Lacoce and Peggy Hammett in memory of Paul Benko

In Celebration

David and Kathryn Mayo Hudson on behalf of David's sister and
brother

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Our Mission

The Survivor Project promotes understanding and acceptance of human diversity through education, oral history, and the arts.

Our Vision

As our communities become increasingly diverse, it is imperative that we find meaningful ways to respect and understand the rich and complex cultures among us.

Our goal is to work to eliminate prejudice and intolerance in order to promote true acceptance of others.

We achieve this by working with communities to develop oral history/arts projects with personal histories of community members who have lost human and/or civil rights.

Each project becomes a catalyst for positive change through introspection and application.

5079 MONTECITO AVENUE
SANTA ROSA, CA 95404

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