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Our Mission

Listening for a Change promotes understanding and acceptance of human diversity through education, oral history, and the arts.

Our Programs

Listening for a Change works to achieve its mission through two dynamic programs -*Essence of Acceptance* and the *Community Listening Project* - and an exhibit, *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 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. Visit our Web site at www.thesurvivorproject.org (soon to be changed to www.listeningforachange.org) to view the exhibit in its entirety.



• LISTENING FOR A CHANGE •

Spring/Summer 2005

Vol 5 Issue #2



Save the Date!

Join us for a spicy day in September

Saturday, September 10th from 6:00-9:00 at the new  **sonoma mountain village**

This year we honor our South American neighbors with tantalizing tangos, music by Cuyuy, authentic food from around South America, and more. Come for a zesty evening with friends and community!

1st Annual Connie Coddling Humanist Award will be presented to Connie Coddling

Are you an artist by night?

Contact us if you'd like to show your work at our Spicy September Event.

Become a Member Now!

Listening for a Change is transitioning to a Member Based Organization

The Board of Listening for a Change has decided to change to a Membership Based Organization.

What does this mean for you? For a yearly contribution (from \$25 to \$2500) you will receive our newsletter and invitations to all of our exciting events.

You will also receive a new publication with in-depth interview excerpts and photographs of community members who have participated in our *Community Listening Project*.

Your continued support will ensure that Listening for a Change has the funding and cash-flow to further implement *Community Listening Project*, expand *Essence of Acceptance*, and keep the original Sonoma County Survivor Project visible and viable.

Please become a member today. Use the enclosed envelope to join and help us make an important difference in promoting tolerance, understanding, and diversity. Thank you.

We've Moved

Listening for a Change has a new office! After eight years in the home of Executive Director Phyllis Rosenfield, we have moved to a lovely pair of offices at 1300 N Dutton Avenue in Santa Rosa. The building is owned by the Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Sonoma County, the largest non-profit in the county, and a good friend to Listening for a Change. We are not only pleased to have the added space, high-speed internet, and an official business address, but also to be working in close proximity to the good people of CAP.

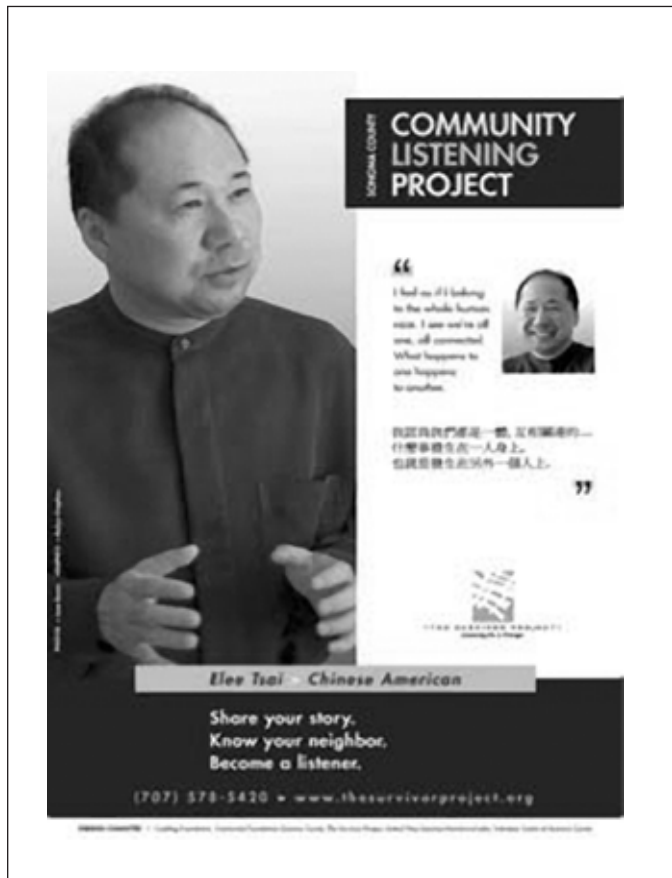
Since its beginnings in 1988 as The Sonoma County Survivor Project, the organization has grown steadily, and outgrown many homes. Originally, the organization existed between the homes of Cynthia Hayashi, Lisa Slater, and Phyllis Rosenfield, with no central office space. As a sponsored program of the Sonoma State University Academic Foundation, the organization had support from the office of SSU's Center for the Study of the Holocaust. In 1997,

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• LISTENING FOR A CHANGE •





I feel as if I belong to the whole human race. I see we're all one, all connected. What happens to one happens to another. —Elee Tsai

Community Listening Project

How does one purposely shatter myths and stereotypes without getting hurt? At Listening for a Change we think we've created a safe, respectful program that helps people do just that. Our communities seem to be missing the capacity to hear and know one another—simple, respectful, open-hearted listening creates the opportunity to come to know others and look at challenging concerns. We create opportunities for new pathways. Communities no longer have to continue down roads that offer little opportunity for systemic transformation.

The *Community Listening Project* teaches people how to conduct authentic oral histories, provides recording equipment, and encourages participants to reach out into their community and interview anyone who's different from themselves. Our diversity definition includes a wide circle such as culture, religion, sex, race, health, and economics.

The *Community Listening Project* continues to offer free, accessible four hour workshops

for anyone from 13-113 year old. Since November, workshops have been held with the Healthy Community Consortium in Petaluma and with the support of the Volunteer Center in Santa Rosa.

As a part of the Martin Luther King Day On we collaborated with the Volunteer Center's Youth Leadership group and the Community Baptist Church and conducted interviews in quiet rooms at the event. We used a similar approach at Caesar Chavez Day in Cloverdale at the Boys and Girls Club. At the upcoming June 4th Heritage Festival in Petaluma interviews will be conducted at the Petaluma Recreation Center with Healthy Community Consortium.

June 18th from 9:00am - 1:00pm is the next *Community Listening Project* workshop at the Volunteer Center. We encourage and welcome your participation. Join in by calling our office 578-5420.



We don't really have a community that's open to people that do not speak English. If the ability to speak Spanish or other languages could be seen as a skill and a real benefit I think that would help with inclusiveness. —Valencia Jewell

Thank you to our Major Funders:

- The Allstate Foundation
- Codding Foundation
- Exchange Bank
- Peninsula Community Foundation
- Pacific Gas and Electric
- Schulz Allocated Donor Fund (through Community Foundation Sonoma County)
- National Bank of the Redwoods

A Special Thank You to All of Our Friends and Supporters Who Have Given So Generously from November, 2004 through May, 2005:

\$1000-1999

- Petaluma Educational Fund
- Padi Selwyn and Ruben Weinsveg
- Summit State Bank
- John Weinstein and Heidi Stewart

\$500-999

- Mark W. Stokes and Lisa Hardin

\$250-499

- Congregation Shomrei Torah Social Action Committee
- Louisa Leavitt

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- Bank of Petaluma
- Jonathan and Rose Batzdorff
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- Patricia Sabo
- Edward and Nancy Sherman
- Dennis and Toni Sousa
- Joe and Sparkie Spaeth
- Todd & Mary Taggart

Car Donors - NEW!
Hillary and Chris Costin
Steven Rosenfield

We Depend on You!

Listening for a Change is only able to do its systemic, community building programming with financial help from people like you.

All financial contributions are tax deductible—So, if you're able to give large, we're most appreciative! If you can make a smaller contribution—we're most appreciative as well!

Use a check or Visa or Master card through our donor envelope or donate online at www.listeningforachange.org.

Welcome to our two new board members: Elee Tsai and Steve Miksis

Steve Miksis is a CPA/poet with broad concerns and community involvement, including volunteering for Memorial Home-Hospice and North Bay Concensus Council. **Elee Tsai** is an architect and a founding member of the Redwood Chinese-American Association. Raised in mainland China, Elee knows the challenges of coming to America as a teen. He participated as an Interviewee in the *Community Listening Project*.

Commission on Human Rights

Last December Listening for a Change was honored by receiving the **Reverend James E. Coffee Human Rights Award** for a nonprofit from the Commission on Human Rights Sonoma County for our original Community Listening Project.

The honor continues with an invitation from the Commission to join them and the Volunteer Center Sonoma County to help produce the second annual Human Rights Award ceremony. Held on International Human Rights Day, December 8th, we are helping plan and implement the next event. The Commission on Human Rights has generously offered to share any profits made from the event with Listening for a Change.

So, mark your calendars now for the evening of Thursday, June 8th—More details to follow in our Fall/Winter newsletter.

...**We've Moved** (continued from page 1)

the county, and a good friend to Listening for a Change. We are not only pleased to have the added space, high-speed internet, and an official business address, but also to be working in close proximity to the good people of CAP.

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April 1, 2005 was moving day, and we had lots of support. Many thanks to all who helped! If you need packing, contact Superior Court Commissioner **Cynthia Denenholz**—she helped plan, pack, and lift! **Kim Clement** came through in a big way with brawn and a big truck. **Meg Alexander's** trusty truck is always there for us. **Evan Spaulding, Luis Onofre, Gavin Johnson, Juan Meza, and Nate Jereb** are

Website Update

This year we have begun a major revamping of www.listeningforachange.org. Online donation is now possible on our easy-to-use, secure credit card donation page. You can even download the papers to donate your car to us online. A new page for *Community Listening Project* is now up, and we have updated workshop dates, times, and directions on the Get Involved page. As part of a new outreach effort for our *Essence of Acceptance* school curriculum, we have added an e-commerce section of the site to allow purchase of the various versions and sections of the curriculum. Over the course of the following year, we'll be working to update the *Essence of Acceptance* pages to allow for better lines of communication for students, teachers, school administrators, and service-learning students who use the curriculum to share projects and ideas with each other. We hope you'll come visit us in cyberspace sometime soon, and feel free to give us your comments and suggestions for improving it even more!

Volunteers

This section is dedicated to thanking all of the many volunteers who have given hours of their time and expertise to furthering the cause of Listening for a Change.

If you are interested in volunteering for us, we have many jobs that need attention, from simple filing to transcribing interviews. In particular, we need lots of volunteers to help out in organizing our summer event, which is rapidly taking shape (see p. 1).

Thank you to all of the over 150 people who have attended our *Community Listening Project* workshops and are now fanned out all over Sonoma County conducting oral history interviews of people from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Until recently, we really haven't had many ongoing volunteers. Lately, we've had several wonderful people donating many hours mobilizing transcribers, organizing files, lending computer time and expertise, manning our table at events, and much more: **Hank Cohn, Ruth Freis, Ellen Mundell, Susan Curry, Kim Clement, Cynthia Denenholz.**

now more buffed than ever! Also, a special thanks to **Helga Lemke**, CAP Executive Director, **John Way**, CAP Director of Development, and **Thomas Westberg**, CAP Facilities Manager, for making our relocation a reality!

A Few Thoughts from Phyllis...



American culture is alive with conversation. Daily, we experience an overload of information! But, the primary means of communication lacks a discourse—though most of us would like to be heard, few are available to listen.

How many times have you been in a conversation when you can tell that the other person is thinking of the next clever point he or she will make or trying to figure out how to turn the discussion back (again!) toward him- or herself? Most of us experience this regularly and are in fact guilty of it ourselves—it's the norm in our fast-paced society.

Active, heartfelt listening is a gift we can and should be giving one another with greater frequency. At Listening for a Change, we know this simple behavior can be reexamined and learned anew. Both our Essence of Acceptance and Community Listening Project programs work to create community where attentive listening is an important part of our lives.

Attentive listening through oral history taking enables us to slide a toe or two into someone else's shoe, engages us in experiencing our common humanity, and allows us to come to know and understand another person's concerns. It also shows respect to the person to whom you listen. The better relationship we have with our neighbor and grasp of his or her needs, the more likely we'll be there for one another.

In our fast-paced lives, authentic listening slows us down and helps us to reflect about what's really important. Who knows? When we listen to one another we might even come up with some fresh ideas for those seemingly intractable problems like homelessness, gangs, drug abuse, etc...

So, join us! Get to really know your neighbor from a diverse background through our Community Listening Project. Not only is this a great way to relate to a fellow earthling, but also a novel way to create community.

There needs to be more room at the public policy table for voices of many different people. Let's add a leaf to the table and remember that the chairs and china don't need to match!

Your support to help cross boundaries and bring new friends to the table is much appreciated. We need you to help make Listening for a Change a viable, dynamic organization—one that can really make a difference.

Phyllis

Essence of Acceptance Expanding Statewide

Listening for a Change has been busy making contacts, scheduling meetings, and writing grants for a new school outreach program to begin in the fall to bring *Essence of Acceptance* to schools throughout the state of California. Up until this point, we have nurtured focused, single-school programs in Sonoma and San Mateo counties, and have been very happy with the success of them.

Essence of Acceptance is a project-based, service-learning curriculum for secondary schools that uses the power of the human voice and sharing of personal experiences to communicate important lessons of human rights. Through the process of taking oral histories from community members who have lost human and/or civil rights, students participate in a unique combination of academic and real life experiences that encourage them to develop empathy for people different from themselves.

Starting in September, Listening for a Change will be meeting with state and regional school administrators and community leaders, and scheduling workshops in five target areas: Los Angeles County, San Diego County, San Francisco Bay Area, Monterey County, and the Sacramento area. These regions will provide a solid basis for statewide growth.

So far, we have been quite successful at facilitating student involvement in the community. We will be continuing this commitment and adding a new one: community leader involvement in the classroom. A new initiative will involve bringing professionals into the classroom to teach part of the curriculum. Local lawyers will teach part of the Human Rights section, and others such as insurance professionals will teach some Oral History techniques. These professionals will also subsidize other interested teachers in the schools purchasing the curriculum. We hope that this initiative will engage students, gratify and promote local professionals, and support schools. It's good for everyone involved!

Looking for Lawyers and Insurance Professionals (or others?)...who like to teach!

If you're a lawyer or an insurance professional and you or your firm are interested in teaching kids about human rights and oral history techniques, we want you to join an exciting new school sponsorship initiative of *Essence of Acceptance* that's a great way to support local schools. Call us to find out about workshops, sponsorships, and classroom teaching possibilities.



Board
Chairman
Jim Leddy

When meeting Jim Leddy, one quickly becomes aware of his capacity for understanding serious issues and searching for pragmatic solutions. His adept social skills mask the long journey he's made from a life of poverty and even homelessness while growing up in the Russian River area.

For Jim, involvement with Listening for a Change is about understanding people's differences and creating a greater level of acceptance of people who might be a little different from you whether religious, economic, sexual, racial, etc. Jim knows from personal experience how unfairly people can be treated...

Born in Sacramento, Jim's parents divorced when he was quite young. He and his mother came to live in the Russian River area when he was four and a half, rarely to have contact with his father again.

In the early 1970's Monte Rio was different, according to Jim. There were a lot of people living in severe poverty, including Jim and his mom. There were years at age five and six when Jim and his mom were living out of their car—by age seven things were a bit more financially stable, but always challenging. His mother struggled with substance abuse, but has now been clean and sober for eight years.

Jim attended Monte Rio Elementary School. He loved the wooded hills and found wonderful places to play and foster his imagination. When asked what influenced him in those years, he said television had a surprisingly positive effect. Pop culture offered a window of opportunity in which he could dream. Star Trek was one of his favorites. He looked around and decided that if he was going to leave the futility he saw around him, he had to do something.

As a teen, Jim was always in the top 10% of his class. Two

"Last time I looked, the planet wasn't getting any bigger. We've got to learn to get along with one another. War is not an alternative."

of his teachers, Lauren Wilbur, an English teacher, and electronics teacher Hal Roa both provided challenges and structure for Jim. In Mr. Wilbur's class he was encouraged to think critically and explain himself. Mr. Roa reminded the students that they had chosen to be there, so he wanted them to take what he offered seriously—Jim did.

Besides keeping up with his studies, Jim could be seen protesting at the Bohemian Grove. He also had a close friend from El Salvador who taught him how our federal government was operating. Jim became active against actions in El Salvador. The dominant Reagan political thought of the 1980's simply didn't resonate with him.

After graduation in 1986, Jim entered UC San Diego as a physics major. He didn't like living in San Diego, so he came home and enrolled at SRJC where he switched majors to sociology. He later transferred to UC Davis, the school from which he graduated. After Davis, Jim attended McGeorge Law School for awhile, but dropped out and began getting involved in the 1992 Clinton election. After that he was hooked. Jim began volunteering for Lynn Woolsey, working nights as a security guard as well as in a video store. In 1993 Jim secured his first paid campaign job with Mike Thompson's special election campaign.

Today, Jim is the regional director for the office of California State Senator Wesley Chesbro. His goal is to make government more accessible and show people that democracy can work. He is married to Cathy Hayes and they have twin three year old sons, Logan and John.

With two sons who will live in a world we've created, Jim says that he tries to make every aspect of his life a way to make the world a better place—work, family, and volunteering.

"Last time I looked, the planet wasn't getting any bigger. We've got to learn to get along with one another. War is not an alternative to getting along—fighting is simply not conducive to preserving the human race. I think about how it's viewed from Neal Armstrong's perspective—this little blue marble in a very large expanse."



Board
Member
Yolanda
Cervantes

Board member Yolanda Cervantes is an excellent listener. As a part of her job as a Sonoma County Deputy Courtroom Clerk, she prepares and records minutes of actions and proceedings and explains policies and procedures to attorneys and the general public. At work, she sees many cases involving fellow members of the Mexican community who have broken the law in some way or another.

"People just lack knowledge of the law. You see, Mexican law is so different from American law, you basically have to kill someone, or get caught selling weapons or drug trafficking to end up in prison."

As a Listening for a Change board member, as well as with the *Centro Laboral de Graton*, she has made it a major life commitment to help improve the lives of day laborers, particularly in her native West County, and to improve communication across cultural barriers. Her work with *Centro Laboral de Graton* has led to the planning of a new center for day laborers in her native community. The center will give laborers a place to congregate, meet up with potential employers, and develop a healthy multi-cultural community that values tolerance, justice, and respect.

Raised in the tiny town of Graton, Yolanda Cervantes is the daughter of a day laborer who came to California in the 1950's from Morelos, Mexico as a part of the bracero program, a war-time treaty between Mexico and the United States that brought over Mexican workers to pick crops. (The program is often described as a form of legalized slavery.) While most braceros had to return at the end of the harvesting season, Sebastian Millan stayed on working. Yolanda's mother, Sofia Cortez, had been born in Edenburg, Texas, but was raised in Mexico. When Sofia was a teenager, her brother traveled to California in search of work, and did not return home. His worried family, including the sixteen year old Sofia, traveled to California in order to find him and also ended up staying in Graton. It was in the tiny town of Graton that Sofia and Sebastian met, married, and had five children.

"Listening to peoples' stories is the most important aspect of understanding others and reducing racism."

As a child, Yolanda's family socialized exclusively with the Mexican community in the West County.

Sebastian held down three jobs in order to support his family. Once he became a citizen, he was fortunate and acquired a job at Sonoma State University as a groundskeeper. He remained a dedicated and hard worker there for 25 years until he retired.

Yolanda attended Santa Rosa Junior College and completed several certificates courses in business and secretarial skills. She has two children, Alonzo and Carlos, both of whom she has raised as a single mother. She recently married Eliceo Cervantes, who also was a day laborer until he acquired a job with the Sonoma County Sheriffs Department as a Detention Assistant. Life is much easier for both of them now—they are able to provide for their family without having to work two jobs.

Yolanda's dedication to improving cross-cultural communication in Sonoma County and beyond brought her to The Survivor Project in 2003. Phyllis Rosenfield had asked her to be a speaker at Maria Carrillo High School, and Yolanda was touched by how the program involved children of every race and how they were so interested in listening to her experiences. Phyllis was also touched by Yolanda's words, and asked her to consider joining the board.

Yolanda's concern for healing the community has also led her to seek improvements in the schools, and so one of her dreams for Listening for a Change in the coming years is to try to bring *Essence of Acceptance* to West County schools. But, she does not want to stop with local schools. She hopes that the new outreach campaign will be successful at bringing the curriculum throughout the state to many new communities.

"Listening to stories is really what it's all about. Listening to peoples' stories is the most important aspect of understanding others and reducing racism."