

New grant brings ‘Essence of Acceptance’ to community schools

From an Essence of Acceptance student presentation:

“Morris has done well in his life, but there have been many times when he and his family have been segregated and prejudged because of their race. When he was eight, his parents were denied a house because of their race.”

It occurred to him that he knew nothing about towns established by African-Americans. This was the beginning of Morris’ journey into finding his passion in life. His goal was to find 50 towns in California settled by African-Americans. By the end of his trip, he had discovered 214.



SCOPE has received a two-year grant to implement a project-based program called the *Essence of Acceptance* in its community schools. This funding will give community school students the opportunity to learn about—and learn to respect—the rich and complex cultures represented in our county. SCOPE is partnering with the nonprofit Survivor Project to implement this new program.

Essence of Acceptance was created by The Survivor Project and piloted last year at Maria Carillo High School. This innovative program uses the tools of oral history to educate students about human rights.

Students participate in the *Essence of Acceptance* program by interviewing people from different cultures who have experienced a loss of human rights, then they analyze and create presentations about what they have learned. Photographs, videos, and drawings support their presentations and provide another way for students to “get to know” the people they interview.

Through this process, students learn to apply lessons of the past to their own lives



and the critical issues of today, thereby coming to understand the importance of tolerance and the consequences of intolerance.

Several other schools in Sonoma, Marin, and San Mateo counties are also working with The Survivor Project to implement the *Essence of Acceptance* at their sites. The Survivor Project provides schools with teacher training, onsite coaching, and assistance arranging for interviews. For information about the program, contact The Survivor Project at (707) 578-4374.

The drawing and quotes accompanying this story were created by students at Maria Carillo High School. The students interviewed Sonoma County resident Morris Turner to learn about his personal history as part of their Essence of Acceptance project. Drawing by Matthew Clark e.