Our New Name

Listening for a Change

Our Board of Directors is pleased to announce a new name for our organization: Listening for a Change. While Board members have cited many reasons for this change, the primary reason is that The Survivor Project no longer adequately reflects the work of the organization. When the Sonoma County Survivor Project was created in the late 1980s, its purpose was to share the stories of Sonoma County community members who had survived severe human rights abuses, such as the Jewish Holocaust, Japanese American internment during World War II, and the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia. Since becoming a non-profit organization in 1998, The Survivor Project has established the much broader mission of promoting understanding of diversity through education, oral history, and the arts. Essence of Acceptance and Community Listening Project are our newer programs by which we seek to teach members of the community to listen to each other in an effort to raise awareness and acceptance of diversity. The name, Listening for a Change, captures the nature of our work today and emphasizes the importance of the act of listening in transforming attitudes in our community. In the coming months, the organization’s printed materials and website will change to include the new name.

Two of six Community Listening Project posters now posted throughout Sonoma County. Interviews were conducted by local workshop participants. See page 2 for article.
This fall, Listening for a Change kicked off a public awareness campaign for the Community Listening Project. Starting in September, we began distributing our new posters for display in public places in Sonoma County. Six different posters feature the images of interviewees who have participated in the Community Listening Project and an excerpt from each interview expressing experiences and impressions of acceptance and tolerance of diversity in Sonoma County. Thus far, over 450 posters have been distributed to places such as Santa Rosa’s City Hall and Police Department, the State Building, Healdsburg and Petaluma schools, and area health clinics and hospitals. Listening for a Change plans to periodically produce new posters featuring new interviewees to display in the community.

To coincide with the City of Santa Rosa’s Race Equality Week (September 27-October 3), Listening for a Change collaborated with the City to produce banners featuring participants in the Community Listening Project. These elegant public artworks have a similar design to the aforementioned posters. Banners have been hung throughout downtown Santa Rosa.

Finally, Listening for a Change has created four public service announcements in collaboration with, and to be aired on, KRCB television Channel 8 and radio and Santa Rosa Community Media Television Channel 72. They also feature the images and words of participants in the Community Listening Project. These 30-second spots include beautiful and haunting music written by local composer Benjamin Taylor and performed by Aaron Westman, viola, and Robin Beloff-Wachsberg, piano. Black and white photographs are by Jane Baron and graphics by Susan Bailyn.

The Community Listening Project seeks to bring people together from diverse cultural backgrounds to come to know one another as neighbors. The Project trains members of the community to take respectful oral histories. Once trained, the volunteers interview members of the community who have different cultural backgrounds...continued on page 5

Essence of Acceptance in the Schools

The Essence of Acceptance curriculum will reach California’s classrooms in a whole new way starting in the 2004-2005 academic year. The California Department of Education (CDE) will include the Essence of Acceptance curriculum in their 2005 Educational Resources Catalog of supplemental materials that is sent to all California teachers and beyond (350,000!). A condensed version of the Essence of Acceptance curriculum and video will be available to teachers in this catalog for $58, with additional lessons available from Listening for a Change for $5 each.

The Essence of Acceptance curriculum will also be included in the California Learning Resources Network’s online databank of curricula. CLRN serves as an electronic information source for educators seeking supplemental learning resources that meet the State’s curricular standards.

Bay Area teachers will continue to use the Essence of Acceptance curriculum thanks to the support of Allstate Foundation, the Petaluma Education Foundation, and the Peninsula Community Foundation. For this academic year, teachers at Sequoia, Casa Grande, Sonoma Mountain, San Antonio, Woodside and Petaluma High Schools will continue to use the curriculum to teach students important lessons of human rights to bridge gaps among cultures, perspectives and histories.
My husband, Arnie, and I recently returned from an interesting trip to Eastern Europe. We touched down in Vienna, Budapest, Krakow & Prague—basically the old Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Each city was fairy-tale beautiful. To my surprise, Krakow, Poland was almost as beautiful as Vienna! We visited lovely castles, elaborate Catholic Churches, ate our weight in rich pastries, and went to each and every Jewish quarter, including Auschwitz/Birkenau.

What hit me in the most visceral way was how beautiful, how like fall in New England the countryside was, how lovely each farm home and property looked, and how very ordinary the people appeared going about their daily lives, with hardly a sign of their recent subjugation of a totalitarian regime.

Auschwitz & Birkenau are surrounded by beautiful forests & farmlands as well—the most heinous crimes ever committed in the middle of bucolic farms…It was, as Hannah Arendt wrote, the banality of evil that left the most searing impression.

During our brief walk on earth, is it even possible to think about working to keep these and other atrocities from happening over and over again? With what is happening in the world today, it is very difficult to feel like we can make a difference.

Often it seems as if we’re swimming against a very large wave and having a difficult time making it to shore with our friends and loved ones. A warm, isolated island has much appeal.

Historian Yehuda Bauer enunciated three commandments as the human imperative of the Holocaust: “Thou shalt not be a victim, Thou shalt not be a perpetrator. Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.”

Listening for a Change’s work is based on the conviction that we can make a difference—as long as we perceive people who share the earth with us as “others” we’ll be fighting against the current. Though our work may only be a few drops in a large ocean, it helps us become stronger swimmers by joining together in something we know is positive and beneficial for our communities—transforming attitudes by coming to know others.

We need you and your support now more than ever.

Phyllis
Les Adler has been involved with The Survivor Project and Listening for a Change since its inception in the late 1980s. He played a role in helping the original Sonoma County Survivor Project become a Sponsored Program at Sonoma State University (SSU), where he has been a faculty member and administrator for more than thirty years. Dr. Adler served as the SSU Director for this initial oral history/photographic project. However, it wasn’t until 2002 that he joined the board and became actively involved in furthering the educational goals of the organization.

Les Adler grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico far from his family’s Jewish roots. In college, at the University of New Mexico, he majored in Russian history, which (in retrospect) was a way of exploring and understanding his family’s immigrant background and heritage. Later, he pursued graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley, earning his Master’s and Doctoral degrees in American History. Living in Berkeley in the 1960s combined with his upbringing instilled in him a strong skepticism of the government’s “Red Scare” tactics and an interest in further exploring the causes and workings of the Cold War. It is this subject that has been the focal point of his research, writing, and teaching throughout his career.

In 1970, Dr. Adler joined the faculty of SSU, where he taught in the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies and served as the school’s Provost. Presently, he is the Dean of Extended Education and involved in creating programs which open the resources of the university to the larger North Bay community.

Settling in Cotati where he and his wife, Judith, have raised three daughters, Dr. Adler describes living and teaching abroad as being highlights in his career and life. As a Fulbright Scholar, he and his family lived in Southeast Asia for a year where he taught American history and foreign policy at the National University of Singapore. The family also had the opportunity to spend a half-year in England where he taught in the American Institute for Foreign Study’s London Semester program.

Dr. Adler’s primary focus in Listening for a Change is in helping promote and place the program’s Essence of Acceptance, curriculum, dealing with human rights and genocide studies, in California’s public schools. He is also working with Phyllis Rosenfield and SSU faculty to develop summer training workshops for teachers on human rights, genocide and holocaust studies issues. “These issues are critically important for our students to understand,” he asserts, “not for their historical value alone, but because of their continuing role in our world today. The Essence of Acceptance is precisely what we are all seeking. Learning to listen and hear others is at the core of that work.”
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Michel Schlumberger Wine Estate Annual Event

Annual Event a Great Success!

On August 29th a lovely late summer afternoon, Listening for a Change held its fourth annual fundraiser at the Michel-Schlumberger Wine Estate. Thanks to our generous sponsors, auction item donors, hard-working volunteers, and guests, the event was a great success.

While enjoying the immense beauty of the Estate’s vineyards and courtyard, guests sampled delectable hors d’oeuvres, wine, and live music. And with auction items ranging from fine wine to a home theater system to getaways in Montreal and Sea Ranch, guests had a wide variety of bidding options from which to choose. Ernie Carpenter kindly volunteered to direct our energetic live auction again this year.

In addition to the auction, guests had an opportunity to view The Sonoma County Survivor Project exhibit and share their thoughts about the work of Listening for a Change. Guests also got a preview of the new Community Listening Project posters that are now displayed in public areas throughout Sonoma County.

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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.