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.

Advisory Committee: Benjamin Benson, Edmund Buckley, Bruce Dzieza, Rabbi George Gittleman, Patrick Gratton, Jennifer Hamstod, Cynthia Hayashi, Geza Kadar, Vera Korkus, Greg Sarris, Kate Sater

LISTENING FOR A CHANGE

Spring/Summer 2005
Vol 5 Issue #2

Executive Director, Phyllis Rosenfeld
1300 North Dutton Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95401
www.listeningforachange.org - info@listeningforachange.org - tel: (707) 578-5420 - fax: (707) 526-2918

LISTENING FOR A CHANGE

Save the Date!
Join us for a spicy day in September
Saturday, September 10th from 6:00-9:00 at the new

We've Moved
Listening for a Change has a new office! After eight years in the home of Executive Director Phyllis Rosenfeld, 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 Rosenfeld, 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, the organization moved to 300 South B Street, Santa Rosa, and started a bigger office and more space.

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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.

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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 ... 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 ... 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 576-5420.

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!

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

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:

We welcome 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.

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

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
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)

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April 1, 2005 was moving day, and we had lots of support. Many thanks to all who helped! If you cocoa, packing, contact Superior Court Commissioner Cynthia Denenhof—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 Onefre, Gav Johnson, Juan Meza, and Nate Jereb are

Website Update

This year we have begun a major revamping of our website. 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 the 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 approaching.

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 hadn’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 Denenhof.

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!

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 point he or she will make or trying to figure out how to turn the discussion around (ward) 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 give 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.

So 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.

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As a teen, Jim was always in the top 10% of his class. Two of his teachers, Lauren Wilbur, an English teacher, and electronics teacher Hal Rosa both provided challenges and structure for Jim. In Mr. Wilbur’s class he was encouraged to think critically and explain himself. Mr. Rosa 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 1980s 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 a while, but dropped out and began getting involved in the 1992 Clinton election. After that he hooked up with Lynn Woosley, getting right as a security guard as well as a video store. In 1993, Jim secured his first paid campaign job with Mike Thompson’s special election campaign.

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.

Jim attended Monte Rio Elementary School. He loved 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 studentsthat they had chosen to be there, so he wanted them to take what he offered seriously—Jim did.

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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 harvest season, Sebastian Millan stayed on working. Yolanda’s mother, Sofia Cortes, 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.

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 wooden 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 facility he saw around him, he had to do something.

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“Impact of a Change” is a new-fund campaign of Listening for a Change that will draw local school districts, technology companies, and other community leaders to Sonoma County to help bring wireless Internet to Sonoma County’s schools and libraries.

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