Neighborhood Listening Project in the Schools

In early February sixty students at Cloverdale High School began interviewing and video recording their community neighbors with Listening for a Change. Sixteen interviews were conducted by Wendy Conner’s Academic Language Arts and Language Learners classes. Interviewees ranged from a twenty-eight year old Mexican-American man who had attended Cloverdale schools to a forty-two year old woman battling cancer to some of the eighty-year-old members of Cloverdale’s pioneer families with historical community memory. Each interviewee brought their own unique story to the students to hear and reflect upon.
Now, it is time for the Cloverdale interviews to be shared with their community-at-large. If funds can be raised in the community, a touch-screen computer kiosk will be purchased and edited versions of each story will be loaded so that Cloverdale residents can come to know their neighbors. Each video will have translated subtitles in English or Spanish, the two primary languages of the town residents. Over time, the touch-screen computer kiosk will be moved to differing venues. For example, it may begin at the Cloverdale City Hall, remain for a month, and then be set up at a business or health clinic. After a month at a second location, it may be placed at the local Fair Grounds, etc. At each location, additional people will have opportunities to hear and meet their neighbors.

Something quite similar began at Healdsburg Junior High this spring with Patricia Sabo and Lillian Fonseca’s AVID classes (for students whose parents who have not attended college, but who hope to attend themselves). These mature eighth graders learned the techniques of taking oral histories and began interviewing local Healdsburg residents. If there is enough interest and support in Healdsburg, this program will continue next year at both the junior high and high schools.

In both Cloverdale and Healdsburg there is a separation between the Mexican-American and European-American communities. These interview/community sharing programs are an effort to create bridges of understanding. Who better but our young people to lead us across turbulent waters of misunderstanding?

This project involves a large amount of video editing. Listening for a Change is working with the Community Media Center where some of our friends and volunteers have been trained to film and edit. In order to complete this project, we can use more expertise and time! Call our office if you would know how to edit with Final Cut Pro or would like to learn.
Phyllis' Column

In considering ways that Sonoma County community members can create opportunities to make authentic connections with one another in order to build a healthier community, I learned the Spanish word cariño. Angela Valenzuela, in her book Subtractive Schooling explains the term in this way:

Cariño is often translated as “caring,” “affection,” or “love,” but much is lost in this translation. Cariño is more a concept than a word. It is the foundation of meaningful relationships—often the only thing left to give in families raising children on substandard wages.

When considered for our educational system, she explains cariño as “authentic caring,” a term quite different from what she calls “aesthetic caring.” For Valenzuela, aesthetic caring lies in “an attention to things and ideas.” Her frustration with today’s secondary schools is the low priority of authentic caring and the high priority of aesthetic caring.

The scales are unbalanced. With the intense focus on raising test scores, especially in low performing schools, the aesthetic caring has become an ever more dominant force. Is this the best way to educate our children to become the needed civically engaged, reflective critical thinkers of the future?

Listening for a Change's curriculum Essence of Acceptance and its more recent curriculum version the Neighborhood Listening Project promote cariño, authentic caring, through the teaching of active listening, ethnographic oral history taking, life/social skills for interviewing one’s neighbors, and how to share what one has learned with the larger community. Through this process, innovative opportunities for building trust and cariño are created with community members from widely differing backgrounds, ethnicity, and culture. Students learn local history, stories of overcoming adversity, advice on the power and importance of education and much more.

Support and join with Listening for a Change as we create cariño in our community.

Erica Bosque Board Vice Chair

Starting from the time Erica was in fourth grade her father insisted that she, and later her two younger sisters, do some kind of volunteer work during the summer. “It was like my friends would go: Your Dad makes you do volunteer work? I’d go, like, yeah, we all do it every summer!”

It was Erica’s volunteer work, first at the Santa Rosa Recreation Department’s summer day camps, later working with foster children, and then with elderly dementia and Alzheimer’s patients that gave her a sense of giving to and receiving from the community through making connections with others. By the time Erica was a junior in high school it was clear that she wanted to find a profession where she could help others, work with children, and have flexibility to do other kinds of work as she matured. “Social work, studying sociology, getting your Masters, allows you to do that. It gives you a diverse toolbox.” Erica attended Santa Rosa Junior College, completed a degree in Sociology at Sonoma State University, and earned a MA in Social Work and a Credential in School Counseling at San Francisco State University.

Now, just 28 years old, she’s the Social Worker and Guidance Counselor at Roseland University Prep. After high school, Erica was hired by the Santa Rosa Park and Recreation Department to run an afterschool program at Doyle Elementary School for low income students. Somehow, she worked full-time and attended college as well! With her competent ways and upbeat personality she was soon coordinator and in charge of five after-school programs and three neighborhood programs. Erica was responsible for the free summer programs at Apple Valley, Valley Oak, and Burbank Housing. During graduate school she worked as an intern at Face-to Face, the Sonoma County AIDS Network, as a health outreach worker. During her second internship Erica worked at Roseland University Prep and the rest is history. Somehow she still stayed tied to Santa Rosa Park and Recreation and is currently the Teen Council co-advisor.

Recently elected Vice-President of Listening for a Change, Erica is currently working on the school’s Teen Council Program which is a collaboration with Listening for a Change called the Neighborhood Listening Project. sonsen.
A Very Special Thank You to the Law Firm of Perry, Johnson, Anderson, Miller, & Moskowitz for Hosting the First Annual Jessica Flores Award!

This award has been dedicated to the memory of our dear friend and board member Jessica Flores. The award is given to a civically engaged person under the age of 40. Jessica was a gifted 37-year-old attorney who worked to create a more just and equitable community for all people.

The Listening for a Change Board selected Davin Cardenas for the 2011 Jessica Flores Award. Active in Sonoma State University student politics, Davin has continued his involvement through the Graton Day Labor Center and as co-founder of the Committee for Immigrant Rights so Sonoma County. Currently he is working with the North Bay Organizing Project which seeks to unite institutions and organizations with shared concerns to develop leadership and work on a grassroots level in order to affect public policy.
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Erica Bosque with Windsor Interns, Kylee Calvert, Ashley Rios, & Samantha Cullum

Johanna & Peter Ottenweiler
for a Change and the Chair of the upcoming event at the Michel-Schlumberger Winery on August 27th, Erica works well with the Listening for a Change board team. Initially she, “Loved the name Listening for a Change! In my profession as a social worker, that’s really what you’re doing—You’re listening to hear how change is going to happen, what changes are already happening and why is that important?” Introduced by former board member Ellen Boneparth, Ellen presented the work of Listening for a Change in such a way that Erica was hooked. Ellen explained that Listening for a Change shares stories to create community change—big or small. Oral discourse is what makes us human and with listening and conversation change can happen.

“I was like—That’s fantastic! It was one of those things where I got lucky enough for it to find me and meet the board members and learn about the Mission. It’s great to be surrounded by people who share some of your values, morals and hopes for the future. I also like being around people who are working in different medium. It’s not just schools, or any one thing—That’s what intrigued me about Listening for a Change, I like its community buffet style!”

Erica appreciates that Santa Rosa is a diverse community but expressed concern that many Santa Rosans don’t leave their comfort zones and explore the diverse culture that is available. She thinks there is class and racial segregation. “I would hope that the quadrant line of Santa Rosa east vs. west would just become more unified and less detached from one another. I think some people are surprised—Wow! There really is that much diversity in Santa Rosa? People stay in their bubble and don’t seek out community diversity and enjoy it and explore it and get to know the other member of their community. I’d like to see more of the communities talking with each other.”

For Erica, it is the teenagers and the young people who offer the promising hope for a more integrated community. She feels that youth are open to meeting and greeting each other, but with the existing separation of the high schools there are not enough opportunities for mingling. Erica observes many young people who grew up in Santa Rosa staying here. She would like to see more opportunities for people to cross community boundaries. She would encourage ‘Roseland residents to go to a Rincon Valley Park, Rincon Valley residents to enjoy the fabulous Latin American food in Roseland, and Bennett Valley folks enjoy the farms of north west Santa Rosa.” She would like a more united, integrated community.

Erica and her family are known for their athletic talents as well as their social compassion. Erica is a runner, bicyclist and overall fast moving young woman! She has been married to Ryan Terschuren for two years. They met in high school and now work at the same secondary school—Erica as a social worker/counselor and Ryan as a Physical Education teacher at Roseland University Prep.

Erica said, “Most of the time I’ve been lucky enough to have it pretty good. When you work in social services, you get reminded of that every day. When a challenge comes up I think it’s important to remember that you have something. There’s always something or someone to tap into. It’s important to find someone to help you float.”
Thank you to our Major Funders:  
Sheri Catlett  
Jean F. Schulz  
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Listening for a Change has learned who its very most loyal supporters are...  
How many people are willing to be at the Herbert Slater Junior High at 7:30 A.M. (or earlier!) on a Saturday morning, wear giant ears, and carry giant Q-Tips??

Many thanks to our Sponsors John Weinstein & Heidi Stewart & to all of our friends and supporters who make this a fun fund raiser!
PROGRAMS

*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 cross boundaries and build 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. The exhibit can also be viewed at www.listening-forachange.org.

MISSION

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

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Diversity & Engagement is a program for businesses, nonprofits and government agencies which teaches attentive listening skills and cultural awareness to help employees interact more effectively.