

VISUALIZE

CREATING A HATE-FREE COMMUNITY

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CALIFORNIA CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION'S HATE CRIME HEARINGS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

By **Ashraf Zahedi**, *Chair, Network for a Hate-Free Community*

In keeping with its objective of creating a hate free community, the Santa Clara County Network for a Hate Free Community sponsored and hosted two sessions of "Hate Crime Hearings" on September 13, 2000, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. Public agencies and members of the community were invited to attend these hearings and provide their testimony on hate crime. The California Civil Rights Commission initiated these hearings. Formed by California Attorney General, Bill Lockyer, the Commission is to assess how hate crime laws are working and determine what needs to be done to ensure their effectiveness. Forty six leaders of various communities were appointed as commissioners and were charged to hold community hearings on "hate crimes" throughout the state of California. Drawing on public input, the hearings were to set the base for the commissioners to recommend ways to improve identifying, reporting, investigating, and responding to hate crimes and hate incidents in the community. The afternoon session was devoted to community based organizations, service providers, law enforcement agencies, schools, and faith organizations. The evening session was devoted to individuals and members of the community. Fred Persily, as a representative of the Attorney General and Executive Director of California Association of Human Relations Organizations served as facilitator for both sessions.

The sessions were enriched by informative and often passionate testimony. This public testimony highlighted social and political factors that impede reporting, investigating, and responding to hate crime and hate incidents. Testimony also provided the sessions with suggestions and ideas on how to make improvements in terms of identifying hate crimes, assisting victims, and elevating public awareness about hatred and hate motivated actions. The information and ideas gleaned from these hearings will be compiled and the final report, with recommendations, will be presented to the California Attorney General, Bill Lockyer. The report can provide opportunities to get appropriate support to the victims of hate crime or incidents, intervene to prevent repetition and escalation of hate crime, and identify public policies and practices that impact inter-group relations.

ANNOUNCING ESTABLISHMENT OF RAPID RESPONSE COMMITTEE

By **Maha ElGenaidi and Norma Mencacci**

The Network for Creating a Hate-Free Community announces the establishment of the Rapid Response Team. The objectives of the Rapid Response team are to:

- ◆ To respond quickly to any and all/hate/bias incidents and to develop a follow-up plan.
- ◆ To respond to any catastrophic event such as a church burning, mass killings, single killing or other crime based on hate and which has a great effect on the community.
- ◆ To mobilize as quickly as possible to assist and support victims of hate crimes/incidents.

No action will be taken without informing the victim and receiving their approval. The Rapid Response Team will also develop a list of needed services for some hate crime incidents. If you are a victim or know of a person(s) needing help please contact the Rapid Response Committee at 408-299-2206.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

THE COMMITTEE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HOLDS FIRST PUBLIC HEARING IN GILROY

By Andrea Villaseñor-Perry, Violence Prevention Coordinator

The Committee to Prevent Violence Against People with Disabilities joined forces with The Santa Clara County Advisory Commission for People with Disabilities and sponsored a successful public hearing on Tuesday evening, October 24, 2000 at the Gilroy Senior Center in Gilroy. The purpose of the Hearing was to hear from people with disabilities, service providers, and other impacted community members about their experiences and concerns regarding all types of violence and abuse against people with disabilities. In addition, the Public Hearing was designed to solicit potential solutions to the problem and to garner support from the larger community.

This year California became the first state in the nation with a program aimed at dealing with violence and crimes against people with disabilities. The facts about violence against people with disabilities are alarming. People with disabilities comprise approximately 25% of California's population. Crime and disability experts cite several studies that indicate that children & adults with disabilities are four to ten times more likely to be victims of violence and major crimes than the general public. The majority of these crimes are never reported, and services to help victims until recently were non-existent.

The Committee to Prevent Violence Against People with Disabilities (CPVAPD) is a Work Group helping to implement the Santa Clara County Violence Prevention Action Plan, an initiative of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors supported the development of a county-wide Violence Prevention Action Plan (VPAP) which calls for a comprehensive, multifaceted approach that engages the community in effective collaborative action to reduce and prevent violence.

The Committee to Prevent Violence Against People with Disabilities (CPVAPD) has been meeting monthly for over a year. The Committee is co-chaired by Cynthia Waddell, Esq. Chair of the county's Advisory Commission and Bob Porter, LCSW, from the Mental Health Department.. The CPVAPD is working on the following objectives:

- ◆ Raising awareness about the problem with policymakers, law enforcement, community agencies, and residents.
- ◆ Gathering data and information through a series of three public hearings that are being held in the South, North and Central areas of the County to solicit input and expertise from the community.
- ◆ Identifying "Best Practices" policies and programs to address the problem and using this information to help establish prevention and training programs designed to prevent and reduce violence against people with disabilities.

For information about the CPVAPD, and other Violence Prevention Action Plan activities, please call Andrea Villaseñor-Perry, MSW, Violence Prevention

HATE CRIME LEGAL UPDATE

By Aaron Persky,
Assistant District Attorney

Two new laws relating to hate crimes and hate incidents will become effective on January 1, 2001. The first law will require schools and school districts to collect statistics on hate-motivated incidents and hate crimes on the standard school crime-reporting form. Examples of hate-motivated incidents include bigoted insults, distributing hate group literature and circulating demeaning jokes or leaflets. Examples of hate crimes include physical assault, vandalism, and threatening telephone calls. The State Department of Education will aggregate the statistics and make the information available to public agencies and private organizations. The second law authorizes a competitive grant program to fund school programs designed to foster ethnic sensitivity, overcome racism and prejudice, and counter hatred and intolerance.

SERVICE PROVIDER HIGHLIGHTS

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE

By Lil Silberstein, *Director*

The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) formerly The National Conference of Christians and Jews is a committed partner of the Network for a Hate Free Community. Generated by the "goodwill movement" between Christians and Jews in response to the campaigns of hatred and proselytization that gripped the nation in the days following World War I, NCCJ mobilized citizens against the forces of violence and exclusion. Their work contributed significantly to an expanded definition of who is an American.

Seventy-three years later, the NCCJ is still in the struggle, joined by teachers, students, the justice system, religious leaders, business and community leaders in the work of building a society where mutual respect and celebration of diversity are the norm. Drawn from every race, ethnic group, and religious tradition, and united by a common determination to combat bias, bigotry, racism and injustice in American society, governing boards, volunteers and staff currently work in 63 regions across the country.

In Silicon Valley, NCCJ provides a broad series of opportunities for learning, ranging from elementary school through university, the workplace, religious institutions and social organizations. Our programs work to fight prejudice and discrimination and promote diversity. Some of our workshops include: "Green Circle," "Different and the Same," "Flash Judgements," "Attitudes Towards Differences," "Experiencing Diversity," "Camp Anytown, USA" and "Holocaust Studies and Critical Thinking: Lessons to be Learned."

NCCJ also operates the Victim Witness Assistance Center providing aid, counseling, and restitution to crime victims and court witnesses, and helping to mend lives and improve relations between citizens and the justice system. In addition, NCCJ offers the Interfaith program which involves a continuing conversation among clergy from many faiths examining theological, social and ethical issues, and building understanding and trusting relationships among faith leaders across religious lines through extended retreats, study groups and conferences.

If you wish to employ any of these programs for your school, workplace or organization, or for more information

The Network's mission is to *reach out, report, respond, repair and rebuild* in an effort to prevent and take action against hate in our community.

For more information, please contact the Office of Human Relations at (408) 299-2206.

THE BAHÁ'Í VISION OF RACE UNITY

In 1991 the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States released a statement called "The Vision of Race Unity: America's Most Challenging Issue." Addressed to the people of the United States, the statement outlines the history of racism and steps to deal with the issue.

The US Bahá'í Community have also produced a one half hour video entitled, "The Power of Race Unity," which shows the effect of positive unity among the races. It is being shown nationwide on cable channels. To view the video and read the statement online, go to:
www.us.bahai.org/raceunity/
<http://www.us.bahai.org/raceunity/> or call the San Jose Bahá'í Center @ (408) 277-0510 for your copy.



Join us for the Annual Human Relations Banquet on February 22, 2001. Tickets are on sale now! For more information and tickets, call Mary Jane Solis at (408) 792-2310.

Visit the new Human Relations Commission's web site at:
www.santaclaracounty.org/hrc

The site includes information about the Santa Clara County Network for a Hate Free Community.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGHOUT THE
HOLIDAY SEASON AND NEW YEAR!

EVENTS

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD BREAKFAST**
January 15, 2000, 7A.M.
Wyndham Hotel San José

HUMAN RELATIONS BANQUET
February 22, 2001, 6 P.M.
Wyndam Hotel San José
For more information, call (408) 792-2310.

CAHRO ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE
March 1-3, 2001
Cathedral Hill, San Francisco.
Call (415) 775-2341 or www.cahro.org.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE COLUMN

If you have an opinion to discuss or an event to promote regarding creating a hate-free community or if you are interested in joining our network please contact us at:

SCC NETWORK FOR A HATE-FREE COMMUNITY
The Office of Human Relations
70 West Hedding, WW. LL.
San José, CA 95110

Santa Clara County Network for a Hate-Free Community
Office of Human Relations/F.H.R.C.
70 West Hedding, Lower Level, West Wing
San Jose, CA 95110

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