

Movement confronts hate with dialogue

By Kristina Davis

SAN DIEGO — On a recent Thursday night, a dozen strangers gathered at the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center arranged their folding chairs in a circle, a little apprehensive about how personal things were about to get.

They passed “talking pieces” from person to person, sharing times when they felt supported by certain identities — and times they felt harmed.

“We are promoting healing from hate in the sharing of our stories,” guided the circle’s co-facilitator, dialogue specialist Ashley McGuire.

The same conversations were happening in neighboring rooms throughout the community center that evening. By the time the circle broke, it was hugs and handshakes all around.

People parted ways in the afterglow of a collective experience, and with the feeling that they’d done something, even if it was small. Could these gatherings — rooted in ancient, tribal practices — be the answer to combating intolerance in San Diego and beyond?

The National Conflict Resolution Center and a host of community partners hope so. The effort is part of a resurging movement in San Diego and across the country to confront racism and bigotry through frank yet respectful dialogues — a movement that has taken on added urgency in the face of escalating, ideological-fueled violence.

But this is no quick fix. The changing of hearts is not as concrete as legislation or added security measures. And it’s not necessarily meant to reach people on the fringes — at least not at first. Rather, it’s slow, intentional community building, one person at a time.

“It can change San Diego,” said Mikel Toure, who leads circles as a restorative practitioner at the National Conflict Resolution Center.



NANCEE E. LEWIS

DAVID CAMPT speaks to a predominantly white audience about how to become a “white ally” in combating racism this month at the Unity Center in San Diego.

“We don’t need everybody on board. But the world is impacted by only a small percentage of the world that comes together. Then it’s a ripple effect to the masses.”

The raw display of hate during the 2017 Unite the Right marches in Charlottesville, Va., got the Rev. Wendy Craig-Purcell of the Unity Center thinking about how her own faith-diverse congregation in San Diego could be more intentional about addressing racism.

As a white person, she asked her black parishioners for advice. Their instruction: Don’t just bring black people and white people together to talk about race. White people need to sit in a circle by themselves and become more educated about racism and privilege.

She developed a curriculum around race issues for a white audience, with special focus on “The White Ally Toolkit,” a program developed by David Campt.

A national expert in bringing people together to talk about difficult subjects, Campt, who is black, sat on the advisory board for President Clinton’s Initiative on Race and has guided conver-

sations for Congress, the military and Fortune 500 companies.

“It’s meant to reach the ordinary white person who truly thinks, ‘I’m a loving person. I don’t see color. I don’t see what the issue is,’ ” Craig-Purcell said of the white ally program. “That, in itself, is the issue.”

The tool kit has been gaining more traction lately, Campt said, partly because white people are experiencing the pain of the nation’s divisiveness in their own circles.

“They support it because it’s helping them feel like this is something they can do about the race problem,” Campt said, “but it’s also a case of people wanting to be better agents of peacefulness in their own families.”

Congregant Kevin Byrnes, a retired human resources executive, started his white ally journey in January.

“For me, it’s been hugely transformative, and also humbling and embarrassing,” he said. “I realized how little I really knew.”

The training is part history lesson, part inner reflection and part conversa-

tion skill-building. When it comes time to put the tools into practice — actually broach the subject of racism with a fellow white person — how the issue is framed can be make or break.

Campt suggests moving away from the word “hate” and focusing instead on our unconscious biases.

“There’s a whole bunch of people who don’t hate people of color. They just have a little less empathy for them,” Campt said. “If we only think about it as hate, the truth is what that does is feeds a certain level of denial.”

And the term “racist” is a surefire way to put someone on the defensive. “People don’t think of themselves as racist,” he said.

Rather, Campt advises approaching the dialogue around how our brains can be affected by influences of which we are not aware. He instructs white allies to be prepared to share a personal story of unconscious bias.

“You’re not going to persuade people very much on the basis of facts,” Campt advised. “The way to move people is to talk about personal experience.”

Jan Atkinson, a life and

spiritual coach who attends the Unity Center, just started her white ally training alongside her husband, and she’s already dipped her toe into such a conversation.

A few weeks ago while out with some longtime married friends, who are also white, she mentioned her participation in the white ally program and shared what she was learning.

“I noticed that the wife was very uncomfortable,” Atkinson said.

The friend dismissed the subject by suggesting they focus on the progress that minorities have made, pointing to the nation’s election of a black president.

The friend later became defensive, stating, “I’m so tired of being called a racist”; Atkinson said no one in the conversation had implied or suggested that she was.

So Atkinson was excited when Campt visited the Unity Center this month to deliver a presentation one night and teach a daylong skill-building workshop a few days later. Byrnes also attended the workshop.

While this small group of San Diegans was learning how to steer uncomfortable conversations on race that Saturday, a gunman killed 22 people at a Walmart in El Paso in an apparent anti-Latino attack.

“It reinforces why this work is so important,” Byrnes said. “It just has to be.”

The dialogue circles being offered by the National Conflict Resolution Center set out to tackle many of the same biases, but in a more controlled space among a diverse cross-section of people.

The first restorative circle held July 25 at the Jewish center in La Jolla was more of a warmup, a facilitated conversation that flitted around the edges of identity.

“I felt it was meaningful,” said first-timer Jay Williams, a healthcare industry professional. “At the same time, I felt like we were a bunch of babies in the room, taking the very, very first steps toward what I hope will be

some progress.”

The National Conflict Resolution Center’s four-part dialogue series, called “A Path Forward,” is sponsored in part by the San Diego Union-Tribune and community and interfaith groups, and funded by the county’s Live Well San Diego campaign.

The county contract allocates \$30,000 for eight community restorative health circles to address “community concerns” and foster “collaborative dialogue that will lead to solutions” but does not specify the topic area to be discussed.

The idea for this series originated months ago as a way to heal from the nation’s deepening polarization. The deadly anti-Semitic attack on the Chabad of Poway on April 27 brought the effort into sharp relief.

“I thought about how infrequently people from different walks of life sit down to share with one another and listen to one another,” said Pastor Brian Daly from Pacific Beach Christian Church, who participated in the first circle. “It was kind of refreshingly different. It wasn’t an agenda someone was trying to cram down our throats. It was literally opening up space for people to get to know each other.”

But the challenge remains: How do you get people to actually show up? That’s where the ripple effect comes in, organizers say.

“The key is creating a safe, empowering, supportive space and meeting that person where they’re at,” said Toure, the circle facilitator. “It helps them make the choice to jump without you pushing them. It may take a minute, it may take 10 years, depending on how thick their walls are.”

The next dialogue circle will be held Sept. 4 at Bayview Baptist Church in San Diego. The event is free, but registration is required at NCROnline.com/communitycircles.

Davis writes for the San Diego Union-Tribune.

L.A. council candidates disagree on the city’s Green New Deal

[**Voters**, from B1] for Innovation at UCLA.

In Washington, D.C., the national version of the Green New Deal — aimed at addressing both climate change and economic inequality — has come under fire from the right and exposed divisions on the left. In L.A., Garcetti’s version of the Green New Deal offers a long list of targets and initiatives, including a push to reduce driving and get Angelenos out of gas-powered

cars.

The mayor’s plan calls for 25% of the city’s drivers to be using electric or other zero-emission vehicles by 2025, and to reach 80% by 2035. Garcetti, who has not endorsed either candidate, also called for the phasing out of three natural gas plants run by the Department of Water and Power, the city utility, by 2029.

Lee said L.A.’s Green New Deal is littered with ideas for cutting fossil fuel consumption that are “out of touch with reality” and will push people out of work. Lundquist’s push to rapidly reduce emissions, he argued, would require “a massive investment of taxpayer dollars” that would ultimately cost Angelenos.

Appearing at a candidate forum last month, Lee said he is not a “climate denier” and understands that consumers, businesses and others will need to change their ways.

“But not at the cost of our economy,” he said. “Not at the cost of good-paying jobs.”

The warnings about the Green New Deal have resonated with Dianne Ohanesian, a Northridge resident who backs Lee. Ohanesian, a real estate agent, fears a rapid switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy will cause DWP rates to go up, creating a huge burden for Valley ratepayers, especially seniors on fixed incomes.

“There are lots of times in the summer where it hits like 109, 110 degrees,” she said. “So we have to have our air conditioning running. We can’t survive without it.”

Those fears have been amplified by the powerful union that represents most DWP employees, which opposes Garcetti’s plan for the three gas plants. Its political arm, Working Californians, has spent more than \$280,000 to support Lee, sending voters mailers that claim that Lundquist will force residents to buy electric cars and tack thousands of dollars onto their utility bills.

One mailer, which features activists raising their fists and carrying a Democratic Socialists of America banner, warns that



DANIA MAXWELL Los Angeles Times

L.A. CITY Council candidate Loraine Lundquist, a Democrat, introduces herself during a town hall meeting on July 20. Her opponent in Tuesday’s special election for the 12th District seat is Republican John Lee, left.

Lundquist has an “extremist political agenda.”

Lundquist has sought to debunk such claims, calling them “fear mongering and misinformation being spread by the oil industry” and the DWP union. She said the claim that she would force residents to buy electric cars is false and argued that transitioning to clean energy will create many more jobs than it eliminates.

Lundquist has also sought to turn the Working Californians spending against Lee, calling him “the handpicked candidate of the DWP union.”

“The only reason that they must be spending all this money is because they want to be paid better and raise your rates,” she said at a recent forum.

Lundquist has gotten enthusiastic support from Food and Water Action Fund Cal PAC, a political action committee focused on the environment and consumer protection. The

group has recruited volunteers from left-leaning groups such as Sunrise Movement, the Democratic Socialists of America and Ground Game L.A., some of whom have been knocking on voters’ doors while wearing T-shirts that promote the Green New Deal.

Walker Foley, a senior organizer with Food and Water Action, said the DWP union’s political committee has been engaging in “red baiting,” relying on “the boogeyman of socialism and communism” to scare voters.

“Loraine has set out a policy vision to help all Angelenos,” Foley said. “Working Californians wants to call that socialism, which is kind of ironic, because a public utility is kind of a socialist concept.”

Joshua Smith, spokesman for Democratic Socialists of America, Los Angeles, said the DWP union is “over-reaching” and believes that voters will not see his group’s endorsement of Lundquist

as a bad thing.

Despite the allegations of extremism, Lundquist has taken positions that put her at odds with the Democratic Socialists of America and other progressive groups. She said she would have voted with other council members to reinstate a city law limiting where homeless people can sleep in cars — but would have pushed to provide more lots where people can park and sleep.

Unlike the DSA-LA, Lundquist also supports having police officers present at cleanups of homeless encampments and supports L.A.’s decision to host the Summer Olympics in 2028.

Lundquist has pummeled Lee over his backing from the fossil fuel industry, which has poured tens of thousands of dollars into the DWP union committee.

Hedge fund manager Aaron Sosnick has hammered on that message, heavily funding an outside committee that has spent more than \$200,000 in the

race and produced mailers slamming Lee as an ally of “dirty oil interests.” Lee has fired back by portraying Sosnick as a wealthy outsider with investments in fossil fuel companies such as Chevron and Valero.

Lundquist “tells voters she is an environmentalist, but at the same time is happy to benefit from coal and oil money,” Lee said in a statement Friday. “That is the definition of hypocrisy.”

Lundquist campaign consultant Jesse Switzer called that argument “either disingenuous or dishonest,” saying that Lee knows that Lundquist cannot legally control spending by an independent committee. Under campaign finance laws, candidates are barred from coordinating with independent committees that support them, such as the ones funded by Sosnick and the DWP union.

Sosnick, who divides his time between New York and Los Feliz, did not respond to requests for comment.

Lottery results

For Saturday, Aug. 10, 2019

SuperLotto Plus

Mega number is **Bold**

11-24-39-40-45—**Mega 27**

Jackpot: \$69 million

Winners per category:

	No. of winners	Amount of prize(s)
5 + Mega	0	—
5	0	—
4 + Mega	16	\$1,537
4	365	\$112
3 + Mega	598	\$61
3	16,118	\$11
2 + Mega	8,536	\$11
1 + Mega	43,688	\$2
Mega only	66,942	\$1

Powerball

Powerball number is **bold**

35-41-44-58-59—**Powerball 3**

Jackpot: \$128 million

California winners per category:

	No. of winners	Amount of prize(s)
5 + P-ball	0	—
5	0	—
4 + P-ball	1	\$34,012
4	32	\$531
3 + P-ball	106	\$166
3	2,288	\$8
2 + P-ball	2,006	\$9
1 + P-ball	15,994	\$5
P-ball only	42,852	\$3

Winning jackpot ticket(s) sold in other states: None

For Sunday, Aug. 11, 2019

Fantasy Five: 2-3-8-10-13

Daily Four: 5-3-0-8

Daily Three (midday): 8-5-0

Daily Three (evening): 7-2-1

Daily Derby:

(10) Solid Gold
(5) California Classic
(7) Eureka
Race time: 1:45:80

Results on the internet:

www.latimes.com/lottery

General information:

(800) 568-8379

(Results not available at this number)