

# HELPING WITH HEATED SITUATIONS

*Demand for safe intervention training grows as hate incidents increase*

**A**lthough racist, xenophobic and gender-motivated incidents are not new in Eugene, these acts of aggression have more than doubled over those reported during the same period in 2016, according to data from the city's Office of Equity and Human Rights.

Heated confrontations are challenging, and many unknown factors like anger and alcohol can exacerbate these public situations—making it very difficult to step in for fear of retaliation and safety.

To help address this issue, a group of community members met Aug. 24 at Temple Beth Israel to attend a three-hour bystander-upstander intervention training.

Led by Nadia Telsey, the group of 25 people discussed local and national hate and bias incidents that have been recorded and on the rise since the 2016 election. Showing Up For Racial Justice (SURJ), a social justice nonprofit, has compiled training materials to assist people who, finding themselves in a heated public situation, may want to help.

The three-hour workshops combine discussions, role-playing scenarios, videos and group sessions on how to safely intervene in the event of a targeted attack against any marginalized community member. The group listed a number of people who have been the subject of harassment, including the elderly, children, people of color, women, religious minorities—the list goes on.

The workshop began with Telsey going over the safety aspects of any situation, such as knowing where the exits are, being aware of the danger the harasser may present and keeping an eye out for other potential witnesses.

Ginnie Lo attended the workshop after hearing about several incidents of harassment, as well as the stabbing on the MAX train in Portland. "I just think it's important because there are so many incidents of harassment and hate lately and also because it brings us together as a community to come together and say we won't tolerate this and we will work to prevent those," she says.

Telsey told attendees who may try to intervene as a bystander to remember to breathe, keep soft eye contact and stand in the "balance position"—a stance with one foot slightly in front of the other that helps prevent someone from being easily pushed over.

The group also reenacted incidents that have occurred throughout the U.S. All participants, at different points, played the role of the harasser, target, intervener and bystander. A bystander is a person who may happen to witness a public conflict, and an intervener is someone who speaks up in the moment of conflict. In this workshop, people in either role can choose to step in safely and help the person targeted by a harasser.

Bruce Kreitzburg says he learned to focus on the target of the harassment during the workshop. Kreitzburg says before the training he thought his options were to not intervene or to confront the harasser. "And what I took away was actually you don't have to confront the harasser; you need to be aware of the harasser; you need to be cognizant of what's going on, but keep the focus on helping the target—which might be as simple as offering some kind words or offering to escort somebody away from the situation where they are being harassed or abused."

Pat Bryan, a member of SURJ, says she thought the workshop was great. "In addition to of course wanting to think about preparing myself should I ever see any kind of conflict that I felt that I could step in and make a difference, I think just in general I've been wanting to build my brave muscles."

Workshop instructor Telsey says it's always important to know your own triggers. "Know what your goals are if you're going to engage with them, what are you hoping to accomplish. I would focus on the person being harassed and keeping a safe distance."

Telsey adds that the workshop is becoming more popular and there are many people who are wait-listed and is in need of volunteer teachers. If you would like to help, contact SURJ at [surj-info@googlegroups.com](mailto:surj-info@googlegroups.com). ■

# SLANT

- **The air quality in Lane County has been horrendous** thanks to more than 300,000 acres of Oregon forests on fire. Houston, Texas, is facing 50 devastating inches of rain—the same amount of rainfall the city usually gets in a year—over just a matter of days. Weather and climate are not the same, but there is no question that climate governs the weather. Climate change is real, and all the predictions for bigger storms and hotter summers are coming true. Now let's keep talking about what we can do to stop it from getting worse.

- **The old Lane Community College building** at 1059 Willamette Street still sits vacant after Lane built its new downtown center some four years ago. The property is eligible for urban renewal funding, but bringing it up to code and making it functional as an art center or other use would be expensive and could take years. The 66,000 sq. ft. building as is, with minor repairs and maintenance, would serve nicely as a shelter for the increasing number of people who have nowhere to live. The building has an elevator and bathrooms on all four floors. The location is close to the downtown bus station and social services. Having a shelter on Willamette might even reduce some of the problems associated with panhandlers and loiterers downtown, and help consolidate policing.

We may never solve the economic, social and health-care inequities that create and perpetuate homelessness, but we can take advantage of opportunities to help. If you like the idea of converting the old LCC building into a shelter, urge our council members to make it a priority. Winter is coming.

- **We want to brag** about one of our interns. Kaitlyn Parvin, a University of Oregon journalism graduate and summer intern in EW's sales department, is heading for Belize to do social media and marketing for TIDE Tours, a nonprofit touring company. TIDE's profits go to environmental and coastal reef preservation and education. Speaking of students and interns, EW has been working with the UO journalism school's Catalyst Journalism Project to develop and publish stories. Catalyst "brings together investigative reporting and solutions journalism to spark action and response to Oregon's most perplexing issues," and a current focus in EW's pages is homelessness. To learn more visit [journalism.uoregon.edu/catalyst](http://journalism.uoregon.edu/catalyst).

- A public memorial for Cecil Andrus, a **famous Oregonian turned Idahoan**, was scheduled Aug. 31 in Boise. He died one day before his 86th birthday. Andrus was born in Hood River, eventually moved to Eugene, where he attended high school, graduating in 1948. After going to Oregon State University, he moved to Idaho, becoming what he called an "accidental politician." That included four terms as a Democratic governor of that Republican state, interrupted by several years as President Jimmy Carter's secretary of interior. Andrus said his proudest accomplishment was steering the preservation of more than 100 million acres in Alaska. It's impossible to imagine a conservationist like Cecil Andrus as either governor of Idaho or secretary of interior today.

- **What we're reading:** *Red Notice* by Bill Browder. The subtitle is "a true story of high finance, murder, and one man's fight for justice," and this should be a red flag to Donald Trump and his buddies that they are dancing with the devil in their game with Vladimir Putin in Russia. It's a fascinating read written by the grandson of Earl Browder, candidate for president of the U.S. on the Communist ticket in 1936.

## ACTIVIST ALERT

- **Green Lane Sustainable Business Network** is holding its monthly luncheon Wednesday, Sept. 6, 11:30 am to 1 pm at the First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive Street. The topic is the benefits of electric vehicles for your business. Vegetarian lunch is optional, \$12 per person for lunch, \$5 per person if not eating. More info at [greenlane-sbn.org](http://greenlane-sbn.org).

- **The Refugee Resettlement Coalition of Lane County** has been working on getting more low-cost help to refugees, asylum seekers and other immigrants in need of legal services. RRCLC is made up of local faith-based groups, service organizations and concerned community members. Catholic Community Services, which coordinates the coalition, has opened a new law services program in conjunction with Immigration Legal services in Portland. There is a shortage of immigration attorneys due to the change in federal administration. Innovation Law Lab is planning to send a lawyer to Eugene in September and do a training/workshop to train

lawyers (current practicing attorneys in other areas of law, retired or non-practicing attorneys) to do asylum cases pro-bono. You can contact the attorney arranging the training, Christine Zeller-Powell at [cezeller@hotmail.com](mailto:cezeller@hotmail.com). For more information about the Innovation Law Lab go to [innovationlawlab.org](http://innovationlawlab.org). For more info on the RRCLC go to [ccslc.org/refugee-resettlement-program](http://ccslc.org/refugee-resettlement-program).

- **BRING Recycling's** annual self-guided Home and Garden Tour, "The Art of Sustainable Living," is Sept. 10. BRING says, "This year's theme draws from 'wabi-sabi,' the Japanese aesthetics tradition that finds the beauty in imperfection and impermanence and profundity in earthliness." For tickets, or to get in free by volunteering, go to [bringrecycling.org](http://bringrecycling.org).

- **Basic Rights Oregon** will hold its statewide leadership summit in Eugene Saturday, Sept. 30, at the Unitarian Universalist Church. The all-day event will draw hundreds of LGBTQ advocates and activists from around the state for workshops and leadership trainings.