



Year One Report July 2019

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2018, through the generous support of the William and Mildred Levine Family Foundation's four-year, \$1 million transformational grant, the Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester established the Levine Center to End Hate. The center grew out of concern over increasing polarization and hateful rhetoric and violence in the U.S and locally. The shock of white nationalists chanting, "Jews will not replace us" in Charlottesville, Virginia two years ago, and the ensuing violence at the Unite the Right rally, sparked conversations which led to the creation of the center. Our own community has not been immune from this troubling trend, with white supremacist leaflets dropped anonymously in driveways in Brighton and Pittsford, Identity Europa flyers placed at 12 Corners and on campus by a University of Rochester student, and the desecration of the Waad Hakolel cemetery in Rochester, among other incidents.

Last October, just as we were preparing to announce the Levine Family Foundation gift to the Rochester community, we witnessed the worst attack on Jews in U.S. history when a gunman killed 11 worshippers at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Since then, there have been attacks on Black churches in the south, mosques in New Zealand, and most recently, the Poway Chabad in California. (See below for an op-ed by Federation President Rina Chessin and CEO Meredith Dragon entitled *Holocaust Remembrance Day arrives amid rising anti-Semitism in our nation.*)

Sadly, the creation of the Levine Center to End Hate could not have been more timely.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR WORK

Guided by principles and goals set forth in our proposal to the Foundation, we set to work establishing a steering committee to help guide our efforts. We recruited a group of individuals diverse in age, race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. These 25 local leaders in business, nonprofit, government, philanthropy, and law enforcement have met regularly from October 2018 to June 2019, helping to provide direction for programming that will kick off in the fall of 2019.



To establish the scope of the center, we began with a series of activities designed and led by expert facilitators to reach consensus on the meaning of hate and ways to end it. Through regular meetings as well as exercises to establish trust, steering committee members developed the relationships necessary to engage in this challenging work. With the input and guidance of the steering committee, we developed a mission statement:

The Levine Center to End Hate seeks to unite the Greater Rochester community in overcoming hate through education, dialogue, and positive action.

At the same time, Levine Center staff conducted extensive research into anti-hate programs around the country. We examined a wide range of projects, including person-to-person engagement, community engagement, and school- and college-based models. The steering committee analyzed the information and, out of our discussions, created three subcommittees to better streamline the work: youth engagement, community engagement, and rapid response. We established an overarching goal for our work:

To bring together youth and adults across Greater Rochester in programming that (1) explores differences, (2) develops skills for dialogue, and (3) activates responses to hate.

Through our research we confirmed that no other organization in the Greater Rochester community is tackling hate in the way we have designed. While there are local agencies working to address racism, homophobia, etc., we are the only program to address all forms of hatred and exclusion. Through partnerships with other groups we will maximize our impact by fighting hate together.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

From the start, we were clear that engaging youth must be a centerpiece of our work. The youth engagement subcommittee met monthly to assess areas of focus and explore programming that would best resonate with young adults. We decided that we would start by focusing on high school and college students.

On May 8, 2019, we kicked off our youth engagement programming by bringing together more than 110 students, along with their teachers and advisors, from Brighton, Greece, and Rochester high schools, as well as Nazareth College, to meet with the Rev. Dr. Bernice King, daughter of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King, CEO of The King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, was the keynote speaker at a luncheon hosted by local community development nonprofit PathStone Corporation. We arranged for the students, representing more than 10 urban and suburban schools, to meet with Dr. King in a special pre-event session where they were able to pose questions and be inspired by her message of nonviolence and inclusion. Following this, the students and the administrators and teachers accompanying them joined over 400 other guests to hear Dr. King at the main event.

Dr. King's message and the way that she engaged openly and honestly with the students clearly had an impact. Below are several student quotes gathered through online evaluations. In addition, there are photos and snapshots of social media posts from the day at the end of this report.

"Her [Dr. King's] discussions of inclusivity and not hating one another were very powerful. I did not feel attacked."

"It wasn't just talking about injustices that are occurring; it focused on change that we can make."

"It was inspiring and motivating to believe that in order to achieve change, we must work together."

Discussions in the Youth Engagement subcommittee centered around ways, both big and small, to bring about change and reach a wide audience of youth. As a result, beginning in the fall, the Levine Center will partner with RISE (Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality) to pilot a leadership development program in two high schools, Brighton and East High, and at Nazareth College. Steering committee member Roland Williams highly recommended this program, as he has been involved with RISE through his affiliation with the LA Rams. We chose to begin our youth engagement efforts with this focus because sports brings together diverse populations and creates opportunities to transcend differences through shared experiences and common goals. We agreed that the RISE program would provide a powerful starting point from which to build future programming aimed at other populations of students, e.g. those involved in the arts, science, and technology.

The RISE Leadership Program empowers athletic directors, coaches, and student-athletes to be leaders in addressing matters of racism, prejudice, diversity, and inclusivity within their teams, schools, and communities. RISE uses a train-the-trainer approach, delivering a full day of instruction and exercises to prepare coaches to deliver a 10-module curriculum that increases awareness, builds skills, and creates safe spaces for difficult conversations about diversity, identity, implicit bias, racial ideology, and more. Student-athletes learn a range of skills, including active listening, perspective taking, conflict resolution, and critical thinking. As part of the program, RISE conducts pre- and post-assessments with student-athletes and their coaches to evaluate participant satisfaction, knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

After extensive research and numerous fact-finding calls with RISE staff, we decided to start by piloting the program at East, Brighton, and Nazareth College. One of the reasons we chose to partner with RISE is the quality of the program. In addition to a data-driven and tested curriculum, the RISE program emphasizes evaluation and continuous improvement through pre- and post-participation surveys of student-athletes and coaches. The information gathered helps RISE identify best practices and establish trends that inform future programming and research.

In the high schools, RISE will train two coaches each from a boys' and a girls' team. On August 14, eight Brighton and East High School coaches will participate in a day-long training. The athletic

directors and superintendents of Brighton and East High are very enthusiastic about collaborating on the RISE program and want to work with the Levine Center to create opportunities for the teams from both schools to come together to form relationships that cross the boundaries of urban and suburban.

In addition to the coaches' training, RISE staff will lead an hour and a half-long information session for school administrators to learn more about the program. We have invited superintendents and athletic directors from throughout Monroe County to attend. Our goal is to grow the program in the winter and spring seasons.

RISE's engagement with colleges differs slightly from their work with high schools. At Nazareth College they will begin with a discovery phase to assess the climate at the institution through perceptions surveys and in-person workshops with student-athletes and coaches. Once the data are collected and analyzed, RISE will work with the athletic director and staff to identify topics and skills for training Nazareth's coaches.

Following the initial pilot phase, we plan to expand the reach and create opportunities for community-wide collaboration. We have begun conversations with the president and athletic director of Nazareth College about developing opportunities for student-athletes to serve as mentors at local high schools.

Assuming the success of the pilot projects with Brighton, East, and Nazareth, the Levine Center's role going forward will be to introduce the RISE program to other high schools throughout Monroe County and provide funding for training coaches. Additionally, we will work with the schools to explore opportunities to expand the impact of the RISE program through inter-scholastic events and gatherings. We will also assess the partnership with Nazareth College and ways this might be replicated at other institutions of higher education.

We look forward to working with RISE to develop well-informed, compassionate young leaders, on the field and off, who are committed to stamping out hate and standing up for acceptance, respect, and inclusion.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Levine Center will be hosting its first community-wide program on November 21, 2019 featuring two speakers, Arno Michaelis and Pardeep Kaleka, on the topic "Why Do We Hate?" Pardeep Kaleka is the son of the leader of a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin who was killed, along with five others, when a white supremacist opened fire in 2012. Arno Michaelis is a former skinhead who spent years of his life committing violent acts in the name of white power and helped start the gang that produced the Oak Creek shooter. Arno and Pardeep have come together to fight hate by founding an educational organization called Serve2Unite that, since 2013, has engaged thousands students from over 30 Wisconsin schools to address a host of social issues, including racism, sexism, homophobia, religious intolerance, Holocaust remembrance, and genocide prevention. In addition, they recently published a book called *The Gift of Our Wounds*.

In engaging these speakers and conceiving of this event, we have identified several areas of focus. Plans for the lead-up to the event include engaging the Greater Rochester community by posing the question, “Why do we hate?”, through social media channels. We are in the process of developing a pledge to end hate that we will promote community-wide, through business, government, philanthropy, and nonprofits. In addition, plans are underway to engage Writers & Books and Monroe County public libraries in partnering with us to create a community-wide discussion of *The Gift of Our Wounds*. These focus areas offer creative ways to be bold in our vision and the execution of our mission.

The November 21st event kicks off a series of community conversations to end hate. Dates, venues, and facilitators are pre-arranged, and as part of their presentation, Arno and Pardeep – the quintessential models of talking across difference – will encourage participation. One possibility for follow-up is to develop a train-the-trainer model, where people that participate can learn how to organize and facilitate their own conversations in their workplaces, houses of worship, social groups, etc. Among other methods, social media will allow us to track who is organizing conversations and encourage participation.

In our effort to engage youth, we have secured Arno and Pardeep as the keynote speakers for ROC2Change on November 22. ROC2Change is a student-led and student-organized summit that takes place twice a year and engages over 800 public and private high school students throughout Monroe County in peer-to-peer discussion of racism, privilege, diversity, and inclusion.

Throughout the month of November, the Levine Center will promote a series of community events entitled “A Month to End Hate.” These include:

- Father James Martin, *LGBT Inclusivity in the Catholic Church*, Nazareth College, November 7
- White Privilege Symposium at Asbury First United Methodist Church, November 15 – 16
- Ibram Kendi, leading scholar on race and racism and author of *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives, November 18
- *Why Do We Hate?* Levine Center to End Hate, November 21

In addition, the Federation is sponsoring an interfaith ceremony on October 27, 2019 to observe the first anniversary of the Tree of Life attack.

All of these events serve as the lead-up to our community-wide summit to end hate in the spring of 2020. We are already laying the groundwork for partnerships with local and national organizations addressing racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hate. The goal is to create programming that reaches a wide swath of the community and engages individuals of all ages and backgrounds. Participants will learn from the best and brightest local and national experts on how to combat all forms of hate.

RAPID RESPONSE

After the shootings at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand on Friday, March 15, the Levine Center to End Hate put out a call to the Federation's many interfaith partners to come together in solidarity with the Muslim community. On Sunday, March 17, just two days later, more than 300 people of diverse faiths, races, ages, and genders stood outside the Islamic Center of Rochester with messages of hope. This display of support was a powerful antidote to the violence and intolerance confronting Muslims and other minority groups. In a further expression of unity, leaders of the Islamic Center invited those outside to enter the mosque and join them for afternoon prayers, followed by spontaneous speeches by several Islamic and interfaith leaders, including the CEO of the Jewish Federation and the Director of the Levine Center to End Hate.

The rapid response subcommittee has met several times to establish parameters for this work. The goal of rapid response is to stand in solidarity with groups that have been targeted and bring people with diverse and potentially opposing views together to listen to one another with respect. Next steps for moving forward include defining what incidents merit a rapid response, identifying venues in which to gather for dialogue on short notice, and securing experienced facilitators to lead the conversations.

EVALUATION

In addition to the subcommittees described above, three steering committee members have met to create a plan for evaluating our work and quantifying our impact. Each of these steering committee members is now "embedded in" and attends the community engagement, youth engagement, and rapid response subcommittees, working to ensure that all programming has measurable objectives to enable us to assess our success in achieving the mission.

AWARENESS BUILDING

How do we focus local attention on the very clear and powerful message — End Hate? How do we stand out in a meaningful and authentic way among current efforts in Greater Rochester to end racism, violence, poverty, and a host of other societal issues that affect our area?

These are the questions framing our planning and execution of a bold marketing strategy with a singular focus: to create a movement to end hate in Greater Rochester. This strategy brings together partners, influencers, and the public to learn, listen, and act against hate through unique programming, facilitated dialogue, and dynamic engagement opportunities.

Prongs of this strategy include:

- A powerful logo that graphically focuses on "End Hate". This memorable logo will be used on all communications and promotional materials.
- A dynamic website that focuses on upcoming events and programs as well as sharing perspectives both locally and nationally. This website will launch in July 2019.

- Social media campaigns across Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram with content that emotionally connects people with the consequences of hate, but also shows what happens when good people stand up and are counted.
- Promotional campaigns for the November 21 launch event and a community response to hate event in the spring
- Ongoing promotion around the RISE program and the impact it is having in schools
- A monthly e-newsletter detailing Levine Center activities
- A pledge that engages individuals, groups, and organizations in a commitment to combating hate in all its forms and promoting acceptance, compassion, and a just and safe community
- Aggressive local PR and social media as part of rapid response to local, national, and global hate incidents
- Internet advertising to drive people to social media and the Levine Center website

In addition, outreach plans include the promotion of the Levine Center and its activities by steering committee members and other influencers, as well as the development of co-branding opportunities with partners that reach diverse communities within Greater Rochester.

CONCLUSION

As we look to next year, our goals are to:

1. Make “end hate” a rallying cry in the Greater Rochester community through programming and communications that encourage learning, listening, and taking action
2. Develop youth leaders that are courageous and committed to engaging their peers in dialogue and action to address hate and embrace diversity and inclusion
3. Engage community leaders in sparking conversations that challenge us to examine our biases and open ourselves to the experiences of people that are different from us

With the generous support of the William and Mildred Levine Family Foundation, we have worked diligently to name, establish, and get the Levine Center to End Hate up and running. We have worked deliberately to set our goals and craft our messaging and programming in line with the parameters of the gift so that we can best achieve our common purpose and work boldly to end hate in our community. Our careful planning has set the stage for an exciting Year 2 and beyond. In light of continued hateful events both nationally and locally, our work has never been more important or timely. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the William and Mildred Levine Family Foundation and look forward to a powerful year of programming and action.

Holocaust Remembrance Day arrives amid rising anti-Semitism in our nation

Rina Chessin and Meredith Dragon, Guest essayists

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"The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference." — Elie Weisel, Holocaust survivor

Thursday, May 2, marks Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, on the Jewish calendar. Shoah is the Hebrew word for Holocaust.

This year, Yom Hashoah is particularly meaningful because of the recent synagogue attack in Poway, California, only six short months after the synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh.

Between 1933-1945, 6 million innocent people, 2 million of whom were children, were murdered in the Holocaust. We must remember that the Holocaust did not begin with Nazi concentration camps. It began centuries before, in Europe, where anti-Semitism was a constant scourge on society. Jews were targeted and scapegoated for larger societal problems.

Moreover, the seeds of the Holocaust were planted and cultivated long before the 1930s through constant rhetoric, stereotyping and vicious propaganda. Propaganda was reinforced through government proclamations, word of mouth, media and political cartoons.

In 2019, we are once again watching a blatant dramatic rise in anti-Semitism. According to the Anti-Defamation League, in 2017 anti-Semitic incidents rose more than 60 percent in the United States and 90 percent in New York state over the previous year. For the first time in decades, an anti-Semitic incident was reported in every state in the union.

Today anti-Semitic rhetoric is once again rampant and can be seen and heard in every echelon of society. It is fueled by all forms of social media. And, [just this week, The New York Times published a horribly anti-Semitic political cartoon.](#)

Holocaust survivors today explain vividly how they feel like we are reliving history. One must never forget the words of philosopher George Santayana, who said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Please, let's not relive history. We must take a stand. In the words of Elie Weisel, we cannot afford to be indifferent. It is our obligation as a community to fight anti-Semitism and ALL forms of vicious hatred and bigotry in our society.

It is incumbent on every human to understand that while we may have many differences, we have far more in common. We must strive to realize that goodness, kindness, love and understanding must triumph over hatred, bigotry, indifference and intolerance. It is on all of us. Never again.

Rina Chessin is president and Meredith Dragon is CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester

Levine Center to End Hate logo



Photos and social media snapshots from the Dr. Bernice King event

