



## Year Two Report July 2019 – September 2020

### Introduction

In the fall of 2018, through the generous support of and in partnership with the William and Mildred Levine Family Foundation, the Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester established the Levine Center to End Hate. Over the past two years, the Levine Center has become an important resource to the greater Rochester community, working boldly to end hate in our region. Our mission—to unite the greater Rochester community in overcoming hate through education, dialogue, and positive action—serves as a touchstone for everything we do.

Our 25 steering committee members—diverse in age, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and working in sectors ranging from business to nonprofit, government to law enforcement, public education to higher education—have served as valued and trusted advisors, providing insightful recommendations to guide our work and helping to make connections to constituencies across our community. We have built strong partnerships with local and national leaders and organizations, collaborating to deliver high quality programming to a wide array of individuals.

Our Year Two report highlights the many programs and events that the Levine Center to End Hate spearheaded from the summer of 2019 through the early fall of 2020 and describes our success in achieving the strategic goals we set for ourselves:

1. Make “end hate” a rallying cry in the Greater Rochester community through programming and communications that encourage learning, listening, and taking action
2. 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
3. Develop youth leaders that are courageous and committed to engaging their peers in dialogue and action to address hate and embrace diversity and inclusion

### Goal 1: Making “End Hate” A Rallying Cry in the Greater Rochester Community

On November 21, 2019, a sold-out crowd of 800 from across greater Rochester—including over 150 high school and college students from the Rochester City School District, Greece, and Spencerport, as well as Nazareth College and Monroe Community College—packed the Lyric Theater to take part in our much-anticipated, highly-publicized launch event titled “Why Do We



Hate?” The evening featured two men who have known the tragic consequences of hate first-hand.

Pardeep Kaleka lost his father, a leader of the Sikh community in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, when a white supremacist opened fire in the neighborhood temple in 2012. Arno Michaelis, a former skinhead who spent years committing violent acts in the name of white power, helped start the organization that produced the mass shooter. In 2013, they met for the first time when Pardeep sought out Arno, who had left the white nationalist movement years before, to try to understand what motivated the shooter. That first meeting was the start of a unique friendship that resulted in the creation of a youth organization called Serve2Unite, whose mission is to establish a healthy sense of identity, purpose, and belonging that diverts young people from violent extremist ideologies, and the co-authorship of *The Gift of Our Wounds: A Sikh and Former White Supremacist Find Forgiveness After Hate*.

“Why Do We Hate?” was an evening of inspiration and insight and a fitting kick-off for the Levine Center’s efforts to unite the greater Rochester community in overcoming hate through education, dialogue, and positive action. The audience was a true cross-section of the community, a notably diverse crowd that garnered comments from several in attendance who said that this was the first time they had been at an event with such a wide array of people. The evening illuminated that hate affects all of us, no matter our identity or background, and everyone can play a part in combatting it.

We sent evaluations out the day after the event and received an overwhelmingly positive response. (See summary, attached.) Because this was our launch event, we wanted to assess how familiar people were with the Levine Center before attending and how clearly they understood the mission of the Levine Center after attending. We also asked attendees to evaluate how important the Levine Center mission is to our community. Responses were on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high).

- Before attending our launch event, how familiar were you with the Levine Center to End Hate? Average response: 2
- After attending our launch event, how clearly do you understand the mission of the Levine Center to End Hate? Average response: 3.6
- How important is the mission of the Levine Center to End Hate to our community? Average response: 4

Several people noted that they were so taken with Arno and Pardeep that they wished the program had been longer. Below is a sample of the feedback we received:

I attended this event with 8 friends and had them return to my home for reflective conversation and refreshments...an opportunity to really engage in one of the things we each resonated with during the evening, and listen to others’ feedback. This was such a powerful & inspirational dialogue and I was so happy to hear the Levine Center will continue to forge ahead with action to educate, inform, and hopefully help reform the division—politically, racially, regarding ageism, gender identity issues, homophobia, etc. The subject of hate abounds in so many areas of our lives. Let it stop here!

Prior to the evening program, Arno and Pardeep led a noontime discussion of their book at Monroe County's main public library. Over 25 people attended, and the intimate setting enabled more informal conversation and Q&A.

### **Raising Awareness of Our Anti-Hate Efforts**

In addition to programming, the Levine Center to End Hate has engaged in a robust communications strategy to spread the message that we are committed to "ending hate," including:

- A powerful, eye-catching logo consistently used on all communications and promotional materials
- A dynamic website, revamped in advance of our September 2020 event, "Brave Spaces: Rochester's Summit to End Hate," (described below) and updated on a regular basis
- A social media presence across Facebook and Instagram that calls attention to programming by the Levine Center as well as partner organizations and delivers content that serves to educate people on the causes and consequences of hate and the ways in which it can be addressed. Recently, we used social media to crowd-source proposals from local organizations for creative, impactful workshops at "Brave Spaces," amplifying the message, "Make Rochester a Brave Space!"
- Generous news coverage of our programs via print, television, and radio (see more below)
- Promotion of Levine Center programming by steering committee members and other influencers
- Co-branding with partner organizations to reach diverse communities within greater Rochester

We have been grateful for the opportunity to elevate our message through substantial media coverage:

- In November 2019, Levine Center director Karen Elam appeared with Arno Michaelis and Pardeep Kaleka on WXXI's radio talk show *Connections* with Evan Dawson to talk about their unique story and promote our "Why Do We Hate?" launch event. As a result of the program, we noticed a spike in event registrations. (<https://www.wxxinews.org/post/connections-discussing-question-why-do-we-hate>)
- Multiple news outlets, including the Democrat & Chronicle (<https://tinyurl.com/D-C-Guest-Essay>), City Paper (<https://tinyurl.com/ROC-City-Paper>), Minority Reporter (<https://tinyurl.com/Minority-Reporter>), ABC 13 WHAM (<https://tinyurl.com/WHAM13>), and Channel 10 WHEC (<https://tinyurl.com/10WHEC>) also covered our "Why Do We Hate?" launch event.
- In December 2019, Levine Center director Karen Elam appeared along with steering committee members Christina Lee and Cary Jensen on 13 WHAM's *Many Voices, Many Visions* with host Alexis Arnold to talk about the programming we developed to follow our launch event, including community dialogues, talking circles, and workshops. (<https://tinyurl.com/Many-Voices-Many-Visions-Dec19>)

- Alexis Arnold invited us to appear again on *Many Voices, Many Visions* on July 27, 2020 with steering committee member Adrian Hale and Levine Center director Karen Elam to talk about race, Black Lives Matter, and our “Brave Spaces” event. (<https://tinyurl.com/Many-Voices-Many-Visions>)
- In early September 2020, upon hearing the news of the death of Daniel Prude while in the custody of the Rochester Police Department, the Levine Center and the Jewish Federation created a joint statement expressing our shock and dismay, calling for a thorough and transparent investigation, and reinforcing the need for resources and training for police officers to provide compassionate support to individuals with mental health issues.
- Levine Center steering committee co-chair Kevin Beckford, steering committee member Taj Smith, Federation CEO Meredith Dragon, and director Karen Elam appeared on *Connections* on September 9, 2020 to promote “Brave Spaces.” Keynote speaker Eric Ward joined us for a portion of the program to talk about antisemitism and racism, their relationship to white nationalism, and how we can achieve a truly multiracial society. (<https://www.wxnews.org/post/connections-addressing-hate-violence-civil-rights-expert-eric-ward>)

We were delighted when Levine Center director Karen Elam was selected in August to serve as one of 21 commissioners on the newly-formed Racial and Structural Equity (RASE) Commission created by Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren and Monroe County Executive Adam Bello. This position affords us an opportunity to build synergies between the work of the Levine Center and the broader community.

In addition, Karen has been invited to speak in multiple national forums, further expanding the visibility of the Levine Center’s work. These include:

- An interactive session (delivered twice) at the Jewish Federations of North America’s FedLab gathering in Washington, DC in November 2019 on the topic of “Community Relations to Fight Hate: Lessons Learned from Charlottesville.” FedLab draws Federation professionals and lay leaders from across the United States and Canada. Over 50 people attended the two sessions.
- A panel presentation at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs annual conference in early February 2020 called “From the Frontlines: Building a Roadmap to Combat Antisemitism and Hate,” where we had the opportunity to highlight the Levine Center’s innovative efforts at countering hate in front of more than 350 community relations professionals and lay leaders.
- A virtual presentation in October at FedLab 2020 called “Owning the Center in Polarized Times” with colleagues from Portland, Oregon and Cincinnati, Ohio, discussing how we maintain the delicate balance during increasingly polarized times as our efforts to advance racial justice, combat antisemitism, and address our collective security concerns intersect.

## **Goal 2: Sparking Conversations, Examining Biases**

As a follow-up to our November 2019 launch event, the Levine Center to End Hate planned a series of interactive programs to create spaces for conversations that would challenge

participants to examine their biases and open themselves to the experiences of others. We did this work in partnership with several local organizations. The programs included:

- ***Welcoming Diversity: Chaos or Community? The Choice is Ours* facilitated by the National Coalition Building Institute – An all-day workshop offered on December 6, 2019**

A day of hands-on skills-building and engagement designed to cut through differences of race, gender, age, ability, language, distance, faith, education, and class in ways that promote inclusion and equity for all, enabling our institutions to succeed and thrive.

- ***Defined by Others: A Theatre-based Exploration of the Social Implications of Identity* facilitated by Impact Interactive – 3-hour workshop offered on January 9 and February 26, 2020**

An evening of theatre-based activities to encourage participants to reflect on their own identities and share thoughts and feelings about times they were treated differently because of who they were.

- ***Let's Talk About Hate* workshops facilitated by the MK Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence – 3-hour workshop offered on January 5, January 23, February 9, and March 5, 2020**

A workshop exploring this seldom-discussed topic through a variety of perspectives and traditions, examining questions such as: What is hate? How does it shape our thoughts, identities, and communities? What can we do about it?

- ***Talking Circles* facilitated by Partners in Restorative Initiatives – 2-hour circles held the first Monday of the month from 1 – 3 pm on January 6, February 3, March 2, and April 6, 2020 at 111 Hillside Avenue and 6 – 8 pm at Henrietta Public Library**

A space for people to communicate openly and honestly, listen deeply, and build a sense of community. Restorative practices make it possible for people to build relationships and to prevent and resolve problems when they occur.

As we wrapped up the Talking Circles in April, participants overwhelmingly requested that we continue to meet and asked for more content to help them grow as anti-racists. We worked with Partners in Restorative Initiatives to develop two levels of workshops: (1) **Anti-Racism 101**, primarily targeted to White participants as an introduction to understanding anti-racism and learning how to effectively participate in the current movement in support of Black lives, and (2) **Study Circle to End Hate** for participants with prior experience in social justice and equity work to investigate the multifaceted ways we are socialized to experience prejudice and identify mechanisms to further their commitment to ending hate. Each of the two-hour workshops were held over four consecutive weeks from late July through mid-August.

In addition to hosting our own programs in partnership with other organizations, the Levine Center also promoted a series of related community events, including:

- Father James Martin, *LGBT Inclusivity in the Catholic Church*, Nazareth College, November 7

- 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
- Community Dinners hosted by the MK Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, January 19, February 6, and February 23, 2020

The programming described above, offered from December 2019 through August 2020, served as the lead-up to “Brave Spaces.”

### ***Brave Spaces: Rochester’s Summit to End Hate***

We began planning for “Brave Spaces: Rochester’s Summit to End Hate” in the winter of 2019. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we had to reassess and decided to go forward with the summit, albeit virtually, moving the date to September 13, from noon to 5 pm. We researched the best options for a virtual platform, updated our website with comprehensive workshop descriptions and an easy-to-navigate design, identified a third-party online registration program that could be embedded on our website and provide seamless functionality, and contracted with a local A/V company to manage all the behind-the-scenes work on the day of the event.

With the summit, we aimed to reach a wide swath of the community, engaging individuals of all ages and backgrounds to learn from the best and brightest local and national experts on how to combat all forms of hate. We began by researching possible keynote speakers and decided on Eric Ward, a Senior Fellow at the Southern Poverty Law Center and a nationally-recognized expert on the relationship between authoritarian movements, hate violence, and preserving inclusive democracy. In his 30+ year civil rights career, Eric has developed innovative responses to white nationalism, antisemitism, and structural inequality, working with community groups, government and business leaders, human rights advocates, and philanthropists. He is the author of multiple works credited with key narrative shifts, including “Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism.”

Once we had secured Eric as our keynote speaker, we turned to creating a Request for Proposals to solicit the participation of local organizations in designing and facilitating workshops that fit the theme of “Brave Spaces.” We received over a dozen applications, which were vetted by a small planning committee made up of three steering committee members and the Levine Center director. We decided that given the caliber of the proposals, we would use all but one of them.

We arranged the workshops into three sessions with the themes of Storytelling and Skill Building; Systems Change; and Activism, Organizing, and Hope. Each session offered four different workshops to choose from. For our closing session, “Inspiring Action,” we invited steering committee member, former NFL champion, Champion Academy founder, and Rochester native Roland Williams to speak. (The program schedule and descriptions of all of the workshops can be found at <https://www.endhateroc.org/brave-spaces1>.)

Evaluation of the summit was very positive. (See summary, attached.) When asked to rate our success in meeting the three goals of the summit, responses were as follows (1 = not at all and 5 = very successful):

1. Educate on issues of racism, antisemitism, and other forms of hate: 93% rated this 4 or 5
2. Provide space for dialogue: 62% rated this 4 or 5
3. Inspire positive action: 84% rated this 4 or 5

We were delighted with the results. We were not surprised by the lower rating on the second goal. Though we attempted to create as many opportunities for conversation through participatory workshops, the virtual platform and the 45-minute time constraint presented challenges despite the best efforts of our facilitators. If we were to organize an online summit again, we would lengthen the interactive sessions.

Our keynote and closing speakers received top marks: 93% of respondents gave Eric a 4 or 5, and 83% of respondents gave Roland a 4 or 5. We were also pleased to see that the event drew so many people new to the work of the Levine Center. In response to our question, “Before attending Brave Spaces, how familiar were you with the Levine Center to End Hate?” 52% of respondents replied “not at all.”

Presentations by Simeon Banister (*A Tale of Two Cities*) and Shane Wiegand (*Redlining, Racism, and Resistance in Rochester, New York*) elicited the highest praise among the workshop sessions. Participants appreciated learning about the history of segregation in our community and the damage that redlining and other racist policies have had on communities of color. Of Simeon, one wrote, “Fantastic information and one of the most important speakers I heard all day. Bring him back for more!” We are, in fact, working with Simeon and Shane to offer their presentations, along with interactive Q&A, to a broader audience in the next few months.

Another participant wrote:

I thought the most effective component of the day was all of its "teach in" moments. This community has plenty of action ahead of it, but I think it does well to know more about itself and its history. The voices that put everything in a larger economic and wellbeing scope--even beyond issues of hate--were I think the most provocative and compelling to hear.

Overall, 92% of respondents gave the summit a rating of 4 or 5. Comments included:

I am grateful for the healing work you do, the effort that went into organizing this day of active and wise hope, and look forward to more of your events.

This was a very informational and educational opportunity for members of the community to take part in. It provided a lot of insight that needed to be put into context for people in the current climate that we are living in right now.

The summit has provided us with rich content to promote ongoing education and dialogue. We recently edited the video of Eric Ward’s keynote speech, added closed captioning, and sent it out to everyone that registered for the summit, encouraging them to organize watch events and facilitate discussions with family, friends, and colleagues. As noted above, we are planning to do similar projects with the presentations by Simeon Banister and Shane Wiegand.

### **Goal 3: Developing Courageous and Committed Youth Leaders**

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

#### **ROC2Change: Student Summit on Race**

As luck would have it, our engagement of Arno and Pardeep for our launch event coincided with ROC2Change: The Student Summit on Race, a student-run and student-driven initiative that has engaged hundreds of high school students from across Monroe County in discussions on race, bias, bigotry, and hate for the past four years. When members of the Levine Center steering committee realized that our event was taking place the day before the ROC2Change summit, they suggested that we offer to have Arno and Pardeep serve as keynote speakers. The ROC2Change student organizers were delighted to accept, and we were thrilled to be able to provide these two incredible speakers to inspire the over 500 students and faculty that attended. In addition to delivering an engaging and inspiring hour-long keynote address, Arno and Pardeep led two dynamic and well-attended break-out sessions for students and teachers.

#### **RISE – Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality**

In the late summer of 2019, the Levine Center began a partnership with RISE (Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality). 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 saw the RISE program as a powerful starting point from which to build future programming aimed at other populations of students.

On August 14, 2019, Collin Williams, Jr., PhD, RISE's Senior Director of Curriculum, led an hour and a half-long information session for school administrators, principals, and athletic directors from 23 different schools/districts throughout Monroe County, including Brighton, Brockport, East and West Irondequoit, East High School, Fairport, Geneva, all four Greece high schools, Hilton, Honeoye Falls-Lima, Penfield, Rush-Henrietta, and more. Eight Levine Center steering committee members attended as well. The executive director of the Monroe County Public School Athletic Conference, Denny Fries, learned of the training and asked to attend. This ultimately resulted in an invitation by Denny to have Collin lead a training for over 300 student athletes and coaches at the Section 5 Athletic Conference in late January 2020.

Two weeks later, Collin returned to Rochester to lead a six-hour training on the RISE fall curriculum for coaches and athletic directors from seven area high schools: Brighton, Brockport, Fairport, Greece Arcadia, Hilton, East High School, and West Irondequoit. He returned again with his colleague, Scott Koenning, to lead the RISE winter training on November 8, 2019. Coaches from Brighton, Fairport, Geneva, Greece Arcadia, and Greece Olympia participated.

RISE CEO Diahann Billings-Burford came from New York City to observe the training and offer a national perspective on the work of RISE.

In addition, the Levine Center engaged Nazareth College in the RISE program, beginning with a preliminary, or discovery, phase to assess the climate at the institution. Nazareth College's athletic director and coaches solicited responses from 140 student-athletes as part of RISE's Collegiate Perceptions Survey to gather data on their perceptions and attitudes regarding race and diversity nationally, on campus, within athletics, and on their teams. They were also asked about their perceptions of their roles as leaders. Ninety percent (90%) of respondents believed that "Racism is still a concern in the United States." Forty-four percent (44%) reported that they were aware of racist incidents that have taken place on campus. And 81% said they would attend more programming on issues of race, diversity, and inclusion.

Following this, Collin came to campus in February to facilitate two workshops, one with student-athletes and the other with coaches. Forty-five (45) student-athletes from a wide range of sports participated in an abbreviated RISE training on February 12 focused on three topic areas: Understanding Our Identities, Perspective Taking, and Creating an Inclusive Environment. Participants completed an evaluation at the end of the workshop that helped gauge their understanding of the concepts pre- and post-workshop and their experience of the RISE curriculum. As one wrote in a sentiment shared by several other student-athletes: "We all have a responsibility to work towards diverse and inclusive environments on our campus. We should take the time to learn about other peoples' deep diversity to find similarities and understand their perspectives." Collin led a similar workshop the next day with 12 coaches. On their surveys, the most frequently mentioned topics were awareness and recognition of the room for improvement in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly with perspective taking. As one coach wrote, "Gaining and being open to others' perspectives is something that needs to remain constantly in my attention."

## **CONCLUSION**

As we move into Year Three, we are focused on building on the successes of our first two years. The COVID-19 pandemic makes our work challenging, as our programming is designed to bring people together to learn, to listen, and to act. But as with the summit, we are planning virtual programs that will enable us to continue moving forward until such time as we are able to come together again in person.

Over the course of 2020-21, we will work to achieve the following measurable goals:

1. Deliver educational programs addressing racism, antisemitism, and other forms of bias to 500 – 700 participants across the greater Rochester community
2. Offer interactive programs in a safe setting that enables 150 – 200 participants to engage in dialogue that expands understanding, challenges assumptions, and examines biases
3. Develop a pilot program engaging 10 – 15 youth in education and training on racism, antisemitism, and activism in partnership with the Jewish Federation's education and

engagement department, evaluating and enhancing the pilot for replication in subsequent years

We are particularly gratified to see how the work of the Levine Center to End Hate has attracted many in the Jewish community, igniting or reigniting a passion for civil rights, racial equity, and social justice that is part of our legacy of *tikun olam*. Additionally, we have continued to strengthen our bonds with existing partners like the Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, National Coalition Building Institute, and Partners in Restorative Initiatives, and are building relationships with new partners like the Urban League and 540WMain.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of the William and Mildred Levine Foundation and look forward to another powerful year of programming and action.

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**Attachments:**

- “Why Do We Hate?” evaluation summary
- “Brave Spaces” evaluation summary