CCA providing leadership and support for racial justice movement in central Oklahoma

Working with minority groups to address police bias and violence

In 2016, CCA Program Director Rena Guay established a chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) chapter in Oklahoma City. SURJ is a national network to facilitate (primarily) white unity with the Black Lives Matter movement and related organizing.

As her first action in this area of work, Rena pulled together a coalition of organizational leaders who met with Oklahoma City police chief Bill Citty. It was a very cordial meeting where many issues were discussed relating to police and community relations, but the focus was on a recent policy change of great concern to the Black community: the cessation of the body cams program for police officers which had just been initiated months earlier.

The group meeting with Chief Citty expressed their desire to have the body cams back, and learned of some of the issues that had caused it to be stopped. While Citty was supportive of the program, union leaders from the Fraternal Order Police had issues that brought the program into contract negotiations, which are required by law.

FOP resistance to certain aspects of the program led Rena to meet further over the next few weeks with other leaders in the Black community, which eventually resulted with a meeting with OKC FOP head John George. This was an unprecedented step forward, according to Black community leaders who have been working on police issues for years. Bringing FOP to the table had been a longstanding roadblock. While the major credit goes to the Black activists who have put in so much time and effort, they say that the expansion of the community representation has been a valuable addition to the effort.

As a result of the pressure brought forth in these meetings, and in other communications during this period, the differences between the police department and FOP are being (Continued on page 2)

Love Trumps Hate

The CCA staff and board are still reeling from the election results, both national and statewide in Oklahoma, as candidates who ran on an agenda of hate and fear were elected to positions of power. But we are collecting ourselves and our thoughts and beginning to develop our response, which will influence the focus of our work in ways we can’t yet fully anticipate.

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INSIDE: Upwave Media project, Legal Program Report, CCA Events
resolved more quickly, and it’s reported that body cams will be back on OKC officers by the end of 2016.

Work on the bigger issue of police and minorities will be ongoing, but other significant progress has come out of the networking and meetings. Such as the need for more and better training of law enforcement officers statewide. Larger cities tend to have good training (though it can be improved), but rural departments generally do not provide adequate training in procedure, conflict resolution and community relations before putting officers on the street. The coalition in which SURJ is taking part has been working to relay concerns about this situation, and has contributed ideas and input that are being used by police organizations to survey and address the problem.

Finally, Rena is seeking to represent CCA on the Police and Community Trust initiative (PACT), a statewide consortium of law enforcement and civic organizations to improve police accountability and relations with the communities they serve. That application should be considered at the next PACT meeting later in 2016.

We are also working to find good applicants for the OKC Citizens Review Board, a group that reviews police department activities and policy to make them more accountable and fair.

If interested in working with SURJ, building the chapter into an independent entity, please contact Rena by emailing office@centerforconscience.org.

RACIAL JUSTICE (Continued from page 1)

Photo posted on Twitter after election. This family is standing outside a school where minority students have been harassed.

LOVE TRUMPS HATE (Continued from page 1)

But we did quickly get together with local groups, including BLM OK, to plan a rally where resistance to hate can be expressed and avenues of solidarity and support for targeted groups be built. That event, on the Saturday after the election, is part of national response, and is still being organized as of this writing.

We are alarmed by the many stories we have already heard, locally and nationally, of attacks, both verbal and physical, as the long festering pockets of hate have been emboldened by the electoral campaigns and results.

There is a critical need to build networks and processes for dealing with this new reality, and CCA plans to be part of that work.

Contact us to get in the loop or to help us meet this new need in our community!
Upwave Media - Radio, podcasting and more

Early in 2016, CCA launched an exciting new project that we named Upwave Media. Upwave is a way for us to use a wider variety of digital tools to reach a wider and more diverse audience, and to give us a more focused platform for responding to current issues, events and causes. The project has its own domain, at UpwaveMedia.com.

The new project involves audio, video, social media as well as written op-eds, storytelling and other word-based communications. We hope to eventually incorporate visual communications as well, such as editorial cartoons, infographics and more. We have big dreams, and think there are significant elements of our project that are unique in the US peace-building community, but of course, expanded development will depend on funding.

Podcasts, streaming radio and shortwave broadcasts

The project includes a number of podcasts that are also offered as radio programming both locally and globally. This exciting development means that CCA news and viewpoints are being heard not only in Oklahoma City, but over much of the globe through shortwave radio. We get pretty excited when we hear from folks in Italy, Australia, Russia, and Japan that they’ve listened to our shows! For more info, visit broadspectrumbroadcast.com.

The shows we have produced or are developing include Peace Buzz, on global peace issues, Red Town Radio where Brenda Golden will discuss Native American issues, Nappy Roots Radio with Camille Landry focusing on racial justice and Black culture. James Branum has produced multiple shows on topics as varied as GI Rights and Aspergers, but now is working primarily on a magazine style program that additionally airs on OKC’s KTLR 890 AM (simulcast on 103.7 FM), as well as a 30 minute program for shortwave broadcast.

All shows are distributed online via RSS feeds and through various digital podcatchers. But — this is the most exciting part — thanks to a partnership with Broad Spectrum Radio, our programming is shared via shortwave radio. Currently that distribution is limited to select stations based in North America, Europe and Australia, but, again, with adequate funding we could expand that outreach.

Report on CCA Legal Project

By James M. Branum

I am continuing my work of representing US military servicemembers who have either resisted war (by refusing to deploy, going AWOL, etc.) or those who are seeking a discharge due to either conscientious or political objection to war.

I recently represented Ryan Johnson at Fort Irwin in California in a court-martial proceeding and he is now serving his sentence (10 months of confinement) at Miramar Brig near San Diego, California. (more information on his case and how you can help to provide critically needed support for his family can be found at couragetoresist.org/2016/10/ryan-johnson/ )

I have also recently been doing a fair amount of CO rebuttal work, preparing written rebuttal packets for conscientious objector applicants who have recommendations that their request for discharge be denied. There are very few attorneys doing this particular task, so I’m glad to fill this need.

Conscientious objector Ryan Johnson.
CCA was founded in 2004 and is funded by community donations. We need your support.

CCA Events

Sophie Scholl Sewing Circle (and Resistance Plotting) – Nov. 19 9 AM

CCA will host a gathering we are calling the Sophie Scholl* Sewing Circle (and Resistance Plotting) on Saturday Nov. 19 at 9 AM. It was prompted by the results of the Nov. 2016 elections, which led us to feel it was time for us to listen to our supporters, allies and accomplices in our work in Central Oklahoma, to assess what adjustments we need to make to best respond to current needs and to best support the wider movements and communities of which we are a part – peace/antiwar, progressive, social justice, sustainability. All interested groups and activists are welcome to join us, with or without handcrafts, for this discussion, in person or via Skype.

We will share the results of the conversation, and if necessary it will be continued. Follow us online or by email (see article this issue) for how to stay connected.

* Sophie Scholl was a student activist who plotted resistance to the Nazi government in Germany during World War II. Her group was arrested, and she was executed.

Chelsea Manning Birthday Party, Nov. 17

Plans are still being developed for the 6th Annual Birthday Party for imprisoned whistleblower Chelsea Manning on Dec. 17. Past celebrations have been held in Crescent, Oklahoma, her hometown, but this year, to increase turnout, we may move it to Oklahoma City, and encourage other communities to have their own events. Stay tuned!

See report on Chelsea elsewhere in this issue.