



California Unity Center Overview

The **California Unity Center** is an extraordinary project of the Capital Unity Council, a California nonprofit organization established in 1999 after thousands of concerned citizens gathered in downtown Sacramento to protest a series of hate crimes plaguing the region. **Committed to investing in the future of our youth**, the Council resolved to create an institution that would be a catalyst for *uniting* diverse people, a safe place where we could come together and work toward transforming hate, intolerance, and ignorance into mutual understanding and respect for humanity. **That resolution became the vision for the California Unity Center, and that future is now.**

The Ongoing Challenge

Hate and discrimination are as insidious today as they ever were. We can point to examples of genocide and violence inflicted around the world, but we don't have to look farther than our own school campuses and communities for evidence that much work remains to be done. A recent survey revealed that nearly 30% of California high school students are bullied or beaten because of their ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or physical and mental ability. February 12, 2008, a teenage boy who identified as gay and sometimes wore feminine clothing to school was left brain dead after being shot by a classmate on their Oxnard, Calif. middle school campus. **The California Unity Center will focus on empowering people to change the tide of violence and to nurture a safe and positive environment in which our youth can thrive.**

The Center

After several years of collaborative planning involving community leaders, educators, scholars, architectural and interpretive design professionals, staff and dedicated board members, we are close to breaking ground. The three-story Center will be a **statewide hub** of cultural exchange, an experiential media and technology-driven **learning center**, and a **gathering place** where community groups collaborate to solve problems and celebrate together. The more than 100,000 California students who visit the State Capitol every year will be able to walk two blocks to the Center, where they will be treated not as *visitors*, but as *participants*, and will be provided with the tools and resources to shape their own experiences and to use their learning to foster harmony wherever they may go.

A \$30 million dollar project, the Center is being designed by world-renowned Studio Southwest Architects and the award-winning exhibit design firm, Academy Studios. Nearly \$11 million has been raised with seed money from Mort and Marcy Friedman; grants from the State Library and the City of Sacramento; major gifts from the United Auburn Indian Community, Rumsey Band of Wintun Indians, AT&T and several businesses and individuals; and in-kind support from our education partners, the Sacramento City Unified School District and the Los Rios Community College District.

Our Approach

All of the Center's learning experiences and program spaces are organized around tools to build unity. Like the Shoah Visual History Institute, StoryCorps, and other oral history movements, the Center will launch an initiative to disseminate the untold stories of discrimination and hate directly from the voices of Californians who have experienced it. Similarly to the U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum, the Center will integrate technology, media, and relics to recreate the powerful experience of walking in the shoes of others. Uniquely, the Center will charge participants to ask, **"What can I do to combat hate and to build unity?"** Within its learning galleries, training facilities and gathering spaces, the Center will provide engaging opportunities to model, practice, and implement nonviolent solutions to this essential question.

California Revealed Learning Experiences

California Heroes Stories - The California Revealed gallery features seven interactive learning experiences that highlight tools Californians have used to combat social injustices. Integrating the power of media and storytelling, a central feature of each learning suite is the *Heroes Stories Database*. At each learning experience, participants will be able to watch inspiring video vignettes of Californians who used such tools as *organizing, expression, protest, volunteering, teaching, practicing traditions, and voting* to confront discrimination and effect social change. Scholars, teachers, and community members are being invited to nominate people for inclusion in the expandable database so that these intriguing stories of women, men, and youth will reflect California's diversity and highlight a spectrum of issues.

Practicing the Tools- An interactive unique to each learning experience will give participants an opportunity to model the tools they learn about. For example, at the *Express Yourself tool* interactive, participants will be able to create a mini-documentary from stock photos, sound, and video footage or design a political poster. They can save their creations to a personalized web page for later viewing and sharing with peers, teachers, and family. At the *Volunteer tool* activity, participants will be able to search a database of social justice organizations and submit pledges to become involved.

What's Your Story? Oral History Alcove

Through first-floor learning gallery's Oral History Alcove, participants will have the rare opportunity not only to listen and learn directly from others, but also to share and teach from their own experiences. The Alcove will include an ADA accessible, digital video recording booth and a public viewing area. Daily participants and researchers alike will be able to record commentary or peruse the testimony database to view previously recorded interviews.

Imagine a historian conducting primary research having access the stories of some of our local heroes, like Jerry Enomoto, who was forced to live in a Japanese internment camp as a child, and his wife, Dorothy, who as a young girl in the South, witnessed the lynching of her neighbor. Imagine a teacher using the online archive to show his class an interview with Dr. Catherine Campisi, who earned a doctorate and became a state government executive, despite being denied admission to several colleges because of her disability. Imagine a teenager and grandparent using the alcove's resources to record an intergenerational dialogue about their experiences with overcoming discrimination. By providing participants with the space, equipment, and guidance to participate in this living history movement, the Center will empower thousands of people to share their untold stories of triumphs over discrimination and preserve them for generations to come.

Using Transformative Educational Technology to Inspire Action

Through the integration of transformative technology, the Center's participants will not only create their own experiences, but will also take their experiences home. Using a micro-chip imbedded key tied to an dynamic technology system, participants' speeches, oral history interviews, and many other activities will be saved to customizable web pages. On their personalized web pages, participants will be able to retrace their journeys and access additional resources organizations, information and social action networks that extend their learning well beyond the Center's doors. Our planned initiative to build a repository of testimonies from Californians of all walks of life and to create an online portal for volunteer networking presents fantastic opportunities for content synergy and integration with web-based portals of schools and colleges, libraries, and other organizations. We will create access not only from inside the Center, but also from campuses and communities anywhere in the world.

With the **California Unity Center**, we have an unprecedented opportunity to shape the way future generations live and work together. We invite you to be a part of it.