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Government and private citizens striving for inclusivity in Orinda

By Sora O'Doherty

In recent weeks, in response to a growing number of incidents in the country, as well as in Contra Costa County and the city of Orinda, people are acting to encourage inclusivity and diversity in the community, and to discourage any acts of discrimination or intimidation.

On Sept. 3, the city council unanimously adopted a proclamation supporting inclusivity and diversity in the city. The proclamation, signed by Mayor Inga Miller, reaffirms that the communities shared values of compassion, inclusion, respect, and dignity, and bolsters its commitment to building an environment, and a community, in which everyone is valued and everyone has the opportunity to thrive. The proclamation ends with an invitation for citizens to likewise affirm these values of inclusion.

According to Shannon Pedroni, a group of Orinda residents has started a grassroots campaign to promote inclusivity and diversity within the community. The actions taken by the group include asking business owners to display window signs that say "Everyone is welcome here, everyone belongs." Pedroni said that the campaign was set off after a recent incident in which a Muslim Orinda resident and local pediatrician was allegedly pushed and subjected to a hateful exchange by another customer in an Orinda store, in front of her young son. This incident was a culminating event atop other incidents that underrepresented minority groups have experienced, including recent anti-LGBTQ flyers delivered to local sporting events and schools.

After the Orinda store incident was shared with neighbors and friends, concerned community members pulled together to organize support for making it clear in Orinda that everyone is welcome here and there is no place for hate, Pedroni said. At the same time, Orinda residents Pedroni, Nazia Sheriff, Sharon McGinnis-Girdlestone and Rebecca Verity approached the Orinda City Council to discuss ways in which the city of Orinda could support inclusivity and diversity. Pedroni said that the grass roots group of concerned residents applauds and appreciates the city council for adopting the proclamation and looks forward to collaborating with the city on more ways to promote community, diversity and inclusion.

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