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Letters to the editor

DEI - another acronym?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Heard of this one? News to me. Cropping up everywhere, including Lafayette's Equity and Inclusion Task Force. My granddaughter's corporate position is Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. She should be able to bring Papa up to speed on DEI. Diversity: People have different backgrounds: (gender, race, religion), and a variety of experience; Equity: People are treated fairly and justly; and Inclusion: Everyone has 'a seat at the table'.

Further discussion brought to light that a common thread weaves between the three factors i.e, Connection, describing an individual's need to be recognized, heard, and affirmed, as a contributing member of a community (business, civic, social or residential).

I listened, while thinking to myself, "Okay fine, this is business world stuff; has nothing to do with me." But an uncomfortable question hung around, "If DEI is about connection, I connect with people every day." Is there a message here? Upon reflection, I realized I only talk with people I'm comfortable with, and, I don't talk to strangers, because they're different, which engenders anxiety and fear.

What if I redefined stranger as: A friend I have yet to meet. And so, I started greeting strangers with simply "hello" or "How ya doing?"

Sometimes a conversation ensued, sometimes not; in either case, strangely enough, I felt good inside. And, it was apparent the other person was pleased to be acknowledged. Can just a bit of conversation make a stranger feel good?

Sometime later, sitting next to a stranger while waiting for a restaurant table, I asked the Black woman, "Been here before?" "Yes." "Live locally?" "No, Oakland." She asked, "Have you tried their Mimosa?" "No." Later, sitting at my table, waiting for my guest, I was totally surprised to have a Mimosa set before me, with the food server acknowledging, "It's from the lady over there." Looking up, it was the woman from the bench, waving her hand, while smiling. Not only was there connection, but it was definitive that I had, indeed, made a stranger feel comfortable.

These days, I look forward to greeting the next stranger, the friend I have yet to meet.

Connection builds community, and each of us has unlimited opportunity to participate.

Papa John Kiefer
Lafayette

Baitx, Donner and Danziger do not serve and protect us

Here we are in fire season, with a heat wave, during the fourth driest year on record. Last summer we had a dark red sky at noon, with soot falling everywhere. We begged the MOFD board to continue the chipper program during the summer, but three board members Danziger, Donner and Baitx, were, and remain, unwilling to spend ANY funds out of their \$33 million budget to do so. The reason Orinda has so much fire prone fuel is that MOFD consistently underfunds fire prevention.

We Orinda citizens were asked last November for our priorities, by a city council poll. We clearly said No. 1 is wildfire risk reduction. The city council then said an additional 1 cent sales tax is needed as an "essential services" tax, that would address fire, roads, storm drains and emergency preparedness. This tax measure passed in January. Since then the city has not yet obtained a chipper and truck. MOFD, which was to provide personnel to man the chipper, found itself short staffed and had to stop its own chipper service for a period in May and June. We have lost months of vegetation removal.

MOFD is now negotiating raises for our firemen with their union. Three of the MOFD board members are either current or previously union firemen. Their election to the board was supported and funded by the union. Upon the union president's suggestion, director Baitx even placed on the agenda the consolidation of MOFD with ConFire. This resulted in strong opposition by hundreds of citizens and both city councils. The board back-pedaled.

It has become apparent that the three MOFD board members do not represent the citizens' interests. A formal complaint indicating the potential conflict of interest has been submitted to the California Fair Political Practices Commission to determine if director Baitx and possibly Donner and Danziger must recuse themselves from the salary negotiations.

Baitx, Donner and Danziger must never again be elected to the MOFD board.

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