

COPA coming together to reclaim our politicalness

KATHY RUIZ GOLDENKRANZ

I wear many different hats in Santa Cruz County. Because I believe strongly it is my obligation to give back, I involve myself in a cross-section of work with children as a Boys and Girls Club board member, in the Queer community as chairwoman of Out in Our Faith, in my synagogue Temple Beth El, where I served as president, and in politics as an elected delegate to the California Democratic Party. These organizations are valuable and serve our community well. I am proud of each.

There is a special, unique involvement with Communities Organized for relational Power in Action, (COPA), an Industrial Areas Foundation affiliate, which in my opinion surpasses all other groups in our region.

Imagine a coalition of 22 institutions around the Monterey Bay, 18 of which are faith based: Christians, Protestant and Catholic; Jewish Congregations; Unitarians, school districts, family resource centers, housing and labor advocates representing over 30,000 people, all working together in English and in Spanish, from the bottom up. These are the people in the pews working for the betterment of our society, locally, statewide and nationally. If you can imagine this, you now know COPA.

My synagogue is a founding member of COPA. We worked for years prior to its founding in June 2003, to establish this network of primarily faith institutions. We all share in the successes and challenges of our society. Job creation, affordable housing, public education funding, affordable, quality health care, crime and gang violence and immigration issues affect each of us, in some way.

While some of us may live in nice neighborhoods, inside those

homes people are struggling to pay their bills, risking losing health coverage and expressing anger over the funding levels of our schools. For those in the barrios, you can take that list and add gang violence and discrimination for having the audacity to immigrate to this country in search of a better life.

Today, — Nov. 22 — from 3-5 p.m., something profound will take place. COPA will gather at the Mello Center in Watsonville. With a full house of 1,000 COPA members, COPA leaders will present and negotiate their solutions to gang violence, foreclosures, health care reform and economic justice with Congressman Sam Farr. Bishop Garcia of the Monterey Catholic Diocese, and a long list of local leaders will express their commitment to work together on our agenda of issues and declare with us, it is time for us average folk to take back our “politicalness.”

You may ask, what is “politicalness”? As defined by Professor Sheldon Wolin, politicalness is the capacity for human beings to value what it means to participate in and be responsible for the care and improvement of our common life. It is our duty to inform and challenge people with and in power, to share in the concerns of our communities. These agenda concerns prevail across all faiths, all cultures, and all people.

COPA’s agenda has emerged from thousands of face to face conversations. Our members decide together which among the many challenges we as a society confront are most important to address. This list represents our collective work. It is incumbent upon us as citizens and residents to inform our leaders and insist on action by reclaiming our politicalness.

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OPINION

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