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|  | Speak Up - KōrerotiaCommunity initiatives after the Christchurch mosque attacks13 March 2021 |
| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s community access radio station Plains FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.Tēnā koutou, ko “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” tēnei, ko Sally Carlton ahau. Today we’re talking about community initiatives after the Christchurch mosque attacks. It’s been two years now - which in some ways is quite amazing that the time seems to have gone so fast and that life seems to have continued on - and on the other hand, we stop and think but those impacts are still so raw and so fresh for so many people and those two years have probably really, really dragged past. So rather than just focusing on the attacks themselves, I wanted to focus on some of the positives that have come from them and for me, one of the most amazing things that we’ve seen has been this upsurge of community initiative and activity and interest and spark around a whole load of themes but particularly connection and connecting people beyond and above community groups, particularly Muslims and non-Muslims but all sorts of other people as well. So today we’ve got four guests in the studio who are going to be talking us through the various initiatives that they have been part of - and in most cases, set up - as a way of talking about what have we been doing but also where are we heading in the future as we’re moving beyond the second anniversary. Sophie Pye, perhaps we’ll start with you. If you could introduce yourself please and tell us a wee bit about why you are on the show today.  |
| Sophie | Yeah sure, hi. I’m Sophie and I’ve just spent the last five years at Rangiruru Girls School in Christchurch and in my last year, I was lucky enough to be head of school. I’m here today because I did try and arrange a student leaders’ trip to the mosque Al Noor and also, I started a project called Humans of Rangi which I look forward to talking about.  |
| Sally | Thank you very much, and Tony Green?  |
| Tony | Just a member the Muslim community. In the six months after the shooting, we had like an interim executive committee and I was part of that and I was asked to be the spokesperson. I came to say in due course, I cannot speak for a woman who has lost her husband or somebody who is walking around with their body riddled with lead; the best I can be or attempt to be is some sort of bridge to that experience. And I guess it's that bridging which is what I’m about here and going forward.  |
| Sally | Thank you and you’re going to tell us a wee bit about your initiative, the Christchurch Invitation. Mazharr Syed?  |
| Mazharr | Kia ora. I feel it’s a privilege for me to come here and speak about the project which I have been working ever since March 15th. All of it is a collection of photographs and other evidences which I started to document after the March 15th. I was lucky to be part of the male team and later my wife became the Mosque woman coordinator. So I was attached to the mosque for all the month along with her. So in that time I started taking photographs. So within six, seven months I found that I have collected more than 80 events and I started to document about them. The aroha, people’s kindness and civility and the amazing events, amazing artefacts, amazing gifts, pebbles. So many things kept coming. The second thing is I am doing a course on how do you dismantle hate with aroha. So this is about teaching how you deal with hate. So that’s how I am here.  |
| Sally | And you also are involved in The Peace Train is that correct? |
| Mazhar | Oh yes I am part of a group which we created to educate people around Christchurch about sustainability and so part of that group, I propose an idea that why don’t we have an interfaith bike ride and that idea evolved into saying that why don’t we go to all the places of worship in Christchurch and bike ride together with all of us in different faiths, beliefs, go show that solidarity. Aand that turned out to be an amazing event; like, 400 plus people turned up. We had the overwhelming response. We are doing it again on April 12 and the response is so much that we are doing four rides in Christchurch.  |
| Sally | So cool. And our final guest, Rebecca Parnham**,** you are going to talk to us about Giving Seeds of Love.  |
| Rebecca | Yes, kia ora. Thanks for having me. I’m Rebecca Parnham, I’m a social worker, a mum, Cantabrian and a Pākehā. I’m an upstander. I think that there’s a real place for Pākehā to be making a difference in this space and we have an obligation to do that. For me, I started Giving Seeds of Love but also part of the Uniting Canterbury Women co-founders, so there’s six of us in the team.  |
| Sally | Could you tell us please what is Giving Seeds of Love and what is Uniting Canterbury Women?  |
| Rebecca | Sure thing. So Giving Seeds of Living is an initiative that I started…we had planned as a family to make seeded paper. We had been working with Roots & Shoots which is Jane Goodall’s foundation and my daughter was an EnviroFern at school. So we were going to make seeded paper. The day we were going to do it was the 17th of March. So having experienced that, running out of town and being in lockdown but knowing that was nothing compared to what our Muslim friends had gone through, I wanted to check in with my kids how they were feeling. So we were making this seeded paper and because you’re just sitting, you’re ripping, it’s quite a therapeutic thing to do. I decided it was time to check in and see what they were thinking and feeling because our children sometimes if they don’t get it which is the hard thing to understand, they make it up in their own heads. Then I could see I had all these parents asking me what do I say to my kids about this. Because I was a social worker I understood anxiety and how to support people after the earthquakes. I started giving Seeds of Love and it was a way of putting out some information and it’s kind of evolved from there. But essentially it’s about using wildflowers to talk about diversity. In nature, diversity is a strength that makes a strong ecosystem and I believe the same should be true of society. We should see our diversity as our biggest strength and if we embrace it, we’ll have a better society. And Uniting Canterbury Women was the brainchild of Jo Bailey. She wanted to do more than she had - she donated money, she gave flowers, she went to vigils - but she felt like she needed to do more. So she contacted Zahra Hussaini and said hey, let’s sit down, I want to talk and they’d met each other before so Zahra then went away and decided who she was going to pull into the team and I was fortunate to be one of those people. We have done a number of events but we did a massive event which again, sometimes you do something and you don’t realise how many people are going to turn up to it. 650 women turned up to our launch event, it was massive, it was overwhelming and it just showed how many people wanted to connect. Both of the things we do are offerings to the community to participate and to connect.  |
| Sally | Fantastic, thank you. Sophie, you spoke about arranging visits for high school students to go to the mosque. Could you maybe talk us through why you wanted to do that and how it actually worked out?  |
| Sophie | I suppose when you’re in a leadership position and you’re wanting to role model these things to the school like, such as diversity and inclusion, for me it was more like… well, first I need to learn more about it myself. And if I’m being really honest, I knew nothing about Muslim, I knew nothing about Islam or other cultures so I really wanted to go through this learning experience so I could go back to school and role model that to everyone. So the idea was that I’d bring together student leaders from Christchurch central schools and we went to the mosque and we went there and it was amazing, we listened to Farid [Ahmed] talk about his experience and just listening to his story and his ability to forgive was a really special experience and I just wish that I could bring every student from Christchurch there to listen to it. But I suppose, like you have to be realistic. I wasn’t able to do that. So for me, it was more about getting the student leaders along and then they can go back to their schools and share the story and work on it from there. |
| Sally | You’ve spoken so far around this idea of learning and Rebecca you’ve touched on the idea of understanding and sort of working through that process. What are some of the other reasons that have prompted these initiatives? |
| Tony | It’s been said that Muslims don’t do memorials or we don’t memorialise but of course as human beings you don’t forget. And the big thing how do we all go forward - and Rebecca, you touched on this in the huge number of people who turn up; Mazharr, you said that with the Peace Train; Sophie, in talking about learning and understanding and what we don’t know about each other - so it’s how do we go forward. Rebecca talked about diversity being a strength and this was going back last year, so the first… anniversary doesn’t seem like quite the right word when you’re talking about this but we’ll use it for want of something better - one of the guys, Ben Gresham, in our group, he said how do we take this forward, how do we take forward the incredible response which attracted global attention and how do we translate that or how do we try to render that into a space where we talk to something better?So the whole 9/11 narrative which is the binary - you are either for us or against us - we have to work against that kind of idea. So we called it a Christchurch Invitation. It’s like an invitation to come; it’s not a compulsion, it’s not a Christchurch injunction or anything like that. So it’s an invitation to come into a space - and our tagline is harnessing difference - to pull that difference together because we saw in the kind of stuff that Sophie is doing, is just a huge possibility we thought that we can maybe do something different.And New Zealand also has something special about the way that it works - whether you go back to the Springbok tour, the protests against the nuclear testing in the Pacific - New Zealand has often had its own way of doing stuff. Sophie talked about, she couldn’t bring everyone together - it’s also trying to give people a way to say look, we can’t solve everything but what small stuff we do, whatever it is, the small stuff we do and we do it consistently and we realise that actually the other people, by the way they all poured out, that there’s this hunger for something different. So I suppose that’s what drives this forward, yes.  |
| Mazhar | While I was at the funeral home Lamb & Hayward, an interesting thing happened while we were receiving the bodies from the hospital and also dealing with the families, educating them about all the formalities, paperwork. Police Chief said something very profound that day and it stuck to my brain like an engraving even to this day. He hugged me and he said, “Mazhar, you know outside how the city is responding; he has chosen a wrong country”. Every morning, early morning before the sunrise, I would go around the city and just get the photographs of all the walls and memorials and churches and everywhere and I really understood what he meant and that kept growing and growing exponentially as the months, days, year and I said OK, this is something profound and when we all share this on Facebook, WhatsApp and all, people from all over the world responded and I read around 20, 25 books of people’s messages. We had around 200-plus books or something! This was such a huge profound empathy and love, care. I said no, this is something phenomenal that this world has ever seen, it is never before the world has seen something like this where the whole country has come together and of course from the world, people as small as kids to old as grannies taking part. And I said this needs to be documented, this needs to be taught as educational material. It is educational content. It is words to be passed on to the next generation. So that’s the idea of the course I took on. The bicycle ride was an amazing way of connecting many things, you know, cycling, sustainability, low carbon footprint, also going from one place of worship to other. It is a Peace Train. Then we went into all of these places, people there overwhelmed. I saw many of them in tears, they won’t go out because we had very tough time, we had to really get people out because it was so enjoying and that was very, very influencing. Yes.  |
| Sally | One thing I think you’ve all touched on is this importance of trying to provide a space where everybody can join if they feel like they need a place for healing or a place for connection.  |
| Tony | One of the things we have to do is try to create difficult conversations, conversations with people you don’t agree with and also because New Zealand, it’s a secular country, it’s got its Christian roots but the majority of the population don’t adhere to a particular faith. But, when we’re talking about Christchurch Invitation, what we’re saying is come into this space of thinking and behaving where you bring the best that you have. So if you’re from the Jewish community, if you’re a Hindu, if you’re a Muslim, a Sikh, if you have no faith, if you come from particular cultural traditions, the whole idea of mana whenua, the whole idea of kaitiaki - the guardians of this space, the manaakitanga - the whole idea of that. One in our group was talking to a Samoan guy, he was trying to explain what we were trying to do and he said does it make sense and this guy, yeah, he said that’s the la’u and that Pasifika concept, the space between us is not an empty space, it’s the ability to respect and it’s trying to speak to that space. Bring the best that you’ve got. We had the earthquake memorial, you look and you hear again of the stories of what people did afterwards.  |
| Sally | We’ve been talking about this idea of trying to pull in anybody who would like to but at the same time there are somewhat more targeted approaches as well. So, reaching out to Pākehā or majority communities, specifically reaching out to Muslims, specifically reaching out to first responders for example. So core groups who were involved in this. I’m interested in hearing about how did you go about the actual practicalities of engaging with those core groups in the first place.  |
| Rebecca | To me Giving Seeds of Love basically just started with my contacts and grew from there but obviously being part of Uniting Canterbury Women gave us the opportunity to look at broadening that. So when we did the event, we handed out 1000 cards with the seeded hearts and also that was the day that we unveiled Unity. Lots of the flower wrappers ended up with us and I thought what are we going to do with these because for me, using the tribute paper for the seeded hearts and using the flower wrappers is a way of saying you came, you left your flowers and now this needs to continue. So all of those flower wrappers now are Unity, which was by Simona Johnson, you know, unveiling that got a lot of media attention which was great. But Unity is almost a challenge: You put those flowers down, what now? And now we’re saying these are the things we can do to connect. I worked with Who is Hussain? a lot to get out to some events as well but it didn’t take much for us to get things off the ground and get some movement because I think we hit on a way for people to connect and I think we were all looking for a way to do that.  |
| Tony | A guy called Neil Postman wrote a book called *The Disappearance of Childhood* and he said, “Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see, children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see”. What are the messages we’re going to send? What we’ve said in the Christchurch Invitation - it’s created an opening of doing things differently. So what are the openings we create to actually listen and let people take over? Because as you get older - and this is a solemn kind of comment - but we had the earthquakes 2010, 2011 - in 2010 nobody was killed and we thought we came out unscathed, 2011 we got caught up short - and then we’ve had a series of things, so we’ve had the Kaikoura quake and then we had this awful thing on March 15th 2019 - and one of the teachings in Islam is nobody knows what they can learn tomorrow and nobody knows where they were spend their last day. So you have to prepare for succession and often we get… we’re guilty of it in our community, we get the stubbornness, people clinging onto position at a time when you really should be stepping aside or stepping at least to one side. And we’ve seen this with the whole hunger for better solutions over climate action. When you’ve got energy and you’ve got ideas coming in, it’s crucial that you draw on that energy. Older fellas like me, we get tired and our ideas get tired sometimes. Making space for that and not going along with the way… If the way that we have been acting towards each other brings about these kinds of things, March 15th and what’s happened globally in other places to Jewish communities and black Baptistchurches and so on and so forth then we’ve got to step back from that and we’ve got to create that and recognise new ways of working.  |
| Sally | We’re going to hear Sophie’s response to Tony’s very thought-provoking comments around the importance of young people in bringing their visions forward. In the meantime, we’ve got ‘Welcome Home’ by Dave Dobbyn.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY DAVE DOBBYN – WELCOME HOME** |
| Sally  | That was Dave Dobbyn with ‘Welcome Home’ which was written actually after a march in Christchurch. |
| Rebecca | Yes, he was inspired after a rally in Christchurch, an anti-racism rally. So I think it’s such a special song to our country, it’s a beautiful.  |
| Sally | Sophie, Tony was talking before the break about the importance of bringing young people into this conversation around bringing people together, diversity, those sorts of things. As our youngest panellist, what are your views on this? |
| Sophie | One thing I think that is awesome in the school system is that students learn a lot from their peers and sometimes more than they’d learn from a teacher lecturing from the front of a classroom. And that’s kind of why I started Humans of Rangi. A little backstory: You might have heard of Humans of New York and this awesome guy goes around and photographs people from New York and shares their stories via text on social media and I thought it was such a cool initiative and I think storytelling is one of the most powerful ways to learn from each other. I have a massive passion for film and so each week I would document a student at school and her story, her dreams, her passions, like her background, her culture, her religion, and they would get shown to the entire school fortnightly in assembly and it was just so awesome. I learnt so much. We had a girl who has a dream to be a Paralympian, a girl’s dad who was the doctor in the mosque attack and a girl who solo flew planes and a story of moving from India to New Zealand. For me, I learnt so much but the feedback was how powerful it was to listen to other girls share their story and how we can move forward in diversity by learning from others and learning about their cultures.  |
| Tony | Storytelling is really, really important.  |
| Sally | What a great initiative, cool as well to use film. What a powerful means of getting stories across.  |
| Sophie | Yes, definitely. |
| Sally | Thinking about not just Humans of Rangi but all your initiatives, do you feel like they’ve been ‘successful’? And you can interpret that term however you want to.  |
| Sophie | I think it’s hard to kind of measure success on these sorts of things but for say the visit to Al Noor, it was that five out of six schools that I reached out to responded and were so keen to come along and join me on my learning experience and for Humans of Rangi, it was more just the students talking and their feedback and parent feedback and what I got back the most was we’d given these students a platform to share their story and that was really heart-warming for me, really encouraging.  |
| Mazhar | For me, there’s more of a perpetual ever-growing, ever-expanding effort because what I see today, we live in a very hyper communication, hyper information, real time information era where we are bombarded from the time we get up to sleep, even in our dreams, we are influenced by news, views, social media. And so much of things can create the bias around your mind. So while I was developing this course, I studied human psychology, human behaviour and neural pathways created in our brains. So I was surprised that both love and hate trigger the same neural triggers in our brain. So once you love something, you like something, that can also be turned into hate and discrimination, it can lead to acts of violence. So there’s a wonderful pyramid by Anti-Defamation League which says that how this bias leads to prejudice, prejudice leads to discrimination, discrimination leads to acts of hate and violence and genocide. So there is a pathway there and that means with this hyper information, hyper communication, this pathway can be created in young minds, old, any age, any and every age, 24/7. That is how we have to work on this topic and I felt me and myself need to be reminded, I myself need to be detoxified, de-hated in so many topics. I felt like OK, I’m trying to take clear of this but I’ve had to understand my own biases in some many things so I said oh, this is something very profound. It is like 24/7 thing you have to keep working from education, to your mentoring, to your home, your neighbourhood, your friends, colleagues, workplace, everywhere, anywhere. It is just got started and what a way that New Zealand has the unfortunate and privilege to do this. I mean so many good things are starting here and we have stood one country, one nation, one whānau come COVID, so I think there is a lot to be done the Kiwi way.  |
| Rebecca | Our initiative, we partnered with Lady Khadija Trust and we got funding to run 20 workshops in the community and we haven’t advertised them because we didn’t need to. It was just people are like yeah, we want you to come in, that would be awesome. We were about growing meaningful connections on our planet. So our thinking is we want to get people in the same room, we want to make connections, those one-on-one connections, and that’s just been so beautiful to see happen. People see me as the face of it but I’ll open up, I’ll start a workshop and then I slowly become obsolete. People won’t even know I’m in the room, they don’t notice when I’ve left the room to do something. For me, the success has just been seeing people connect, it’s really, really beautiful. I think we’re all working to our strengths whatever they are. We’re all approaching the same issue but where our strengths are.  |
| Mazhar | Just adding to that point, I think, when I designed this course, so I took all those initiatives, 1800 initiatives, and I tried to classify them in various categories like empathy, sympathy, love, kindness, emotions, all those… Hate also has a lot of them, like prejudice, discrimination, bias. The more emotions in love than hate. So I took both of this as a content of teaching. I started giving this three-day course delivered at the WEA [Workers Education Association] and now New Zealand Police has extended the support for me to give that and I’ve given it to Canterbury University staff, Ara staff and many other faith groups. So I’m taking this opportunity to say that look, this workshop is a humble effort to understand how and why we should continue to do this work. Spread the message of love and aroha 24/7.  |
| Tony | The many, many things coming through in this… an incredible hunger for connection. Sophie is saying about the way that the stories at Rangi were received and when somebody… the story can come out and they can see that another person has heard them and have seen the space that they’re in. Rebecca said she didn’t need to advertise stuff, people just came and that lovely phrase you said: you said, “I’ve slowly become obsolete”. There’s a couple of things here. One is that in the flood of people that came from all over the world to the mosque in the period afterwards, it has seemed to me - and I keep using this term - like an experiential metaphor. People were coming, of course they were coming out of empathy, they were coming out of sorrow but very, very often they stood there and they were talking about their own condition. I remember a black woman from Ohio stood there, she was talking about her own children in the States and she said I tell them, “If you are stopped by the police, put your hands together on the top of the steering wheel and follow exactly what they say” and even then I am worried about a rogue cop on a bad day. I saw a Dutch guy come in and he just told me his own story, he told about losing his son at the age of 22. His daughter had gone off, she lived by herself, there was nobody else around and he was alone and it was if he was looking at his own life and saying what is this all about, what is the purpose of things. This sort of hunger of connections. Just one more thing on this that mentioned the earthquake memorial, I’m trying to work on a book on all of this and I talk about the fault lines of hate, that the fault lines in the earth that gave us the earthquake and took lives in 2011, you had an incredible coming together of community afterwards and what we’ve got now in Christchurch is we now rebuild differently. So we have probably the strongest buildings in New Zealand. What I’m saying also is that the fault lines of hate and fear can do incredible harm - and we’ve seen that - but the opportunity for us is to recognise that before they cause the harm. Some of the work that you’re all describing here, that speaks to that. To draw on those… not just those strengths but that openness, that willing, that desire for something better.  |
| Sally | Definitely. One of the reasons I see the various initiatives you guys have been involved in as being successful is because they not only have that kind of symbolic element of trying to bring people together, trying to increase harmony or all these sort of good things we’ve been talking about, but they also have a really practical element to them. Like you sit down and you make papier-mâché and you squish the hearts in; or you get on your bike and you ride; or you take a course; or, in Sophie’s case, you watch a video or something. There’s some kind of practical element and if you’re going to be connecting with people, I think if you’re *doing* something with them, that really helps.   |
| Mazhar | Yes, absolutely. So correctly said. When I came to New Zealand, one of the very immediate things I felt in New Zealand was that people *do* things here rather than just talk and share. So they put down their best foot forward and do acts on it. That was really impressive and when I see the amount of climate change and carbon footprint, ecosystem, sustainability, and the Māori… you see people do wear koru here; they speak, they greet. So that this is a place where people *do* and that exactly reflected in the attitude of the country that people do and everybody wanted to do something. So while I was coming on the first Friday here with my family, the Muslim communities were given parking very close to the Hagley Park and we parked and we walked and hundreds of people, other communities attending there. Slowly I found when I got down, a group of people came and walked along with us together. I went, “Did somebody teach them to do all of this?” This is something like those starling birds, if you know the starlings. They just fly and they move, they move like clouds and winds and they change the direction so fast and if you have seen those starling murmurations, as they call it. Nobody teaches them, nobody. There is no leader in that group, everybody does it and with such a speed that even the split second decision, they say that it’s faster than fighter pilot’s reaction time. So they do it without bumping into each other and without hurting each other and they just do it so random, so organic - and that’s exactly what I saw in New Zealand. That there’s no leader here, of course there was a leadership at that time but the way the people did was so random. As we call it in physics resonating sympathy vibration. That analogy, you can see very practically in New Zealand. These last two years I’m seeing that starling. I give that example of starlings murmuration aroha here.   |
| Sally | That’s lovely.  |
| Rebecca | On the marae, that happens and men flank the women. That happened at that event but also weren’t there times when people stood outside of the mosque for prayer? That whole idea of flanking you, I’m supporting you physically, I’m going to stand here.  |
| Mazhar | Absolutely true. You know when I went from the mosque to home I was terrified because there’s still news was there’s still shooters in the city so I thought, “OK I’m a target, I can be shot any time” so I went home, closed the lights, closed the windows, put the sofa and I tried to behave as if there is nothing in this house, dark, and we will lie in one room with my family. It was so fearful, terrifying, trauma to me and within an hour I saw my neighbour standing outside my home and I looked through my curtain and walked out and they hugged me and said, “We are here to support you and we are here to guard your house”, something like that. That fear quickly turned… it was like ice melting and you know what, within an hour, me and my wife left my kids at home and we went to the hospital. So you can see how it changes.So that incident tells me that look, that act of kindness brought my fears that I walked that night with my wife to the hospital alone. The Deans Avenue was closed and we had to walk all the way to the hospital and it was dark and scariest Riccarton Road ever you can see. That’s what I’m trying to say here is: don’t ignore even the small kindness of what you would do and everyone you could in your capacity. You don’t know how much of influence you can create.  |
| Tony | Small acts of kindness. I mean another one of the visitors to the mosque was a girl from Ohio in the States and she came in and walked into the mosque, tears pouring down, and she was followed by a woman from Melbourne also crying. The two were hugging one another and the girl from the States said my friends over there think I’m weird because I don’t listen to the news because it’s dark and it’s bleak and I feel powerless and I said, without getting too much in the political talking about the Trumps or Boris Johnson or anything, there’s that wonderful Christian prayer, “God grant the strength to leave alone the things I can’t change, the power to change the things I can, the strength to leave alone the things I cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference”. To be able to do those sort of small things and a small thing can be just the smile, a consistent smile. For many, many things that come out from this is that of course at the centre of those people who lost loved ones and with that, people who are carrying awful wounds and we see them, I mean in particular cases you see people consistently in the mosque and they’re trying to bend to pray but you know they’re in a lot of pain. But the ripples of the trauma head out. And you’ve got the first responders who saw stuff that they cannot unsee. I spoke to a particular guy who moved out from Deans Avenue, he said I cannot walk down Deans Avenue. He said I can drive down it but I cannot walk down it. So then you realise also I think on top of that and this is one of the going forward things, is how do we frame this? Because yes, in this instance it was the Muslim community that was attacked. But we know globally that these things have been done over and over again far, far too often to different communities and so God forbid that it happens to anybody else really. We all have to take this on, not just that this particular community has to be helped but we have to work towards that so that nobody else goes through this kind of thing. I think the messaging, the framing around this… Because the Royal Commission report talks about social inclusion. For example, now in Australia and other places too, Chinese people are getting attacked because of the Coronavirus and so on. So that other person’s problem is my problem, you know, that other person’s challenge is my challenge.  |
| Sophie | Yeah just on what Tony has been saying, I think that’s so right and a lot of discrimination does come from misunderstanding and not knowing and I think that’s where it’s so important that we do spread awareness and we all learn together and we take that time, like sacrifice that time to learn because when we do learn, that’s when people are more kind towards other races and religions and things like that and I think what you’ve said Tony is very true.  |
| Sally | We might have our second song though. We’ve got ‘Kind’ by Music with Michal, who is a local Christchurch mum and she does a lot of kids’ music and I believe she finished this song after the 15 March? |
| Rebecca | Yes, so she mainly had written it and then she went home with her husband and they finished the song and she released it for free for anyone to download and use and she’s just had some funding to put out a beautiful music video.  |
| Sally | And then we might also have the Tears for Fears song, ‘Seeds of Love’ which is why you chose the name of your Giving Seeds of Love. So we might have the two songs then together.  |
| Rebecca | Perfect. |
|  | **MUSIC BY MICHAL - KIND** |
|  | **MUSIC BY TEARS FOR FEARS – SEWING THE SEEDS OF LOVE** |
| Sally  | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia and today we’re talking about community initiatives after the Christchurch mosque attacks. We’ve got four guests with us – Sophie Pye who was a high school student at the time, Tony Green who is involved in many things including the Christchurch Invitation and was a spokesperson for the mosque after the attacks, Mazhar Syedahmed who has been documenting all these initiatives who is also involved in the Peace Train and various other things, and also Rebecca Parnham from Giving Seeds of Love and Uniting Canterbury Women. For this final section, I’d like to think about the long haul: what happens beyond the cameras leaving, beyond the first anniversary being passed, the second anniversary passing. How do we maintain momentum beyond those key milestones? It’s a big one but feel free to jump in.  |
| Rebecca | It’s really important that we continue all of this work. In some ways Giving Seeds of Love has evolved and it’s been quite organic so I’ve tried to hear what people are saying to me and when I partner with different people, we go on different projects. This is important not just at anniversaries; in fact, we step back during those times because we need to listen to the people that were affected. We have to continue this, we have to continue this for our children’s sake, for the future. For me it’s just led us on a path that will continue and evolve. So we’ve evolved as kind of the grief process has. So we started by looking at trauma and helping people to reduce the trauma and then we looked at connecting and I think the next step for us is about more formally putting some supports together but yeah, I think we need to continue this forever, it’s a huge issue. |
| Sally | One question actually, for your Seeds of Love, will you run out of bits of paper eventually?  |
| Rebecca | I wouldn’t think so. It’s amazing. I have everything that was in archive and sometimes you’ll open up a beautiful big envelope and lots of the Jewish community, especially in America sent a lot. It was beautiful. I don’t think I’m going to run out of paper, no, there was a lot of love.  |
| Sally | So just to make it clear for people listening, Rebecca’s seeds of hearts are made from papier-mâché made of the paper of the cards and offerings placed outside the mosques and various places around Christchurch.   |
| Tony | Can I pick up again on something that Sophie said? One of the crucial things: What does it really mean about community? And you can go through school or you can go through an educational process and the importance of that ought to be that as you work through, you find out who you are. I mean Sophie’s point about going to uni and not really being quite sure what she might do is brilliant. I taught in Singapore for many years and I remember giving a morning assembly talk and I said there’s a lot of talent in this room, a lot of you are going to be doctors and lawyers and blah blah, some of you in fact were going to be doctors even before you were born, meaning the parental intention and aspiration was you must be this. And then yet some of these people are very talented, very able but are utterly unsuited to be doctors. Their greater gift was in some other area. So finding out who you are, what is it that makes you tick, and then actually listening to other people’s stories so you come from a place where actually you find out more about them. So you create community and you break down those barriers of fear, how dare I admit to this feeling and that kind of thing. So that Māori expression “He tangata, he tangata, he tangata. It’s people, it’s people, it’s people”. We are hoping in 2022, hoping that we may be able to have a play on a young student from Julliard School in the States who is a playwrighting student, she came here and I introduced her to some *shuhada*, those who lost their loved ones, and others, and she sat down with them, gained their trust and then just listened and she recorded verbatim what they said, went back to the States and together with others, they turned this into a performance piece of verbatim drama. She sent me back word clouds where the word that is most frequent is ramped up in font size and these were word clouds taken from the verbatim interviews with these people and consistently, not in every case but across a whole lot of cases, the one word that stood out in much larger font is *people*. People, people, people. If we are to be strong, that whole thing that has been talked about, Rebecca has talked about this diversity, our tagline I said is harnessing difference is what I think we need to be about And I’ll just say one last thing here. Some years ago together with Farid Ahmed, he and I were asked to do a talk in Christ’s College and the House Master who organised the talk said that many of these students come from a very, very established thing. They have inheritance and life has been much the same in terms of expectation and he said I want to complicate their existence. That should be it, that you don’t settle back into that safe notion but actually you get tested, you get tested in your views and perceptions and we test one another in terms of that, in a way that is intended for the good.  |
| Sophie | I think I can relate to what you were saying so, so much and it was definitely a big realisation for me. Exactly what you were saying, I realised that I’ve grown up around the same people and the same values and things like that and it wasn’t until the attack that I realised how much I didn’t know and how much I hadn’t put myself around people that I wouldn’t normally encircle myself with. I think there’s a lot of hope within our generation - you guys might think very differently - but I think with my generation, there’s much hope because everyone is so open to learn about LGBT and being less… Do you get kind of where I was going?  |
| Sally | Yes, definitely. I was actually thinking as you were talking, LGBT is always the one that comes to mind when I think of your generation and it’s just not even an issue.  |
| Sophie | Exactly. But yeah, no, I think it’s just important as you were saying Tony, to make sure that you put yourself around different people so that you are constantly learning.  |
| Sally | And that challenges our biases that you were talking about, Mazhar, at the beginning. If we’re going to want to move forward with others, we have to look at ourselves.  |
| Mazhar | In Quran, if you are reminded that if you kill one person, it is like killing the whole humanity and if you save one person, it is like saving the whole humanity. So if you just understand what is humanity, is it 7.4 billion people? No. It is from the first man ever you can imagine to the last man you could ever imagine. So that is humanity. It is not the current population. So it is such a big message there and so I read a lot of theoretical physics and cosmology and according to the theory of inflation, nothing is empty. Even the universe today deemed which is space is filled with dark matter as they say. So if you see nothing is empty. So taking back to the message of the Police Chief who said to me that day, is that if you keep doing these works of aroha, kindness. Fill the room with love, there won’t be a place for the hate to sit. So the more you do, the people who have any ideas of creating hate will think the reverse happens here. That’s what New Zealand showed, that you do this, we do the reverse exponentially. Hundred thousand times bigger. If you keep doing these activities and whatever in your capacity, this is what you’re going to fill in. So I want to take the opportunity here to say that please, I have that great target to reach one million people this year through my course. I know it is very ambitious but New Zealand has two degrees of separation, the world is separated by six degrees. So we are so lucky that the message can go very quickly. So I really appreciate giving me this opportunity. I want to take this as a message to everybody who is listening. Please extend this to anyone, everyone you know in your neighbourhood, your community of faith, your college, your school, your workplace. I want to share this friends of aroha. Whenever I present I see a few people in tears because it really is an amazing message but also to understand the importance of doing this kindness, that not that it just one big catastrophe, trauma, hate and we act. This is to be 24/7 along the way we breath oxygen. Thank you very much.  |
| Rebecca | I’ve always surrounded myself with people of different ethnicities and different religions and it’s what makes my life rich and full. And once we figure out our similarities, we just hone in on our differences because they’re so interesting and I just wish…. want people to see that we don’t need to be threatened by each other. Our differences are so interesting and I just want people to connect because once you sit next to someone, get to know them like they do in the workshops, all that stuff goes away. We just become two people sitting next to each other having a laugh. We just need to keep doing what we’re doing and we need to be proud of what we’ve done. We need to be an example to the rest of the world. We need to show them that this is the way to do it, this is the response. I’m really proud to be a Cantabrian, to be from Christchurch.  |
| Tony | I’m remembering a French family who came to the mosque, I had to sort of dredge up my 50 year old school French and cobbled together with shrugging and grunts and so on but we managed to communicate and I gave her my contact and she emailed me afterwards and thanked me for the reception and so on and she said that we hope that this journey of six months that we have taken with our children in different countries will permit them to develop *un coeur grand*, a big heart, a big heart open to the beauty and diversity of the world. If you are open to that and Rebecca has just said that whole thing of it being so rich and full, if you planted everything the same in your garden, even if you planted all the same plants, they’d all look different but we have to recognise differences and it’s just an interesting thing.  |
| Sophie | Just along the lines of what Rebecca was saying is that we’re all just people with stories to tell and I think kindness is the thing that allows others to open up and share their stories. So just being kind to everyone, everyone in your community, not in your community, so that people open up and share their stories.  |
| Sally | I think that’s a fantastic place to finish, Sophie, because I think you’re right. If you give people the opportunity to tell their story, they feel seen and they feel valued and that is what then gives them the courage to step forward and be themselves and that then means that we all become who we want to be and the place we want to see, really.  |
| Sophie | Definitely and that’s exactly what I think we want for our world is everyone feeling as though they can be themselves.  |
| Sally | Ka pai, kia ora. Thank you so much to all of you. This has been a really intense discussion but really uplifting as well, just to hear about all these fantastic things that are going on and the passion and drive that you all have for the difference that you are making. I think this is a fitting way to mark two years and to be looking forward to the good things that we can continue to create. Tēnā koutou. |
| All | Thank you.  |