

Thank you - to you and the undersigned organizations - for sharing your concerns about our awards event tomorrow.

For many years our organization has brought diverse people and ideas together in an effort to humanize and build understanding for those who are different from us or with whom we may disagree. This is not uncomplicated work, but we embrace the complications because nothing worth doing is uncomplicated or easy, for that matter.

In that vein, we seek out nominations each year for people, schools and law enforcement initiatives that are, among other things, working to reach out to diverse people and deepen our/their understanding of other's experiences. This year, like each year before, has a mix of people, including youth working for a better school climate, an artist who tells the story of OC residents experiencing homelessness and an advocate who started the OC Dream Team.

In the category of Community Oriented Policing, as you have noted, we are honoring the Sheriff for her creation of an Inter Faith Advisory Council. You and so many others have well articulated your concerns over decisions and policies the Sheriff has authored, this is one initiative that we felt has been positive. The Advisory Council is a venue where the Sheriff has heard directly from people affected by immigration policy and enforcement, as well as those targeted by Islamophobia, Hate Crimes/Incidents and bigotry in general.

In this era where police-community relations are strained and some departments grow ever-more closed off from public engagement and divest from community oriented policing, we do want to show the places where one attempts to swim upstream – even if those efforts are not perfect – and they rarely are, if ever.

Along with the Sheriff, we will honor 3 Tustin Police Officers who have taken time to engage with middle school students and their parents to break down barriers and challenges assumptions that the community and the officers have about one another. This effort is not perfect either, but we also think it is profound and meaningful and hope that by lifting it up we show others that it can be done.

Though we find ourselves in disagreement about this award, please know that as an organization, we value the many people and organizations that are coming together across the county and creating change. I realize that we may not always agree about the tactics, but that doesn't stop us from knowing that our way is not the only way and it takes many people and tactics to create an inclusive county.

I would welcome more conversation as well.

Respectfully,
Ali

Alison Edwards, CEO
OC Human Relations