



ellen krug  
writer, lawyer, human

## The C\* Project

### *What is The C\* Project?*

The C\* Project mission is to **cause courageous conversations** that will lead to **compassionate** positive **change** in how we interact toward humans whom we **consider** “different” from “us.”

### *Motivation and Goals for the Project*

The C\* Project is designed to spark positive change where everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, country of origin, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, and disability status is included rather than excluded. The C\* Project originated from understanding that public dialogue about diversity and inclusion occurs far less frequently in the greater Midwest than it does in larger urban centers. As a consequence, acceptance of persons who are “different” is more limited outside Midwest cities such as Minneapolis, Chicago or Kansas City.

The goal of The C\* Project is to promote better inclusivity and acceptance of diverse humans. This can only come through courageous conversations where fears, hopes, and attitudes are brought into the open. Those conversations will help listeners understand that biases for or against certain persons are innate and that the human tendency to judge others can be modified only through conscious effort. All of us have far more in common than we have differences.

### *How the Project Works*

The C\* Project centers on a presentation, “Gray Area Thinking: Understanding Diverse Humans,” which begins with a brief video clip that depicts Darnell Barton (a City of Buffalo, NY bus driver) saving a complete stranger from suicide. (Darnell is black; the woman he saves is white.) The video underscores the fundamental tools of “Thinking Gray”: (a) awareness of human suffering/struggling; (b) risk-taking to alleviate that suffering; and (c) acts of compassion/kindness.

From there, the presentation specifically addresses what it means to be “different” (and struggle) in a society that for now, is predominately white, heterosexual, and Christian.

One focus of the presentation is how America is rapidly changing. Foreign-born persons, transplants from other states, non-Christians and persons “coming out” as gay/lesbian or transgender are becoming more and more common across the Midwest. The C\* Project seeks to help everyone understand the challenges and rewards to welcoming/including everyone in our communities.

Apart from fostering positively changed attitudes toward those who are “different” from “us”, The C\* Project seeks to inspire others to act as local agents of change who can continue meaningful dialogue about diversity and inclusion.

The C\* Project presentations take place in spaces (public libraries, churches, social service agency meeting rooms) with both public leaders and the general public being involved. Presentations (including question and answers) are flexible; the best events are workshops of 4-5 hours; we need at least 2 hours to cover basic topics.

### *Ellen (Ellie) Krug and Origins of the Project*

The C\* Project is a personal initiative of Ellen (Ellie) Krug, a lawyer and nonprofit executive director. (Note: The C\* Project is unrelated to Ellie's Minneapolis nonprofit which works to connect low-income persons with civil legal resources.) Ellie, a transgender woman who transitioned from male to female in 2009, has presented on her experiences and resulting life lessons to Fortune 100 corporations, universities and colleges and nonprofits. She is the author of *Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change* (Stepladder Press 2013).

The C\* Project incorporates thoughts and ideas about unconscious bias, micro-inequities and cultural humility. Importantly, The C\* Project aims to spark an old-fashioned concept: human to human communication, with the firm conviction that most people really want to do the right thing.

### *How to Arrange for The C\* Project Presentations*

Persons or organizations who are interested in hearing more about The C\* Project or seeking to arrange for a presentation can email Ellie Krug at [elliekrug@gmail.com](mailto:elliekrug@gmail.com) or telephone at 319-360-1692. More information about The C\* Project can be found at <http://elliekrug.com/the-c-project/>

Pricing for The C\* Project presentations is flexible. Presently, donations to The C\* Project are not tax deductible.

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\* Courage, compassion/kindness, communicating, changing attitudes, color of one's skin, cooperation, certainty, connectedness, collaboration, core beliefs, community, challenging the status quo, catalyst, cheerleading, commonality, children succeeding, conscious understanding, coming around.