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AWC-SB Presents “Communicating in a Polarized Society” with Dr. Tania Israel and the 2026 Founder’s Award

Santa Barbara, CA – The Association for Women in Communications Santa Barbara ([AWC-SB](#)) will present “Communicating in a Polarized Society” with Dr. Tania Israel on **Wednesday, January 14, at 5:30 p.m.**, and will also present the 2026 Lois Phillips Founder’s Award to architect Cass Ensberg.

The event at Workzones in Santa Barbara is **free for AWC-SB members and \$25 for guests**. For more information and to register, visit the [AWC-SB website](#).

Political polarization in the U.S. is at a record high. As news, social media, and biases drive the wedge ever deeper, families, communities, and democracy suffer the fallout of societal divisions. How can communication leaders combat polarizing forces, manage interpersonal conflict, and cultivate a public voice in this fraught context? Dr. Israel can offer solutions. Grounded in evidence, experience, and skills, she will share perspectives and strategies that will leave you informed, optimistic, and empowered to take action.

“We’re excited to have Dr. Tania Israel and anticipate a great turnout for this event. She’s a highly engaging speaker and we’re looking forward to her presentation,” AWC-SB Board President Ana Papakhian said. “Her effective communication strategies empower us to improve our personal well-being, relationships, community, and country.”

In addition to Dr. Israel’s talk, AWC-SB will present the 2026 Lois Phillips Founder’s Award to architect Cass Ensberg. The award is given to individuals who are outspoken on an issue or communicate a need that would otherwise not be addressed.

“Cass Ensberg addresses issues that are controversial,” Dr. Phillips said, “including city planning policies that affect local architecture and our downtown area. She communicates her feedback and ideas in presentations, published op-eds, commission discussions, and the political debates that will shape the future. As a professional woman, Ensberg is a role model for those of us who might avoid controversies, even when we have important and fresh ideas to share.”



About Tania Israel

Tania Israel is a Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara and award-winning author of *Beyond Your Bubble: How to Connect Across the Political Divide* (APA, 2020) and *Facing the Fracture: How to Navigate the Challenges of Living in a Divided Nation* (Greenleaf, 2024). Dr. Israel's work on navigating political conflict has been received enthusiastically by professional conferences, corporations, campuses, political organizations, and faith communities. She has shared her expertise with top media outlets, such as the TODAY show, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and NPR, as well as on her podcast, *Ready to Be Strong*. Her TEDx talks include *How to Win a Political Argument* and *What Halibut Fajitas Taught Me About Bridging the Political Divide*. Dr. Israel has facilitated educational programs and difficult dialogues about a range of topics, including abortion, law enforcement, religion, and sexual orientation. She has received honors from Congress, the California State Legislature, and the American Psychological Association. To learn more visit TaniaIsrael.com.

About Cass Ensberg

Architect Cass Ensberg, FAIA, will receive the Lois Phillips Founder's Award 2026 for being a dynamic spokesperson advocating for affordable housing and the restoration of the historic and world-renowned [El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District \(EPV\)](#). As a public communicator, Ensberg writes and speaks about a range of ways to achieve the dynamism of downtown Santa Barbara and State Street. Principal of Ensberg Jacobs Design, she is also a dedicated volunteer to programs such as *Kids Draw Architecture* and has served on boards, commissions, and committees.

ABOUT AWC-SB

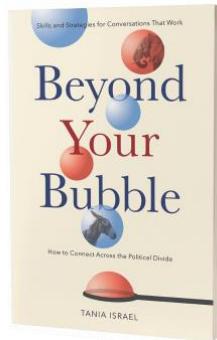
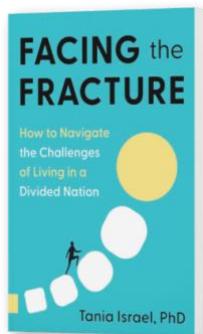
The Association for Women in Communications – Santa Barbara (AWC-SB) empowers women to develop and deepen the communication skills they need to succeed in a variety of fields. Members enjoy educational and networking opportunities to elevate their careers, enhance personal growth, and become agents of change. Now an independent organization, AWC-SB served for many years as the award-winning local chapter of the national Association for Women in Communications and is governed by an [all-volunteer board](#).

AWC-SB members include journalists and broadcasters, entrepreneurs, designers and marketers, authors, corporate communicators, photographers, coaches, and public relations experts. AWC-SB offers opportunities to network with colleagues, hosts monthly meetings (free for members) featuring experts on current topics, and presents the annual Women of Achievement Awards event. Visit [awcsb.org](#) to learn more about the organization, its all-volunteer board, and upcoming events.



AWC-SB was founded in 2006 by communications consultant Dr. Lois Phillips, publisher Mindy Bingham, and producer Deborah Hutchison. They saw the need for a dynamic, local organization that cut across sectors to bring together professional communicators, solopreneurs, scholars, and corporate communicators as well as communications majors at local colleges and universities.

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Dr. Tania Israel and her books *Facing the Fracture* and *Beyond Your Bubble*



Cass Ensberg



Dr. Lois Phillips