



Cambridge Peace Commission

A department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Cambridge Peace Commission Meeting

Wednesday, January 19, 2011 • 6:00 p.m.

Notes

Attending: Manikka Bowman, Karen Coleman, Frank Connelly, Larry Kim, Brian Loeb, Mushtaque Mirza, Rosalie Rippey, Jess Weaver

Staff: Brian Corr

Guests: Stephanie Acker, Sarah Almer, Barbara Bryant, Andrea Gaudette, Stephanie Guirand, Debby Irving, Dave Slaney

Annual Martin Luther King Day Commemoration

- Successful, powerful remarks by Rev. Steve Neville
- When we started, just under 100 people, but there were about 200 people who attended
- Most of the City Councilors attended
- The remarks addressed both Dr. King's deeper challenges of oppression, ongoing persecution and also the idea of service

The separately organized "Many Helping Hands Day of Service" at the YWCA Cambridge followed the commemoration:

- Group of women from Cambridge organized this and coordinated with the Peace Commission on the timing and location
- There were easily 250 people there, including families, students, etc. Between 30 and 50 people spilled over from the MLK commemoration

There were questions about: whether the level of coordination with the YWCA was a good model for next year? How do we engage people who are already working in other fields, how do we get them to learn about these issues? Noting that many speakers discussed whether service was "what Dr. King would have wanted us to do," and how training, educating volunteers about the causes they are interested in can help people to look at the bigger picture. There was a suggestion that a group of members from the Peace Commission reach out to the organizers of the day of service and discuss making it a long-term project.

Upcoming Events, Activities, and Programs

- **YWCA: Stand Against Racism**
 - Cambridge has its own planning committee, but this part of a national project. Chance for people to talk about these issues ("isms."). Not sure exactly what it will

entail, but maybe trying to organize an event with the high school, located in the library after school?

- Students involved in the presentation; more likely to show up if they have some connection to it...STARS students maybe?
 - Chandra Banks might have some good ideas.
 - Other CRLS club ideas: Amnesty, Black Students Alliance, Haitian Club, etc.
 - Goals of Stand Against Racism are to: Empower women and eliminate racism (the YWCA's mission); try to get all YWCAs to organize around issues of racism; and to organize -- YWCAs across the state did events: films, teach-ins.
 - There were questions about the role of the Peace Commission and whether we should organize our own event or support what they're doing.
 - Debby Irving has a ton of these films; she is happy to volunteer to do something or just to lend films and help with choreographing post-film discussions.
- **2011 Holocaust Commemoration**
 - Led by Peace Commission (with subcommittee) for last 20 years
 - Event at Temple Beth Shalom on Tremont St. for first two weeks in May
 - Challenge is trying to find a speaker...has always been a survivor of the Holocaust. Commitment to find people, even though finding those who have experienced it and are willing to discuss it is really difficult. Members of Congregation Eitz Chayim in Cambridgeport have taken this on.
 - The program will include music, poems, high school students, and possibly students from the Graham and Parks School, and clergy.
 - There are opportunities for people to help through being readers, setting up, materials, outreach, and turnout.
 - There was a discussion of how to communicate the universality of persecuting minorities, perhaps with a message that is about who is vulnerable in our community, as well as questions about how do we affirm religious rights and cultural identity?
 - There was discussion about the benefits of having the commemoration in a synagogue versus in a church, a library, or a secular space...but then it's taking it away from Temple Beth Shalom because it has always been there and whether there a possibility of rotation between different venues?
 - **Peace@Home Project on Domestic Violence**
 - Work with men around domestic violence, "train the trainer" idea
 - Small grant from the Men's Health League brought together men from Cambridge and beyond, and trainers from EMERGE came, and were good at facilitating conversations.
 - Now looking at how to make domestic violence something that men talk about and in what ways. There was great interest from people regarding how it worked, and now the idea is to do this in a bigger way
 - The idea is to do it again in April, when Tony Porter from A Call to Men is in Cambridge, working with the Cambridge Public Health Department and the Women's Commission

Work and Activities about Haiti

- **Reflections**
 - Duvalier's return creating a lot of frustration and tension
 - Both people who are Haitian and broader community

- Lack of progress that we see from here happening in Haiti...a lot of emotion
- **“Untold Story of Haiti” event on January 11**
 - City’s internal Diversity Committee
 - Panel discussion was a big success, especially Prof. Peniel Joseph of Tufts University
 - For a city event, it was very political, including issues of the US government in the past and how the has imposed its will on Haiti, and how in the media, amidst discussion of the poverty, the suffering, etc. there is a total lack of discussion of the history.
- **Cambridge-Haiti Sister City Project**
 - Peace Commission has responsibility for sister city relationships, and is working from the original proposal to the City Manager.
 - City has created committee of both Haitians and non-Haitians which will set criteria, choose a sister city, and implement a plan for creating the relationship. Once a Sister City is selected, the goal will be to work with Haitian partners, not just send money to foreign NGOs.
 - There will be three main aspects of a relationship: public health, education & youth, and environmental issues – all focused on both medium- and long-term relationships.
- **Haiti Action Network:**
 - Began as the “Haiti Interfaith Action Network” and sent people to Haiti after earthquake
 - The Haitian New Covenant Church in Waltham was twinned with the Quaker congregation in Wellesley (Wellesley Friends Meeting).
 - January 12 to February 12 has been declared a “Month of Remembrance Rededication to Haiti” in Cambridge and in other places.
 - Meeting with Sens. Kerry and Brown to discuss aid distribution and Temporary Protective Status (TPS) of Haitian immigrants.
- **Upcoming play on Haiti: Ti-Jean and His Brothers**
- **Reflections on Haiti**
 - How well do aid organizations incorporate needs/viewpoints of Haitians? how well do they understand logistic/political requirements for distribution?
 - People often want to just go and do something; sometimes Haitians would rather just have the money so it can be spent on their priorities; hopefully the Sister City relationship can generate awareness and long-term commitment and avoid issue being neglected as time passes
 - Waste disposal and sustainability are concerns for used aid donations; tracking money and accountability are also concerns; so is the slow pace of aid projects
 - Community is an important aspect of Haitian society; exploitation and corruption don’t define the country
 - Danger of rushing in to fix Haiti, rather than respecting the communities, listening to the people; Sister City planning work sounds intentional, open to broad dialogue

Members Sought for Peace Commission

- The City Manager will be accepting applications for Peace Commission membership through January 31.

- City Manager is looking for people who are willing to do some work: to do things of use to people in the city, make the commission relevant to the community
- Brian describes history of Peace Commission: came out of nuclear-free zone movement; Cambridge was twinned with Greenfield for nuclear evacuation; focus on nuclear disarmament and peace education; three initiatives - educate people on the effects of nuclear war, do peace education in schools, Sister City in Soviet Union (Yerevan, Armenia); peace education focus has faded as schools have incorporated peace education into their curricula; some schools programming continues under former director; Sister City relationship with El Salvador has remained strong; Brian sees his role as helping community members share ideas and strategies, facilitate

Evaluation

- Be more action-oriented; what can I do before next month's meeting?
- Members/volunteers should take more ownership, not put everything on the staff
- More youth involvement; possibly a junior peace commission, or maybe just incorporate youth into the Peace Commission

Next Meeting

- Wednesday, February 16, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.