

**Human Rights Commission
October 26, 2005 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Glenn Glasgow, Randy Cole, Marie Glaze, Noel English, Lawrence Morganfield III, Mark Thomas

Members Excused: Valeta Snell

Staff Present: Phil Steinhaus, Fred Boeckmann, Nanette Ward, Erin Cozad

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions:** Glaze called the meeting to order and introductions were made.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Glaze recommended moving Public Comment up to Old Business. Glasgow moved to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Thomas and passed by a unanimous vote.
- III. **Approval of 9/28/2005 Meeting Minutes:** Thomas moved to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Glasgow and passed by a unanimous vote.
- IV. **Old Business:**

- A. **Side by Side Film Festival:** Glaze gave some background information, saying that the Commission had allocated funds for the Israeli/Palestinian film festival which had planned to show two movies, *Another Road Home* by Israeli film director, Danae Elon and *Paradise Now* by Palestinian film director, Hany Abu-Assad. Steinhaus said that the funding was approved by the commission in May and the contract went to City Council for approval in June. Glaze said that there is now a request to show a substitute movie, called "*Wall*." Representatives for that proposal were in attendance to request that the current contract be revised to allow the showing of this new film.

Iman Labadia said that she has been in Columbia for about four years. She said that she is Muslim and that she was covered for 16 years, like you see most Muslim women. Recently she found out about some disturbing things that had happened; her neighbor thought that she was making bombs in her home. The FBI was sent to her house because they felt that her husband was a terrorist. Where she works someone confided to her that every time she saw people in this type of clothing she thought that they were going to blow themselves up. This propelled her to do a project like this. She uncovered, her neighbors wondered who the new people were who had moved in, and they came over to introduce themselves. They were surprised to find that they were the same people. She decided that education was needed and that there was a lack of understanding and awareness about who Muslims are and what their religion is about. That moved her to do a project like this. So, she collaborated with Ragtag Cinema Café to work on a project that would bring some kind of understanding to the community and to introduce some dialogue and education. She wrote grants to several groups in the community and asked many, many people to come on board as sponsors.

In addition she has done a poetry/prose contest in the community. The contest was called "Side by Side". Writings were to depict peace among all people in the world, particularly Palestine and Israel. She chose eleven different women from eleven different faith based groups to join this effort as judges. She said that entries are still coming in. Winners were supposed to go to the Missouri Theatre and read their pieces on stage. Then the film fair would follow. A part of the whole process was to be community dialogue.

Another aspect of the program is the Descendants of Abraham study circle program that Labadia worked with Nanette Ward to put together. This dialogue program involves twelve Jews, twelve Muslims and twelve Christians coming together for dialogue. One study dialogue was done on September 25 at the Cherry Street Artisan and one on October 9. There is a follow-up scheduled for December 11. These people are ambassadors who are going out to bring people together to the film and where the dialogue can continue. After the film, which is scheduled for November 30, Labadia said that she has set up with the Artisan to have time to meet and process. On the first of December there is a Community Circle for anyone who has attended the film or would like to meet again, from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. in the evening. Plans are to continue with study circles and that this process will help to promote dialogue in our community between faith based groups. Labadia said that her goals are dialogue and process, coalition building, minimizing fear, education, tolerance, acceptance, understanding, awareness and peace on a local level.

Thomas asked if there has been a good representation from the community as a whole, in study circles and dialogue groups thus far. Labadia replied that the first time they got together there were twelve of each faith but the second time there were a few more Jews. She felt that people were excited, especially the women. In order to be sensitive to the Muslims, the dialogue circles were separated by sex, because Muslims are usually separated. She felt the women's circles were highly successful and said that the women were eager to come back again.

Ward said that the Human Rights Commission's part has been collaborating with the Descendants of Abraham Study Circle. It was our volunteer facilitators and Ward with Labadia, moderating those two gatherings over two different Sundays. The Community Circle, one of our monthly events, was lined up in conjunction with the film fair. The follow-up that Labadia mentioned, with the Descendants of Abraham participants will be held on December 9.

English asked if Labadia has had any conversation with Rabbi Feintuch or any of the people who are now coming forward and saying that they object to this particular film. Labadia said that she has talked with both the Rabbi and Mike Perkins, who were the two people who sent in complaints. Both of them have attended the Descendants of Abraham program. She said that she thought they are both very familiar and comfortable with the study circle program. She has discussed the change in the film to be shown at the festival it by e-mail with Perkins and personally with the Rabbi.

Labadia asked David Wilson to speak. Wilson is the Vice President of the Board of Directors for Ragtag Cinema Café. He said that Ragtag often works with non-profit organizations. Labadia came to them with the idea for the film festival which they liked and came on as a sponsor. He said that he often writes grants but never guarantees movies too far in advance because of the many details. When they couldn't get the other films, he found *Wall*. He thought this would be a good substitute. The film maker is an Arab Jew and he believes the film tries to show both sides of the issue. He hopes to encourage discussion between religious cultures through the showing of the film. He also hopes that the Rabbi can agree with the purpose for the dialogue. English asked what impact the loss of \$400 would have. Wilson said they would still have the festival but would like to have the money and the commission as a sponsor.

Ibtsam Barakat spoke and shared that she grew up in Ramallah, Palestine and is now a resident of Columbia. She has not seen *Wall* in person but feels that walls divide people. She said that thousands of children wait in the rain to go to school because of the wall and that Ramallah is a walled in city.

Lee Radtke spoke and said she is a member of Congregation Beth Shalom and has participated in Descendants of Abraham study circle. She thinks *Wall* shares the voices of people who don't often have their voices heard. She added that having the film maker here to talk about the film is a big plus and will help facilitate community discussion. She feels that this is tremendously important. She would be very pleased if the commission would agree to go ahead and fund the film. Glaze asked if other congregation members agree. Radtke said there are always people in the congregation that disagree on big issues.

Cole asked if anyone has seen the other films or knew about the other films. He wondered if reviews of the other films were similar to the reviews of this film. Paul Sturtz, Program Director at Ragtag, said that he saw both proposed films. He thinks *Paradise Now* would have been a much more controversial film. He thinks that *Wall* is a better fit.

Glaze stated that the problem is that on June 20, the City of Columbia entered into an agreement with Ragtag to help fund two films for an event to be held at the Missouri Theatre. Those films were to have been "*Another Road Home*" and "*Paradise Now*". The commission agreed to pay \$400 for this. English asked if there is a process for amending the contract. Boeckmann said it can go back to the City Council with a request for them to approve the change. Steinhaus said that he wouldn't take it back to the City Council without the recommendation of the commission. The choices are to agree that this film meets the purpose for which the commission originally allocated the money and that the commission now recommends to the City Council to amend the agreement. Or, if the commission does not agree, then the commission can agree that the agreement was for these two movies and if Ragtag can't provide these two movies then the agreement has been broken and the money should be returned.

English said that she thinks the job of the commission, in part, is to tear down walls and if a movie like this will help to accomplish that then she thinks the commission should support the change and support making a change in the contract. She said she didn't see any problem with supporting one movie instead of another on the basis that it will accomplish the same thing that we set out to accomplish in the first place. Cole said that he agreed. Any video on the subject will be controversial. If it wasn't it wouldn't be a good depiction of the situation.

Glasgow asked how you could be opposed to what they are trying to do. He also believes it will enhance the cause of human rights. He said that human rights, in and of itself, is a controversial matter, so a little more controversy can't hurt. Thomas said he thought the amendment is completely in keeping with the original spirit of the agreement. Morganfield agreed with the sentiments expressed by other commissioners. He thinks it is something that is needed and that whatever help we can give toward making this idea become a reality is beneficial to us. Glaze asked if there was a motion to amend the contract. Glasgow moved to amend the contract. The motion was seconded by Cole and passed by a unanimous vote.

Glaze thanked the visitors for coming. Steinhaus said the contract amendment would be on the next City Council agenda and suggested that people might want to watch for it and come to the council meeting to show their support.

B. Community Study Circles Program Report

Ward handed out copies of a document called "Ten Things Everyone Should Know About Race" and asked everyone to look it over and if there were questions she would be glad to answer them. She then reported the following:

Activities Completed/In Progress

- 10/5: "You in Mizzou" Community Circle Program initiated this semester – Completed first on 10/5 with about 20 in attendance; next coming up on Tues. 11/1, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., focus on exploration of meaning and impact of "Diversity" (Azizan-Gardner, Byndom, Binkley)
- 10/7 & 8: Study Circles Resource Center National Conference, Northbrook, Illinois
- 10/9: Descendants of Abraham Study Circle Program – Second session on Oct. 9 (two circles each of men and women, 6 volunteer facilitators; Missourian reporter); follow-up session scheduled for Dec. 9
- 10/20: Monthly Community Circle "Race – The Power of an Illusion, Episode 2: The Story We Tell" video and dialogue with 20 attendees
- MU Office of Service Learning Student – Marian Trattner (40 hours this semester); participated in Descendants of Abraham second session
- Hickman High School Student After-School Study Circle – Preparing and Organizing for January 2006, Andrew Gardner, Sr., along with Tyree Byndom
- MU Community Leadership Project Student for Student Study Circles Organization/Program – Michael Taylor; putting together a core team of leaders from diverse backgrounds, different student organizations, for first study circle and facilitator training.
- MU Community Leadership Project Student for Study Circle Stories of Impact – Kris Hickman
- Study Circle Volunteer/MU student – Megan Shawgo
- Promoted diversity-related activities via email forwards (on-going)

Contacts

- Dr. Julie Middleton, MU Extension Regional Diversity Teams Coordinator – Study Circles model for training
- BCRAA Program Committee Chair, Robin Rueben, Feb. 2006 Diversity Program and possibly May 2006 Workshop with focus on Diversity issues

Coming Up

- Facilitator Training Oct. 28-30 (10 diverse trainees) Ward said that she is very excited about the upcoming Facilitator Training. Several volunteer facilitators are going to be involved, coming as mentors.
- Thursday, November 17, Community Circle: "Sharing the Circle from Different Native American Tribal Cultures"
- Israeli/Palestinian Film Fair–Nov. 30, 6 p.m.–10 p.m.; Artisan Debrief Session 10 p.m. – 12 a.m.
- December 1 Community Circle – Film Fair Dialogue; CPL, 6 – 8:45 p.m.
- "LET'S TALK, COLUMBIA!" 2006 – Sat.-Sun., February 11 & 12.

Follow Up

- True/False Film Festival Study Circles – Feb. 26 & 27

V. New Business

A. FY2006 Human Rights Enhancement Program Proposals

Steinhaus reminded Commissioners that the agency hearings and work session is scheduled for next Wednesday evening. As he will be ordering food from Jack's he needed to know if anyone was not going to be able to attend.

Glaze explained that everyone should take time to look over the proposals before the meeting next week. Steinhaus explained that in the packets that he handed out there is

a list of proposals and an evaluation sheet for each program. There is also space for entering a funding amount. He suggested that while reviewing proposals, commissioners might give a preliminary score. Also, any questions should be written down so you can remember to ask them during the agency's hearing. Scores can be changed during the hearings if it seems appropriate.

VI. Staff Reports:

- A. Community Services:** Steinhaus mentioned an article in commissioner's folders. He also mentioned the Diversity Celebration poster and essay contests. He said that Lee Radtke, who works for Columbia Transit, is working closely with him on the two contests. The posters will be laminated and displayed on city buses throughout the year. He mentioned that the program at the celebration this year will be a performance collage. He added that this information is on the celebration web site.

Steinhaus mentioned that white supremacist literature was found in Columbia today. Glaze mentioned the deaths of Rosa Parks and C. Delores Tucker, who was the first African American Secretary of State in Pennsylvania.

- C. Law Department:** Boeckmann reported that Robert Rinck has been hired as the new Assistant Prosecutor.

- D. Investigator/Community Educator: Study Circles Conference Report:** Ward passed around some National Study Circle conference information. This was the first time she had attended in four years. She said she learned a lot. The people there were interested in our Community Circles program. She added that we have good facilitator training and that other programs are not doing extensive training like we do.

Steinhaus reminded commissioners of the City Council boards and commissions reception next week. He said it is a nice event and encouraged commissioners to attend. He also passed around the Mid-Missouri LGBT Coalition final report on PrideFest 2005.

VII. Public Comment: None

VIII. Commissioner Comment: None

- IX. Closed Session:** Thomas made a motion to go into closed session to discuss pending cases. The motion was seconded by Glasgow and a roll-call vote was taken. Steinhaus called the roll with the following vote: Glaze – yes; Cole – yes; Glasgow – yes; English – yes; Morganfield – yes; Thomas – yes

- X. Adjournment:** Following the closed session, the commission adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phil Steinhaus, Manager
Office of Community Services