

**Human Right Commission
August 24, 2005 Meeting Minutes**

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

Members Excused: Valeta Snell

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Phil Steinhaus, Nanette Ward, Erin Cozad

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions:** Glaze called the meeting to order and introductions were made.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** The agenda was amended to include scheduled public comment by Noel English's daughter, Rachel English. Glasgow moved to approve the amended agenda. The motion was seconded by Noel English and passed by a unanimous vote.
- III. **Approval of 7/27/2005 Meeting Minutes:** Glasgow moved to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Noel English and passed by a unanimous vote.
- IV. **Public Comment:** Rachel English, a sophomore at Carlton College in Northfield, Minnesota is working on issues related to the Darfur region in Sudan and requested to speak to the commission about what's going on and to see what kind of action could be taken in the City of Columbia. She said that she organized a Darfur Awareness Week on her campus and that prompted her to learn more about the conflict. Last week she went to Washington, D.C. to attend a national student leadership conference on Darfur where she learned a lot more about it.

Rachel English shared that Sudan is the biggest country in Africa and on the western side of Sudan is a region called Darfur. This area is about the size of Texas. There is a tribal conflict that stems from the early 1980's that involves increased competition for resources due to drought, famine and migration from Chad. In addition, Moammar Kadafi from Libya was trying to spread his vision of an Arab Africa. These forces, in combination with bad government have led to local people in Darfur being divided into two social groups; the Black Africans and the Arabs. The Black Africans felt that they were receiving less than they deserved from the government so they established a group called the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA). They launched an attack on the airstrip in 2003 but the government, rather than targeting the SLA, targeted the people of Sudan. They targeted the Black African population and up to the present time there have been about 400,000 killed and about 2,000,000 displaced from their homes. The population of Darfur is only about 4,000,000 so over half of the people have been directly effected by this conflict.

Rachel English said that the way the attacks generally happen is that the government will come in with their helicopters and bomb the villages. The bombs contain long canisters which are filled with nail like objects. When these are dropped, the nails spread out throughout the entire village and hit a lot of civilians. These bombings are followed by attacks by the Arab Militia, which is funded by the Sudanese government. The militia comes in on horseback and as the people try to flee, they try to kill all the men, and rape the women. The government denies doing this but there is evidence that they are supplying the guns and other supplies that are needed by the militia. About 60% of the attacks occur in this manner. Another 30% is just by government and the remainder is just the militia.

Rachel English said that the media has reported that the situation has improved but basically all this means is that there is currently a cease fire line with the SLA holding the majority of the countryside and the Khartoum government occupying the major cities. Of all the villages that are controlled by the government in the countryside, there is basically nothing left, which is why the it is reported that the military situation has improved because there is nothing left to attack in that area. The villages have been mostly burned. Now, they are starting to attack the refugee camps, forcing them to change locations and using bulldozers to flatten the camps. Currently, it's the rainy season in Sudan, which means it's even harder for aid workers to get food into the region because they have to use air drops rather than taking it in on trucks as the normally do.

Rachel English shared what has the international community has done in response. Colin Powell declared genocide in September and the Senate also unanimously declared genocide. However, there hasn't been much action since then. There was a bill, called the Darfur Accountability Act that was passed by both House and Senate, but it was caught up in negotiations between the House and Senate and it was never approved. Originally, aid groups were not allowed in the camps but now they are. There aren't any groups doing education or building schools or anything like that. All they have going is basic things like food, water, basic sanitation in the camps.

There is little or no media coverage of the attacks because it is very expensive for companies like NBC or ABC to send camera crews into the area so most of the coverage is coming from independent journalists who go, shoot the film and sell it to the major companies.

The UN has taken some action. There have been a number of Security Council resolutions but they have not been enforced. They have tried to impose sanctions and a no fly zone but they are just words on paper. There has been no force behind them. About 50 people have been recommended to an international criminal court and there is a group that's currently investigating the 50 people that are deemed responsible for this genocide. There are only about 7,000 African Union troops in the region to provide protection for a region the size of Texas. Their mandate is that they can only protect aid workers and cannot protect civilians. When a town is attacked AU troops go in and record numbers but they aren't actually allowed to help anyone.

Rachel English asked if there is anything that this commission or the city of Columbia can do to help in this situation. She shared that there are several local events planned. October 6 has been set aside for a "Darfur Fast". This date was chosen because it is 10 years and 6 months after the start of the genocide in Rwanda which killed about a million people. She said that other local actions are possible. People can help sponsor a camp initiative which is run by the Darfur Peace and Accountability Association. This group is attempting to build schools in the camps because none of the children have schools and it's been about 2 years since any of them received education so they're looking for long term commitments from community groups to send supplies and money to build schools.

Glaze said she isn't sure that the commission can do anything officially. Boeckmann said that the City Council does not take a political stand on non-local (national or international) affairs. Boeckmann said that the commission just has jurisdiction within the city of Columbia, to address allegations of discrimination and conduct human rights education related to our community. He added that the City Council has traditionally stayed out of any kind of foreign affairs. They have been asked, from time to time, to take a position or pass a resolution on things involving either national government or foreign affairs and they have been very reluctant to do that.

Noel English asked if that meant that the commission couldn't sponsor a local version of the Fast Day. Glaze said she didn't think that the commission could do that officially, but could do so as individuals. She added that if there is an organized group within the community that is doing it, Marie Glaze, as an individual could be a part of it but Marie Glaze as Chair of the Commission could not. Boeckmann agreed with Glaze.

Noel English asked if the commission could sponsor a group supporting Darfur Fast? Boeckmann said, "Not really." Glasgow asked if anyone was doing anything nationally. Rachel English said that several national groups are working on Darfur advocacy and they're trying to reintroduce the Darfur Accountability Act. Glaze asked what happened to stall the bill. Rachel English said that it was reported in the New York Times that President Bush urged the Senate and the House not to pass the bill, supposedly in exchange for information regarding Bin Laden.

Rachel English said that there are local groups who are going to support the Darfur Fast. Cole asked about doing a press release regarding the event and saying that the commission supports it. Steinhaus said that we can share information about events.

Glaze said she thought she had read something about the University having investments in Sudan. Rachel English said that some states and Universities have divested. It was noted that the University of Missouri is showing the film Hotel Rwanda on October 6. Rachel English asked if she should contact the mayor about the issue. Boeckmann said that the Mayor is always willing to talk to people about issues that concern them. Glaze said that she was sorry that the group could not do anything officially but she commissioners could get involved as individuals. She said that she could give up a meal or two on October 6 but she just needed to know where to send her lunch money.

V. Old Business:

A. Community Study Circles Program Report: Ward provided a brief overview of recent educational activities and shared that she attended Roots of Racism Workshop on August 18 and 19 as did Glasgow. In addition, Ward reported that she has promoted diversity-related community activities on an on-going basis and has sent e-mails to commissioners regarding these. She said that she recently received a message from Sarah Perry regarding the Pro-Equality Summit to be held this coming Saturday. This is an all day summit on LGBT equality issues. You can register for the summit on-line.

Ward reported making the following contacts in the last month.

- City of Independence Human Relations Committee contacted her and asked about using the "Let's Talk" part of our Community Study Circles program name as in, "Let's Talk, Independence!" Ward was glad to have them learn about our program and use "Let's Talk" to promote their program.
- A Missourian Reporter contacted her regarding a recent incident that might be classified as a hate crime. A copy of the article was included in commissioner folders.
- Ward met with Steve Tatlow from the Community Partnership regarding facilitation training.
- Discussion with Jessica Jennrich, Associate Director of the MU Women's and Gender Studies about participation in an upcoming conference on October 28.
- Dr. Julie Middleton, MU Extension Regional Diversity Teams Coordinator contacted Ward regarding the use of the study circles model for diversity training.

- Marty Campbell from Beach, North Dakota contacted Ward to get more information about how to incorporate the monthly community circles into their Study Circles Program.
- Megan Shawgo and Matt Ems (UMC students), and Zephan Runningwater contacted Ward about volunteer opportunities with the study circles program.
- Andrew Gardner a senior at Hickman High School Sr. has been working with Ward on a combined after-school study circle program for Hickman and Rock Bridge students.

Ward also reported on the following up-coming events:

- The next monthly Community Circle will be held on Tuesday, August 30. The program will be hosted by FedEx Freight of Columbia and will use the video "RACE – The Power of an Illusion" as a discussion starter.
- On Saturday, August 27, Ward made a presentation to 40 MU students of STARS Leadership program.
- Ward will attend the National Coalition Building Institute Asian Heritage Retreat in Missoula, MT on Sept. 9-11.
- Sunday, September 25 will be the first session of the Descendants of Abraham Study Circles. The program will include 2 sessions.
- The Community Circle program scheduled for Monday, September 26 will be a "Listen-In Circle" on the topic, "Religious Covenants – Sharing Different Perspectives." The program will be held at the Columbia Public Library from 6:00-8:45 p.m.
- Ward will attend the Study Circle Resource Center National Conference – "Telling the Story of Democracy" on Oct. 7-8.
- The second session of the Descendants of Abraham Study Circles will be held on Sunday, October 9.
- The October Community Circle is scheduled for Thursday, October 20.
- Ward is working with Noor Azizan-Gardner and Tyree Byndom to help implement an MU faculty/administration study circle program. English said that there is a new graduate assistant in their office, Rachel Binkley , who will be in charge of coordinating the Study Circle program for faculty, students and staff. The working title will be, "U" in Mizzou – Let's talk about" The first subject to be discussed will be about the community we live in.
- Ward is also working on putting together a general brochure for the Study Circles Program.
- The next community round of "LET'S TALK, COLUMBIA!" will be held on Saturday and Sunday, February 11 and 12, 2006

Ward reported that she is also following up on the following items:

- Hickman High School After School Student Study Circle
- Oak Towers Fall Study Circle
- MU Office of Service Learning Projects: Stories of Study Circles Impact and Black and White Students Project.
- Coordination of study circles with the True-False Film Festival which will be held on the weekend of February 25, 2006.
- Planning for the community round of "LET'S TALK, COLUMBIA! 2006 on February 11 and 12, 2006 at the Unity Center.

B. Volunteer House Report: No report was available. The number of volunteer hours is still being compiled.

- C. **FY2006 Human Rights Enhancement Program:** Steinhaus reported that the Request for Proposals (RFP) has been distributed and publicized. He said there was an article in the City Source Newsletter and two ads were placed in the Tribune. There were also announcements in the Boone County Related Agencies and Voluntary Action Center newsletters. Steinhaus reported that he has updated the web site and that the new RFP is available for people to download. Steinhaus also sent out a direct mailing of the program announcement to the commission mailing list. An information session for interested applicants is scheduled for Wednesday, September 7. Commissioners were invited to attend. Steinhaus said that he will review the RFP and answer any questions that attendees might have.

- D. **International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) Conference Update:** Glaze reported that she attended the conference last week and provide a more detailed report to the commission next month. She said that it was a great conference as usual. She attended a networking breakfast with the Vice Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, Naomi Earp. Glaze said that there were a lot of good workshops ranging from health care and education issues, DNA and wrongful imprisonment, human trafficking, best practices for commissioners as well as many others.

- E. **Roots of Racism IV Workshop Report:** Glasgow reported he attended the conference and found it to be extremely interesting. He said he went there expecting to hear about slaves coming here from Africa and all the things that happened to them but he was greatly surprised. The workshop did touch on this subject but the presenters did it in such a way and from such a different perspective that participant saw it in an entirely different light. He said the workshop was tremendously well done and that the presenters were very knowledgeable and presented a great deal of information. He felt it was a very worthwhile event. He added that one Hispanic gentleman related a story of being picked out of a line in the airport in St. Louis because he fit the profile of a terrorist. Glasgow also said that he would recommend the program to anyone.

Ward also attended the conference. She said that former commissioner Dee Campbell-Carter was one of the presenters and served on a panel. She told of her experiences as an African-American woman and shared the experiences that her son has had with law enforcement. Ward said that people began to talk about what could be done so she shared information about the community circle that's coming up at the end of August. Glasgow felt that there were many people who were not there who should be there.

VI. **New Business:**

- A. **FY2006 Budget Report:** Steinhaus reported that the commission's proposed FY2006 budget was included in the city budget by the City Manager. The City Council is considering the budget and will adopt it at the end of September.

VII. **Staff Reports:**

- A. **Community Services:** Steinhaus passed around a final report from the AHANA (African American, Hispanic American, Asian American and Native American) Journalism Workshop, which is one of the programs that was funded through the Human Rights Enhancement program. The group had requested funds to scholarship a student from Columbia to attend the workshop. The student who received that

scholarship was from Rock Bridge High School. Included with the material that was received with the report was a copy of the Urban Pioneer newspaper and a thank you note from the student. Several other articles were included in commission folders as well as an updated commission roster. Also included was a corrected set of closed session minutes from the June 22, 2005 commission meeting.

B. Law Department: No report.

C. Investigator/Community Educator: Ward reported on an incident that occurred in her neighborhood in Ashland on Saturday. She and her daughter were out working in the driveway when a car load of young teens came by yelling and driving strangely. They teens in the care were yelling at 4 or 5 boys (about 13 years old) who were outside across the street. One of the boys was African-American. The teens in the car were opening their door and yelling profanity laced with racial slurs at the boys in the yard.

Ward said she was scared and went into her house and called the Ashland Police. She then called the house across the street and talked to the parents who were unaware of what was going on outside. The parents came outside and stood in the driveway. They knew one of the kids in the car who was an Ashland boy. The others were from Rock Bridge High School. The police never responded to Ward's call.

Ward said that the parents then went out into the road and stood in front of the car and yelled and got the young people to pull over and back into the driveway. It turned out that the reason they were opening the door was because they were waving a knife. The parents then brought the 13 year old boys outside while the parents confronted the teens in the car. The boys in the car denied having a knife but finally handed it over. Ward said that she was very upset by the incident. She realized what it was like to experience fear in your own neighborhood. She got the names of the Rock Bridge students and will contact them when she is working at Rock Bridge this fall.

VIII. Commissioner Comment: Thomas asked Robin Hoecher, a Missourian Reporter present at the meeting, about an article concerning an alleged hate crime. Hoecher said she received conflicting information from the Columbia Police Department and she is concerned that the incident is not being investigated as hate crime. She would like to bring the incident to the public's attention. She can be reached at either REH4RB@mizzou.edu or RobinHoecher@Hotmail.com.

IX. Public Comment: None.

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

XI. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phil Steinhaus, Manager
Office of Community Services