

**Human Rights Commission
September 28, 2005 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Marie Glaze, Glenn Glasgow, Mark Thomas, Noel English, Randy Cole, Valeta Snell

Members Absent: Lawrence Morganfield III

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

Others Present: Katie Bailey - Columbia Missourian

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions:** Glaze called the meeting to order and introductions were made.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Glasgow moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Thomas and passed by a unanimous vote.
- III. **Approval of 8/24/2005 Meeting Minutes:** Glasgow moved to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Thomas and passed by a unanimous vote. English expressed appreciation for the detailed minutes. Everyone agreed with English.
- IV. **Old Business:**
 - A. **Community Study Circles Program Report:** Ward reported the following activities during the past month:
 - Ward presented an experiential study circle program at the MU Academic Retention Center to the STARS Student Diversity Program on August 27. Forty people attended and were very receptive.
 - The August 30 Community Circle topic included the showing of the video. "Race – The Power of an Illusion." Sixty people attended and FedEx was a business sponsor. Robin Hoecker, Missourian Reporter wrote a nice article about the program which was shared with the commission. Ten Wal-Mart supervisors attended and enjoyed the program. They were all mostly from Marshall, MO. Wal-Mart will help to sponsor the September Circle.
 - Ward attended the National Coalition Building Institute Asian Heritage Retreat, Missoula, MT on September 9-11, 2005. A written report will be presented at a future meeting.
 - The September 26 Community Circle topic was, "Religious Covenants – Sharing Different Perspectives." Forty people attended and Wal-Mart was a business sponsor. Many different faiths were represented, including Jewish, Muslim, Tao, Christian, Bahá'í Faith, Buddhist, Hindu, Spiritualist, and Native American. Noel English shared her experience as a participant. Tyree Byndom planned the questions and invited the "listen-in circle" members. English said that the questions weren't what people expected. The questions were things like - what do you think religion is and how is that different from spirituality? It sounded like people wanted to know what we believe and how that is different from what they believe.
 - The first session of the Descendants of Abraham Study Circle Program was held on September 25 and the next one will be on October 9. The program planned

to involve 36 participants plus 10 volunteers. Participants were Jewish, Muslim and Christian. This group used the Brown Eyes/Blue Eyes video to stimulate discussion.

- The new “You in Mizzou” Community Circle Program is being initiated this semester with programs scheduled for 10/5, 11/1 and 11/30 from 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. This program is being organized by Noor Azizan-Gardner, Tyree Byndom, and Rachel Binkley.
- An MU Office of Service Learning Student, Marian Trattner, will work 40 hours this semester with the Study Circle Program.
- Michael Taylor with the MU Community Leadership Project is working to develop a student study circles organization and program. He is reaching out to leaders of various student organizations. He wants to register the Study Circle Team as an organization on campus, to give it stability, longevity and the formality of an actual organization.
- Kris Hickman, another MU Community Leadership Project student is working with the study circles program collecting stories of impact as a way of documenting program outcomes. She will be meeting tomorrow with Connie Kacprowicz about video taping individuals who are being interviewed.
- Megan Shawgo, an MU student, has begun volunteering as an interested citizen.
- Ward provided some facilitation training to Steve Tatlow from the Community Partnership. He felt he learned a lot that will help him with the Partnership meetings.
- Ward continues to promote diversity-related activities via email.

Ward reported having contact with the following individuals:

- Jessica Jennrich, Associate Director of the MU Women’s and Gender Studies. Discussed an upcoming conference on October 28.
- Dr. Julie Middleton, MU Extension Regional Diversity Teams Coordinator. Discussed using the study circles model for training
- Marty Campbell, Beach, North Dakota Study Circles Program. Discussed Community Circle program.
- Zephan Runningwater. Discussed volunteer opportunities.
- Andrew Gardner, Hickman High School student. Discussed combining the Hickman and Rock Bridge after-school student study circles.

Ward reported the following future events and activities:

- Sunday, October 9 – second session of the Descendants of Abraham Study Circles. A third session might be added as well.
- Ward will attend the Study Circle Resource Center National Conference – “Telling the Story of Democracy” on October 7-8, 2005.
- The next Community Circles will be held on October 20 and November 17.
- The "Side by Side" Israeli / Palestinian Film Festival will be held on November 30.

- The annual community round of “LET’S TALK, COLUMBIA!” 2006 will be held on February 11 and 12, 2006.

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

- High school after-school student study circles.
- Oak Towers study circle.
- True / False Film Festival Study Circles on February 26-27, 2006.

V. IAOHRA Conference Update: Glaze said that everyone should have received a copy of her report and that she would be happy to answer any questions. She said that the session on DNA evidence was very powerful. She also said that the session on transgendered issues was very interesting. One of the presenters had transitioned from male to female. This person is a professor at Florida State University. Glaze said it was a great conference and she really enjoyed it.

Thomas reported that Steve Weinberg, a journalism professor, has started an “innocence project” at the University of Missouri. He is working with others at Northwestern University in Chicago. The MU Law and Journalism Schools are working together on this project. The Law School will look at it from the legal perspective and representation issues and the Journalism School will look at it from the perspective of investigative reporting and the role of innocent people who have been incarcerated. There is also some collaboration with a group in Kansas City.

Glaze said that she was really moved by the story of an innocent man that she heard at the conference. She said that she knows there are people who are wrongfully incarcerated and she also knows that most people who are incarcerated say that they are wrongfully incarcerated. But there are victims and she never loses sight of the fact that someone had to rape and kill these individuals and she always keeps the victim uppermost in her thoughts. However, she understands that sometimes people are a little over zealous in their investigation and prosecution and they overlook things so it’s kind of nice to know that the DNA evidence is there to help balance things out. She still remains a big supporter of the victim.

VI. New Business:

A. National Coalition Building Institute Conference Report: Tabled. Glaze asked for a written report to be presented at the next meeting.

B. Other: Steinhaus said that Dr. Marilyn Coleman, from the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at MU, had contacted him about the speaker they were planning to bring in for their event, which received funding from the commission. The speaker has been diagnosed with cancer and is just beginning treatment. They would like to push the date for the event back until later. Their request is to amend the contract by extending it until the end of 2006 and then reschedule during that period. That request would have to go to City Council so Steinhaus asked if the commission wanted to do this. There was a motion by Thomas to extend the contract. The motion was seconded by Glasgow and passed by a unanimous vote.

VII. Staff Reports:

- A. Community Services:** Steinhaus pointed out a Missourian article that was included in Commissioner's folders.
- B. Law Department:** No report.
- C. Investigator/Community Educator:** Ward mentioned the Poetry and Prose contest, saying it is for all ages, not just children. She also mentioned that a client had come by the office and brought goodies and gave high praise for Cozad.

She also reported receiving praise for their work from David Baker at the Missouri Commission on Human Rights. She said that she and Cozad filter a lot of information before he gets complainants referred from our office and he just took some time to say that he appreciated what we do and how we are able to do much more than they are able to do in terms of having a personal contact with the complainants.

Ward reported that she had received an e-mail from Anne Deaton who attended the Descendents of Abraham Circle, giving high praise for the program. Ward also said that Iman Labadia is a tremendous ally and ambassador for the commission.

VIII. Public Comment: None

- IX. Commissioner Comment:** English reported that she had attended the Helen Neville in-service at Smithton and she was disappointed. It was too much of a lecture format. She did not think the presentation went very well. There was nothing she could see that was immediately useful in the classroom. It was very much the same old thing – what is racism, power, and oppression...that kind of discussion. It was supposed to be talking about the "Color Blind" society and why it doesn't really work. She found it to be a very negative approach.

Ward said that she had forgotten to mention that Mark Janda and George Frissell had done an Achievement Gap study circle with Columbia Public School teachers. Ward said she wasn't involved but they had used the guide that the Study Circle Resource Center does on the Achievement Gap. There were ten or twelve teachers who went through about eight hours of dialogue. What Janda did was pass on the names of those who participated. Several of them are interested in being trained as facilitators.

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

- XI. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phil Steinhaus, Manager
Office of Community Services