

**Human Rights Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**January 9, 2008**  
**7:30 PM in the Newton City Hall cafeteria**

**Attendance:**

Commissioners present: Jane Brown, Peter Brown, Muriel Esdale, Marianne Ferguson –Chairperson, Judy Fischbach, Brenda Krasnow, Sheila Mondshein, Sona Petrossian

Commissioner absent/regrets: Susan Thomas

Advisory Council Members present: Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Ann Capoccia, Sam Glass, Norman Lazarus, Viviane Planine, David Rosen, Armando Rossi, Sharon O. Stout

Advisory Council Members absent/regrets: Dianne Chilingirian, Marcia Cruz Redding, Nazik Kazimi, Carol Y. Kelley, Matt McBride, Carleton Merrill, Myrna Offen, Joan Rubin

Students present: David Fisher

Students regrets: Julijana Englander, Ali Zaidi, Isaac Zarsky

Staff present: Beverly Droz

Guests: Homer Franck, Frank Wolpe

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**The meeting opened** at 7:30 pm, chaired by Marianne Ferguson. Everyone was welcomed and introductions were made around the room.

**The minutes** of the December 12, 2007 meeting were approved and accepted.

**School Updates:**

**Newton South High School:**

David Fisher reported:

- They had to cancel the Darfur candle light vigil in Newton Centre due to the snow storm. They're working on rescheduling it as well as another concert to benefit Save Darfur.
- TBGLAD day was a huge success
- The Leadership and Diversity Group is working on a big event to bring together the school.

Viviana reported that two movies, directed by Angelica Allende Brisk (South alumnae and WGBH producer) have been shown:

- "Far From Cuba" about Peter Pan children
- "Sweet Fifteen" about a Brockton family that tries to celebrate their daughter but have poverty problems

At a recent Anti Racism Task Force meeting, students expressed that the "Mix It Up Day" was not working and they recommended something else in its place. They also plan to screen two more movies:

- "Not Your Average Arab" about Arab and Muslim stereotyping
- "The Problem We All Live With" about different expectations of students in Boston and suburbia

**Newton North High School:**

Bev reported that Ali and Julijana could not attend but sent an email saying that they were exploring introducing Martin Luther King's "Letters from Birmingham Jail" to the elementary school classes. It would need to be an abridged version but it would reveal what King went through beyond the "I Had A Dream" story. They wanted to know what the HRC thought. There was brief discussion and members felt it was probably more appropriate for middle school classes. There would also be the network in place because of the Mentor Violence Prevention program model.

**Hate Crimes:**

Lt. Apotheker reported, as he had reported at the December meeting, that in 2007 there were 6 hate crimes and 2 incidents. He briefly reviewed them. He summarized that in 2006 there were 12 crimes while earlier in 2005 over 30. We're pleased with the programs in the schools and in the public - and we believe that has helped. Crime is the act of malicious damage and assault. Hateful speech is considered an incident. Lt. Apotheker reports all incidents to Bev who tracks them along with all discrimination complaints in an excel spreadsheet per year. He also contacts and works with ADL.

## **OTHER BUSINESS:**

### **Cameras in NSHS**

Lt. Apotheker said he was not told about them. The Police are in the school often because of stolen items. It is legal to have cameras in public buildings. Their experience has been that when cameras were placed at a high theft location, teens were apprehended and it discouraged teens from committing theft. There was brief discussion that there was a lack of process and knowledge and management. The only issue regarding the cameras that would involve HRC would be privacy issues.

### **Bulletin Board Project:**

Bev has not had time to further investigate HRC having a bulletin board display on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor wall of City Hall.

### **MLK Day:**

Brenda brought up the can food drive. How would it be tied to MLK Day? Ann reported that Project Bread keeps statistics on the number of hungry. She's working on a Homeless project that looks at high school students who are homeless and how to get resources to them. She will bring in the information.

The Sub-Committee to work on the idea of announcing the food drive at the MLK event on Jan. 21 is: Ann, Brenda, Sharon, Jane and Muriel.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **Membership:**

Muriel reported that Joan Rubin has been in rehab for the past month. She welcomed Mickey Lazarus back with us. She reported that the Commissioners met with Frank Wolpe and he will join the Advisory Council.

### **Fair Housing:**

Sheila reported that the Fair Housing Task Force website is now on City's website. The Mayor will announce it at the Jan. 28 press conference. It covers a lot of information. We expect more people to utilize this information and to make housing discrimination complaints which will come to Bev. Bev will send the link out to everyone.

**Program:** Brenda reported that the committee will meet in early February to plan the next program.

### **Education:**

Sona will contact NNHS and NSHS about Days of Remembrance program. She's been in touch with the author of "Just Don't Turn Around" (Bielek) who will be a speaker. She encouraged members to be on the lookout for such speakers.

**MAHRC:** Peter reported that their meeting is this Friday.

### **Multi-Cultural Groups:**

Marianne reported that Marcia has an appointment this Friday with the director of HERvoices.

### **Clergy Association:**

Sam reported that they had a "free enterprise capitalism" meeting. The speaker owns a T-shirt company called www.NoSweatShop.com. The company makes organic cotton T-shirts on the West Bank of Palestine. The company brings jobs to the shattered region. The owner of this website and company lives in Newton. There was an article in the TAB about this company.

Clergy members took the Darfur lawn signs that Sam brought to the meeting.

## **OTHER Announcements:**

MLK Day flyers were handed out for the event Jan. 21 at 2<sup>nd</sup> church on Chestnut Street in West Newton.

Bev announced the FEBRUARY 21 event at the library about the Underground Railroad - a 3 part program with speakers and music celebrating Black History Month. Topics include:

- A talk about Newton's connection to the Underground Railroad
- A quartet of Berklee College Music voice students singing the original Harriet Tubman song
- Author Jacqueline Tobin will discuss her new book "From Midnight to Dawn" about the Underground Railroad.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.**

**Next meeting: Wednesday February 13, 2008 at 7:30pm in the City Hall cafeteria.**