

**Unity in the Community**  
General Membership Meeting  
6:30 P.M., Sunday, May 15, 2011

McCoart Government Center  
1 County Complex Court  
Woodbridge, VA 22192

Members Present: Jim Amaral, Hank Azais, Cindy Brookshire, Dexter Fox, Bob Gaskill, Taalibah Hassan, Wali Hassan, Illana Naylor, Gregg Reynolds, Jeanette Rishell,

Chair Dexter Fox called the meeting to order at 6:34 P.M. A quorum was present.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

1. Secretary's Report. Electronic copies of the minutes of last month's General Membership Meeting were distributed to all members via email in advance of this meeting. Paper copies were also available at the meeting for review by those in attendance. The minutes were accepted as presented.
2. Treasurer's Report. Gregg Reynolds presented a treasurer's report. Unity in the Community (UITC) has a balance of \$1,987.34, \$670.53 of which is in the general fund, \$150.00 in the humanitarian fund, and \$1,166.81 in the study circles fund. The report was accepted as presented.
3. Vice Chair's Report. Lydia Gonzalez was not present to give a report.
4. Chair's Report.

4a. Chair Dexter Fox reported that he attended a discussion regarding birthright citizenship in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, May 11. The discussion highlighted a national movement which is working to repeal the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment that grants U.S. birthright citizenship and replace it with citizenship extended and administered by individual states (in the same way that states manage voter registration and issue driver's licenses). Dexter categorized concerns about this effort as legal, demographic (class), practical, and moral, with legal and demographic issues being the most predominant. An example of the types of concerns that were raised include, "If citizenship is extended only to some individuals at birth, then we create a class system in our country. If at least one parent of a newborn must be a U.S. citizen in order to be granted U.S. citizenship, then some people born in the U.S. could be without citizenship if their parents' native countries required birth within their nations' boundaries." Dexter stated that citizenship issues will likely be a part of coming political dialogue. Dexter also reported that concern about this issue was a part of an editorial entitled "Twisting the Truth on the Mexican Border," published by The Washington Post on May 14.

4b. On Thursday, May 12, Dexter saw the first rough cut premiere of Not in Our Town III: Light in the Darkness. The film follows the Patchogue, New York community after the fatal attack of local immigrant resident, Marcelo Lucero. Dexter stated that the film highlights how strong civic leadership can effectively counter the divisive effect of anti-immigrant rhetoric. The film will make its nationwide premiere on PBS on September 21, 2011. Taalibah Hassan also attended the rough cut premiere and concurred with Dexter's assessment. Discussion and program guides for the film are in development. Dexter has hopes that the film can be used as an educational tool for local issues in Prince William County, Manassas, and Manassas Park, and is in dialogue with The Working Group about getting rights for showing the film as part of this fall's Immigration & Human Rights Cinema (I&HRC). Taalibah suggested that, in addition or as an alternative to showing the film as part of the I&HRC, the film be screened locally in a place where immigrants are comfortably and easily able to attend. In the eastern half of the county, she suggested Holy Family and St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Churches as possible

sites. She stated that this would also allow small group follow-up discussion of the film. Taalibah also suggested that Unity in the Community's (UITC) International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP) program be used, in part, to advertise the film's showing. Gregg Reynolds suggested that the film be shown at a gathering of religious leaders in the community in hopes that they would use it to raise awareness and interest in immigration issues within their faith communities. Additional suggestions included placing a link to the film's trailer on the UITC website; showing the film at All Saints Catholic Church or other similar venue near GMU (where the IHR Cinema has been held); partnering with one or more faith communities with a large Hispanic population to show the film; and inviting law enforcement, school administration, and other community leaders to the film's showing.

4c. Dexter reported using personal funds in the amount of \$99.50 to renew UITC's website with Gate.com, and \$42.50 to renew UITC's membership in the Prince William County-Greater Manassas Chamber of Commerce. Jeanette Rishell moved that UITC reimburse Dexter in full for the Gate.com expenditure. Illana Naylor seconded the motion. The motion passed. Bob Gaskill moved that UITC reimburse Dexter in full for the Chamber of Commerce expenditure. Cindy Brookshire seconded the motion. The motion passed.

4d. Dexter stated that he has begun to send out notices about Chamber of Commerce events to UITC members who have expressed an interest in same and asks that other members who wish to be placed on an email list that forwards information about Chamber events notify him.

4e. Dexter reported that UITC has been registered for the Dale City 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. Wali Hassan volunteered to donate the use of one of his buses to give UITC a higher profile in the parade. Anyone interested participating in this event should contact Dexter as soon as possible.

4f. Dexter reminded UITC members that the positions of UITC Chair and Treasurer will be filled by election this coming September. Both positions are for two years. The creation of a nomination committee will be on placed on next month's agenda for discussion and action.

4g. Dexter stated that he invited Steve Torres, a local Bail Bondsman, to tonight's meeting to discuss detention trends that he has observed while in the performance of his duties. Unfortunately, Mr. Torres was unable to attend the meeting.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **5. Everyday Democracy-Study Circles – Status Update.**

5a. Cindy Brookshire reported that the most recent the1-by-Youth event took place Saturday, May 14, in the Point of Woods communities (1, 2, and 3) of Manassas. The purpose of 1-by-Youth projects is to build community by bringing residents together to foster community relationships. This year's event included 750 volunteers from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and D.C. The group was comprised of youth, adults, local police officers and an ethnic mixture that reflected the citizenship of the community. The volunteers readied a community garden of 30 plots for spring planting. They also placed a stone in honor of Sgt. John D. Conner, III (a Manassas City Police Officer killed in the line of duty in Point of Woods in 1988) at a gazebo that was also erected. At least a dozen residents came out to work along side of the volunteers. A previous 1-by-Youth event in the Georgetown South community of Manassas inspired residents to become active in their community. It is hoped that this event will have the same effect upon the residents of the Point of Woods communities. Cindy reported that both Illana Naylor and Kathy Clark were present at this 1-by-Youth event. Cindy further reported that a video of the event was made and that she paid the videographer \$500 for his work. Jeanette Rishell moved that Cindy be reimbursed in full for the expenditure. Bob Gaskill seconded the motion. The motion passed.

5b. Cindy stated that community-based study circle groups are stagnant and should now evolve into school-based groups, which are microcosms of the larger community. She reported that a school/faith

community relationship has already been established this past year between Baldwin Elementary School and Trinity Episcopal Church. As part of this relationship, members of Trinity provided food for children in need on weekends and days when school was not in session (participating students routinely receive free breakfasts and lunches and the school).

6. Virginia Driver's License Issue – Immigrant Access. Lisa Johnson-Firth was not present to make a follow-up report on this issue that was first reported last month.

7. Immigration & Human Rights Cinema. The last film for spring has been shown. No plans have been made for the fall series. Dexter reported that George Mason University (GMU) will be reimbursing him for the licensing fee he paid for one of the movies screened this past spring. Dexter also reported that possible topics for the fall series include foreclosure and birthright issues. Dexter was asked if he thought GMU would be agreeable to having films shown in other venues as a way for increasing attendance at screenings. Dexter stated that UITC and GMU have been very careful about obtaining permissions and paying licensing fees to show the films in this series and that GMU, in addition to providing the facility to host the screenings, has been an equal partner in securing screening rights for the films. Dexter also reported that UITC's Immigration & Human Rights Cinema email notification list now contains seventy (70) addresses. He also knows that some people have attended screenings as a result of reading about the series in local newspapers; he does not have a count as to how many have attended for this reason. Additional ideas suggested for increasing attendance at the film series (which have averaged between 30 to 40 people) included advertising screenings in GMU campus newspapers, letting faith communities and other community groups show some of the films for which UITC has multiple or unlimited exhibition rights, listing films that have been shown on the UITC website, and talking up the series with friends and neighbors.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

8. International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP). An informal meeting was held on Thursday, May 12, to discuss the IDPP. In attendance were Illana Naylor, Dexter Fox, Lisa Johnson-Firth, and Joanne Bagnerise. The group decided to use "United We Stand" as the theme for this year's IDPP event. It was decided that promotional materials for the event will include a descriptive paragraph that describes the focus of the theme (e.g., united we stand for cooperation, tolerance & justice; united we stand with a passion for peace; etc.). It was stated that this year's event will focus on local faith-community leaders with the possible addition of choral readings, prayer, and diverse voices from the community.

9. Initiatives & Partnerships. Bob Gaskill reported that Covenant Presbyterian Church and Dar Alnoor Islamic Center recently held a gathering at Covenant so their members could come to know and understand each other better. Bob described the fellowship hall setting as being packed and permeated with a powerful feeling of collegiality and friendliness. He cited Taalibah Hassan as being instrumental in bringing the two communities together. He stated that recent events as reported by the news media (the assault and killing of Osama Bin Laden) have served to exacerbate friction points between various components of our community and that events such as this one counters that friction by promoting a great wellspring of goodwill. Bob also stated that one of UITC's useful purposes is to promote and celebrate such goodwill.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

10. Gregg Reynolds reported seeing a film entitled *A Day Without Mexicans* (a fictional documentary which studies the effects that a sudden disappearance of Mexicans living in California has on the state, businesses, and people) and recommended it for viewing. Gregg also expressed his concern regarding recent redistricting proposals (for elections) and stated that each plan should be carefully studied to prevent discriminatory ones from passing. In addition, Gregg reported that he has noted a rise in the usage of community health centers and believes that it is due to ongoing financial difficulties experienced by Prince William County residents.

11. An Interfaith discussion on the role of Holy writings will be held at the Manassas Church of the Brethren (10047 Nokesville Rd., Manassas) at 7:00 P.M. on May 19. Participants include members of the host church and the Manassas Mosque. The public is also invited to attend.

12. The Mexican consulate will be sponsoring a meeting of local, Mexican community leaders on Friday, May 20, from 6:00 to 7:00 P.M. to discuss problems they are having. Hank Azais will be in attendance and take notes. The Mexican Consulate will also be at the Emmanuel Baptist Church (8006 Centreville Rd., Manassas) on Saturday, May 21, from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. to help Mexican citizens living in the area with consular identification cards, passports, citizenship questions, and other concerns. Appointments are necessary and may be made by phoning 202-736-1016.

13. The Prince William County Branch of the NAACP will host a Fish Fry from 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, May 21. There is a \$10 charge per meal; \$6 charge per sandwich. Proceeds will be used to benefit PWC Branch youth activities. This event will take place at Weems Botts Museum Park (3944 Cameron St., Dumfries).

14. Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE) will be holding a foreclosure strategy meeting at Holy Family Catholic Church (14160 Ferndale Rd., Dale City) on Monday, May 23, from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M. A discussion of political meetings, research actions, and local actions planned for June will be held. Another meeting is scheduled for Sunday, June 5<sup>th</sup> (time and location to be announced).

15. Hope for Japan, a program that includes music, an art exhibit, and a tsunami slide show will take place on Memorial Day, Monday, May 30, at 6:30 P.M. Proceeds from this program will go to Japan via the Red Cross to help people affected by disasters like the recent Japanese earthquake and tsunami. The location of this event will be the Hylton Performing Arts Center on the Prince William Campus of George Mason University (10960 George Mason Circle, Manassas). Tickets may be purchased online at [www.hyltoncenter.org](http://www.hyltoncenter.org) or by calling 888-945-2468.

16. An Islamic Heritage Exhibit, featuring “Forgotten Roots: Muslims in Early America,” and the “Untold Story: Muslim Americans in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century” will be presented at Dar Alnoor Islamic Center (5404 Hoadly Rd., Manassas), from noon to 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, June 4. Amir Muhammad, a Washington, D.C., historian and museum curator, will be giving a lecture about the exhibit at 4:00 P.M. This program is free and open to the public.

17. Hank Azais reported on the formation of a group whose purpose will be to bring immigrants living in the community together to discuss problems they face and how to deal with them. Workshops will include how to speak with government officials, how to go about registering for citizenship, and where people can go to resolve health concerns. Meetings are expected to begin this summer.

The next UITC meeting will be held at the Bull Run Unitarian Universalists (9350 Main St., Manassas) at 6:30 P.M. on Sunday, June 19.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Amaral, Secretary