

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

November 16, 2017

Jennifer Howard Schroeder, chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm in the Highland Room, Needham Town Hall.

Committee members in attendance: Abdul Cader Asmal, Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard Schroeder (chair), Amelia Klein, Bud Schram, Matt Schroeder, Marlene Schultz (vice-chair,) Dan Rubin.

Committee members absent: Ashok Mehta, Kerry Hurwitch.

Police liaison: Lt. John Kraemer

School liaison: Dan Gutenkanst

Guest: Nadaa Ali

Jennifer opened the meeting with introductions and a welcome to soon to be newly appointed committee member, Nadaa Ali.

1. **MINUTES** of the October 19, 2017 meeting were accepted and approved as presented.
2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** None
3. **OLD BUSINESS**

Diversity Summit: November 18, 2017 Amelia reminded members to please wear their NHRC nametags to the summit and to also take photos to be used in the annual report. Cynthia (and possibly Kerry) will help with set up on Friday night.

Committee Membership Our new member, Nadaa was welcomed. Jennifer reported that Reginald Foster, chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Needham Housing Authority, has found a resident/representative who is interested in serving on the committee. Once appointed, we will still have one opening. We discussed other groups that might be represented on the committee.

Subcommittees Dan Rubin volunteered to join the Schools subcommittee. Everyone agreed to stay on the subcommittees they chose last year.

4. **NEW BUSINESS**

Upcoming NHRC Program We have engaged Diane Levin, Professor at Wheelock College to speak on Monday, February 5, 2018 at Powers Hall, 7:30-9pm. Working title for presentation is: *What are Today's Children Learning about Human Relationships and Social Justice from Media and What Can we Do about it?* Ideas for publicizing the program include; through PTCs, local preschools, Needham Times, Hometown Weekly, Parent Talk, Wellesley Townsman, World of Wellesley, Newton Tab, Boston Globe, Needham Grassroots, our website, electronic signs posted in town. We want to make sure there is a human rights focus. Amelia suggested using Article 26 from The Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a way to set the context. She will introduce Diane. We will also solicit examples from community members of things they have heard from children and things they are concerned about regarding the effects of the media. Use a Google form to solicit comments from parents. Ideas for the format for the evening include: start with a share – have the audience answer a question and discuss it in small groups, use a word cloud depending upon the technology available to us in Powers Hall, We want to make sure that the focus is not on screen time. Amelia will meet with Diane after Dec. 1. Please email your ideas about the content and format to Amelia so we can work with the speaker to have a well developed and defined program. It was suggested that we put together a list of links to Diane's articles, book and website to be distributed to participants that evening. We should consider partnering with Parent Talk as a co-sponsor to tap into their networks. Kerry will make a flyer to be distributed at the Diversity Summit and at MLK celebration.

Identify other NHRC programming ideas

- Marlene wondered if the group was interested in suggesting to the Selectmen that they change their name to remove reference to gender in the governing panel's name as was recently done in Brookline and other towns. A motion was passed to have Marlene have a conversation with Marianne Cooley to see if they were already thinking about changing the name.
- Abdul felt we should focus on racism in an ongoing way. He feels it is a structural problem and we need several programs to address the issue. Nadda mentioned a program where we focus on unconscious bias and Bud suggested we once again look into tracesofthetrade.org. Come at 7pm prior to the December meeting to brainstorm ideas about how we might address this issue
- Jennifer is in conversation with the library to co-sponsor an anti-racism book club that would meet on a monthly basis.

- Jennifer is also looking into an NEF grant for to reinstitute a peer leadership program at the high school that they used to have in 2006. The focus would be on teaching high school students skills to lead/facilitate discussion on racial justice issues.

5. REPORTS

Needham High School Matt asked if we would like to do a workshop at the high school for *One Day* on January 31 8:15-11:00am. We would need to develop a 45 minute presentation. A motion was made and passed to develop a workshop; Matt will work with Nadda on this and probably incorporate unconscious bias into the workshop.

Schools Dan said that he would probably come to either the January or February meeting to share the equity audit with all of us, depending on when the Committee has more time to discuss this topic.

Town Issues Lt. Kraemer reported three graffiti incidents which occurred in the Town over the past several weeks. The first incident was at McDonald's. There was a swastika, which was red, and they think might have been ketchup. The second was on a post on Greendale. The 3rd was last week in a high school bathroom where they found the N word. There are no suspects for any of the incidents. There has been an increase in the reporting of incidents, which is probably due to the heightened awareness people have to report things. Massachusetts has the highest rate of reported incidents in the country.

Update: Community Inter-racial potluck Marlene and Jennifer attended the planning meeting for the community potluck that will be held at First Parish on January 28, 2018 at 5pm. All are invited and encouraged to bring others with them. Jackie Mulvehill, a Needham grad and Si Si's daughter will be the facilitator. She has been a diversity trainer since Needham High School, at College of the Holy Cross, and in her work life as a Teach for America Teacher in DC, and as Campus Director for Citizens Schools at Orchard Garden, Roxbury. The program looks excellent.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Needham- Mon. Nov. 20, 7pm - First Parish UU Church - interfaith service of remembrance & discussion forum On Transgender Day of Remembrance, Monday, November 20, several Needham faith communities and social justice organizations will come together to mark the Transgender Day of Remembrance, at 7:00 pm at the First Parish in Needham Unitarian Universalist, 23 Dedham Avenue. The Reverend Catie

Scudera, pastor of First Parish, with Reverend Daryn Stylianopoulos of the First Baptist Church in Needham, and Reverend Jim Mitulski of the Congregational Church of Needham UCC will lead an interfaith service to recall all those who have been killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice.

Other sponsoring organizations include Temple Beth Shalom, Christ Episcopal Church, OUT Metro West, Needham Diversity Initiative, and Progressive Needham. A discussion forum on combating anti-transgender prejudice and violence will follow the service. All are welcome and encouraged to attend this event in support of the transgender community. An offering will be taken to benefit Umbrella, OUT Metro West's program for transgender and gender non-conforming youth. The Transgender Day of Remembrance, now observed across the country, was started here in Massachusetts by transgender advocate Gwendolyn Ann Smith to honor the memory of Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was killed in Allston on November 28, 1998. Hester's murder remains unsolved to this day. The Day of Remembrance also seeks to raise awareness of the ongoing threat of anti-transgender violence (which predominantly affects women of color), as we memorialize the hundreds who have died in just the last two decades.

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Meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Marlene Schultz, Recorder*

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, December 21, 2017 at 7:30 pm, Highland Room,
Town Hall
Recorder: Marlene**