

**Annual Town Report
FY 2017**

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE



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<i>Cynthia Ganung (Clergy Association, IJTF, Diversity Initiative)</i>	<i>Bud Schram</i>
<i>Kerry Hurwitch</i>	<i>Dan Rubin</i>
<i>Amelia Klein (Diversity Initiative)</i>	<i>Jennifer Howard Schroeder (Chair)</i>
<i>John Kraemer (liaison – NPD)</i>	<i>Matt Schroeder (NHS)</i>
	<i>Marlene Schultz (Vice-Chair)</i>



CHARGE
Human Rights Committee
Approved August 12, 2008

Created in 1995 by the Board of Selectmen, the mission of the Human Rights Committee is to address matters pertaining to human and civil rights and problems related to thereto that may arise in the Town.

The charge of the Committee is to:

1. Advocate appreciation and respect for human and civil rights in our Town (Education);
2. Organize and/or recommend community events to constructively promote respect for human and civil rights in our Town (Community Outreach);

3. Provide advice and assistance to the Town Manager, Chief of Police, and/or other Town offices in response to issues that challenge the human and/or civil rights of any individual or group in our Town (Community Response)

NHRC LOGO

The NHRC logo design, which is universally recognized, combines the shape of a hand with that of a bird (dove). It was created by an international committee for the promotion and protection of human rights.

MEMBERSHIP

Official members of the Needham Human Rights Committee are Needham residents who volunteer to serve on the Committee. They are appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

The Committee shall consist of 12 members. When practicable, the Committee should include representatives or designees of the Needham Police Department and the Needham Public School Department (ex officio and non-voting), the Needham Commission on Disabilities, and the Needham Housing Authority. Membership should also include a representative of the local clergy, a senior citizen, a tenant of the Needham Housing Authority, a realtor, and a Needham High School student.

MEETINGS

Human Rights Committee meetings are usually held the *third Thursday* of each month at Needham Town Hall, Highland Room, 7:30-9:00 pm. Meetings are open to the public and all meeting dates and agendas are posted on the Town website. On occasion, guest speakers are invited by the Committee to share their expertise in the area of human rights. Guest speakers play an important role as resources for planning future NHRC events. The Committee welcomes all Needham residents who are interested in human rights to attend a meeting and to learn about the work of the Committee.

SPONSORED COMMUNITY EVENTS

Organizing community events and educational forums related to human rights plays a major role in the work of the NHRC. Following are highlights for the Fiscal Year 2017.

Diversity and Dessert and a Concert in the Park – July 21, 2016 Memorial Field



In an effort to cultivate relationships, celebrate the diversity of Needham and enjoy the arts, an outdoor community-building event took place at Memorial Field. In addition to enjoying desserts and a concert by the Needham Community Band, participants learned about the important work of the co-sponsors of the event - the Needham Diversity Initiative and the NHRC. Display stands and materials provided information about the organizations and publicized future events related to diversity and human rights themes.

Needham 5th Annual Diversity Summit – November 19, 2016 Pollard Middle School



The Needham Diversity Summit brings together community leaders, friends, neighbors and students to explore, foster, strengthen and celebrate Needham’s diversity - of socioeconomic status, race, sexual orientation, gender (including identity and expression), religion, ethnic identity, ability and age. The Summit attempts to empower groups that may otherwise feel unable or that lack the confidence to share their experiences and voices, and to provide a safe and inviting space for audiences to listen and respond. The NHRC was a co-sponsor of the day-long

event. NHRC members served on the Diversity Summit Planning Committee and attended and hosted the Diversity Summit. NHRC members also led workshop sessions, an integral part of the Diversity Summit program.

Human Rights Day – December 20, 2016

The Needham Board of Selectmen made a statement in recognition of Human Rights Day, which was promoted by the NHRC. The statement is posted on the NHRC Town Hall webpage.

In recognition of Human Rights Day, we wish to remind all our residents that Needham is committed to creating and fostering a welcoming and safe community for all who live and work

here. This commitment means we reject discrimination or acts of hate based on a person's race, color, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship, ancestry, family/marital status, ability, source of income, military status, or age. Further, we remain diligent in celebrating and practicing diversity, inclusion, and respect in every possible aspect of life in Needham. We therefore ask our community to recognize Human Rights Day, finding the humanity within each other and to stand united with those most vulnerable among us.

[Vote of the Board of Selectmen 12/20/2016]

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration - January 16, 2017 Needham High School



This annual community event celebrates the legacy and the life and achievement of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The central focus of the MLK Day is children. Most of the performances are by or for children of all ages. An annual highlight is a combined choir of children from diverse Needham communities and groups. Middle school students conducted a ceremony of lighting candles in honor of those who have inspired them. Other program highlights included a keynote speaker, storytelling activities for children, a dance ensemble presentation, and a student art display. NHRC was a co-sponsor of the celebration. Committee members served on the MLK Day Planning Committee, organized and provided refreshments, attended and hosted the event. Additional sponsors were The Clergy Association, the Needham School Department and its METCO Program, and the Needham Diversity Initiative. (Photo courtesy Needham Diversity Initiative, Inc. needhamdiversity.org)

Human Trafficking "Hidden in Plain Sight" - March 9, 2017 Powers Hall, Needham



George Goneconto (Moderator), Chief John Schlittler, Deborah O’Hara Ruschowski, Steven Procopio, Peter DiMarzio

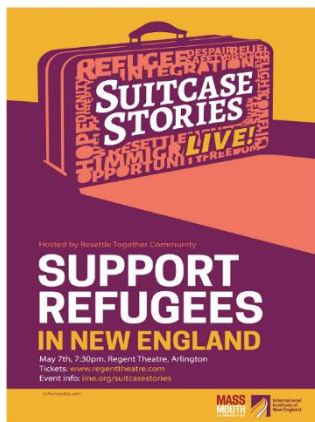
The Needham Human Rights Committee partnered with Needham PATH – People Against Trafficking, whose mission is to prevent human trafficking in Needham and in Norfolk County, for an event in Needham. Guest speakers included Needham Chief of Police John Schlittler; Deborah O’Hara-Rusckowski, a delegate at the United Nations; Steven Procopio, LICSW and Consultant for Human Trafficking; and Peter DiMarzio, Homeland Security Investigations Victim Assistance Specialist. Speakers shared their professional experiences in working against human trafficking globally and locally. They identified possible indicators of human trafficking, and stressed the need to educate the public to recognize risk factors and indicators which exist in our communities that are “hidden in plain sight”.

Understanding ISIS and Combatting the Threat – May 9, 2017 Center at the Heights



- Craig Considine, a Needham native and Needham High School graduate, returned to educate the Community about ISIS at an event sponsored by the NHRC and the Needham Public Library’s “Needham Free Public Forum” program. Professor Considine is currently a faculty member in the Department of Sociology at Rice University in Houston. His work focuses on Islam, Muslims in American Society, Interfaith Relations, the Sociology of Religion, Race and Ethnic Relations, and Social Problems. Following his presentation, Professor Considine responded to questions from the audience which addressed conflicting perspectives and approaches to combatting terrorism. Approximately 115 people attended the forum.

Suitcase Stories – June 22, 2017 Trip Advisor, Needham



Suitcase Stories Live was one of a series of storytelling performances organized by IINE – the International Institute of New England that took place in Needham. The purpose was to honor refugees and immigrants and to raise funds to support IINE's programming. The performance featured foreign and U.S.-born residents who shared their personal refugee or immigrant related stories. The event was held and hosted at Trip Advisor headquarters in Needham around World Refugee Day. The NHRC was one of several Needham Community co-sponsors of the event.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

In pursuing its mission, the NHRC seeks opportunities to collaborate - and develop on-going relationships - with groups in the Needham Community. Following are examples of ways the NHRC has made efforts to reach out to both official and non-official Town Committees and organizations.

- **NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY** Members of the NHRC have had on-going conversations with the Executive Director and the Resident Services Coordinator to discuss common interests and means of support. The Committee’s goal is to learn about the needs of residents living in NHA units, and how well residents of Needham public housing are integrated into the Community. The Committee continues to seek candidates who are residents of the Needham Housing Authority to serve on the NHRC, and has collaborated with NHA officials in promoting resident representation on the Committee.
- **MEDIA SOURCES** The NHRC has developed close links with local media sources. Direct contact with editors and journalists has helped the Committee promote its events and generate interest in human rights. Committee members have attended information sessions organized by the Needham Times and have had opportunities to meet the staff, learn how and when to send press releases and calendar listings, and how to “pitch” a story for their organization. The Needham Times has been supportive of the mission of

the NHRC and has highlighted its work in major articles and guest columns. The Hometown Weekly has consistently responded to press releases and published lead articles about Committee events in a timely fashion. Additionally, the NHRC launched its own Facebook page to publicize events and promote understanding of human rights issues in the community.

- **NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS** Members of the Committee have met with the Superintendent and Needham Public School officials to discuss ways to collaborate and to share resources. The NHRC is committed to developing on-going relationships with school personnel and students. Their input is critical in the planning of educational forums which address the challenges faced by youth in our community. The NHRC provides opportunities for NHS students to take on leadership roles as members of the Committee, and to take initiative in providing student participation and input in the planning of events. The Needham High School representative who serves on the Committee provides an important link to faculty and student groups. In October 2016, the student representative led a workshop for high school students at a NHS event to explore the “all school read” The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates. The workshop explored the school to prison pipeline. In November 2016, four members of the NHRC presented a workshop, “What are Human Rights” at the Pollard Middle School STA (Students Take Action) Day. In February, 2017, Needham residents raised concerns to the NHRC about a long- standing practice in the Needham middle schools that purportedly used, at least in part, a student’s apparent race in determining cluster placement. Throughout the spring 2017, NHRC members met with Needham Superintendent Gutekanst and residents to explore possible solutions to the issues raised.
- **NEEDHAM COUNCIL ON AGING** The co-chairs of the NHRC have corresponded with the Executive Director of the Council on Aging to plan events at the Center at the Heights to accommodate the needs of older adults. The Director has been supportive in helping the Committee reserve dates and space at the Center to host key events. The Center staff members have generously given their time and energy in organizing and facilitating event activities. One event was held at the Center at the Heights this past year (*Understanding ISIS and Combatting the Threat* – May 9, 2017).
- **NEEDHAM DIVERSITY INITIATIVE, Inc.** The Needham Diversity Initiative (NDI) is a grass-roots, community organization of individuals who live, work or study in Needham. Many are educators and have been involved with diversity training in the past (e.g., via their profession or membership in Needham’s Human Rights Committee, Needham Clergy Association, or Immigration Justice Task Force). The NDI organizes on-going events, workshops, and community forums which provide opportunities for residents of Needham to learn about the diverse populations within their community, to examine diversity issues, and to build diverse coalitions. Two members of the NHRC serve on the Board of the Needham Diversity Initiative. The NHRC has been an annual co-sponsor of the Needham Diversity Summit and the Martin Luther King Day Celebration. The NHRC co-sponsored a community building event with the NDI - *Diversity and Desserts at Memorial Field* on July, 2016, and co-sponsored *Race Amity*

Day on June 2017 together with the Needham Diversity Initiative and the World of Wellesley.

- **NEEDHAM CLERGY ASSOCIATION** Two members of the NHRC are active members of the Needham Clergy Association. Both groups have shared information about their work with members of their respective organizations, and have supported and attended public events organized by each group. This past year, NHRC members participated in a race dialogue pot luck dinner sponsored by the Needham Clergy Association and the Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries.
- **NEEDHAM IMMIGRATION JUSTICE TASK FORCE** One member of the NHRC is a member of the Immigration Justice Task Force and has been an important link to the group. The NHRC has supported the activities of the IJTF and has attended and co-sponsored events they have organized. The work of the IJTF is relevant to the work of the Committee: both groups are advocates for human rights. The IJTF has been an important source of information about current issues and actions taken in relation to immigration policies, many that involve residents and employees in the Town of Needham.
- **NEEDHAM REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PARTNERSHIP** Several Needham faith-based and community organizations have formed a consortium to 1) inform Needham residents about the global and national refugee resettlement crisis, 2) explore ways to create community partnerships to help transition immigrants in the Boston area, and 3) consider the possibility of becoming partners in the *Resettle Together – Partners in Local Refugee Resettlement program*. The International Institute of New England (IINE) is one of three resettlement agencies in Massachusetts that provides many opportunities for surrounding partnering communities (such as Needham) to support the resettlement process through advocacy, pre-arrival support, social events, and working directly with clients. Two members of the NHRC serve on a steering committee for the consortium project.
- **NEEDHAM FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY** In October 2016, Needham Public Library Trustees and a Board Member presented information to the NHRC about the Library's desire to promote a respect for diversity in the town through programming and educational forums. As a result of these discussions, the Library and the NHRC co-sponsored a May 2017 event titled *Understanding ISIS and Combatting the Threat*, featuring Professor Craig Considine of Rice University (and Needham High School alum). The NHRC continued collaboration with the Library through co-sponsorship of its *One Book One Community Program*. Throughout the summer, the Library made available copies of *In the Country We Love: My Family Divided*, by Diane Guerrero. In conjunction with several community groups, including the NHRC, the Library hosted numerous community meetings to discuss the important themes presented in the book about the implications of immigration policy in the United States.
- **REPRESENTATIVE DENISE GARLICK** In January 2017, Representative Denise Garlick contacted the NHRC to begin discussing convening a coalition of community leaders to promote respectful dialogue about issues impacting human rights.

Additionally, NHRC members participated in a meeting called by Representative Garlick to address the Town's position on adopting immigration enforcement policies proposed by the American Civil Liberties Union. The meeting, which held approximately 30 participants, featured discussion by Selectwoman Marianne Cooley, Police Chief John Schlittler, immigration advocate and town resident, Ken Farbstein, and Representative Garlick.

- **NEEDHAM WITNESS FOR JUSTICE EMPOWERMENT FAIR** In January 2016, at the request of a Needham resident, the NHRC co-sponsored a special event, held at Needham First Parish, which offered residents of Needham the opportunity to network with many local groups active in the Town to promote human rights. At this event, participants heard from leaders of various groups and brainstormed about ways they could coordinate efforts in the Town Community.

HUMAN RIGHTS RESOURCE GROUPS

The NHRC has kept informed about human rights issues by connecting to regional organizations and groups who serve as resources to the Committee. These resources enhance the work of the Committee in planning educational forums, and in responding to issues that challenge the human rights of any individual or group in the Needham Community.

- **MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELATIONS COMMISSIONS (MAHRC)** The Massachusetts Association of Human Rights and Relations Commissions is an organization of municipal and local agencies responsible for promoting human and civil rights and harmonious relationships among diverse groups at a local level. The mission of MAHRC is to provide local and statewide leadership in the areas of human rights and intergroup relationships. MAHRC accomplishes this charge by promoting networking initiatives, developing educational strategies and model programs; and serving as a resource for new and existing human rights and relations commissions.
- **PEOPLE AGAINST TRAFFICKING of HUMANS (PATH) NEEDHAM** PATH's mission is to prevent human trafficking in Needham and in Norfolk County. Their goal is to raise awareness through education, advocacy and collaboration. From the beginning Needham PATH has had a strong relationship with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Victim Assistance Program. PATH continues to develop ongoing collaboration with other agencies within our local communities. There is a great need to educate the public to be able to recognize the risk factors and indicators which exist in our communities that are "hidden in plain sight". Many Needham PATH members have been trained by organizations such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and are available for speaking engagements to educate and raise awareness about human trafficking.