



**The Interfaith Alliance**  
**LONG ISLAND CHAPTER**  
<http://www.interfaith-alliance-li.org>

### **Minutes – Meeting of 2/7/2008**

**Attendance:** Rev. Mark Lukens, Chair; Bob Adams, Norma Cohen, Jay Grosmark, Ahsan Khan, Patricia Lee, Margaret Melkonian, Marty Melkonian, Elaine Peters, Dolores Tibbets, Richard Tibbets

Mark Lukens called the meeting to order.

**Minutes:** The members waived reading of the minutes from the 1/3/08 meeting and approved them as written.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Dolores Tibbets deposited the \$2,119.12 closing balance from Roslyn Bank into a new bank account at North Fork Bank. There was one deposit of \$20 for the month, so the new balance as of 1/31/08 is \$2,139.12.

**TIA-LI Brochures:** Norma offered her grateful acknowledgement for the fine work done by Loren & Dan on their recent updating of the TIA-LI brochures.

**Stop the Hate Vigil:** Margaret reported that the January 20<sup>th</sup> “Stop The Hate” vigil held at Hofstra, which was co-sponsored by TIA-LI, the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives and others, was well received by local media. The vigil resulted in two articles in Newsday and will be broadcast on Cablevision’s public access channel 115 on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Margaret indicated that there were about 225 attendees at the Hofstra vigil. Norma noted that we obtained about 50 signatures for TIA’s “First Freedom First” campaign.

Norma thanked Margaret Melkonian for all her efforts in organizing the vigil. Norma stressed that this is a nation-wide effort and that passage of anti-hate speech legislation is a priority for The Interfaith Alliance. She was also proud to report that TIA-LI has been a sponsor of this vigil for about 10 years.

**Honoraria:** The members voted to authorize honoraria of \$250 to the Shepherd Singers, whose singing at this vigil was so inspiring, as well as \$250 to S.T.R.O.N.G. Youth, Inc. Sergio Argueta, their Executive Director, spoke at the vigil about the work of S.T.R.O.N.G, which is an organization dedicated to working with youth to prevent gang violence in Nassau County.

**War in Iraq & Afghanistan:** Mark noted that the Presidential Primaries are becoming more focused on the economy and less so on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He noted that the political right in this country would rather focus on hot button issues and ignore the bad news associated with the wars, such as the death of U.S. service personnel as well

as Iraqi and Afghan citizens, the destruction of civil and economic society in those two countries, and the erosion of civil rights in this country. The war is also leading to a deterioration of morality in this country as the Bush administration continues to justify the use of torture and seeking other terms to describe it (e.g., “enhanced interrogation techniques”). Mark stressed that we need to tie these various war-related issues together in order to focus the electorate’s attention on this dreadful war.

**Ghosts of Abu Ghraib:** In a nation-wide project called “Spotlight on Torture,” the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is distributing DVDs of the movie *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* to religious organizations upon request. We discussed a plan to show this DVD at our April TIA-LI meeting.

The NRCAT website describes the DVD as follows:

- “*Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*, an 80-minute HBO film, features the familiar and very disturbing pictures of torture at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison and raises many questions: How did torture become an accepted practice at Abu Ghraib? Did U.S. government policies make it possible? How much damage has the aftermath of Abu Ghraib had on America's credibility as a defender of freedom and human rights around the world? Acclaimed filmmaker Rory Kennedy looks beyond the headlines to investigate the psychological and political context in which torture occurred.”
- “We at NRCAT have undertaken the Spotlight on torture project because we believe that *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* will help people of faith deepen their understanding of the nature of U.S.-sponsored torture.”

**NOTE:** NRCAT indicates that this movie is for mature audiences only as the images and interviews are extremely intense.

**LI Clergy And Religious For Peace: A Call To End The War:** Margaret Melkonian reported that Long Island peace groups are continuing to obtain signatures for the “Call for Peace.” Clergy and religious interested in signing can call her at (516) 741-4360 or visit the website [www.longislandpeace.org](http://www.longislandpeace.org)

**Faith-Based Funding:** Norma reported that the expenditure of federal funds for faith-based initiatives continues to be a large problem. She has called Sen. Clinton to determine Clinton’s stand on Faith-Based Funding, but was told that Clinton’s response is “on hold.”

**Multi-Faith Luncheon:** Norma encouraged the group to begin planning for TIA’s Spring Multi-Faith Luncheon. Volunteers are needed to serve on the committee. If you are available to help with this event, please contact Norma at (516) 627-1156 or [NormaCohen1@optonline.net](mailto:NormaCohen1@optonline.net)

**Dialogue Project:** There was a brief discussion about a group called “The Dialogue Project.” Their webpage describes them as follows:

“The Dialogue Project’s mission is to build trust, compassion, and partnerships among people who experience bias, hostility, and tension relating to the conflict in the Middle East.”

Following the discussion, Rich agreed to seek further information before our next TIA meeting. The project's website is [www.thedialogueproject.org](http://www.thedialogueproject.org)

**TIA-LI Website:** The TIA – Long Island website contains information of interest to our members. You may visit this site at [www.interfaithalliance-li.org](http://www.interfaithalliance-li.org)

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**Thursday, Feb.21, 7:30pm:** Ann Wright, retired Army Colonel and former State Department Diplomat, will speak **at UUCSR** on the topic: “Dissent: Voices of Conscience.” This program is a benefit for Iraq Veterans Against the War. There is a suggested contribution of \$5.

**Friday, Feb. 29, 7:30pm:** Stephen Kinzer, former New York Times Foreign Correspondent and author of *All the Shah's Men*, will present a talk “A Rational U.S. Policy for Iran” **at the Great Neck Library**, Bayview Ave. & Grist Mill Lane in Great Neck. Call Great Neck SANE/Peace Action @ 516-487-3786 for more info

**Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 7:30pm:** Jonathan Schell, author of *The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger* and journalist at The Nation, will speak **at UUCSR**.

**Wednesday, Mar. 19<sup>th</sup>, 5-6pm:** On this 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, there will be a demonstration on the corner of Old Country Rd. and Glen Cove Rd. (opposite main **entrance to Roosevelt Field**) to protest the continuation of the war.

**NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING:**

The next TIA meeting will be **Thursday, March 6th at 7:30pm** at the **Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock** 48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset. Call (516) 627-6560 for directions, or visit the website [www.uucsr.org](http://www.uucsr.org)

We have also **tentatively** scheduled an April 17<sup>th</sup> TIA meeting, which will include a viewing of the DVD *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*. Confirmation and details to follow.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Tibbets