



Minutes – Meeting of 5/8/2008

Attendance: Mark Lukens, chair; Habeeb Ahmed; Hank Around; Ronnie Around; Paul Auerbach; Norma Cohen; Mel Cooperman; Kirby Einhorn; Ahsan Khan; Ginette Levin; Marty Melkonian; Barbara Schneider; Jeff Schull; Dolores Tibbets; Richard Tibbets;

Mark Lukens called the meeting to order.

Minutes: The members waived reading of the minutes from the 3/6/08 meeting and approved them as written. (There were no minutes for the 4/17 meeting as that consisted of a showing of the DVD *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*, which is being distributed by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT).

Treasurer's Report: The 3/6/08 Balance was \$1,609.77. Since that time, we received \$1,185 in Membership Dues, spent \$53.70 for website maintenance. We also paid \$10 for banking fees and were reimbursed \$24.35 for previous banking fees related to the January, 2008. These transactions resulted in a 5/8/08 balance of \$2,755.42.

Ghosts of Abu Ghraib: Mark provided a brief report on TIA's April 17th viewing of Rory Kennedy's Emmy Award winning HBO documentary *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*, which was attended by about 100 persons. Mark noted that, given the culturally specific nature of the torture and humiliation practiced at Abu Ghraib, it is extremely unlikely that the torture was the result of a few "bad apples," as the administration would like us to believe. Rather it appears to have been planned much higher up in the military chain of command. Mark noted that torture is not uncommon during warfare. However, the fact that torture was apparently Pentagon policy is unprecedented in American history.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is distributing this DVD free of charge to those who agree to show it publicly in order to raise awareness of the crimes committed by the military. Mel suggested showing the Abu Ghraib DVD in additional locations, such as churches, synagogues, and colleges.

For more information, go to www.nrcat.org and click on "People of Faith Act" in the list at left side of screen, then click on "Screenings of Ghosts of Abu Ghraib."

Long Island Wins: Mark introduced Kirby Einhorn, the Communications Outreach Director of Long Island Wins. Kirby told us that Long Island Wins is seeking to create practical solutions to the immigration issues facing Long Island. The group's website states its mission: "*We are Long Islanders working together to promote immigration solutions that include and work for everyone.*" Kirby notes the need to work to promote workplace rights for all workers, both citizens and immigrants.

Kirby also advised us that Long Island Wins is fighting against proposed legislation in Suffolk County and asked for our support.

(Ed. Note: The bill, #1105, was subsequently passed by the Suffolk Legislature on Tuesday, May 13th.)

For more information, go to www.longislandwins.com/

Interfaith Luncheon: Norma noted that 38 people have registered for the May 22nd luncheon. We discussed speakers for the luncheon. Mark agreed to guide the discussion. Margaret will speak about the People's Agenda.

National TIA Board Meeting: Norma presented a report about the TIA National Board meeting held April 30th and May 1st.

- Finances are a problem at this time. TIA has a new financial team in place to get expenses under control.
- The current TIA membership is aging. TIA is searching for ways to attract younger members so we can continue to grow as a membership organization.
- TIA has recently worked to sharpen both its message and its image to better reflect its mission of protecting faith and freedom. As part of this outreach effort, TIA now has a presence both in *Face Book* and *You Tube*. Hopefully this will make TIA more accessible to the younger generation. You may learn more about the new TIA internet presence at the website www.tialliance.org

Stop the Hate: There was a brief discussion of the new Independent Lens documentary *A Dream in Doubt* which examines hate crimes against minorities. The PBS website highlights the film as follows: "One of America's first post-9/11 hate crime murders punctuates a growing wave of violence in retaliation for the terror attacks."

Local schedule for *A Dream in Doubt*

Channel 13, Friday, 5/23, 10pm.

WNET-DT (Digital TV) Friday, May 23, 10:00pm

WLIW World (Digital Channel):

- Wednesday, May 21, 8:00pm; Thursday, May 22, 1:00am;
- Thursday, May 22, 9:00am; Thursday, May 22, 3:00pm; Sunday, May 25, 1:00pm

This film is also being shown for free in some movie theaters.

For further information, go to www.pbs.org/independentlens/dreamindoubt/

War in Iraq & Afghanistan: Marty noted that the House of Representatives would soon vote on an appropriation bill for the Iraq War. He urged members to call Congress and urge members to not vote for any military funding except for that necessary to bring the troops home.

(Ed. note: The House subsequently voted to NOT fund the war - with most Republicans abstaining. The Senate will vote next.)

Race and Religion: Various members spoke about issues of racial and religious conflict in the country.

- Concern was expressed about Rev. Jeremiah Wright’s support of Louis Farrakhan.
- Anti-Muslim sentiment in this country was discussed.
- Members noted that Humanists were also under attack in this country.
- Mark noted that ministers often make provocative statements in order to get the attention of their congregants and goad them to action.
- Mark stressed the need for TIA-LI to:
 - Provide visible support to Muslims and others facing religious discrimination
 - Sponsor interfaith dialog.

TIA National Leadership Meeting: Rich reported that Rev. Dr. Welton Gaddy, President of TIA National, spoke to TIA local leaders gathered in Washington DC April 27th to April 30th. Gaddy was deeply concerned about the turmoil over the statements which Rev. Jeremiah Wright made to the National Press Club and in other venues. Gaddy is concerned that the press does not understand religion in America. He further stated that the media has particular problems understanding both the Black Church as well as the prophetic religious tradition. Gaddy says that there is urgent need for open and honest dialog about race in this nation.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thurs, May 22, 1:00p.m.: TIA Clergy / Member Luncheon
The Luncheon will be held at
The Veatch House Ballroom
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock.
48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset

Sat., May 24, 10a.m.: Memorial Commemoration at Jones Beach – with recitation of the names of those killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (meet at Parking Field#2)
NOTE: There will be an \$8 fee to park in the lot.

Wed, June 11, 7:30p.m.: Shelter Rock Forum presents Father Louie Vitale. Topic will be “No to Torture: The Nonviolent Response to Terrorism.” Father Louie will talk about his recent five month prison term served for crossing the line and praying at Fort Huachuca, Arizona where we train American Intelligence Officers in “Enhanced Interrogation” tactics, such as water boarding. For further information about Fr. Louie’s presentation, go to <http://paceebene.org/tour>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, June 14th at 12:30 PM: Community Empowerment March, Freeport, Roosevelt, Uniondale, and Hempstead. This March will bring attention to the devastation that violence causes to minority neighborhoods in Nassau County. The focus of the March will be a broad look at issues that are negatively affecting the community, including violence, drugs and apathy, but most importantly what the community itself can do to build safer and healthier communities.

For further information, contact STRONG Youth, Inc. at 516-408-3798 (or visit the TIA-LI website at www.interfaithalliance-li.org)

June 21st, 7:30p.m. Shelter Rock Forum presents Kristofer Goldsmith, Iraq War Veteran. Kris refused to return to Iraq. He fought to get out of the Army. Despite threats of a Court Martial, Kris was released from active duty with a General Discharge (under honorable conditions). He has since worked with other soldiers to help them “escape the grasp of an unjust, out of control” military.

TIA-LI Website: The TIA – Long Island website, which is updated on a regular basis throughout the month, contains information of interest to our members. You may visit this site at www.interfaithalliance-li.org

NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING:

The next TIA meeting will be

Thursday, June 19, 2:30 PM

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

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Tibbets