



Minutes – Meeting of 6/19/2008

Attendance: Mark Lukens, chair; Hank Around; Ronnie Around; Paul Auerbach; Sylvia Auerbach; Norma Cohen; Mel Cooperman; Ethel Hurvitz; Ahsan Khan; Marty Melkonian; Jeff Schull; Richard Tibbets; Kausar Zaman

Mark Lukens called the meeting to order at 2:45.

Minutes: The members waived reading of the minutes from the 5/8/08 meeting and approved them as written.

Treasurer's Report: The 5/8/08 Balance was \$2,775.42. Since that time, we received \$175 in Membership Dues, spent \$26.85 for website maintenance. We also paid \$10 for banking fees for April and May. These transactions resulted in a 6/19/08 balance of \$2,295.81

Announcements: Norma noted that Ester Halpert had died. Ester was a founding member of TIA-LI, and had been a very active as long as her health permitted. Ester was also one of the first TIA-LI members to attend a TIA-National meeting. We offer our sympathy to Ester's family.

Interfaith Luncheon: Approximately 75 persons attended the Interfaith Luncheon, which was held on May 22nd. Attendees included Jains, Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Quakers, and Unitarians. She also recognized Loren, Paul, and Jeff for all their efforts in picking up and preparing the food for the luncheon.

Marty reported that we passed out several copies of the DVD *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*, which is being distributed by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (www.nrcat.org).

We also had a brief discussion of plans for future luncheons, including (1) the possibility of finding some organization to provide financial sponsorship of the luncheon, and (2) using the occasion to honor someone working to promote TIA's values.

Ghosts of Abu Ghraib: Paul reported that he and Marty are developing plans to distribute the "*Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*" DVD to local colleges and universities. Apparently the DVD can be distributed at no cost to religious groups only, not to political groups. Paul and Marty are therefore in touch with the LI Council of Churches to get a list of chaplains, etc. on the various campuses. Marty also suggested the possibility of TIA-LI purchasing several copies of the DVD from NRCAT for distribution to non-religious groups.

War in Iraq & Afghanistan: Marty reminded us that Kris Goldsmith of Iraq Veterans Against the War will be speaking at the Shelter Rock Forum on Sunday, June 22nd. After being threatened with a Court Martial, Kris, a native of Uniondale, was given a “General Discharge” from the military due to his refusal to return to Iraq. Kris is an outspoken opponent of the wars and has spoken in numerous forums on Long Island.

Marty also stressed the importance of contacting our Congressional representatives to urge them to vote against the \$165 Billion funding bill for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. There appears to be a good chance of the bill passing, since it also includes funds for GI Benefits and for an extension of unemployment benefits.

Mel noted that four major oil companies may be granted “no-bid” contracts to operate oil wells in Iraq. They will then advocate for U.S. military protection in Iraq, further committing this nation to action in that country.

Memorial Commemoration at Jones Beach: Marty reported that about 150 peace advocates marched along the boardwalk at Jones Beach to commemorate the death of soldiers as well as civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. Kris Goldsmith of IVAW joined in this march. The marchers were confronted by some members of the group “Gathering of Eagles,” who harassed the marchers and called the Iraq Veterans “traitors” for being part of the Memorial Commemoration.

Legislation in Albany: Norma advised us that the Assembly has passed Michelle Schimel’s “microstamping” legislation, which would provide law enforcement with a vital tool to track down criminals based upon shell casings found at crime scenes. Unfortunately, the State Senate has not allowed this bill to come up for a vote. Norma asked members to call their State Senate and urge them to allow a vote on this legislation.

Religion and Race: Rich distributed excerpts of three news articles which were distributed by TIA National as part of their weekly “Media Roundup” email. These articles dealt with (1) the media’s lack of understanding of the role of the Black Church in America, especially the Church’s prophetic role; (2) Welton Gaddy’s article about candidates misusing religion; and (3) a Texas’ community’s anger about a presentation to Houston junior high school students by the Council on American-Islamic Relations following an incident in which a Muslim student was stuffed head-first into a trash can by a class mate.

In the ensuing discussion about the Black Church, Mark agreed that the news media does not understand that sermons often use hyperbole to shock the folks in the pews. This is prophetic speech, not political speech. Mark also noted that when people discuss “Black Liberation Theology,” they should look to Martin Luther King, Jr. as an model of such theology, not Louis Farrakhan. He also cited James Cone of Harvard Divinity School as a proponent of a “Theology of Hope.”

Mark is concerned that Rev. Jeremiah Wright’s 20 years of service in the pulpit have become overshadowed by a few provocative statements which were taken out of context and widely distributed over the Internet. Members noted that the Bill Moyers interview with Rev. Wright provided a much fuller description of his career and actions than the

narrow issues that are generally covered in thirty second news bites on TV and in internet videos.

In the discussion of the junior high school incident in Texas, TIA members were concerned that the Houston community appeared much more upset that their students were exposed to a presentation on the basic beliefs of Islam, and not outraged about the attack on the Muslim student which precipitated the presentation about Islam.

Outreach: Mark noted that TIA-LI should be pro-active at seeking events and venues in which we can promote the TIA message and mission with non-TIA members. If you know of any inter-religious events, please let Mark know. You may send him email at revlu@optonline.net

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 6th, 7:00 PM: The Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock's Social Justice Committee and Great Neck SANE/Peace Action will co-sponsor a Hiroshima Day memorial at the Congregation.

TIA-LI Website: The TIA – Long Island website is www.interfaithalliance-li.org This website, which is updated on a regular basis throughout the month, includes occasional letters by our Chair, Rev. Mark Lukens. His latest letter comments on Dunkin Donuts' decision to terminate an Internet ad featuring Rachel Ray wearing a fringed scarf. Mark comments that:

“There is something terribly wrong when the hysteria of a few small minded pundits and their ilk is taken so seriously by a major corporation that the simple act of wearing what appears to be a common middle eastern garment is associated with some kind of endorsement of terrorism.”

To read the entire letter, as well as Mark's other letters on issues of concern to TIA-LI members, visit the website, then click on “Rev. Lukens BLOG,” which is located in the left-hand column of the home page. You may read more about this incident by going to the *New York Times* website at www.nytimes.com and typing “Rachel Ray Scarf” into the Search Box.

The TIA-LI website also contains listings of upcoming events as well as copies of TIA-LI minutes for all meetings since January of 2008.

Next TIA Meeting: See Next Page

NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING:

(NOTE the change in Date and Meeting Location)

The next TIA meeting will be
Thursday, July 17th, 7:30 PM
at the **Islamic Center of Long Island**
835 Brush Hollow Road, Westbury, NY 11590

DIRECTIONS:

1a) **LIE from west:** Take exit 40 west (Jericho Tpke) at light make a right onto Jericho Tpke and then immediate left onto Brush Hollow Road (7/11 at the corner).
Go about a mile or so and the Islamic Center is on your right with lots of flowers.

1b) **LIE from east:** Take exit 40 west and make left onto Brush Hollow Road.
Go about a mile or so and the Islamic Center is on your right with lots of flowers.

2a) **Northern State Pkwy from west:** take exit 34 for Brush Hollow Road.
Make the hair pin turn and go down and make a left on Brush Hollow Road.
Go about a mile or so and the Islamic Center is on your right with lots of flowers.

2b) **Northern State pkwy from east:** take exit 34 for Brush Hollow Rd.
At light make a left onto Brush Hollow Road.
Go about a mile or so and the Islamic Center is on your right with lots of flowers.

NOTICE:

**TIA requests that men and women wear long pants and
also that women wear long sleeves to this meeting.**

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Tibbets