



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

**Minutes – Meeting of 12/4/2008**

**Attendance:** Mark Lukens, Chair; Habeeb Ahmed; Hank Arond; Ronnie Arond; Paul Auerbach; Norma Cohen; Jay Grosmark; Marty Melkonian; Elaine Peters; Jeff Schull; Richard Tibbets; John Tilton.

Mark Lukens called the meeting to order at 3:45pm.

**Minutes:** The members waived reading of the minutes from the 10/23/08 meeting and approved them as written.

**Treasurer's Report:** Dolores reported that our current balance is \$1,402.11. This includes a donation of \$30 and four withdrawals as follows: \$500 for a ticket to TIA National's Annual Cronkite Dinner, \$100 for a Journal Ad for the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives annual fundraiser, \$26.85 for website maintenance, and \$5 for banking service charges.

NOTE: The 10/23 minutes contained an error regarding the balance in the treasury. The correct amount as of 10/23 was \$2,003.96. (The Treasurer's Report contained the correct figures.)

**Interfaith Service Award:** Mark Lukens and Rich Tibbets reported on a fundraiser held by the Islamic Center of Long Island (ICLI) on November 30<sup>th</sup>. Mark accepted the Center's "Interfaith Service Award" on behalf of TIA-LI. The award read in part:

"In recognition for their efforts towards building bridges and promoting interfaith understanding and tolerance."

TIA-LI is most thankful for this gracious honor from the Islamic community.

The fundraiser featured numerous speakers both from the Islamic Center, as well as the community. Speakers spoke of the recent presidential election and the high participation by Muslims. Bishop Murphy of the Catholic Diocese of Rockville Center spoke of interfaith efforts at the Muslim-Christian Forum. State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli offered support and encouragement to the Islamic Center.

You may see a more complete report on the award and the fundraiser, as well as photos, at the website [www.interfaithalliance-li.org/events/iclifundraiser.htm](http://www.interfaithalliance-li.org/events/iclifundraiser.htm)

**TIA National:** Norma provided an update on TIA National. The recent Cronkite Dinner was a financial success and has provided much needed revenue to help TIA weather its current financial problems.

**Mumbai:** We discussed the November 26<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack which killed 163 people. All denounced terror as a means of achieving political ends. There is an urgent need to deescalate conflict between ethnic and religious groups and to address some of the factors which work to breed extreme hostility and terrorism.

The *Los Angeles Times* published an op-ed piece by Asra Nomani, a recent recipient of the Interfaith Alliance Walter Cronkite Faith and Freedom Award. TIA's State of Belief website notes that her op-ed piece

*"...looks at religious tolerance and hatred in India in light of the horrifying terrorist attacks from last week. Her piece looks at how fragile democracy can be when endangered by religious intolerance."*

**Membership Chair:** Norma reported that she would like another member to assume the responsibilities of TIA-LI Membership Chairperson. Norma described some of the duties of Membership Chair, which includes outreach to other groups and individuals and efforts to increase membership in TIA-Long Island. We had a brief discussion of ways to increase membership. Several members expressed a willingness to assist with membership duties, but a new Chair has not yet been selected.

**Ecuadorian Immigrant Killed:** We discussed the November 5<sup>th</sup> incident in which a gang of high school students beat and killed an Ecuadorean man in Patchogue in what police have labeled a hate crime. Members voted to cosponsor the December 12<sup>th</sup> "Evening for Marcelo's Mom In Patchogue" event and to make a \$500 donation from the TIA-LI treasury to the Greater Patchogue Foundation to assist Marcelo's mother, Rosario Lucero.

**Islamophobia:** Paul Auerbach distributed an article from FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting) by Steve Rendall and Isabel Macdonald. The article, entitled "Making Islamophobia Mainstream," disapproves of the National Book Critics Circle (NBCC) for nominating Bruce Bawer's book *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying the West From Within* for best book in the field of criticism. While the book didn't win, Rendall and Macdonald claim that the group's nomination "was emblematic of a mainstreaming of Islamophobia, not just in American publishing but in the broader media." Rendall and Macdonald define "Islamophobia" as writing that tends to dehumanize an entire faith and attribute to its followers a set of negative traits such as intolerance and violence.

In the discussion which follows, Habeeb discussed Jewish-Muslim relations and told of the Islamic Center's "Twinning" program in which the Islamic Center of Long Island joined with Temple Beth El of Great Neck to discuss anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. For further details, go to [www.icliny.org/download\\_files/pr.pdf](http://www.icliny.org/download_files/pr.pdf)

**TIA-LI Banner:** We discussed a suggestion to purchase a banner to identify TIA-LI presence at rallies and other group activities.

**Abu Ghairb DVD:** Paul reported that he has been in contact with Hillel, Newman, and IVCF groups at New York City college campuses in an effort to promote viewing of the

DVD *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* at those campuses. This DVD is being distributed by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.

For info about the Abu Ghraib DVD or about the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, go to [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)

*NOTE: For further information on various issues discussed at the December 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, go the TIA-LI homepage at [www.interfaithalliance-li.org](http://www.interfaithalliance-li.org) and scroll down to the section at bottom titled “Minutes of TIA-LI Meetings for 2008”*

The meeting ended at 5:30pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Tibbets

<b>NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING</b>
The next TIA meeting will be <b>Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm</b> at the <b>Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock (UUCSR)</b> 48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset. Call (516) 627-6560 for directions to UUCSR, or visit the website <a href="http://www.uucsr.org">www.uucsr.org</a>