

MINUTES
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
CITY OF AUSTIN MINNESOTA
March 27, 2003

Members attending: Gabe Garcia, Liliana Silvestry-Neilon, John Hagen, Sue Wagner, Nancy Clark, and Jeanne Poppe.

Members absent: Anu Kasturi, Masuka Magambo, and Pat MacLean.

City Liaison: Tricia Wiechmann

Media: Roxanna O., Matt Merritt (Post Bulletin and Daily Herald)

Gabe called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm. Approval of the February minutes were moved and seconded (Poppe, Clark).

The essay contest is concluded and the winners were awarded their certificates and savings bonds at the March 17 city council meeting. Out of 17 total entries the three winning entries in order were Catherine Monson (winner of \$150 savings bond), Kimy Ounkong (winner of \$100 savings bond) and David Fetzik (winner of \$50 savings bond). All had photos taken with the mayor. Thank you notes will be sent to the Hormel Credit Union, Wells Fargo Bank, Sterling State Bank, and US Bank along with photos of the winners. The city council made a big deal for the winners and shook hands with each of them. Catherine's entry will be sent on for the statewide contest. Certificates will be sent to each of the 17 who participated in the contest.

Confirmation that each of the human rights commission members received copies of the League of Women Voters Immigration study and the full version of the Wilder study.

John Hagen talked about the meeting held at the senior citizens center (regarding immigration and our community). Further discussion in our group about how in the last six months there is an increasing movement against immigrants. It is more than ever an issue and when people are feeling the pinch they react by wanting to blame someone and this is a reaction to the frustration they feel. It is important to us as a community to have a thriving meatpacking plant and many of today's workers are immigrants and even though some money is leaving the community most of it is kept here for living expenses.

Liliana mentioned the AAUW conference in Austin on April 5 at the Holiday Inn and they will be talking to some degree about immigration.

Those around the table decided it is our challenge to get the message out and educate people about what is fact and what is myth. We can have Police Chief Paul Phillip help debunk the idea that there exists only immigrant-based crime.

Sue stated in her work (child protection) she knows it takes three generations to change and Nancy mentioned it takes at least one generation to begin that change. Liliana stated she knows the largest illegal immigrants in the United States are Canadians.

Action: Nancy will bring her information on cultural diversity.

Jeanne will make contact with the League of Women Voters and find out what they are planning to do regarding the dispelling the myths.

We also talked about money for scholarships for community leaders (trying to do what we can to help build culturally diverse leaders). Liliana suggested there might be grant money to help us be proactive.

Announced a dialogue on terrorism will be held at the public library on April 15, Jeanne Poppe and Julie Tufte will co-facilitate.

Human Rights issue of trailer park management issues for a family at Oakland Park – referral has been made to the state human rights commission.

Moved and seconded to adjourn (Clark, Hagen).

Next meeting April 24.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Poppe