



Together for Humanity

Newsletter March 2009

Purpose: To provide positive experiences of diversity, to teach students to abandon prejudice and take action on values shared by all Australian.

Who we are? We are an independent multi-faith non-profit organization with Christian, Jewish and Muslim board members with participants from these and other background implementing our program together.

NEWS

Independent Evaluation

Independent Evaluator Dr. Jenny Nailor has completed an evaluation over many months of our activity in QLD and NSW. She has found

“the evidence gathered confirms that the programs have been successful educationally”.

She focused mostly on qualitative evaluation, using multiple sources. There were also impressive differences in students attitudes reflected in students’ attitudes about some groups before and after their participation.



Descriptor from Attitudinal Survey	In Relation to own Group	In Relation to “Other”	In Relation to “Other”	Improvement
	% of students agreeing with this descriptor	Pre % of students agreeing with this descriptor	Post-workshop % of students agreeing with this descriptor	
‘Are scary’	6	60	18	+ 42%
‘Dislike people from other groups’	12	93	29	+ 64%
‘Steal other people’s lands’	6	60	47	+ 13%
‘Are selfish’	6	73	24	+49%
‘Have no morals’	6	73	41	+32%
‘Are friendly’	80	7	59	+52%
‘Have good morals’	93	7	53	+49%

In the ‘shadow of death’

Our program has faced a huge test of a very different kind when we were confronted once again with the horrific reality of conflict in the Middle East. Our relationships of trust and empathy helped us respond with real concern and sincerity about the suffering and the huge dilemmas involved. The draft

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set of principles that came out of that discussion appear at the end of this newsletter.

Our hard work in this area has also helped us play a constructive role on this issue as members and leaders in the Islamic and Jewish communities grappled with the ethical questions of not being complicit with injustice and trying to maintain relationships.

First University Event- NSW University 24 March

Time was limited but very productive. With approximately 15+ Together for Humanity volunteers, students and staff participants.

Our topic was “Should Jews and Muslims talk to each other after Gaza.” Each presenter was able to express their view on conflict management through personal experiences, specific to religious issues faced by all on a global level.



Of course, the topic on Post Gaza Dialogue was raised and discussed with much emotion from the audience. Talks extended beyond time allowed and organizers requested a further sessions to continue dialogue on such a critical area of interest.

Harmony Day 2009

Harmony Day is celebrated on 18 March each year and is promoted by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to celebrate

the cohesive and inclusive nature of our nation and promotes the benefits of cultural diversity. Together for Humanity was called on to assist a range of schools to support their efforts.

These included, Concord West, Quaker’s Hill West, Northmead High School, Wiley Park Public School, Masada college and Ravenswood school for girls.

George, one of volunteers of Lebanese Christian background described his experience at Masada and Ravenswood.

“An Amazing conversation between the presenters and young curious minds, about religion and cultural values. Unplanned, the session turned into a information frenzy through the numerous questions asked by an amazingly bright bunch of young students. So bright that teachers joined in the conversations gathering new information as the talks developed.”



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The significant contribution by students prompted presenters to reduce the number of activities due to the quality of the students interest and limited time, they sent us away wanting more. The intelligence of these 11 year olds amazed me, for example, in response to the question 'How do you help remove the imaginary barrier around peoples isolation because of their appearance?' One student replied, 'By accepting each others differences and be friends'.

For Zalman a highlight was working alongside a participant of the program done a few years earlier at Granville Boys High, Mohamed Taha. "I was really thrilled to work together with one of these guys... years earlier we had all agreed we needed to work together to overcome our differences- and here we were fulfilling that old promise".



Action Committee

Many thanks to David Einfeld. David has been instrumental in putting together an action committee which will support the work of the organization. The committee meets the first Tuesday of every month in the city. If you are interested in getting involved please contact Matthew Wolf 0413 657 038.

New Partners and office space

Radio Marathon – the charitable arm of Laiki bank has formed a partnership with Together for Humanity to apply our method to addressing prejudice against people with Disabilities.

We are looking forward to working on this vital objective. We have also moved into office space at 175 Castlereagh Street, Sydney thanks to our partners the Community Relations Commission for a Multi-Cultural NSW. People wishing to help out can use one of the two desks we have been given on level 8. Please contact Matthew if you would like to help.

The Community Relation Commission, Radio Marathon and Laiki join our other partners and supporters, The Department of Immigration and Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Queensland and the Caledonia Foundation. Your support is greatly appreciated.



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Citizenship



Queensland
Government



COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
For a multicultural NSW



DRAFT/Interim Policy reflecting

TFH

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board general consensus

Together for Humanity Response to Violent Conflict

As an Australian multi-faith organization we are committed to building meaningful bridges between all peoples. The following principles and truths guide Together for Humanity Foundation's response to violent conflict.

1. Human **life is sacred**. It is wrong to be indifferent to the killing of any human being for any reason or in the name of any particular cause.
 2. Universal standards, international laws and moral principles, must apply to everyone, regardless of race, religion, creed, gender or other differences.
 3. **Justice** is a core obligation of all humanity. People's rights, especially those relating to safety, freedom to pursue a livelihood and dignity must be protected. The application of justice is often neglected and all people who are in a position to speak out must do so. Everyone, the powerful and the oppressed are morally accountable.
 4. There will be disagreements between sincere people of good faith over conflicts and the reasons behind them. We encourage them to debate their views with respect for each other and without demonising people expressing the other viewpoint.
 5. There are **moral principles about disagreement**. It is right to express a view strongly and ethically, being careful about our response to opposing views and using non-polarized language.
 6. With the qualification of our limited capacity to talk about specific situations we affirm broad principles, regardless of how these relate to the situation at a particular time and place.
 7. It is wrong to demonize a race, nation or religion even as we are pained or outraged about choices made in their name in a conflict. Ties of nationality and common faith will influence many people. Some will conclude that it is impossible to be both loyal to one side and also be objective.
 8. Violent conflict and killing must be **prevented** even if we will struggle to find an effective way to do so. People directly in a conflict must be offered assistance to adopt positive methodologies and influenced to use techniques that will alleviate the conflict. Understanding the opposing view does not mean agreeing with it. Building relationships with "the other side" is not the same as siding with the enemy. Humility and an open mind, understanding, generosity of spirit, and building trust are essential elements in reducing and eliminating violent conflict.
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