

# Dialogue

Celebrating  
22 Years  
1989 - 2011



Center for the Healing of Racism

Sept. - Dec. 2011

Volume 18, Number 3

## Of Special Interest

Send us your email address!

We are asking all of you to send us your email addresses so we can cut down on mailing costs as well as cut down on time! Please send your addresses to us at [cfhr1@juno.com](mailto:cfhr1@juno.com) and/or [cfhr1@yahoo.com](mailto:cfhr1@yahoo.com).

## Quote of the quarter

Racism is something that people can transcend through friendship.

~Vincent F. Rocchio

## How to reach us

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HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Central

Houston Community College System seeks to provide equal educational opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

## Co-Directors' Column

### *Co-director resigns, but to remain active*

Dear Center Members:

I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve as Co-Director of the Center for the Healing of Racism for the last two years. Due to personal and professional obligations, I am submitting my resignation. I am not leaving the Center and hope to participate in the programs as well as facilitate with Cherry locally and nationally. I know that there is gold in the resources of the Center and hope to continue efforts to spread the news of our needed influence.

I remain firmly supportive and am convinced more than ever that our Mission remains a critical need for our fast growing and richly diverse Houston community and our country. Teaching people about healing racism and empowering them and their communities to continue that work in everyday life will be a work in progress for a long time to come. We have made great strides, but we have much to do yet to make it a country where equality and justice and respect are realities for all people.

Witness the Katy restaurant

that has a poster of cowboys hanging an Iranian man and the owner refusing to take it down. Since the media began publicizing this on television and the newspaper, business has been booming. The reasoning of those who are visiting the restaurant is that "this is America and we have freedom of speech. We can do what we want." What about our responsibility to one another in a community? Behavior that is offensive to a particular ethnic group should

**Continued on page 2**

## *Internalize Oneness*

### Center thanks donors for reaching goal

The Board of Directors is overjoyed to inform you that our recent fundraising appeal has raised just over \$15,000 so far, and the Center is no longer in danger of being closed. We are profoundly grateful for your generous support, and gratified by your commitment to our mission.

As you know all too well, current economic conditions have affected all of us. Despite this, the Center has been able to accomplish incredible things: publish Bread is A Simple Food: Teaching Children about Cultures; serve on the Health Museum planning committee to bring RACE: Are We So Different, a national exhibit, to Houston; present the film "A Place at the Table" as part of The Third Annual Mayors Citizenship Week; partner with the Jewish Community Center (JCC), Multicultural Education and Counseling through the Arts (MECA) on an art collaboration for young adults; and bring timely films and dialogues to Houston Community College Center (such as the film "Reel Bad Arabs" as we looked back to 9/11).

We have received first-time grants from the United Way for Opening the Breadbasket presentation to six under-served schools, and the Albert and Ethel Herzstein Foundation for our comprehensive Dialogue:Racism program. The Center was given a Peace Award by The Houston Peace and Justice Committee and Cherry took part in a Town Hall Meeting which aired on PBS, Channel 8. We have continued holding workshops for many schools and organizations and giving awards to our Allies such as our 2011 recipient Lee Mun Wah, as well as address the needs and

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# Dialogue

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

**To facilitate the healing of racism through education and dialogue in a safe and supportive environment, in order to empower individuals and transform communities.**

Have you gotten around to filling out your membership for 2012? If not, please take the time to do so. The work must go on!

Has your address changed? If so, please notify the Center so your newsletter can be timely delivered!

Or, send us your e-mail address and choose to receive your newsletter in your email in-box.

# Co-Directors' Column

## *McLaughlin resigns, but will remain active*

Continued from page 1



**Lucy McLaughlin resigns post as center co-director**

be offensive to all of us, no matter our ethnicity or heritage. The wealth gap widens

between people of European descent and people of color. There are significantly greater numbers of men and women of color unemployed and in our prisons and penal system than those of European descent. This and other evidence of inequalities today trace their origins back to our history of racism. It is essential that we learn that racism is not just about interpersonal discrimination, but also, and maybe more importantly, has an institutional power component that must be addressed.

Martin Luther King said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." We need continued efforts to bring us together and not divide us; inform us and not inflame us; empower us and not demean

us. Having a safe place to engage in dialogue about this painful reality is critical. We owe it to ourselves and our children to continue the work of the Center and help others take the personal and emotional journey that leads to healing the hurts of this disease called racism.

I extend a special thank you to Cherry for all that she has done and continues to do for the Center since its beginning in 1989. I have met so many wonderful people who are allies on this journey of securing racial justice, for which I am also grateful to the Center. I look forward to seeing you at upcoming events.

In oneness and love,  
Lucy McLaughlin, RN

**DIALOGUE:  
RACISM  
WINTER  
SESSION 2012**

**Please join us for this  
8-week session:**

**FIRST UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
CHURCH  
5200 FANNIN STREET  
@ SOUTHMORE  
STREET**

**Thursday evenings  
7:00 to 9:00 P.M.  
STARTS: February 9  
ENDS: March 29, 2012**

## Center reaches funds goal!

Continued from page 1

inquiries of individuals around the world via email.

Your tax-deductible donations supported all of these efforts! Your response to our appeal let us know that you are aware of the importance of our work.

With your help, we will continue to address the tensions that occur due to dramatic population changes. We will respond to every type of racism and xenophobia continuing to affect the lives of individuals and communities, including bullying. We will continue to offer meaningful programs to the public, in schools and at universities. We will be the voice of hope, promoting the nobility of every individual and the oneness of humanity.

As the Board of Directors makes plans for the upcoming year, please consider a year-end gift to the Center, particularly if you were unable to give in our recent appeal. The work of the Center is far from finished. You may mail in a check, or you may wish to donate online at our website, [www.centerhealingracism.org](http://www.centerhealingracism.org).

We have no doubt that our work has a lasting effect on the lives of our program participants and in our community. Thank you for your generosity over the years and for helping The Center for the Healing of Racism continue our unique work to our community.

Sincerely,  
Melanie Mouzoon, M.D.

# 9/11 Dialogue

## *Focusing on the often-overlooked views of Arab and Muslim Americans*

By Akhtar Mohammed

On Wednesday September 7, four days before the 10-year anniversary of the tragic events of 9/11, Cherry Steinwender and I facilitated a dialogue on the events that took place that day. This dialogue was open to the public at Houston Community Central Campus.

The focus of this dialogue was on the personal views of the attendants and the views often overlooked by our community, that of the Arab and Muslim Americans. This dialogue would also present the amazing documentary of "Reel Bad Arabs," hosted by Dr. Jack Shaheen, which goes into detail of how Hollywood vilifies an entire group of people merely because of country of origin or religious beliefs.

**MY GOAL FOR** that dialogue was to share my personal story of how I felt when everything transpired after that day in September, and the views that many other American Muslims shared along with me. I spoke about how the terrorists being Muslims and belonging to Arab countries created a burden for me to carry even though I had nothing to do with those crimes and was born in the USA. The idea that a high school student was made to feel guilty because 18 terrorists who thought of themselves as Muslims was a tragedy in itself, but add to that the travesty that they had distorted views of Islam and acted violently upon those views.

It was even harder for those citizens who had adapted well to the American culture, were living in America by legal means, yet felt like outsiders.



I spoke about how the Islam that I was brought up to understand, one that is taught everywhere in the world, was all about living and letting others live in peace, no matter the color of their skin, background or religion. According to Islam, when faced with violence, acting out is the last resort for Muslims. I was taught first to ponder over a situation with a clear mind and never try to act out of vengeance, even if it made me seem like a coward.

**THOUGH THE** extreme views held by Al-Qaeda maintain that they are practicing Muslims, I have yet to meet a single Muslim who shares the terrorists' beliefs of blaming Americans and committing violent acts against them. This small group of terrorists, who committed these violent acts, have been taught differently; they have been conditioned to follow a fabricated version of Islam, the opposite of everything for which Islam truly stands. Even so, this small group has been the basis of how Muslims are perceived throughout our country and the world.

The dialogue also gave recognition to the victims that passed away on 9/11, by giving

a moment of silence whilst everyone reflected on where they were at the time, how they felt, and how that event changed or affected their lives. After the silence, everyone was welcome to share their thoughts on their experiences of the day. With an event of that magnitude, everyone was able to recall specific details of their day, as if it had taken place yesterday.

### THE DOCUMENTARY

"Reel Bad Arabs" also touches upon how the news media always characterizes the terrorists as Muslim extremists even before anyone has a clue about who these terrorists are. One case in point was the Oklahoma City bombing that took place in 1995 which was believed to be a terrorist attack by Muslim radicals. The news media coverage was quick to label who the culprits were even before the facts were discovered. It was later revealed by the FBI that the bomber was Timothy McVey, a white, Irish American Catholic young man, yet sadly there was never any mention of how the news anchors gave false information, or how they may have judged too quickly.

Why are Arabs and the Muslims looked at as villains, when in fact the 129 terrorist attacks in the past 20 years have been from white Christian males? Why are Americans quick to judge how Arabs live in their own country, when we have never stepped foot on their land, or talked with their people? When was the last time we gathered together to identify our similarities? How come we don't perceive Arab men as peaceful, family-oriented individuals and Arab women as happy and content with their

lives? Why is it we have overlooked the fact that family comes first for most Muslims or that honoring their parents is one of the pillars of Islam? When will we stop blaming 1.5 billion Muslims, located on every corner of this planet, for being vicious, maladaptive, crude people who cause trouble and violence wherever they go?

"Reel Bad Arabs" brought to light a perspective that can cause us to question our support of such anti-Arab films. We should not be conditioned as a nation to believe every negative stereotype that Hollywood has to offer. Instead, we should have directors and screen writers who focus on a broad scope of Arabs and Muslims. Dr. Shaheen feels positive about the possibility that these kinds of changes will occur with the following generations, and gives hope to viewers at the end of the film.

**I WAS PLEASED** that the information given by the film and my point of view as a Muslim were refreshing new concepts that enlightened the people in attendance. If this kind of information could spread and become a part of people's psyche, I believe that this overt prejudice towards the Arab community can come to a halt. We are not trying to kill all Americans and all peaceful ways of life; we are trying to focus on our own lives, and build a safe haven for our families and generations to come just like everyone. Like everyone else, the majority of Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians live for the American dream and are just like everyone else, saddened and desirous of justice for the attacks that took place on the twin towers.

# Breathing life into Carmenchu's single story

## *The term Hispanic is too broad and shouldn't label people*

By Carmenchu Grana

My name is Carmenchu Graña and because of my birthplace and family's nationality, I am considered Hispanic in American society. It is peculiar to me that I was given a label without asking for one and furthermore, that this label had to center around my cultural difference from my American peers. I have always questioned why I am obligated to frame my identity around my family's cultural background instead of other factors like my gender, educational level, or political views. It is also interesting that I was given a label no one uses in my household. We never describe ourselves as Hispanic.

The term Hispanic is too broad. It includes people from many countries with their own cultural and historical background. If I ever use a label (mainly to help others grasp my cultural background), it is

Spanish-American. I belong to two countries and cannot deny the influence they have on my identity or imagine my life without them since I have always been intimately linked to two worlds.

I was born in Mexico City to Spanish parents. My family comes from two regions in Spain—Galicia and Asturias. Unlike the common stereotype of Spaniards, we do not dance flamenco, attend bullfights, or eat paella. Spain has nineteen autonomous regions, some of which are drastically different from others. In my case, some cultural staples of the northern regions of Galicia and Asturias include Celtic music, la muñeira (a traditional form of dance), and a love for cured ham and potato-based meals. In addition, Gallego is spoken in Galicia along with Spanish.

My family moved to the United States when I was two years old. While Spanish was my first language, I cannot deny

pride in my other languages—English and Gallego—which I have grown up hearing spoken by important people in my life. Each language provides a level of comfort and insight into a particular worldview that is integral to my identity. Being part of an environment bursting with different languages, food, music, and philosophies has shaped me into the person I am today.

For instance, I am an American who grew up watching Sesame Street, loves Barbecue and Tex-Mex cuisine, dances to western swing, and embraces the concept of individualism so prevalent in the United States. Yet, I am also a Spaniard who treasures songs passed down from her grandmothers, loves pulpo a feira (octopus drenched in olive oil and paprika), uses Spanish slang, and believes in the strength of the family. I am all of this and so much more, and there is no way I can deny any

one of these aspects because doing so is equivalent to denying myself.

The truth is that single stories, otherwise known as stereotypes, never do anyone justice because they pigeonhole individuals. Single stories only present a small aspect of a person's reality. They deny others of their individuality, as well as your opportunity to connect with them on a personal level. We must always keep this breadth of vision in mind as we meet people with untold experiences waiting to be discovered. We can learn so much more about others, and ourselves, when we are open to seeing people as they really are. This is ultimately what I ask of others and what I do for those I come across—for I know the frustration of being placed in a box without the ability to express the complexity of my identity.

## Teachable Moments

### *On college roommates: "No way! You're black!"*

The Center recently received an email from a member who was understandably upset about a recent incident that had occurred between her friend's daughter, an excited college freshman, and her new roommate.

Apparently, the new roommate walked into their shared dorm room with a boy and shrieked upon seeing the friend's daughter: "You're my new roommate? No way! You're black!" Then she ran off squealing and giggling with the boy. She also spoke to the administration and had them to reassign her to another room, evidently no longer sharing with an African American.

One can only imagine the shock and hurt this young freshman felt at the mean spiritedness of such a spontaneous outburst, and one can certainly understand the outrage and concern of her family and friends about this traumatic experience so early in her campus life.

However, instead of making hasty assumptions about this Mean Girl and condemning her to eternal damnation, let us weigh the situation from a different perspective.

The Center for the Healing of Racism defines prejudice as "an emotional commitment to ignorance." I am sure this ignorance was the case, considering we are dealing with a freshman. For her to have uttered such a remark, it is obvious that she had no African American friends or neighbors, so she may have relied on stereotypical images and reports to take such a stand.

It is very unlikely that this young woman would have made such an outburst had she socialized with, or even observed, a variety of African Americans up close. After all, the Rev. Dr.

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# Regis School boys learn about the beauty of cultural diversity

By Kim Farina

Printed with permission

Boys at The Regis School learned about the beauty of cultural diversity during workshops held by the Center for the Healing of Racism

Boys in the first- through eighth-grades at the Regis School participated in on-campus workshops that encouraged them to recognize, celebrate, and appreciate the diversity of the human race. Cherry Steinwender, Co-Director and one of the founders of the Center for the Healing of Racism, presented the workshops titled "Opening the Bread Basket." Miss Cherry, as Steinwender refers to herself, used breads from different cultures to illustrate the similarities of every member of the human race in spite of the differences in appearance.

The boys enjoyed tasting breads from Iraq, Russia, Ethiopia, and many more places while learning about the people that make them. Miss Cherry explained that when people leave their country of origin, they bring some of their culture with them. Jack Graham, Social Awareness Ambassador and seventh-grade student said, "It was cool to see how Ms. Steinwender brought the breads together with the different cultures."

"I want you to understand that we all belong to the same human family," Miss Cherry explained to the boys, "I do this because I want to connect you to who we really are as people."

The day before the workshop six middle school boys—Antonio Brunel (5th), Ethan

Belveal (6th), Jack Graham (7th), Samuel Samson-Williams (7th), and Gage Whitehead (8th)—went on a cultural shopping excursion with Miss Cherry to gain exposure to different cultures.

The boys talked about their experiences during the middle school workshop. Reflecting on the cultural excursion, Antonio Brunel said, "It was pretty cool in the sense that you should never judge something by the way it looks. You need to see what the person is like and, in this case, what the bread looks like before you make a judgment."

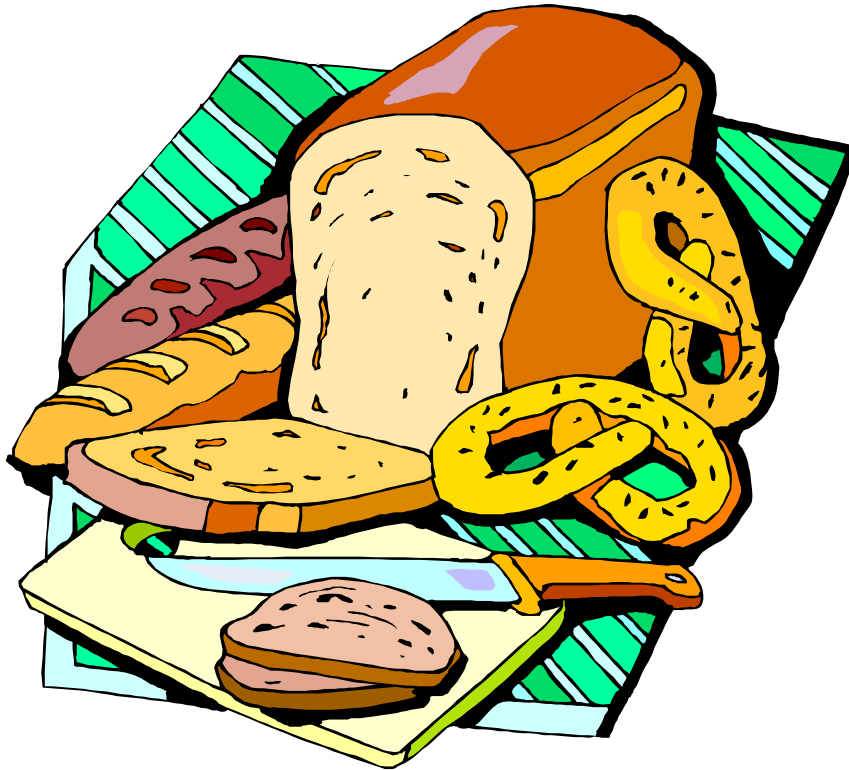
The Center for the Healing of Racism is a non-profit

organization based in Houston, Texas. It is dedicated to the healing of racism through education and empowerment. For more information on the breadbasket workshop and the Center, visit the Web site: [www.centerhealingracism.org](http://www.centerhealingracism.org).

## INTERNALIZE ONENESS

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### CFHR's New Mission statement:

**To facilitate the healing of racism through education and dialogue in a safe and supportive environment, in order to empower individuals and transform communities.**

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**SUBMISSIONS**

Newsletter submissions are due the first week of the month before publication. Articles are accepted via e-mail and may be edited for brevity or clarity. Send submissions to the Center's e-mail address.

**Newberry Communications  
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Houston, TX 77085-1480  
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**DIALOGUE:RACISM SERIES**

The Dialogue: Racism series is held in a supportive and honest setting. Information is provided at each session, followed by an opportunity for voluntary sharing. Facilitators say participants leave with a new understanding of racism, what they can do about it, and a sense of community with others of different backgrounds and life experiences.

# Teachable Moments

*It is hoped young student grows out of her "freshman daze"*

**Continued from page 4**

Martin Luther King, Jr. once noted that "Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they cannot communicate; they cannot communicate because they are separated."

So where did this ex-roommate learn that sharing with African Americans would be a problem? How had she been prepared to meet our ever-changing world?

College is not only a transition between high school

and the workforce, but also an emotional and intellectual crossroads where life changing decisions are made and self-awareness truly begins.

Our young African American may have lost her idealistic picture of college life, but her ex-roommate lost even more in the long run. She not only lost the opportunity to give a positive first impression to a stranger, but she also lost the opportunity to meet and grow in friendship and trust with another gifted young woman.

I am sure that as she matures in that intellectual environment, she will regret her once immature and hurtful behavior,

and we can only hope that as they both make their way through the halls and pathways on campus, they will one day see each other again, stop, talk, listen, and eventually smile at their typically foolish "freshman daze."

The Center thanks LaNelle Pierce Chambers, a speaker and Community Voices volunteer columnist in Fort Worth, for her contribution to this teachable moment.

In the Spirit of Oneness,  
M. Douglas-Jones  
Vice Chair

**CENTER FOR  
THE HEALING OF RACISM**

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