

# Dialogue

Celebrating  
19 Years  
1989 - 2008



Center for the Healing of Racism

October - December 2008

Volume 15, Number 4

## Of Special Interest

### Send us your email address!

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### Quote of the Day

There can be hope only for a society which acts as one big family, not as many separate ones.

- Anwar el Sadat

## How to reach us

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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

### *The 2008 election – America moves forward*

In an e-mail posted the day after the Presidential election, Documentary filmmaker Michael Moore wrote:

"Who among us is not at a loss for words? Tears pour out. Tears of joy. Tears of relief. A stunning, whopping landslide of hope in a time of deep despair. An African American has been elected President of the United States! Anything is possible!"

### **Big Boys Don't Cry**

Big boys cried along

with the rest of the nation and much of the world as we watched history in the making. After the tears, we danced and burst into song as history was made with this announcement: "The 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama!"

The Center has been working steadily and diligently for nearly 20 years toward the internalization of oneness. On November 4, 2008, 40 years after the Civil Rights Bill was signed, Americans showed the world

that we can judge a person by the content of his character – not by the color of his skin.

The Center and all of our members and friends who supported us should feel an additional victory for the work we have done through education to heal the wounds of racism. We should feel that we played a role, however small, in the outcome of the election.

Continued on page 2

## *Internalize Oneness*

### Dialogue: Now What?

**By Lenny Hoffman, MD**  
Member and supporter

The Board and Staff of the Center for the Healing of Racism invited community allies, members and guests to participate in an open forum on November 6, 2008, two days after the elections. This gathering was appropriately organized to give the community an opportunity to celebrate and release some feelings of excitement, as well as to defuse anger and disappointment in recognizing the schism that persists in our country. The dialogue brought together members of the Center for the Healing of Racism and many allies in the cause for equality for all. We recognized and celebrated our differences: color, age, gender, religion, country of origin. Those who wished to speak did so through an open microphone.

The group acknowledged that this election year will be recognized as an historic marker in the progress toward equality for all Americans because the President-elect is the son of a Kenyan man and a European-American woman. Without question, "Race" was an issue. However, the majority of Americans recognized the need for change and

Continued on page 3

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## MISSION STATEMENT

To serve as a catalyst for  
the healing of racism  
through the education and  
empowerment of  
individuals.

Have you gotten around to filling  
out your membership for 2008?

If not, please take  
the time to do so.

The work must go on!

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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

**Continued from page 1**

With such a big win, however, we should not feel that racism is over. We should not feel we can ride off into the sunset, or invest in a rocking chair and watch the world go by. Our work continues. We cannot honor victory by taking a vacation.

We should be aware that not everyone is rallying around the new President-elect. In fact, there are those who are using their voices to spread hate and urge Americans to buy guns. Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center warned that some people feel so threatened by the election of an African American as

President that they believe life as they know it has ended. But we should not allow their convictions to impede progress. Rather, we should keep our eyes on the greater prize of healing the hurts of racism.

The weekend before the election, the Center for the Healing of Racism Board of Directors held a retreat near Lake Conroe, Texas, to chart our future course. The first order of business was to take this new opportunity to the people we serve in a meeting in which we can explore the questions and challenges: "Now what? Where do we go from here?"

With little time, we rolled

up our sleeves and sent out about 1,000 e-mail flyers and five press releases inviting the public of all political persuasions to come together to express their feelings about the last two years of campaigning and the Nov. 4 election.

The day after the election, the Center received several e-mails from our members. Among them was one from Barbara Hacker: "There is hope in this country! Thank you, thank you, thank you, God. I feel like I have witnessed something very powerful and I feel energized to want to do more! YES WE CAN!!! You all are in my heart."

### *Was it about Race, or THE Race*

**By MD Jones**

On Nov. 4, 2008, voters overwhelmingly mandated Barack Hussein Obama the 44th president of the United States of America. This election was the culmination of a long, grueling campaign for both candidates, throughout which the deep roots of bigotry were exposed to the entire world.

But in the eighth year of this millennium, Democracy prevailed: an African American family will reside in the White House. Two days after the elections, in an effort to heal the evident hurt, the Center for Healing Racism invited Houston of all political persuasions to the Cullen Oaks Community Center in Third Ward to express their feelings about the campaign and outcome.

People of different cultures and backgrounds, including campaign workers, spent two hours venting their concerns and frustrations over the Obama candidacy and election. Concerns included Obama's capability, associations, expectations, support and safety. By sessions' end, participants seemed to be more at ease.

I am in awe of this situation and proud that technology has afforded oppressed people worldwide to see democracy in action. I am relieved that minority populations in the U.S. are feeling encouraged enough to remove limits from their ambitions. I was excited to see so many young people – from students and athletes to fraternities, sororities, entertainers, unions and religious groups – mobili-

zing to campaign and vote.

Yet I cannot accept that voting Americans are the only ones responsible for this event. My ultimate awe is at the echoes of history, ordering of stages and processes, institutional collapses, even extremes in the weather, which seem to have brought us to this moment in our evolution as a nation when a brown man with Hebrew, Arab and African names will command the respect of global leaders, some of whom are regarded as anti-religious or religious fanatics.

So I pray for life to witness the response to such challenges: How will this leader impact inter-ethnic relations in the U.S.? How will media now represent America's diverse population in the news? We'll see.

## Dialogue: Now what?

Continued from page 1

the hope for a better future for our country. Voters put prejudices aside and elected the most qualified, intelligent and inspiring man to be President of all the people—Barack Obama.

I feel a wave of excitement and hopefulness just by speaking his name and sense similar feelings in others. By his name alone, I am reminded that most of us are descendants of immigrants, many with names that differ from the

standard Joneses and Smiths. My ancestors may have assimilated, or "blended in" with the general population, some having encountered prejudice, but gradually they were accepted despite their differences. But if your ancestors were black, you were not so readily accepted. This denial of acceptance to African Americans continues to be a major block in America's ability to insure full equality for all. Yet when a descendant of a black

Kenyan father can be elected President of the United State, it is proof that America is becoming the country that truly represents and supports all its people.

The anger and disappointments expressed by most participants at this meeting were focused on the news media, particularly on talk radio. These participants noted the efforts by many in the media to engender distrust of Mr. Obama by disseminating lies, false characterizations, unwarranted attacks on his

family and the spurious attempts to cast aspersions on his associations with persons who have openly criticized our country. The group expressed concern about the impact such gestures by the media would have on President-elect Obama's ability to lead us through the difficult times facing the country and the world.

Discussion was also centered on individual and

Continued on page 4

## Now What?

### *A Post-election Dialogue*

Sandy Boyd

Following the last election the Center for the Healing of Racism hosted a dialogue to discuss what we should do now that Americans have chosen a black man as President-elect. The goal was to provide the opportunity as soon as possible after the election; unfortunately, that resulted in short notice, and many who might have attended were unable to do so. We would like now to give all of you an opportunity to be heard.

What now? How do **YOU** feel now that the election is over? Have the needs of our country changed enough that the Center should change its focus? Should we continue to offer Dialogue:Racism free to the general public several times during the year? Do we need to describe it in a different way? Do we need to consider other issues? Apply our expertise to address other aspects of racism? What problems should we address now?

Please give us feedback on your perception of our world as it is now and on the issues we should address. Send comment to Cherry at [cfhr1@juno.com](mailto:cfhr1@juno.com) or Sandy at [sboyd8071@hotmail.com](mailto:sboyd8071@hotmail.com), or send confidential letters directly to the Board of Directors at the Center for Healing Racism; P. O. Box 27327; Houston, Texas 77227.

We will report on your answers in the next newsletter, and we will report on the CHR Board's response to your suggestions in the following newsletter.

## Dialogue with Libby and Len Traubman

Sandy Boyd

The Center for Healing Racism joined the First Unitarian Universalist Church and the Dominican Sisters of Houston to co-sponsor a dialogue billed as Crossing Lines. Facilitated by Libby and Len Traubman, Crossing Lines is a dialogue they developed to enable people of different backgrounds, such as Palestinians and Israelis, to get to know each other and find common ground.

For the dialogue we were each paired with a partner different from us in some way. We took turns talking about ourselves for 15 minutes. We were advised

not to interrupt for the first 10 minutes; then we had five minutes to ask questions. This type dialogue is based on a belief that the shortest distance between two lives is their stories. Dialogue is different from conversation in that it requires us to truly attend to the story we are hearing. Listening carefully to another's story then telling our own story did, in fact, allow us quickly to transcend the barriers between us.

The Traubmans have led more than 200 dialogues. I was delighted to experience their passion for building bridges between peoples.

## INTERNALIZE ONENESS

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**SUBMISSIONS**

Newsletter submissions are due the first week of the month before publication. Articles are accepted via e-mail. Send submissions to the Center's e-mail or to: Robertcn@iapc.net. You may also submit it to:  
**Newberry Communications**  
**13511 Sherman Oaks Dr.**  
**Houston, TX 77085-1480**  
**Telephone: 713-551-9025**

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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.

**Dialogue: Now What?**

**Continued from page 3**

communal roles in combating such negative attacks. We spoke of the replies to hateful blogs in the local newspapers and whether this is an effective response, or whether we should appeal to the media to refrain from publishing such personal attacks.

I was proud to be present and proud to be a part of the Center for the Healing of Racism. I felt the presence

of my grandparents who immigrated to America when they were forced out of their homeland because of religious persecution. They lived through difficult times, but were privileged to live to see their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren practicing their religion while still "blending in" with fellow Americans.

We have seen the beginning of a new era in universal acceptance of all,

and we will see ourselves get through these difficult times. We are confident that President-elect Obama will be a good leader, but he will need our support.

I am committed to the continuation of Dialogue: Racism because it allows us to listen and learn. Through experience and acceptance, Dialogue: Racism leads to open minds and open hearts.

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