

Friends of Compassion Meeting #4

August 18, 2010

Gonzaga University Jepson Center

Announcements: John Hancock

Albert Schweitzer said, "I'm convinced that far more idealistic aspiration exists than is ever evident. Just as the rivers we see are much less numerous than the underground streams, so the idealism that is visible is minor compared to what men and women carry in their hearts, unreleased or scarcely released. Mankind is waiting and longing for those who can accomplish the task of untying what is knotted and bringing the underground waters to the surface."

This is a young group (only 4 meetings) that grew out of an effort to bring the Dalai Lama to Spokane. We're a work in progress. The people here will be the architects of this organization. There are an inexhaustible number of people doing good things.

Thanks to Dr. Raymond Reyes (Vice President for Global Engagement) and Dr. John Shuford (Institute for Hate Studies) for hosting and catering this meeting.

Spokane Islamic Center: Mission, practice & NYC: Saleh Algiadi

John Hancock: Spokane Islamic Center was founded in 1979 and serves over 1100 Muslims in the Greater Spokane area. Our membership is very diverse and is composed of various ethnicity and backgrounds including, Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Croatia, England, Egypt, Gambia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Kashmir, Kenya, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Senegal, Singapore, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United States, Yemen, and more.

The Spokane Islamic Center works to fulfill the following objectives...

- To help Muslims in the Greater Spokane area practice Islam as belief and way of life in accordance with the teachings of the Glorious Quran and the Sunnah (traditions) of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him.
- To organize religious, social, and educational activities.
- To conduct a program of Islamic education to Muslims and non-Muslims.
- To disseminate and project to the community at large the Islamic positions as they relate to all areas of life.
- To cherish the bonds of friendship and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in the community.

Saleh Algiadi: Timing is everything isn't it. When one steps back and looks back, people can understand what is going on. We sometimes think with emotions not heads. Two wars are going on. We're tired of them. The economy is crumpling around us. We're tired of it. Then Muslims come over and want to build near the Twin Towers. For myself, as an immigrant (32 years old) I've seen this in other places but I didn't expect to see it here. We have the personal freedom to practice our own religions. My children are American born Muslims. Do we allow our some children to practice their religion and don't allow others to practice theirs? I can go worship the way I want, but you can't. You can build in New York City, but you can't. There are radicals out there that are doing wrong things. But we're not punishing the radicals, we're punishing American citizens. We label them as Muslims and say they are foreigners and they should go back to their own country.

Matt Wakabayashi: I'm Japanese. During WWII we were locked in concentration camps. Spokane is pretty white.

Saleh Algiadi: Of all the places that I've traveled, Spokane has less diversity. There is much more acceptance. I've tried other places but always came back to Spokane. When we moved to Appleway, we first thought about building out in the open. Should we build a mosque that looks like a mosque? Do we do it or not. We decided we have to do it and we have to have faith. Aside from one incident (drug related crime) we haven't had anyone bother us. Visitors ask why there is barbed wire around the mosque. There were drug dealers originally. So, the decision was made. The business next door also advised us to put up the fence. There hasn't been a need for that barbed wire since.

The Islamic Center invites visitors. You can find us on the internet at: spokaneislamiccenter.org. Prayers are held Fridays at 12:30

Art of Happiness & Personal Path: Diana Riggins

Diana is a President and CEO of Riggins Enterprises (Business Development and Marketing Services). Some of the volunteer organizations Diana is currently involved with include: Big Brothers Big Sisters (Past-President of the Board of Directors, Endowment Board Member), Spokane North Rotary Club (President-Elect and District Committee for Group Study Exchange, Chair of Kuroiwa Fellowship), Distributive Education Clubs of America ("DECA" Competition Event Judge). She is a member of the Suquamish Tribe (direct decedents of Chief Seattle).

Diana was compelled to share her life story with Friends of Compassion because reading books by the Dalai Lama changed her life. Diana's family lived in area of Chicago where you had to be in a gang for protection. Her father was alcoholic and extremely abusive. She feared for mom, brothers & sisters. Life was incredibly painful. She lived in fear in every way imaginable. After her parents divorced, Diana went to college and hid her pain by overachieving. She was the youngest person in the Chicago symphony and graduated from Gonzaga with a degree in Electrical Engineering at the age of 20. Tragically, her fiancé was killed in a car accident two days after proposing. Diana would make millions then go bankrupt. She had three children. Relationships with men always fell apart.

She wondered, "Why are these terrible people in my life?" Then Diana read, The Art of Happiness by the Dalai Lama. Something clicked. In one day, she could breathe. She could smile from the inside and she realized that she could control her own happiness. She stopped blaming her father for everything that happened and the whole world opened up. Diana's currently been married for 9 years. She's experienced incredible love. She also earned back the million dollars and reminds us that, "Terrible isn't forever. Life is wonderful."

One Peace, Many Paths: Joan Broeckling

One Peace, Many Paths is a diverse, spiritually-oriented peace group in Spokane, Washington. We began at Unity Church in 2008. Participants in One Peace, Many Paths are united in the understanding that we are all One, and passionate about working for greater peace in our lives and in the world. We honor and encourage all paths to peace.

Throughout the year, One Peace, Many Paths sponsors a variety of peace-related activities. One of the highlights is a series of events called Pathways to Peace, beginning with September 11, the Day of Remembrance and ending with September 21, the International Day of Peace. (Joan handed out fliers regarding the "Pathways to Peace" activities. These events may also be found on: friendsofcompassion.com.) OPMP will add events to their list of any group who has peace as part of their goal.

Our vision is to inspire people to know and experience peace. It's more an internal peace – not war. We have sponsored events including a Buddhist Sand Mandala, readings by children's book author Sarah Conover, "Compassionate Service - Compassion in Action (with Universal Compassion Movement), and

plays.

Last month Joan spoke about “Compassionate Cities.” A plan has been worked out. However, the group is too small to begin implementing it. If this is of interest to you, please contact Joan (selahcentered@hotmail.com).

Mormon Church – Background, Compassion and Action: Dave Ross

Dave and Diann Ross are officially co-directors of public outreach for the LDS Churches in greater Spokane. Most know of the church as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. We believe Jesus Christ is the son of God and savior of the world. We’re a very family oriented church. It was formed here in the United States but it’s now throughout much of the world. We study the Old and New Testament, and we get our common name from the Book of Mormon.

Our church is organized a little different than other churches. We’re organized into “wards” (geographic areas). The larger areas are called “stakes” and Spokane is a multi-stake area. We have a Lay ministry; there’s no paid ministry. It’s strictly voluntary. Family is the basic unit of church.

Our church views compassion as unlimited loving kindness toward all others. Today we accept the word charity as benevolent giving. I think the best description of charity is the New Testament parable of the “Good Samaritan.” Our outreach should be all inclusive.

One of the most outstanding examples of compassion, many of us would agree, was Mother Teresa.

There is a book called Simple Faith that was written about Mother Teresa. We have become interested in exploring the extraordinary potency of Mother Teresa as a symbol of love in action. Her impact on the public imagination is compared to the ripples that a stone makes when it is thrown into still water. For many non-Christians, Mother Teresa represents a form of Christianity that they can whole-heartedly respect. She crossed all barriers. She cared about everyone and served everyone. She said, *“We have all been created for greater things; to love and be loved. Love is love. Love a person without any conditions or expectations. Works of love are works of peace and purity. Works of love are always a means of coming closer to God. The more we help each other the more we love God better by loving each other. As Jesus said, ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’ Loving in action is what gives us grace.*

Those who are unloved, unwanted and uncared for become just a throwaway society. That's why we must wake everyone to the need. There is something else to remember, we can't give to the outside what we don't have on the inside. This is very important, if I can't see God's love in my brothers and sisters, how can I see that love in someone else? How can I give it to someone else? Everybody has some good; some hide it, some neglect it, but it's still there."

A Jewish Rabbi, Maimonides, (lived in the 12th century) developed a list of eight levels of giving. There are different ways to give.

8. Giving grudgingly with a sour countenance.
7. Giving less than you can afford, but doing so pleasantly.
6. Giving generously, but only after you have been asked.
5. Giving before you are asked.
4. The recipient knows the giver. The giver does not know the recipient.
3. The giver knows the recipient, but the recipient does not know the giver.
2. Give unanimously where the recipient does not know the giver and vice versa.
1. Helping someone become self sufficient.

Justice & Compassion: Dr. John Shuford

John teaches Philosophy at Gonzaga and has a background in both philosophy and law. He is also the Director of the Institute for Hate Studies.

This is a paraphrase of a longer argument from one of my colleagues through the Institute for Hate Studies. I don't agree with it, but it's important to the work of compassion to be able to refute the argument. There's also the compassion-bashing that's going on right now from law-and-order proponents, for example, in the immigration reform debate.

There is a growing interest in groups around alternative justice. What does compassion mean to the Institute for Hate Studies and how do we approach compassion? We're not of unified minds about the relationship between compassion and justice. The last 25 years John has studied theories of justice, and tried to practice and advance justice. A critique of compassion as a vehicle for social justice:

"Compassion is a virtue and a fundamental precept of most world religions. However...Compassion is

chosen, not compulsory. Compassion is a value, not law. Compassion implies charity, not obligation. Compassion implies that moral action is optional and voluntary, not binding and mandatory. Human rights and social justice recognize the rights and interests of others, and what we owe them. Thus, motivation for moral action should be based on concern for human rights and social justice, not on compassion.”

Personally I'm not convinced of this interpretation. In Plato's Republic (it's basically a meditation on the nature of justice) a nice working definition of justice comes forth. "Giving and doing to each thing what is fitting and each thing doing or giving what is fitting." Personally I believe that compassion is the well spring of justice. I think there's lots of support for that idea in many traditions. Folks are familiar with Dr. King's notion of the beloved community. The notion of the beloved community is this beautiful marriage between compassion and justice. I think there's evidence within Abrahamic traditions as compassion being obligatory; compassion as the law.

Jim Mohr is also here. He was the last director of the Institute for Hate Studies. He is now on the Board. The Institute has realigned its mission to focus on scholarship, other research, leadership, education, resources targeted at understanding, preventing and combating hate. The idea is that compassion is a practical strategy for combating hate. We have a number of exciting things coming up this year:

- Annual "Take action against hate" benefit dinner scheduled for October 12th
- Second International Conference for Hate Studies

Israel/Palestinian Issues

State Department

Hate in the immigration debate and how to combat it

To find out more, google "Institute for Hate Studies."

John Hancock: I hope that the Friends of Compassion will always have a goal of defining what we mean, and a goal of supporting like-minded organizations. We're not just a discussion group. We need to find a cause to get behind. One potential for the work of this organization has to do with alternative justice. In the simplest way, it's the distinction between all those in jail; which need punishment and which ones need help. And probably they all need some of both. The current system is not very sophisticated at sorting out which people need which and who will respond to the one and who to the other.

John showed an article from the Spokesman Review "Tight rein on jail mail" (8/14/2010): "Spokane

County jails will join a growing number of lockups that restrict inmate mail to postcards. Starting Sept. 1, inmates cannot send or receive letters in envelopes. Instead, they and anyone they correspond with must use postcards measuring 8½ by 5½ inches. Jail officials say the new policy will reduce labor costs and increase safety by discouraging hidden contraband.

What a dehumanizing thing. This is just the newest discouraging news. Our system has failed to do a good job at protecting public safety. There are more and more laws and draconian punishment. Right now, 1 in 100 Americans are in jail. It was 1 in 400 in 1970. Are we a better society for having locked up four times as many people? How do we feel about it as compassionate thinking people? The subject of how do we help people who have been arrested is not new in Spokane. It costs \$115 to \$120 per person a day per prisoner. So, we taxpayers in Spokane are spending \$80,000 a day to lock people up. Economically for us, compassionately for us and in terms of those humans – there's got to be a better way. There are experts and examples all around the county.

Alternative Courts/Smart Justice: Breean Beggs

Breean has been a lawyer for 19 years and is also a preacher's kid.

For most of our history as a civilization, lawyers have been conflict resolvers. Really my work is to take a conflict that is already there and get it resolved. Most people want to be heard and get things resolved. I'm really about helping people move ahead for positive change. Although I'm no longer at the Center for Justice, I'm still a "catalyst" searching for change. Criminal justice has come to forefront. The bad news is that the criminal justice system is broken (and it's not just media hype) at any level you might want to look at. The biggest thing looming is that we might have to spend ½ billion to build, finance and operate a jail. That's NEW money. Law enforcement is understaffed for what they have to do. They're out of sync with the community. The community is mad at them. The prosecutor's office doesn't have enough bodies to get the job done. They're in complete distress. When you talk to the revenue people (city or county), there's no budget. The public defender case loads are high. It's all broken and that's probably the good news.

For the first time since I've been a lawyer I have heard from judges, prosecutors, police, democrats, and republicans that it's broken and something needs to be done. What's missing is any real leadership to make it happen. Everyone in the Prosecutor's office is sitting there. The city court system is there. There county court system is there. There's no leadership. And that's the opportunity; things are really lined up for interstate solutions. There's a lot of opportunity to make changes. I've been working with folks at the ACLU, court judges, and county commissioners and with PJAL and there's a lot going on right now. People are talking but nothing new has been put together yet. Instead of building a new jail, let's build a "smart justice center." Simply spend the money you would have on a jail and on the operational

costs on treatment and counseling. If you really need to incarcerate people, use electronic home monitoring and you can make a long term change in what's going on. There's a lot of this going on, but on a small scale.

Courts ruled that within the city, the judges have to be elected from the city not the county. So, when that ruling came down, it forced the city to put together their own court system. For a long time before that the judges elected county-wide tended to be more conservative. For the last few years the judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and mayor's office and the police chiefs have been meeting and implementing some of these alternatives. One of the things they have now is a five day program in the city library. Instead of going to jail for five days, you have to check in and get education job training (8 hours a day) where they build life skills, budgeting, and things like that. These are not dangerous people. It's paid for by the probation office. One of the good things is that if you save money on corrections in the city it goes back into budget. That doesn't necessarily happen in the county.

Another thing they're doing in the city is that they started up community service again. For a long time there was no community service in Spokane. They were worried about liability, there were administrative cost. The municipality came up with a way to prescreen charitable institutions to cover the liability. They pay a little bit of money for workers' compensation. And then the person goes out and does the work and there's not a lot of oversight. The non-profit gives verification to the probation department. So people are actually out there doing things that need to be done.

The reason we went from 4 in 100 to 1 in 100 people in jail is because of an experiment with mandatory sentencing for certain crimes, especially victimless crimes such as drug possession and driving without a license. We take away 400,000 drivers' licenses a year from people who are behind on their tickets. If they get caught driving a couple times without a license, it's a 60 to 90 day mandatory sentence. There's a movement in the legislature to stop this.

Before building the jail, the commissioners decided that they needed to do a study of what's wrong with the system (Bennett report). For the last two years many judges and lawyers have been talking about how to make things better. Under our legal system, jail before someone is convicted of a crime is really for people who are dangerous or fear of fleeing. There are certain people who are very dangerous and not willing to engage in restoration to society. There needs to be consequences and accountability for people to support getting back into agreement and right relationship with society.

Both Republicans and Democrats are saying that we need to try something new. People can ask

whether we need a new jail. Groups can convene a series of meetings to talk about this and figure it out.

Predictors for incarceration include: foster care, broken homes, alcohol, literacy, mental health problems, and the need for parenting training. 70% of our county budget goes to criminal justice.

Dave: Government thinks it has to take care of the problems. I wouldn't want to be a cop today. In one night there are more problems than there were in a month in the 70's. It is a societal problem. There are programs such as having inmates train dogs for the blind. It changed their lives. It teaches them to be self sufficient. Government/law isn't going to fix it. Charities can.

Breean: it's important to know the current system isn't working – let's try something else. Being against the jail is negative; being for alternative solutions is positive. It's important to find other like minded organizations. Having a conference would allow us to learn and dialogue with people on different sides.

Unity in the Community: JIM MOHR

Unity in the Community is the largest multi-cultural event in Spokane with approximately 8,000 attendees and 150 vendors. It runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Riverfront Park Clock Tower Meadow.

FOC needs people to staff booth. Please volunteer.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 15th at 7p.m.

Spokane Falls Community College

Student Union Building

Lounges A-B

3410 W. Fort George Wright Dr.