

Friday, June 15, 2007

Dayton Welcomes IofC

BUILDING
TRUST
IN AMERICA

**A National
Initiatives Of Change
Forum
University of Dayton
J.F.K. Union Center
June 15—16, 2007**

The 2007 National Initiatives of Change Forum opened with greetings from Mayor Rhine McLin and City Commissioner Dean Lovelace. Robert Corcoran, National Director of Initiatives of Change welcomed the group by holding up a vision of Dayton and Southern Ohio as an area working to build bridges across divides. He spoke of the need to build trust, not just across domains and sectors of our society, but also building trust with close friends and colleagues. He reminded the participants that building trust is a work done on a daily basis, over and over, and it is a delicate bridge.

State of Ohio Commissioner of Public Utilities and former city manager of both Dayton and Cincinnati, Valerie Lemmie challenged the participants to examine

the statistics of the eroding lack of trust in government that exists across the nation. From 1958 when 75% of Americans believed that the government was doing a good job to 2005 when 72% were convinced that government was doing badly and had no trust in government, Commissioner Lemmie emphasized the need to build trust for 'without trust we can't ever get to collaboration or partnership in the areas of need.'

From race and immigration to youth violence and gangs, participants spoke of the burning issues in their localities with which they were engaged as trustbuilders. One woman from Boston spoke of her passion to find ways to work with young people as an alternative to gangs. Another, a 5th grade teacher in Miamisburg, shared her commitment to work

with her fellow teachers as they explore an understanding of their own culture. Two groups, Boaz and Ruth from Richmond, Virginia and PowerNet of Dayton, Ohio were focused on reentry of ex-offenders and successful reintegration into society.

Carolyn Leonard, from Portland,
Continued on next page



Mayor Rhine McLin greets participants at the forum.

Dayton on Center Stage

In a meeting facilitated by Patricia Hicks-Smith, of Dayton, and Cricket White, of Richmond, four engaged citizens served as panelists to begin a full group conversation about trust and trust building. As a way to examine this issue, Dayton was used as a model of cities across

the nation. As many other cities today, Dayton is facing huge challenges and opportunities. It is moving from being an industry-based locality to one which is service based. While citizens wrestle with the loss of industry and jobs, simultaneously there is a very large influx of immigrants.

A breakdown of trust in government, industry and education has led to crisis across the city.

The river is a dividing line between white and black. This segregation played into the failure of the recent education levy

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Forum opening continued...

Oregon 'the largest white city in America' challenged all who do the work of trustbuilding and honest conversation – 'those of us who have already been in dialogue, who are already engaged, we need to take it to another level.' She used the term COAL – **C**onversations **o**n **A**nother **L**evel – as a goal for every community. "We will make mistakes, we will sometimes misunderstand each other. We need to acknowledge that but we

must also move on – there is so much work to do – we must move on and take others with us."

A retired corporate leader shared his commitment to work with business and corporations in partnership with schools and education issues in Richmond, VA. "It is important for us to ask, what is the role of business in securing quality education for every child?"

Cincinnati City Commissioner Cecil Thomas closed the meeting with encouragement for all participants, "We must examine the connection between personal issues and society. Before we can move past any –'ism' we must first admit we have this issue inside us."

Focus on Dayton continued...

and affects everything, though this is not openly recognized by most citizens. Professor Theo Majka and Carolina Silva spoke of the need to listen to immigrants and to bring service providers and immigrants together for honest conversations. To build trust, we must not blame immigrants for existing institutional barriers, but instead must address those institutions head on while facilitating successful interactions between Spanish speaking citizens and the service providers they may rely upon.

Dean Lovelace, Dayton City Commissioner, spoke of too many people living on an income of under \$20,000 and of the need to hear their voices and work to address poverty. The Rev.

'Many of our issues don't get solved because they stall at the national level. Therefore the emphasis for problem solving falls to our localities.'

John Paddock of Christ Episcopal Church, spoke of the need to educate the white population, which largely voted against the education levy, but are unaware of the role race plays in their own lives and thinking. The audience participated in a lively exchange, offering comments from their

own experience about where trust is lacking and how to build it.

Director of the Dayton City Department of Recreation and Youth Services, Kathy Shanklin, shared the challenges facing

city officials who must make difficult decisions about what and which services should be eliminated or reduced. She said it always breaks down to issues of race and separation.

The participants joined into the conversation with

the panel. Many issues raised by the Dayton panel echoed in the comments from the audience.

Theo Majka shared, "Many of our issues don't get solved because they stall at the national level. Therefore the emphasis for problem solving falls to our localities."

An African American man shared his efforts to build bridges and trust in the community in which he lives, a community that is 70 – 75% Latino-Latina. When he discovered that an institution he frequents had unused diaries in Spanish, he chose to distribute them to people in his community. By taking the first step, he created an opportunity for trust to grow and modeled the importance of personal, one-on-one outreach.

What's YOUR story???

We all have a story to tell, but how do we tell it, and why? These and many more questions challenged the minds of the participants as they settled in their seats for the afternoon session on storytelling. Dr. David Campt, who facilitated this discussion, started out by answering the "why" question. "We tell our stories to invite others into a circle of trust where barriers can be broken down and real change can occur."

Participants were asked to listen to a five minute story which they then were asked to condense to three minutes by eliminating unnecessary details while maintaining the integrity of the story. Through this exercise it became obvious that some conscious choices needed to be made when telling a story. Campt encouraged the group to use a



framework addressing:

- Focus: What is the main message the story highlights?
- Timing: How long should the story take, given the setting?
- Compelling/Interesting: Are there elements of the story that need to be emphasized to create a certain emotional connection?
- Language: What kind of language or concepts should be in the story, given the audience?

What's YOUR Story continued

- **Humor:** Are there elements of the story that can be humorous while strengthening the main point?
- **Engagement:** Are there ways to involve the listeners that add to their experience?

Interest spiked as Camp asked each person to write down certain elements of a person to write down certain elements of a personal story using the following roadmap.

- Take the lessons you learned and use them to set up the background to your story.
- Meditate on the inner struggle presented by your story.
- What choices will you make regarding aspects of the story to emphasize and de-emphasize and what is the result?

There was little room for the timid as the participants were asked to be vulnerable by sharing their story with those at their table and then re-telling their story after some feedback.

The larger group reconvened to explore the learning that had taken place, emotions ran high. Participants expressed appreciation for having a chance to

refine their own stories.

One woman was told by her listeners that in her story she had covered these different themes. "Now I know that I can focus my story to create the impact I want" she said. Others commented on the importance of not rushing the story and the difficulty in discerning the important and impactful aspects that needed to be present.

Do it Yourself!

- Gather a group of no more than four people
- Each person should tell a story in 3 to 4 minutes
- Have a time keeper inform the storyteller when the 4 minutes are up
- Listen attentively and supportively
- Give 1-3 suggestions for how to edit the story for length and impact
- Story tellers should re-tell their story with the goal of being engaging, impactful, and timely.
- Express appreciation for the privilege of listening to each other's stories. It is a gift we give each other.

Films as Tools for Trust building

The Imam and the Pastor, the Long Walk Home and Mystery of Love were the three movies used as examples of how film can generate honest conversation that leads to building trust.

Participants reviewed these films both for their own reactions but more importantly to discover how to use these, and other films, as catalysts for honest conversation.

Many people find it challenging to simply begin a deep discussion about a difficult subject. By responding to a film, a group of people can begin tentatively to explore what might be a 'taboo' idea or conversation.

Participants were asked what practical suggestions they were taking away from this experience.

- "The experience of how much emotion a 10 minute segment can evoke in different participants"
- "This is a way to reach youth but it must be investigated truthfully and without agendas' so that youth will build trust in the process.
- I feel "a deeper conviction to do more to build the bridge' between different people.

- Knowing that this tool is available for use in our local community work gives me hope.
- There is 'a power of storytelling through film. The Interfaith dialogue that is possible when people respond to this film and the real peace that can be attained when people step beyond their comfort zone' is available to more of us by using such tools.
- I was impressed because I saw real live people who have forgiven so much. It is possible.
- I realize that if they (in the film) can change their community, so can we. It gave me hope.

Participants were given guidelines to use in assisting in using film as a trust building tool.

These included:

- the film selection—what actually makes a 'good film'.
- Frame the issue—make sure those who are watching it start with at least one shared focus.

- Decide on the role of the facilitator or host—are they intended to be experts, guides, teachers, coordinators?
- Get everyone in the room! You must think strategically in recruiting participation. And you must be prepared to invest some time and effort.
- Design the process—room set up, food or not, whether one needs an ice breaker, and how to close. The leader may even want to invite viewers to think about what next steps participant might like.
- Manage the process—everyone's voice must be respected. Be prepared for conflict. And let the movie tell the story.

The Imam and the Pastor is available from Initiatives of Change.

Please check at our registration table if you would like to purchase a copy for your own use.

Trustbuilders Awards to Three in 2007

Initiatives of Change created the Trustbuilder Awards in 2005 as a way to highlight individuals who have given their lives to build community, challenge the status quo and model trustbuilding. This year three exemplary individuals were honored for their lives, their contributions and their commitment — Audrey Brown Burton, who spoke to the forum by teleconference, Bob Webb of Washington, DC and Commissioner Dean Lovelace of Dayton. Excerpts from their award statements appear below.

Initiatives of Change honors the exemplary leadership Commissioner Dean A Lovelace has shown to the citizens of Dayton, Ohio and Montgomery County. As the longest serving seated Commissioner, not only has he shown tremendous commitment and dedication his role, but he has remained true to his mission of being 'responsive', introducing a number of key initiatives to reduce poverty, promote economic and neighborhood development and address racial intolerance.



Initiatives of Change honors Audrey Brown Burton for her pioneering work of racial reconciliation and visionary leadership in Richmond, and for her faithful obedience to her call as a Christian and as a full time worker with Initiatives of Change. Her example of risk-taking in reaching out the hand of friendship to people of different backgrounds and opposing views has inspired countless others to move out of their comfort zones. Always a passionate advocate of social justice, she exchanged antagonism for an inclusive approach to community building, which resulted in unexpected partnerships. Together with her husband Collie, she created a heart for the city in her home.



Initiatives of Change honors Robert E. Webb for a life of reaching across divides of race, religion, ethnicity and age to build trust and understand and seeking to follow God's leading in all areas of his life. Soon after he encountered the ideas of Initiatives of Change as a young journalist from Mississippi, he apologizes to an African American he met for his racist attitudes and behaviors and sought to bring a new spirit to this nation through the articles and editorials he wrote in his long career with several papers including the Cincinnati Enquirer.



Leon Boothe—"This I Believe"

Dr. Leon Boothe, keynote speaker, is the president emeritus of Northern Kentucky University, former faculty member of the University of Mississippi and senior advisor for the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center project in Cincinnati.



He spoke on the subject, "This I Believe" as he reflected on the issue of racism in Mississippi in the 1960's.

Dr. Boothe recommends both commitment and 'out of the box thinking' as ways to move our nation forward on these issues. What really

changes an issue is for people to have a serious commitment based on education, family emphasis and personal epiphany.

He believes that innovative thinking, when communities can look at existing solutions to problems and focus those same solutions on new, unrelated problems, is an important way to change the status quo.