

Building the Future Community

Newark Interfaith Coalition for Hope and Peace

"Seek the welfare of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

"Remember Abraham said, 'O my Lord! Make this city one of peace and security.'" (Qu'ran, Sura Abraham 14:35)

February 28, 2008

Dear Friend of Newark,

We are writing to invite you to a summit meeting of community leaders from Newark and the surrounding area to explore effective ways of engaging the gang culture and reducing youth violence. This meeting will take place on Thursday, April 3, with a dinner buffet at 5-6, and meeting at 8:30 p.m. at Symphony Hall in Newark. Detailed purposes for our gathering are listed on the reverse side of this letter.

As a newly-forming group of Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders, we are well aware that dedicated people have already been at work on these issues. We wish to explore together with you how a strong interfaith coalition might effectively support and strengthen existing efforts, and explore new possibilities of action. We hope to mobilize resources in the faith community, both urban and suburban, to work collaboratively with others to promote the paths that lead away from violence toward peace.

Our meeting will include time for networking among attendees, presentations from Newark groups, and presentations by two guests: Rev. Jeffrey Brown, one of the founders of Boston's Ten Point Coalition and Imam Earl El-Amin from the Muslim Community Cultural Center of Baltimore, Maryland — work that may provide inspiration and ideas for work in this great and challenging city.

Recent highly-publicized events have brought deserved focus to long-standing issues of violence in Newark often resulting from grief, addiction, abuse, depression, despair, hopelessness, and fear. Many public, private, and religious institutions have addressed these important issues. Faith tells us to "seek the welfare of the city," and we want to be a more effective part of ongoing efforts to address this multi-level challenge.

We hope you'll join us on April 3. Please let us know your availability by March 25 so we can plan room set-up and the buffet reception at 5 p.m. Just call the Episcopal Diocese of Newark at 973-622-4306 or email Mr. Michael Francaviglia at mfrancaviglia@dioceseofnewark.org.

Yours in partnership,

The Rt. Rev. Mark Beckwith
Episcopal Bishop of Newark

Imam W. Deen Shareef
Masjid Waarith ud Deen

Rabbi Matthew Gewritz
Temple B'nai Jeshurun

On behalf of:

Salahuddin Bilal, Masjid Waarith ud Deen, Rev. Tanya Bennett, Chaplain, Drew University,
Barbara Bell Coleman, Amelior Foundation, Rev. Dr. Michael Christensen, United Methodist Church Shalom Centers,
Fr. Luis Gonzalez, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church, David Kerr, Director of Integrity House,
Bro. Michael Muhammad, Muhammad Mosque #25, Rev. Robert Morris, Interweave Abrahamic Kinship Initiative,
Rev. Reginald Osborne, Bethel World Outreach Ministry, Rev. Thomas Reddick, Renaissance Church of Newark,
Pastor Carmelo Roman, Temple Rock of My Salvation,
Brian Schlemmer, Drew University, Rev. Dr. Kevin Yoho, Newark Presbytery

Building the Future Community: 31 Mulberry St., Newark, N.J. 07102

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Leadership Summit

Date: April 3, 2006
Place: Symphony Hall
1030 Broad Street • Newark, NJ

5 p.m. Dinner Buffet Reception
6-8:30 p.m. Program

Guest speakers:

Rev. Jeffrey Brown,
Boston's Ten Point Coalition

Imam Earl El-Amin
Muslim Community Cultural Center of Baltimore, Maryland

The purpose of the Leadership Summit is to gather and build a strong interfaith response to the underlying conditions and negative consequences of gang culture in Newark, and to explore ways to promote non-violence, hope for the future, and building the community.

We hope to:

- * To identify, honor, and collaborate with public and private organizations working to reduce gang violence
- * To identify gaps the interfaith community can help fill
- * To commit interfaith coalition resources to reducing gang violence in Newark
- * To evaluate effective intervention models practiced in other major cities
- * To facilitate networking and organizing among current and potential leadership
- * Begin building an urban-suburban faith-based alliance to bring resources into the community that build a positive future

Our long-term goals, like those of many already working in this field, are:

- * To reduce gang violence
- * To provide realistic alternatives to gang culture
- * To engage gang leaders in transforming gang culture toward peace and mutual social and civic respect
- * To bring resources to the community to address creatively underlying causes of violence