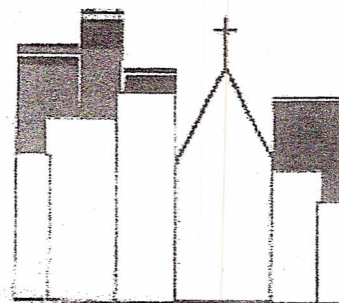


THE URBAN NETWORKER

A Publication of The Episcopal Urban Caucus

Ministries of Reconciliation, Social Justice and
Peace – Founded 1980 Fall, 2013



THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS 2014 ASSEMBLY

Racism in America: In Light of the Trayvon Martin Decision

The Episcopal Urban Caucus will gather for its 2014 Assembly from February 19 -22. We are gathering at the Ramada Plaza Hotel at 160 Frontage Road in Newark, New Jersey, but we are the guests of the Diocese of New York. We will be welcomed by the Rt. Rev. Andrew M.L. Dietsche Bishop of New York. Our Assembly Eucharist on Thursday, February 20th will be at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Since its beginning the caucus has had as primary work fighting racism in America. From the work for civil rights, to economic justice, to immigration and to the work for justice and reconciliation the Caucus is committed to overcoming the sin of racism. Our assembly will focus on the matter of racism in light of the Trayvon Martin verdict and other matters facing us as a church and a society. We will offer a keynote address, workshops as well as our cooperative work with the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice and the Episcopal Peace Fellowship. So please mark your calendars and you can follow the registration information and assembly schedule on our website at www.episcopalurbancaucus.org.

Reflection on Racism in America and in the Church

By +John L. Rabb

The great cellist, Pablo Casals, was asked why when he was in 90s and already the most acclaimed cellist in the world he continued to practice so intensely each day. His response, coming with a smile, was; "I am making progress." Sadly in America today, and even within the church, we do not realize as Casals did that there are matters we must be working on continually. One of these is racism.

From 2000 to 2009 I was a member of the Commission on Anti-Racism of the Executive Council and from 2001 to 2009 I chaired the Committee on Racism in the House of Bishops, and was deeply involved in the 2006 pastoral *The Sin of Racism, II* which redoubled the efforts of the 1994 pastoral and added concerns regarding immigration and economic development. I have observed, however, that for many this work seems to be accomplished. We are doing less funding to fight racism, assume too often that everyone is on board and are not always clear what the issues are. In the church and

in society we do have stronger laws, much greater acceptance, an African-American as President and a far more civil environment that a generation ago. However today racism persists, I believe, in fear and loss. Too many people fear that if some other body of people receives benefits for which they are entitled, it will be at my loss. There is a shrill sound of "us vs. them" in our political discourse, such as it is, and even within the church. We are still guilty of easy stereotyping. The stepped up efforts to require more rigid identification for voting, for example, reveals the

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

depth of our fear. There is no evidence, anywhere, of voter fraud! So why are we enacting such laws? Racism is a sin, the sin of believing that it is acceptable for the majority to hold onto its privilege.

Often those most guilty of racism are not people of privilege, just the opposite. They are often poorer people with fewer resources who have mistakenly be lead to believe what is done to support one group will come at their expense. This is, I believe, the problem with enacting immigration reform.

The gospel of Jesus Christ respects the full humanity of all of God's people, no exceptions! So the church needs to be clear first that racism is a sin because it violates what God calls God's people to do and to be. The church needs to work to see that within the church and society anti-racism education and training are done and required. The church needs to stop it speaking like a community of scarcity and speak like a community that fully embraces the abundance of God's grace! If we keep speaking and acting out of a loss of resources what does that say to people who fear and especially fear loss? If we keep acting like

there is not enough what credibility do we have to stop the reduction of education, health care and economic justice for God's people?

Finally we need as a church to heed the words of one of our own, theologian Stanley Hauerwas who says that the church does not have a social ethic it is a social ethic! In all we do we must reveal to a broken and contrite world the wholeness of reconciliation of the Good News! So I believe we need to start practicing fighting the sin of racism with ourselves, and be a church truly committed to reconciliation and the building up of God's people.

Workshops at the 2013 EUC Assembly focus on Ministries of Reconciliation

Amity Carruba of the Episcopal Service Corps presented an informative workshop on opportunities for young adults to serve in cities throughout the USA. Participants, ages 21 to 30 are encouraged to read the website information if they are interested in applying. Service corps participants may be assigned to work in churches, senior centers, urban gardens, and homeless programs. The core values of the Episcopal Service Corps are working for social justice, living a sustainable lifestyle in a community, and deepening spiritual awareness and discerning vocation. Applicants are not required to be Episcopalians. Amity told us that are always seeking Dioceses to participate in this program. Dioceses must provide housing, a stipend, and jobs in the community.

The Alliance for Metrostability presented a panel on the work of a coalition of community groups. These group organize to work on advancing racial, environmental and economic justice. It was exciting as an attendee to hear how they promote advocacy with diverse groups in Minneapolis. It was impressive that they successfully negotiated with the builders of a new football stadium that they hire a certain percentage of construction workers from the communities of color. This was an excellent example of the benefits of collaboration.

One of the panelist spoke about the work of finding common ground when organizing diverse groups. One area they found that affected many group was transportation in Minneapolis. They had a booklet illustrating the power of storytelling on a common topic. I browsed the stories and thought that most low-income neighborhoods share public transit challenges these residents wrote about. Inadequate bus service limits opportunities of residents of color to attain jobs, attend schools and colleges, and participate in recreational activities and leads to isolation. I found the stories very powerful. The coalition of groups was able to restore partial service in areas that suffered from cuts in bus service.

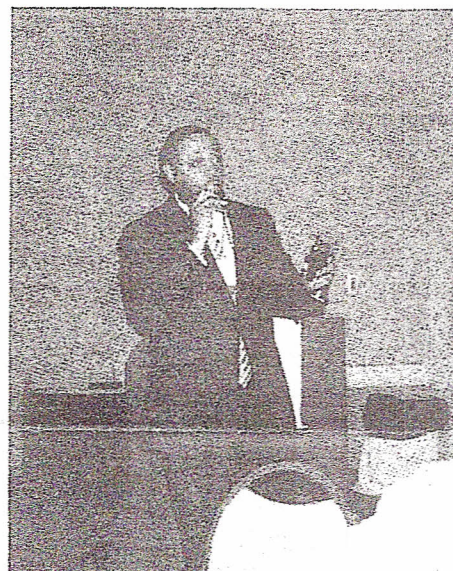
Reflections on the 2013 Assembly

By Sheila Sims, President, Episcopal Urban Caucus

Urban Issues of Housing, Transportation, and Economic Justice in Minneapolis

Workshops and site visits gave the attendees at the 2013 Episcopal Urban Caucus Assembly an opportunity to learn how Minneapolis agencies are working on advancing racial, economic, and environmental justice.

The Keynote speaker, Rev. Andre Dukes of Shiloh Temple in Minneapolis gave an emotionally moving talk about his life growing up in a single parent home, getting in trouble but able to continue his education after a stint in juvenile detention. He is the Family Academy Director for the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) that has as its focus a "cradle to career" model. NAZ is a collaboration of organizations and schools in partnerships with families that works to end poverty, unemployment, low education and violence. The Harlem Achievement Zone model was the inspiration for the Northside Achievement Zone. The NAZ model includes the well being of the entire community from the very young to seniors.



Rev. Andre Duke, Keynote Speaker at the 2013 Assembly

Minneapolis councilman, Don Samuels of Ward 5, narrated a bus tour of the Northside Achievement Zone. He was an enthusiastic tour guide and had the entire bus excited by the progress in that area. He showed us the only YMCA designated for senior citizens in the country. The housing in that area was new and one could not distinguish between Section 8 housing and homeowners. Mr. Samuels also told us the test scores of the schools in that area are among the highest in the state of Minnesota. One of the challenges in that community was transportation since the river and freeways isolated them from the business section of town. He told us it would take about two hours by bus to commute to college. This of course meant that residents had difficulty getting to jobs and attending classes with the resulting economic stagnation. Mr. Samuels is a strong and rousing voice for peace and one of the founders of the Peace Foundation in Minneapolis.



Minneapolis councilman Don Samuels of Ward 5

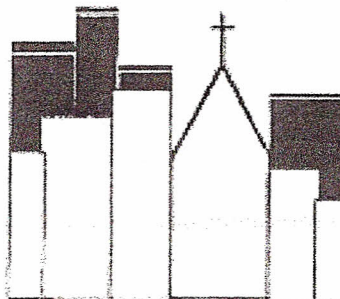
THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS

Ministries of Reconciliation,

Social Justice and Peace

WEBSITE

www.episcopalurbancaucus.org



Board of Directors

Officers

Sheila Sims, President

Canon Robert Brooks, Vice President

Velva Wright, Secretary

Diane Pollard, Treasurer

The Rt. Rev. Brian Prior

The Rt. Rev. John Rabb

The Rev. Michael Hopkins

The Rev. Glenna Huber

The Rev. Kimberly Jackson

The Rev. Philip Jacobs

The Rev. Charles Lane

The Rev. Eric Metoyer

The Rev. Mathew Stewart

Jacqueline Kellum-Foster

Rosemary Braxton

Nell Braxton Giibson

Bruce Ingram

Barbara Larsen

The Hon. Byron Rushing