

URBAN NETWORKER INSERT

BRIDGES Rosemary Braxton

words as he told those gathered that Strickland would not speak. He explained that the Keynote Speaker was suffering from a viral flu strain that he left him too weak to appear.

Werner then introduced Paulo Nzambi, Chief Operating Officer for the Bidwell Corporation who was to be the substitute speaker. Nzambi stood and spoke without a single note, beginning with a story Bill Strickland loves to tell of how the former Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, Robert Appleyard, drove to the north side one Christmas Eve to embrace and encourage Bill. Later Appleyard introduced Strickland to priest Toby Biddle who became a staunch supporter of what would become the Manchester Project.

I was drawn in by the speaker who shared the details of how the Episcopal Church played an important role in Strickland's dream. Nzambi artfully drew our attention to a slide presentation that highlighted the current Manchester Bidwell site, a beautiful edifice with a magnificent waterfall at the back entrance. Nzambi spoke of jazz – a truly original American Art form, created by African Americans amid squalor, whiskey and cigarette butts and he spoke of jazz greats Nancy Wilson and Quincy Jones who participate in a Jazz Series that raises money for the Manchester Bidwell Corporation. He emphasized that these musicians feel they have found a home amid the beauty of Manchester's halls that reflect the beauty of jazz itself.

Nzambi went on to compare the beauty of jazz to the beauty Strickland found through his

relationship with Frank Ross who, recognizing the value of human beings, invited Bill Strickland to learn the art of making pots, inviting him into the artistic world because he saw Strickland as a person who he was not going to leave in Manchester. Ross became a mentor who took Strickland to see Fallingwater, the house Frank Lloyd Wright was commissioned to build. The simplicity and beauty of this dwelling has influenced the Manchester Bidwell buildings and grounds which were envisioned and built by Strickland. His relationship with Frank Ross led him to two principles. 1. Environment dictates behavior, 2. People are assets not liabilities. Through these principles Manchester Bidwell seeks to educate and inspire urban youth to be constructive, productive people through the arts. Today the center teaches ceramics, photography, weaving, silk dying among other art forms. The center sees art as a great equalizer, open to everyone in a way that flattens the plane. Manchester Bidwell also believes something positive happens to a person in the midst of creating beauty and says to the pottery student, "We are going to invest in you until you master the clay." The people at Manchester believe that if a student is disciplined and sticks with a process that student can apply discipline to other areas of his or her life. They also believe that clay is a metaphor for life and that students can make something extraordinary out of life.

Mr. Nzambi explained that the Bidwell Training Center was born in 1968 and began as a Trades program to teach carpentry, electricity and masonry. Ironically during the days of slavery woodwork, smithing and masonry were the work of black men but today, Nzambi pointed out, electricity, carpentry, masonry and other unions are inhospitable to

African Americans, so the Training Center focuses on newer less entrenched occupational ladders.

The Manchester Culinary Arts Program was funded and became a reality when John Heinz approached Bill Strickland and offered to help. As Nzambi spoke I began to see the Manchester Bidwell Corporation, like the city of Pittsburgh, as a monument to bridge-building. Strickland built a bridge to his community through ceramics; Heinz extended a bridge to opportunity through the establishment of the culinary arts program. Near the Smithfield Street Bridge new dreams are joined to careers at Manchester Bidwell.

Mr. Nzambi showed pictures of the Pharmacy Tech Program that trains those written off by society to be laboratory technicians and medical assistants capable of using the latest computer software. What the program asks in return is for commitment and perseverance from its students. Such commitment and perseverance assure a 79% placement rate for those students who survive the strenuous elimination process.

The academic component teaches skills like resume writing, dressing for success and job interviewing. Funding comes from philanthropic support, corporate partners, individual donors and the state of Pennsylvania. Nzambi stressed that the beauty of the physical environment embraces student participation. At Manchester people believe beautiful things are not just for the wealthy.

The Bidwell National Center for Arts and Technology (NCAT) was developed to offer the opportunity for other cities to become a replication site. Once an organization or group makes application and is accepted it undergoes a vetting process. Replication sites currently exist in San Francisco and Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Resolutions (cont'd)

conditions of employment. We deplore the recent attempts by elected officials in several states who are seeking to deny public employees these basic human rights, and call upon all people of good will to support the struggles of the workers in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio and other states where these rights are under attack. We call upon all elected officials to respect the labor rights of public employees and to withdraw any legislation that would limit or eliminate those rights. And be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Presiding Bishop, the President of the House of Deputies, members of the Executive Council, the AFL-CIO and the Governors of Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be sent to the 78th General Convention meeting in Indianapolis in 2012 and that deputies and bishops of the Episcopal Urban Caucus assure that it is part of legislative process.

Resolution 2011-3

RESOLVED that, the Episcopal Urban Caucus recommend to the Board of the EUC that \$200 be sent to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial being built in Washington, DC.

Resolution 2011-4

RESOLVED that, the Episcopal Urban Caucus and the Church in Metropolitan areas partner to organize, to restore, to train and develop leadership for the local neighborhood parish/mission station through:

- A. building a network of urban neighborhood congregations
- B. teaching and training tools for community organizing
- C. teaching and training a theology of urban and neighborhood praxis
- D. resource best practices and sharing personal stories

- E. creating a three or four day institute for urban ministry
- F. engage the Urban Caucus to create a track on urban congregational mission that visits start-up, redeveloping or active congregational mission centers in their local settings.

Resolution 2011-5

RESOLVED that, the 31st Assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus meeting from February 23 – 26, 2011 in Pittsburgh, PA gives thanks to the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh for their generous and gracious hospitality. This 31st Assembly wishes them continued success as they continue on their journey and this Assembly stands in support of them.

Michael Schut, the Environmental Affairs Officer for the Episcopal Church, spoke on Saturday morning about Eco-Justice and Green Faith. Eco-justice, he reminded us, is not exclusively about caring for exotic animals, the wilderness and trees. It also includes human beings. The Episcopal Church has recently launched a collaboration with Green Faith's Green Certification Program which is a holistic two-year program to express creation-care throughout parish life and ministry. It includes an emphasis on environmental justice.



Mike Schut shares Eco-Justice and GreenFaith information during the Plenary

(continued from In My Father's House)

for local rallies. In their kitchen, books about cooking share space with books about struggle and revolution.”

Then one enters the room which is inspired by August Wilson's *Two Trains Running*, and if one was alive during the Black Power struggle as was I, he or she is immediately transported back to those days. One's mind and senses breathe in the aroma of seasonings that waft through the air, and he or she is transfixed by the jukebox playing speeches and anthems from that time. One feels the power of the greater-than-life sized black fist at the end of the room as the afros and dashikis come alive. The power of the time comes rushing back and the 1960s and early 70s are with you again. Cheryl Finley, PhD in the Department of the History of Visual Art and Visual Studies at Cornell University says, “Photographs, video material and sculptures enliven every corner of the room....(and) the kitchen table provides a space to strengthen familial bonds while commemorating the fruition of the long-held dreams of black people.”

I left the museum feeling sad that we had not made time in our busy EUC schedule to arrange a special trip to the museum because the exhibition brings back not only personal stories and aspirations from my generation, it also reflects the journey of many of our organizations – the Union of Black Episcopalians, Coalition-E, the Episcopal Urban Caucus and The Consultation – to name a few.

The 2012 Assembly will be held in Atlanta, Georgia from February 29th to March 3rd.