

Las Vegas UPF, WFWP and CARP at Communities Building Community Event

Leslie Rigney
August 13, 2017



On August 13 in the afternoon, there was an initial event organized by the newly formed group "Communities Building Community". This organization which came out of the "Faith Organizing Alliance" for the purpose of building a more cohesive community in Las Vegas that would be free to participate by those following a faith or not. UPF chose to connect with this group for the purpose of building relationships in the Las Vegas Community, connecting with people who are taking leadership, and for the purpose of lending balance to what could be a left-leaning, politically motivated group. Participating in the organization were faith leaders as well as progressive leaders. There was an underlying interest in bringing more political interest to the community with the goal of creating a more 'just' society. Many of the initial organizers came from the African-American community, joined by respected Jewish leaders as well as Lutheran and non-denominational faith leaders. A progressive group also participated in many practical ways.

After several weeks of planning, the initial program was held at the prestigious 'Ner Tamid' Temple in Henderson, which generously offered their facilities for the meeting. The purpose was to have an event which could be an 'ice breaker' and enable folks from the diverse communities to get to know each other. Each community leader at the meeting committed to bring a number of members from their community. Questions were developed to be points of discussion and icebreakers at the tables. A speaker was invited. One member at Ner Tamid organized the food and venue. A logo and flyer was created, with the help of the progressives.

This initial event was very successful, with 80-100 participants. Our Mary Hida and Wendy Herstein, representing WFWP and UPF attended with 3 GPA members. Mary wrote: "It was wonderful to see how all the people who attended loved being there with each other and expressed the beauty of discussing

points and just sitting and discussing with each other. One lady told how after many years she went to a neighbor's house and had dinner together, and what a difference it made in coming to understand each other, from different races."

Wendy reported "At my table, one of the discussion questions was about 'action steps to dispel bad feeling between races, ethnicities and religious groups in our communities.' Because of our FFWPU teaching, I was able to offer, as one of my faith's teachings, the radical solution of intermarriage – resulting in better relations as both factions learn to love the grandchildren. I offered the example of my son who is visiting Japan, married to a Japanese girl, where they are so protective of the Japanese race. This prompted a black minister sitting at our table to state: 'America is God's Hope because we mix the races.' It helped diffuse the anger that had been stirred up against America by the event's MC who was so disturbed by race relations in America, particularly an event in Virginia that had just pitted black and white against each other."

A table was available for the various communities to put out literature from their faith community or organization. UPF and WFWP and CARP brought literature.

UPF will continue working with this group and develop deeper relationships with other faith leaders and find ways to connect with some of the progressives in the Las Vegas community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leslie Rigney