

BELMONT AGAINST RACISM
PO Box 649
Belmont MA 02478

June 5, 2008

Dear BAR Members,

This letter reviews the 2007-2008 year for Belmont Against Racism (BAR). Our annual meeting will be held Tuesday June 10, 2008 at the First Church Unitarian/Universalist on 404 Concord Ave., Belmont starting at 6:30 pm.

Annual Meeting, Tuesday June 10, 2008 – Tina Chery, guest speaker

We are honored and delighted to have Clementina (Tina) Chery as our featured speaker at the annual meeting. Through our work with the Herman Taylor III Memorial fund over the past two years, I have come to recognize Tina as the primary person that Boston area families affected by violence turn to for advice, comfort and hope. She is an impressive and inspiring leader. Her work on building neighborhood peace through reconciliation is quite amazing, as is her own personal story. I invite all of our members to attend her free talk at our annual meeting.

Working Together as a Community

The 2007-2008 year was filled with important events, and I was truly impressed with how Belmont works together as a community on so many issues of common interest. The key to success is collaboration among different community organizations. Once again a hallmark of our efforts this year has been the number of times we have worked with co-sponsors across our town and the greater Boston area.

Human Rights Commission – Armenian Genocide

This past year began in the summer of 2007 with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) struggling with a difficult issue: how to reconcile the town's participation in the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) "No Place for Hate" program with the ADL's seemingly indifferent attitude toward the Armenian genocide. The HRC decided to recommend that the town withdraw from the "No Place for Hate" program, and BAR supported this action.

Herman Taylor III Memorial Fund – Peace March and Rally

Throughout the summer, we worked with the Herman Taylor III (HT3) Memorial Fund on the “Taking Back Our Neighborhoods” Peace March and Rally, which was held on September 11, 2007. Even though the weather was quite terrible during that day, the rain stopped in time for the march. We were truly impressed with the support that came from the town, including participation in the rally by so many town officials (including Angelo Firenze and Dan LeClerc of the Board of Selectmen, and state representative Will Brownsberger).

While the HT3 Fund has decided to not hold another march this coming September, we will continue to support them in their activities to help youth and honor the memory of Herman Taylor III. We urge our members to stay in touch with the family through their website at www.ht3fund.org.

Belmont Police Department – Diversity Training

This past fall, the Belmont Police Department conducted diversity training. We congratulate the police department and patrolman’s association for taking leadership roles in making this happen. To help support this important program, BAR provided funding to defray the costs of meals and refreshments.

After School Transportation Fund

Also in the fall, BAR delivered a check for \$9300 to the school department to fund the after school transportation program for our Boston area high school students. This was the net result from our fundraising efforts during the 2006-2007 school year.

Belmont/Boston Friends Program – Burbank School

The Belmont/Boston Friends Program, a volunteer organization based at the Burbank Elementary School, conducts a number of activities throughout the school year to encourage friendship and communication among students and parents at the elementary school level. BAR is happy to be one of the co-sponsors for some of the fun and educational events organized by this group. Special thanks to Heidi Haska and her fellow members of the Belmont/Boston Friends Program.

Make a Statement Day, Diversity Week – High School

By working with the schools at all grade levels, BAR helps to encourage open minds among the youngest and most important members of our community. At the High School, there are two particular programs that we help support with funding. The first,

Make a Statement Day, is an activity that was started by the students themselves. Leadership has been passed down from student to student, starting with Jessie Mattleman followed by Michael Stratford, and in 2007-2008 Caroline Tilden assisted by Becka Levin, Mark Howitt, Jessica Meyer and Katie Christensen.

The second, more comprehensive, program at the high school is Diversity Week. BAR is one of many co-sponsors of Diversity Week. We continue to be amazed at the depth and breadth of programs that occur during that week. Dan Richards, assistant principal, deserves special recognition for his contributions to Diversity Week. The entire high school (students, faculty, and administration) should be commended for their steadfast support of this program over the years.

Belmont Gay Straight Alliance

The Belmont Gay Straight Alliance Committee (BGSAC) is a subcommittee of BAR. This group helps bring a focus to the accomplishments that have occurred in our state and community to protect the rights of all citizens, and reminds us of the work that still needs to be done. You can support BGSAC, and have fun at the same time, by attending the semi-annual Renegaydes Country Western Dance fund-raiser.

Through the Alliance, BAR participates in activities such as the annual Gay Pride March in Boston, the Freedom to Marry Ice Cream Social, and educational events such as the May 2008 screening of the film *The Bible Tells Me So* about conflicts and continuity between religious beliefs and human rights. Fran Yuan deserves tremendous credit for her years of service to this subcommittee.

Martin Luther King Breakfast

The focal event for BAR's community and education outreach is the annual Martin Luther King Day breakfast and celebration. This year's event was another major success. The turnout among Belmont officials and ordinary citizens was as strong as ever. The keynote address by Kim McLarin, author and host of *Basic Black* on Channel 2, was very impressive and quite well received. It was a pleasure honoring this year's recipients of the Keeping the Dream Awards: Laura Miller (a Belmont resident who has devoted many years of her life to social justice) and the family of Herman Taylor III.

As most of you know, the MLK breakfast is also the primary fundraising event for the after school transportation fund. The outpouring of support was quite wonderful this year, and we expect to deliver a check in excess of \$15,000 to the school department next fall. This amount should allow the school department to fund both the high school program and extend support to transportation for special Belmont/Boston events at the elementary and middle school levels.

One Book / One Belmont – Town Library

This year also marked a highly successful set of “One Book / One Belmont” programs organized by the town’s library department. The focus this year was on Pakistan and Afghanistan, highlighted a number of different lectures and culminating in a major speech given by Greg Mortensen, the author of Three Cups of Tea.

We commend the town’s libraries, and in particular Emily Reardon, for making possible such a unique educational and inspirational opportunity. BAR was proud to be one of the co-sponsors, and we look forward to many more years of working with different town departments and community groups on programs of common interest.

BAR is a Community Organization

Finally, I want to express my thanks to the members of the BAR board of directors, listed below. Each of these individuals brings a unique combination of dedication to social justice with a wonderful sense of humor. It has been an honor, and lots of fun, working with this talented group of volunteers.

Looking forward to the next year, we hope that **you** will consider taking an active role in BAR. We recognize that everyone has many commitments, so think about picking a single activity of interest next year and joining in.

To learn more ways to be involved, or make comments and suggestions, please visit us on our web page www.belmontagainstracism.com or contact us at belmontagainstracism@gmail.com. We welcome your ideas and opinions.

Yours truly,

John Robotham, President

for the BAR board of directors:

Michael Collins, Vice-president

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Steve Friedman, Treasurer

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