



# DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY

*OVER TWENTY YEARS OF SERVICE TO AMERICA'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES*

## SUMMARY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS PROGRAMS REPORT ON 2013 PROGRAM YEAR

DECEMBER 5, 2013

### ➤ PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

The cycle of Dialogue on Diversity's 2013 programs has been concluded except for the Holiday Fair and Children's Gift Collection, set for December 14<sup>th</sup> – a unique entry in the program series, affording the opportunity for the friends of the Dialogue to render a tangible and meaningful service to some few disadvantaged persons from among the ethnic and cultural minorities our programming is designed to understand and advocate for. The following sections summarize each of the principal programs, in their order through the year, that constitute the Dialogue's Public Policy series and its Entrepreneurship training and advocacy.

The presentations in each of these programs seeks to illuminate the significant questions arising in one or another phase of civic, social, and economic life for the diverse population communities of the country and the hemisphere. While most of these questions are at the same time reflected in the designs of political movements, our own programs are resolutely independent of conventional political platforms or manifestos; we undertake to present some significant variety of opinion and analysis and, to the extent that the Dialogue's programs appear to advocate certain policies, these represent independent analysis and valuation, and are in the nature of a critique of the positions of existing political parties and factions. Throughout the Dialogue's history of over a score of years, and continuing in 2013, we have effectively drawn a body of members and regular attendees reflecting the diverse ethnicities and cultural traditions that our charter sets out as a goal; our range of speakers and award recipients similarly reflect this diversity – all this without plan or quota, but by virtue of our very real concern with the valor of a diverse national culture.

### ➤ INTERNET DATA PRIVACY COLLOQUIUM

The year's schedule begins with a January 29<sup>th</sup> colloquium on Information Technology, and specifically the Internet, its often quite breathtaking capabilities and the accompanying dangers to the values of privacy, for its content producers, its surveillance practitioners, its users, and a motley assortment of third parties – which includes nearly everyone. The colloquium on the privacy quandaries spawned by a pervasive information technology is scheduled each year near the annual international observation of the January 28 Data Privacy Day.

A salient feature of contemporary existence is the swift advance in computer hardware and the software that imparts dazzling speed and analytical capability, together with a broadening of the areas of human activity permeated by the operations of information technology. Along with this evident progress is the growing vulnerability of the realm of privacy guarded by individuals and communities. Panelists noted that the very existence of vast banks of data about individuals is rightly perceived as dangerous – if not now, then potentially so through data accessibility for a future authoritarian leaning government, or if utilized in offensively aggressive intrusions by private sector companies. Medical records and other health care information form a special focus of concern. Facial-recognition technology and the more general use of hi-tech observation techniques by governments are a serious area of worry. The colloquium program concluded with treatment of the burgeoning use of social media and the dangers of self-revelation, especially among young users.

### ➤ PUBLIC POLICY FORUM IN WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Each March, designated as Women's History Month, and marked specially by International Women's Day, March 8, Dialogue on Diversity presents a program of reflections on aspects of public policy and in particular a review of the remaining disabilities imposed upon women by perverse social norms and residual features of law, in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world, where the relics of tribalism and immemorial patriarchy have placed harsh, even violent barriers against any stirrings of women's advancement.

Among speakers were Julieta Garibay, prominent advocate for college students and others left undocumented and vulnerable by parental omissions in their infancy ("Dream Act" issues), Francine Lawrence, Executive VP of the American Federation of Teachers (host for this program), and Ayanna Gregory (daughter of Dick Gregory),

accomplished singer in jazz, soul, and blues idioms. Awards were presented to Rita DiMartino, former State Department Ambassador (International Award), and Ms. Garibay (Liberty Award).

## ➤ HEALTH CARE SYMPOSIUM

The Health Care Symposium, an all-day program May 14th, like preceding editions of this program, sought to analyze and explore the main facets of the larger subject of health care in America, much in the light of the health care reform statute of 2010, the ACA, which in steps has been entering operation during the three plus years since its enactment, fashioning new contours in the functioning of the health care and related insurance and other industries.

The topics as explored in the Symposium included [1] the legal and institutional framework of the health care system, most recently the extensive health care reforms in the ACA statute and its voluminous regulations; [2] the strategies for prevention, from “lifestyle” practices of diet, exercise, etc., to such higher-tech steps as periodic “check-ups” and testing for a variety of conditions, to the hi-tech research efforts seeking to develop vaccines, imaging devices (say, for cancer screening), and the like; [3] the significance of cultural competency and the campaign to reduce the disparities of access and treatment that are the obverse of that cultural alienation rendering cultural competency of crucial importance in an efficient and humane health care system; [4] the growing importance of an installation of information technology in medical record generation, maintenance, and analysis, in communication among medical providers, in telemedicine, and in all this the resultant perils to privacy interests of patients and some third parties’ [5] and an updating on the diagnosis, treatment, and social effects of a variety of often occurring diseases and chronic conditions – typically dealt with: cancer, HIV-AIDS, hypertension, diabetes, mental health, Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia, and obesity. Among speakers were Dr. Malcolm Joseph, Medical Director for CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield and an energetic Dialogue on Diversity backer; Dr. Deborah Peel, Psychoanalyst and among the national leaders in the campaign for medical record inviolacy; Lisa Pino, who had been deputy director of the SNAP food stamp program, a key part of the “social safety net”, which has since come to be highly controversial in the midst of budget disputes; and Dr. Gregory Pappas, Senior Deputy Director, D.C. Department of health, heading the AIDS treatment effort, and a ramrodding figure in the intense, and successful, effort to construct the Insurance Exchange (“Marketplace”) for the District of Columbia under the ACA health care reform. The Health Leadership Award was presented to Congresswoman Dr. Donna M. Christian Christensen, representing the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Congress.

## ➤ ENTREPRENEURSHIP/INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

This program, the oldest in the Dialogue on Diversity repertory, combines instruction on business management, the use of information technology in enterprise management and practice, and tips on international trade as well. Its 2013 edition was held September 18 at the Microsoft Innovation and Policy Center on K Street in Washington – followed by an elaborately catered reception courtesy of sponsoring Microsoft in the sleek 12<sup>th</sup> floor penthouse area.

An Entrepreneurial Excellence Award was given to Catherine Briceño, of Fairfax, Virginia. Among featured speakers were Frederick Humphries, VP, Government Affairs at Microsoft, and Frank Torres, Microsoft’s Director for Consumer Affairs. The midday session featured newly elected Rep. Tony Cardenas of California, with a spell-binding disquisition on entrepreneurs and their socially beneficial, often arduous lives. The opening segment had dealt with the role of information technology in the practice of business management, with experts from think tanks, the FCC, and the business world. A segment on supplier diversity followed with past masters Theresa Speake and Denise Rodriguez-Lopez. Anna Doar Sinaiko of the Harvard School of Public Health, along with Dania Palanker of the National Women’s Law Center, explained the position of small business under the ACA health care insurance reforms. Afternoon sessions dealt with the marketing strategies under government contract bidding preferences (8a status, women’s preferences, HUB Zones, etc.), and with an added variety of essential topics – access to capital with the versatile Joycelyn Tate, business mentors and incubators with Nicole Eickhoff of the D.C. Women’s Business Center, and, with the always persuasive Richard S Ginsburg of the SBA, International trade.

## ➤ COLLOQUIUM ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND IMMIGRATION

October 23rd, 2013. This colloquium dealt with the perennial causes of grief, domestic disruption, and clinically cognizable medical harms flowing from the incidence of domestic abuse, from which no class or ethnicity appears to be immune. Special complications deepen this concern by reason of its nexus with immigration rules.

The sub-topics included [1] an inventory of the physical and psychological harms that are the badges of the plague of domestic abuse – a perhaps surprisingly broad range of medical and mental symptoms, ranging from broken bones to diabetes; [2] sketch of the dangers threatening households and the possible avenues of the

abuse target's response – a deliberate stance of sticking it out in submissive silence; retaliation – which generally only sets in motion a downward spiral of violence; recourse to courts, with their sanctions against the abuser, the remedy often including some form of counseling for the abuser; and departure from the site of the abuse, a strategy presenting problems of psychological adjustment and economic viability, but often the only effective resort; [3] the special difficulties experienced by teens and young persons whose romances have turned caustic and exploitative; [4] abuse of the elderly, often by family members and nursing home personnel; and the sickening reality of trafficking in persons, for both sex and forced labor purposes. Among special speakers: Lynn Rosenthal, WH Advisor on Violence Against Women, Rep. Raúl Grijalva of Arizona, Raúl Yzaguirre, founder and former head of the National Council of La Raza, and Polly Baca, public affairs activist on the Colorado and national scenes. Trailblazer Awards were presented to Lynn Rosenthal and Rosey Hidalgo, expert analyst of domestic abuse problems for Casa de Esperanza. The immigration segment, related to domestic violence by a range of interactions of immigration rules with incidents of domestic violence. Alex Nowrasteh of the Cato Institute explicated the basic economic effects of immigration (and of labor migration generally) highlighting the substantial potential enhancement of global production of goods and services through free movement of labor resources, also describing the pernicious economic effects on Arizona's economy and commerce consequent on that State's laws subjecting immigrants to various disabilities.

### ➤ HOLIDAY FAIR AND CHILDREN'S GIFT COLLECTION

This festive event, closing the year's cycle of programs, is set for December 13, 2013 at the Horizon Ballroom, International Trade Center, Reagan Building in downtown Washington. In a brisk change of pace the Dialogue, in early December each year, presents its Holiday Fair and Children's Gift Collection, a joyous occasion on which toys, books, art sets, and craft kits are collected and given to children of economically disadvantaged households served by a list of collaborating social service groups.

In each Holiday Fair the children benefited have come largely from the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant districts, brought along by their mentors and a corps of community groups, nursery schools, health care organizations, etc. Each of the attendees coming from Dialogue on Diversity's own circle of members and friends is urged to bring along a gift for a child (\$10-\$12 in value), under the slogan, prominently displayed on the flyers flooding the internet just before the event, A Gift for a Child Is Your Ticket of Admission.