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*Gulf Coast Interfaith (GCI) continues its work in the key areas of democracy, disaster recovery, housing, healthcare, employment, education, and Latino Outreach in an effort to advance social, economic and health opportunities for the residents of the city of Galveston and Galveston County and the Gulf Coast area. Collaborating with local congregations and community advocacy groups, we are consistently reaching to fulfill our goal to produce tangible, sustainable solutions to the issues facing our neighbors.*

## GCI

### ***Galveston County Collaborating Organizations***

Gulf Coast Interfaith continued its collaborative work with the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations.<sup>1</sup> GCI made its office at 2728 Ave Q available to the Collaborating Organizations (CO) for meetings on Jan.10<sup>th</sup> and March 21<sup>st</sup>. There were wide ranging discussions and strategy sessions covering R1 housing defects, R2 outreach and recovery, voter education in the upcoming Galveston municipal election, and adoption of a pay day lending ordinance in Galveston.

## EMPLOYMENT

### ***Living Wage Study Group***

A Living Wage Study Group meeting was held on Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> and March 29<sup>th</sup> at St. Patrick Catholic Church and Feb.20<sup>th</sup> at Live Oak Baptist Church. The three meetings focused on moving from a study group to action.

The movie "Inequality for All"<sup>2</sup> was released nationally in February. It was narrated by Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor for President Clinton. A DVD of the movie was purchased and shown for

<sup>1</sup>The membership of the coalition known as the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations varies depending on the issue. Generally the CO is comprised of: NAACP Galveston Unit 6180, LULAC Galveston Council 151, Galveston County Coalition for Justice, Galveston Northside Task Force, Gulf Coast Interfaith, Barbour's Chapel Community Development Corporation, NAACP Mainland Branch Unit 6201, NAACP Dickinson/Bay Area Branch Unit 6280, LULAC Texas City Council 255, and Gulf Coast Homeless Coalition.

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inequality\\_for\\_All](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inequality_for_All)

free at the United Steelworkers Union Hall on February 7<sup>th</sup>. GCI leader McIntyre and Lee Medley, President of the AFL-CIO's Galveston County Central Labor Council, briefly discussed the possibility of future free showings at meetings of the Living Wage group.

### ***Section 3***

At the March 21<sup>st</sup> CO meeting Pat Tolliver (GCI) and Laura Murrell (GCI), with the promised assistance of Bernice Madison (NAACP), articulated their plan to retrieve copies of the current Sec. 3 plan for Galveston and GHA, compliance documents for the past year (or more), and meet with staff to evaluate the success of the two programs. They would also meet with Ron Ashe with Sullivan and Steve Mataro with DSW Homes. The CO agreed good programs were adopted because of the hard work of the CO and Austin Advocates but that the CO must be more diligent in monitoring. All agreed the community will benefit from an effective Sec. 3 program and further agreed if additional help is needed that Pat, Laura, and Bernice should ask and it will be provided by CO.

## **LATINO OUTREACH**

Another Diez y Seis de Septiembre meeting was held at the home of GCI leaders Mercado and McIntyre on Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>. There was continued discussion on holding an event in September as well as the possibility of an event on Cinco de Mayo. There was also discussion about leadership of the events by LULAC and working with Mainland LULAC.

## **DEMOCRACY**

### ***Galveston City Council***

The CO planned a series of house meetings with Galveston candidates: Mayor-Jim Yarbrough (3/31), Dist. 3-Kate Marx (4/7), Dist.6-Carolyn Sunseri (4/14), and Dist. 4-David Hoover (4/21). A page of questions were prepared and submitted to the candidates and all CO members who were present were encouraged to return to their organizations with the information they obtained.

CO members Cornelia Banks is running for reelection in District 1 and Richard Batie is running again in District 2. Batie missed by two votes forcing and being in a run-off in 2012 against Rusty Legg. Legg decided to not run for reelection.

### ***Galveston election system***

At the Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> CO meeting there was discussion about Mayor Rosen's comments at the Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> council meeting where he once again brought up the 4-2-1 plan during the council discussion about charter amendments. Rosen declared that folks were interested in it since the demographics have changed but that it would be up to the next council to appoint a charter committee to determine what the

people want to do. Everyone agreed that such an effort to adopt a discriminatory 4-2-1 plan would be opposed by the CO.

### ***Galveston City Manager Michael Kovacs***

After months of efforts by some Galveston council members, Michael Kovacs was terminated in a 4-3 vote on Feb.18<sup>th</sup>. An eloquent defense of Kovacs was given by Councilmember Tarleton and Banks.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Galveston County redistricting of JP Courts***

The voting rights case went to trial on January 14<sup>th</sup>. Members of the Collaborating Organizations participated in the trial through their depositions and attendance. A decision on the case is expected in the summer from Judge Costa.

## **DISASTER RECOVERY and HOUSING**

### ***Galveston Ike Round 2 Housing Recovery***

GCI hosted a breakfast on March 27<sup>th</sup> for the leaders in Galveston's housing recovery to discuss the final outreach effort to encourage poor homeowners to file an application to have their house rehabbed or rebuilt in Round 2. The breakfast was at the Lighthouse Charity Operations Building at 6918 Broadway and was provided by Lighthouse Charity. Kevin Hamby and Jeff Piatt who were contracted to conduct the R2 outreach made a presentation that answered questions and resulted in the commitment of additional effort by community leaders to secure more applications by April 21<sup>st</sup> and to develop a plan for the use of any unspent funds.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

GCI leaders Compian and McIntyre attended a luncheon at Nono Tony's on Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> for Kenneth Smith, new employee at UTMB's Center to Eliminate Health Disparities, where there was a general discussion about community and economic development.

McIntyre attended meetings of the "Hear Our Voice" group at Moody Mansion basement on Feb.11<sup>th</sup> and at the Community Room at Island Community Center on March 18<sup>th</sup>. The group is led by UTMB's Rebecca Hester and Jason Glenn and is attempting to provide a grassroots forum for community issues to be identified and acted upon.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://galvestontx.swagit.com/play/02182014-583>. See Item 6a.



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