

Diversity Roundtable
Achieving a Culture that Values Diversity
Greater Lafayette Commerce
Thursday May 1, 2025
11:30 am – 1:00 pm
The Arts Federation (TAF) and Zoom

Minutes
Impacting Change in Issues of Diversity and Inclusion
DiversityTippecanoe.org

1. Welcome/Introductions **Amy Sundell** (5 minutes)
 - a. Please put your name and affiliation in the Chat
 - i. Online attendees: Adelia Sorge (Racial Reconciliation, LWV), Harry Targ, Roberta Schonemann, Amy O’Shea (United Way), Adyreyana Bryan (Purdue intern with United Way), Chris Campbell (State Rep), Christopher Munt, Johanna Wu (Bahai Faith Tippecanoe), Kim Corrales (On My Way Pre-K), Laura Penney Bade, Sheila Rosenthal (retired nurse), Frank Rosenthal, Stephanie Rambo, Naj McFadden, Tracy Orbin (Hanna Community Center), Judy Gainey
 - ii. In the room attendees: Tom Topping, Joan Marshall, Tracy Bryson, Connie Heier, Alan Darwactor, Joe Tylenda, Jos Holman, Suzanne Clemenz, Ebony Barrett, Akram Almakki, Tracy Dodds, Rachel McEachem, Mark Cripe, Don Schreiber, Dena Targ, Audrey Cooks
 - b. Please put any announcements you may have in the Chat
2. Announcements – **Amy Sundell** (10 minutes) Summit Feedback – Steph Rambo
 - a. Jeffery Robinson event – Jos Holman, 5/6 at 7 pm, Long Center
 - i. Star of the film “Who We Are” will be present. Sana Booker will interview him and there will be Q&A. He will discuss race relations and where we are today in the US.
 - ii. It is free, but tickets are encouraged.
 - b. GLIBE Scholarship Luncheon, 5/7 at Courtyard by Marriott, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm
 - i. 7 scholarships will be given away to students
 - c. George Floyd Anniversary at Trinity Methodist Church on 5/25 at 1:00 – 2:30 pm

- i. Mural on Ferry has been there since his murder. The mural will be recognized and there will be speeches.
 - d. Juneteenth, 6/21 at Tapawingo Park, noon – 4 pm
 - i. Website is in the process of being updated. Sponsorship opportunities will be live this weekend.
 - e. Taste of Tippecanoe, 6/21 Downtown, 5 – 11 pm
 - f. Changing July 3rd DRT Meeting to July 10th
 - g. Other Announcements?
 - i. Bowl-a-thon tonight benefiting Purdue ResLife Organized Workers. 6:30 to 8:30 at Arrowhead Bowling.
 - ii. 2 May Day Protests. Today, 4 to 6 PM in West Lafayette (South Side of State Street From S. Grant to S. University) and Saturday, 12 to 3 PM in Lafayette (4 Corners at intersection of South St and Sagamore Pkwy S)
 - iii. The People's Town Hall this Friday 6 to 7:30 at IBEW (electrical worker's union on South 30th St off of Teal Rd)
 - iv. For those of you who attended the DRT Summit, please make sure to fill out the post-event survey.
- 3. Program Part 1 – Cars for Keeps, Cory Shively
 - a. Cars for Keeps is a faith-centered non-profit trying to break the cycle of generational poverty and provide support to those in need through affordable vehicle ownership and financial education
 - b. 2018: Founded; 2022: Raised funds to build website, pay legal fees, and create lease; 2023: Raised \$18,000 to place first vehicle for a single mother of 4 children; 2024: Raised \$86,000 and placed 6 vehicles for a total of 7 vehicles on the goal. 2025: Goal is to place 10 vehicles
 - c. Lease-to-own program; no to low interest; lease term up to 40 mos; payment amount based on affordability of recipient not value of vehicle; upon completion of lease, title is turned over to lessee
 - d. Place wholesale vehicles that are gently used; partner with Trejo Motors
 - e. Application period is April to May 30
 - f. Application requirements: Complete application; 6 months of continual employment; letter of reference from employer; live in a county they serve for 1 year minimum (Tippecanoe & 8 surrounding counties); no criminal activity for 3

years; meet income level requirements; complete budget course; secure insurance coverage

- i. Income requirements: For 1 person, \$19,380-\$27,685; For 4 persons, \$27,85-\$39,500 (other levels are available, these are just examples)
- g. 2025 Goals: Place 8 vehicles, 1 outside of Tippecanoe Co
- h. Beyond 2025 Goals: Provide services throughout the state, place first vehicle in Monroe Co, secure physical location within Tippecanoe Co; Within 7 years, provide services in a minimum of 7 states
- i. What can you do?
 - i. Networking
 - ii. Be a passenger (monthly financial supporter)
 - iii. Donate a vehicle
 - iv. Follow on socials
 - v. Shop at Payless
- j. Q&A
 - i. Will Cars for Keeps pay for repairs?
 - 1. Within first 6 months, if car needs repairs, recipient is encouraged to pay for half of the repairs and Cars for Keeps sets the rest up on a payment plan in addition to their monthly payments
 - ii. Why did they pick Trejo Motors?
 - 1. Started with Romney Motors in Frankfort, Cory knew the owner. He suggested Oscar Trejo because they were in Lafayette. Oscar does not make any money off of the vehicles purchased. He also does a reduced rate oil change for recipients.

4. Program Part 2 - Concerns of Arabs/Muslims in Greater Lafayette Area, Dr. Akram Al-Makki (**Sheila Rosenthal**). (55 minutes)

- a. Dr. Al-Makki is a local nephrologist (kidney specialist) and director of Medical Education at IU Health Arnett.
- b. Mosque: Muslims from Purdue faculty and students joined hands to build the first mosque on campus 30 years ago. ISGL operates the only mosque within 50 miles radius. A house was converted into a mosque. It caught fire in 1996. Present structure was built in 1998.

- i. They have since outgrown this Mosque and are looking to build a newer, bigger mosque and community center.
- c. All Arabs are not Muslims, and not all Muslims are Arabs. There are 1.3 billion Arabs in the world, and Muslims are only 300-400 thousand.
- d. Arabs and Muslims have been in Indiana since the 1800s. Many of the population in the Greater Lafayette area are students, professors, medical professionals, and businesspeople.
- e. Some of the concerns that Arabs and Muslims have are the same as other Americans, such as the price of food, but there are specific concerns to this population.
 - i. Cultural integration: Balancing cultural heritage with American life. This is especially a challenge for newcomers.
 - 1. Laws & regulations
 - ii. Community building
 - 1. Finding spaces for worship, socialization, and community events
 - iii. Education and awareness
 - 1. Fighting stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims
 - iv. Employment and economic opportunities
 - 1. Navigating the job market and entrepreneurship in the area
 - v. Social services
 - 1. Accessing resources for specific needs, such as halal food (meat that is slaughtered in a specific way)
 - a. Some Muslims will eat meat from a supermarket, but some will only eat halal. If they cannot find halal meat, they may go vegetarian
 - vi. Space for prayer
 - f. We don't have very accurate statistics on Muslims in the Lafayette Area. Here are the estimates:
 - i. 600,000+ Muslim residents, excluding students & children
 - ii. Muslim students form a large part of the Muslim community in our area
 - g. Activities and social services

- i. ISGL (Islamic Society of Greater Lafayette) provides housing above masjid, to male & female students
- ii. Tenants ensured that daily prayers continued during COVID even when their masjid was closed for 3 weeks
- iii. Sunday school serves local children with Quran and Islamic studies
- iv. ISGL provides weddings, funerals, zakat/Sadaqat assistance to local families, community education (lectures etc.)

h. Recent concerns

- i. Protests on the war in Gaza have led to students losing visas and/or scholarships

i. Q&A

- i. What is your connection growing up in Syria?

1. Syria is one of the countries that has taken a lot of refugees throughout history. Damascus is mentioned in the Bible as one of these places. There are many people of all different positions, backgrounds, and ethnic groups. In 1948, the Palestinians were kicked out of their homes during the formation of the state of Israel. Many Palestinians came to Syria thinking it was temporary. Unfortunately, they were not allowed to go back. In the 1967 war, Israel expanded, occupied more lands, and kicked more Palestinians out to Syria.
2. Dr. Almakki grew up in Damascus going to school with many Palestinians. Many of them suffered from poverty and discrimination. Many of them were still trying to find a way to go back home, so they did not settle very well in the hosting countries. However, some of them did meld with the population. Dr. Almakki became very sympathetic to their cause because he has seen it firsthand, not from the media, which can be very biased and one-sided.
3. In 2011, Syrian people had to become refugees as well. After the dictator died, his son inherited the country. Dr. Almakki was in Damascus at this time when demonstrations started. It started as peaceful, but after about 8 months, people started to carry weapons. The Assad regime displaced about half of the population. Many of those who fled died. The Assad regime eventually brought in mercenaries and the Russians.

4. The rebels were able to establish a small government and take back the whole country. They were able to topple the regime on Dec 8, 2024.
 - ii. How are students and families getting legal assistance?
 1. There are some organizations helping. CAIR, IMAN, ACLU. Dr. Almakki does not know of any specific local lawyers, but these organizations can guide you to the correct resources.
5. Hot Topics, if time permits (10 min)
6. Recap of Summit
7. Volunteers needed - **Amy Sundell** (5 minutes)
 - a. Summer Festival Booths, this committee is chaired by Ben Carson and Joan Marshall. They could use some help. DRT will send out more information and volunteer sign-ups, so keep an eye out!
 - b. Update historical information about DRT. We have a summary of the minutes of our meetings from 2001 – 2015. We could use a volunteer, or two, to summarize the minutes from 2016 – present.
8. Future Topics – **Amy Sundell** (5 minutes)
 - a. June 5 – Hanna Center update, Kajen Monroe (Tracy Orbin). This meeting will be hosted by Barb Clark
 - b. July 10 – Racism as a Public Health Crisis Community Action Team, Andrew Lane (Sheila Rosenthal). This meeting will be hosted by Ebony Barrett.
 - c. August 7 – Journalism, the impact of its demise on communities, on governmental conduct, on citizen participation, and on the exercise of free speech (Roberta Schonemann). This meeting will be hosted by Barb Clark.
 - d. Sept 4 – Immigration, Dr. Margaret Hass (Monica Casanova). This meeting will be hosted by Jos Holman.
 - e. Oct 2 – English Language Learning Students, Maribel Masoodi, Dual Language Instructor at Edgelea School (Monica Casanova). This meeting will be hosted by Amy Sundell.
 - f. Nov 6 – Housing Report, (Christopher Munt). This meeting will be hosted by Barb Clark.
 - g. Dec 4 – DEI, Ebony Barrett and Tenecia Waddell-Pyle (Lindsey Mputubwele). This meeting will be hosted by Barb Clark.