

Minutes
International & Multicultural Advisory Committee (IMAC) Meeting
February 16, 2022 * 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Google Meet Meeting

In Attendance: Bob Anantua, Mae Beale, Beckie Chapman, Jill Christianson, Hui Dong, Farida Guzdar, Alexandra Hursky, Magdalena Castro Lewis, Arna Rubman, Laura Smit, Niti Srivastava, Rosie Verrati, Suzanne Waller

Guest: Jun Han

CA Board Liaison: Ginny Thomas

CA Staff: Grace Chang

Welcome & Introductions

Chair's Report – Laura Smit

- Laura reported that she had a lot of fun attending the dumpling making class at Jun Han's house. The Howard County Library system set up the link to record the class, which is posted on the library's YouTube site. She has sent out the link to the video to everyone. She said that Jun and Grade did a great job working together.
- The Board budget process is nearing its end. We had a number of people give their testimony during Resident SpeakOut. The Board is scheduled to vote on Thursday, February 24. The major issues that have come up during the budget process is Stonehouse (Long Reach Village Center) and the Art Center for improvements, and how much money will be invested in the tot lots. The Budget will go into effect on May 1. Jill Christianson asked where does the International Exchange & Multicultural Programs (IEMP) land? Valerie Montague responded that two employees have been allocated for IEMP in the budget. She also stated that there will not be a physical exchange for the next fiscal year.
- Ginny Thomas congratulated the group, saying that while IEMP is not ranking high, she commended those who came to give excellent testimony. She said that the testimony really personalized what the group and IEMP represents. She added that it is important in reaching out to the community. Some of the emails received were fantastic and made an impression. The department is certainly not getting cut, and she stated that she is impressed with the staff, chair and this committee. Valerie added that it has an impact when people show up and speak out – which is why the tot lot at Phelps Luck is getting attention.
- The Build Haiti Foundation is currently holding a Chinese brush painting fundraiser via Zoom. David Weeks at Glenelg Country School has a Chinese high school student doing the fundraiser, teaching how to paint bamboo, plum blossoms and pandas. There are three sessions left. The links to sign up are on the Build Haiti Foundation's website.

Program Manager's Report – Grace Chang

- The first of the three cultural dance/fitness classes in the IEMP Dance Around the World series at the Columbia gyms went really well. We had a large turnout of over 50 people attend this class. The next class is African dance at Supreme Sports Club on February 19, and a Bollywood dance class on February 26 at the Athletic Club.
- IEMP and the Tema committee assisted the African Art Museum in hosting a delegation from Uganda in early February. Grace Chang was able to find homestays for the delegation of seven people, including Miss Uganda of Tourism and the Ugandan Broadcasting Corporation. The purpose of the trip to the United States was to have a cultural exchange with a number of cities visited during the tour. The Tema committee assisted in the reception that was hosted by the African Art Museum for the delegation on February 5. The African Art Museum will be hosting a special dinner reception as a thank you to Grace, the Tema Sister City committee and the host family in appreciation for all their assistance.
- IEMP has been working with the Howard County Center of African American Culture (HCCAAC) and Howard County Library System (HCLS) on a program called *Living History: Rising to Leadership in Howard County* which is scheduled as a live event on February 28, at the Equity Resources Center located in the HCLS' Central branch. Big thank you to Mae Beale for connecting IEMP with HCCAAC. Mae Beale will be making the opening remarks during this event.
- A mobile exhibit of IEMP's programs and events will be installed at the Columbia gym on March 1. The exhibit will rotate to all three gyms, changing at the beginning of the month. Photos of the Sister Cities Exchange program, the World Languages Cafe and other events will be exhibited.

Approval of December 15, 2021 Minutes

The Committee approved the December 15, 2021 IMAC meeting minutes.

IEMP Lakefront Summer Concert Series - Grace Chang

Open Space has allocated three Sundays this summer to IEMP to bring more culturally diverse programming to the Lakefront concerts. One Sunday will be dedicated to showcasing the Sister Cities program, and one Sunday will be devoted to local youth dance groups. Grace asked the committee for suggestions for the third Sunday. Bob Anantua suggested a Caribbean group. Bob will follow up to get a name of a Caribbean band. Towson University has a world music program and they have ensembles. A world music day was suggested. Jill suggested incorporating storytelling during the concert. Arna suggested poetry readings, mindful of all ages, with American Sign Language. Mae also agreed to having a storytelling event, but she felt that stories need a smaller, more confined venue. Valerie pointed out that the fountain at the lakefront is noisy, and there are often many children who will be talking and running around during the event.

Laura suggested incorporating storytellers from sister city experiences. Ginnie agreed that it is important for the branding of Sister cities. Beckie suggested having a bazaar. Jun said it would be a good opportunity for fundraising at the lakefront. Niti suggested a

talent show, which is always a huge draw, with singing and poetry. Grace suggested storytelling would be a great event at the library. Laura also suggested Howard Community College as a venue for storytelling. Arna suggested keeping it all at one place and suggested the pier at the lake, some place more quiet for storytelling.

Sister Cities Signposts & Cergy-Pontoise Cement Plaque at Lakefront - Grace CA management informed Grace (IEMP) that there are some funds in the budget to finish the Cergy-Pontoise cement plaque project that was discussed with Open Space prior to Covid. In December 2019, Michelle Miller, Leslie Barnett, Laura Smit and Jan Clark met at the Lakefront and agreed to install the plaque at the Lakefront, above the fountain, engraving the names of the other four sister cities and to place a signpost much like the CA path signs down below at the Lakefront. Laura noted that the plaque was removed from its location across the Mall of Columbia parking lot (near LPP) and is stored at Open Space.

Grace asked IMAC members if they would now prefer to use the funds available to complete the installation of the cement plaque above the fountain at the Lakefront or to install a Sister Cities signpost with directional signs and distance in miles toward the respective countries. IMAC voted to have a signpost, in lieu of installing the plaque. Grace will follow up with Open Space to make the request.

Reports from LUMINUS - Jill Christianson

OneWorldFest - July 4, 2022

Jill provided links to the event on the meeting chat. She reported that OneWorld Fest is the umbrella concept for the initiative that LUMINUS is leading to highlight their work with immigrants/New Americans. Working with the Inner Arbor Trust, the Downtown Columbia Arts & Culture Commission and Columbia Association, OneWorldFest will include a 5k run, followed by a naturalization ceremony at which 246 people will be sworn in (which represent each year of the United States). The naturalization ceremony is pending approval from USCIS. Jill is working with Nina Basu, Inner Arbor Trust and Grace in discussing the exhibits at the event.

The purpose of the event is to change the narrative, framing the Fourth of July as a day for all of us, which includes immigrants. Jill will keep Laura and Grace informed in regards to the virtual race component, in which our sister cities could participate running in their own cities, logging their miles. Jun Han added that running is very popular in China, and said she will reach out to city officials. Magdalena suggested making it a competition between sister cities. Jill said that there is a registration fee to enter the race, and the cost increases closer to the race. There will be no cost to the cultural performances nor to the naturalization ceremony. Jill added that the virtual race (where runners log miles/kms) will take place several weeks leading up to the event.

Afghan Refugee update - Jill reported that there are three different hotels in Howard County where Afghan refugees will be placed for two months, until they can be placed. Their children will not be in school during this time. Howard County Government is coordinating with the International Refugee Committee, the Settlement Agency which is responsible for the 115 Afghan refugee families at the BWI hotels. LUMINUS is

supplementing with aid, a health clinic with physicians and volunteer and ESL classes. People can join the Afghan Alliance which has volunteer opportunities, including making baby kits, requests for drivers and many different opportunities. Work is being done to get the children into schools. They are currently still taking stock of the number of families in the three Howard County hotels. Niti reported that ICA has been helping the Afghan refugees. Last Saturday, they donated coats, toiletries and bread, coordinating through a Whatsapp group. IMAC members can reach out to Niti to help out this effort.

Ideas for Future Events

- **Juneteenth** - Mae Beale said that the Howard County Center of African American Culture will be meeting soon to begin planning their Juneteenth events. She suggested inviting Grace to the Juneteenth planning meeting at HCCAAC.
- **Tours of Ethnic Grocery Stores** - Marcy Gitt, Bob Anantua and Gerry Maxwell-Jones volunteered to serve on the committee to plan this program. The grocery stores that were suggested for food tours include LA Mart in Columbia, Lotte on Route 40 and a Halal market on Route 40 which is a Turkish market.
- **Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May**- Grace reported that IEMP is helping plan the Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Festival that will be held on Sunday, May 1 at the Chrysalis. The Liyang (China) Sister City committee will have a table at the event. Grace is working with two high school K-pop dance groups to perform at the event. Laura asked Niti if the Indian Cultural Association (ICA) is participating at the event. Niti said that they are part of the county AAPI workgroup, but they will not be participating in the May 1s event. They are planning another event on May 7 or May 14 at the Chrysalis.
- **Other suggestions**- Magdalena said Hispanic Heritage month is coming up in September. Arna asked about having a tea ceremony that coincides with Liyang's tea festival in April.

Reports from Columbia's Sister City Committees

Liyang, China – Hui Dong

- January 6, 2022, Jun Han and Grace had a Zoom meeting with Ms. Mary Allen, the director of International Education of HCC, and her assistant to discuss the possible college level cultural and academic project exchanges.
- January 11, 2022, Liyang Committee had a virtual meeting about making videos for the 2022 Howard County Lunar New Year Celebration event, and we recorded the video through Zoom on Jan. 13. Warren Gitt also helped edit this and another 30-second Liyang video. Both of them were shown in the HC virtual Lunar New Year Celebration event on February 5th, 2020.
- January 18, 2022, with Grace's help, Columbia Association mailed two Lunar New Year greeting cards to Liyang.
- February 1, 2022, we collaborated with Howard County Library System to make a Lunar New Year celebratory dumpling-making video, which will be posted on the HC library and CA websites. Five committee members and Grace met in Jun Han's house and made dumplings together.
- February 6 – 11, 2022, Jun Han organized a remote one-week "English Bridge

Winter Camp” with Liyang Yanhu Middle school. 15 Liyang students participated. Ms Hong Ding, the Chinese teacher in Glenelg Country School was involved and is planning to participate in the summer exchange program.

Cap-Haitien, Haiti - Bob Anantua

- Bob stated that it has been very challenging to make contact because of Covid and the political situation.
- He has been trying to reach Tony Marcelli, who is a member of the Ft Lauderdale Sister City Committee (which is also a sister city to Cap-Haitien) and lives part time in CH, since last quarter. The Committee hopes to be able to make some plans to engage the youth from a school here with a private school in Cap-Haitien. As for the Cap-Haitien Sister City committee, Bob is planning a meeting to come up with plans given the political and Covid limitations. He is giving priority to engaging committee members here and recruiting new committee members.

Cergy-Pontoise, France - Sue DiPaula

- In Sue’s absence, Laura reported that the e-Pal student exchange between a level 5 French class at Atholton High School and a high level English class for seniors in a high school in Cergy-Pontoise is up and running, and the students have been communicating via email. The program is coordinated by one teacher in each city.

Tres Cantos, Spain – Laura Smit

- Howard High School has begun its e-Pal program with the Jose Luis Sampedro school in Tres Cantos. There are 50 students signed up in Tres Cantos and 46 at Howard HS, so a few students here will have two e-Pals. The objective is to share experiences and culture, and to help each other improve their respective languages (Spanish and English). Their exchanges will be weekly and they will be monitored by the teachers. The details of the protocols they have developed are listed below (in Spanish).
- The e-Pal exchange planned between Oakland Mills HS and another high school in Tres Cantos is just getting off the ground as there had been some issues with emails lost in cyberspace. Both teachers and schools are still interested.

PROTOCOLO DE LAS CARTAS DE INTERCAMBIO

El objetivo: realizar un intercambio entre estudiantes de Howard High en Ellicott City Maryland y El instituto Sampedro en Tres Cantos España a través de cartas electrónicas de forma regular para llegar a compartir experiencias y cultura, además de ayudarse mutuamente a mejorar en las habilidades lingüísticas.

Información básica

Frecuencia: semanalmente

Tipo de intercambio: carta electrónica (email)

Estudiantes:

- *En EEUU, estudiantes de Howard High School de los niveles español 5 AP, 4 honores y miembros de la Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica.*
- *En España, estudiantes de bachillerato del instituto de Sampedro de Tres Cantos*

Las normas

- *Seguir las normas de los institutos (HCPSS y de Sampedro) en cuanto a comportamiento, lenguaje, contenido y tratamiento social*
- *Recordar que estáis representando a vuestro instituto y cultura como embajadores culturales*
- *Los estudiantes de España escribirán en inglés y los estudiantes estadounidenses realizarán sus cartas en castellano (español)*
- *Preguntar a los compañeros de cartas si están interesados en ser corregidos en el formato y el lenguaje, a fin de ayudarles a mejorar*
- *Los que están compartiendo un estudiante, escribirán cartas separadas*
- *En caso de conflicto o de contenido inapropiado, se debe avisar a los profesores inmediatamente*
- *Abrirnos a la posibilidad de algo nuevo, de otra forma de pensar y de ver el mundo desde otra perspectiva*

Para comprobar la comunicación:

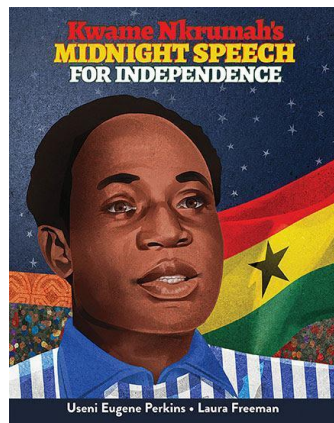
- *Mantened una copia de las cartas*
- *Completad el registro con las fechas de las cartas intercambiadas*
- *Reflexión: se completará una reflexión periódica sobre la experiencia del intercambio en Google Forms.*

Tema, Ghana – Rebecca Chapman

- The Tema Committee has not met as a group since our last meeting in November, but members have been busy.
- Gerry Maxwell-Jones (Co-Vice Chair) and Beckie Chapman, (Chair) have been attending Zoom meetings of Sister Cities International -Africa and Sister Cities International-Ghana. The current project is to publicize and sell the book by Useni Eugene Perkins and Laura Freeman, "Kwame Nkrumah's Midnight Speech for Independence". The discussion centers on purchasing the books from the publisher, Just Us Books, at a discount price and selling them to make some money for Tema Committee activities. More to come on this as we continue to meet with SCI.
- The Committee purchased four of these books at the Ghanaian Embassy event in November. (Sale of the books there served as a fundraiser for Sister Cities

International). Nana Owusu- Nkwantabisa (Co-Vice Chair) delivered them for the Central Library in Tema on his visit to Ghana in January.

- The committee has contacted Frank Asante, the Public Relations Director for the Mayor's Office in Tema, to schedule a Zoom meeting with him and make plans for the coming year. We are waiting for him to send some suggested times convenient for him to join us.
- Gerry Maxwell Jones is continuing to work with the African Art Museum of Maryland assisting with displays there. Gerry also helped facilitate a reception at the Museum on February 5 for a delegation from Uganda. Doris Ligon is eager to have the Tema Committee collaborate on future projects there.
- Stay tuned for further activities in February and March.



Next Meeting Date: April 20, 2022

The committee agreed to meet in person, with a virtual option for the next meeting on April 20, 2022.

Minutes by Grace Chang