



October 31 - November 2 St. Louis

## Planning Team Conference Call Notes

**Wednesday, June 21, 2017 12:30PM Pacific/2:30PM Central/3:30PM Eastern**

**Participating:** Marianne Duddy-Burke, Jim Mitulski, Rick Mixon, Sylvia Rhue, Justin Tanis, Marnie Warner, Judith Wray. **Staff:** Lauren Bennett, Mark Bowman, Carl Foote.

**CHECK-IN QUESTION:** What is a concern or worry you have about our *Rolling the Stone Away* Conference?

Most said they are worried about publicity, fundraising and/or registration.

Marianne added the question: How do we make space and get the most of our time?

Sylvia and Jim responded that they are not as concerned because people are usually late in getting ready for conference and many register at the last minute.

### REGISTRATIONS

Lauren reported that as of today we have 10 regular registrations. Because people are just now learning about the program, staff proposes that we change the early registration deadline to September 1<sup>st</sup>. The current deadline is July 1. We will also be offering a day rate registration to help make the conference more accessible to folks in the greater St. Louis area. **Decided to change early registration deadline to September 1.**

To help with registration, we need your help! Please write and share about the event in your next newsletter, or better yet, create a separate email for your organization. The Press Release (just added to the Media page on the website) is a great start for some language around the conference and all Invited Guests have an individual memo that can be shared with the event information.

Jim proposed that we distribute flyers to conferences this summer that include a registration code that gives persons a discount on the registration cost. Discussion on the efficacy of this and staff time to implement.

**Decided that staff would prepare flyers for conferences that include such a registration discount code.**

In order to make the conference more accessible, we will be offering a space on Facebook for people to find roommates. We will start recruiting volunteers for registration, hospitality, A/V, to manage the office, and to help with accessibility soon. If you know of any people or organizations who might want to help, let us know.

### WEBSITE

Carl reported that in the past month (31 days, May 15-June 14), the RTSA website has received an average of 27 visits per day, up from an average of 16 visits over the first three months. Peak numbers have increased, with 113 visits on June 13. The site is relatively "sticky", or interesting, as well – nearly 60% of the new visitors explore the site and read more than one page.

Our Facebook campaign is having a noticeable (if not yet stupendous) impact. Roughly one third of the website visits are arriving via social media; eighty-nine people visited the site by directly clicking on our Mary Hunt post.

Facebook posts are gaining some traction and exposure, both subjects of interest (such as a memory of the Pulse nightclub shooting) and invited guests. Response to a post can vary widely – for example, our Troy Perry post has “reached” 247 people on Facebook to date, but the post for Allen Harris only 26.

Jim asked how to get access to the memes; Carl explained. **Requested that Carl send these instructions to everyone in writing. And on next planning team call, Carl can demonstrate how to do this on the screen.**

## **PERSONNEL**

Mark reported that Ann Craig has resigned as Media Coordinator. We are appreciative for Ann’s work and will look to find someone else to push ahead with our publicity efforts. Send candidates with skills in promotional planning, writing and media cultivation to Mark as soon as possible. If needed, we could have a publicity coordinator and a media coordinator. Would like to get someone started in the next week.

Welcome AhSa-Ti Tyehimba-Ford as our Audio-Visual Manager. AhSa-Ti has years of experience in running and overseeing A-V technology for events and conferences. She is Lead Audio-Visual Technician for worship at City of Refuge in Oakland. She will officially start on July 1, but plans to join us for this meeting.

## **BUDGET**

Mark reviewed revised budget sent with agenda. Assumes 200 paid registrations and that we pay expenses for 130 persons. **Budget approved.**

Scholarship Fund included in the budget at \$7,500. Mark proposes that we offer 37 comp registrations upon request for “students or young activists or young scholars.” Question of whether we should also include “others with limited income” or keep scholarships focused on younger participants. Mark & Ryan are talking about possible crowdfunding campaign to raise additional scholarship funds. Jim also asked us to consider how to use this as draw to invite persons of color. **Decided to set up scholarship fund (comp registration) for “students, young activists and scholars.” Marianne and Jim to assist Mark in implementing this.**

## **FUNDRAISING**

Mark reported that after the early burst of energy and returns, we’ve made little progress in fundraising over the past month. Still at about \$35,000 of \$100,000 pledged/raised with a few asks pending. Slowdown is due, in part, to expected financial assistance (with prospects or gifts) from Participating Organizations not materializing. Propose that we focus our efforts on prospect congregations and individuals that we find through planning team members and invited guests.

Marnie noted that she sent 40 letters to friends and 10 of those provided gifts totaling almost \$2,000. She is willing to share her letter with other persons.

Marianne asked if an individual donor who gives a \$1,000 gets a complimentary registration and if this is on the website. Mark affirmed this policy and this giving level is called a Guest Sponsor.

**Agreed that each planning team member will carry out one fundraising act in the coming week. Notify Mark or Ryan what you are doing and request any needed assistance.**

## **PROGRAM PLANNING**

Judith reported that she, Lauren, Mark and Rick M facilitated 7 conference calls with 42 of our invited guests over the past two weeks. These were rich, lively conversations that both gave us much insight and ideas for our program and significantly increased our guests’ investment in this event. Many of the guests expressed much gratitude for the work being done to make this gathering happening.

After listening and reflecting on these calls, the team has recommendations to move ahead in program planning:

- 1) Identify two persons on the planning team to be hosts/emcees through all of the plenary sessions to provide continuity and flow to the proceedings.

- 2) Have singing at each session—to open and perhaps at other times. Consider Mark Wilson and someone to complement his style as song leaders.
  - 3) Address intersections of issues of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, class, age in every session and use of appropriate language/pronouns.
  - 4) Take time at the end of each session to reflect on what the discussion on our history means for today and how persons might live this out in this time.
  - 5) Consider whether/how we might invite questions from participants in some/all sessions.
  - 6) We did some refining of Session 1 & Session 7 and propose using the skills of Mary Hunt to plan the first and Deborah Johnson on the second.
  - 7) Sessions 3, 6 & 8 (each focused on an historical period) to be structured as interview/dialogue rather than presentation. Considering whether to use our historians/scholars to lead these sessions and/or find persons with strong interviewing skills.
  - 8) We will invite selected guests to participate in planning and presenting each plenary session. Have one planning team rep on each plenary session team to assist in the planning.
  - 9) Narrow the panel topics down to 12. A planning team member agrees to volunteer to facilitate the preparation for each panel.
- QUESTION: What is a reasonable expectation for participation of planning team members that will enable optimal program planning? Are planning team members willing to both: a) be liaison with one plenary session planning team; and b) facilitate the planning for one panel?
- 10) We compile a diverse list of 10-12 current movement leaders and invite them as guests to participate in the program.
  - 11) We create a list of 20-25 additional elders to invite to help fill out the program. We would need to secure the funds to underwrite before inviting these additional guests. We would end up with around 100 invited guests, planning team and staff members. Question asked of whether we need additional invited guests.
  - 12) A number of invited guests made suggestions for the session or panel in which they would like to participate. The Program Team has further work to do in making these assignments.

Generally, positive responses to these recommendations by the Program Team.

**Agreed that all planning team members are asked to be part of planning for a plenary session and a panel. Send Judith your preferences for which plenary sessions and/or panel(s) you would like to help plan.**

Program team invites input on narrowing the list of panels down to 12. Justin noted that some of the panels address topics one typically does not see in conferences, such as role of sex in our movement and tension between religious and secular activists. Hopes that these types of issues are included.

**Agreed to invite 10-12 current leaders to be invited guests. Mark receiving suggestions from several sources—anyone send nominations to Mark. Justin and Jim will help Mark determine whom to invite.**

Marnie asked if—since we now have a pretty firm outline of the program—we could write a description of the program to post on the website. **Mark indicated he would work on this and invite input.**

#### **TRAVEL AGENT**

Mark reported that we are trying to secure a travel agent who will book flights for our invited guests. If you know someone who might do this, send info to Mark.

**NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME: Thursday, July 13 at 12:30pm Pacific/2:30pm Central/ 3:30pm Eastern**

Jim led a closing prayer.