

# community

The Newsletter of the Community Church of Boston  
A Peace and Justice congregation since 1920

February 2009

# news

## Black History Month, Social Justice Everyday

by Jason Lydon, Congregational Director

Dear friends and members... February is Black History Month! I can't remember the first time someone joked to me that, "why of course Black history month is the shortest and one of the coldest months in the year, that's just so perfect it's a cliché." I wrote a letter a couple years ago about the importance of Black History Month and where it came from. This year I want to take a moment for us to remember the vital importance of talking honestly about the realities of racism and the deep impacts of White supremacist culture on our society.

A good friend of mine taught a class on the role of the law in social movements at Harvard Law School. During the class he quoted Ruth Gilmore, Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity and Geography, (re)definition of racism as "the state-sanctioned...production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death." This is an essential redefinition as we think about the impacts of infant mortality rates for Black babies versus White babies around the country. This definition reminds us to think about the role of the medical industrial complex as it tears at the bodies of People of Color. Not only do we watch the state sanction this manufactured system but we can see the state and colluding in the creation of these systems from the prison industrial complex to the military machine, from the school systems to access to health coverage, and on and on. We must be able to recognize what is we are struggling against if we are ever going to be able to overcome this system.

A situation for us to begin thinking about is the murder of Oscar Grant. The Bay View, a national Black newspaper, reports the story, "By now everyone has seen the horrific videos of an Oakland BART police officer shooting an unarmed Black man, Oscar Grant, while he lay face down on the ground and was fully cooperating. The man who was killed execution style was the father of a 4-year-

old girl and was considered a peacemaker. In fact moments before he was shot he was pleading with his friends who were all cuffed up to calm down and be cooperative with police. Grant was seen begging the police officers, who had pulled tasers out and pointed them at the heads of his friends, not to shoot. For reasons unknown to us, the police officer pushed Grant to the ground. One officer kneeled on his neck while the other officer pulled out a gun and shot him point blank in the back. The bullet went through his back, hit the ground and bounced back up and pierced his lung, killing him."

If we wish to be committed to justice, we are not allowed to remain silent about this. After two long weeks, with a video of the cop shooting Oscar circulating the internet, the cop, Johannes Mehserle, who murdered Oscar has been arrested. Another cop, who punched Oscar in the face, is still working as a BART Officer. One way to take action is to write and call District Attorney Tom Orloff and tell him to arrest the second cop involved. You can get in contact with the California Attorney General Jerry Brown and demand oversight of Alameda County's racist court system. It is not uncommon for White cops to walk free after killing Black men. This is the system we live in.

It is also vital that we not forget to look right into our own Boston police. How often have you been in Fields Corner and watched cop cars drive around slowly simply intimidating young People of Color in the street? How many times have you seen young Black and Latino men frisked on the side of the road simply because the cops can get away with it? As we engage in what's happening in Oakland we must not lose sights on our own home city.

For Black History Month 2009 let us keep strong our commitment to ending the "the state-sanctioned...production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death."

# COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON



## Sunday Service & Speakers Forum

in Lothrop Auditorium  
Sundays at 11:00am

### February 1st

*Superbowl Sunday*

**MEGHAN O. MAHONEY**

**“All the Sports World’s a Stage and All the  
Athletes MORE than Merely Players!”**

### February 8th

**MATTHEW P. DUMONT, M.D.**

**“Hope Amid the Ruins”**

### February 15th

**JASON LYDON**

**“In the Spirit of Valentines Day:  
Sex, Sexuality, and the Left”**

### February 22nd

*27th Annual W.E.B. DuBois Address*

**TY DEPASS**

**“Racism, the Media, and the Struggle for  
Justice in ‘Post-Racial America’”**

## Small Office Space Available

Well-suited space for grassroots groups, activists, unions, etc. \$400/month includes heat and electricity; free wireless internet; use of common rooms for meetings/trainings; use of auditorium twice yearly for large events. Available immediately. For more information contact: [info@commchurch.org](mailto:info@commchurch.org)

## CCB Board Meeting

*The Board of Directors met on January 15, 2009.*

*Following are highlights of the meeting.*

The following board members were present: Kevin Devine, Dick Keshishian, John MacLeod, Nancy Messom, Virginia Pratt, Lenny Shames

**Congregational Director’s Report:** A Facebook (internet outreach tool) page has been created for the Church. This will be updated weekly with statements concerning various issues and may act as a means to inform others about CCB’s Sunday services and current happenings in the area.

The Church needs more income. One suggestion is for Emerson College and several performance groups who could utilize the space for plays and musical events.

February 7th is National HIV/AIDS in Black Communities Awareness Day. A coalition has been formed from a number of organizations that encourages religious leaders to talk about the impact of HIV/AIDS.

**Financial News:** According to the treasurer, the Church is seeking a new elevator company to reduce maintenance costs. Bonuses to the CCB staff will perhaps be given out during February. The Finance Committee continues to meet on a regular basis to make revisions to the budget so as to make it as actual as possible.

**Various Concerns:** CCB is requesting a \$15.00 annual donation to cover the cost of printing and mailing from those who receive the monthly newsletter.

The Committee on Ministry will meet before the end of January to conduct the annual evaluation of the congregational director.

An ad-hoc committee will meet shortly to begin the task of updating the Church membership directory.

The annual fiscal meeting will take place on February 22nd, at 1:30pm in the Lothrop Auditorium, following the Sunday morning program.

*The next meeting of the board is scheduled for Thursday, February 19, 2008 at 7:15pm. Members and friends of the Church are invited to attend.*

-Dick Keshishian, Clerk

# The Social Justice Education Institute

SJEI is the culmination of over thirteen years of building a powerful learning community where young people are engaged in experiential education.

This three-day series of workshops offers participants the opportunity to learn and experience The City School's pedagogy and model first hand. Just as we do in our work with young people, we challenge educators and youth workers to take ownership of their own education and lives, asking themselves and each other questions such as:

1. How does oppression impact my work with young people?
2. How do we build a powerful, loving community where everyone teaches and learns?
3. What is my vision for collective learning, action, and change?

Experiencing this training has made a deep, lasting impact on the lens through which I view education, youth work, and social justice. SJEI provided the time, guidance, and provocative questioning I needed to reflect on my own experiences, beliefs, and assumptions around these topics. I have since been

able to move forward in the process of examining how these experiences, beliefs, and assumptions impact my interactions and work with young people.

In school systems where educators are being pressured unrelentingly to create curricula that teach to standardized tests, SJEI offers an alternative path: developing strong social justice-based lessons that promote youth agency, voice and leadership. Participants work together to build transformative learning communities, and learn strategies to inspire the young people they work with to take ownership of their education and become leaders both inside and outside of the classroom.

Thanks to our collaboration with the Boston Public Schools' Center for Leadership Development, educators can receive Professional Development Points for their participation in SJEI. Our flier and registration form are both available online at [www.thecityschool.org](http://www.thecityschool.org).

If you have any questions about SJEI, how to register, or how to schedule a training for your school or organization, please contact Justice at (617) 822-3075 or at [justice@thecityschool.org](mailto:justice@thecityschool.org).

## AMONG US

Chantal Balesdent, daughter of Suzanne Giroux, graduated cum laude from Colby College in May, 2008. She is now a PhD candidate in chemistry at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

Ezra Natan Traber-Sirikwa was born on November 17 at Mount Auburn Hospital. His mother, Sarah, is the oldest child of longtime members Bernhard Metzger & Masha Traber, and first great-grandchild of Edythe Traber. Sarah, Ezra and his father, Nyangusi, will live in Tanzania.

Michael Heichman's daughter, Danielle Lennox-Heichman, plays first violin with the New England Conservatory Youth Symphony, which performs regularly at Jordan Hall in Boston.

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## John O'Brien Memorial Library and Cynthia Foster Wing

We have been discussing the possibility of developing a John O'Brien Memorial Library within the Lothrop room on the side with the big windows. A couple years ago we suggested designating this the Cynthia Foster Wing.

Honoring these two pillars of our community is clearly very important. I would encourage anyone who is interested in helping make these two dreams and ideas come to life should talk with Dick Crowley or myself. If you have social justice books to donate, please let me know.

If you have ideas on how we could best share the books in the library without losing them, please let me know. We are in the infant stages of this work and your ideas are welcome and encouraged.

# Find us on Facebook!

The Community Church of Boston now has a Facebook profile. Our profile name is Boston Church (they wouldn't let us be the Community Church). By joining us on Facebook you can be kept up to date with things going on and the upcoming Sunday information.



You can chat with other Community Church members and post on our page. We will share as much information as possible from our page and keep our friends aware of coming events and opportunities. We are working to be out there as much as possible. Invite your friends to join us.

## Our Purpose

Community Church of Boston is a free community of women and men united for the study and practice of universal religion, seeking to apply ethical ideals to individual life and the democratic and cooperative principle to all forms of social and economic life.

## Staff

Jason Lydon, *Congregational Director*  
Mark Laskey, *Office Manager*  
Luis Alonzo Guzman, *Custodian & Cook*  
Xinli Xu, *Bookkeeper*  
Jim Casteris, *Superintendent*

## Board of Directors

John MacLeod, *President*  
David Broeg, *Vice President*  
Virginia Pratt, *Treasurer*  
Dick Keshishian, *Clerk*

Christina Braidotti, Kevin Devine,  
Nancy Messom, Leonard Shames,  
Ruediger Volk



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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