

Summary Report

The Imam and the Pastor

SUMMARY

On 24 November 2010 faith representatives from Croydon met at the David Lean Cinema, to view the film; The Imam and the Pastor, which was then followed by a discussion session.

The discussions, chaired by Nero Ughwujabo (Chief Executive of Croydon BME Forum), focused on how the lessons of the film can be used to take forward faith partnerships in the borough, especially through the work of Faiths Together in Croydon (FTiC).

BACKGROUND

Film

Councillor Lynne Hale, Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities, gave a welcome and introduced the film.

This 39-minute documentary film brings to life the astonishing reconciliation between Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, and their peace-making initiatives which have ensued.

- They were leaders of militant groups involved in conflict between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna, northern Nigeria.
- Pastor Wuye lost a hand while Imam Ashafa's mentor and two close relatives were killed in the fighting.
- Now they are taking bold initiatives to promote co-operation and resolve conflicts.
- The film, narrated by Rageh Omaar, shows that it is possible for the perpetrators of inter-religious violence to become instigators of peace.
- It is a story of forgiveness and a case study of grass-roots initiatives to rebuild communities torn apart by conflict.
- Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye are the joint founders and directors of the Inter-Faith Mediation Centre in Kaduna.

DISCUSSION SESSION

(Key: B – Barry Goodwin, N – Nero Ughwujabo, S - Shuaib Yusaf)

The discussion session was introduced with a short speech from both Rev. Barry Goodwin (Chair of Faiths Together in Croydon - FTiC) and Shuaib Yusaf (Representative of Croydon Mosque).

(B) suggested those who are of different faiths and yet able to work in partnership, are people with confidence in their own faiths.

He suggested the success of FTiC was its willingness to work with “brother and sisters in all faiths, towards shared humanity and a common good”.

Second to speak was Shuaib Yusaf. He commented that unlike in the film, the UK had a high trust base between faith communities, yet there was still room to use similarities in belief to achieve solutions to issues that arise. (S) Also noted there was a need to respect and protect people's right to faith both now and in the future.

Question 1

Where there is diversity and communities have internal strength, how do we bring these communities together?

(S) responded to this by suggesting that instead of communities trying to discuss or have theological discussions on non-negotiable areas of the others religions, attempts should instead be made to discover commonality and move forward from these points.

(B) added to this by suggesting faiths could work together through acts of compassion and through exploring environmental compatibility. Both (B) and (S) were keen to explore how the Big Society could achieve these goals.

Question 2

Can the sequel, An African Solution, be shown?

Please see the next steps section below for suggestions on this.

Question 3

What is the role of the faith leaders?

(S) By pooling resources together, the faith and community in general can achieve more, lifting the baseline previously mentioned, to greater, stronger heights.

(B) It is the responsibility of faith and community leaders to set the example, to improve relationships and build leadership for the future. He suggested a Leadership Academy for young people (potentially something the Youth Council or a Young Faiths Together in Croydon could lead on).

(S) Also covered under this question, was the difference in values that faith and secular society can teach. (N) Responses suggested that both sides should consider how to improve their relationships with each other.

Discussion

A possible suggestion for consideration in relation to resources is finding space and facilities to educate young people.

The example of Belfast as a model of peace initiatives between faith communities in Western society was highlighted.

Question 4

How do we respond to potential anti-Islamophobia in Croydon?

(S) Negative media portrayal is a challenge when dealing with this. The silent majority of all faiths subscribe to the same values. Suggested a coalition of faiths, building on the work of FTiC, could make dealing with these issues easier.

(B) Perhaps the challenge is to respond to any phobia.

Discussion

Comment that respect is crucial and is not the same as tolerance.

Question 5

There is a potential danger of overlooking the complexity of faith, racial and cultural differences in Croydon which impact greatly on working together: are we trying to deal with diversity within faiths in Croydon?

(B) As we become stronger as churches together we can have an increasing role to play in Croydon. Faiths Together in Croydon to show The Imam and the Pastor, An African Answer and The Cross and the Bodhi Tree to a wider audience in 2011.

(S) Important to mix with different communities – range of ideas. A meeting is taking place next week between representatives from different Islamic centres and communities. It is hoped that the council will continue to support unity between faiths going forward.

(B) Welcome what the mosque is trying to do in Croydon. It is important we need to be able to act as faiths on our own and as FTiC.

Question 6

The main issue in the film in violence. What is the main issue in Croydon where faith is concerned?

(S) Degree of succession planning for next generation to get involved. It is important that young people do not have to revisit the same steps again. The main concern is building synergy going forward.

(N) Risk of separatism at community level but dialogue at leadership level. For some communities their only interaction is at work and school. Isolation is experienced in Somali, Afghan and Punjabi communities in particular.

(B) Issue around the way the community goes forward. We are going through a revolution in the way we care for each other, people being out of work, etc. This potentially creates considerable pressure on Croydon as a borough in terms of cohesion. Effects on different parts of Croydon. Work needs to be done on where cuts will be felt the most. Also a need to give hope and aspirations to young people.

Question 7

How to we address two issues almost hidden in the film – the role of women and young people in communities?

(S) Contribution of women is important. Women are beginning to integrate into Croydon mosque and run women's activities. It is also important to ensure that young people do integrate.

(B) Gender issues are of huge importance e.g. debate around women bishops. There are also great challenges around young people. Following from the good work of Faiths in our Future, would like to see a youth Faiths Together in Croydon. We should allow young people to facilitate their own forum.

Discussion

We should encourage younger faith forums, work jointly with young people and give them a platform.

We should aim to show the film to the wider community not usually involved in inter-faith dialogue e.g. schools and other places of worship.

We should consider utilising technology and social media to involve younger people e.g. Facebook groups.

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

- Establish Young Faiths together in Croydon group
- Consider showing The Imam and the Pastor in schools
- Faiths Together in Croydon to show three films to a wider audience in 2011.
- Investigate availability of places for faith groups places to come together for discussion
- Investigate creating a coalition of faiths within the borough.
- Investigate utilising technology and social media to involve younger people.

RISKS

David Lean may potentially be closing and so this resource is only available until March 2011.

Date: 13 December 2010