

## From the President's Pen...

**Every time we take a group of young people to Washington, DC** incredible things happen. Their lives are changed and so ours. Our most recent trip in May with students from Furr High School was no exception.

One of the things we do on every trip is take the students to the **U.S. Holocaust Museum**, which bears witness to the atrocities suffered by millions of Jews, gypsies, and others at the hands of the Nazis during World War II.

We take the students there for many reasons. One reason is because **we want the students to understand the importance of being actively involved in their communities**. As has been said, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." (attributed variously to Edmund Burke and Leo Tolstoy). We believe it is important for citizens to be engaged in the governing process in their communities, in the nation, and in the world. We want people to find and use their voices, and we believe civility is essential for that process to work well.

Another reason we take the students to the Holocaust Museum is that **we want them to see the danger of disrespect, to teach them the dangers**

**of hate**. We teach them that there is a very slippery slope that goes from disagreeing with someone, to disliking someone, to disrespecting someone, to villainizing someone, to victimizing someone. It is a slope that lies in wait for any of us.

**That is why civility is so important**. Holding to high standards of civility and respect allow us to stand above the slope that leads to degradation and hurt. The Institute is the voice of average citizens joining together to say that the way we treat one another, even in the midst of disagreement, is often as important as the decisions that we make, and in fact can affect those decisions. The Institute is voices joining together to say that civility and respect matter. **Civility makes a difference in everyone's lives. Civility makes life better.**

Every time we take young people to the Holocaust Museum, they wonder about the strong security practiced there, and someone always asks us why. Recently one of the security guards at the museum, **Stephen Tyrone Johns**, was murdered while working at the museum. The man who allegedly shot him was filled with hate. He had travelled down that slippery slope. Murder is the greatest incivility of all. It is tragic that the next time we take students to the Holocaust Museum there will be another death to be remembered.

**You can read more** about the impact these trips are having on the students and the school in this newsletter. Please know your support is deeply appreciated, for it is your support that makes these trips possible. **Your voice raised in civility is making a difference**. Tell your friends, and ask them to join today!

*Cassandra Dahnke,*  
President and Co-founder



*page turners...*

## **The Case For Civility** **And why our future depends on it**

The jacket on this book says: “**a noted scholar challenges the Left and the Right.**”

Indeed, Os Guinness has studied at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, has met with high powered newspaper writers, and has addressed political and business leaders in the United States, Europe and Asia. Hailing from Europe he came to the United States to study for 6 months and remained here for 20 years.

**This book is exactly what it says it is: A call for civility for our future’s sake.** The author claims that the United States of America is the only country that can lead the world to a civil community. And we better start NOW! Why us and not them?

Os Guinness feels **the United States is best prepared to lead the way in civility** because our founding fathers had the foresight to make a nation based on liberties to speak, write, believe and think. No other nation in the world can claim this foundation in quite the way we can. This is the reason we need to lead the way in modeling civility for others!

**The first part of the book describes the current culture war** that exists not only in our country, but around the world. More and more we people bicker about everyone else. We do not think that we are a part of the problem. Guinness describes in vivid ways how we have gotten to where we are.

**The way out of our bickering is to find a civil way to live together.** And what does that look like? He writes boldly that one cannot expect a civility that is based on common ground. If we would only seek the common ground between different belief systems, we’d be able to live more civilly with each other. This is not civility. It is getting along with each other.

The times have passed for us to simply find common ground with one another. Rather the **author encourages us to find common ground rules to deal with each other’s beliefs.** Civility means to stay present with each other through our differences and find new ways to live in harmony.

**This book begs the reader to begin this process with the self.** New leaders won’t be able to pull us together like Lincoln and Roosevelt did in the past. The times are too complex and the world needs a new kind of people that will lead us to discover new ways to live civilly. The responsibility falls on our shoulders.

**It is very gratifying** to read this book. It’s a quick read and it gives tons of evidence that our country and the world need a grass roots movement. This grass roots movement needs to lead our leaders toward civil discourse that builds civility in the process of carrying out new mandates.

Gee, I wonder if such a movement exists? Mr. Guinness, welcome to our movement! **Join the crowd** and let us together build a civil society that leads toward civility rather than consensus!

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**About the Author:** Os Guinness is a noted author and social critic. He is a respected scholar and speaker, and the founder of the Trinity Forum.

**The Case for Civility** is published by HarperCollins Publishers, New York, New York, 2008.

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### **Civility Blog**

facilitating dialogue... teaching respect...

Do you want to know what others are thinking about civility or just want to share your thoughts?

Take a look at the Institute’s blog.

**[www.civilityblog.org](http://www.civilityblog.org)**

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## the Institute for Civility in Government 2008 Annual Summary

As of December 31, 2008, the Institute had 365 people join since it began, drawing from 24 states and the District of Columbia. Of those, 206 are active members. Forty-nine of them joined in 2008. The following is a list highlighting Institute events during 2008.

### January

Speaking Engagement – Pilot Club, northeast Houston  
Speaking Engagement – Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church Book Club

### March

Exhibit – Mission Presbytery Meeting, Austin, Texas

### April

Congressional Student Forum – Lone Star College, Houston  
Speaking Engagement – Central Presbyterian Church, Houston

Annual Meeting

### September

Trip to Washington, DC

### October

Speaking Engagement – FOCUS event, New Covenant Presbytery, Houston  
Exhibit – Mission Presbytery Meeting, San Antonio, Texas  
Fundraising Event – 10,000 Villages



Sue Crawford

### Annual Meeting April 26 2009 Humble, Texas

Special thanks to our members at Atascocita Presbyterian Church who hosted our Annual Meeting. It is much appreciated!

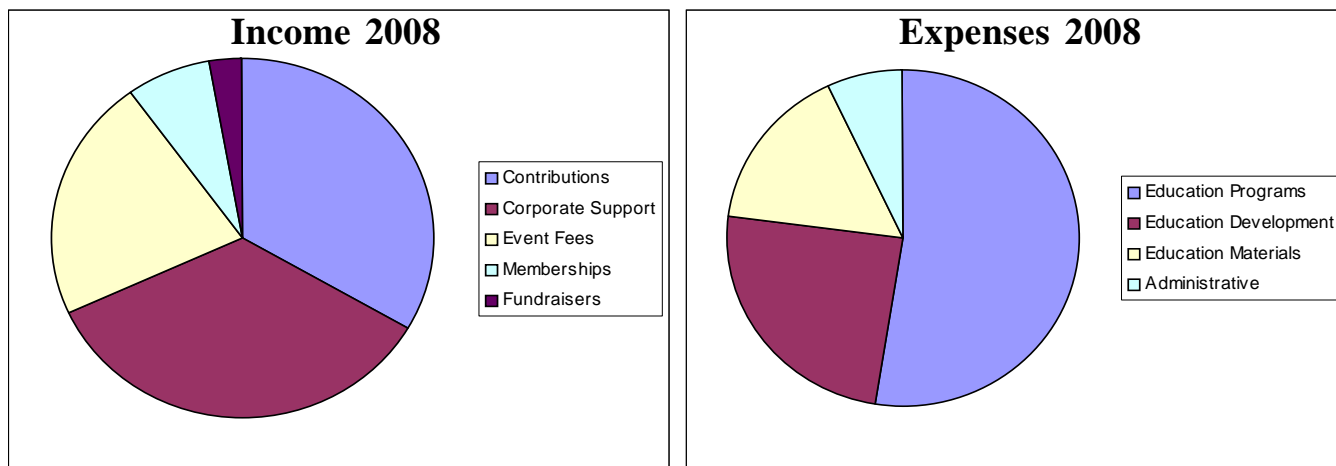


Allan Griffin and Connie Nyquist

## Institute for Civility in Government Unaudited Annual Report for the year Ended December 31, 2008

Contributions	\$15,680	<b>Education Programs:</b>	
Corporate Support (\$11,530 for March '09 DC trip)	16,262	DC Student Trips (\$5,453 for March '09)	\$15,982
Event Fees	10,400	Exhibits (\$1,550 for '09)	1,550
Memberships	3,425	Congressional Student Forums	1,220
Fundraisers	1,255	Speaking Engagements	40
Investment Income - Unrealized Gain	48	<b>Total Education Programs</b>	<b>\$18,792</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$47,070</b>	<b>Education Development:</b>	
		Contract	\$6,000
		Networking/Public Relations	2,850
		<b>Total Education Development</b>	<b>\$8,850</b>
		<b>Education Materials:</b>	
		Books	\$2,894
		Newsletters	1,533
		Website Development & Maintenance	680
		Banner Stands	599
		<b>Total Education Materials</b>	<b>\$5,706</b>
		<b>Administrative:</b>	
		Insurance	\$884
		Postage	641
		Office Supplies	496
		Printing	459
		Post Office Box Rental	52
		<b>Total Administrative</b>	<b>\$2,532</b>
		<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$35,880</b>

### Income over Expenses 2008 \$11,190



## Furr High School Students Visit Washington DC

by Vanessa Winton

Imagine your first time experiencing Washington, DC: seeing the Pentagon from an airplane as it lands at Reagan National, looking up at the Washington Monument, viewing the Lincoln Memorial at night, bewildered by the precision, endurance, and honor of the changing of the guard at Arlington National Cemetery, riding a subway. Even though I have made at least 20 visits to our nation's capitol in my lifetime, every time I get the chance to accompany students who have never seen these national treasures, I experience them for the first time all over again.

For the past three years I have had the immense privilege of helping to choose and escort 12 students from Ebbert L. Furr High School on a trip to Washington, DC facilitated by the Institute. These trips have had a profound impact on the lives of our students, the majority of whom have never traveled outside of the state of Texas or have flown on an airplane. The annual Washington, DC trip has not only "broadened their horizons" by exposing them to a different way of life in a beautifully "master planned" city.

Rather, on a more profound level, the trips have changed the trajectory of the paths many of our students lives have taken, thereby motivating them to make different choices about their futures.

Traveling to DC has motivated many of our students to go to college, the logic being that a college degree would lead to a good job which would afford one the opportunity to return to DC. Several students have also pursued internships in the office of their congressmen and women. Most important, each student has walked away with a greater sense of their importance in making democracy work and promoting a civil discourse on issues.

Moreover, the word about the annual Washington, DC trip is spreading. Students are coming to my office each week to ask how they may be chosen to attend. Students from previous trips are sharing their experiences and are encouraging other students to sign up. Their voices are louder and stronger. The civility training and meetings with their elected officials have motivated them to believe that they can make a meaningful impact in their communities.

### *Welcome New Members!*

Frances Alexakos	Felicia Leftwich
Maureen Allen	Corey McCarthy
Mary Josie Blanchard	Royce McCarthy
John Buchanan	Tom McLendon
Tharon Cain	Irma McLeod
Jane Church	Phylisia Malone
Chris Dyess	Fernando Moreno
Jim Dyess	Alberto Pena
Naomi Flores	Perry Raybuck
Jazmin Garcia	Delisia Rhodes
Victor Garcia	Ruavon Ricks
Kenneth Green	Alejandra Ruiz
Dinah Harlow	George Williams
Evelyn Jogie	Stephen Winton

*Who do you know who needs to join?*

### *See this dot?!*

This dot is your guide to your membership in the Institute, and will be a part of each newsletter you receive.

**Green** - your membership is current. Thank you! ☺

**Yellow** - Your annual fees are due. Please send \$25 to the Institute to maintain your support and to continue receiving newsletters, emails, and invitations to special events. ☹

**Red** - Past due! Sorry, but unless you renew your membership, we will be unable to keep you on our mailing list. ☹

**We thank you for your support!**

Membership and contributions may be mailed to:

**the Institute for Civility in Government**

**P.O. Box 41804**

**Houston, Texas 77241-1804**

## *Institute Sponsored Trip to Washington DC*

While in DC, students met to discuss issues and concerns with **U.S. Representatives Gene Green, Al Green, and Sheila Jackson Lee**. They also met with staff members of **Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn**.



Congressman Gene Green greeted students.



Congressman Al Green met the Furr High School students in his office.

**the Institute for Civility in Government  
P.O. Box 41804  
Houston, Texas 77241-1804**