

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute- 520 Sixteenth St. North, Birmingham, AL 35203
Board of Directors – A Special Meeting on Thursday, January 3, 2019 at 8 a.m.
BCRI Meeting Minutes – Board Approved on Feb 12, 2019

Attendance-in-person: Walter Body, Vice Chair, Jeffrey Bayer, Bing Edwards, Janice Kelsey, Danny Markstein, Cameron Vowell, and Denise Gilmore

Attendance via telephone: Isaac Cooper, Michele Elrod, Rosilyn Houston, and Odessa Woolfolk

Unable to attend: Mike Oatridge, J. John Oros, Jr., Jonathan Porter and Rev. Thomas L. Wilder, Jr.

BCRI Staff attendance: Andrea L. Taylor, President and CEO, Kate Cleveland, Vice President, Development and Charles Woods, Program Director.

This special meeting of the BCRI Board of Directors was called to order at 8 a.m. by Walter Body, Vice Chair, to discuss the Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award.

Board members and staff reported that there was a protest by selected community members focused on Dr. Angela Y. Davis' advocacy and support for BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions), the criteria for selection, and ambiguity about her support for non-violent social change. Initially, BCRI Board members concluded that the best course of action was not to cancel the event, instead create an opportunity for dialogue and public education.

Several Board members expressed a lack of knowledge about Dr. Davis' recent position on these issues. It was reported to the Board that after receiving email notice on Wednesday, December 26th about the controversy, BCRI initiated a conference call with community representatives opposed to the selection of the 2018 award recipient.

There was no consensus among Board participants and members of the Jewish community at the end of the call on Friday, December 28 at 11 a.m. Consequently, a follow-up meeting was scheduled on Monday, January 7, 2019 for further dialogue with BCRI to help resolve the issue. Also, most Board members were not previously aware of the recently published article in Southern Jewish Life Magazine which gained visibility on social media and email in December. It was noted that BCRI staff weren't contacted prior to the article and staff was unaware of any controversy prior to December 26th.

Board discussion focused on the criteria for the award, the scope of the vetting process, the potential impact of a withdrawal on the African American and Jewish communities, BCRI's commitment to the right to free speech and the opportunity to foster dialogue. The need for a thoughtful response was noted along with a reminder that we'd likely not be here today if religious leaders in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement had prevailed and drove Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. or Rev. Shuttlesworth out of Birmingham or if only the views aligned with the political climate of the day had prevailed.

A discussion ensued about the possibility of moving forward, ideally without revoking the award and creating a divisive racial and ethnic situation. It was suggested that the focus would be on Dr. Davis' role in the Civil Rights Movement and her Birmingham connection, with plans to foster a dialogue for public education about the pertinent issues. There was a consensus to postpone any further action pending the outcome of the meeting scheduled on January 7, 2019 with selected community members in support of the award as well as those strongly opposed to granting the award as announced in October.

The meeting adjourned at 10 a.m.

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute – 520 Sixteenth St. North, Birmingham, AL 35203
Board of Directors – A Special Meeting on Friday, January 4, 2019 at 5 p.m.
BCRI Meeting Minutes – Board Approved on February 5, 2019

Attendance in person: Mike Oatridge, Chair, Walter Body, Vice Chair, Janice Kelsey, Secretary, Thomas L. Wilder, Jr., Treasurer, Jeffrey Bayer, Bing Edwards, Michele Elrod, Danny Markstein, J. John Oros, Jr., and Cameron Vowell.

Attendance via telephone: Isaac Cooper

Unable to attend: Rosilyn Houston and Jonathan Porter

Not invited: Odessa Woolfolk (emeritus); Denise Gilmore (ex-officio)

Staff (Non-Voting): Andrea L. Taylor, President and CEO; Kate Cleveland, Vice President, Development

A special meeting of the BCRI Board of Directors, convened in the Board Room at the request of Mike Oatridge, Chair, was called to order at 5 p.m. to address issues related to the selection of Dr. Angela Y. Davis as the recipient of the 2018 Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award.

A discussion followed regarding recent opposition to BCRI's Award selection, more than two months after it was publicly announced, by groups and individuals who were actively opposed and who began a widespread, intense campaign through social media, journal publications, personal conversations and letter writing campaigns. A meeting was scheduled to be held on Monday, January 7, 2019, with selected critics.

Following the Board discussion, which included reports from individual community conversations among a diverse group, the Chair called for a Board vote to reconsider the selection of the 2018 Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth Award recipient. The motion was made by Bing Edwards and seconded by Walter Body, to rescind the award and the Roll Call Board vote was as follows:

Ayes: Mike Oatridge, Walter Body, Janice Kelsey, Rev. Thomas L. Wilder, Jr., Jeffrey Bayer, Bing Edwards, Michele Elrod, J. John Oros, Jr., and Cameron Vowell

Nays: Isaac Cooper and Danny Markstein

After the vote to rescind the award, the Board discussed the plan for disseminating their decision to the recipient and to the broader community the next day with assistance from Danny Markstein and his public relations firm. The meeting was canceled that had been scheduled for Monday, January 7th with selected community members in support of the award as well as those strongly opposed to granting the award as announced in October.

The meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute – 520 Sixteenth St. North, Birmingham, AL 35203
Board of Directors – A Special Meeting on Monday, January 14, 2019 at 5 p.m.
BCRI Meeting Minutes – Board Approved on February 5, 2019

Attendance-in-person: Rev. Thomas L. Wilder, Jr., Interim Chair, Jeffrey Bayer, Bing Edwards Michele Elrod, Rosilyn Houston, Danny Markstein, J. John Oros, Jr. , Cameron Vowell and Denise Gilmore

Attendance via telephone: Isaac Cooper

Unable to attend: Jonathan Porter & Odessa Woolfolk (Emeritus)

BCRI Staff attendance: Andrea L. Taylor, President & CEO; Kate Cleveland, Vice President, Development

Guests: Bill Todd, o2Ideas, & Deborah Walker, Deborah J. Walker Consulting, LLS

This special meeting of the BCRI Board of Directors was called to order at 5 p.m. by Rev. Thomas L. Wilder, Jr., Interim Board Chair, to address issues related to the January 4th decision to rescind the Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award to the 2018 recipient, Dr. Angela Y. Davis.

A discussion followed, facilitated in part by Dr. Deborah Walker, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant, regarding the current local and national climate regarding the decision to revoke the award and the potential for moving beyond the apology to begin the healing by reinstating the award.

Bill Todd, O2Ideas, also provided a perspective on the current climate and the need to carefully consider next steps beyond the apology.

Other discussion points included a review of potential implications of reinstating the Award to Dr. Davis, who is highly regarded, especially in the African American community, for civil rights activism, prison reform work and women's rights. It was also noted that the Board did not follow through with the original process in which there was agreement to fully vet the opposing constituents at the Monday, January 6th meeting, which was cancelled.

A motion was made by Cameron Vowell and seconded by Rosilyn Houston to reinstate the Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth Award to Dr. Angela Davis. The Voice Vote tally: 7 Ayes and 2 Abstentions.

A brief discussion took place regarding follow-up based on the new decision and a reminder regarding the importance of confidentiality among the Board members until the key stakeholders have been informed and an implementation plan is developed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.