

HPJC Strategic Plan

Fiscal 2014-2019

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Our Long Range Vision for Greater Houston

Our vision for the Houston metropolitan area is a just and nonviolent community where the inherent dignity of all people is recognized. The best touchstone of such a community is how it takes care of its most vulnerable members, particularly its children. All residents should have the resources and support they need to realize their potential and exercise their talents, free from grinding poverty, baseless discrimination, exploitation and the threat of violence. We also envision Greater Houston as a community that recognizes its interdependence with all of creation and is, therefore, committed to sustainable development, environmental protection and care for the entire web of life. Furthermore, we see Greater Houston as a city that supports the use of diplomacy as a means of solving local, national, and international problems, and is a leading force in moving the nation and the world toward becoming a more just and nonviolent place.

Mission of HPJC

- We work to promote Peace, Justice and Environmental Protection by providing resources to member organizations and individuals in Greater Houston.
- We join with other organizations in making public statements in support of our mutual efforts to promote these goals.
- We undertake projects to support ourselves and to spread information about Peace, Justice and the Environment within the Greater Houston community.

Our Vision of Houston in 25 Years

If the reality for people in Greater Houston were to change in the following ways by 2038, our society will have taken great strides toward becoming the just nonviolent community to which we aspire.

Peace

Institutions bearing the most responsibility for forming and informing the **public conscience** are emphasizing peace and justice. **Grade and high school curriculum** emphasize the importance of civic life and citizenship plus environmental stewardship, and specifically promote non-violent conflict resolution, basic human and civil rights, and conservation of natural resources. **Military training** has been removed from schools and colleges. Children learn about failures as well as positive aspects of US foreign policy, especially our reliance on use of the military. People are quick to question our government when there are temptations to **attack or invade another country** in order to protect economic interests. **Religious leaders** are proclaiming with courage and intelligence the foundational teachings of their faiths in these areas. It is commonplace for media to question the illegitimate exercise of power, especially military and economic power.

Justice

A much higher percentage of citizens, especially low-income citizens and people of color, are **voting** in all local, state and national elections, and campaign finance reform and increased transparency have reduced the ability of **large donors** to determine the outcomes. These changes have led to a shift in the ideological bent of Houston-based

public officials at the county, state, and national levels. The citizens of Houston are empowered to **create and manage** their own lives.

There are adequate resources and support for health care, education, skills training, child care, neighborhood empowerment, environmental restoration, and other programs of social uplift.

Either through national, state, or local initiative, Greater Houston has moved beyond establishing a minimum living wage to reduce economic disparities, towards the broader goal of a **life of meaning** and self-support for all citizens.

Families are better able to function well. There is universal access to **health care** irrespective of ability to pay. Unwanted pregnancies have been reduced through education of the public and family planning. People have access to both formal and informal **mental health** services. The **physical and mental abuse of children** has been greatly reduced, reducing the need for mental health services.

People migrating to the US to contribute to our society and for a better life for their families are treated with fairness and respect for their human rights and dignity. They are not forced to live in a shadow society that exploits them. The immigration system has been reformed so that immigration policy takes into consideration the availability of jobs for immigrant workers.

In addition to supporting existing and newly founded unions, Houston is a city accepting of people who desire to define what they see as a meaningful life through efforts like **worker-owned cooperatives**.

Our criminal justice system has changed to a system of **restorative justice**, with an emphasis on restoring broken relationships rather than just relying on punishment. Providing adequate social services, as noted above, has helped to reduce crime. Citizens accused of crimes have access to high quality legal assistance regardless of their economic status. The legal system is increasingly supplemented by self-governance and community **reliance on mediation** as the path to justice. The **death penalty** has been abolished. All remaining justice institutions now require education on **nonviolent conflict resolution** skills for law enforcement, prison guards and inmates, and comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration training. The system is intolerant of mistreatment based on ethnicity or class, and this attitude is often reiterated through training programs. **Drug use** has been decriminalized and appropriately regulated with the emphasis shifted to preventive education

Environment

We have a heightened understanding of our **interdependence** with our natural environment. The earth is our beautiful home and the only home we have. It is also home to thousands of peoples and cultures, and millions of plant and animal species. They are our roommates. **Cruelty** not just towards domestic animals, but also toward

wild animals and their habitat is a socially unacceptable practice. We understand our joint responsibility to preserve and restore our environment; we understand that **maximizing short term interests** should rarely be as important as maintaining a healthy planet for those of the future; we work to conserve and renew resources for future generations rather than using them up; we understand the need to reduce the energy footprint of all materials we use; and we all understand that systems that give 80% of world resources to 20% of the earth's population are not only **unjust**, but also the main causes of the waste products that presently threaten all future life.

Houstonians are well informed about food choices and there is a great dietary reliance on **grains, vegetables, and fruits** produced without non-renewable products or genetic modification. The people of Greater Houston grow much of their food themselves or buy it directly from area growers. Air, water, soil, or food pollution is seen as intolerable criminal behavior, and the importance of **forests, prairies, wetlands and high carbon soils** for an adequately watered and shaded Texas is widely appreciated. Because those people who were born or reside in the US use more resources than people in any other part of the planet many of us have limited the size of our families to one or two children.

Houstonians are purposeful about **conserving energy** in a variety of areas, including emphasis on recycling and public transport, and designing their activities to get the most functionality out of investments in energy, materials and labor. **Tax policy** and building codes are used to ensure placement, construction, and renovations that conserve energy, water, food and other resources. There is widespread recognition here that low-density growth in the suburbs displaces agriculture and puts additional stresses on the environment. People avoid long commutes in single passenger vehicles. Our **public transportation system** has been greatly expanded and most people use public transit on a regular basis.

Houston and the surrounding region have assumed its proportionate responsibility for the reduction of **greenhouse gas emissions** and the re-absorption of CO₂ to return the atmosphere to 320 PPM of CO₂ as quickly as possible. Industrial and residential users conserve energy by using clever design to **avoid energy expenditures**; have converted to the use of solar and wind to produce power, and have moved in general towards fewer, more durable, more renewable, more multi-functional, more group-owned possessions of all sorts.

The Challenges to Realizing Our Vision

- The people of Greater Houston do not recognize their interdependence with the planet and all of its people.
- There is a reluctance to acknowledge, or rectify, the injustices in our city, state, nation, and world.
- The response is often to lay blame on others rather than sharing responsibility for their causes and cures.

- The dominant culture generally does not regard poor people, people of color, recent immigrants, gays and lesbians, and people of certain religious faiths and nationalities as brothers and sisters, but rather as the cause of society's problems.
- Seeing some groups as 'others', rather than our brothers and sisters who are victims, encourages people to see them as unworthy, and makes it easier to blame them. This then leads to hostility, which easily breaks out into violence, both individual and collective.

Recognizing the Manifestations of an Unjust Society

Problem: Indifference to the Persistence of Poverty

- Reductions in government regulation have caused an increase in wealth concentration.
- As the poor grow more numerous, the problems caused by poverty do too:
 - Everyone becomes fearful about their economic situation, whether they be poor, middle class or wealthy.
 - Fearful people want to hang on to what they have rather than sharing.
- Interaction of poverty with violence leads to additional problems:
 - Children in poor neighborhoods live with the threat of violent death to themselves or their friends
 - This leads to psychological & physiological consequences which stunt their ability to learn in school & form trusting relationships
 - Families do not have the financial means to move away from these dangerous neighborhoods

Problem: Pervasiveness of Violence

- Violence has become commonplace in our society.
 - People do not attempt to respond to it unless there is a big massacre.
 - News sources publicize violence excessively.
 - Peaceful developments are generally ignored.
- Children grow up seeing constant violence on TV & see it frequently used to resolve conflicts.
 - Violence has been commercialized in films and video games.
 - These same video games are used by the military in training soldiers to shoot other human beings without thinking about the consequences.
 - Paddling as a method of discipline is used in some area school districts.

- The US government involves itself in wars not related to national security and continues these wars after any chance of winning them is long past in the hope that they can be ended when no Americans are watching.
- The veterans of these wars return to their hometowns, where some of them add to the civilian burden of mental illness and family violence which harms women and children

Problem: An Ethic Of Exploitation

- An awareness of interdependence promotes a commitment to caring for other humans and the entire web of life.
- Conversely, an ethic of competition and the glorification of violence as its most virulent expression instills callousness toward the claims of others.
 - Right wing ideology promotes the idea that people are responsible only for themselves and need not concern themselves with anyone else.
 - Corporations fund the spreading of this ideology.
- Exploitation is the opposite of receiving a just reward for your productive efforts.
- Corporations exploit everyone within their reach in the name of greater profits for shareholders.
 - Some groups are singled out and targeted for oppression because of their minority status such as racial, sexual or religious minorities
 - Other groups are targeted for oppression because they are perceived as “the weak” such as women, children, the elderly and especially the poor
- The environment is also subjected to this ethic of exploitation.
 - burning fossil fuels brings about climate change
 - Texas, and especially Greater Houston, is the pusher of fossil fuel addiction
 - Our current way of life will inflict climate catastrophe on the entire planet but no one with the power to do so wants to change as long as there is a drop of fuel left to burn.
 - Renewable energy development lags because fossil fuels are still cheaper at the pump.

Problem: The Role of Government

- Government often aids the rich and powerful in their exploitation of the poor instead of balancing the scales of justice between the rich and the poor.
- Citizens respond to government hostility toward them with apathy
 - They do not know how to take the levers of government into their own hands.
 - They do not have the patience and stamina that such a lengthy struggle would require.

Our vision of HPJC in 25 years

rev. 7/25/2013

HPJC is central to peace and justice activity in Houston. Its membership includes most of the area's eligible institutions and organizations.

Those institutions and organizations that aren't members nonetheless have a good working relationship with HPJC, meaning that they are responsive to its emphasis on collaboration and networking to achieve particular objectives. They habitually think in such terms, and look to HPJC as the way to enlist broad support for their agendas.

A majority of Greater Houston's religious institutions look to HPJC to help them fulfill their obligations to create a just, nonviolent world. Just as they now use the collaborative mechanisms and networking of Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston to live up to their social service mission, so they will use HPJC to live up to their social change mission.

HPJC has achieved diversity of ethnicity, age, and educational and economic background. This has been verified through the use of agreed upon measures.

One measure of HPJC's centrality to peace and justice work is its ability at any given moment to focus attention on those issues, or viewpoints on issues, that are crucial to creating a just, nonviolent society. It is able at short notice call together representatives of key constituencies to make joint public statements that command broad media coverage. And the Greater Houston media regard HPJC as a dependable source of progressive commentary, and habitually call upon its leadership for statements.

HPJC has ready access to Houston-based elected officials at the local, state, and national levels. They respect the accuracy of its information, the soundness of its judgment, and the influence it exercises within a significant sector of their constituency. It is not unusual for them to come to HPJC with their own requests for help to achieve objectives that they know are consonant with our values.

Peace education is an important part of HPJC's service to the community. It makes sure that there are age-appropriate instructional programs available, and that they are well publicized. In the case of peace education for adults, HPJC offers attractive, effective programs facilitated by well-trained personnel. Regarding the schools, both public and private, HPJC has succeeded in securing a place in the curriculum for peace education, and HPJC is a source of technical assistance for high quality programs. Area schools of education include nonviolent conflict resolution in their teacher training. And with HPJC's encouragement, at least one area university has instituted a Peace Studies program.

While HPJC is active in promoting peace and justice at the local level, it has a special responsibility for the internationalization of Greater Houston's care and concern. Just as Houston's corporate elite has long been a major player in economic globalization, so too HPJC has helped its general populace to become participants in the global quest for

nonviolence, human rights, and economic, social, and environmental justice. Through its programming, educational work, and interaction with other institutions and organizations, it persuasively demonstrates the imperative to think globally while acting locally.

HPJC's annual awards event is a premiere event in Greater Houston's non-profit world. Its recognition of local peace and justice activists is a coveted award. Other community events it stages, such as its peace festival for children, attract large numbers.

HPJC's website is Greater Houston's most valuable source of information about matters of concern to peace and justice advocates, and a much-used resource for activists. Other forms of communication, such as its email list serve, are essential and effective tools of networking and coordinated action.

HPJC's physical site is a hub of activity. It includes office and work space for its staff and volunteers. It also houses several other compatible organizations. There is meeting space for large and small groups, which is regularly used by many organizations for meetings, talks, classes, informal discussion groups, and art exhibits, concerts and other cultural events. The facility also has an extensive resource library, including state of the art audio-visual equipment and printed and recorded material of all kinds related to peace and justice issues and peace education. When major events like demonstrations or marches are planned, the facility is used for training and other kinds of preparation.

To carry out its work, HPJC is adequately staffed. There is an executive director, an executive assistant, and the necessary number of project directors, plus a paid webmaster.

A membership of at least 2500 individuals and 75 organizations and institutions provide the material base of support for HPJC's work.

HPJC is a model for peace and justice centers around the country, and has helped neighborhoods and communities in the Houston area start their own centers, which have become part of an expanded peace and justice network in the region.

Feasible Five Year Goals for HPJC as an Organization

(not in priority order)

Future of HPJC Committee

1. Full time Executive Director
2. Physical space, fully staffed during most business hours
3. Increase annual income to \$75,000 (from \$23,000)
4. Establish fundraising mechanisms in addition to the dinner

Membership goals

5. Grow membership from 100 to 2000 (hire membership coordinator; make videos; PSA's)
6. Increase diversity in ethnicity, age, education, economic background, etc. of our membership and leadership
7. Recruit ethnically diverse organizations as members
8. Institutionalize amicable relations between members and between member organizations

Communication goals

9. Professional quality HPJC newsletter and other means of communicating with our membership
10. Full utilization of website features and tools
11. Utilize KPFT and other media to promote events and projects for HPJC and member organizations
12. Make presentations to City Council on peace, justice and environmental issues

Organizational Effectiveness goals (?)

13. Provide regularly scheduled skill share sessions for members and others
14. HPJC volunteer coordinator and volunteer plan
15. Our five working groups and organizational committees are operating and adequately resourced to address their identified goals.

HPJC Working Group Suggested Five Year Goals

Foreign and Military Policy - 5 year Goals

Updated 5/9/2014

1. Significantly change public attitudes in the Houston area so that more people will question and begin to oppose the current bullying and militaristic approach of US foreign policy and support cooperative and diplomatic alternatives.
2. Educate Houstonians about the economic as well as human costs of our current militaristic approach to foreign policy and the potential benefits of an alternative approach through media presentations and public programs, and through tabling at events at least six times per year.
3. Expand and strengthen the activist network in Greater Houston on foreign policy issues through collaborative projects and events with other groups and by developing and implementing a rapid response network to respond to foreign and military policy issues and events.
4. Be recognized by the Greater Houston media as a credible source for public commentary on foreign and military policy issues and events.
5. Make effective use of the media by generating at least one letter to the editor campaign, one op-ed piece, or on-air presentation proposal about foreign policy per month and have at least one of these published in the Houston Chronicle or aired each quarter.
6. Research the legal grounds for challenging congressional and presidential actions leading to U.S. military actions involvement in a foreign conflict without a declaration of war.
7. Expand funding and support for peace education programs for children and young people, including Peace Camp, Peace Club, the World Peace Game, student foreign policy debates, and counter recruitment efforts in schools.

Environmental Justice - 5 year Goals

Updated 5/9/2014

1. Create a Houston Regional round table composed of members of the 2014 encuentro and other already existing organizations, to be informed regularly by fence-line community leaders; to meet in their neighborhoods and to provide a voice through public statements and authoritative input to policy makers on issues of environmental justice.
2. **Transportation:** Impact the design and funding of public transport to be accessible to low-income populations in the Houston region

Human Rights/Criminal Justice - 5 year Goals

Updated 5/9/2014

1. Cut rate of executions in half
2. Decriminalize drug users
3. Increase resources for prisoners leaving prison for education, housing, socialization, work
4. 25% increase in funding for Public Defenders office
5. End private prisons and detention centers
6. Reduce incarceration by 25%
7. Reduce solitary confinement by 25%
8. Reduce police brutality 50%.
9. Abolish corporal punishment in schools.
10. End School to Prison Pipeline
11. Pass immigration bill

Economic Justice – 5 Year Goals

5/9/ 2014 Revision

1. Increase the Minimum wage in Houston. Eliminate theft of tips and wages by employers.
2. Forgive student loans
3. Make taxation more progressive.
4. Reform bankruptcy laws to increase the possibility of debt forgiveness.

Peace Education for Families & Children - 5 year Goals

5/9/2014 Revision

1. Hold eight Peace Camps each summer in diverse areas of Houston
2. Promote nonviolent communication/conflict resolution. Develop inner peace
3. Learn to connect with and listen to young people.
4. Promote Pre-school education
5. Emphasize co-operation instead of competition in schools and in public life.