AMERICANCENTER

U.S. Religious Freedom Owes Debt to Colonists' Radical Document

*1657 Flushing Remonstrance urged tolerance, foresaw modern religious rights - **By Judy Aita***

The Flushing Remonstrance of 1657 was a plea for religious tolerance made by colonists in Flushing, New York.

New York -- The ancient, fragile document now lies protected in a glass case, its revolutionary, eloquent prose barely visible, its pages scorched. But the principle of religious freedom promoted by a small group of English settlers in the Flushing Remonstrance has survived the centuries.

Flushing is a neighborhood in Queens -- one of the five boroughs that collectively make up New York City -- and is located about 16 kilometers east of Manhattan, New York.

Dated December 27, 1657, the Flushing Remonstrance is the earliest known document in America to argue for religious freedom. A group of Flushing residents used it to petition the Dutch colonial government to uphold freedom of conscience and permit religious pluralism. It is considered by historians to be a precursor of the guarantee of religious freedom in the U.S. Constitution.

For its 350th anniversary, the Remonstrance was on rare public display at the Queens Public Library and then the Queens Museum of Art from December 2007 until June 2008. It has been in the custody of successive New York governments -- Dutch, British and American -- along with 12,000 pages of original Dutch records. The document on display is a 1657 duplicate, copied by a notary into the colonial council minutes of New Amsterdam. Its pages were singed in a 1911 fire at the Albany archives. The original petition is nowhere to be found.

A TRADITION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

In 1645, the charter from the Dutch West India Company establishing the town of Flushing in the colony of New Amsterdam granted religious freedom or "the right to have and enjoy liberty of conscience, according to the custom and manner of Holland without molestation or disturbance from any magistrates or any other ecclesiastical minister."

Nevertheless, after his arrival in 1647, colonial governor Peter Stuyvesant would tolerate no religion except that of his Dutch Reformed Church. Although he persecuted other religious groups such as Lutherans and Jews, Stuyvesant was especially harsh on the Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, issuing an edict forbidding anyone in the colony to entertain a Quaker or allow a Quaker meeting in his or her house. The townspeople of Flushing were moved to defend their town charter in 1657 after Stuyvesant banished respected citizen Henry Townsend for allowing a Quaker meeting in his home.

Edward Hart, the scholarly town clerk, wrote the document, which was signed by Tobias Feake, the schout (sheriff), and 29 other townspeople. Feake delivered the plea to Stuyvesant.

The Flushing Remonstrance was remarkable for several reasons, Kenneth T. Jackson, professor of history at Columbia University, wrote in the *New York Times* on the document's 350th birthday. The signers stood up for others; none was himself a Quaker. They backed up their words with action, sending it to the most powerful official in the colony.

In addition, Jackson wrote, "like all great documents, the language of the Remonstrance is as beautiful as the sentiments they express."

"For our part we cannot condemn them [Quakers] in this case, neither can we stretch out our hands against them," the Flushing residents told Stuyvesant.

… continued on page 3

The American Center
C-49, G Block, B. K. C., Bandra East Mumbai – 400051 Tel: 022-2672-4024
E-mail: mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov; Website: http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov
Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Monday through Friday)

H O L I D A Y S

August 9 - Ramzan Id (Id-ul-Fitar)
August 15 - Independence Day

AMERICAN CENTER
Mumbai

Saturday Kids' Movie Screening

10 August 2013
at 11:00 am

When Blu, a domesticated macaw from small-town Minnesota, meets the fiercely independent Jewel, he takes off on an adventure to Rio de Janeiro with the bird of his dreams.

U. S. Consulate General,

C 49;-G Block, Near Trident Hotel, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra - E , Mumbai – 400 051

Free and open to the public on a first come, first served basis.

This event is for children 6-16 years old; those under 16 must be accompanied by a parent.

Mobile phones and laptops are permitted for this event, but Bluetooth technology must be disabled. Cameras, memory storage devices, and other electronic equipment are not allowed. Photography and video recording in and around the Consulate compound is strictly prohibited.

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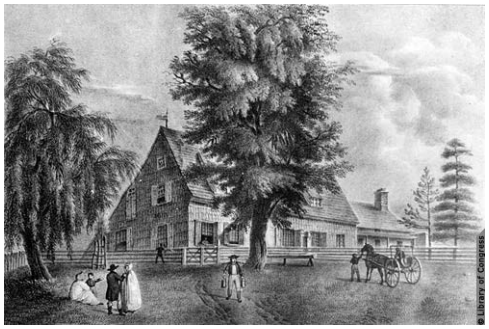
"Wee [sic] desire therefore in this case not to judge least we be judged, neither to condemn least we be condemned, but rather let every man stand or fall to his own Master," they said.



In 1662, John Bowne let Quakers meet in his home, angering the Dutch colonial governor in what is now Flushing, New York. Bowne was jailed, then banished. He made his way to Holland and presented his case to the Dutch West India Company, which backed Bowne and ordered the colonial governor to respect freedom of religion.

The colonists mentioned "Jews, Turks and Egyptians ... Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist or Quaker" and said they were "desiring to doe [sic] unto all men as we desire all men should doe unto us, which is the true law both of Church and State."

"Therefore if any of these said persons come in love unto us, we cannot in conscience lay violent hands upon them, but give them free egresse and regresse unto our town, and houses, as God shall persuade our consciences, for we are bounde [sic] by the law of God and man to doe good unto all men and evil to noe man," they said.

An angry Stuyvesant rejected the Remonstrance, demanded the signers recant, levied fines and jailed Hart and Feake. Despite pleadings from even his own sister and local Indians, Stuyvesant made the entire town suffer, replacing the town government with his own appointees.

In 1662, a young farmer named John Bowne, who had married a Quaker, allowed the Friends to meet in his house. He was arrested, fined, imprisoned and then banished from the colony. Bowne made his way to Holland with the Remonstrance and presented his case to the Dutch West India Company. The company backed Bowne and in 1663 told Stuyvesant that religious freedom must be honored. "The consciences of men at least ought ever to remain free and unshackled," the company said.

A LASTING LEGACY

According to R. Scott Hanson, a visiting assistant professor of history at the State University of New York at Binghamton, the Remonstrance is best understood in terms of its local context, but it did play an important part in the evolution of religious freedom in America. Often overlooked, it is, nevertheless, "remarkable, and still stands as the earliest document for these principles in colonial America."

"It was a group of ordinary citizens arguing for this idea," Hanson added. "Historians think of it as a pioneering plea, so eloquent and at length."

Rhode Island and Pennsylvania granted religious freedom after the Remonstrance. And in 1683, the Charter of Liberties, which established a colonial government in New York, guaranteed religious freedom, as did the New York Constitution in 1777.

Whether the Remonstrance itself actually affected other states and the U.S. Constitution is unclear, Hanson said.

While some historians see a link, there is no historical proof that either James Madison, author of the Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments to the Constitution), or Thomas Jefferson, author of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1779) and the Declaration of Independence, actually had read or heard of the Remonstrance, Hanson said. Jefferson's writings do comment on the religious freedom in the sister states of Pennsylvania and New York.

The principles of the Remonstrance lived on and grew in the settlement of Flushing and throughout Queens County, New York. In colonial times the area was the most diverse, with more than 16 languages spoken and several religions practiced, and the diversity continued to flourish over the centuries. A sense of local pride in the Remonstrance itself resurfaced in the 1900s, Hanson said.

The Quakers built their own meeting house in 1694 and hold meetings there to this day. Bowne's house, which was inhabited by his descendants until it became a museum in 1945, was declared "a national shrine to religious freedom." The farmhouse now shares Bowne Street with 10 different places of worship.

Today, Queens is the most ethnically diverse county in the United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Flushing itself is home to more than 200 houses of worship -- churches, temples, Sikh gurdwaras, mosques, synagogues, meeting houses and others -- a fitting legacy of the 30 signers of the Flushing Remonstrance. (See "One New York City Neighborhood Is a World of Religious Diversity.")

More information on the Flushing Remonstrance can be found at "350th Anniversary of the Flushing Remonstrance," produced by the Queens Borough president's office, and the Web site of The Bowne House Historical Society.

For more information on religious diversity in the United States, see Diversity-At Worship.

AMERICAN CENTER MUMBAI

Theme of the month: Religious and Cultural Diversity

Saturday Film Screenings

at 02:00 pm

August 10

the Help

(146 mins, 2011)

In 1960s Mississippi, a young journalist (Emma Stone) decides to write a book about the black maids who have spent their lives taking care of white children. As the best friend of one of the employers, she faces the risk of being shunned by her society friends--all of whom have servants gathering the courage to participate in the secret literary project.

August 24

THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT

(107 mins, 2010)

A lesbian couple (Annette Bening, Julianne Moore) must cope with having their already nontraditional family life rocked to the core when their two children decide they want to meet their mothers' sperm donor (Mark Ruffalo). The co-op farmer/restaurateur turns out to be unconventional in his own ways, leading to comic strife and emotional upheavals.

U.S. Consulate General,
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NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

August 28th, 2013

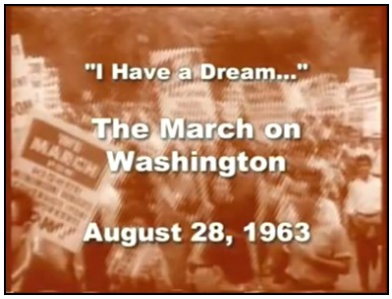
This month the American Library is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King's groundbreaking speech, "I Have a Dream." This speech called for increased civil liberties and equality for African Americans and is considered a critical moment in the USA's civil rights movement. Dr. King delivered the speech on Aug. 28, 1963 to over 250,000 civil rights supporters in Washington, DC as part of the "March on Washington."
There are many resources to learn more about Dr. King and the civil rights movement of the United States:

E - resources

THE KING CENTER
Since - 1968

The King Center

Established in 1968 by Coretta Scott King, The King Center is the official, living memorial dedicated to advancing the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. http://www.thekingcenter.org/



Watch the famous "I Have A Dream" Speech

- Video of the Speech
- Text of the Speech

The March on Washington in Photographs

Photo gallery
The Life and Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

Book: Free At last: the U.S. Civil Rights Movement

To read these and many more visit the

The American Library

Monday to Saturday
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

022 - 26724231/ 4024
libref@state.gov

Designed by:
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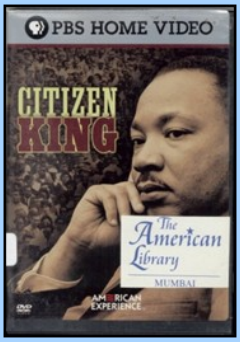
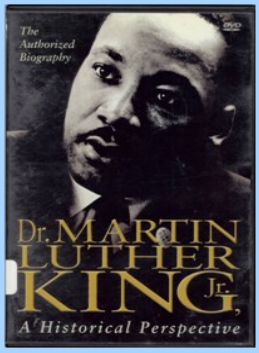
NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

Resources in the American Library, Mumbai

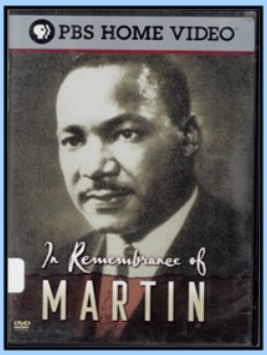
DVDs



Citizen King - PBS Home Video, 2004.(120 mins.)

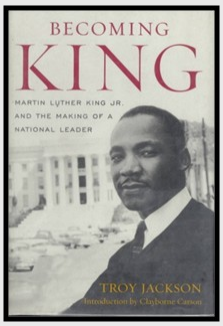


Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: a Historical Perspective - Xenon Pictures, Inc., 2002, (60 mins.)

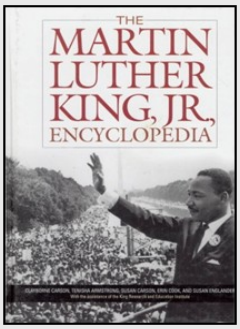


In Remembrance of Martin- PBS Home Video, c2005 (60 mins.)

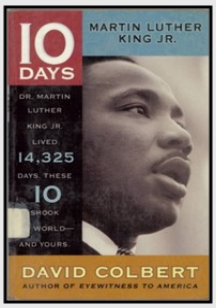
Books



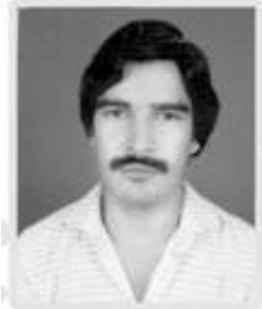
Becoming King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of a National Leader by Troy Jackson. University Press of Kentucky, 2008.



The Martin Luther King, Jr., Encyclopedia by Clayborne Carson... [et al.] Greenwood Press, 2008.



***Martin Luther King Jr.* by David Colbert. Aladdin Paperbacks, 2008.**



In Memoriam:

Mr. Muthukrishnan Janardhanan

04/03/1956 – 08/04/2013

We are very sorry to inform you of the sad demise of our dear friend and colleague, Mr. Muthukrishnan Janardhanan, who passed away early Sunday morning. His illness came as a surprise to everyone and his passing as a shock. Janardhanan's last rites and funeral were held Sunday morning.

In the many years that he worked in the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai, Jana - as he was fondly called - touched countless lives with kindness, a willing ear, a helping hand, and his ever-smiling face. He will also be remembered for his incredible work ethic.

We have posted an electronic tribute to Janardhanan on our Facebook page. Feel free to post your thoughts and wishes to that comment: www.facebook.com/Mumbai.usconsulate. We will host a memorial service at the Consulate in the near future and hope many of you are able to attend. We will send out another email once those details are finalized.

Please keep him and his family in your thoughts and prayers. Janardhanan will be sorely missed.

Designed by: **Milburn Fernandes**

E-Bulletin Editor: **Benjamin Fong**

Graphics by: **Dhaval Ninawe**

AMERICANCENTER
Mumbai

Mumbai Mondays

Diversity in the USA
The American Salad Bowl

by Jessica Kania

What does it mean to be an American - is it the passport you hold? The language you speak? The holidays you celebrate? As America becomes more culturally diverse and our experiences as Americans become less uniform, how do we promote a common national identity while respecting the fact that we are truly a nation of immigrants? Join the U.S. Consulate for a conversation on the cultural and religious backgrounds of Americans, how diversity affects the American psyche, and relations between majority and minority communities in the U.S.

Jessica Kania was born in central New Jersey and has lived in Morocco, Israel, and India. She spent two years at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, where she worked on projects promoting interfaith dialogue and cultural activities between Israel's Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. In addition to studying finance and economics at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton school, she also studied Hebrew and Arabic language as well as religious studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

August 19 at 06:30 PM

U.S. Consulate General,
C-49, G Block, Bandra-Kurla Complex
Near Trident Hotel, Bandra-East, Mumbai-400051

★ Free Entry ★
On a first-come, first-served basis.

Mobile phones and laptops are permitted for this event, but Bluetooth technology must be disabled. Cameras, memory storage devices, and other electronic equipment are not allowed. Photography and video recording in and around the Consulate compound is strictly prohibited.

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Alumni Highlights

CG Peter Haas and ACAO Swati Patel I nteracting with alumni

Alumni Reception

PAS Mumbai hosted an Alumni Reception on June 27 at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai for alumni of various USG-funded exchange programs like Fulbright, IVLP, SUSI, CCIP and YES. Around 100 alumni between the ages of 17 and 70 attended the reception, not only from Mumbai, but also from Pune, Aurangabad, Ahmedabad and Bhopal. Alumni were presented with custom-made visiting card holders. The evening provided a platform for alumni to network amongst themselves and to discuss ways to put to practice their U.S. experiences in bettering their community. The event was hosted by Consul General Peter Haas, who emphasized the importance of building relationships between Indians and Americans.

Check-out more photographs of the event at: http://www.flickr.com/photos/usconsulatemumbai/sets/72157634442603842/

Alumni meet Secretary of State, John Kerry

Secretary of State, John Kerry was in India last month for the Indo-US strategic dialogue. Some alumni had a chance to interact with him!

Community College Initiative (CCI) Program alumnus – Zulfiqar Sheth – interacts with Secretary of State, John Kerry.

Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program alumnae – Arundhati Sridhar – and others, at Lodhi Gardens, Delhi, with Secretary of State John Kerry.

Alumnus tops Rockefeller Challenge

IVLP alumnus and Ashoka Fellow Biplab Paul from Gujarat was selected in the Rockefeller Foundation Centennial Innovation Challenge for his work with rag-pickers in Ahmedabad.

Check out: http://challenge.rockefellerfoundation.org/awards

On the Horizon: Workshop on Emotional IQ

We will be conducting a one-day Alumni Workshop on "**Emotional Intelligence for Personal and Professional Excellence**" on August 30 at the Consulate! Eligibility and registration details will be sent via email to alumni.

Alumni Highlights

Are you an Alum of a USG sponsored program?

If so, register on the State Alumni website www.alumni.state.gov.

Once signed in, you can access content from State Alumni including:
1. Alumni Updates
2. Events
3. Grants database

If you are already registered, I would encourage you to log in, and post your own stories and events to these pages to share your accomplishments with other alumni, and network with them.

You may also share your stories with our Alumni Coordinator at AvariBK@state.gov / MumbaiPublicAf-fairs@state.gov

If you are an alumnus of a United States exchange program and have received special recognition, please send a write-up with 2-3 photos to mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov. You could be featured in future e-bulletins!

facebook | join our group

Alumni Group on Facebook

"The International Exchange Alumni - Western India" group has been created on Facebook. The group is for U.S. Government funded program alumni living in Western India. (The U.S. Consulate General Mumbai covers the following states in Western India: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Goa)

You may request to join the group: http://www.facebook.com/groups/170264503133421/

Alumnae promotes American Library to assist students and professors in better understanding the American Political System

IVLP alumnae Rashmi Bhure spoke to Political Science professors from various Mumbai colleges. Her talk centered on ways that the American Library can assist them and their students prepare for the new paper in American Political System started by the University of Mumbai from this academic year onwards.

USIEF Alumni Award

Fulbright-Nehru alumnae Ms. Sangeeta Sonak's proposal titled 'Environment and Development: Goa at Cross Roads' was selected for the U.S.-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) Alumni Award 2012-2013. Sonak conducted a series of workshops over the months of June and July in Goa. The workshop aimed to provide a platform to discuss a range of topics from mining to dams to coastal tourism. The audience included professionals, researchers, academicians, students, and members of civil society.

Fulbright-Nehru alumnae Sangeeta Sonak addressing the audience

… continued on page 10

… continued from page 9

The audience at one of the workshops conducted by Sangeeta Sonak

WORD FROM THE CENTER

My tour here has, unfortunately, come to an end and this is my final "Word from the Center", both as the Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer and as the e-Bulletin Editor so I'd like to take this space to reflect on a few thoughts.

It's hard to believe just how fast 3 years has flown by. And it's even harder to say goodbye especially given this is my second posting in this vibrant city of Mumbai - meaning there is even more of an attachment to the work, the vision, the people, the bilateral relationship. In my time here, I have seen a lot, heard a lot, felt a lot, and experienced a lot.

Shortly after my arrival, I had the honor to support President Obama's trip in November 2010 and have continued to see our bilateral relationship grow even stronger with the recent visit of Vice President Biden near the eve of my departure. In between these two very high-level visits at the beginning and end of my assignment, I hope I have contributed to our relationship by successfully managing the cultural and exchange aspects of my portfolio.

In part, it was my job to create our "theme of the month" for the 12 months of each year for the past three years. From choosing the films we show to picking the articles you read, I know for a fact that our bilateral relationship is full of depth on subjects such as religious diversity, women's empowerment, patriotism, human rights, environment, and much more. I will miss the excitement of filling auditoriums with our U.S. cultural programs, whether it's comedy, theater, dance, or music. By spearheading the exchanges portfolio, we have sent hundreds of Indians from Western India on various U.S. government exchange programs that then come back empowered to change themselves or India for the better, and now we are taking that investment and moving full steam ahead with alumni programming. And there is so much more, but in the end, it's all about the people-to-people ties.

I'm proud to have been a part of the U.S. – India relationship at the peak of our partnership. Thank you for your support along the way, and I hope you continue to be involved in the future of our mutual progress. It's been a pleasure being your e-Bulletin Editor for the last 3 years and serving as the

Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai.

Signing off one last time, with warmest regards,

Swati Patel