

Abington Human Relations Commission

October 3, 2018

Present: John Carne, Rosemary Jenkins, Joanne Kleiner, Shelley Rosenberg

Guest speaker: Ronnie Polaneczky, award winning journalist

Ms. Polaneczky spoke with us on “The Power of Deliberate Listening,” which is also the title of a TED TALK she gave. The HRC was interested in this in conjunction with the community dialogues we are preparing to start. A few of the many important points from the talk:

Deliberate listening is listening on purpose, with a purpose, in order to get to know the other person and his/her ideas. It is letting go of one’s preconceptions and listening without judgement. It is letting go of one’s need to be right. It is being more interested in what the other person has to say than in saying one’s own piece and being right.

Social media makes it harder than it normally is (and it’s difficult since people are hard-wired to make judgements) since we are supposed to react to media (to “like” something), so we feel obligated to judge. People have to make a deliberate and concerted effort not to judge and to listen in order to truly hear the other person. This changes the listener as much as it changes the talker.

Ms. Polaneczky spoke of an exercise she undertook to listen, sitting in Clark Park (in West Philly) for a day with a sign that said: I will listen with compassion, without judgement, and with an open heart. People sat down and spoke with her all day. We want to take that as an example (maybe even use her words, with her permission) for the way we would like to conduct our community dialogues.

After her talk, we spent the remainder of our time discussing experiences and issues with her. Rosemary emailed the handouts/links to other talks.

Next meeting: November 7. We will work on the description of Ambassador program that John wrote, and the invitation to participate and the letter to the community that Rosemary wrote.

Dec. 5 meeting – we will invite some potential ambassadors