

Written Statement of Rev. Kevin G. Ewing

On behalf of

International Festival of Arts & Ideas

Committee on Appropriations

February 17, 2009 Public Hearing

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, Senator DiBecella, Representative Miner and Members of the Appropriations Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening. My name is Reverend Kevin Ewing. I work as a Community Organizer in New Haven and am a new member of the board of directors for the International Festival of Arts and Ideas.

For 15 days each year the International Festival of Arts and Ideas shows us the beautiful portrait of a strong and peaceful community.

Community is built through the public relationships we have with each other. By engaging in mutual action with others we build community.

Thousands of people attend the festival events. The crowd is always diverse - ethnically, socially, culturally and any other category that can be created to point out our differences. Yet at that moment these people share an experience and their differences are momentarily forgotten.

Community is built when people are engaged in mutual ACTION.

For a collective 3,300 hours in 2008, 217 people from 32 cities came together and engaged in the mutual action of volunteering for the Festival. Many of them didn't know each other before the Festival and it is unlikely that they would have met. But now they've talked to each other. They've shared stories. Now they know that they have common interests. Now they know that they can work together.

In 2008 the "613 Radical Acts of Prayer" brought together 18,000 people.

I'll admit I didn't get the dance. But I did get the joy... the feeling of creating... the sense of belonging that I saw in my friend's face as he *danced* in his wheelchair. He was a part of community of participants.

People engaged in mutual action. People working together towards a single goal. That is how we build community. Whether that goal is the enjoyment of performances in the company of neighbors or volunteering to make the performance possible or joining with neighbors to *be* the performance, the power is in the coming together. That's how we build community.

And if we can do it to create culture and art, we can do it for anything. We can stand together and make the change that we so sorely need.

So you see, for me, a Community Organizer, the International Festival of Arts and Ideas is more than just an event or series of events. It is a power resource for building community.

We need this festival. I urge you to keep funding for 2010 and 2011 flat at \$1M.

Thank you.

Tuesday, February 17, 2009

Attendees in support of written testimony submitted by Rev. Kevin G. Ewing

Nancy Bennett, Festival Volunteer, Orange Street, New Haven

Janet Brodie, "Radical Prayer" Participant, Westville, New Haven

Dana Canevari, Disabilities Commission, 5 Harbour Close Bldg A, New Haven

Nancy, Daniela, Eric & Elvis Carranza, St. Rose of Lima Parish, Baila Peru, Fair Haven

Bernarda Castillo, St. Rose of Lima Parish, Somos Peru, Fair Haven

Mariangel Champaign, St. Rose of Lima Parish, Ecuadorian Folkloric Dance Group, Hartford

David Firestone, Fellowship Place, 441 Elm Street, New Haven

Liz Gersten, "Radical Prayer" Participant, Westville, New Haven

Jackie Harris, West River Grandparents and Relatives Raising the Future, 122 Maple Street, New Haven

Zhang Liu, Festival Volunteer, Bethany

Susan Millen, "Radical Prayer" Participant, Hamden

Edward Pezzo, St. Rose of Lima Parish, Somos Peru, Fair Haven

Venice Walters, "Radical Prayer" Participant and Festival Volunteer