



## **Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR)**

December 2021

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# **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **December Schedule**

#### **Zoom Meetup**

- Thursday, December 30, 7:00 - 8:30 pm
- **NO MEETING** Tuesday, December 21

### **January Schedule**

#### **Chapter General Meeting (Virtual)**

- Wednesday, January 5, 6:00 - 7:00 pm

#### **In-Person Meetup**

- Sunday, January 16, 1:00 - 3:00 pm

#### **Zoom Meetup**

- Tuesday, January 11, 6:30 - 8:00 pm
  - Thursday, January 27, 6:30 - 8:00 pm
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# CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS



## **New Resources Added to FAIR Austin's Website!**

If you haven't checked out [FAIR Austin's Website](#) yet, take a look!

This past month, we've added some new resources, including a Parents' Resource page and a Legal Liaison Question Portal.

On the [Parents' Resource page](#), we have linked to relevant sections of Central Texas ISD school board manuals and the current state of TX law relating to parental rights in the public schools regarding viewing school materials and the new requirements for teaching about American History, Civics, race, and sex. We also link to FAIR National tools and presentations developed especially for parents navigating their school systems. There's also a helpful form letter you can use to request to inspect materials!

The [Legal Liaison Question Portal](#) allows members to ask questions regarding the current state of Civil Rights protections and Texas law related to FAIR's Mission. While our volunteers are members of the State Bar of Texas, this service is for educational use only and does not establish a lawyer-client relationship.

Over the next several months, FAIR Austin volunteers will continue to add tools related to our mission, so keep an eye out!

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**“The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.”**

**— John F. Kennedy**

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## **FAIR ATX Zoom Meetup**

The first weekly FAIR ATX Zoom meetup took place on Tuesday, 12/7/2021. Fourteen people attended, including three new members!

During the introductory meeting, members introduced themselves, discussed reasons for joining FAIR ATX and their hopes for going forward. FAIR ATX Technical Lead Brian gave an overview of our chapter's tech tools that allow us to stay connected. Jade, the FAIR ATX Community

Outreach Lead, outlined the intended function and expectations for the weekly Zoom meetup.

The group watched a short clip of Bari Weiss and Jordan Peterson discussing finding moral courage in difficult times. The group later broke into small group discussions before rejoining the larger group.

Key takeaways from the meetup include:

- Both courage and fear are why many of us are involved with FAIR.
- The feeling that you can't say what you think proves that a serious problem exists.
- For some members, what has happened in America in the last few years is reminiscent of what happened during the China Culture Revolution, about 50 years ago.
- Learning, practicing, and polishing various communication techniques and arguments would be of interest to a majority of FAIR ATX members.
- Our chapter should identify domains (school, work, personal, etc.) and create tailored approaches for each.
- Members are willing to share their expertise on different topics, communication strategies, and experiences.
- During introductions, most members cited Salt Lick as the "best place to eat in Austin." We will reexamine this at future meetings.

Future Zoom meetups will be extended to 90 minutes to allow more in-depth conversations. Members are free to join anytime during the meeting and stay as long as they'd like.

Please look out for future invites for the weekly Zoom meetup!

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# **Reflection on Our First Three Months: What We've Accomplished and Where We're Heading**

by Jennifer Capoccia, FAIR Austin Chapter Lead

As we head into 2022, reflecting on the first three months of Austin FAIR, I am so proud of and grateful for the local volunteers who rolled up their sleeves and got to work.

As an all-volunteer, local chapter of FAIR, our primary mission is to educate the public, empower people, and stand up for what's right at the local level. While we have Austin in our name, our local membership includes much of Central Texas.

I signed up to volunteer to help get the Austin Chapter of FAIR up and running early this past August after my background check was complete. I recruited my husband and one of our closest friends to help.

We had no idea how this would work out but impressed by FAIR's Mission, pro-human message, and commitment to nonpartisanship, we were willing to volunteer our time and energy to get something off the ground here. After all, we were just about to become empty nesters as our son was getting ready to move close to 2000 miles away for school, and we needed something meaningful to fill our newfound extra time.

We read through the Chapter Leader Guide and the FAIR Advocacy Toolkit. I attended the weekly Chapter Leader Meetings to learn best practices from other chapter leaders across the country who had started local chapters months before. I'd worked in nonprofit program development years ago, but this was the first time I was working on launching a chapter of a nationally based organization less than a year old. In my experience, when relying entirely on volunteers to build an organization, it can be slow-moving. We had to remind ourselves to be patient.



Toward the end of September, Brian Kors, from FAIR National, suggested we were ready to launch FAIR Austin and host a Zoom Open House. He invited all the people who signed up through FAIR National within our geographic boundaries. On the phone, just before launching the meeting, he told me not to be discouraged if only two to three people showed up, as that had happened in previous launches. Still, sometimes just an additional two to three other dedicated volunteers lead to exponential growth.

As our open house commenced, we were thrilled to see close to 20 people show up for that first meeting. People introduced themselves, talked about what drew them to FAIR and what they hoped this chapter could accomplish. Many expressed a need to feel in good company and less alone in their concern that the prevailing 'anti-racism' ideology promoted by prominent public figures and movements showing up in local schools and workplaces was dividing people. This brand of "Anti-Racism" promoted segregation and harmed the very people and communities it was purported to help.

Through experience, I know volunteers need meaningful work, and it's essential to make the highest use of their talents. Don't offer a filing job to

someone equipped to write a strategic plan! Consequently, after that first meeting, I reached out to every attendee to gauge interest in volunteering and determine how they believed the chapter could best use their skills. Through that week of phone calls, I learned that we had a community of competent, committed individuals who were ready to get to work.



We had several attorneys interested in helping in some capacity. But since FAIR Austin doesn't provide legal services or engage in litigation, we determined they could fulfill an educational role for our membership. Consequently, we launched the FAIR Austin Legal Liaison program. Members who have questions about the current state of the law and concerns regarding their workplace and schools are invited to enter questions into our new [Legal Liaison question portal](#). Once a member agrees that no client-lawyer relationship is forming, within one to two weeks, one of the team members will respond, setting up a phone call to give them an overview of the law and its relation to their circumstances. Thanks to Ian, Renee, and Stewart for volunteering their time and Brian for creating the portal.

Also, in the vein of educating, we are working on further developing our newsletter to include more local stories related to FAIR Austin's mission.

Thanks to Vanessa and Pam for their efforts toward that. We would love to have more members volunteering for the newsletter to cover more stories of local interest.

For the sake of empowering people, we just launched our [Parents' Resource](#) page. We've added information about the current state of Texas Education Law related to "Controversial Issues" taught in Texas public schools. Thanks to Will and Alan for compiling and drafting that information so that the layperson understands more easily. Also, thank you to Renee and Stewart for checking citations and Sopo for her input. The page also links to the best of FAIR National's resources for parents. Keep an eye on that page because as we better assess the needs of parents locally, we will be adding to it.

Speaking of assessing needs, one of our volunteers has created a survey to get more information about better serving and actively involving FAIR Austin's membership. Please watch your email for that survey. Thanks to Ellen for her work! Others have worked to help develop strategy and have generated ideas for this new chapter – thanks to Mike and Bill!



Finally, as for standing up for what's right, members identified their challenges by discussing their concerns regarding what they witnessed in our community institutions. To stand up, they needed to know they were in good company. Consequently, we started a monthly in-person meetup to



build relationships, and thus far, those have been well attended, and friendships are forming.

Jade, our new Community Outreach Lead, just launched a weekly Zoom meetup as an opportunity for FAIR Austin members to connect, share experiences and encourage one another. The meetings have loose themes ranging from current events, sharing of personal experiences, and honest and open discussion. We hope this will further build a sense of community within our chapter. As this goes to press, we just had our first meeting, and it was well attended, and the group came up with lots of great ideas to propel us forward. Thanks, Jade!

As we head into 2022, after spending the past three months getting to know a fantastic group of people, I am reminded of Margaret Meade's famous quote:

***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”***

Change starts locally. If you have been thinking about getting more involved, please reach out and help us build this chapter. We will find something meaningful for you to do, using the time you have to offer and putting your skills to the highest benefit. Together, we can turn FAIR Austin into one of the most impactful chapters in the country.

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**“This will remain the land of the free so long as it is the home of the brave.”**

**- Elmer Davis**

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Have feedback? Let us know at [austin@fairforall.org](mailto:austin@fairforall.org)



**Fairness. Understanding. Humanity.**



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