

Our Vision: A state free of discrimination.

Iowa Civil Rights Commission

Communicator

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THE MODEL CITIES PROJECT BY MARY COWDREY

Three communities in Iowa were selected by Governor Tom Vilsack and Lt. Governor Sally Pederson to participate as Model Cities for welcoming new Iowans. The three cities are Fort Dodge, Mason City and Marshalltown. The Model Cities Project brings together community leaders, citizens, business, faith-based organizations, schools, community colleges, volunteers, and state agencies to develop a strategic plan. The strategic plans developed by the Model Communities can be used by other communities.

Each Model City began with assessments of the community. These focused on recreational opportunities, health-care, education, workforce, transportation, and housing.

Steering Committees and subcommittees in each community have already begun their work. The Communities have drawn on a wide array of resources including local citizens, business, industry, county and city leaders, as well as state government resources.

"There was that law of life, so cruel and so just, that one must grow or else pay more for remaining the same."

-Norman Mailer

ICRC HIRES NEW CIVIL RIGHTS SPECIALISTS

On February 19, 2001 the Iowa Civil Rights Commission hired 5 new staff members who bring a variety of different backgrounds, training and work experience to our agency. The 5 new members were assigned to the investigation, screening and the mediation units.

The Investigation Unit:

Francesca Palmer- Francesca graduated from



Ottumwa High School in 1996 and moved to Des Moines in 1997 and began to work for Younkers as a sales associate. She became a sales manager in November of 1997 and continued working as a manager for Younkers in various departments until she was hired by ICRC.

Vicki Douglas-Vicki is a graduate of Drake University and has many years of work experience in the area of human services with special emphasis in child protection. She has worked for such organizations as the Iowa Department of Human Services, the Louisiana



Department of Human Services, the YMCA, Urban Dreams and Des Moines Public Schools.

Christopher Silberhorn- Chris has a BS in Aerospace Engineering from Iowa State University. He earned his JD in Law from Drake University in 1996 and passed the Iowa Bar Exam in February of 1997. Prior to being hired by ICRC, he practiced civil rights and employment law for 5 years working primarily with plaintiffs.



The Screening Unit:

Linda Ross- Technically, Linda is not a “new” employee at ICRC since she had previously worked for our agency in from 1989 to 1997 in a variety of capacities including, investigations, intake, screening and testing. Linda’s work experience also includes almost 2 years with Qwest as an advertising coordinator & market manager assistant and part time fitness instructor at the Riverfront YMCA. Linda has a BA in Speech Communication from Iowa State University.



The Mediation Unit:

Lena Robison- Lena has a BA in psychology from Drake University and has been an employee of the State of Iowa for more than 11 years. Prior to being hired by our agency, she had worked for the Department of Human Services and also for Iowa Workforce Development where she held several different positions including employer liability specialist, bilingual advisor and project manager for the ex-felon employment program. Lena has also done volunteer work for the Latino Snap Shot and has been very active in the Latino community. She is founder of “Latinos Unidos”, a community educational and social latino organization.



L.B. Galbearth, Jr.- L. B. graduated from Central High School in Kansas City, Missouri in 1987. He graduated from Western Missouri State College in 1994 with a BA in history and a BS in political science. L.B. began employment with the Buchanan County Juvenile Office in 1991 and served with the Missouri State Supreme Court as a Deputy Juvenile Officer from 1994 to 2000. L.B was also a member of the Missouri Army National Guard from 1986 to 1992. He moved to Des Moines with his wife and four children in October 2000.



In addition to new staff, ICRC has also has 4 new commissioners who recently started their appointments. The new commissioners are: Constance Gronstal, Gilberto Solivan, Timothy Tutt and Maria Waterman. We will have more information about our new commissioners in the next issue of The Communicator.

Mark Your Calendars

September 15: Hispanic Heritage “Kick-off” Festival; starts at 10:00 AM; downtown Des Moines, Walnut Street and Court Avenue bridges

September 16: National Conference for Community and Justice “Walk as One” walk-a-thon; registration begins at 12:30 PM, walk begins at 1:30 PM, Hoyt Sherman Place, Des Moines

October 4: Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc. annual awards banquet, 6:30 – 9:00 PM, Des Moines Botanical Center

January 26, 2002: *I’ll Make Me a World in Iowa* (celebration of African American arts and culture); begins at 10:00 AM, State of Iowa Historical Building, Des Moines

BLACK IDENTITY BY FRANK TRIBBLE



In the 30 plus years that I have lived in the great state of Iowa, I, like most transplants have reflected on the value of my experience here. If you are an African American, you know that your experience can be colored in very interesting ways by that demographic.

Like countless other African Americans and people of color, the culture shock of landing in a place where there are so few of us was staggering to me. So what does one do? In my case, I began the journey of adapting to life here and endeavored to understand what makes these Iowans tick. While the journey continues, I can truly say that my education thus far, has been eye opening. In the process, I've also not been spared from learning some things about myself and how I fit in the big picture.

Initially, much of my energy went toward seeking acceptance and attempting to fit in by doing "as the Romans do." To some extent, this approach was worthwhile from a purely survival perspective, but in terms of acceptance, I wasn't having much luck. On one hand, I found that white Iowans were having a difficult time accepting me and black Iowans felt I acted too white? Now that I look back on this predicament with hopefully a bit more wisdom, I must confess that this assessment of me by other blacks was not totally inaccurate. A common occurrence is for people such as myself to adopt majority culture at the expense of forgetting about our own. I certainly fell into that category by attempting to determine the worth of things based on standards that didn't apply, standards that don't begin to incorporate the perspectives of African Americans or other people of color.

My rediscovery of various aspects of my culture involved acknowledging some things that I once felt embarrassed by. Things that were less than intellectual and therefore, had no validity or relevance. Rediscovery of my culture has meant accepting myself and gives me the feeling of finally returning home. Where a certain phrase, a way of walking, even a special way of nodding your head is

immediately understood without need for explanation. Home is where I can "let my hair down" and not have my style be interpreted as stereotypical. In this sense, my journey has led me closer to home.

One of the challenges of being black in Iowa is that there is no critical mass of African Americans here. In my case this has been both a blessing and a curse. The curse manifests itself in some of the obvious ways: fewer role models, fewer opportunities to interact with those who understand your challenges, a lack of opportunities for cultural validation and the sometimes resulting failure to realize one's full potential. If you don't have the opportunities to travel out of state to larger metropolitan centers, it can be easy to forget that there is such a rich variety of African Americans representing every walk of life imaginable or unimaginable.

The good news is that in Iowa, we have more opportunities to be true to ourselves. When our identification is not limited to a narrow definition of blackness, we can see the endless possibilities for participation and being leaders in America and the world. For me this means having complete knowledge of who we are, where we come from and the impact that we've had on world civilization.

Well one might ask "how do you do that in Iowa where there are so few of us and our culture has such a difficult time being acknowledged and appreciated in the mainstream?" It means having to sometimes go beyond conventional education to find where we are accurately represented in world history prior to when our ancestors were mere slaves. We need to search out those in our Community who are the keepers and guardians of our history. We must also follow our hearts and the dictates of our souls as it relates to making our dreams into realities. Just because it's more difficult to see others like us in Iowa who are successful in whatever field it may be, does not mean that they don't exist. It just means that sometimes we have to look a little harder or even past Iowa.

The whole barrier exists because most people never come together and sit down at a table . . . join together, break bread together, and celebrate their differences and their likenesses.

OPRAH WINFREY, 1998

Nominations Sought for Annual Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc. Awards

Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc., a private, nonprofit organization, established to educate individuals and groups about civil rights, assist civil rights efforts statewide, and recognize individuals and groups who have championed the cause of civil rights, is seeking nominations for this year's awards. Winners will be recognized at the sixth annual award ceremony on Thursday, October 4 at 7:00 PM at the Des Moines Botanical Center. The awards will be presented to individuals and organizations that have made a significant contribution in promoting civil rights in the past 2 years. Awards are presented in four categories: individual, education, business, and

community organization. All nominations should include the following:

- Name, address, and phone number of the person, group, organization, or business being nominated
- Name, address, and phone number of the person doing the nominating
- No more than 2 pages briefly describing the contributions of the nominee
- Any supporting nomination letters

The deadline for nominations is August 17, 2001 (postmarked). Nominations should be sent to Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc., P.O. Box 5182, Des Moines, Iowa 50306-5182. If you have questions, please call Dawn Peterson at 515-281-8086.

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