

Our Vision: A state free of discrimination.

## Iowa Civil Rights Commission

# Communicator

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### **From the Desk of the Executive Director....**

**By Corlis Moody**



The Iowa Civil Rights Commission works to make Iowa a state free of discrimination

Over the past several months, Commission meetings have been held at cities around the State. Although most have taken place in Des Moines,

meetings were also held in Mason City, Cedar Rapids and Council Bluffs.

This year the Commissioners set up subcommittees to address important civil rights issues. These subcommittees are collecting information and taking action regarding Racial Profiling, Sexual Orientation, Immigration, and Age Discrimination. Speakers presented information to Commissioners regarding these issues as well as Disability Issues, Native American Mascots in Schools, and African-Americans in Prison.

In addition, the Commissioners supported the Department of Education's proposal to have anti-discrimination provisions in their Rules and their proposed policy for inclusiveness in schools; recognition of the Ames City Council of Martin Luther King's Birthday as an official holiday; National Conference for Community and Justice's (NCCJ) proposal to remove Native American mascots from schools; and the "State of Black Iowans" report compiled by Jonathan Narcisse. They

also composed a Resolution recommending Sexual Orientation be added to the list of protected classes already in Chapter 216 of the Iowa Code. Following the events of September 11, the Commissioners issued a statement urging that Muslims in Iowa be treated fairly and without discrimination or harassment. They also joined a statewide coalition of organizations opposing 'English Only' legislation.

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### **Brief Bios of New Commissioners**

The Iowa Civil Rights Commission is fortunate to have four new commissioners who began their term of service in May 2001, bringing to our organization a wealth of skills and experience. Our new commissioners are:

#### **Constance Gronstal**

Ms. Gronstal is from Council Bluffs, Iowa where she is employed as a School Social Worker for the Area Education Agency. She has a BA in sociology from Mount Marty College in Yankton, S.D. and an MSW from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She has had an interest in civil rights issues for many years and strongly believes that citizens should be willing to give of their time and abilities in the service of their community, state and country.

#### **Gilberto Solivan, MD**

Dr. Solivan is from Puerto Rico and has an impressive record as a dermatologist. He has been associated with the Mason City Clinic since 1993. Dr. Solivan states that love of God and devotion to family values are his driving forces. He believes that every human being has God-given dignity. In remarking about the dramatic increase in Iowa's

Latino population, Dr. Solivan believes that Iowa now has a great opportunity to embrace newcomers and provide them with a safe environment to grow, prosper and contribute to the fabric of society.

### **Timothy Tutt**

Mr. Tutt has a BA in Spanish from the University of Northern Iowa and has had a brilliant career as a teacher for the Des Moines Public Schools since 1982. Mr. Tutt has taken civil rights for all people as an issue of personal interest, concern and activism. He believes that all persons should have unconditional access and fair treatment under the rights provided by the Constitution of the United States.

### **Maria Waterman**

Ms. Waterman has a BA in Economics from Loras College in Dubuque and a JD with Distinction from the University of Iowa, College of Law. Ms. Waterman is retired from the practice of law from the firm Lane & Waterman and strongly believes in the objectives of the Civil Rights Act to police and prohibit discriminatory practices against the citizens of Iowa because of their protected personal characteristics. Ms. Waterman wants to use her legal background to address matters that are brought to the attention of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission.

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## **Mark Your Calendars**

**March 18:** Iowa Commission on the Status of Women Meeting. 1-4: p.m. Blue Room, Ola Babcock Miller Building, Des Moines. Free and open to the public.

**March 19:** Write Women Back Into History Essay Contest Awards Ceremony. 11 a.m. Governor's Formal Office, State Capitol. Free and open to the public.

**April 13:** Latinos Resource Fair, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Southridge Mall, Des Moines

**May 13:** Iowa Commission on the Status of Women Meeting Time and location TBA. Free and open to the public

**May 16-17:** Whispers & Screams Conference. Gateway Center, Ames Sue Ryan-Anderson, ICSW, 515/281-6915, 800/558-4427

**May 24:** Latino Youth Carnival. 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. – State Historical Building, Des Moines.

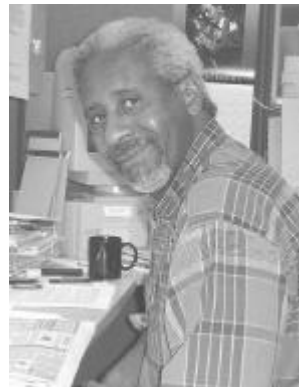
**May 25:** Latino Heritage Festival. 10 a.m. – midnight, Walnut Avenue and Court Avenue Bridges, Des Moines.

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## **Let's Talk...**

**By Frank Tribble**



Recently, I participated in a discussion during a “Lunch and Learn” at the Iowa Civil Rights Commission where I am employed. This occasion was an opportunity for our staff to visit with Hal Chase and learn more about his book “Outside In”. It became quickly apparent to those in attendance, who had not previously seen it, that this book is a monumental achievement. But we were there for the inside story. That story is a labor of love on the part of all of the authors who took part in writing about and illustrating that African Americans and European Americans in Iowa have inextricable ties that bind us to a shared history. We are continuing to make that history together every day as we do what we do.

For some, well at least one who was brave enough to bring it up, it seemed uncharacteristic for Mr. Chase, a man apparently of European ancestry, to know so much about black people. So this person asked Mr. Chase to convey to us his racial identity. For some of us, his response to the question was unexpected. Rather than provide a direct answer, it may have seemed to a few that Mr. Chase danced around the issue explaining that there is no such thing as race. It is an idea that has been manufactured and accepted without question for at least a couple hundred years.

My best guess is that my co-workers came to what they thought would be a typical Lunch and Learn, but experienced something a little different. And maybe Mr. Chase doesn't realize it, but he was the catalyst for our staff to have the opportunity to begin dialoguing about race relations. From the outside looking in, one might say that discussing a topic of this nature would be the expected norm for staff at the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. Oddly enough dialogue about race, the dynamics of racism and race relations rarely occurs in informal or formal forums anywhere. However, when discussions of this nature do occur, it is more than obvious that there are great discrepancies in understanding of the most basic issues and huge disparities in recognition of the role of culture when it comes to race. As well, there are indications that some might even be confused as to what racism is. All of which makes it almost impossible to have meaningful dialogue about race.

If we are passionate about what we do, we need to work at creating opportunities to dialogue about it so that we continue to grow and be better at what we do. If we are afraid to talk about race, racism and race relations isn't that all the more reason to find ways that are safe to engage in that dialogue? If we dare to have the courage to have honest conversations about race, we can't do it without dealing with elements such as power, privilege, culture and who is an American. So let's rise above the fog of denial. Let's dare to go below the surface. Let's talk! We might even learn some things about each other.

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## Friends of Iowa Civil Rights Award Winners

Individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions in promoting civil rights in Iowa were recognized at the Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc. annual banquet held October 4, 2001 at the Des Moines Botanical Center. This year's awards were presented in the following categories:

Individuals, Community Organizations, Education, Business and an Honorary category.

## Individuals

### Oscar Argueta

Oscar Agueta is an inspiring individual who has worked tirelessly to create a welcoming community in Henry County for new Hispanic residents.

He co-hosts La Voz Hispana, a weekly Spanish music and talk program on KILJ radio station. He established and continues to publish El Heraldo Hispano, a bi-monthly Spanish newspaper circulated throughout SE Iowa. He has organized a variety of cultural events in Mt. Pleasant. He serves on El Concilio, a council of friends and family who support Latino students and prospective students at Iowa Wesleyan College. He is the contact person for establishing relationships with government officials on behalf of the Hispanic community in SE Iowa and a strong supporter of El Café Hispano, which offers Spanish music and dancing each Saturday night at Iowa Wesleyan College. He facilitated a six-week educational series this past summer that provided newcomers information and the opportunity to voice their concerns to officials, business people, educators, and other service providers.

Oscar has played an important role in helping individual Hispanic families settle in SE Iowa. He has assisted them in finding housing, medical care, and other basic needs. He performs all of these responsibilities in addition to holding a full time position as a translator/interpreter at Experian and raising his 9 children with his wife, Arleta.

### Sergio Corona

Sergio Corona is a native of Zihuatonejo, Mexico. He has been in the United States for many years. He has 3 children and lives in Perry. He is the owner of Viento del Tropic in Perry. He is a humble and deserving self-made individual. He started Viento del Tropic in 1996. He wrote the articles, obtained the news, sold the ads and took the format to the printers. If that was not enough, he also organized and delivered this Spanish newspaper to Des Moines, Marshalltown, and Perry.

# Community Organizations

Sergio says the main reason he started the Spanish newspaper was because he saw the need for communication within the Latino community. This was one way he could provide something that was very needed. The paper lets people know about events in the community, the programs that are available, ways to live a better life, and employment and housing opportunities.

Sergio has a heart of gold and goes out of his way to insure the news is published. In 1996, Sergio began by publishing 1000-1500 weekly Viento del Tropico newspapers. Today he publishes 3000 bi-monthly, has one part-time individual, and one driver to Marshalltown. He would like to someday provide the newspaper to Ottumwa and Osceola. Sergio's drive, determination, endurance, and hard work have kept the Spanish paper alive.

## Lena Robison

Lena Robison has worked diligently to bring people together and has actively coordinated community activities which have benefited Iowa Latinos, while at the same time presenting the very best of Latino culture to all Iowans.

She is the founder of Latinos Unidos of Iowa, Inc. and has been a state employee for more than 11 years. She has used her people skills, education and bilingual qualifications to inform Latino clients of their rights and options with regard to unemployment insurance benefits and of job possibilities available to them. She has dedicated her personal time to providing leadership and direction for Latinos of all nationalities who currently live in Iowa. She has served as a sympathetic ear to newcomers who speak little or no English and has served as a referral source for their problems and concerns.

Everyone who knows Lena knows she has boundless enthusiasm for her work on behalf of the Latino community. She is truly a joy to all those whom her life touches.

## Healthy Henry County Community Diversity Action Team

The team was formed in April 1999. In the last two years, the Diversity Action Team has made exceptional progress in welcoming immigrant newcomers and increasing awareness and understanding through a variety of ethnic and cultural educational opportunities. The team has published the history of Lee Town, an African American community within Mt. Pleasant that began in the mid to late 1800's. They have supported the efforts to create information and cultural links with the Hispanic community. The team has provided a variety of cultural events and in the fall of 2000, opened the Welcome Mat, which provides clothing, furniture and household goods at no cost to new residents. The team was instrumental in increasing the number of ESL courses offered in the community. The team has offered support to youth activities and planned the Community Voices program, held this past summer. The team plans to offer a similar program this Fall in Vietnamese and Laotian. The team started with 4-5 people and has grown to 30-40 who regularly attend the monthly meetings. Team members come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, races, economic and social classes. The team has partnered with and received support from many organizations in the community. Through the efforts of the many team members, the Diversity Team has been able to make a marked difference in the opportunities that community members have to learn about one another in positive and constructive ways that lead to respect for the civil rights of all residents.

## Mary Treglia Community House

The Mary Treglia Community House began in 1921 in what was then called "The Bottoms" of Sioux City. Today it is a tireless crusader and service provider for the many races, ethnic groups, and cultures in Sioux City.

As it celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Mary Treglia Community House is exactly that – a house for the community. From early morning before school programs for children through late evening language classes and discussion groups for adults, Mary Treglia Community House has done much to improve

living conditions, decrease crime, increase communication, and perhaps above all, to prove that different races, religions, ethnic groups, and cultures can teach and learn from each other.

Mary Treglia strives to improve the civil and human rights of the people of Sioux City. It hosts discussion groups and sponsors programs that are crucial to expanding awareness and sensitivity to the strength that cultural diversity implies. It is helped in these endeavors by the tireless efforts of staff, the board of directors, and the scores of volunteers who are the unsung heroes who create the great works of the Mary Treglia Community House.

The mission of the Mary Treglia Community House is to recognize and respond to the unmet needs in the area in which it is located. It is a place where all people of the community can come together and get to know each other through the various workshops and social events that the Community House sponsors.

## Education

### Latinos Unidos of Iowa, Inc.

Latinos Unidos of Iowa, Inc. has made a significant contribution in promoting civil rights here in Iowa by heightening positive awareness and visibility of the people of Latino/Hispanic heritage. It has united Latino/Hispanic people of Iowa through educational programs and social events. It has sponsored numerous educational forums to inform and educate Latinos in Iowa about a variety of issues of interest to the Latino community, while striving to promote Latino culture to the people of Iowa.

Some of the educational forums sponsored by Latinos Unidos have included:

- The Empowerment of the Latina into the Millennium
- Bilingual voter registration workshop
- Small business bilingual workshop
- Workshop on the necessity of automobile and home insurance
- And most recently, “Sus Derechos Civiles en Iowa,” a bilingual forum presented in cooperation with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission to inform Latinos of their rights under the law and the steps

they should follow if they feel they have been the victims of illegal discrimination.

Latinos Unidos also provides 5 - \$1000 scholarships to worthy Latino students every year. They host Latino Job Fairs twice a year, as well as a job placement workshop. They are truly a moving force in the Latino community and sponsor many social activities that have created a very positive awareness of Latino culture in Iowa.

## Business

### Wells Fargo & Co.

Wells Fargo & Co. (previously Norwest) has long been a major force for community improvement in Iowa. It is often at the forefront of initiatives to improve the lives of people throughout the state. Wells Fargo has been a part of the PRIDE parade and a strong force in the recent Des Moines City Council meetings when the addition of sexual orientation to the city human rights code was discussed.

It has been one of the primary patrons of the Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc. since its inception and most recently was the primary sponsor of the Forum on Immigration that was held this year at the Historical Building in Des Moines. It is their willingness to take on and support projects of this nature that make the difference in our community. Not only do they contribute monetary support; but also there is a concerted effort on the part of Wells Fargo to encourage employees to participate in community activities. Their participation often adds immeasurable support to many of the activities that enrich all of our lives.

# Honorary

## City of Des Moines

For a number of years the City of Des Moines has attempted to expand its human rights ordinance to include sexual orientation. This year, through the hard work and perseverance of members of the public, city employees, members of the Des Moines Human Rights Commission, members of the City Council, and the Mayor, Des Moines became the fifth city in the state of Iowa to include sexual orientation as a covered basis.

Their fight to do what was right, to push forward in spite of years of opposition is to be especially commended.

## Manjari Saha

From September 1998 to June 2001, Manjari Saha served as the chair of the Friends of Iowa Civil Rights, Inc. Her commitment and energy for civil rights issues broadened our vision of where we wanted to be and motivated us to do what needed to be done to get there.

Although we are fortunate to still have Manjari on the board, we would like to recognize her dedication to civil rights and particularly to the leadership of the Friends organization.

Over the past few weeks, the old Education and Outreach Team reviewed what we do and how we do it. What we are about is a whole lot more than just presentations!

The Education and Outreach Team is now....

## Resource Services

We provide the following:

- Outreach
- Public Information
  - Publications
  - Training
  - Presentations
  - Consulting
  - Translations
  - Special Projects
- Resources (videos and books)
  - Research

Visit our website at [www.state.is.us/government/crc](http://www.state.is.us/government/crc) or Call 1-800-457-4416, ext. 18086

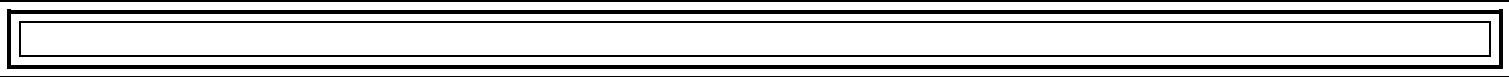
## Resource Services Team

Al Falconi (515-281-4506); [al.falconi@icrc.state.ia.us](mailto:al.falconi@icrc.state.ia.us)

Tom Good (515-281-4505); [tom.good@icrc.state.ia.us](mailto:tom.good@icrc.state.ia.us)

Frank Tribble (515-281-7508); [frank.tribble@icrc.state.ia.us](mailto:frank.tribble@icrc.state.ia.us)

Dawn Peterson (515-281-8086); [dawn.peterson@icrc.state.ia.us](mailto:dawn.peterson@icrc.state.ia.us)



**Iowa Civil Rights  
Commission**  
**515-281-4121**  
**1-800-457-4416**  
**FAX 515-242-5840**  
[www.state.ia.us/government/crc](http://www.state.ia.us/government/crc)

**Corlis Moody**  
**Executive Director**

**Al Falconi, Editor**

**Iowa Civil Rights Commission**

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**211 E. Maple St., 2nd Fl. Des Moines, IA 50309-1858**

