

**The Justice Circle of Moorhead
Achievements**

January 2001-January 2003

“Status of Equal Opportunity for Minorities in Moorhead, Minnesota”

Website: www.mnstate.edu/mhdrights

May 7, 2001, updated: 9/8/01, 10/2/01, 1/3/02, 1/15/03

Submitted by Sandi Berlin

I. Release of Report by US Commission on Civil Rights, written by the Minnesota Advisory Committee to the US Commission on Civil Rights

- A. In 1998 - 1999 the US Civil Rights Commission and the Minnesota Advisory Committee heard testimony of Moorhead residents regarding equal opportunity and equal justice minorities and non-minorities.
- B. Testimony given and statistics used in report illustrate an overwhelming difference of perceptions within this city of approximate 30,000 people.
- C. Based on these testimonies the US Commission on Civil Rights a report was released January 30, 2001. This report is titled “The Status of Equal Opportunity for Minorities in Moorhead, MN”.
- D. Four areas mentioned in the report are Housing, Employment, Policing, and Education.

II. Formation of the Justice Circle of Moorhead.

- A. In the fall of 1999, Minnesota Council of Churches’ Renewing the Public Church called the Civil Rights reports to the attention of a few leaders of faith in Moorhead.
- B. Although, this began as a faith-based group, the Justice Circle of Moorhead, has continued to grow including civic leaders, public institutions, non-profit organizations, private business owners and individual citizens of Moorhead and Fargo.
- C. The Justice Circle continues to generate interest causing a ripple effect to communities beyond the immediate area.
- D. Meetings are co-convened the *second Thursday of each month, 9:00 am at the First Congregational Church, 406 8th St. S., Moorhead.*

III. Justice Circle strategically planned for the release of the civil rights report.

- A. Organize community and local media to receive the report.
- B. Report released January 30, 2001, at the Red River Inn, Moorhead MN
- C. 800 copies of report were initially ordered and distributed.
- D. Goal to have report in the hand of each citizen in the Moorhead with churches as the site to offer the report.
- E. Encourage and support Anti Racism Training, i.e. Tri-Council Coordinating Commission/MN Churches Anti-Racism Initiative.
- F. Generate positive ideas and action for Moorhead to respond to report.

➤ **Organized 50 +Study Circles.**

- A. Sponsoring three facilitator’s training sessions, with seventy - plus trainees, by Karen Roles, of Renewing the Public Church, of the Minnesota Council of Churches.
- B. Fifty (50) study circles took place during the months of February, March and April 2001 in Moorhead with 306 participants
- C. Study circles were held in 3-4 sessions, at various times and locations.

Justice Circle of Moorhead

Page 2

➤ **Community Forum sponsored by the Moorhead Human Rights Commission and the Justice Circle of Moorhead.**

- A. A Community Forum was held at Heritage Hjemkost Interpretive Center, Moorhead, April 26th 2001.
- B. Approximately 200 participants, with media coverage
- C. Recommendations and summary of the 50 study circles were presented
- D. Facilitators included Moorhead Human Rights Chair Rick Henderson, Alicia Rodriguez, Pr. Vernnia Wright, Justice Circle Co-chairs Diane Wray Williams, Sandi Berlin and Yoke-Sim Gunaratne, Director of Cultural Diversity.
- E. One hundred nineteen (119) community members initially signed on to the Citizen Action Teams (CATs) in ten areas to address Moorhead Civil Rights.

VI. Study circle recommendations summaries areas of concerns (collected 4/26 & MSUM discussion sessions). CATs listed below, including number of individuals signing on:

1. Cultural Understanding & Cultural Competence (6)
2. Education (51)
3. Faith-Based Groups (3)
4. Housing & Public Accommodations (26)
5. Human/Civil Rights Advocacy (9)
6. Income & Employment (6)
7. Leadership Development & Civic Participation (4)
8. The Media (3)
9. Public Health (2)
10. Public Safety (9)

These Task Forces continue to meet to study, strategize, report and monitor.

VII. October 2001, the recommendations of the Study Circles were summarized, and brought to the Moorhead Human Rights Commission.

The Justice Circle of Moorhead describes itself as:
**People living in hope, believing in equality for the human family
Working together for justice in our community.**

VIII. Community(s) working for Justice

The following includes some outcomes (and/or timely developments) that have taken place, since the Report was released. The community continues to work towards creating equal opportunity for Minorities across the Red River, in Moorhead, MN and Fargo, ND.

The Justice Circle of Moorhead
Page 3

1. The Moorhead Human Rights Commission and the Fargo Human Relations teamed up, forming the Joint Human Relations Commission.
2. First Fargo/Moorhead Celebration of Martin Luther King Day.
3. Building A Human Rights Community: A Conversation with American Indians was held at NDSU, October 11, 2002.
4. February 9, 2002 Alicia Rodrigues and Sandi Berlin Hosted a National Issues Forum: Racial and Ethnic Tensions: What should we do? with Moderator, Karen Nitzkowski. Sponsored by Fargo/Moorhead Community, Mhd Community Ed., and MN Humanities Commission.
5. March 23, 2002, the Moorhead Justice Circle received 2001 Best Practices In Social Work and Social Services Award in the category of Organization/Community Development. This was an international, competitive award. The Justice Circle Abstract was submitted by Dr. Amy Phillips, MSUM and Dr. Harvey Stalwick, Concordia. In addition to the Award, travel expenses for 2 were paid, \$1000 cash for Justice Circle, and 1yr. Subscription to Social Services InfoNet, which was donated to the Turtle Mountain Tribal College.

**6. TOCAR - TRAINING OUR CAMPUSES AGAINST RACISM
Background**

TOCAR evolved out of the community-wide study circle process that took place in the spring of 2001 in response to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Report, "The Status of Equal Opportunity for Minorities in Moorhead, Minnesota." From the study circle process emerged Citizen Action Teams, one of which focused on Higher Education. This Higher Education Team decided that its focus would be the development of a multi-campus anti-racism initiative and one of its student members named this initiative TOCAR. The team, now the TOCAR Collaborative, consists of faculty, student, and staff representatives from Minnesota State University Moorhead, Concordia College, North Dakota State University and Northwest Technical College.

Mission Statement

TOCAR seeks to enhance campus climate and promote equal opportunity by 1) advancing multicultural understanding and competence and 2) confronting ethnic/racial prejudice and discrimination and institutional racism.

TOCAR's Goal: To dismantle institutional racism and make our colleges and universities multicultural/anti-racist organizations through an intentional process of personal and institutional reflection, action, and change.

7. **YWCA of Fargo/Moorhead** – Commissioned 13 members to serve on the YWCA Anti-racism Leadership Team. The mission of the YWCA of Fargo/Moorhead is to Empower women and girls and eliminate racism. Their Vision is equality.

Page 4

8. Justice Circle held a discussion on the controversial topic of Gay/Lesbian family households, and membership at the YMCA. Although some chose not to take part in this discussion, it was agreed upon, that "all children should be treated equally".

9. Media – Forum develops first ever Readers Advisory Board, Multi-cultural pages include Perspectives of a Native American Woman, Sandra Berlin.

10. Official Proclamation, by Mayor Mark Voxland of Moorhead congratulated and extended appreciation for the Moorhead Justice Circle's commitment to promotion of social integrity in the Moorhead community. Proclaiming, Monday, April 1, 2002 as "Moorhead Justice Circle Appreciation Day" in the city of Moorhead.

11. Human Rights Honorees have included Irene Hogan, PEPP (People Escaping Poverty Project), Diane Wray Williams, Amy Phillips and Sandi Berlin.

12. January 2003, recommendations from the Mhd Human Rights Commission were brought to the Mhd City Council.

13. Uniting for Equality (UFE) A collaborative project of Fargo/Moorhead based organizations. Includes YWCA, Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living, Dorothy Day House of Hospitality, Minnkota Health Project, F-M Area Coalition of Homeless Persons, Women's Network of the Red River Valley, Pride Collective and Community Center, the Moorhead Justice Circle, the MSUM Social Work Dept., The People Escaping Poverty Project, individual members and encourage others to join Uniting for Equality.

Goals:

- To have collective impact and create a "shift in power" in the legislator.
- To form a positive working relationships with community organizations.
- To form positive relationships with legislators, which are the House Representatives for 9A, 9B and the Senator.
- To hold Legislators accountable to the needs of a diverse community.

- To rally support for the Legislators on budget and laws we believe to be important to this community.

UFE has developed 6 Core Community Values, unifying the group, held a luncheon to present the Community Values to MN Legislators, and sponsored Community Organizing workshops.

Core Community Values include:

Education
Housing
Public Safety
Income and Employment

Community Climate
Recreation and Sports

Page 6

(Insert Uniting for Equality - Core Values page 5)

For more information about UFE, please contact Lysa Ringquist, Community Organizer for People Escaping Poverty at 218-236-5434 or email lysa@pepp.org.

Additional copies of “The Status of Equal Opportunities for Minorities, in Moorhead, MN” report, are available by calling 1- 202-376-8128 or may be downloaded through MSUM website: www.mnstate.edu/mhdrights.

For more information regarding the Justice Circle of Moorhead contact: Co-convenors Diane Wray Williams at 218-236-5663; Sandra Berlin at 701-237-6555 or Dr. Amy Phillips at MSUM 218-236-2724.