

Community Relations

Link

Promoting Harmony - Facilitating Resolution - Celebrating Diversity



CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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CRC Honors Officers at 35th Annual Police Awards

By: Melissa Baker, Community Relations Specialist

The 35th annual Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Community Relations Awards banquet was held on Thursday May 15, 2014 at Center Stage on North Davidson Street.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Awards program was established by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee (CRC) in 1979. The program expresses the community's appreciation to police officers who have made outstanding contributions to the improvement of police-community relations. The program encourages officers in their

daily performance to further the understanding of the joint role of residents and police in promoting public safety and fighting crime, and rewards officers who have advanced creative solutions to neighborhood problems.



Nominations for this award are made by citizens in the different

patrol areas, Charlotte-Mecklenburg School personnel and students, groups, and individuals. The officers are judged on their involvement in helping the community understand the police function and the residents' role in making Charlotte a safer place to live.

This year the CRC received 521 nominations. A panel of judges, made up of members of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee, chose 28 semi-finalists and 15 finalists.

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Diversity Matters in County Government

By: Dena Diorio, Mecklenburg County Manager



While a diverse workplace is important for any organization, it is especially important to Mecklenburg County government. At its core, we are a group of people serving people -- a diverse group of people. Diversity is a value that is integrated throughout our organization, and it's imbedded in the way that we do business.

The Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners established

framework for diversity in 2006 with the goal of being a "model diverse organization." The parameters were defined as:

- No disparity in customer satisfaction with County services
- No disparity in satisfaction among County employees
- Maintaining a qualified workforce representative of the community

Since then, a Diversity Council was formed and it meets monthly to advise and support the County's diversity management efforts. Mecklenburg County created a Diversity Management Plan with specific goals, strategies and measures to make sure that we

are on track to be that model diverse organization. Some of the goals include: high customer satisfaction and positive resident perception; increased employee knowledge about diversity and working with a diverse population; and increased employee motivation and satisfaction regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, ethnicity, and/or national origin. Many County departments have taken action to better serve our diverse population. Translation services and bilingual staff are offered in many departments, including the Department of Social Services, the Health Department, and Child Support Enforcement.

(Continue on page 5)

12 Years a Slave; A Community Dialogue

By: Patricia Albritton, CRC Chair

On Saturday, March 22, 2014, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee (CRC) presented a screening of the movie *12 Years a Slave*. Over fifty people joined CRC members to view the movie and engage in a group dialogue. The viewing audience was multi-racial, teenagers and retirees, single individuals and families, CRC members, and City employees. Some had viewed the movie; many had not. Within the month leading up to this CRC event, *12 Years a Slave* had won the American Academy, British Academy, and Golden Globe Awards for Best Picture.

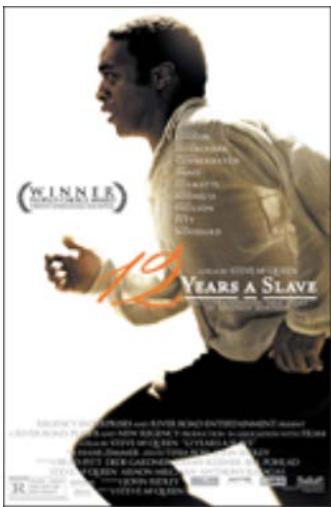
In the open group dialogue after the movie, I thought the discussion would focus on how slavery was a horrible period in our American lives but slavery ended over two hundred years ago.

However, most in the group understood that slavery was legal in America for over two hundred years and only officially ended 150 years ago. Moreover, it was not until fifty years ago that Civil Rights Acts (1964) legislation mandated equal rights and an end to racial discrimination.

Why is this history important? Because many can see that African-Americans still live with the effects of discrimination and racism. There may not be physical bondage but gaps in access to education, distribution of wealth, and basic human rights have never closed.

After the movie screening, some of the discussion comments centered on a lack of respect for the current education system (from students, administrators, and policy makers), disparity in assignments for advanced placement classes in high school grades, a lack of equal access to health and human services, and this country's wealth continuing to be held by a small percentage of individuals.

Despite the enactment of new policies and laws, many in the discussion group pointed out that many of the hardships displayed in the movie remain challenges today:



- the disregard for keeping the family structure together;
- people turning on each other for the slightest gain for themselves;
- individuals and groups ignoring the brutality directed towards others because they have no sense of power;
- education being a pathway to advancing but not equally offered to everyone and not offered to some at all;
- individuals being harassed and discredited because they attempted to demonstrate any capability of intelligence;
- African Americans fearing for their lives even though they are free men and women.

Moreover, it is not just African Americans feeling the effect of societal bondage; today, many cultures are still trying to capture their basic human and civil rights. "Fear, distrust, and envy" continue to control us all.

Thus, the question remains how can we work together across all lines of difference to ameliorate the current effect of past discrimination and racism?

"First there must be truth". We start by acknowledging that we still have work to do; that discrimination and racism are not only in the minds of some people but that they really do exist. We must talk about discrimination and racism and not be afraid to discuss the impacts on our society and in our city. We have to begin to understand and accept how those impacted feel and not disregard this impact because it may not be voiced in a way comfortable to most people.

If we are to truly address discrimination and racism, every person needs to take a part in understanding and correcting behaviors. We can say there is room for change but we can no longer wait for others to make the change.

(Quotations from *The Willie Lynch Letter and the Making of a Slave*, published by Lushena Books, and *Blood Done Sign My Name* by Timothy B. Tyson)

12 years a slave

My reaction

I was not prepared for this movie, though I am a student of history and I know many of the horrors that were perpetrated on the African American population during the era of slavery. I knew that slaves were treated as property, much like animals. I knew that slave families were broken up, children torn away from their parents. I knew that religion was used by white slave owners to justify their ownership and subjugation of slaves. I knew that slave traders made their livelihood off the purchase, kidnapping and sale of African American slaves. I knew that slaves were barred from education to keep them from rebelling. I knew that uncooperative slaves had been tortured and killed.

Even though I knew these things had happened, I was not prepared to see it portrayed so vividly in this movie. Based on a true story, the personal experience of a middle class man from Boston who was kidnapped and sold into slavery portrays in graphic detail his unspeakable tragedy as well as the unbearable atrocity that was slavery. But more importantly, it portrays the roots of modern day racism.

Marc Friedland, CRC Member

April: Fair Housing Month

By: Luis Matta, Community Relations Specialist

CHARLOTTE - Each April, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses Fair Housing Month to mark the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, the landmark law passed shortly after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. which prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, and family status. This year's Fair Housing Month theme is "Fair Housing is Your Right: Use It!" Throughout the month, HUD will cast a spotlight on the persistent problem that exists in this country, as individuals and families continue to face both blatant and subtle forms of housing discrimination.

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan launched this year's commemoration at an event featuring the new film "A Matter of Place," which documents three personal stories of housing discrimination in New York City. Underwritten by a grant provided under HUD's Fair Housing Initiative Program, the film profiles three

examples of housing discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, and source of income and features commentary from legal experts, civil rights advocates and fair housing testers. "This month is an opportunity to recommit to the principle that fair housing is an essential part of everything we do; every grant we make; every building we build; and every community we work with," said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. "And we will go to the mat in order to ensure the right of every American to fair housing. Although the times have changed - our commitment to this work remains as strong as ever. It is at the core of our mission."

"Fair Housing Month is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on just how far we've come to make our housing more equitable and how far we still have to go to end housing discrimination," said HUD Acting FHEO Assistant Secretary Bryan Greene. "Fair housing is about giving

people the opportunity to pursue their dreams and whenever this opportunity is denied, not only do families lose, our entire nation loses."

In addition to the legal protections provided under the Fair Housing Act prohibiting housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, and family status, approximately 20 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 150 cities, towns and counties across the nation also prohibit discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals and families.

In 2012, HUD published new regulations to ensure that the Department's core housing programs are open to all eligible persons, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, 12 states and the District of Columbia, as well as several counties and municipalities protect persons against housing discrimination based on their source of income.

"Each year, HUD and communities and organizations across the country recognize Fair Housing Month by hosting an array of activities that enhance the public's awareness of their fair housing rights."

Feel discriminated? Call us! For more information about fairness in housing and public places or to file a complaint, please call 704-336-5160.

Police Community Relations Awards (Continued from page I)

The panel commented that that all 28 officers demonstrated a level of dedication, commitment and innovation that was inspiring.

All 28 semi-finalists were honored with a framed Certificate of Appreciation; the 15 finalists each received a \$500 gift card and an elegant crystal award.

During the past 35 years, residents of Charlotte-Mecklenburg have nominated over 4100 law enforcement officers, 530 who have been recognized with police-community relations awards. The awards program is made possible through the generous sponsorship of local businesses, individuals, churches and organizations. Donna Murrell, staff liaison to the Police Community Relations Sub-Committee, received \$33,000 in

monetary and in-kind donations from corporate sponsors to cover this year's event, which has become so big that it was standing room only.

This year's event also featured a red carpet with photo op, and dancing into the evening after the awards.

Several dignitaries were in attendance, including CMPD Police Chief Rodney Monroe, City Council members LaWana Mayfield and Gregg Phipps, County Commissioner George Dunlap, and WBTV Anchorman Paul Cameron.



Top Left to right: Sgt. Kirk Hildenbrand, Officer Brad Hall, Sgt. Celestine Ratliff, Officer David Padgett, Det. Bill Clark

2nd Row Left to right: Det. Marty Cuthbertson, Det. Michael Nguyen, Officer Jose Campos, Officer Kristina Frazita, Officer Marchelle Hoffman

3rd Row Left to right: Officer Michael Rorie, Officer Richard Reese, Officer Robert Goodwin, Officer Tricia Edwards, Officer William Houston

The Director's Thoughts on Racism and Diversity



**By: Willie Ratchford
Executive Director, CRC**

Racially charged comments by a rancher in Nevada, Cliven Bundy, and an NBA team owner, Donald Sterling, have resulted in renewed discussion across America on the issue of race.

Many people, of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, and of various political persuasions, have roundly condemned both of these individuals for their indiscretion. These rebukes, I believe, have been good for our country and local communities.

However, we need to do more. What we have done is address two individuals who many see as racists. The next step is to begin to address the vestiges of racism that permeate many of our institutions.

Ameliorating the current effects of past discrimination and racism starts with acknowledgement and an understanding that racism is still with us and embedded in our institutions. Institutional racism has been defined as "social and institutional power plus race prejudice," and not something we can only attribute to an individual. It also starts with acceptance of the diversity that makes us who we are as a country.

Racism: In my line of work, human relations, we find that those who actively practice racism today are very subtle and sophisticated in the way they express that racism. In fact, this kind of racism is so covert that often the victims of this insidious behavior do not realize that they have been victimized.

People engage in what we call "have a nice day racism" or "racism with a smile and a pat on the back." Because many of us do not see it, we assume that it does not exist. It does, both individually and institutionally.

Racism affects Hispanics and Latinos, it affects African-Americans, it affects Native Americans and it also affects Caucasians; and many others. No racial or ethnic group gets a pass from this insidious behavior. The sad thing about individual or personal racism is that it says much more about the perpetrator of the racism than it does about the victim of the racism.

Diversity: In order for us to get over racism, we all must accept the diversity of humanity.



"Diversity, generally understood and embraced, is not casual liberal tolerance of anything and everything not yourself. It is not polite accommodation. Instead, diversity is, in action, the sometimes-painful awareness that other people, other races, other voices, other habits of mind, have as much integrity of being, as much claim upon the world, as you do."

Our Mission:
We advocate for an inclusive community where trust, acceptance, fairness and equity are the community norms.

Diversity Matters in County Government (Continued from page 1)

Our Park and Recreation department targets programs to seniors, people with disabilities, and at-risk youth. The Board of Elections offers curbside voting to accommodate voters with special physical needs. And by offering many services online, we are more customer friendly to those with mobility problems.

You can find out much more by visiting our Diversity page at MecklenburgCountyNC.gov. Internally, diversity training starts on day one. Every County employee is required to take Diversity 101 when he or she is hired. The Diversity Council consults and collaborates with our training staff to develop up-to-date training programs and market its "Diversity Makes Us Better" brand. To date, more than 3,500 County employees have taken diversity training. The Diversity Council

works carefully to stress to employees the value of diversity and Mecklenburg County's commitment to diversity management. An example of this happens each year at our annual employee appreciation day.

One year, the team developed the Diversity Museum Walk, a display of team photos and diversity displays that ended with a diversity trivia game. The Diversity Council also awards the Team Award, a competitive award program that looks at the diverse make-up of work teams, how effective team members work together, innovation, team projects, and performance.

Regular measurement of diversity efforts is important. The County uses several tools to

measure how we rate in this area including the Employee Climate Survey (ECS) and customer satisfaction surveys. 81% of County employees completed the ECS for Fiscal Year 2013, and 92% of those County employees felt that they work in a diverse division and that co-workers respect the diversity that exists in their division.

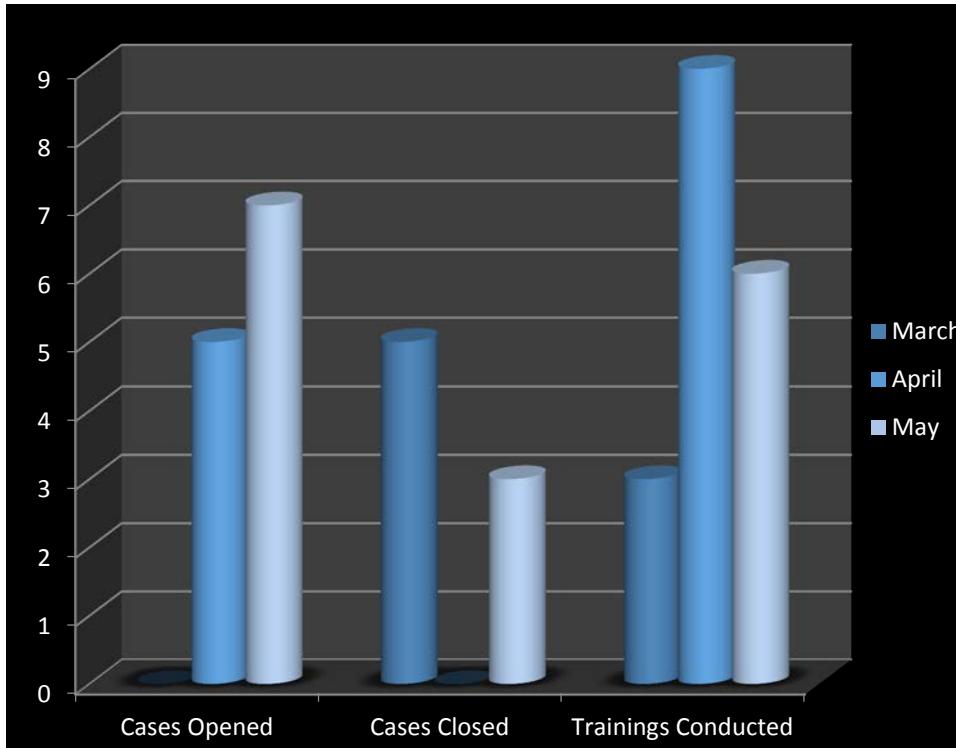
Externally, Mecklenburg County uses community and point of service surveys. We achieved a 96% customer satisfaction rating indicating satisfaction with direct and online service delivery. Through training and recruitment of a workforce that is representative of the community,

We've worked hard to eliminate disparity among County services

and programs. We're doing very well but we know of an area for improvement: advisory committee diversity.

The County has numerous advisory boards, committees and commissions that meet to discuss and advise on social, environmental and fiscal issues. Our goal is to have this membership representative of the County's racial and ethnic population and we have fallen short the past two fiscal years. To that end, I'll finish with a request to help us meet our goal. Apply today for an appointment to an advisory board at MecklenburgCountyNC.gov.

Fair Housing Highlights



Police Review Highlights:

MARCH:

Staff attended 5 Chain of Command Hearings

APRIL:

Staff attended 6 Chain on Command Hearings

Staff assisted citizens with filing 6 complaints against police officers

Staff assisted citizens with filing 2 appeals to the Citizen's Review Board

CRC Board Members

CRC Staff

Executive Director

Willie Ratchford

Community Relations Managers

Ledger Morrissette Jr.
Mary Williams
Terry Bradley

Community Relations Specialists

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Lezlie Briggs
Luis Matta
Stephanie Randolph
Terry Stokes

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Bill Schreiner
Dana Sidberry
David Smith
Ruth Stevenson
Jennifer Styczen
Michael Tanck
Carrie Taylor
Rhonda Taylor
Glenn Thomas
Thomas J. Vinson, Jr.
Bahiyyah Walker
Dwayne Walker
Doug Wilson

*Our Vision:
A Charlotte-Mecklenburg
where people's differences
are acknowledged, under-
stood, and appreciated*

We're on the Web!

See us at:

crc.charmeck.org

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Thank You

We love to hear from CRC Link readers! If you have a suggestion, feedback, or great story idea, please do not hesitate to contact us at mmbaker@charlottenc.gov

The CRC Link is a quarterly publication of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee.

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Dispute Settlement Highlights

