

# Kentucky Commission On Human Rights

Protector of Civil Rights. Voice for Equality. Catalyst for Positive Change.

## Human Rights Report

### Northern KY city agrees to ADA modifications

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights June rulings included a conciliation agreement between Michelle Carroll-Piver and the City of Fort Thomas in Northern Kentucky near Cincinnati, Ohio.

Carroll-Piver of Romeoville, Illinois, claimed the city discriminated against her at its West Southgate Park based on her minor son's disability.

She said in her complaint, "Playground equipment is not accessible by wheelchair or walker, which is his means of mobility. I have to carry him to the various pieces of equipment." Carroll-Piver claimed the city was denying her child equal accessibility to public accommodations, a violation of the Kentucky and U.S. Civil Rights acts.

The Kentucky Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator Office found the park to be noncompliant with requirements for public accommodations listed in the U.S. Americans With Disabilities Act.

The city denied violating the law, but agreed to modifications to ensure accessibility to people with disabilities at its parks. In addition to compensating the complainant with \$1,000, Fort Thomas will make these changes at West Southgate Park:

- Provide handicap parking

at West Southgate Avenue entrance

- Install accessible curb at Rosemont Avenue entrance
- Install new entrance gate or latch system for easier access
- Replace water fountain push button lever system
- Place additional concrete slope in playground
- Provide new picnic table with open ends
- Add new adaptive swing seat and safety belt

### Shelbyville forms commission

We are proud to welcome a new Kentucky local commission partner, The Shelby County Human Rights Commission serving Shelbyville, Simpsonville and Shelby County. Glenda Green, a Kentucky Commission on Human Rights representative, asked the county last winter to establish the local commission. She worked with officials through its formation and commissioner training.

Green said officers have been selected and an ordinance officially establishing the Shelby commission is up for passage this summer.

The chair is Gary L. Walls. The commissioners are Verman Winburn, vice chair, Darlene Brown, secretary, Randy Brown, Erik Butler, Mary Crawford, Kevin L. Crittenden, Ann Morris, Butch Kinsella, and Hilda Plante.

Proposed Ordinance No. 84-1 says the body's objective is to inform, educate and offer assistance in resolving inquiries of discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations, as they relate to the protected classes of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age and familial status. The commission may receive inquiries and conduct studies to help carry out its mission.

Members of the public may contact the commission at (502) 655-0424 or send email to [HRC@aol.com](mailto:HRC@aol.com).

### Supremacist rally in Western Kentucky

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights in May again urged the public to speak out against Klan activities in the state and against the group's backward doctrines of hatred and violence.

This was in response to the news announcement that the The Imperial Klans of America, the second largest branch in the nation of the white supremacist group, held an annual "Viking" rally at its Dawson Springs, Ky. headquarters over Memorial Day Weekend.

"People are aghast that an insidious group like this has a headquarters within the boundaries of Kentucky," said John J. Johnson, executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights.

The Southern Poverty Law Center and others claim the KKK is losing members. But, IKA "Imperial Wizard" Ron Edwards told WHAS Television in Louisville that despite losing a multi-million dollar civil suit this year brought by the Southern Poverty Law Center, his organization is growing since the election of African

American U.S. President Barack Obama and the downward spiral of the economy. The court case found Edwards liable for teaching violent doctrines that resulted in the brutal beating of a Panamanian teen in 2006.

## Louisville human relations fights for budget

Coming to light in June was an internal survey the Louisville Metro Council sent to Mayor Jerry Abramson listing programs and services in order of budgetary priority. The memorandum noted that those toward the bottom could be likely candidates for budget cuts. Sadly, the council placed the city Human Relations Commission just above swimming pools and fourth from the bottom.

In times of economic hardship, the council should not push human rights issues to the side. "To the contrary, this is when equal opportunity issues are more likely to arise," state commission Executive Director John Johnson told the Courier-Journal newspaper in a letter to the editor.

With proper support of the Louisville Human Relations Commission, the necessary infrastructure is in place to address issues of equal opportunity. The agency hears and rules on discrimination complaints, mediates discriminatory disputes among members of the community, and provides awareness to people about civil rights laws and the obligations to comply. It administers the city certification process for businesses owned, operated, and controlled by minorities, women, and people with disabilities. It enforces the city policy

to use and encourage the use of such contractors. It monitors the Affirmative Action plans of contractors and vendors doing business with Louisville Metro Government.

In order for Louisville to maintain its recent designation by the U.S. Conference of Mayors as America's "Most Livable Large City," the council should change its stance and make the Louisville Metro Human Relations Commission a high priority.

## Talk about Fairness

RICHMOND – In partnership with the Richmond Human Rights Commission, the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights presented a panel to speak about the need for passage of a statewide law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

This Citizens Advocacy Hearing was held on June 17 at Richmond City Hall. Media reported that a large crowd gathered to hear panelists encourage the passage of a local ordinance.

Teresa Isaac of Lexington acted as panel moderator. She is a former Lexington, Ky. mayor and serves as a faculty member in the Business Department of Midway College.

The panelists were Jody Cofer of Murray, Ky., Jennifer Crossen of Lexington, Rev. Don Smith of Covington, Ky., and Carla Wallace of Louisville, Ky.

"Since the 1960s when the general assembly first adopted policies of non-discrimination and formed the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, the Commonwealth of Kentucky has repeatedly demonstrated that we are at the forefront of southern states when it comes to protecting our

citizens against discrimination," Isaac said.

Carla Wallace played a large part in Louisville's passage of an ordinance that included the protection of gay and transgender citizens against discrimination.

"Civil rights protections for one group create more equality for all groups," Wallace said. "We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."

Today, there are 13 states and 100 municipalities with inclusive non-discrimination laws that include gender identity.

On June 19, 2008, the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights unanimously adopted a resolution calling for the passage of a statewide fairness law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in any person's pursuit of employment, housing, and the goods and services of public accommodations.

On June 1, 2009, President Barrack Obama issued a proclamation declaring June 2009 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month to promote equal rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. As stated in the President's proclamation, 40 years ago, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City resisted police harassment that had become all too common for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. This marked the beginning of the Gay Pride Movement.

To commemorate the important events of June 1969, and to commit to achieving equality for Kentucky's LGBT community, the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights and the Richmond Human Rights Commission selected June 17 as the date for the

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Fairness Citizens Advocacy Hearing.

While the state has not added sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes within the Kentucky Civil Rights Act, three local governments in Kentucky currently enforce local ordinances prohibiting discrimination because of sexual orientation and gender identity: Louisville, Lexington and Covington.

## Camp Nelson wants to recognize role in KY African American history

The Kentucky Human Rights Commission held a Citizens Advocacy Hearing on May 20 at the historic Camp Nelson in Nicholasville, Ky.

The discussion gave advocates the opportunity to ask the public to support efforts to restore the park and bring new jobs to Jessamine County. Park officials along with a volunteer fund-raising committee described the significance of the Civil War base to Kentucky African American heritage.

Panelists were Dr. Dean Richards, author and Civil War historian and chair of the fund-raising committee, Dr. Stephen McBride, director of Interpretation and Archaeology at Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage Park, Michael Crutcher, a Frederick Douglass re-enactor, and Robert Bell and James Hunn, both U.S. Colored Troop re-enactors.

The site just south of Lexington was a major training ground for the U.S. Colored Troops. When President Abraham Lincoln directed Congress to pass the Conscription Act of February 1864, the Union Army in Kentucky began enlisting African Americans, both slaves and freemen into the Union Army. Slaves in Kentucky began enlisting by the thousands and Camp Nelson became by the end of the Civil War the largest recruiting and training center in Kentucky and the third largest in the

nation.

The commission supports the proposed partial replication of the original Camp Nelson site because of its historic significance in the country's war that ended slavery and the camp's history concerning the largest minority in the state. "We are proud to support an undertaking that will help mark a major point in our state's history and highlight the stories of African Americans during troubled times that ultimately led to freedom," Executive Director John J. Johnson said.

The Friends of Camp Nelson volunteer committee is helping the park push forward a multi-project plan to restore the park located at 6614 Danville Road. The proposal includes five major projects, Dr. Richards said. If successful, one project will result in rebuilding the Hickman Covered Bridge, which will be the world's largest single span covered bridge.

Another project will be the horse and mule reclamation-rebuilding project. Camp Nelson concocted a system to replenish the strength of horses and mules that were used to transport ammunition and supplies, and was so successful that it was used all over the United States until the use of horses and mules by the Army ended in 1943 in Camp Carson, Colorado, Richards said. Tired horses and mules would become broken down and unserviceable very quickly, but using special feeding and exercise regimens, Camp Nelson found a way to recuperate the stock, he said. "We recently learned that this same system that originated in Camp Nelson is currently being used in the war in Afghanistan in the rough mountain areas," he said.

## Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians

The Kentucky Human Rights Commission introduced the Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians poster series in 1970, to

recognize the achievements of African Americans neglected in traditional histories of the state and to introduce Kentucky African American history into classrooms. The series helps the commission in its task to raise awareness of human and civil rights in the commonwealth. Educators and libraries use the colorful, biographical-style pieces as teaching tools. Free posters are available to the public. The gallery is online at [www.kchr@ky.gov](http://www.kchr@ky.gov).

### Elder Watson Diggs (1883-1947)

On April 24, Elder Diggs became the 45th gallery member.

His poster was unveiled at a Louisville meeting of the body he helped create, the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. He was known as *The Dreamer*. On January 5, 1911, he cofounded, along with nine other men, the first black fraternity at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind., and one of the earliest black national social fraternities.

He was born in Hopkinsville, Ky., the county-seat of Christian County. He later left his home state and graduated from college in 1908 from Indiana State Normal in Terre Haute, Ind., now Indiana State Teachers College.

Diggs believed he could establish an African American fraternity on the largely white IU campus. He envisioned this would help give black men support and sanctuary. He felt a strong, dignified, permanent body could change perceptions and enable future generations to attend the university. During this challenging time, African American students were not allowed to participate in social and other functions, they were denied use of school entertainment and recreational facilities. On the night of January 5, 1911, his dream of what was to become Kappa Alpha Psi became a reality. Originally chartered and incorporated as Kappa



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# Human Rights Report

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Alpha Nu, it officially became the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity in December 1914.

Kappa Alpha Psi is a collegiate Greek-letter fraternity with a predominantly African American membership. Since the fraternity's founding, however, Kappa Alpha Psi has never limited membership based on color, creed or national origin. The fraternity has over 150,000 members with 700 undergraduate and alumni chapters in every state of the US, and international chapters in England, Germany, Korea, Japan, the Caribbean, Saint Thomas, Saint Croix, the United States Virgin Islands and South Africa.

An educator by profession, Diggs taught in public schools in Indianapolis, Ind., where he became a principal. After his death on Nov. 8, 1947, the name of the school where he served as principal for 26 years was changed to Elder W. Diggs Elementary. The public school is still in operation.

### *Morris Jeff, Jr. (1938-2003)*

On April 10, Morris Jeff became the 46th Great Black Kentucky



gallery member. His poster was unveiled during the annual conference of the National Association of Black Social Workers, in Louisville.

Jeff was a social worker, therapist, advocate, trainer, activist and consultant who spoke with clarity on urban problems and solutions using an African philosophical approach. He was a licensed clinician and a widely respected expert on a number of subjects including trans-racial adoption, black-on-black violence, welfare reform, reparation, manhood development, cultural diversity, the middle passage, rites of passage programs, Kemetic (Egyptian) culture and African spirituality.

He was a native of New Orleans, La., who moved to Louisville in 1965. He received a bachelor's degree from Xavier University in New Orleans, a master's degree in social work from Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta) in Atlanta, Ga., and a Ph.D. in social work from Tulane University in New Orleans.

In Louisville, he served in the early 60s as project director at the Presbyterian Community Center. In 1966, he accepted the directorship of the Plymouth Settlement House and served in that position until 1972. The Plymouth Settlement House at 1626 West Chestnut Street was started in 1917 to serve the African American population of Louisville's west end.

The clinician believed in preserving and advancing African American families. He appeared on the NBC Today Show, ABC Night Line, CBS Night Watch and the Oprah Winfrey Show as an opponent to trans-racial adoptions. He asserted that black people can and must care for black children.

In 1981, he developed the Harambee Closing Ceremony to honor African culture to be held as part of the National Association of Black Social Workers annual conferences. Harambee is a Kiswahili word that translates as "pulling together" or "we all pull together." The ceremony has since been renamed the Dr. Morris F. X. Jeff, Jr. Harambee Ceremony to honor his legacy and immeasurable contributions to the National Association of Black Social Workers, and to the brothers and sisters throughout the African Diaspora.