



**BONNER COUNTY  
HUMAN  
TASK  
FORCE  
RIGHTS**

# THE RIGHTS STUFF

JAN 2003

THE RIGHTS STUFF is published—occasionally—by the BONNER COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS TASK FORCE. Helping with this issue were: Gretchen Hellar, Linda Navarre, Gary Payton, Christine Holbert.

Visit our updated BCHRTF website at [www.bchrtf.org](http://www.bchrtf.org)! See photos of the Civil Rights Award Banquet, the text of Gary Payton's acceptance speech, and 2002 newspaper articles on human rights issues in north Idaho. Suggestions and new ideas are always welcome.

## A DIALOGUE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN IDAHO: STATEWIDE TELECONFERENCE

by Gary Payton

It was my privilege to represent the Bonner County Human Rights Task Force at the statewide teleconference in November, 2002. Let's examine the key points of the teleconference and the ways in which BCHRTF's work modestly influenced the virtual gathering. We'll touch on the format, the principle points, and potential follow-up actions which BCHRTF may take to sustain the momentum of this event.

The teleconference was jointly organized by the Idaho Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Governor. People gathered at teleconference sites in Boise, Idaho Falls, Moscow, and Coeur d'Alene. Approximately 35 people participated, including Governor Kempthorne. North Idaho was represented by Tony Stewart, Mary Lou Reed, Ruthie Johnson, and me. Following introductory remarks by the Governor, the group turned to three questions:

- What human rights issues have been addressed well in Idaho?
- What human rights issues still need to be addressed?
- How can Idaho best accomplish the tasks identified in question 2?

Governor Kempthorne opened the teleconference by reviewing recent accomplishments statewide. Some of the points covered included:

- Successful trial of the Aryan Nations and Richard Butler.
- Idaho is the fifth state to adopt Juneteenth as an official state holiday. This makes Idaho the only state west of the Mississippi to celebrate the emancipation of slaves.
- Successful passage of legislation establishing the minimum wage for farm workers.
- Introduction of Native American teachers in state classrooms to teach native languages, with no teacher certification required.
- Construction of the Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial in Boise.

- Plans for the establishment of a Hispanic Cultural Center.
- Memorializing of Japanese-American internment during World War II.
- Annual Holocaust Remembrance at the state level in Boise.

Question 1: What human rights issues have been addressed well in Idaho? Following the Governor's remarks, the group moved into a random listing of other steps forward. Highlighted here are only a few of those additional responses:

- Establishment of a statewide network of human rights organizations such as our Task Force.
- Establishment of a Diversity Office, headed by Dr. Raul Sanchez, reporting directly to the President, University of Idaho.
- Establishment of many human rights "clubs" at high schools and middle schools across the state.
- Commitment to proactive education on human rights issues across the state.
- Adoption of Human Dignity resolutions by some county and city leaders.

Question 2: What human rights issues still need to be addressed? During the discussion of Question 2, multiple points were raised. Many implied their own solution. Hence, the lines between the responses for Questions 2 and 3 were not precise. Among the many responses were:

- Greater need to address Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender issues across the state. Education and expansion of existing malicious harassment laws were two of several topics discussed.
- Need for Human Rights Commission to be granted subpoena power. Idaho's commission may be the only one in the nation without such power. Businesses can easily disregard the inquiries of the commission without such power.
- Greater need to address the serious "religious divide" across the state. The speaker noted the divide exists around homosexual concerns. Another speaker noted the LDS and non-LDS divide in southern Idaho.
- Need to hire more minority teachers in Idaho schools.
- Need for continued advocacy for the elderly.

- Need for continued advocacy for the disabled.
- Need to find more ways to engage Native American leaders in this on-going dialogue. It was noted by the organizers that invitations were extended, but no Native representatives participated in the conference.
- Need to repeal the outdated sodomy laws in Idaho.
- Need to address the economic justice issues which often form the basis for hate and discrimination. Living wage, not minimum wage, conversation is needed.
- Need for mandatory diversity training for state legislators and state administrators.
- Need for an annual human rights report for the state of Idaho.

Question 3: How can Idaho best accomplish the tasks identified in Question 2?

- There was much discussion of how and who can introduce legislation in the next session of the Legislature advocating for an expansion of malicious harassment laws to include concerns about sexuality.
- Discussion of the "vehicle" for keeping people informed of progress/follow-up to the conference. The monthly Diversity News email published by Michael Shaw of the Idaho Association of Cities was the logical candidate vehicle.
- Formally, the teleconference will be transcribed and the topics made available to both the Human Rights Commission and to the Office of the Governor.
- In sum, we need to keep doing what we do best: educating, networking, and remaining dedicated to enhancing human dignity in Bonner County.

As a footnote, an AP reporter was present in the Boise audience. He filed a national story on the conference which was run on the first page of the Bee and in the Handle section of the Spokesman-Review on Tuesday, November 19, 2002.

## BOOK REVIEW

by Linda Navarre, Teacher, Sandpoint Middle School

Reading? Harrumph! "Mom, I don't feel like it. . . ." Perhaps it's time to look at the privilege to read. February is Black History Month, and I can think of no better way to address both issues than to recommend Nightjohn by Gary Paulsen. It is a short book (92 pages) that focuses on learning to read. The main character, Sarney, age 12, would like to read "letters." This is forbidden for a slave. It tells of Nightjohn's life-threatening endeavor to teach Sarney and others to read. The story is riveting due to Gary Paulsen's graphic descriptions of plantation life. A reluctant reader's whine "I don't wanna' read" pales next to the struggles to learn that Sarney has. My eighth graders have begged to hear me read it to them. Now that is saying something about the power of this story!

## THE PATRIOT ACT

by Gretchen Hellar

As members of the Bonner County Human Rights Task Force, it is our obligation to know as much as we can about possible threats to our human and civil rights. It has come to our attention that there is an upcoming forum on the Patriot Act. Although not sponsored by the Task Force, we feel that any forum dealing with the subject of human rights should be publicized to our membership. The following is an announcement about the forum which we received and would like to pass on for your consideration.

“The Northern Panhandle Green Party and the Idaho American Civil Liberties Union are co-sponsoring an informational forum entitled “Freedom At Risk: How the Patriot Act Threatens Your Rights Under the Constitution.” The Patriot Act, which was passed after 911 with very little attention (Congressional representatives have reported being forced to vote on it without having time even to read it) has now come front and center to the nation’s attention as a serious threat to the Bill of Rights. Twenty-three cities, towns and counties have passed resolutions or ordinances against the Patriot Act and 70 other cities and counties in 30 states are working on them. Find out why Americans are opposing the Patriot Act and how other pending federal legislation is being proposed to abridge your civil rights even further. The forum will be held Monday, February 10 at Community Hall, 204 South First Street (the log building across from the County Courthouse) from 7-10 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public. For more information call 263-0197.”

## BOB WARD MEMORIAL FUND

by Gretchen Hellar

As you probably know the Human Rights Task Force established a fund at the library for human rights literature and audio-visual items in memory of Bob Ward, a long time political and human rights activist. Because of your generous contributions the library has been able to acquire 55 different human rights related books and tapes. Availability of this material has and will “make a difference” in our community.

Remember, you can donate funds to increase this community resource at any time. By making the check payable to the library, these funds are tax deductible. Be sure to specify that the funds are to be designated for the Bob Ward Memorial Fund.

## HOLIDAY TEA FUNDRAISER

by Gretchen Hellar

A SUCCESS!!!! What more is there to say except thank you. Together all of you contributed over \$3000 to your Bonner County Human Rights Task Force. As you know the Task Force is a completely volunteer organization so all of the funds go directly to task force programs including school programs, community forums, newsletters (with over 300 members you can see that keeping you informed about Task Force activities is not cheap), student scholarships, and maintenance of our Web page—our way of letting other communities know that human rights are alive and well in Bonner County.

As you know it only costs \$1 to join the Task Force. We believe that commitment to human rights should not depend on the size of your wallet. Because of this commitment, we rely on fund-raisers to cover the costs of our programs. Although it is fun and worthwhile to get together personally, we felt that you might enjoy celebrating the holiday season in the comfort of your own home. Marian Breckenridge proposed the idea of the “Holiday Tea at Home” fund-raiser, and deserves our thanks for a successful approach.

And remember, we will be getting together soon! The Task Force will be having its annual meeting and a forum in April. We look forward to seeing you there.

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is Black History Month. The BCHRTF Black History Month Committee—with Anna Gallo as Chairperson—has been organizing various activities to put on your calendars: Check local newspapers for the Committee’s book reviews, recipes, and editorials having to do with African-American history and culture. This year’s exhibit at the Sandpoint Library—coordinated by Gretchen Ward—is titled, “Black Presence in the Northwest,” and includes photographs, letters and other materials loaned by Spokane’s Black Pioneers of the Northwest along with ephemera gathered by Gretchen Ward. It will cover Black arrival in the Northwest in the late 18th century to the present time. In addition, Marian Breckenridge is composing an editorial for The Daily Bee, as well as a lecture to be presented at the Gardenia Center on February 2, 2003. Marian’s talk will focus on Black History Month and its spiritual origins. Sandpoint’s African-style drummers and dancers, EarthBeat Drum & Dance, have agreed to perform for both Sandpoint High School and Sandpoint Middle School. EarthBeat Drum & Dance, organized by Michael Carr, has rhythm and energy that will both inspire and entertain students and teachers alike. Perhaps you saw them at the recent Panida Theater Variety Show? I am still catching my breath after watching their physical strength. Thank you also to Cindy Santi for scheduling these performances at the schools.



Bonner County Human Rights Task Force  
212 North Fourth Avenue • Suite 189  
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864