



**BONNER COUNTY  
HUMAN  
TASK  
FORCE  
RIGHTS**

# THE RIGHTS STUFF

MARCH 2004

**THE RIGHTS STUFF** is published—occasionally—by the BONNER COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS TASK FORCE. Helping with this issue were: Gretchen Hellar, Anna Gallo, Hal Hargreaves, Robyn Edwards, Phil Deutchman.

*by Hal Hargreaves*

## THE YEAR

The way I've decided to submit the annual report may seem confusing or complicated, but I wanted something interesting and reflective of the many layers of the Task Force's role in this part of the world.

We started with two new members of the Board, Phil Deutchman and Paul Graves; one, an academic and the other a past mayor, social director, and founding member of the Board. Every time we go around the circle to introduce ourselves to some guest, I realize what an extraordinary group this is. In every event produced this year, the Board has performed the hard work of designing and gophering, down to the last time consuming detail.

## ROASTED

Sometime in the heat of the '03 summer, a writer for *The River Journal* likened us to the effete snobs of Agnew's famous quote. "Nattering nabobs of north Idaho" might well have been his label for the Task Force. I bring this up because it served as a challenge for me and perhaps others, even though I thought it a punch below the belt. What has transpired this year?

## WORKING WITH OTHERS

Poverty and Economic Justice were main themes that emerged this year, for example, The Poverty Simulation and the liaison with SEED. We cooperated with the Extension Service, and presented a Diversity Simulation and Discussion. People who attended the previous year's event were appealed to, to attack the most intractable set of problems imaginable—persistent poverty. Attendees discussed the desirability of adopting a living wage. Solutions were few, but the energy and awareness of problems came out of the closet.

In June 2003, we invited Fred Shrumph to introduce the community to the needs for Conflict Resolution in the public schools. Following his forum presentation, the Task Force hired Mary Rupert to conduct an intensive audit of school professionals as to the need for new programs or activities. She spent many hours asking what was going on presently and what was considered necessary. The conclusions were that the elementary schools had active "Character Counts" programs in place, but there it ended. The middle school and the high schools had nothing in CR, and seemed ready for innovation.

With regard to the middle and high schools, we needed to know more about student behavior and readiness for Conflict Resolution programs. We decided it would be incomplete to gain adult views alone, so Charles Glock, George Redinger, and Gretchen Hellar squeezed an existing survey of student values and attitudes that would answer the "needs question." It was a time-consuming effort, but we believed we had a convincing argument for establishing Conflict Resolution in the schools. We presented both documents to the Administration. Up steps Jim Soper, principal at SHS. From planning to action, the first training program took a month to prepare and execute. The exceptional talents of Cindy McMahonn made the effort worthwhile; her attendees became participants in the planning efforts now underway. We hope to offer training to the general faculty this spring.

Brenda Hammond and her Neighbor Support Committee has tackled the difficult area of citizen complaints against police. Contact with the police chief has been made lately; protocols and relations are being formulated. The Task Force tries to fill the role of safe ground for those who have a complaint, and also as a moderating influence for good community relations.

## CELEBRATING

We do still march; this year however, the only planned march was the Fourth of July Parade. The verdict: guilty of being flag wavers and having lots of fun.

Buffalo orchestrated a Martin Luther King birthday celebration that will be remembered for years. Bonner County children sang, danced, and read their way through a wonderful series of performances. The energy was strong and the sentiment inclusive. The Panida was over half-full of appreciative theater-goers. It was a fitting birthday for King. If you missed the performance at The Panida, the Task Force has a video available to view.

The Foundation for Human Rights Action and Advocacy decided to have a Stay-at-Home Tea fundraiser again; it was another wild success. A quiet cup of tea and a biscuit or two brought the foundation a cool \$5,000. Thank you Marian, and all the Board.

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Phil Deutchman took upon himself the project of studying and reporting on the Patriot Act. We began by listening to his review and discussing the implications of the law; then Phil penned a petition. Five hundred seventeen people eventually signed, and it was sent to the Idaho legislature and

the US congressional offices.

Gay, lesbian, and transgender identity issues were addressed by Robyn Edwards at yet another learning session for the Task Force Board. Robyn is not only a passionate defender of human rights, but also an articulate representative of the problems gays, lesbians, and transgender people face. We have just begun to tap this area of concern.

The Spring Forum was ably and interestingly led by Muntez Fargo who gave us an answer to the Question, "The Middle East: How Did We Get There?"

In June, we retreated to the edge of the Lake, spending a whole day designing the coming year and getting to know each other better.

Because of the talents and dogged hard work of the Board members, it has been a truly fine year. The quality of the programs has been exceptional. Slowly, sometimes ever so slow, we are reaching our goal of a more compassionate community. Every effort counts in this; every person counts.

Perhaps the image of a garden is appropriate. The more we mulch it, and in good time turn it over for planting, pulling weeds and watering, the more we can expect a rich harvest. It takes a whole community—in all its diversity—to become whole.

I close with another image, of a friend we have lost, Barbara Veranium, a quiet, powerful woman who believed in human rights with her time, talents and passion. She is a worthy image of all we hold dear.

## THE ANTI-PATRIOT ACT PETITION

*by Phil Deutchman*

The anti-Patriot Act petition and resolution sponsored by the BCHRTF has been collected and the signatures were counted. There were over five hundred signatures from around northern Idaho. Copies of these were mailed to the Idaho ACLU for their lobby effort, as well as to Representative Charles Eberle (R-Post Falls), who authored a Joint Memorial to be considered by the Idaho Legislature. This Memorial is also co-sponsored by Reps. Tom Trail and Bonnie Douglas. E-mails were sent to Rep. John Campbell, Rep. George Eskridge and Sen. Shawn Keough asking for their support of the Memorial. Board members were also asked to encourage these representatives.

Copies of the Joint Memorial will be distributed at the March 2nd board meeting for perusal by the board members. It appears that the Speaker of the Idaho House, Bruce Newcomb needed encouragement to expedite the Memorial. Rep. Trail recommended that US Senator Craig and US Representative Otter be contacted to see if they'd write letters to the Idaho House Speaker encouraging him to have the Memorial considered by the Idaho House of Representatives. Board member Phil Deutchman contacted Craig's and Otter's offices asking that they write letters. As of this writing, the fate of the Joint Memorial in the Idaho House of Representatives is unknown.

## THE "DEFENSE" OF MARRIAGE

by Robyn Edwards

In the context of the current national discussion, the following historical observations (excerpted from an essay by Peter J. Gomes, Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Pusey Minister in the Memorial Church, Harvard University) seem both well stated and extremely cogent.

"When the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1620, among the first things they did for the well-ordering of their new commonwealth was to institute the Dutch custom of civil marriage with which they had become familiar during their long sojourn in the Netherlands. . . . There would be no clergyman in Plymouth until . . . 1629, but even then marriage would continue to be a civil affair, as these first Puritans opposed the English custom of clerical marriage as unscriptural. Not until 1692, when Plymouth Colony was merged into that of Massachusetts Bay, were the clergy authorized by the new province to solemnize marriages. To this day in this Commonwealth (ie Massachusetts) the clergy, including those of the archdiocese, solemnize marriage legally as agents of the Commonwealth and by its civil authority . . . There are always conscientious people of deeply held religious conviction who, alas, on the basis of those convictions find themselves on the wrong side of history, such as those in our own Commonwealth who hanged witches in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and embraced the fugitive slave laws in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and those who in our own time find the support of custom, reason, and faith in their prejudices against Roman Catholics, Jews, and persons of other colors and ethnicities. . . ."

The Federal Defense of Marriage Act which became law over President Clinton's signature was actually written and promoted by Rep. Bob Barr of Georgia—Barr, not yet 50 years old, has been married three times. The current joke making the rounds on Capitol Hill is "Bob Barr, WHICH marriage are you defending?!"

The subject is not a laughing matter for thousands of Idaho citizens who are being denied equal protection under Civil Law in our State and for whom in our Country the more than 1000 Federal benefits of (even one) marriage, under civil law, are beyond reach.

It has been widely taught that the advantages of citizenship are equally available to all Americans; our Constitution should not be used as a vehicle to institutionalize unfairness and inequality. Please let our representatives in Washington know that you do not support the so called "Federal Marriage Amendment."

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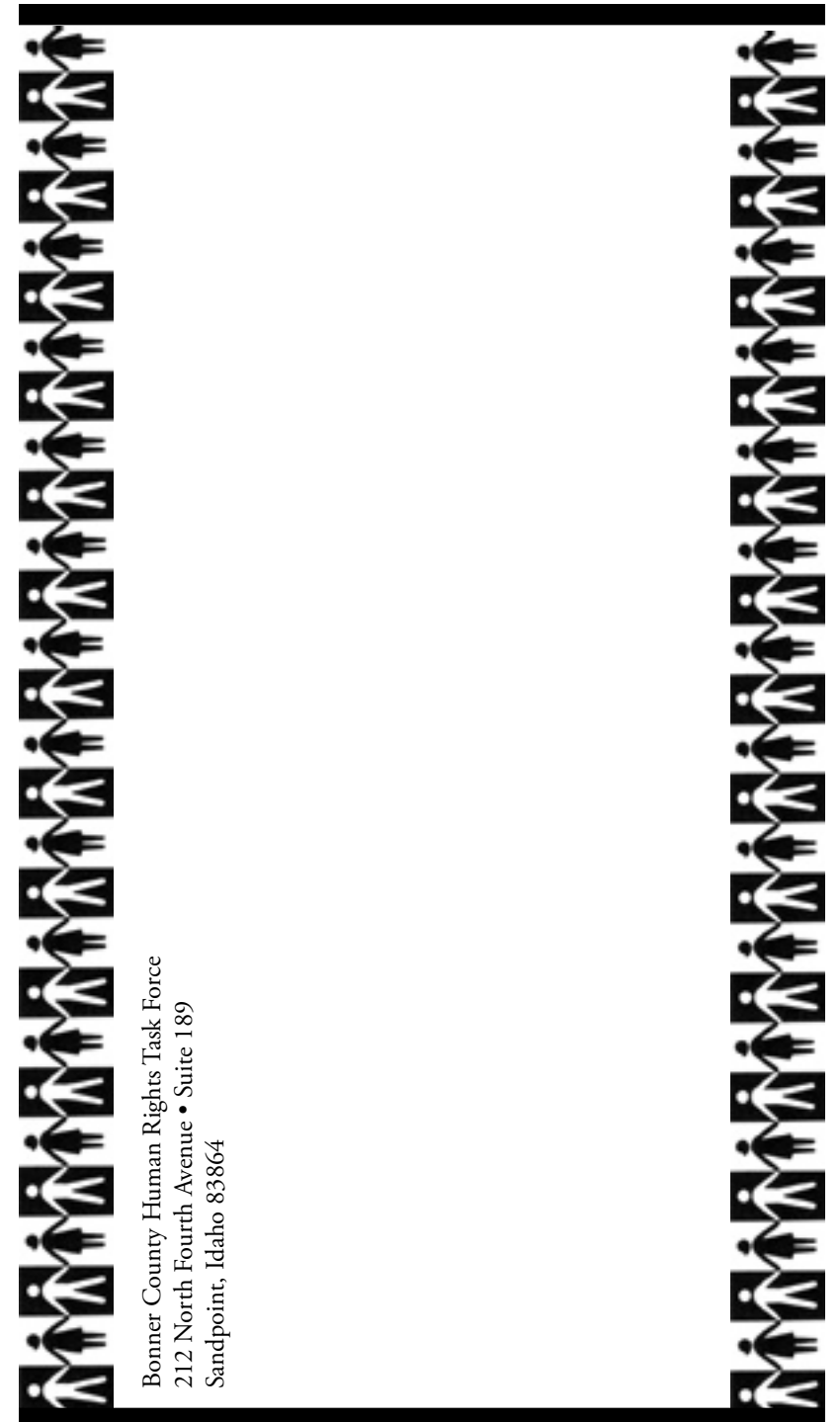
## ETHIOPIAN DINNER

—by Anna Gallo

The Ethiopian dinner in celebration of Black History month was an unqualified success. Christine Holbert's poster was a work of art and drew many to the event. She very generously emailed everyone on her extensive Lost Horse Press mailing list. Write-ups appeared in many newspapers. Good to have this kind of publicity for Sandpoint. Gretchen Ward's editorial in the 2/8/04 edition of the Bonner Bee and the display she mounted in the library make her truly one of Sandpoint's treasures. Marian Breckenridge had the idea for the Ethiopian dinner and arranged for an evening of exciting entertainment. Cindi Santi researched the recipes and arranged for Taste of Idaho to do the catering. Linda Navarre's decorations were an inspiration and tied the whole event together. We did not do an exit poll, but we received and overheard many favorable comments. Most gratifying to me were the number of children who came. It is for them we do this work. Thank you to all who attended the dinner and made it a huge success.

## BCHRTF WEB SITE

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



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