Discrimination Against Refugees?
Not In Our City!

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, contact our office for free and confidential assistance.

#KnowYourRightsDSM

Sexual Harassment?
Not In Our City!

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, contact our office for free and confidential assistance.

#KnowYourRightsDSM

Slum Housing?
Not In Our City!

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, contact our office for free and confidential assistance.

#KnowYourRightsDSM
Belief Statement

We believe in equality with respect and justice for all.

Vision Statement

The Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission will be recognized for its excellence in education, advocacy, community engagement and investigations of civil rights violations creating a city that is a beacon of human rights and equality for all, with a culture of inclusiveness, respect, and peace.

Mission Statement

To advance justice, promote equality and ensure the protection of human rights for all people in Des Moines through investigation, education, advocacy, and community engagement.
Dear Des Moines,

This year has been a whirlwind both within the Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission and on the outside. Nevertheless, we have made great progress in the journey to preserve and protect the rights of the residents of Des Moines and the metro.

It has been an honor to lead the commission for the past two years. Moreover, I am aware that we could not have done any of the work without the support of the community. Therefore, on behalf of the entire commission and the department, I would like to thank everyone who has supported us on the new initiatives that we have undertaken and the progress we have made on past endeavors. The list of supporters and advocates is too long for this letter and we are thankful for that.

We have moved on multiple items this year, forming new steering committees and hiring and training new staff, all while increasing investigations, referrals, and outreach to the community. However, two of the initiatives that I am most proud of are the Welcoming City recommendation to the Des Moines City Council and the 21st Century Policing report work with the Des Moines Police Department. Both of these items are formidable, multifaceted, and carrying over into the future; that is what the commission and the department are here for- to step up to the challenges, regardless of the time and effort they require.

With that said, we still have work to do on multiple issues in our city and region. Please know that we are here for you. Do not be bashful or afraid to reach out to any of us. It is our honor to serve you and the residents of our city.

ALL THE BEST,

CHAIR
DES MOINES CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
IZAAH JB KNOX
The Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission was the first Human or Civil Rights Commission in Iowa, established in 1951. Three years later, the Civil Rights ordinance established a member commission representative of racial, religious, and ethnic groups. In the 1950’s, job discrimination and the complaint process were defined. Des Moines has led Iowa, even prior to the 1965 Iowa Civil Rights Act passed by the State Legislature.

Since then, the Department, in varying degrees of membership, activities, and forms of staffing, has worked to advance justice and equality for all people in the City of Des Moines in accordance to Chapter 62 of Des Moines Municipal Code. The overarching purpose of the work is to prevent and eliminate to the extent possible, discrimination based on age, ancestry, color, creed, physical/mental disability, familial status, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation.

The Commission receives and addresses complaints of discrimination originating in the City of Des Moines in the areas of employment, public accommodation, housing and municipal practices; completes complaint investigations in a timely manner; resolves complaints through mediation and conciliation; interprets civil rights laws and aspects of diversity, and offers educational opportunities that support positive human relations in our community.

The City Manager and City Council-appointed Commissioners oversee the work of the Director and the Civil & Human Rights Department.

Izaah Knox  
Chair  
Appointed by: Bob Mahaffey

Donna Red Wing  
Vice Chair  
Appointed by: Skip Moore

Kameron Middlebrooks  
Secretary  
Appointed by: Bill Gray

Michael Bowser  
Appointed by: Brian Meyer  
Term Ended April 2017

Michelle Book  
Appointed by: Christine Hensley

Daniel Garza  
Appointed by: Mayor Frank Cownie

Emily Shields  
Appointed by: Chris Coleman

Doug Philip  
Attorney
This past fiscal year was my first full fiscal year as director of the Des Moines Civil & Human Rights Department. This past year brought numerous changes to the department as we hired 3 full-time staff persons in addition to four new commissioners.

Since taking the helm as the director, we have made several significant changes to help us better serve the community and efficiently track the data of the persons and communities that we educate and serve. Despite a very small and new staff, this past fiscal year we successfully:

1. Increased the number of formal complaints filed by **one-hundred and fifty-one percent** (151%) demonstrating that there is still much work that needs to be done in Des Moines regarding civil rights violations.

2. Increased our **Municipal Equity Index** (MEI) score with the Human Rights Campaign by 15 points to a **near-perfect score of 97** demonstrating the cities commitment to all citizens regardless of their sexual orientation.

3. Created new events and enhanced cornerstone events hosted by the Commission. For example, this past year we had **over 500 people** attend our annual civil & human rights symposium; this was the largest crowd we have had in recent history.

4. Created our first ever **Fair Housing Summit** for fair housing month and we **hosted two hate crime forums** with Des Moines University that were attended by over 600 people collectively.

5. Developed new partnerships to help us increase our outreach to the communities. This past year we formed **partnerships with U.S. Department of Justice, Central Iowa Community Initiative, the Refugee Alliance of Central Iowa (RACI)**, among other community organizations.

6. Spent over **140 hours** training new staff members on how to properly investigate discrimination cases and serve our clientele.

7. Developed and implemented a new **210-day employment case checklist** for investigators to keep track of where they should be during their investigation.
8. Distributed over 1,500 civil & human rights department brochures to the residents of the city of Des Moines.

9. Made new contacts in the Bhutanese, Kunama, South Sudanese, and various Muslim communities who allowed us to host various events to better serve those communities including Know Your Rights trainings and a community resource fair.

10. Partnered with Iowa Workforce Development to increase the employment of the non-white communities of Des Moines and hosted a listening tour with members of the Des Moines community.

11. Formed the LGBT Advisory Committee, a subcommittee of the Commission, created to increase awareness of the needs of the LGBTQ community here in Des Moines.

12. Soft launched our “Not In Our City” advertising campaign. This campaign is designed to better inform all Des Moines residents, employees, and visitors of their rights under our human rights ordinance. This upcoming year a city-wide campaign will be launched.

13. Updated our Commission Rules and Regulations, requiring Commissioners to be more engaged with the community and to engage with their respective city council member.

Despite these accomplishments, we have numerous challenges that still plague the Des Moines community. This past year, several articles and reports were published discussing the inequities in housing in Des Moines and in the African-American community. Mayor and City Council have also been asked repeatedly to address matters that concern undocumented residents. These matters cannot be solved by one small department with a limited budget. It is going to take the work of government, organizations both for and not-for-profit, and the community overall to resolve these issues. We recently hired a new equity coordinator to do more of this work but again, one person cannot do this work alone. One of our big goals for the upcoming year is to increase our community engagement and work with various communities and community members to address inequities. The creation of a Refugee/Immigrant Advisory Subcommittee is one of the first steps in achieving this goal.

As you look over this annual report, if you have any questions on how you can be more involved please do not hesitate to reach out to our department. Only by working together can we make Des Moines the city that it has the potential to be.

IN THE SPIRIT OF

ADVANCING OPPORTUNITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL,

JOSHUA V. BARR

As a Human Rights Specialist, I have been exposed to communities in Des Moines that opened my eyes and heart. I walked through some of the worst conditions in Des Moines, and worked to make it better for current and future residents. I facilitated conciliation agreements that include policy change, training, and measurable progress check-points. One case I investigated resulted in a conciliation where the owner agreed to fix and address the conditions of the complexes and potentially improve the living conditions of a few hundred residents of Des Moines. I made the right choice leaving my private practice of law to work in Civil Rights. I knew that I wanted to fight for justice and equality for all but when I went into private practice, I realized our criminal justice system was broken and “justice and equality for all” was not going to be attained by working in that system. Now, I am able to proactively correct current and future issues and as a result of my investigations, the first cause case in Des Moines in over ten years will be going to hearing.

Eric M. Scott, J.D. Human Rights Specialist, Hired July 2016

My investigations into complaints of discrimination have resulted in conciliations that I believe will have a lasting effect on community members in Des Moines. Being a Human Rights Specialist has challenged me to grow as a professional and a human rights activist. In this role, I have been able to partake in numerous outreach opportunities including being a guest lecturer at my alma maters, ADM High School and Central College.

The 2017 Civil and Human Rights Symposium was the highlight of my year. The hard work from our volunteers and partner organizations throughout the year culminated in the highest attended symposium in our Department’s history. I am excited for the creative outreach initiatives being launched by our Department and look forward to being part of an amazing team of people working towards its growth.
Monserrat R. Iñiguez  Administrative Assistant, Hired October 2016

Serving as the administrative assistant and intake officer set me on a very deep learning curve on how to address inequalities within a system of government, a departure from my background in grassroots activism. This position has exposed me to on-the-ground, everyday civil and human rights violations taking place in the city. The complaints that come to our department serve as indicators of where systemic issues are and what needs to be done to alleviate them. I am fortunate to be working on a team of people looking to resolve the issues at the root level. It is important as a resident of Des Moines to be aware of how inequities manifest and work to proactively redress those issues instead of remaining reactive to circumstances. The knowledge I’ve gained through this work has informed how I show up for community and maintained the scope of my work, both personal and professional, in alignment with ensuring liberty, justice, and opportunity for all.

Peter Anderson  Legal Intern, Summer 2017

I worked with the Department of Civil and Human Rights as a Legal Intern and assisted the Department as they wrestled with the day-to-day injustice that pervades all aspects of society, even in a city as great as Des Moines! I learned a lot about the structure and nature of city government and local and state laws that interact to reflect the will and best interest of the city’s citizens. I performed a lot of research on exciting new ideas that the Department is considering in carrying out their mission to make sure that all people can feel included, satisfied, and safe in Des Moines. I believe that the Department is full of some of the most empathetic and passionate people I’ve met.

There is no doubt that the Civil and Human Rights affairs of the city are in good hands.
Education & Training
Conduct training programs to teach people and entities what rights are protected in the City of Des Moines. Programs are designed to teach people what the law is and how to identify discrimination in order to prevent and eliminate discriminatory conduct here in Des Moines.

Community Relations and Engagement
Designed to promote equal opportunity here in Des Moines at events through giveaways, interactions and answering questions about Des Moines human rights laws.

Mediation and Conciliation
Mediations are conducted between parties in a face-to-face setting in order to establish a level of mutual understanding and respect between the parties and reach an equitable resolution of the issues.

Investigations
Investigations are conducted to determine if Des Moines' human rights laws have been violated in employment, fair housing, public accommodations, or municipal practices. This is a huge part of our efforts to eliminate discriminatory actions against Des Moines residents and visitors in an effort to make Des Moines a welcoming city to all.

Testing
Fair Housing testing is conducted to determine if renters and sellers of properties in Des Moines are acting in accordance with fair housing laws. (Presently outsourced due to a lack of staffing; as the staff grows, we hope to bring this back in-house)

Litigation
In the event of human rights ordinances violations, litigation or public hearings may take place to enforce the human rights ordinance and punish violators of Des Moines human rights laws.
**SUCCESS**  

- **151%** increase in the number of formal complaints filed in the office  
  - Outreach efforts to Des Moines communities are working and signal a need for the office and additional staff.

- **15%** increase in the number of cases closed compared to 2016  
  - Allows office to focus on proactive and preventative efforts to combat discrimination.

- **15** point increase (97/100) on the Municipal Equality Index  
  - Demonstrates to residents and visitors that the city is LGBTQ+ friendly.

- **50%** increase in attendance to our Annual Human Rights Symposium  
  - The office and city capitalize on the platform to highlight human rights issues impacting residents of the city.

**IMPACT**

- **LGBT Advisory Council**  
  - Advises the commission on issues impacting the LGBTQ+ community to ensure the inclusion of their voice in municipal policy.

- **Des Moines University Greater DM Partnership Department of Justice**  
  - Establishment of a new alliance to address inclusion and diversity issues allows the department to do more community outreach and engagement with minimal expenditures.

- **Iowa Civil Rights Commission**  
  - Renewed agreement with ICRC brings additional funds to the office to support community work.
2017 saw an increase in cases across all areas protected under the Department’s jurisdiction.

This past year the Civil & Human Rights successfully implemented a new data tracking system to assist the department in better understanding the issues within the City of Des Moines. This data will be used to assist the department in conducting more effective outreach and human rights training throughout the city.

Complaints filed came from residents living in the following wards:

- **Ward 4**: 23%
- **Ward 1**: 13%
- **Ward 3**: 25%
- **Ward 2**: 28%
- **Unknown**: 11%

The Respondents in the complaints filed were located in the following wards:

- **Ward 4**: 15%
- **Ward 3**: 25%
- **Ward 2**: 28%
- **Ward 1**: 14%
- **Unknown**: 35%

*Unknown refers to unincorporated areas of the city.*
**Complainants by Gender**

- Male: 40%
- Female: 60%

**Complainants by Race**

- Black/African Am: 30%
- Asian/Pac Isl: 2%
- Hispanic/Latino: 28%
- Native American: 3%
- White/Caucasian: 37%

**Cases by Basis**

- Gender Identity: 0
- Ancestry: 0
- Creed: 0
- Sexual Orien: 0
- Religion: 0
- Age: 10
- Familial Status: 3
- Retaliation: 0
- National Origin: 0
- Disability: 0
- Color: 0
- Race: 50

- Training Hours Completed: 140
- Cases Conciliated: 19
- Cases Closed: 38
- Monetary Awards: $25,280
Community activists and leaders discussed how poverty creates barriers for Des Moines residents who desire equal and fair access to healthcare, housing, employment, the justice system, and education. “The issue of poverty affects all of us, regardless of income,” said Joshua V. Barr, Director of the Des Moines Civil & Human Rights Department. “Poverty is the barrier that restricts access to every human right. We are proud to have an event where we will talk about the issues of poverty and discuss solutions to enact change.”

The Symposium’s Keynote Speaker, Gary “Dre” Taylor of Kansas City’s Nile Valley Aquaponics Project, spoke on how to build communities through food. Mr. Taylor’s aquaponics project addresses food accessibility in Kansas City by raising fish and vegetables in a controlled, sustainable environment.

Conference sessions included, Being Poor in the Legal System, Generational Poverty, The Criminalization of Mental Illness, and If Time is Money, Am I Wasting Both? A Conversation about College Access and Affordability.
The Symposium also included a panel of local elected representatives discussing the issue of poverty. The panel featured Des Moines School Board Chair Teree Caldwell-Johnson, Iowa Senator Janet Peterson, Des Moines City Councilperson Christine Hensley, and Polk County Supervisors Bob Brownell and Angela Connelly.

The event was free and open to the public.

The Des Moines Civil & Human Rights Commission Human Rights Awards were awarded to:

- The John R. Grubb Community YMCA for the Business & Industry Award
- EMBARC for the Mary Louise Smith Award
- Kaija Carter for the Porter S. Dimery Youth Award
- Donations benefited The Iowa Homeless Youth Center.

Artforcelowa youth artists displayed their work and attendees voted for the best representation of poverty.
The Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Department thrives on connecting with the community and hopes to expand outreach to address issues that affect all residents of Des Moines. It is critical that as knowledge of the Department's services grow, our relationships with the communities in Des Moines encompass more than what is within the Department’s jurisdiction. This year our outreach efforts included but were not limited to: forums on hate crimes, training immigrant populations on their rights, reviving fair housing month events, and attending a number of community events/discussions.
The Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission hosted its first Fair Housing Summit on April 29, 2017 from 9:30 AM - Noon at the Evelyn K. Davis Center, 801 University Ave, Des Moines.

The Summit featured speakers from the March 13th Civil and Human Right’s Symposium covering housing issues such as: excessive housing costs and the impact on a community’s economic participation, and the barriers to affordable housing.

Anne Bacon of IMPACT Community Action Partnership led a session titled, *Gimme Shelter*, that explored the question, What happens when families spend in excess of 30% of their income on housing? What effect does that have on their ability to participate in our economy and our communities?

Josh Hellyer and Eric Burmeister from the Polk County Housing Trust Fund led a session titled, *Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing*. This session examined; the location of the current inventory of affordable housing in Central Iowa, identified some of the distinguishing characteristics of those neighborhoods, took a look at current studies that recommend households experiencing poverty choose housing in neighborhoods of opportunity, and the barriers in Central Iowa to having that choice. It also covered how recent changes to the Fair Housing Rules might be used to expand choices in high opportunity areas.

Over 35 community members showed up and participated in the sessions and discussion to learn how to make access to Fair and Affordable Housing a reality for all residents of Des Moines.
As we head into 2018, the Department and Commission have ambitious plans to better address civil and human rights address in Des Moines. Accomplishing these goals cannot be achieved without the volunteer subcommittees and concerned organizations and individuals that assist us in reaching out to the community.

Our 2018 goals include, but are not limited to:

**Education & Outreach**

1. Full launch of our Not In Our City Campaign using billboards, bus ads, and posters informing residents and visitors of their rights here in Des Moines.
2. Distribute brochures in the most common languages throughout the city at public places.
3. Continue education and awareness events based on local and national issues.
4. Conduct more educational events placing a spotlight on the rich human rights history in Des Moines and Iowa.

**Investigations**

1. Decrease investigation completion time.
2. Explore a workshare agreement with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

**Community Engagement**

1. Increase dialogues with community members to inform mutual understanding and respect among Des Moines residents.
2. Increase civic engagement through community dialogues with residents in multiple languages.
3. Build a stronger relationship with Des Moines Public Schools to better serve youth and their families.

**Expand Socio-Economic Opportunity**

1. Collect information and data on community concerns and provide opportunities for residents to express those concerns to elected officials and appropriate city departments with the goal of eliminating anecdotal stories and gain understanding of the collective needs of communities.
2. Strategize on methods to better integrate the various immigrant communities into Des Moines in ways that allow them to thrive.
3. Incorporate and develop the Social Equity Section of Plan DSM & other relevant sections of the plan into the work of the Department and Commission.
ADVANCING OPPORTUNITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

HOW TO CONTACT THE COMMISSION

Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Visitors are received by appointment or as walk-ins.

PHONE: (515) 283-4284
FAX: (515) 237-1408
EMAIL: HumanRights@dmgov.org
WEB: www.HumanRightsDSM.org
facebook: DSMCivilHumanRights
twitter: @YourRightsDSM

#KnowYourRightsDSM