



Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission Newsletter

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 11 NOVEMBER 2011

SPECIAL DAYS, CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS IN NOVEMBER

MONTH LONG CELEBRATIONS

Native American Heritage
Month



DAY LONG CELEBRATIONS (see page 5 for more details)

All Saints Day, Nov. 1

All Souls Day, Nov. 2

Eid-al-Adha or Feast of Sacrifice
(Muslim), Nov. 7



Veterans Day, Nov. 11

World Kindness Day, Nov. 13

International Day of Tolerance,
Nov. 16



World Peace Day, Nov. 17

Transgender Day of
Remembrance, Nov. 20



Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 24

“We Are The 99%”:

What Does It Mean and Why Should We Care?

Written by Janet Abejo, Investigator

What does “We are the 99%” mean?

“We are the 99%” has become the mantra for the Occupy Wall Street protests. It is in reference to the difference between those who are considered wealthy - 1%, and the remaining 99% of the U.S. citizens that are struggling to make it. The political slogan originated on a Tumblr blog where people post a picture of themselves, holding up a piece of paper stating their personal story of economic hardship and ending it with the statement “We are the 99%.”

(<http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>).

A recent article posted on NPR.com, “Superrich Americans Driving Income Inequality”, stated “The 400 people on Forbes magazine’s list of the richest Americans saw their combined net worth climb 8 percent this year. The good news for the wealthy comes as the poverty rate has reached a 15-year high and unemployment remains stuck near 10 percent.” In other words while the rich are getting richer, the poor keep sinking further and further down.

When asked why this was happening, Timothy Noah, who reported in a 10-part Slate Magazine series on the growth of income disparity in the U.S, commented “Obviously there are inequalities related to gender and race, but the increase since 1979 has nothing to do with gender or race.” It’s interesting how the discussion and perception of income equality has transformed. Before the protests started, if one was to bring up income inequality, a natural reaction would be to reference the obvious issues of income inequality related to gender and race. Now the discussion and the issue itself has transformed to include not only minorities, but now 99% of all Americans.

Why should we care?

Williams Sundrom, Professor of Economics at Santa Clara University, states in his

article “The Income Gap” (found on the Markula Center for Applied Ethics website), “Income inequality raises basic ethical issues that should be the subject of public debate and inform government policy.” Professor Sundstrom goes on to say there are important moral arguments for reducing inequality using the following basic principles.

***Public Compassion or Sympathy:** As members of a larger community, we simply should and do care how others are doing. Income growth at the top of the distribution provides the means to act on our compassion by improving the material well-being of those at the bottom.*

***Fairness:** Morally arbitrary differences among us arising from the circumstances of our birth, upbringing, or current position in the market economy should not be permitted to create drastic differences in basic well-being or human dignity. In a just society, those with a better draw in life’s lottery should contribute toward the welfare of those with a poorer draw. Furthermore, to the extent that family income helps determine a child’s life chances, fair equality of opportunity depends on providing families with adequate resources to give their children a good start.*

***Desert:** The income a person receives should have some relationship to what she or he deserves. Arguments based on desert have often been used to defend market-derived inequality: In the labor market, pay is a function of productivity, and lower pay reflects a smaller contribution to production. But in our everyday language, we also link desert to effort: The low-skilled worker who puts in a long, hard day’s work may in this sense be as deserving as the high-powered lawyer or CEO.*

(continued on page 3)

November Quiz

This month's quiz includes questions about November events. How many can you answer correctly? Answers are on page 3.

Veteran's Day is November 11th

- 1) Veterans Day was once called:
 - A. Soldiers Day
 - B. Flag Day
 - C. Armistice Day
- 2) How many living war veterans are there in the US?
 - A. 4 million
 - B. 7 million
 - C. 19 million
- 3) How many stars were on the American flag in 1954 when November 11 officially became Veterans Day?
 - A. 46
 - B. 48
 - C. 50
- 4) Why is Veterans Day on November 11?
 - A. It was randomly selected because there was a big gap between Labor Day and Thanksgiving.
 - B. The date marks the official ending of World War I.
 - C. The date marks the official ending of World War II.



Thanksgiving Day is November 24th.

- 5) What year was the first Thanksgiving celebrated?
 - A. 1621
 - B. 1777
 - C. 1849
- 6) The first Thanksgiving lasted for three days. What *didn't* the Pilgrims eat?
 - A. Clams
 - B. Venison
 - C. Pumpkin pie
- 7) The potato is America's most beloved veggie. Why didn't the Pilgrims whip up some mashed potatoes for their big dinner?
 - A. Many Pilgrims were allergic to spuds
 - B. Potatoes were thought to be poisonous
 - C. Potatoes weren't eaten in the US until the early 1800s.
- 8) Which US president scoffed at the idea of a national holiday in honor of the first Thanksgiving?
 - A. George Washington
 - B. Thomas Jefferson
 - C. Abraham Lincoln



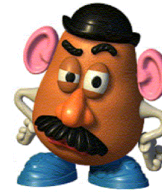
Sorry to say it, but snow is a possibility in November!

- 9) What is the biggest snowflake on record?
 - A. 8" x 15"
 - B. 5" x 5"
 - C. 8" x 12"
- 10) What is the heaviest 24 hour snowfall on record for the United States?
 - A. 49"
 - B. 60"
 - C. 76"
- 11) Not counting wind chill, what is the coldest natural temperature ever recorded on earth?
 - A. -95.9°F
 - B. -117.3°F
 - C. -128.6°F
- 12) How tall was the tallest snowman ever made?
 - A. 150 feet
 - B. 113 feet
 - C. 85 feet



Answer to Quiz from Page 2

- 1) **C - Armistice Day.** Originally meant to honor World War I veterans, Armistice Day officially received its name in America in 1926 through a Congressional resolution and became a national holiday 12 years later. Realizing that peace was equally preserved by veterans of WW II and Korea, Congress decided to honor those who have served America in all wars. In 1954, President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day.
- 2) **C - 19 million.** Imagine 380 football stadiums full of people and you've got the picture. That's a lot of veterans!
- 3) **B - 48.** After Alaska joined the union in 1959, the flag had 49 stars. A year later, when Hawaii joined the union, the flag got its 50th star.
- 4) **B - The date marks the end of WW I.** To be more precise, fighting officially ended at 11:00am, November 11, 1918 - the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. On November 11, 1921, an unknown World War I American soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. This site, on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the city of Washington, became the focal point of reverence for American's veterans.
- 5) **A - 1621.**
- 6) **C - Pumpkin pie.**
- 7) **B - Potatoes were thought to be poisonous.**
- 8) **B - Thomas Jefferson.**
- 9) **A - 8" x 15".** According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the largest snowflake on record was found in Fort Keogh, Montana in 1887. That's bigger than a sheet of typing paper!
- 10) **C - 76".** The heaviest snowfall in a 24 hour period happened on April 15, 1921 when 6 feet 4 inches of the white stuff clobbered the good folks living in Silver Lake, Colorado. The largest snow storm on record dropped 15 feet 9 inches of the white stuff on February 13-19, 1959 at Mt. Shasta Ski Bowl, CA.
- 11) **C - 128.6°F.** This temperature was recorded at Vostok, a research base in Antarctica on July 21, 1983. This is colder than dry ice which forms at -109.3°F.
- 12) **B - 113 feet.** This massive snowman was made by the people of Bethel, Maine. Nicknamed Angus, he took two weeks to finish.



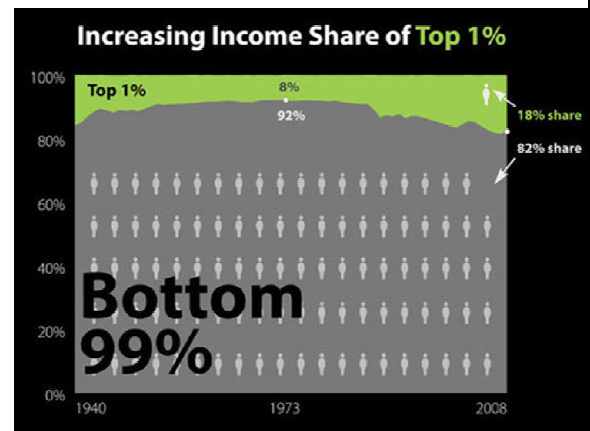
We Are The 99% (continued)

***Democratic Solidarity:** A democratic community cannot tolerate too much social stratification before it loses its democratic character. This is perhaps most evident in the relationship between income and political influence in modern American politics. Although the wealthiest candidates and causes do not always win, they are always sure of being heard.*

***Positive Liberty:** Americans place great value on freedom as the absence of constraints on conscience or expression (negative liberty). But the exercise of freedom in practice depends on access to the basic resources and capabilities necessary to act. The absence of positive liberty is nowhere more evident than in the limited options of the poor.*

***Self-interest:** It is at least plausible that, after a point, increased inequality might lead to social or political instability and impede economic performance. Self-interest, even among the rich, might be served by moderating inequality*

(from <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/iie/v9n3/income.html>)



For me, one of the basic principles mentioned above resonates above the rest: Fairness. This section captures the ideology of many Americans, especially those participating in the Occupy Wall Street protests, posting their stories online, and struggling on a daily basis. It is so often circumstances beyond our control dictating ones destiny, but these circumstances should not make a difference in our ability to care for basic needs or treated with the human dignity we all deserve.

New Books Out in November

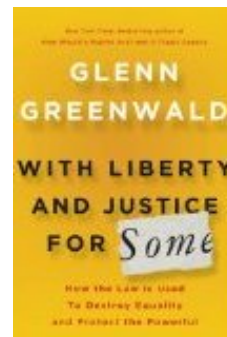
With Liberty and Justice for Some: How the Law is Used to Destroy Equality and Protect the Powerful

**Written by Glenn Greenwald, Published by Metropolitan Books
(October 25, 2011: Kindle Edition November 11, 2011)**

From the nation's beginnings, the law was to be the great equalizer in American life, the guarantor of a common set of rules for all. But over the past four decades, the principle of equality before the law has been effectively abolished. Instead, a two-tiered system of justice ensures that the country's political and financial class is virtually immune from prosecution, licensed to act without restraint, while the politically powerless are imprisoned with greater ease and in greater numbers than in any other country in the world.

Starting with Watergate, continuing on through the Iran-Contra scandal, and culminating with Obama's shielding of Bush-era officials from prosecution, Glenn Greenwald lays bare the mechanisms that have come to shield the elite from accountability. He shows how the media, both political parties, and the courts have abetted a process that has produced torture, war crimes, domestic spying, and financial fraud.

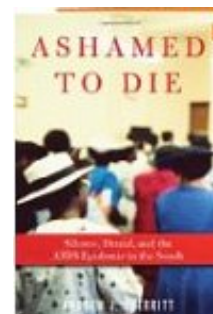
Cogent, sharp, and urgent, this is a no-holds-barred indictment of a profoundly un-American system that sanctions immunity at the top and mercilessness for everyone else.



Ashamed to Die

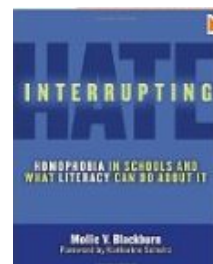
Written by Andrew J. Skerritt, Published by Lawrence Hill Books (November 1, 2011)

Even as the tragic African AIDS epidemic fills the headlines, the United States has failed to address the HIV/AIDS crisis in the South, where people are dying because of ignorance and a shame that leads to silence. In *Ashamed to Die*, author Andrew Skerritt focuses on a small town in South Carolina, a microcosm of this national tragedy, and examines how the tenacious disease ravaged the town's black community. The heartbreak of America's failure comes alive through Carolyn, a wild child whose rebellion coincided with the advent of AIDS; Girard, a dreadlocked bank executive; Nita, a young woman searching for love; and many others. These are impoverished people who struggled with racial oppression for generations but whose lives were dramatically changed by the civil rights movement. Sadly, their hard-won freedoms were subverted by drugs, illicit sex, despair, and, finally, death from AIDS. Skerritt contends that taboos about love, race, and sexuality--combined with Southern conservatism, white privilege, and black oppression--continue to create an unacceptable death toll. This true story of how persons of faith, enduring love, and limitless forgiveness can inspire others is not only a call to action and awareness, it is also a guide for poor communities facing a public health threat burdened with conflicting moral and social consequences.



Interrupting Hate: Homophobia in Schools and What Literacy Can Do About It **Written by Mollie V. Blackburn, Published by Teacher's College Press (November 18, 2011)**

This timely and important book focuses on the problems of heterosexism and homophobia in schools and explores how these forms of oppression impact LGBTQQ youth, as well as all young people. The author shows how concerned teachers can engage students in literacy practices both in and out of school to develop positive learning environments. The featured vignettes focus on fostering student agency, promoting student activism, and nurturing student allies. With a unique combination of adolescent literacy and teacher action projects, this book offers a valuable model for educators interested in creating safe learning communities for all students.



Continued Page 5

New Books Out in November (continued)

Racial Beachhead: Diversity and Democracy in a Military Town
Written by Carol McKibben, Published by Stanford University Press (November 23, 2011)

In 1917, Fort Ord was established in the tiny subdivision of Seaside, California. Over the course of the 20th century, it held great national and military importance—a major launching point for World War II operations, the first base in the military to undergo complete integration, the West Coast's most important training base for draftees in the Vietnam War, a site of important civil rights movements—until its closure in the 1990s. Alongside it, the city of Seaside took form. *Racial Beachhead* offers the story of this city, shaped over the decades by military policies of racial integration in the context of the ideals of the American civil rights movement.



Middle class blacks, together with other military families—black, white, Hispanic, and Asian—created a local politics of inclusion that continues to serve as a reminder that integration can work to change ideas about race. Though Seaside's relationship with the military makes it unique, at the same time the story of Seaside is part and parcel of the story of 20th century American town life. Its story contributes to the growing history of cities of color—those minority-majority places that are increasingly the face of urban America.

Local Events in November

“You Mean There’s Race in My Movies?” A Critical Analysis of Race in Mainstream Movies

Presented by The Minority Reporter

The Commons, Cornell College, Mount Vernon, IA November 9, 2011, 6:30pm

Fredrick Gooding Jr., founder of The Minority Reporter website, asserts that mainstream movies can have a strong cultural impact, particularly regarding the perpetuation of racial imagery and how Americans relate around notions of race.

This interactive multi-media discussion goes "behind the scenes" to explore the ways in which minority images are consciously created, manipulated and distributed for public consumption to audiences in around the globe. Mainstream movies are a shared social experience of significant value; they are important tools used both to inform and influence cultural identity. As it stands, American mainstream movies are seen and enjoyed by diverse audiences not just in America, but all over the world. We thereby apply our racial analysis exclusively to mainstream movies (as opposed to independent films or "made-for-TV" movies) because they have consistently demonstrated the great potential for societal, cultural and financial impact.

The purpose of "The Minority Reporter" is to stimulate a broader discussion about the formulaic significance of race within Hollywood movies and their impact on mainstream society. The analysis centers around the six common character patterns that Hollywood employs for both minority and white characters--archetypes and prototypes, respectively.

Special Days this Month

All Saints Day and All Soul’s Day: Both Christian holidays, All Saints Day honors and recognizes all of the saints of the Christian church, many of which were martyrs. All Souls Day pays respect and remembers the souls of all friends and loved ones who have died and gone to heaven.

Eid-al-Adha: This Islamic festival marks Ibrahim’s willingness to follow Allah’s command to sacrifice his son. It is celebrated around the 10th to 13th of the Islamic month of Dhu-al-Hijjah and is typically celebrated with prayers and social gatherings.

International Day of Tolerance: This annual observance, declared by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1995, was created to generate public awareness of the dangers of intolerance.

Transgender Day of Remembrance: This day memorializes those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. The event is held in November to honor Rita Hester, whose murder on November 28, 1998 kicked off the “Remembering Our Dead” web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999.



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Your Civil Rights

It is unlawful to discriminate in the areas of
**Employment, Education, Public
Accommodations, Credit, and Housing.**

Complaints of unlawful discriminatory treatment must be based on a person's **Age, Race, Color, Creed, Religion, Mental or Physical Disability, Sex (gender), National Origin or Sexual Orientation.** These categories are called *protected class characteristics.*

It is also unlawful to retaliate against a person because such person has lawfully opposed any discriminatory practice.

Additionally, the Commission enforces local civil rights laws in the areas of credit and housing on the basis of familial status (families with children under 18 years), and in the area of credit and education on the basis of marital status.

Contact Jayne Swanson, Newsletter Editor, if you wish to be added to the distribution list at j.swanson@cedar-rapids.org

Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission Meetings

*Commission Meetings occur the third
Wednesday of each month and are open to the public.*

Upcoming Meeting Dates

November 16, 2011	April 18, 2012
December 14, 2011	May 17, 2012
January 18, 2012	June 21, 2012
February 15, 2012	July 19, 2012
March 21, 2012	August 16, 2012

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held in the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission Office, 425 2nd Street SE, Suite 960, starting at 5:30pm

Agendas and minutes can be found on our website (see address above).

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