



# Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission Newsletter

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 12 DECEMBER 2011

## SPECIAL DAYS, CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS IN DECEMBER

**AIDS Awareness Day, Dec. 1**  
(see page 5)

**International Day for the  
Abolition of Slavery, Dec. 2**

**Ashura (Muslim), Dec. 5**

**Pearl Harbor Remembrance  
Day, Dec. 7**  
(see page 5)

**Bodhi Day (Buddism), Dec. 8**  
(see page 2)

**Human Rights Day, Dec. 10**  
(see article this page)

**International Human Solidarity  
Day, Dec. 20**

**Hanukkah Begins, Dec. 21**  
(see page 2)

**First Day of Winter, Dec. 21**



**National Homeless Persons'  
Memorial Day, Dec. 21**

**Christmas Day, Dec. 25**  
(see page 2)

**Kwanzaa Begins, Dec. 26**  
(see page 3)

**New Year's Eve, Dec. 31**



## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Human Rights Day - December 10, 2011



### The History of the Document

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948, was the result of the experience of World War II. With the end of that war, and the creation of the United Nations, the international community vowed never again to allow atrocities like those of that conflict happen again. World leaders decided to complement the UN Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of all individuals.

The document they considered, and which would later become the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was taken up at the first session of the General Assembly in 1946. The Assembly reviewed this draft Declaration on Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms and transmitted it to the Economic and Social Council "for reference to the Commission on Human Rights for consideration . . . in its preparation of an international bill of rights."

The Commission, at its first session early in 1947, authorized its members to formulate what it termed "a preliminary draft International Bill of Human Rights". Later the work was taken over by a formal drafting committee, consisting of members of the Commission from eight States, selected with due regard for geographical distribution.

The Commission on Human Rights was made up of 18 members from various political, cultural and religious backgrounds. Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, chaired the UDHR drafting committee. With her were René Cassin of France, who composed the first draft of the Declaration, the Committee Rapporteur Charles Malik of Lebanon, Vice-Chairman Peng Chung Chang of China, and John Humphrey of

Canada, Director of the UN's Human Rights Division, who prepared the Declaration's blueprint. But Mrs. Roosevelt was recognized as the driving force for the Declaration's adoption. The final draft by Cassin was handed to the Commission on Human Rights, which was being held in Geneva. The draft declaration sent out to all UN member States for comments became known as the Geneva draft.

The first draft of the Declaration was proposed in September 1948 with over 50 Member States participating in the final drafting. By its resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948, the General Assembly, meeting in Paris, adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with eight nations abstaining from the vote but none dissenting. Hernán Santa Cruz of Chile, member of the drafting sub-Committee, wrote:



*"I perceived clearly that I was participating in a truly significant historic event in which a consensus had been reached as to the supreme value of the human person, a value that did not originate in the decision of a worldly power, but rather in the fact of existing—which gave rise to the inalienable right to live free from want and oppression and to fully develop one's personality. In the Great Hall...there was an atmosphere of genuine solidarity and brotherhood among men and women from all latitudes, the like of which I have not seen again in any international setting."*

The entire text of the UDHR was composed in less than two years. At a time when the world was divided into Eastern and Western blocks, finding a common ground on what should make the essence of the document proved to be a colossal task.

The entire text can be found at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>

# December Holiday History

*The quiz this month is replaced with some facts and history for this holiday season.*

## **Advent**

Advent is the period preceding the Christmas season. It begins on the Sunday nearest November 30, the feast day of St. Andrew the Apostle, and covers four Sundays. Because the day it begins changes from year to year, so does the length of each Advent season. This year, Advent began on November 27th.

Advent has probably been observed since the fourth century. Originally, it was a time when converts to Christianity readied themselves for baptism. During the Middle Ages, Advent became associated with preparation for the Second Coming. In early days Advent lasted from November 11, the feast of St. Martin, until Christmas Day. Advent was considered a pre-Christmas season of Lent when Christians devoted themselves to prayer and fasting.



Advent wreaths have their origins in the folk traditions of northern Europe, where in the deep of winter people lit candles on wheel-shaped bundles of evergreen. Both the evergreen and the circular shape symbolized ongoing life. The candle-light gave comfort at this darkest time of the year, as people looked forward to the longer days of spring. Later, Eastern European Christians adopted this practice. By the sixteenth century, they were making Advent wreaths much as we know them today. An advent wreath traditionally contains four candles - three purple symbolizing hope, peace and love and one rose symbolizing joy.

## **Bodhi Day**

Bodhi Day is the Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day that the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama (Shakyamuni) experienced enlightenment. This year Bodhi Day falls on December 8th. According to tradition, Siddhartha had recently forsaken years of extreme ascetic practices and resolved to sit under a Bodhi tree and simply meditate until he found the root of suffering, and how to liberate one's self from it. All traditions agree that as the morning star rose in the sky in the early morning, Siddhartha finally found the answers he sought and became Enlightened, and experience Nirvana. Having done so, Siddhartha then became a Buddha or "Awakened One".

Services and traditions vary amongst Buddhist sects, but all such services commemorate the Buddha's achievement of Nirvana, and what this means for Buddhism today. Individuals may choose to commemorate the event through additional meditation, study of the Dharma, chanting of Buddhist texts (sutras), or performing kind acts towards other beings.



Often, colored lights are strung about the home to recognize the day of enlightenment. They are multi-colored to symbolize the many pathways to enlightenment. The lights are turned on each evening beginning on December 8th and for 30 days thereafter. A candle is also lit for these thirty days to symbolize enlightenment.

A meal of rice and milk is significant on this holiday. According to Buddhist legend, Sujata offered this to the Buddha upon his awakening to help him regain strength.

## **Hanukkah**

Hanukkah, the "Festival of Lights", starts on the 25th day of the Jewish calendar month of Kislev and lasts for eight days and nights. In 2011, Hanukkah begins at sundown on December 20. With blessings, games, and festive foods, Hanukkah celebrates the triumphs - both religious and military - of ancient Jewish heroes.

Hanukkah is a relatively minor holiday in the Jewish year. In the United States, however, the closeness to Christmas has brought greater attention to Hanukkah and its gift-giving tradition. Amid the ever-growing flood of Christmas advertising, it may seem especially fitting that the Hanukkah story tells of Jewish culture surviving in a non-Jewish world.



Nearly 2200 years ago, the Greek Syrian ruler Antiochus IV tried to force Greek culture upon peoples in his territory. Jews in Judea (now Israel) were forbidden their most important religious practices as well as study of the Torah. Although vastly outnumbered, religious Jews in the region took up arms to protect their community and their religion. After three years of fighting, the rebel armies known as the Maccabees reclaimed the temple on Jerusalem's Mount Moriah. They then prepared the temple for rededication - In Hebrew, Hanukkah means "dedication". In the temple they found only enough purified oil to kindle the temple light for one day, but the light continued to burn for eight days.

The lighting of the menorah is an important Hanukkah tradition. The menorah is a candlestand with nine branches. Usually eight candles, one for each day of Hanukkah, are the same height, with a taller one in the middle used to light the others. Each evening of Hanukkah, one more candle is lit, with a special blessing.

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# December Holiday History (continued)

## Christmas

From its modest beginnings, Christmas has evolved into the biggest celebration in the world. Although Roman Catholics and Protestants celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25th, early Christians did not celebrate Christmas. There was disagreement about when Jesus was born and some early Christians opposed celebrating his birthday. In the fourth century Christmas was added to the Church calendar as a feast day.

December 25th was a significant date for various early cultures. The ancient Babylonians believed the son of the queen of heaven was born on that date. The Egyptians celebrated the birth of the son of the fertility goddess Isis on the same date, while ancient Arabs contended that the moon was born on December 24th.

The Romans celebrated Saturnalia, a feast named for Saturn, god of agriculture, on December 21, the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere. They believed the shortest day of the year was the birthday of the sun. The Roman emperor Constantine was a member of the sun-cult before converting to Christianity in 312.

Some scholars suspect that Christians chose to celebrate Christ's birth on December 25th to make it easier to convert the pagan tribes. Referring to Jesus as the "light of the world" also fit with existing pagan beliefs about the birth of the sun. The ancient "return of the sun" philosophy had been replaced by the "coming of the son" message of Christianity.



## Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday, nor is it meant to replace Christmas. It was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Black Studies, in 1966. At this time of great social change for African Americans, Karenga sought to design a celebration that would honor the values of ancient African cultures and inspire African Americans who were working for progress.

Kwanzaa is based on the year-end harvest festivals that have taken place throughout Africa for thousands of years. The name comes from the Swahili phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits of the harvest". Karenga chose a phrase from Swahili because the language is used by various peoples throughout Africa.

Each of the seven days of Kwanzaa honors a different principle. These principles are believed to have been key to building strong, productive families and communities in Africa. The principles of Kwanzaa include:

- 1) **UMOJA (oo-MOE-jah) - UNITY:** To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race
- 2) **KUJICHAGULIA (koo-jee-cha-goo-LEE-ah) - SELF DETERMINATION:** To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves
- 3) **UJIMA (oo-JEE-mah) - COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY:** To build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together
- 4) **UJAMAA (oo-JAH-mah) - COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS:** To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit together from them
- 5) **NIA (nee-AH) - PURPOSE:** To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness
- 6) **KUUMBA (koo-OOM-bah) - CREATIVITY:** To do always as much as we can, in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it
- 7) **IMANI (ee-MAH-nee) - FAITH:** To believe with all our hearts in our parents, our teachers, our leaders, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle



Information on these holidays from the following websites:

<http://www.infoplease.com> (Advent, Hannukah, Kwanzaa)

<http://www.doityourself.com> (Bodhi Day)

<http://www.melanet.com/kwanzaa> (Kwanzaa)

# New Books Out in December

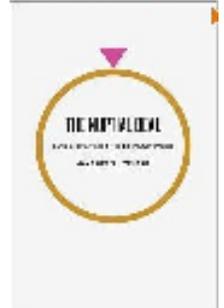
## ***The Nuptial Deal***

**Written by Jaye Cee Whitehead, Published by University of Chicago Press (December 1, 2011)**

Since the 1990s, gay and lesbian civil rights organizations have increasingly focused on the right of same-sex couples to marry, which represents a major change from earlier activists' rejection of the institution. Centering on the everyday struggles, feelings, and thought of marriage equality activists, *The Nuptial Deal* explores this shift and its connections to the transformation of the United States from a welfare state to a neo-liberal one in which families carry the burden of facing social problems.

Governance and marriage are now firmly entwined. Fighting for access to marriage means fighting for specific legal benefits, which include everything from medical decision-making and spousal immigration to lower insurance rates and taxes. As Jaye Cee Whitehead makes plain, debates over the definition and purpose of marriage indicate how thoroughly neo-liberalism has pervaded American culture. Indeed, Whitehead concludes, the federal government's resistance to same-sex marriage stems not from "traditional values" but from fear of exposing marriage as a form of governance rather than a natural expression of human intimacy.

A fresh take on the terms and stakes of the debate over same-sex marriage, *The Nuptial Deal* is also a probing look at the difficult choices and compromises faced by activists.



## ***After Freedom Summer: How Race Realigned Mississippi Politics, 1965-1986***

**Written by Chris Danielson, Published by University Press of Florida (December 4, 2011)**

No one disagrees that 1964—Freedom Summer—forever changed the political landscape of Mississippi. How those changes played out is the subject of Chris Danielson's fascinating new book, *After Freedom Summer*.

Prior to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, black voter participation in Mississippi was practically zero. After twenty years, black candidates had made a number of electoral gains. Simultaneously, white resistance had manifested itself in growing Republican dominance of the state.

Danielson demonstrates how race—not class or economics—was the dominant factor in white Mississippi voters' partisan realignment, even as he reveals why class and economics played a role in the tensions between the national NAACP and the local Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (an offshoot of SNCC) that limited black electoral gains.

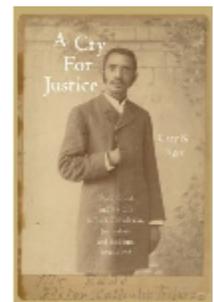
Using an impressive array of newspaper articles, legal cases, interviews, and personal papers, Danielson's work helps fill a growing lacuna in the study of post-civil rights politics in the South.



## ***A Cry for Justice: Daniel Rudd and His Life in Black Catholicism, Journalism, and Activism***

**Written by Gary B. Agee, Published by University of Arkansas Press (December 5, 2011)**

Daniel A. Rudd, born a slave in Bardstown, Kentucky, grew up to achieve much in the years following the Civil War. His Catholic faith, passion for activism, and talent for writing led him to increasingly influential positions in many places. One of his important early accomplishments was the publication of the *American Catholic Tribune*, which Rudd referred to as "the only Catholic journal owned and published by colored men." At its zenith, the *Tribune*, run out of Detroit and Cincinnati, where Rudd lived, had ten thousand subscribers, making it one of the most successful black newspapers in the country. Rudd was also active in the leadership of the Afro-American Press Association, and he was a founding member of the Catholic Press Association.



By 1889, Rudd was one of the nation's best-known black Catholics. His work was endorsed by a number of high-ranking church officials in Europe as well as in the United States, and he was one of the founders of the Lay Catholic Congress movement. Later, his travels took him to Bolivar County, Mississippi, and eventually on to Forrest City, Arkansas, where he worked for the well-known black farmer and businessperson, Scott Bond, and eventually co-wrote Bond's biography.

**Continued on page 5**

## New Books Out in December (continued)

### *Women of the Right Spirit*

Written by Krista Cowman, Published by Manchester University Press (December 6, 2011)

This book is the first investigation on how official organizers built and sustained the national militant campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union between 1903 and 1918. While the overall policy of the Union was devised by an ever-decreasing circle of women, centered around the mother-daughter team of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, much of its actual activity, including its more extreme militant actions such as arson, was devised and implemented by these organizers who worked in London in the provinces.

*Women of the Right Spirit* reveals organizers to be a diverse bunch of women, whose class backgrounds ranged from the aristocratic to the extremely impoverished. It describes the ways in which they were recruited and deployed, and the work they undertook throughout Britain. The exhausting pace of their itinerant life is revealed, as well as the occasions when organizers fell out with their employers or their own branches. Taking the story of the WSPU's workers up to the end of the First World War, the study considers what directions they took when votes for women became a reality.

The book will appeal to academics, postgraduates, and undergraduates with an interest in women's history, as well as a more general readership wishing to understand the extent of support for the votes for women's campaign and the mechanisms through which it was organized.

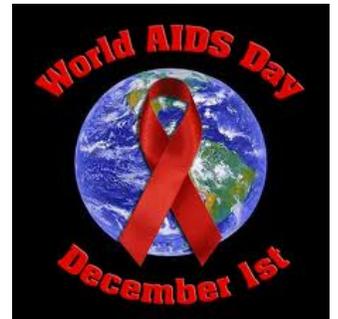


## In Remembrance...

### **World AIDS Day**

December 1st each year is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died.

World AIDS Day is an opportunity for you to learn the facts about HIV and put your knowledge into action. If you understand how HIV is transmitted, how it can be prevented, and the reality of living with HIV today, you can use this knowledge to take care of your own health and the health of others, and ensure you treat everyone living with HIV fairly, and with respect and understanding.



### **Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day**

December 7 commemorates the attack on Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii, during World War II. Many American service men and women lost their lives or were injured on December 7, 1941.

On the direction of the President, the flag of the United States of America should be displayed on the homes of Americans, the White House and all United States government buildings. The flag should be flown at half-mast to honor those who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor.





Cedar Rapids  
Civil Rights Commission  
425 Second Street SE, Suite 960  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

**Phone:** 319-286-5036

**Website:** [www.cedar-rapids.org/civilrights](http://www.cedar-rapids.org/civilrights)

**E-mail:** [civilrights@cedar-rapids.org](mailto:civilrights@cedar-rapids.org)

***CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION STAFF***

*Karl Cassell, Executive Director*

*Darryl Lipscomb, Compliance Manager*

*Stefanie Robinson, Investigator*

*Janet Abejo, Investigator*

*Jayne Swanson, Administrative Assistant*

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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](mailto: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***

December 14, 2011	May 16, 2012
January 18, 2012	June 20, 2012
February 15, 2012	July 18, 2012
March 21, 2012	August 15, 2012
April 18, 2012	September 19, 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).

#### ***Upcoming Event***

City Council Meeting - Public Hearing on Chapter 69 Ordinance changes, December 6, 2011

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The CRCRC has 176  
Twitter followers



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