



THE NETWORK KICKS OFF MLK WEEKEND WITH AL FRANKEN

THIS ISSUE

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in Missoula

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Human Rights in Action is a publication of the Montana Human Rights Network, a non-profit organization based in Helena.



MHRN is a proud member of Montana Shares. Learn more at: www.montanashares.org

January 13, 2006 was a very special day in Missoula—Mayor John Engen decreed it “Al Franken Day.” Missoula’s local Air America affiliate, KNS 105.9, and the Montana Human Rights Network hosted political satirist and talk radio host Al Franken for both a live radio show and an evening benefit for the Network.

The evening event marked the Network’s 3rd Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration and fundraiser. In a hilarious and inspiring address to a nearly full Wilma Theater, Al told stories of his life and work as a progressive activist. Amy Martin, along with her band The Borrowed Geniuses, opened the evening with her wonderful songs.

Thanks to everyone who attended this unforgettable event, as well as to our hard-working staff, board members and volunteers. Many thanks, as well, to Al, the “Al Franken Show” crew, and KNS 105.9 for helping to make the weekend so much *dang* fun.

DVDs and Posters Available

Did you miss the Al Franken event? Coming soon! DVDs of the evening and event posters will be available on our website. Visit www.mhrn.org. □



Franken began the day with a live broadcast of his radio show from the Missoula Children’s Theater.



Before the main event, Franken spoke with Montanans at a special reception.



Franken talks with Missoula-area singer/songwriter Amy Martin.

MONTANA NEWS AND EVENTS



Photo by Summer Goddard/Valley Journal

Community members paint during the Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition's 2005 Culture Fair.

Gallatin Valley Human Rights Task Force

The GVHRTF and the Bozeman Film Festival co-sponsored a screening of *The Fire Next Time* and a panel discussion with the audience in October. The film chronicles the harassment of environmentalists in the Flathead area. The film's producer, Patrice O'Neil, participated in this event. The task force also co-sponsored a screening of *Not In Our Town*, which documents Billings' response to white supremacists, with Temple Beth Shalom in December.

For Human Rights Day, GVHRTF organized a human rights book donation project in collaboration with the Bozeman Public Library and the Country Bookshelf. It also promoted Human Rights Day celebrations in Gallatin Valley schools.

For MLK, Jr. Day, close to 500 people came to hear Mawi Asgedom,

author of *Of Beetles and Angels*, deliver an inspirational talk. This event was co-sponsored with Montana State University. In February for Black History Month, GVHRTF and MSU will team up again to sponsor an African drumming concert by Bongo Love.

Missoula Advocates for Human Rights

A hundred people rallied in Caras Park, as part of Missoula's celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Darrell Jackson, a University of Montana professor, spoke, and Amy Martin sang. Participants then marched across the Higgins Street Bridge to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, where the keynote address was delivered by George Price, an African-American studies professor at UM. Music was provided by the Missoula Women's Chorus, and students read their prize-winning essays. Over 200 people attended the event at St. Paul's. Refreshments were served, and collec-

tions were taken for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C. The Advocates and the M.L.K. Committee will continue supporting the D.C. Memorial by sponsoring a dinner in February at which Eden Atwood will perform.

Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition

On Saturday, December 3, 2005, the Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition co-hosted its 14th Annual Culture Fair. The Culture Fair is an opportunity to express our pride and unity of living in a multi-cultural society.

Entertainment ranged from bagpipes and belly dancing to folk dancing and old-time fiddlers. Films shown included *Wal-Mart: The High Price of Low Cost*, as well as a video on the use of racist Indian mascots. The exhibit/sales booths ranged from Falun Gong, a Chinese-based religious movement, to hair braiding. Delicious food included Italian sausage soup and menudo (a traditional Mexican soup). □



Photo by Summer Goddard/Valley Journal

Karen Kapi gets her hair done at the Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition's 2005 Culture Fair.

MONTANA HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK WISH LIST

The following items are a few examples of tools the Network needs to continue doing human rights work in Montana. Are you able to provide any of these items? For more information, please call Alison at the Network, (406) 442-5506 ext. 14.

Technology

◆ Digital Camera, \$300

The Network is in need of at least one high-quality digital camera to record events, activities and research.

◆ Monthly Webpage Maintenance, \$200

Technology is a great tool to help connect us with Montana communities and Network members. A contribution to help maintain our website is one you can watch develop every day.

◆ Laptop Computer, \$1,500

The Network continues to update obsolete computer technology as much as possible. A laptop computer makes organizing, fundraising, and

research easier and more portable—a big plus for our staff, which travels all over Montana to get the job done.

Education and Programming

◆ Network News newsletter, \$3,000 per issue

Help us spread the news about human rights work in Montana to our members, prospective members, and the community.

◆ The End of Silence DVDs and Study Guides, \$1,400

The End of Silence tells the story of Montana youths' experiences with anti-gay harassment in Montana schools. Help us train educators and community leaders on how to use this teaching tool to make Montana

On the Road Again...

As all Montanans know, the miles between our cities and towns can add up fast. The Network is in need of a reliable vehicle so staff can help with local grassroots organizing in communities across the state. Avoid the hassle of selling your old car—donate it to the Network instead! Contact Alison for more information at (406) 442-5506 ext. 14.



schools and communities safer for everyone.

◆ Reliable Transportation, \$5,000

Community organizers need to travel to Montana communities safely and easily. Please consider contributing funds to purchase a reliable used vehicle—or, donate your car for the cause (see inset box on this page)

STAFF AND OTHER MONTANANS TRAVEL TO COLOMBIA

Montanans Katie Knight, Jesseca Letke, Scott Nicholson, and Erin Thompson traveled to the war zones in Colombia for two weeks last summer. Scott is an organizer for the Montana Human Rights Network, and Erin is on the Network's Board of Directors.

The purpose of their trip was to witness the impact of U.S. military intervention in Colombia and to provide international accompaniment for human rights activists who have been threatened by right-wing paramilitaries and their associates in the Colombian military. Colombian human rights activists have requested accompaniment,



because the paramilitaries and the military are reluctant to carry out their repression in front of international witnesses.

The delegates accompanied members the Network's sister organizations in Colombia: the Coca-Cola workers union, Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association, and the Joel Sierra Regional Human Rights Committee.

After they returned to Montana, the Montana delegation gave a series of very moving and informative presentations about their trip entitled, "U.S. War in Colombia: Repression and Resistance." More than 350 people attended the presentations in Bozeman, Helena, Kalispell, and Billings.

STAFFING CHANGES AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK: THANKS, BETTY! WELCOME, KIM!

The Montana Human Rights Network would like to welcome new organizer Kim Abbott to the Helena office. Kim has an extensive background in organizing, with particular experience working with low-income families. The Network is excited to have her on board, especially as we take a closer look at economic justice in Montana.

We send a big thank you to former organizer Betty Kijewski, who recently left the Network and joined her husband, Kenny, at their new home in Glacier Park. Betty's tireless efforts over the past five years at the Network have made tangible differences for human rights in Montana.

Her work with gay youth has been both ground-breaking and life-changing for the many Montanans involved. Betty and her son, Josef, created a documentary, *The End of Silence*, on the experiences of gay youth in Montana. Betty also crafted and lobbied for anti-bullying legislation during the past two legislative sessions. In response to this legislation, the Montana Board of Public Education is in the process of approving a policy that requires all Montana schools to have anti-bullying policies. Schools in Montana are safer and more inclusive thanks to Betty. Many thanks to all three of the

Kijewskis, and happy trails in Glacier! ☐



The Kijewski family moves to Glacier National Park



MONTANA HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

P.O. Box 1222
Helena, MT 59624
(406)442-5506
e-mail: network@mhrn.org
Web: <http://www.mhrn.org>

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