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WELCOME TO MHRN'S NEW PUBLICATION

The Montana Human Rights Network (MHRN) is changing the format of its publications. In an effort to highlight the work of our local groups and keep our members informed about Network activities, the "News From Around" section of our newsletter will now be a publication of its own. You will continue to receive *Network News*, with its analysis of the right wing, three times a year. In addition, you will receive *Human Rights in Action* twice a year, bringing you important information about local groups, events, activities, and membership.

INSIDE

Page Two
*News and Events
from Local Groups*

Page Three
*Youth Summit
Lobby Day for Equality*

Page Four
Sonia Lopez Tour

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

SINGER/SONGWRITER AMY MARTIN PERFORMS BENEFIT CONCERT IN HELENA

On March 10th, Amy Martin blessed Helena with her inspiring talent with performances both at the Capitol and at the Myrna Loy Center. In the afternoon, Amy led the House of Representatives in a rousing sing along of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land." Later in the evening, she performed at a fundraising event for MHRN, with more than one hundred fans in attendance. Thanks, Amy, for sharing your music, your experience as an activist, and your sense of humor! To learn more about Amy Martin and to hear her music, visit www.amymartin.org.



Photo by George Lane

Before her night performance, Amy led a sing along in the Montana House of Representatives

SAVE THIS DATE: MHRN'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Annual Montana Human Rights Network Conference is scheduled for October 15, 2005, at the University of Montana in Missoula. Reserve this date on your calendar, so you can attend! Watch for more information coming soon!

MONTANA NEWS AND EVENTS

GREAT FALLS

Martin Luther King Jr. Day has long been a special day for MHRN. One of our first projects was to lobby the state of Montana to declare the day a state holiday back in 1991, and we succeeded! Members and supporters of the Network celebrate all over the state, with a wide variety of activities and events.

In January, US Congressman Dennis Kucinich spoke at our second annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration and Fundraiser about how we can continue working toward equality and justice in our time. Interim Director Travis McAdam, MHRN Board Member Denise Juneau, and Rep. Carol Juneau (D-Browning) also spoke. After a great dinner and a hoppin' silent auction, the Alexander Temple choir closed the evening with their booming and joyous talent. Look for upcoming news about this inspiring event and join us in 2006!

MISSOULA

Missoula's lively annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration featured speaker Godfrey Saunders, principal of Bozeman High School. Festivities began in Caras Park with comments from MHRN Board Member Dr. Ralph Stone, and a performance by singer/songwriter Amy Martin. Two hundred and fifty people then marched across the Higgins Street Bridge to St. Paul's Lutheran Church for speeches, activities and food. Prizes were awarded (with increased prize money this year!)

to local students who participated in the annual essay and art contests.

BITTERROOT

Over 80 people attended the 10th Annual Bitterroot Human Rights Alliance MLK Day Celebration. The keynote speaker for this yearly potluck dinner was MHRN's Scott Nicholson. Scott presented a riveting talk and slide presentation on human rights abuses in Colombia, which are carried out by right-wing paramilitaries with the complicity of the Colombian government.



US Representative Dennis Kucinich (front left) was the keynote speaker at the Network's MLK event in Great Falls.

BHRA presented the Iman-Evans Bitterroot Humanitarian Award to Rod Miner and Marty Stomberg. They were integral to the campaign to defeat the Religious Right's attempt to insert creationism into Darby High School science classes. As is BHRA's yearly tradition, students from the Trapper Creek Job Corps provided poetry readings, songs, and musical presentations.

BHRA, in conjunction with AARP Montana, the Montana Senior Citizens Association (MSCA), and MHRN, sponsored a panel discussion in April on the attempted privatization of Social Security. The moderator was former US Congressman Pat Williams, and the panelists included Alex Ward

from AARP, Betty Beverly from MSCA, and UM Economics Professor Tom Power. Over 60 people attended, and all seemed to agree that privatization was a wrong-headed attempt that would probably destroy the most successful social program in US history. The event was videotaped and was shown on public-access television channels in Missoula, Helena, Great Falls, and Billings.

BOZEMAN

The Gallatin Valley Human Rights Task Force (GVHRT) sponsored a huge Martin Luther King Jr. Day march and rally for diversity. More than 1,000 people attended! GVHRT has also been working extremely hard to promote tolerance and diversity in the Bozeman area. It has successfully campaigned for a city and countywide resolution affirming that the Gallatin Valley is "a place where rivers and cultures meet." The resolution was, in part, a response to the racist organizing of the Na-

tional Alliance, a white supremacist group, in the area. Recently, GVHRT formed a chapter on the campus of Montana State University to address how students can challenge racist organizing aimed at young people.

HELENA

The Helena Human Rights Task Force resumed meeting in June, with new leadership and new members. Currently, the group is working on a production for Helena Civic Television and preparing for membership events in the fall. If you would like to get involved or just stay in the loop about activities, contact Ken Toole at the Network for more information.

YOUTH ATTEND “shOUT SUMMIT”

On a snowy April weekend, more than 20 youth from around Montana gathered near Helena for MHRN’s annual “shOUT Summit.” The group consisted of young people from all parts of Montana, and a wide variety of ages, backgrounds, sexual orientations and gender identities. The weekend included workshops covering topics from health and sexuality to personal expression through writing and art. Dancing, karaoke, and wonderful food were also highlights.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth often face hostile environments at school and, sometimes, at home. shOUT provided a safe space for youth to network with their peers from around Montana. Here’s what some of the youth had to say about the shOUT Summit:

“I didn’t know how wonderful safety and acceptance was— thank you for this time.”

“This is the first time in my life I could relax.”

This event would not have been possible without generous donations of food and lodging, the hard work of Network organizer Betty Kijewski, and all the remarkable youth, adults and presenters involved. Thanks to all of you!

2005 MONTANA PRIDE CELEBRATION



As it does every year, the Network was a proud co-sponsor of Montana’s annual Pride Weekend. This year’s event was held in Helena on the weekend of June 17-19.

GREAT LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT!

Thanks to all our members who contacted their legislators during the 2005 legislative session in support of justice, equality and democracy for all. While we have a long way to go, great steps were made this year for human rights in Montana. We all worked hard to promote safer schools, good science, and equality and fairness for all citizens. Some of you joined us for our Lobby

Day on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Others called, emailed, and sent letters to their legislators. Thanks for all *your* hard work—we expect the 2007 session to be even better.



MHRN Board Member Denise Juneau speaks to the “Lobby Day for Equality” crowd at the Capitol.

MHRN CLASSIFIEDS

Seeking Volunteers

Grassroots human rights group seeks special someone to spend quality time together. Enjoys quiet afternoons stuffing envelopes, fun-filled evenings working phone banks, and occasional special events. Looking for enthusiastic, open-minded volunteers with similar interests for friendship and possible LTR. Call 442-5506 x10 or email network@mhrn.org.

Help Wanted

Work from Home! Looking for people interested in **hosting membership house parties**. Invite your friends, local MHRN members and supporters, or anyone you think would be interested in our work. Have fun and drum up even more support for human rights in Montana. Call Alison at (406)442-5506 x14. We’ll help you party in any part of the state!

COLOMBIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST TOURS MONTANA



Sonia Lopez

Hundreds of people across Montana, as well as in Oregon, Washington and California, had the pleasure of meeting 21-year-old human rights activist Sonia López this spring. Sonia is the director of the Joel Sierra Regional Human Rights Committee and a leader of the women's organization Dawn of Women for Arauca. She has been involved in human rights work since she was nine years old.

The Montana Human Rights Network and CAJA (Community Action for Justice in the Americas) brought Sonia from Colombia to talk to communities about the rampant human rights abuses in her country, and what we can do to help. Sonia told of friends and coworkers who were arrested, abused or killed in the effort to improve their communities and promote peace in the region. The United States provides resources and weapons to the Colombian military, which has direct ties to brutal right-wing paramilitary groups.

Sonia encouraged everyone in the United States to learn more about the situation in Colombia, and to contact their Congressmen to protest America's involvement with the military and paramilitaries. She also invited Americans to visit Colombia to meet with the people who are so strongly affected by US and Colombian government policies. Staff or-

ganizer Scott Nicholson and a CAJA delegation traveled to Colombia in June to visit Sonia and other human rights activists there. Scott continued his work in Colombia throughout the summer. To learn more about MHRN's international work, contact the Network at (406) 442-5506 or e-mail us at network@mhrn.org.

MHRN AND MONTANA SHARES

In the past year, you may have noticed the Montana Shares logo on MHRN newsletters and other materials. The Montana Human Rights Network is happy to be a new member of Montana Shares. We would like to thank all of you who were so generous during last year's workplace giving campaigns. If Montana Shares hasn't been in your workplace, we encourage you to contact them and arrange this convenient way for you and your co-workers to support the Network. The next campaign will be starting soon!

Included in this newsletter is an insert regarding the annual Montana Shares raffle. A suggested donation of \$10 will enter you in the raffle, and designated contributions will go directly to MHRN. **The drawing will be held on September 10th. The prizes are great, so send your tickets to Montana Shares as soon as possible!**



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