

Winter 2014

City and County issue proclamations on Black History and Human Relations Month

By: Ledger Morrisette Jr.

This February, Mayor Patrick D. Cannon and the City Council presented to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee two proclamations: one proclaiming February as “Human Relations Month” in recognition of Mr. Julius Chambers and Mr. Franklin McCain, and another proclaiming Black History Month. The Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners also acknowledged that joint proclamation in its monthly meeting.

The proclamations note that the theme for Black History Month is “Civil Rights in America” and that “African Americans have contributed and continue to



Major Patrick Canon, CRC Chair Patricia Albritton, and CRC member Michael Tanck accept the proclamation

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Making the Case for Leadership

By: John Martin, CEO and Founder YBM Leadership Alliance

Whether on the field, in the classroom, working in the community, or running the boardroom, leadership skills offer the keys to success. One of the key areas of the **YBM Leadership Alliance** program model is leadership development.

Much has been written about the importance of leadership as a twenty first century skill set. So what’s the big deal about leadership? Why does **YBM Leadership Alliance** focus on leadership for the young men in our program?

There are three great reasons why YBM has decided Leadership is one of the key skills to success.

Leaders get paid – The highest paid people by far in any organization or team are the leaders. If you look at the top of Fortune 500 companies, the people running the organization are not necessarily the smartest people in the company; they are the ones who have the best leadership skills. According to a May 22, 2013 Associated Press article, the head of a typical large company made \$9.7 million in 2012 while the average worker in the US made \$39,900. In other words, the average CEO makes 354 times more than the average worker. So why do leaders get paid so much more than everyone else? The answer is based on a simple economic principle of supply and demand; which

leads to our second principle of leadership.

Leadership is a highly desirable skill in short supply. The micro-economic model of supply and demand basically states that anything of value in short supply, which has a high demand, will have a high price. If we apply this model to leadership we find that leaders provide high value, but good leaders are hard to find. Leaders provide high value because they set and communicate the overall short and long-term direction for the entire organization or team. A leader is the sole person responsible for ensuring that everyone is heading in the right direction, and that everyone is focusing on and

making adequate progress toward achieving the collective goals. Every organization, team and group of people in the world today and throughout human history has been in search of good leadership. We all need and seek good leaders. This concept is universal and timeless. Companies in Japan, Africa, and across the globe are in search of good leaders. This leads us to our final reason for focusing on leadership as a key component of the YBM program model.

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Leadership is a learned skill.

Since the beginning of time people have been asking, "Are leaders born or made?" Many experts now believe that leadership is a learned skill that can be developed with practice over time. Erika Anderson, *Forbes* contributor and author of "Leading

so people will follow," offers a perspective. "Most folks who start out with a modicum of innate leadership capability can actually become very good, even great leaders," she writes. Sure, some people are born with special gifts in leadership but they

represent the Leadership Elite, the "Michael Jordan" of leadership. Just as not every basketball player can be Michael Jordan, not every leader needs to be in the Leadership Elite to steer their team to victory. The good news for most of us is there are tons of material written on leadership development, plenty of people to emulate, and many movies about leaders. The most popular books are focused on leadership. As a matter of fact, the most popular book in the world for many centuries is a series of stories about leaders. That book is the Holy Bible. Leaders in the Bible are of all backgrounds, races,

sizes and sexes. They include Moses, Abraham, Esther, Isaac, Daniel, David, Solomon, and of course Jesus. Leadership has literally been around since the beginning of time.

Our ultimate goal for YBM is to develop a network of young leaders who will positively impact our global community. We believe that good leadership is the key to solving community-wide issues and is also the key to proactively avoiding future problems. With the proper guidance and training, the young men of YBM are destined to lead us to success.

*Want to feed a man for a day?
Give him a fish.*

*Want to feed a man for a lifetime?
Teach him to fish.*

*Want to change the world?
Teach him to LEAD!*

— John Martin

Editor's Note; John Martin made a presentation about his work with YBM at the January meeting of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee. The CRC Link's editorial staff thought it was important to share his message with our readers.

About YBM Leadership Alliance

The YBM Leadership Alliance is a 501c3 non-profit organization focused on leadership development and college preparation for young black men. Our vision is to create a new reality where young black men are sought out as leaders. We accomplish this by promoting positive images about young black men, developing their leadership capabilities, and imparting a goal for academic excellence. Our young men are trained to be leaders today and are prepared for leadership tomorrow. They give back by mentoring younger students, performing community service, and public speaking.

For more information about **YBM Leadership Alliance** and how you can become a part of a group that is forming the mold - which will shape our leaders of tomorrow, please visit us at:

<http://www.ybmleadership.com>

To Volunteer or partner with YBM Leadership Alliance, please Contact our Business Development Director, Tammy Reed -- treed@ybmleadership.com or 704.605.6570.



CRC staff trains peer mediators at Olympic High School

Staff members from CRC's dispute settlement department have been working with 11th and 12th grade students at Olympic High School to develop a peer mediation program at the school.

A guidance counselor contacted CRC for help with conflict resolution and now, approximately 60 students will become trained mediators.

Thirty students have already participated in a two day training which provided them with the basics of mediation as well as the opportunity to participate in role playing exercises to practice their newly acquired skills.

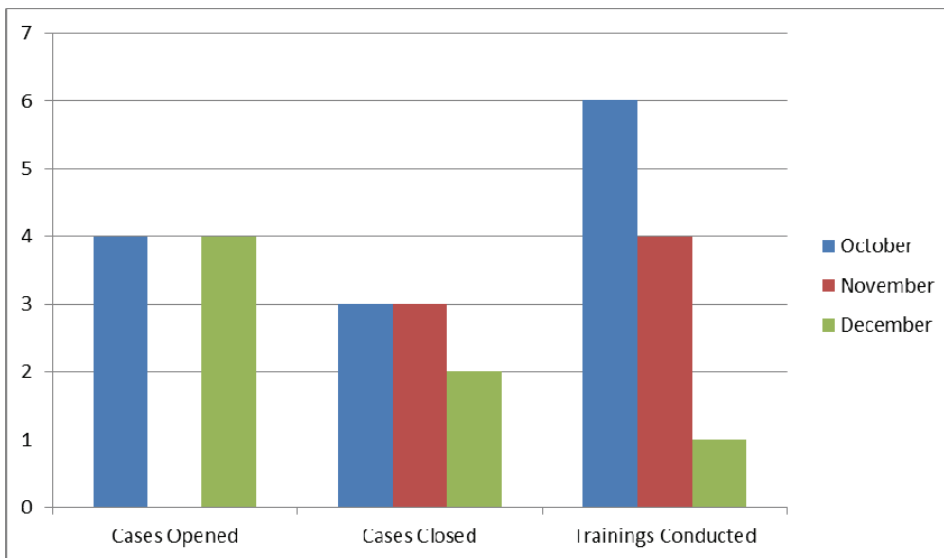
Once all students have been trained, teachers and staff will be able to refer disputes within the school to the peer mediators.

"I really enjoyed working with these students," said Donna Murrell, CRC staff member. "They were excited and eager to learn, had great questions and participated throughout the entire training."



Students at Olympic High School participate in a team building exercise guided by CRC Staff

Fair housing fourth quarter highlights



Police review fourth quarter highlights

October

- Staff attended 11 police chain of command hearings
- Staff assisted with filling 5 citizen complaints against police officers

November

- Staff attended 2 police chain of command hearings.
- Staff assisted with filling 1 citizen complaints against police officers.



Proclamations (continued from page 1)

contribute significantly to every aspect of life in the state of North Carolina and the nation at-large;" and that "Human Relations Month is a time set aside to recognize the efforts of those seeking equal rights for all, while renewing our resolve to continue the work toward fair treatment and improved quality of life..."

In 1926, famous historian, Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History announced the second week of February to be "Negro History week." The week was chosen because it coincided with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln on February 12 and Frederick Douglass on February 14, both of which Black communities had celebrated together since the late 19th Century.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson was born to parents who were former slaves. He spent his childhood working in the Kentucky coal mines and later earned a Ph.D. from Harvard. He was disturbed to find in his studies that history books largely ignored the black American population, and when blacks did figure into the picture, it was generally in ways that reflected the inferior social position they were assigned at the time.

In 1976 as part of the United States Bicentennial, Negro History Week was expanded to Black History Month and official-

ly recognized by the U.S. government. President Gerald Ford spoke about this, urging Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Now we celebrate Black History Month in February across the United States. The month is also celebrated in the United Kingdom and Canada. It seems to me now that it has always been celebrated. But that is not the case. As I write this article, my mind reflected on some of my own story.

I was born and reared in Pascagoula and Moss Point, Mississippi during the Civil Right Era. All the schools I attended, elementary, middle, high school, and college were at the time "all Negro" or "all colored". My family lived in several different neighborhoods during my formative years. In one neighborhood, we lived next door to a white family and I walked to my school on the sidewalk in front of the white school as the white kids were waiting for their school start. In another neighborhood, our house was located across the street from a white school where we played on the recreation equipment during the summer when the school was closed. At the time I could not attend either school.

While my early schooling was a "while ago" and "old school", I

remember during Negro History Week in February, we had to write about famous Negroes who had made significant contributions in the United States. I wrote about people like Ralph Bunche, Frederick Douglas, Booker T. Washington, Althea Gibson, and Jackie Robinson, to name a few. We were required to do this during that week so that we would learn about Negroes who were heroes, contributors to "our country."

Today students everywhere can write about many blacks who have made and are making significant contributions in civil rights and human relations on a local, state, and national level. No doubt Mr. Chambers and Mr. McCain would be the subject of many of those papers.

Mr. Chambers, a prominent civil rights attorney died last year. He was crusader for equality whose landmark cases led to the integration of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. He was the lead lawyer in the 1971 *Swan v. the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* case which mandated busing to end segregation of public schools across the nation. Mr. Chambers was born in Mount Gilead, NC and lived many years in Charlotte.

Mr. McCain and 3 other students, The Greensboro four, from North Carolina State University in February 1960 decided to make a statement against segregation and the injustices

that prevailed in our country: their sitting at the at the then segregated lunch counter of Woolworth store in downtown Greensboro served as a catalyst for sit-ins to take place in other cities in North Carolina and across the nation. Mr. McCain was born in Union County, North Carolina and lived many years in Charlotte.

I would be remiss if I did not name other blacks who have made history and contributed to civil and human rights in Charlotte: Fred Alexander, Charles Jones, Harvey Gantt, Sarah Stevenson, Reginald Hawkins, James Ferguson, B. B. Delaine, Dorothy Counts, and countless others, have played a major role in the local civil rights movement and their lives have impacted the lives of all residents of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Editor's Note:

Ledger Morrisette Jr. is a Community Relations Manager with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations. His primary responsibility is managing the Fair Housing Assistance Program and Public Accommodation issues/complaints.

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG COMMUNITY RELATIONS MISSION & VISION

Our Mission: We advocate for an inclusive community where trust, acceptance, fairness and equity are the community norms.

Our Vision: A Charlotte-Mecklenburg where people's differences are acknowledged, understood and appreciated.



Race in America Town Hall

Compelling dialogue and unsettling information preached to the choir

By: Shannon W. McKnight, CRC member

On Tuesday, February 18, 2014, critically acclaimed journalist Soledad O'Brien brought the Black in America Town Hall Tour to Charlotte, NC. O'Brien, an award winning journalist, documentarian, news anchor and producer, was the originator of Black in America and Latino in America for CNN. O'Brien was named journalist of the year by the National Association of Black Journalists and one of Newsweek Magazine's "10 People Who Make America Great".

A diverse array of guests attended the sold out event. Children, teens, elders, African Americans, whites, Latinos and others filled the seats at the Knight Theater as O'Brien opened the Town Hall with a riveting dialogue that touched on topics such as her own experience growing up as a bi-racial child in Maryland to media perceptions of people of color. O'Brien then introduced her research on race relations in America. Her examples on the vast differences of how whites and blacks view a "post racial" society caused guests to audibly react. She gave strong examples on how even the media could be held responsible for some perceptions of African Americans, displaying visible examples of television and news coverage that posited people of color in a negative light. From Hurricane Katrina to the Trayvon Martin case, O'Brien touched on how media coverage of both events impacted race relations on the

community as a whole. She then shared statistics on everything from median household income disparities between blacks and whites to average educational background and employment disparities. The data was nothing short of staggering, with blacks falling short in every category by a large margin.



O'Brien was then joined on stage by three panelists; Dr. Patrick Graham, President/CEO of the Urban League of Central Carolinas, Ms. Tiffany Capers, Managing Director of Teach for America, and Ron Stodghill, Director at the Smith Institute for Applied Research, author and founder of Innovo Laboratory. The discussion ranged from education, unity, racial identity, economic achievement, entrepreneurship, discrimination and the black middle class. Each panelist brought a unique perspective on each topic. They widely agreed that, while Charlotte is recognized for its large African American

middle class, there are very few African Americans that are actually in a position to hire or employ other African Americans. O'Brien then opened the floor for questions from the audience. Guests stood in line to ask and address not only the panel but others in the room. Guests

shared their own racial experiences and observations from their own perspective. Not surprisingly, most audience members asked for definitive recommendations on how to best address the social ills that plague the black community. O'Brien reminded the audience that the Town Hall Series was a place for dialogue. She shared that neither she, nor the panel had definitive answers.

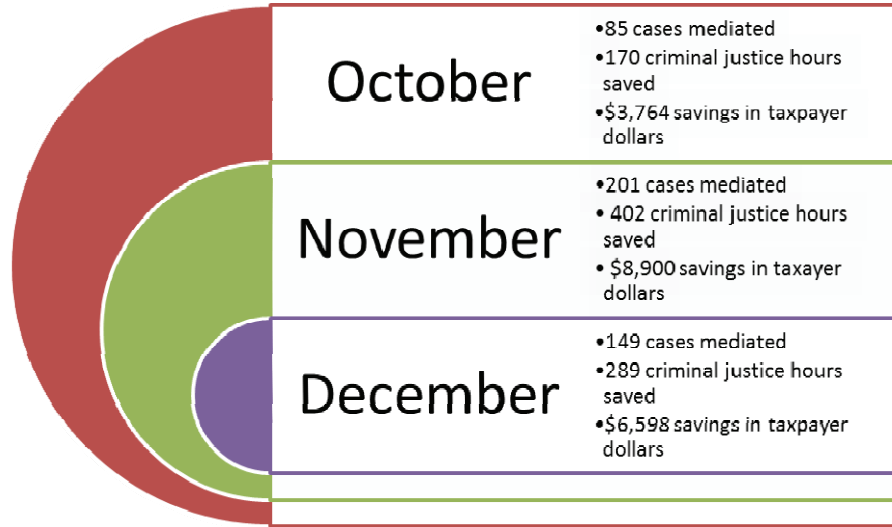
As a member of CRC, I found the Black in America Town Hall an impactful discussion, not unlike many we've seen before in our community. Statistics were

presented in a strong, eye-opening light, none that were new. Clear examples of negative portrayals and biased representations were again offered. Community members took to the microphones venting, sharing, and inquiring- much like other Town Halls, community meetings and panel discussions that we've seen in the past. At the close of the event I was again left with the same questions that I always have after these dialogues: Where were the people who really needed to hear this message? The majority of the room was filled with people that I've seen before; former teachers of mine, non-profit colleagues, corporate partners, elected officials and others. Where were the kids whose educational deficits will almost certainly assure that they become a "statistic"? Where were the under employed and unemployed individuals who needed to KNOW that their racial counterparts were not in a position to hire them? Where were the young men who needed to hear that they are being systematically set up to fail and why? When are we going to take these messages TO them and stop talking ABOUT them in their absence?

We love to hear from CRC Link readers! If you have a suggestion, feedback or a great story idea, please do not hesitate to contact us at aarreaza@charlottenc.gov. The CRC Link is a quarterly publication of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee

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Do you know an officer who goes above and beyond the call of duty?

Nominations are being accepted for the 35th Annual Police Community Relations Awards sponsored by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee.

An annual feature of Charlotte's Law Enforcement Week celebration, the award recognizes officers and work teams from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department for building positive, problem-solving relationships with individual citizens and neighborhood groups. During the past 34 years, Charlotte-Mecklenburg community members have nominated more than 2,550 officers.

Citizens in the patrol area, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) personnel, groups and individuals may make nominations. To nominate an officer or team, write to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee, 600 E. Trade Street, Charlotte, NC, or call 704-336-3056 to request a nomination form. You can also apply online [here](#). Deadline for nominations is Tuesday, April 1, 2014.

Members of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee will review nominations. Officers selected will be honored at an awards ceremony and dinner on Thursday, May 15, 2014.