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State of Minnesota
Council on Black Minnesotans



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Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature

November 1998

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1998 Biennial Report

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Introduction

The Council on Black Minnesotans is pleased to present this Report of its activities over the last two years to the Governor and Legislature of Minnesota. Every other November, the Council is required by law to summarize its activities since the last report, list its receipts and expenditures, identify the major problems and issues confronting Black people, and list the specific objectives that the Council seeks to attain in the next Biennium.

Beyond meeting its statutory reporting duties, the Council values this opportunity to bring Minnesota's executive and legislative branches up to date not only on its own activities, but on issues of special concern to many Black Minnesotans. With new leadership in the Governor's Office and the House of Representatives, the Council regards this Report as a chance to introduce itself to state policymakers who might be unfamiliar with our functions, to articulate a set of policy issues and priorities, and to help ensure that the interests of Black Minnesotans are considered and addressed in Minnesota's policy processes. The Council is eager to work with all branches of state government in order to increase their awareness and understanding of Minnesota's Black citizens, who often regard the Council as their essential link to public policy.

Minnesota's Black population makes up only about 3 percent of the state's total, but also represents one of its fastest-growing demographic components. Minnesotans of African descent have increased from 35,000 in 1970, to 54,000 in 1980, to 95,000 in 1990. While the U.S. Census Bureau projected in 1995 that the state's Black population would reach 122,000 in 2010, current estimates of the 1998 total range from 135,000 to 140,000. In other words, Black Minnesotans will have nearly tripled in number between 1980 and 2000.

As of 1990, about 95 percent of Minnesota's Black population lived in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and more than half of the remaining Black Minnesotans lived in other metropolitan areas of the state. About 71 percent of the 1990 Black population lived in the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. By contrast, only 20 percent of Minnesotans of European descent lived in the central city of any metropolitan area, according to the 1990 Census.

These figures indicate that the general condition of Black Minnesotans is closely linked to that of Minnesota's cities. At the same time, it must be recognized that Black populations are growing in suburban and nonmetropolitan areas, and that the ability of Black Minnesotans to take full advantage of our expanding high-technology economy will require attention to a wide range of issues that affect the distribution of jobs, housing, transportation options, and quality educational opportunities in and between communities throughout and beyond the Twin Cities area.

Finally, the Council urges the Governor and Legislature to recognize that Black Minnesotans should not be seen as a special interest group, a lobbying bloc, or a monolithic body of opinion on any given issue. Although Black Minnesotans will sometimes differ from the general population on a particular question at a particular time, we hold a wider range of political and social beliefs than many might expect. We therefore remind every elected and appointed official in the state that if they will take the time to get to know their Black constituents, they will be impressed with the wealth of talent, energy, and public spirit that characterizes today's Black Minnesotans.

Summary of Activities Since Last Report

A. Organizational Development and Activities.

The Council on Black Minnesotans consists of eleven citizen voting members appointed by the governor and four legislative nonvoting members appointed by the two houses of the Minnesota Legislature. Broadly speaking, the primary functions of the Council are to serve as a liaison between Minnesotans of African descent and state government, participate in policymaking on issues that affect the interests and welfare of Black Minnesotans, and publicize their accomplishments and contributions to the state. The Council normally meets on the second Tuesday of each month at its St. Paul office, and meets two or three times a year in other cities, such as Duluth, Rochester, and St. Cloud. The specific duties of the Council are set forth in detail at Minn.Stats. Section 3.9225, subd. 3, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

As of November 15, 1998, there are nine citizen members of the Council, with two vacancies it is actively seeking to fill, preferably with at least one person who resides outside of the Twin Cities area. Six of the current citizen Council members have been appointed since November 1996. In general, the current Council is younger, better educated, and more professional in background than prior Council boards, which tended to draw from a strong pool of community leaders representing grass-roots organizations and the Black church tradition. This shift in the composition of the Council, however, should not be taken as a departure from its long-standing commitment to community involvement. If anything, it reflects instead a new sophistication and expanding range of approaches to its continuing goal of linking community leadership and citizen participation to policymaking processes at all levels of government.

Most of the daily work of the Council is performed by a full-time professional and clerical staff, which grew from a strength of four FTE's through FY 1996 to its present level of six. The two new staff fill professional positions funded by separate legislative appropriations, rather than the Council's general operating funds. The Council will be seeking funds in the coming legislative session to integrate these two positions into its general operating budget.

The Council board has been occupied mainly in setting broad policies, establishing priorities, staff oversight, and strategic planning to maximize its positive impact within a context of sharply limited financial and personnel resources. Council staff has been deeply engaged in implementing policy, collaborating with community organizations and government agencies, and keeping abreast of developments on a wide range of issues of particular interest to Minnesotans of African descent. Staff is now engaged in a process of defining and streamlining roles and decision-making processes consistent with the February 1998 recommendations of the Department of Administration's Management Analysis Division. Council staff recently acquired its first modern, network-ready computer system.

Significant improvements in internal Council processes are expected to result from the staff's growing familiarity with this new technological capacity.

B. Policy Development and Related Activities.

Right at the core of the Council's purpose is the objective of insuring that state policymaking reflects the needs, interests, and ideas of Black Minnesotans. The Council works closely with community organizations and state government to help promote mutual understanding, lines of communication, and effective policy implementation on some of society's most difficult and emotionally charged issues. Largely because of Minnesota's demographics, very few state legislators find it politically necessary to court African-American support or assume leadership roles on issues of particular importance to Black Minnesotans. As a consequence, many Minnesotans of African descent feel, rightly or wrongly, that state government is neither sensitive nor responsive to their concerns. By bringing such concerns to policymakers while keeping the community informed of policy considerations and opportunities for constructive participation, the Council on Black Minnesotans serves as a critical link between its constituency and state government. The Council is pleased to report that most state agencies and legislative committees are very much interested in our views and involvement, and that some agencies have come to seek the Council's input at an early stage of their policymaking procedures.

In the coming Biennium, the Council will continue to develop relationships and streamline communications with other functions of state government so that mutual familiarity can promote effective consideration of Black perspectives at the earliest practicable points. The following discussion illustrates how the Council has worked with state government, Minnesotans of African descent, and a wide variety of community organizations on particular policy issues.

1. Education. Over the last two years, education has emerged as the single issue of greatest importance to most Black Minnesotans, just as it seems to have done in the state as a whole. This probably reflects several factors: recent sustained improvement in employment levels and personal incomes, the leveling off of violent crime rates among Black youth, and the widely publicized policy discussions in 1997-98 about such educational issues as the Governor's educational tax credit proposal, statewide rulemaking on desegregation and diversity, and the growing acceptance of charter school, residential academy, and alternative education programs to meet changing and diverse student needs.

The Council has closely monitored and participated in the rulemaking activities of the state Board of Education and the Department of Children, Families and Learning in the areas of graduation standards, desegregation, and diversity. The Council has also helped organize and coordinate the participation of many community organizations in these rulemaking processes, so that parents of African descent can understand and evaluate specific proposals and present their responses effectively. Good working relationships with

both the Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools have long been in place. The Council's key community collaborators on educational issues include the Urban Coalition, the Minneapolis Urban League, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, the new St. Paul Education Summit, the other state Councils of Color, and many other community-based organizations.

The Council also plays an important role with respect to educational legislation. We monitor the progress and content of the K-12 Education Omnibus Bill, and prepare a digest of its provisions so that interested community groups can learn of new developments as quickly as possible. This year, the Council is directly involved in implementing one provision of the 1998 K-12 Bill, the new Clearinghouse of Best Educational Practices. A growing recent trend in state education policy has been to promote the development of cooperative programs and initiatives between schools and communities, and between schools and other public sector entities. The Council expects to encourage the expansion and continuing state support of these initiatives in the coming Biennium.

2. Children's and Families' Issues. The Council on Black Minnesotans has played a leading role in policymaking in this area for many years, and was instrumental in obtaining passage of legislation that required consideration of a child's relatives and cultural background in foster care and adoptive placements. The consideration of such factors in out-of-home child placement underwent significant change in 1996-97, when the Minnesota Legislature, in response to a new federal mandate, effectively prohibited child-placing agencies from consciously preferring same-race placements of children in need of adoptive or foster homes. At the same time, the federal legislation that compelled these changes also required states to become more active in recruiting and training foster and adoptive families so that the pool of available placement options would better reflect the diversity of the children in actual need of homes. To meet this need for Black Minnesotans, the Council played a leading role in organizing the African American Adoption and Permanent Placement Agency, Inc. (AAAPPA), a new private nonprofit corporation committed to recruiting Black families as qualified adoptive and foster care resources. The Council served as fiscal agent for AAAPPA in its first months, but the organization is now fully organized with tax-exempt status, and is operating under its own contract with the Department of Human Services.

The Council has an express statutory duty to monitor trends relating to the out-of-home placement of Black children based on data provided annually by the Department of Human Services. Recent DHS reports indicate that children of African descent have been much more likely than other children of color to be placed with relatives or other same-race homes, but the impact of the new state and federal requirements has yet to be reflected in the data. We expect that the work of AAAPPA and other organizations active in foster family recruitment will help mitigate the effects of the new federal and state legislation.

Another Council priority in the area of family development and preservation relates to our ongoing work with African-American men's groups, such as Urban Ventures, SALAAM,

Black Veterans of America, MARCH, Save Our Sons, and others. Many Black men are deeply concerned and involved with helping men and youth connect with their families and communities through mentoring, neighborhood improvement, tutoring, and crisis counseling services. It is impossible to overestimate the value of the work of these individuals and groups for modeling the values of good citizenship, positive relationships, and guidance for young people. The Council will continue to explore opportunities to support these committed men's groups and help connect them to the resources they need to expand the impact of their work.

The Council also monitored the development and implementation of federally mandated welfare reform in Minnesota, as passed by the 1997 legislature. We have worked with many community organizations to help ensure that those families dependent on public assistance can take maximum advantage of the opportunities reflected in the new MFIP while minimizing their exposure to the sanctions and adverse consequences that figure in the new statute.

In cooperation with other state agencies, the Council was represented on the Advisory Group for implementation of the new Minnesota Putative Fathers' Registry and participated in review and public information activities concerning the Departments of Corrections and Human Services' Umbrella Rule for youth residential facilities, and the State Supreme Court Task Force on Foster Care and Adoptions in the Juvenile Courts. The Council also helped facilitate the Department of Children, Families and Learning's 1998 Child Care System Retreat, and was represented on the Media Committee for publicizing Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month.

The Council's work in the area of children's and families' issues also depends to a great extent on collaborating with professional and community groups with specialized expertise in particular aspects of the field. The Council is affiliated or works with many such groups, including the National Association of Social Workers, One Church One Child, the National Black Child Development Institute, African American Family Services, the National Center for Fathering, ARC of Hennepin County, the Minnesota Food and Nutrition Network, the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network, and the National Association of Black Social Workers.

3. Civil Rights. Black Minnesotans have long relied on the Council to play a leadership role in this area. In the last two years, the Council has responded to racially motivated assaults on African Americans or African immigrants in communities such as Rochester, Albert Lea, and St. Cloud. While such incidents have occurred with increasing frequency in smaller Minnesota cities, they take place from time to time in the Twin Cities as well. Especially painful was the timing of two assaults on African Americans in Minneapolis and St. Paul last January, which closely coincided with Minnesota's official observance of the Martin Luther King holiday. In cases such as these, the Council is often invited to visit the affected communities and work with local leaders and citizens to find ways to prevent similar incidents, promote constructive discussion of underlying factors and

tensions, and give the community a chance to unite in condemnation of such incidents. One consequence of the most recent wave of hate and bias crimes has been the emergence of widespread community demand for legislation to increase the penalties for assaults and other offenses shown to be motivated by bigotry.

The Council is also an active participant in the Governor's Affirmative Action Council and the Statewide Affirmative Action Committee. The former body discusses inclusive state hiring policies and practices at the executive level, while the latter is concerned with matters relating to the implementation, monitoring, and effectiveness of particular agency approaches. Both play important roles in ensuring that affirmative action in Minnesota remains fair and effective. While wholesale abandonment of affirmative action does not now appear to be likely in Minnesota, the contrary experience in some other states indicates that affirmative action must not be taken for granted. The Council feels that the results of well-designed and equitable affirmative action programs will themselves provide the best assurance that inclusive state hiring and contracting policies will continue in effect for as long as they are needed.

Other Council activities related to civil rights in the last Biennium have included helping to develop state hate-crime legislation, working with the community and the federal judiciary on fairness issues in pretrial detention decisions, taking part in the recent initiative to eliminate racially offensive or divisive tactics in political campaigns, co-sponsoring the United States Attorney's Office Summit on Hate Crimes, and participating regularly in such community discussions as the Hamline University Race Dialogue Series and the Lucille's Kitchen Forum events.

4. Health Issues. Throughout the last two years, the Council has been active in helping to develop effective public and private responses to the many health and medical issues that affect Black Minnesotans as a distinct and identifiable group. These activities have generally been undertaken in conjunction with organizations concerned with a particular health problem, such as Children and Adults With Sickle-Cell Anemia, the African American AIDS Task Force, or the National Sarcoidosis Association; or with broader coalitions that work with several such agencies, such as the Urban Coalition's Populations of Color Health Task Force, and the Minnesota Food and Nutrition Network. The Council has observed in recent years a growing awareness in the medical research field not only of the disparate etiologies and effects of certain diseases and conditions between different racial groups, but also of the implications of such disparities for effective prevention, study, and treatment with respect to different groups. We therefore anticipate that public health policies will take due account of these disparities in allocating resources in these areas.

The Council was also active in the last two years with the broad-based collaborative effort between state agencies and the public health community to find effective ways to reduce the impact of tobacco-related illness in our society, and work toward the eventual elimination of tobacco as a health care issue. We also helped formulate a Minority Consensus Position on National Tobacco Policy in cooperation with many organizations

representing communities of color from around the country. After having been involved in the deliberations leading to the incorporation of the new Minnesota Partnership for Action Against Tobacco, the Council expects to work with this entity to help overcome the harmful effects of tobacco use among Minnesotans of African descent.

5. Crime and Corrections. Issues of crime, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system are still some of the most persistent problems faced by Black Minnesotans, even though the steep rise of violent crime rates through the mid-1990's has peaked and begun to decline. The Council has long been concerned with helping Black communities identify and overcome the root causes of crime, promote safety in Black neighborhoods, and assume a positive role in working with law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system. At the same time, the Council continually presents Black perspectives to policymakers and the criminal justice establishment in order to promote fairness in the application and inclusiveness in the administration of the criminal law.

While the general public and policymakers are generally aware that persons of African descent are proportionally overrepresented among the state's criminal defendants and incarcerated population, it is often overlooked that Black persons are also far more likely to be victimized and adversely affected by crime. These circumstances were highlighted in the Council's 1996 survey, "African American Perspectives on Crime and Justice in Minnesota".

The results from over 700 survey responses indicated that Black Minnesotans, in comparison to the state's overall population, were four times as likely to regard violent crime as a major problem in their communities, about three times as likely to have been robbed or assaulted, and only half as likely to report that police did a good job of protecting their communities.

Black Minnesotans have a strong interest in effective responses to crime problems, and recognize that improved relations with law enforcement agencies will be an important component of any comprehensive set of solutions. For example, the Council has worked with the new statewide Gang Strike Task Force in order to help insure that the public interest in suppressing illegal gang activities does not result in the widespread collection and maintenance of data on law-abiding Black citizens who may be relatives or casual acquaintances of suspected gang members. Similarly, the Council has been involved in many activities relating to the State Supreme Task Force Report on Racial Fairness in the Courts, such as the important work of the Steering Committee on Law Enforcement Relations with Communities of Color. The Council recently has participated in diversity training for local law enforcement agencies, as well as curriculum development and training for law enforcement complaint investigators. We also meet regularly with law enforcement and corrections officials in our work with crime and violence prevention coalitions. The Council expects to become involved in helping to recruit officers of color for the State Patrol, which currently has fewer than ten Black patrol officers.

In order to improve its effectiveness in working with law enforcement agencies and community groups and in helping to develop public policy, the Council regularly receives and studies research and policy reports from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and the National Institute of Justice. In the coming Biennium, the Council expects to improve its effectiveness in using these and other data resources to help inform public discussion of criminal justice issues and help ensure that policymaking reflects the best available information.

The Council works closely with many organizations concerned with criminal justice and public policy responses, including Partners in Community Corrections, the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, and the Minnesota Center for Crime Victims and Witnesses' Services.

6. Youth Violence Prevention. With the support of legislative appropriations specifically for the purpose in 1996 and 1997, the Council has been especially active in the area of youth violence prevention and intervention since the last Biennial Report. Specifically, the Council assembled comprehensive information concerning violence prevention organizations and resources in the Twin Cities area, convened a series of meetings for violence prevention practitioners in 1996-97, worked closely with several metropolitan-area violence prevention coalitions and networks, and recently awarded 14 grants to organizations for implementation of their innovative and focused program ideas. The grantee organizations not only represent African-American communities around the Twin Cities, but also include American Indian, Asian, African immigrant, and Chicano-Latino groups. The research and information on successful approaches to youth violence prevention that the Council has accumulated has been extremely helpful in its efforts to help community-based organizations integrate research and theory with the actual work of practitioners who interact with youth and families.

In the course of its work in this area, the Council has found that there are many organizations and persons in the Twin Cities area who are committed to effective violence prevention messages and programs for youth and families. Building on the success of these violence prevention resources will depend on the following: continued and increased financial support for well-designed programs; improved communication between organizations active in violence prevention; and continuing the trend toward linking practice with research and theory. Meanwhile, the state of violence intervention services is not as well developed in community-based organizations, and public resources committed to emergency and longer-term aid for victims of violence are not sufficient either to meet the full range of needs that arise in the aftermath of violence or to support the development of a spectrum of community-based services to meet these needs.

C. Community Development.

In addition to its functions relating to public policy development and working toward solutions to problems of particular interest to Minnesotans of African descent, the Council has also been involved in a wide range of community development activities in cooperation with organizations that run the gamut from the Center for the American Experiment to the Urban Coalition. The Council is often called upon to organize, support, or publicize efforts to develop civic, social, and economic capacity in the Black communities of Minnesota.

Perhaps foremost among these efforts is the continuing work of many organizations in the area of citizens' education. The Council is active in many projects to raise the level of Black participation in political processes and public issues. Some of these efforts include the Council's annual legislative training workshops and Capitol tours, the African American Citizenship Initiative, voter registration campaigns undertaken with many church and community-based organizations, and the highly successful Candidates' Forum Series at Lucille's Kitchen co-sponsored by KMOJ Radio and the Spokesman-Recorder newspapers. The Council on Black Minnesotans also works with the other state Councils of Color to encourage civic participation among all of Minnesota's diverse communities, and introduce public processes to young people. The Council undertakes these activities in a thoroughly bipartisan manner. The point of the Council's participation in civic activities is not to advocate a particular policy position or party agenda, but instead is to support Black involvement in Minnesota's public life and to encourage candidates to address the concerns of Black voters in their campaigns.

Other examples of the Council's recent work in the area of community development were conducted in one or more specific policy areas. For example, Council representatives have met with U.S. Bureau of the Census officials to help find ways to make the 2000 Census as accurate as possible in counting the number of Minnesotans of African descent. The Council also presents an annual informational event in cooperation with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to give Black Minnesotans access to a range of home ownership options. We were also involved with the recent reissue of the Twin Cities Black Pages, a directory of businesses and services with a principally Black clientele. Finally, the Council maintains close relationships and makes frequent appearances on the local mainstream and Black media, such as the broadcast television stations, Minnesota Public Radio, and KMOJ Radio, in order to raise awareness of important issues and publicize opportunities for public participation.

D. African Issues.

Persons born in Africa comprise one of the fastest growing segments of Minnesota's population, and are currently estimated to number from 15,000 to 30,000. While African-born Minnesotans who have resided in the state for more than ten years are on average better educated than the state's general population and fare well in a variety of professions and occupations, Somalis who have arrived since 1990 represent the largest group of

African immigrants in Minnesota and face many acute problems in the course of their resettlement. Many recent arrivals were professionally educated and employed in their home countries, but language and cultural barriers prevent them from participating fully in the Minnesota workforce.

Primarily through its African Resource Center project, and in cooperation with such organizations as the Immigration Task Force of Minnesota, the Council has worked on behalf of recent African immigrants and refugees in the areas of family economic assistance, health care, housing, employment, and human rights. The Council has also advised several African self-help organizations who are uniquely qualified to assist their own communities to make the adjustment to life in Minnesota. Some of these organizations are the Somali Community of Minnesota, the Somali-American Friendship Association, African Social Services, the Igbo Women's League, and the Takulo Organization.

The African Resource Center not only serves as a clearinghouse for information, organizational resources, and advice for persons and groups interested in African immigrant and continental African issues, it also provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and cultural contacts for people from many African nations. The Center has recently opened a telephone hotline to keep interested persons advised of issues and events of interest to the native African communities, as well as to field community reports and concerns.

The Council and its African affiliates have also been involved in strengthening ties between immigrant and African-American communities, and between Minnesota and the emerging democracies of Africa itself. Last year, the Council sponsored a major community gala that celebrated these connections between Africans and African-Americans. The Council has also hosted or sponsored several trade, cultural, and diplomatic tours from various African nations, including South Africa, Ghana, and many other nations, especially in the southern portion of the continent. The Council hopes to promote and participate in trade delegations that can link Minnesota high-tech and agricultural business resources with export, development, and investment opportunities in African markets.

E. Arts and Culture.

The Council has been deeply involved in many projects and activities that draw upon Minnesota's rich pool of African-American and African talent in the performing and visual arts. Council representatives serve on Penumbra Theater's Planning Committee for the new African American Cultural Arts Center, the Advisory Committee for the Science Museum of Minnesota's AFRICA! Exhibit, and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council. Last year, the Council participated in the Minnesota History Center's exhibit, *Our Gathering Places: African Americans in Minnesota*. The Council participates annually in such Black community

celebrations as Juneteenth, Selby Dayz, and Rondo Days. Community cultural celebrations have proved to be an excellent medium for informing people of the Council and its activities, and for stimulating Black interest in Minnesota's public life.

We also work with Black student groups from around the state in planning Minnesota State (Mankato)'s annual Pan African Student Leadership Conference. Council support for a wide range of artistic expression and cultural activity for Minnesotans of African descent is an inexpensive but highly rewarding way to help recognize and support creativity not only for the benefit of our own communities, but also for the entire state's enrichment.

F. Martin Luther King Holiday Commission.

The Council's involvement in the annual celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday has grown significantly since 1984, when the Minnesota Legislature first designated the third Monday in January as a state holiday. In the first years since that date, observances were organized by the Minneapolis and St. Paul Interdenominational Ministerial Alliances, and their focus was an annual rally at the State Capitol and march to the St. Paul Cathedral. Since then, at the request of Coretta Scott King and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission, Minnesota governors have appointed a state commission to plan and carry out Minnesota's official state observance of the Martin Luther King Holiday.

Since 1994, Council Executive Director Lester Collins has served as the chair of the Governor's Commission on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. The Governor's Commission comprises a diverse group of 21 volunteers who plan, organize, and carry out each year's event. While the legislature has made an annual appropriation of \$7,500 to support the observance, the commissioners themselves raise an additional \$30,000 to \$35,000 each year to meet the actual costs of the event. In recent years, the focus of the state Martin Luther King Day observance has been a community rally at St. Paul Central High School followed by a march to Concordia University's Gangelhoff Auditorium for a program of music, speeches, and community awards to recognize special achievement in work toward equality and justice. About 4,000 people took part in last year's event.

The Governor's Commission has worked hard to include persons and groups from outside the Twin Cities area in both the planning and the celebration of Martin Luther King Day. Greater Minnesota interest and participation has increased rapidly in recent years. Student groups from Rochester, St. Cloud, and Mankato have been honored for their work in helping to bring peace and social harmony to their schools and communities. In the next Biennium, the Council and the Governor's Commission on the Martin Luther King Holiday hope to expand Greater Minnesota's involvement and participation in the official state observance.

Major Issues and Problems Confronting Black People

The following list of issues and problems is not exclusive and is not set forth in any particular order of priority for solution. These issues instead are presented as characteristic concerns of many or most Minnesotans of African descent.

1. Education. Black Minnesotans are very much concerned about the quality of education available to their children in Minnesota's public schools, but there has yet to emerge any consensus as to what solutions might be most effective. Recent standardized test score data indicate that students of African descent, as a group, perform far below satisfactory levels. Considerable doubt exists among Black Minnesotans as to the equitable allocation of resources in the schools that serve their children or the commitment of those schools to their ultimate success. Not only does educational policy and innovation need to make significant improvements in the education of students of color, but those responsible for implementing educational policy must work hard to penetrate the atmosphere of community skepticism that currently surrounds such efforts.

2. Crime and Law Enforcement. Even in today's trend of declining crime rates, Black Minnesotans continue to be disproportionately affected by violence in their communities. Recent law enforcement developments such as the new Gang Strike Task Force and the efforts of police in Minneapolis and St. Paul to concentrate on crime in low income communities of color are applauded by many, but there remains a great deal of controversy among Black citizens as to the fairness and motivations of these tactics. It is widely believed that conduct that is severely punished in communities of color is broadly tolerated in other parts of the state, and that the main result of selective aggressive enforcement in urban areas is to further stigmatize Black youth and disqualify them from the pursuit of legitimate opportunities. Whether accurate or not, such perceptions reflect a substantial share of African-American opinion, and must be regarded as a significant problem in itself. Law enforcement authorities must take the lead in improving relations with the Black communities of Minnesota. Community-based violence prevention and intervention resources must be developed in urban neighborhoods not only to keep violent behavior from spreading, but also to help reclaim those young people who have fallen under its spell.

3. African Immigrants' Issues. Current estimates of Minnesota's African-born population range from 15,000 to 30,000, with the most recent arrivals from Somalia and other strife-torn nations of East and West Africa concentrated in low-income neighborhoods in Minneapolis and St. Paul. While many immigrants have immediate and pressing needs for language, education, job skills, and emergency assistance, others with professional credentials and backgrounds remain severely underemployed. Some self-help groups have emerged from among the immigrant groups to help mobilize community responses, but their

ability to deal effectively with acute and long-term resettlement needs is sharply circumscribed by lack of financial resources and effective access to state and local policymaking processes.

4. Welfare Reform. Although today's high-performance economy has led to record low unemployment rates and a long-overdue rise in personal incomes, there is considerable concern that many persons now making the transition from welfare to self-sufficiency will be unable to do so on terms that can reasonably lead to long-term economic security, and that previous patterns of long-term welfare dependency will give way to even worse forms of permanent subsistence-level survival on the margins of the service economy.

5. Housing. Two issues fall under this head -- discrimination in housing opportunities in suburban and non-metropolitan areas of the state, and the lack of meaningful housing options for people of low-to-moderate income anywhere other than the poorest inner-city neighborhoods of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and a few other areas of the state. Of special concern here is the fact that jobs are increasing fastest in precisely the areas where housing and transportation options are most limited -- the outer suburban areas of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

6. Bias Crimes. There has been a recent increase in the incidence of hate and bias crimes in the Twin Cities, in other areas of the state, and on college campuses. Many Black Minnesotans feel that this at least in part reflects a longstanding "suburbanization" of the news media, that tends to portray people of color and inner-city communities as newsworthy only when sociopathic, and to be avoided whenever possible to do so. There needs to emerge a new leadership on state and local levels that can encourage communities to unite in their condemnation of intolerant and hateful behavior. Intolerance cannot thrive among people who will not let it thrive.

7. Health Care Issues. People of African descent are disproportionately affected by a wide range of health conditions and diseases. These range from hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease to AIDS and premature death. Racially differentiated characteristics in many physiological disorders are only recently becoming identified and understood, as in the recent studies indicating that race-linked differences in metabolizing nicotine can make it more difficult for Black smokers to break the habit. Minnesota's medical and health-care infrastructure should take the lead in research, treatment, and effective delivery of preventive approaches and therapeutic responses to the health problems of Black Minnesotans.

Specific Council Objectives for Next Biennium

A. Internal, Organizational and Technical Objectives.

1. Develop and implement an internal performance measurement tool for assessing the Council's effectiveness in the performance of its statutory duties.
2. Develop computer and network-supported systems to assemble and maintain community resource, data and research, mailing list, and media databases.
3. Set up and maintain a Council on Black Minnesotans website.
4. Develop and implement computer data management systems to link research and data to policy initiatives and policy implementation processes.
5. Develop criteria for prioritizing and following through on key activities.

B. External, Informational, and Community Objectives.

1. Achieve and maintain budget levels sufficient to support high Council performance across the full range of its statutory functions and priorities.
2. Develop and implement a comprehensive public information strategy to give Black Minnesotans, policymakers, and the general public timely and accurate information on Council projects, issues, and events.
3. Establish information networks to give persons and groups interested in particular problems the opportunity to come together and participate in policymaking processes.
4. Keep Minnesotans of African descent informed of legislative developments.
5. Form effective alliances with other communities of color and low-income populations on issues of common concern.

C. Council Activities in Greater Minnesota.

1. Strengthen and extend the Council's work outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area, where Black communities are growing fastest.

2. Ensure that the interests of Black Minnesotans in Greater Minnesota are not overlooked in policymaking activities at the state and local level.

3. Help develop the ability of Black Minnesotans in Greater Minnesota to participate fully in political, economic, social, and cultural activities in their own local communities, as well as throughout the state.

4. Help improve the climate of tolerance and respect for diversity throughout Minnesota so that citizens and visitors of African descent can feel safe and comfortable anywhere in the state.

D. Legislative and Policy Objectives.

1. Continue to improve and extend the Council's effectiveness in monitoring, analyzing, and responding to legislative and regulatory developments of interest to Black Minnesotans.

2. Work with the legislature and state agencies develop sound policy approaches to the problems and issues confronting Minnesotans of African descent.

3. Improve and strengthen the Council's capacity to work with public and private sector agencies and organizations in implementing policies on issues of interest to Black Minnesotans.

4. Help Black Minnesotans develop and refine their understanding of political and policymaking processes in the state, as well as their capacity to advance their own policy objectives.

5. Improve the Council's capacity to address the needs and interests of Minnesota's African immigrant communities.

Appendix 1

Minn.Stats. Section 3.9225 COUNCIL ON BLACK MINNESOTANS.

Subdivision 1. **Creation.** A state council on Black Minnesotans consists of 11 members appointed by the governor. The members of the council must be broadly representative of the Black community of the state and include at least five males and at least five females. Membership terms, compensation, removal of members, and filling of vacancies for nonlegislative members are as provided in section 15.0575. Because the council performs functions that are not purely advisory, the council is not subject to the expiration date in section 15.059. Two members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker and two members of the senate appointed by the subcommittee on committees of the committee on rules and administration shall serve as nonvoting members of the council. The council shall annually elect from its membership a chair and other officers it deems necessary.

Subd. 2. **Definitions.** For the purpose of this section, the term "Black" describes persons who consider themselves as having origin in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

Subd. 3. **Duties.** The council shall:

- (a) advise the governor and the legislature on the nature of the issues confronting Black people in this state;
- (b) advise the governor and the legislature on statutes or rules necessary to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in this state;
- (c) recommend to the governor and the legislature any revisions in the state's affirmative action program and other steps that are necessary to eliminate underutilization of Blacks in the state's work force;
- (d) recommend to the governor and the legislature legislation to improve the economic and social condition of Black people in this state;
- (e) serve as a conduit to state government for organizations of Black people in the state;
- (f) serve as a referral agency to assist Black people to secure access to state agencies and programs;
- (g) serve as a liaison with the federal government, local government units, and private organizations on matters relating to the Black people of this state;
- (h) perform or contract for the performance of studies designed to suggest solutions to problems of Black people in the areas of education, employment, human rights, health, housing, social welfare, and other related areas;
- (i) implement programs designed to solve problems of Black people when authorized by other statute, rule, or order;
- (j) review data provided by the commissioner of human services under section 257.072, subdivision 5, and present recommendations on the out-of-home placement of Black children. Recommendations must be presented to the commissioner and the legislature by February 1, 1990; November 1, 1990; and November 1 of each year thereafter; and
- (k) publicize the accomplishments of Black people and their contributions to this state.

Subd. 4. **Review of grant applications.** All applications by a state department or agency for the receipt of federal funds which will have their primary effect on Black Minnesotans shall be submitted to the council for review and recommendation at least 30 days before submission to a federal agency.

Subd. 5. **Powers.** The council may contract in its own name, but no money shall be accepted or received as a loan nor indebtedness incurred except as otherwise provided by law. Contracts shall be approved by a majority of the members of the council and executed by the chair and the executive director. The council may apply for, receive, and expend in its own name grants and gifts of money consistent with the power and duties specified in subdivisions 1 to 7.

The council shall appoint an executive director who is experienced in administrative activities and familiar with the problems and needs of Black people. The council may delegate to the executive director powers and duties under subdivisions 1 to 7 which do not require council approval. The executive director serves in the unclassified service and may be removed at any time by the council. The executive director shall recommend to the council, and the council may appoint the appropriate staff necessary to carry out its duties. Staff members serve in the unclassified service. The commissioner of administration shall provide the council with necessary administrative services.

Subd. 6. **State agency assistance.** Other state agencies shall supply the council upon request with advisory staff services on matters relating to the jurisdiction of the council. The council shall cooperate and coordinate its activities with other state agencies to the highest possible degree.

Subd. 7. **Report.** The council shall prepare and distribute a report to the governor and legislature by November 15 of each even-numbered year. The report shall summarize the activities of the council since its last report, list receipts and expenditures, identify the major problems and issues confronting Black people, and list the specific objectives which the council seeks to attain during the next biennium.

Appendix 2
Table A

Council on Black Minnesotans
Revenues FY 1997-1998

General Fund:	Operations	\$508,463	
	MLK Holiday	22,500	
	Violence Prevention	209,834	
	African Resource Center	56,250	
	African American Adoption Agency	<u>41,804</u>	
General Fund Total:		838,851	838,851
Federal Fund Total:			9,904
Gift Fund:	African Resource Center	12,019	
	MLK Holiday	2,272	
	CASCA	<u>5,000</u>	
Gift Fund Total:		19,291	<u>19,291</u>
TOTAL REVENUES			\$868,046

Note: The revenue and expenditure data for the 1997-98 Biennium in Appendix 2 are based on unaudited figures received from the Office of Fiscal Services of the Department of Administration, which provides administrative services to the Council as provided under Minn.Stats. Section 3.9225, subd. 5. Further explanation of revenues and expenditures appears following Table B.

Appendix 2
Table B

Council on Black Minnesotans

Expenditures FY 1997-1998

Salaries & Benefits	\$505,599
Rent, Maintenance, Utilities	47,232
Repairs	8,901
Printing / Advertising	17,452
Professional / Technical Services	95,957
Other Purchased Services	6,269
Employee Development	8,348
Other Operating Costs	21,469
Supplies	28,054
Equipment	27,197
Communications	22,402
Computer	3,566
Travel In-State	15,186
Travel Out-State	9,951
Aid to Non-Gov't Orgs	25,359
Statewide Indirect	<u>85</u>
TOTAL	\$843,588

Appendix 2
Explanation of Revenues and Expenditures

The main source of revenue for the Council on Black Minnesotans is a biennial legislative appropriation in the Omnibus Government Services Bill for the Council's general operating expenses. This appropriation for the 1997-98 biennium is shown on Table A under "General Fund: Operations."

All other Council revenues come from one of the following sources: direct legislative appropriation for a specific purpose (MLK Holiday, African Resource Center); interagency agreement with another state agency for a specific purpose (Violence Prevention, African American Adoption Agency); or donations, grants, or event receipts for a specific purpose (Gift Fund revenues for African Resource Center, MLK Holiday, and CASCA). In cases where the Council has acted as a temporary fiscal agent for another entity (African American Adoption Agency, CASCA) under an interagency agreement or grant, the funds pass through the Council's accounts for the benefit of the entity, with no net effect on the Council's operations or finances.

Council expenditures as shown on Table B aggregate all expenses paid from all of the sources described above, including those made on behalf of another entity under a fiscal agency arrangement. The positive difference between total revenues and total expenditures reflects funds that have been encumbered but not yet expended, and balances carried forward into FY 1999.