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**2004  
BIENNIAL  
REPORT**

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**COUNCIL ON BLACK MINNESOTANS**

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## **COUNCIL ON BLACK MINNESOTANS – 2004 BIENNIAL REPORT**

### **I. Executive Directors Comments**

**These comments are being presented to provide the Governor and Legislature with the Council's context of operations and activities.**

#### **A. Purpose of the Council on Black Minnesotans**

The State Council on Black Minnesotans was created by the State Legislature in 1980 to address the unmet needs and ongoing concerns impacting Minnesotans of African descent and to ensure that the conditions experienced by these constituents are conveyed to policy makers and others in authority; individuals and institutions that impact the well-being of those populations. More specifically, it has as its primary purpose to advise the governor and legislature on the nature and intensity of issues confronting the state's Black populations. The ultimate outcome of these processes is to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies and procedures of this state. The Council has the responsibility of advising and educating both policy makers and the general population, researching the broad spectrum of issues affecting Black Minnesotans and advocating on their behalf. It also has the responsibility of participating in the celebration of Black Culture and the acknowledgement and promotion of individuals and groups that contribute to this rich culture and its achievements.

#### **B. Council's Board of Directors - Performance, Structure and Priorities**

The performance of the Board of Directors of the Council for the reporting period was extraordinary. The Board was strategically and intensely involved on three levels. Council members were not only dedicatedly involved in regularly and specially scheduled Council meetings, but they significantly and effectively participated in the restructuring of Council committees and their subsequent operations. The Council's committee structure was greatly influenced by its constituencies and mirrors their priorities as identified through community forums, research surveys and other engagements. The top four priorities have become the focus of the Council's agenda for the 2004 Legislative Session. These priorities, in lexical order, include:

- 1. Black Families and Children Issues** – particularly out-of-home placement disparities and welfare reform issues.
- 2. Criminal Justice Issues** – with particular focus on Racial Profiling/Police Misconduct, disproportionate arrest and incarceration rates and equity within the judicial system.
- 3. Education Issues** – Mainly monitoring issues and conditions affecting Black students and their families and sponsoring educational events..

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- 4. Health Issues** – Direct efforts involved focusing on teen pregnancy and AIDS/STD prevention, tobacco usage reduction and smoking prevention and environmental health issues. Indirect efforts involved working through the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health and other organizations to deal with a wide range of health disparities and serving on several task forces.

In addition to the above mentioned priorities/committees, the Council also created two additional substantive committees and four operational committees that would monitor and work on identified issues. They include:

- 1. Additional Substantive Committees**

- a. Housing Issues
- b. Economic Issues

- 2. Operational Committees**

- a. Executive Committee
- b. Legislation, Policy and Advocacy Committee
- c. African/African American Relations Committee
- d. Information Systems and Technology Committee
- e. Finance and Fundraising Committee

But most importantly, Council members have been involved at the community level. They regularly attended a multitude of meetings that addressed issues of education, health, human services structure and delivery, and issues confronting community-based organizations. They were the Council's link to its constituencies.

In the interest of efficiency and effectiveness, the Council's committee structure has been modified. The Council now has three committees: 1) the Executive Committee, 2) the Marketing Committee, and 3) the Legislation/Policy Committee. However, the policy committee will address essentially the same substantive areas as the Council has addressed historically, using a subcommittee structure. These changes will be discussed further in the section on Future Council Actions.

Much of the Council's contact has been with state, metropolitan, county, and municipal governmental units. And, in most instances, the Council's efforts have been collaborative in nature. Carrying out the functions of education, communication, and advice for the benefit of our constituents, requires involvement and collaboration with (a) policy makers, (b) community organizations, and (c) individuals.

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### **C. The Constituencies of the State Council on Black Minnesotans**

The Council's primary constituency are families and individuals of African Heritage; the state's largest non-European ethnic/cultural group. It should be noted that both African Americans and Africans were undercounted in the 2000 Census. According to the Office of the State Demographer, there are from 172,000 to 200,000 Black Minnesotans – more than triple the state's Black population in 1980.

The Council's fast growing client constituency includes one of the largest African immigrant populations in the United States. The State Demographic Center estimates that the African immigrant population in Minnesota is currently over 40,000; with the Somalis being the largest group – numbering 25,000.

The vast majority of the Council's constituencies, nearly 92%, are residents of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Smaller Black communities can be found in or near Rochester, Duluth, Saint Cloud, Mankato, Morehead and Worthington.

In addition to the Governor, State Legislature and other traditional public policy makers, the Council also has, and collaborates with, an institutional constituency of community-based agencies, health and human service agencies and research organizations with similar values, concerns, target populations, and objectives.

### **D. Summary Comments on the Status of Black Minnesotans**

Overall, the populations served by the Council are disproportionately impoverished and have experienced a multitude of complex and inter-related social, political and economic problems. The vast majority of Black Minnesotans are extremely segregated, being concentrated within specific communities and neighborhoods in the metropolitan area. These conditions are both caused and exacerbated by: (a) a lack of equal access and opportunity, (b) the lack of cultural competency and responsibility within institutions and their staff, and (c) the presence of individual and institutional racism. The Council was created to address the disparities and disproportionalities associated with these conditions and be an instrument to create social and institutional change.

When examining the socioeconomic conditions experienced by persons of African heritage in Minnesota, it is clear that this group of Minnesotans has made relatively little progress since the 1980's. Even though the 1990's produced a period of phenomenal economic growth for Minnesota, particularly in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, it is clear that persons of African heritage did not proportionately benefit from this prosperity. As was indicated earlier, over 90% of Black Minnesotans reside in the Twin Cities seven county Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). An examination of reports on income and earnings, employment status, home ownership levels (all indicators of wealth and economic well-being) suggest that Blacks residing in this area are in a state of economic and social regression.

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Significant disparities and disproportionalities between persons and families of European descent and persons and families of African heritage (and other populations of color and American Indians) continue to persist. This is particularly true in the areas of child neglect reports and out-of-home placement care; racial profiling, arrest, sentencing and incarceration levels; infant mortality and teen pregnancy rates, chronic disease and longevity; student academic performance, drop out rates, and access to higher educational opportunities. While the rates or incidence of specific conditions have gone down in Black communities, the gap associated with these conditions between persons of European descent and non-whites has remained consistent and significant.

Populations of color have been growing at an awesome rate in Minnesota and the Council has had as one of its primary concerns the changing demographics of the state and its relationship to the need for greater cultural competency and equity in the delivery and distribution of health and human services and resources; particularly the distribution of local, state and federal resources. Council staff has made presentations to several forums and conferences on this issue, including the National Association of Social Workers Conference in June 2003.

**The structure and content of this report will reflect the Council's priorities and committee system processes from 2001 to 2004.**

**What will follow is: (1) a summary and presentation of highlights regarding the activities of the Council since its last report, and (2) the identification of major problems and issues facing Minnesota's Black population by substantive/priority and operational areas.**

**Subsequently, a list of the specific objectives which the Council seeks to accomplish during the next biennium will be presented along with a list of financial receipts and expenditures.**

## **II. Council's Priorities, Problems & Activities**

It is essentially through collaboration and involvement with policy makers, service providers and community-based organizations and individuals that the Council addresses issues and accomplishes its goals.

Between the period of 2001 and 2004, and using community and organizational forums as a process, the Council identified, re-identified and systematically updated a set of priorities that would guide the actions of the Council and other community organizations.

This report and its associated activities have also been guided by the goals specified in the Council's last Biennial Report. Four areas for future action were identified:

- A. **Organizational and Technical Action Goals;** which included the development of an agency website and streamlining the flow of information between the Council and other entities.
- B. **Community Action Goals;** which included increased public policy and legislative education efforts with individuals and groups. And the promotion of greater collaboration between other communities of color and low-income populations on issues of common concern.
- C. **Greater Minnesota Action Goals;** this goals focused on increasing the Council's involvement and effectiveness with Black communities outside the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and promoting cultural competence.
- D. **Legislative & Policy Goals;** improving and strengthening the Council's effectiveness in advising policy makers and addressing the needs and interests of African Immigrant communities.

The Council on Black Minnesotans has made significant progress in achieving these goals. This progress is reflected in the following sections of this report.

### **A. Black Families & Children Issues**

The proportion of African American and American Indian children in out-of-home placement care is about four and seven times their representation in the total child population of Minnesota. And, because this type of disproportionality has been going on for decades, this issue has become the top priority for Council action and resolution. What concerns the Council is not only the level of disproportionality but the fact that when African American children have been placed in out-of-home care, remain in out-of-home care longer, and they have not been placed with African American family members. This practice has tended to contribute to the instability and disintegration of Minnesota's Black families.



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### **1. Commission on Minnesota's African American Children. (COMAAC)**

The Commission on Minnesota's African American Children, of which the Council is a member, is a federation of concerned professionals and citizens that began meeting in August of 2000. Subsequently, monthly meetings have been held at office of the Council on Black Minnesotans. COMAAC exists to work with and hold the county, state and federal government accountable and responsible. This includes ensuring that all families receive equitable treatment and devising ways to reduce the glaring racial disparities and disproportionalities in the child welfare system. Its primary role is to promote research and examine issues related to out-of-home placement and provide policy makers, practitioners and the public with direction and assistance in the area of child welfare issues. Its principal goal is to reduce the number of African American children in out-of-home placement care and restore individuals, families and communities to a greater state of well-being.

In collaboration with the Commission on Minnesota's African American Children (COMAAC) the Council had several meetings with Department Human Services (DHS) Commissioners to discuss issues of policy and practices. In addition, several representatives of COMAAC serve on the DHS Racial Disparities Task Force which oversees research being conducted on out-of-home care case management issues at the University of Minnesota and elsewhere.

COMAAC also proposed eight specific recommendations for the consideration of DHS commissioners and staff. It is important to note that meetings were held with Commissioner Goodno when he was in the legislature. Subsequently, other meetings with Commissioner Goodno have been held. COMAAC has also reviewed DHS reports and plans and have made specific recommendations for their submission and/or implementation.

At the state legislative level, the Council assisted in arranging several hearings on the issue of out of home care disparities for the senate committee headed by Sen. John Marty; during the 2002 session. One hearing was held at the capitol and had as its primary focus the empirical research results of Dr. Samuel Meyers of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute and Drs. Nancy Rodenberg and Glenda Rooney (President of COMAAC) of Augsburg College. The second senate committee hearing was held at the Minneapolis Urban League and was successful in securing impressive testimony from community residents impacted by out-of-home policies and practices.

During the 2003 Legislative Session, the Council supported legislation sponsored by Rep. Neva Walker and Sen. Linda Higgins that would promote aggressive actions on the part of child protection staff to identify relatives of affected children and make serious attempts to place these children with family members.

Two other community forums on this issue were co-sponsored by the Council as part of the Minneapolis Urban League's "Pipeline" series on community issues. Two mini conferences on this subject were sponsored by Hennepin County Department of Human Services and the State Department of Human Services. And, testimony has been provided by COMACC representatives at hearings held by Hennepin County Commissioners.

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COMAAC has also developed a strong working relationship with Ramsey County Human Services Department.

The police, along with teachers, social workers and health care providers are mandated reporters when situations that may involve child abuse and neglect arise. It must be stated at this point that the issue of neglect is closely correlated with the issue of poverty. And, Black families are disproportionately poor. Hence, more Black families potentially subject to charges of neglect.

Unfortunately, police involvement has historically led to a significant number of reports and actions that have caused African and African American children to be disproportionately separated from their families and placed in foster care. As a result, the issue of out-of-home placement became a significant part of the Federal Mediation process between the City of Minneapolis, its Police Department, and its American Indian/Communities of color. Currently, front-end strategies are being developed that will reduce disparities and disproportionalities. More specifically, alternative solutions that will address this issue are being collaboratively developed by Hennepin county DHS, COMAAC representatives and representatives from the Minneapolis Police Department.

Steps are being taken to decentralize and integrate the out-of-home placement process by both Hennepin and Ramsey County Human Service Departments. And, efforts regarding out-of-home placements are also being made to re-educate and involve guardian ad litem and the judiciary in a more positive and culturally appropriate manner.

### **2. Minnesota's Welfare System – Minnesota Family Investment program (MFIP)**

Over the past several years, massive changes have been made in Minnesota's welfare system. These changes are reflected in the Minnesota Family Investment Program. Some of these changes have had a devastating impact on populations who are disproportionately impoverished; in particular, Minnesota's American Indian and Black communities.

Using a three-year Self-support Index, the Minnesota Department of Human Services issued a report in 2003 on welfare outcomes of racial/ethnic and immigrant groups. Containing few surprises, the report demonstrated that there are disparities in "MFIP outcomes by racial/ethnic and immigrant status. More specifically, "African American, American Indian, Somali, and other black immigrant participant outcomes were lower than those of other racial/ethnic and immigrant groups."

However, contrary to "popular opinion", it has been determined and reported by the State Demographic Center that "most Africans receive no public assistance". For example, only 13.5% (less than 4,000) of the Somali estimated population of 25,000 and 3.9% (less than 300) of the Ethiopian estimated population in Minnesota (7,500) receive public assistance.

The Council on Black Minnesotans, in collaboration with other groups and individuals, have been involved in the development of policies and programs designed to improve MFIP participant outcomes for African American families. For example, through the

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MFIP Focus Group project, headed by consultants Mary K. Boyd and Kwame McDonald, the Council provided assistance by creating both a survey of resources that were available for African American families in Ramsey County and a service capacity survey to determine the status and dynamics of these available services and programs. Subsequently, using a program model developed and implemented in Minneapolis by Sister Atum Azzahir, a program was developed and put in place to “guide” African American families through the requirements, barriers and services associated with MFIP. The Council supported the project’s successful attempt at securing funding from Ramsey County for this program.

The Council on Black Minnesotans has also involved in collaborations with other organizations whose focus has been welfare reform and its impact. The Council joined both Affirmative Options and the Welfare Rights Committee in their efforts to secure a moratorium on MFIP’s five-year limit for assistance and to have funding restored for SSI recipients.

### **B. Criminal Justice Issues in Minnesota**

It is clear that racial bias exists in American society and in Minnesota and its justice system. It has been observed that the extent of the bias is a function of the extent to which the courts implements norms based on the social values of this nation and state. It has been asserted that “Racial bias persists in the Minnesota justice system because the judiciary is willing to tolerate racial bias to advance other goals”. The same may said of other institutions associated with law enforcement where “public officials, including police officers, prosecutors and judges, make discretionary decisions. From the decision of the police officer to make a stop on the street, through the decisions to arrest, charge, plea bargain, set bail and sentence, persons of color receive disproportionately harsh treatment”.

Racial disparities exist in the Minnesota justice system and it is a state-wide condition that impacts all persons of color. Almost every research study, investigation or task force initiated in this state over the past decade has concluded that this phenomena not only exists, but that it is pervasive. For example:

- African Americans, American Indians, Chicano/Latinos and other persons of color are 21 times more likely to end up in prison than a person of European descent.
- A study conducted by the African Men’s Project determined that in 1999, over half of all males of African descent that were between the ages of 18 and 30 were arrested in Hennepin County.
- It is common knowledge within the Black community they are far more likely to be stopped and searched than persons of European heritage.

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- While Blacks are stopped and searched at a more frequent rate, it is interesting to note that contraband was found more frequently among persons of European descent. “Overall, 24% of discretionary searches of Whites produced contraband compared to only 11% of Blacks searched and 9% of Latino searched”.
- Persons of color are also more likely to get a harsher sentence for the same crime than their European descent counterparts

In an effort to secure a more definitive picture regarding the nature and operations of the justice system, an information system was developed and implemented by the state court system in 2001. This system is an on-going repository of information on issues ranging from arrests to dispositions and includes data on demographic variables; particularly race and ethnicity. The Council applauds the efforts of the state judiciary in this endeavor. Celebrating the significance of this information, the Council co-sponsored a community forum at the Minneapolis Urban League to release and discuss an important report on race and justice. This report resulted from an analysis of some of the data contained in the Court's new database. It clearly substantiates the conclusions of the Supreme Court's Racial Bias Task Force Report of 1993 regarding the prevalence of discrimination in the state's judicial system.

### **1. Racial Profiling**

Since the early 1990's, many top leaders in state and local government have consistently disregarded persistent pleas and warnings that systematic and frequent violations of civil and human rights have been occurring, and continue to occur, as a result of the well established practice of racial profiling by Minnesota law enforcement individuals and agencies.

In 2001, the existence of racial profiling/police misconduct was subsequently verified as a result of the state legislature passing statute 626.951 which required conducting a “Traffic Stop Survey” and involved sixty-five law enforcement jurisdictions. The statute also contained three other major provisions needing to be addressed, primarily by the Minnesota Board of Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST Board) and the Office of the Attorney General. These provisions had as their focus a Model Racial Profiling Policy, Racial Profiling Training/Curriculum and a state-wide 800 phone number project for reporting profiling incidents.

Racial profiling is defined as “any action initiated by law enforcement that relies on race, ethnicity or national origin of an individual” and includes “the use of racial and ethnic stereotypes as factors in selecting whom to stop and search” The statute had its shortcomings in that participation in the survey by police jurisdictions was voluntary and participants in the survey were not to be identified. Despite these shortcomings, the Council was involved throughout the legislative and implementation process.

The results of the survey are extremely significant. The study clearly concluded that racial profiling not only exists but that it is a pervasive and state-wide problem.

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Results of the survey were presented at a hearing by representatives of the Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice and the Institute on Race and Poverty of the University of Minnesota. The hearing was held under the auspices of the Senate Joint Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee and the Government Budget Division Committee. While the Council greatly appreciates the holding of his hearing, we would like to have other hearings held on this most important issue. We believe that it is critical that a hearing on the results of the racial profiling survey be held in the Minnesota House of Representatives. And, we believe that it is important to have hearings held in both the Senate and the House on the status of the other major components of the 2001 Racial Profiling statute. Another purpose of such hearings might be to examine the relationships between the Racial Profiling Study and the reports on Racial Bias in Minnesota Courts, recently released by the Minnesota Courts.

The Council has representation on the Mayor of Minneapolis Task Force on Racial Profiling Research. Currently, there is also representation on the MN Council on Crime and Justice Institutional Review Board (IRB). And, technical assistance has been provided on survey research methodology to the Minneapolis Police Mediation Process regarding misconduct complaint information systems and the role of police in the out-of-home care placement process.

### **2. Judicial Issues**

That racism has been a factor in judicial deliberations and outcomes was clearly identified in the report issued over ten years ago by the Racial Bias Task Force. And, more recently, the MN Court's report on race and justice – from arrest to disposition – brought clarity to this issue. The data revealed in this report was both extremely alarming and impressive, particularly regarding the treatment of Black juveniles by the "justice system". The Council is represented on the MN Court's Public Trust and Confidence Committee headed by Judge Edward Lynch. And, in collaboration with Minneapolis Urban League, the Council arranged to have a community forum that introduced this information to the Black community.

Council representatives testified before both the Supreme Court and its Advisory Committee on Rules of Public Access to Records of the Judicial Branch. The Council was, and remains, concerned regarding the proposal that would allow the placement of arrest records on the world wide web. It was felt that this practice would have a detrimental impact on persons of African heritage and other populations of color. Allowing unrestricted use of data distributed to bulk data harvesters would continue to promote the exploitation of African Americans and others who have already been exploited by the criminal justice system

Information harvesters, who have historically sold **conviction** record information to prospective landlords and employers, will sell and make money on **arrest** information on persons that are suppose to be presumed innocent. As a result, individuals will be punished irrespective of their innocence. This practice, given current arrest trends, is tantamount to giving African American youth a life sentence. If the Supreme Court

concludes that this recommendation should be implemented, it would not only impede to ability of individual to secure equal access to housing and employment, it would open up our court system to unnecessary litigation.

On the other hand, the Council on Black Minnesotans agrees with and supports the recommendation of the court to encourage its own web site managers to take steps to “discourage bulk harvesting of data and using names to search pre-conviction data”. This recommendation, however, is not consistent with the court’s first recommendation.

## **C. Education Issues**

The topic of education for the Council is both a function and a substantive priority. From a policy priority perspective, the initial role played by the Council in the area of education has been reactive/responsive and has essentially involved monitoring critical issues and conditions impacting Black students and their families. This includes the operations of the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools and proposed state policy on educational standards, particularly those associated social science curriculum.

With its focus on adherence to established policies, procedures and equal treatment, the Council joined several community-based organizations to ensure that these factors were followed in the selection process for the Superintendent of the Minneapolis Public Schools. The Council’s focus was also placed on proposed school closings in Minneapolis. The rationale for their closing and the impact of their closing on the Black community was critically assessed..

Many meetings have been held between school superintendents, school board members and staff with the goal of resolving some of the more critical issues facing the areas public schools. Issues addressed included the cause and consequences of the academic achievement gap, the need and strategies for increased and effective parental involvement, school discipline, drop-out and truancy rates, improved college preparatory curriculum and linkage with higher educations, and cultural competency and responsibility.

However, subsequently, efforts have been directed toward more proactive involvement with educational organizations and projects. For example, a three-day conference on Black education issues and policies was held at Augsburg College in October 2004. It was sponsored by the Minnesota Alliance of Black School Educators and the Minneapolis Leadership Summit/Coalition of Black Churches. Presenters at this conference included representatives from the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership and the Institute on Race and Poverty of the University of Minnesota. The Council on Black Minnesotans partnered with these organizations to present a program that focused both “practitioner issues” and critical policy issues. It is anticipated that a significant report will be generated from conference proceedings.

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Council staff made numerous presentations addressing educational issues and policies during this reporting period. This includes presentations made at three annual conferences on Pan-Africanism at Mankato State University and a presentation to MSU's Graduate Students of Color Association. Also included are presentations made at the Conference for Minnesota Financial Administrators and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities organization.

Currently, Council staff is involved in a Citizens League and Saint Paul Public School District collaborative project designed to improve the academic performance and potential of students of color in high school and enhance their matriculation at higher education institutions with the goal of ensuring more successful academic outcomes.

**Education as a Function** - Significant efforts have been made to educate policy makers and the general population of Minnesota regarding a wide range of subjects. As an example, the Council assisted the League of Minnesota Cities in its development of a report and guide for improving the cultural competency, sensitivity and knowledge levels of municipal policy makers and employees throughout the state. Another facet of this function is the implicit requirement that the Council and its staff have the obligation and responsibility to become as knowledgeable as possible regarding issues and conditions facing Black Minnesotans.

The Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration has historically been used to educate, re-educate and secure the commitment of Minnesotans to the values and priorities enunciated by Dr. King during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. The Governor's Commission for 2004 produced an event that encompassed three days of celebration. It included a spoken-word contest for high school students, a one-man show on Dr. King by Blair Underwood, a symbolic march from the youth program at Central High School to Concordia University where the main program was presented. In addition to the traditional program, an information fair was held that focused on issues of health and community involvement. In total, thousands attended these events.

The Council on Black Minnesotans has worked closely with the Minnesota Reparations Group to educate individuals and organizations regarding the impact and consequences of slavery. This involvement had as its goal delineating the contributions made by Blacks to Minnesota and this nation. The desired results of this involvement is a more knowledgeable, sensitive and concerned population.

### **D. Health Issues**

Significant health disparities continue to exist for Minnesota's Black population. "The term "health disparity" means a difference in health status between a defined portion of the population and the majority. Disparities can exist because of socioeconomic status, age, geographic area, gender, race or ethnicity, language, customs and other cultural factors, disability or special health need."

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Black Minnesotans, particularly those living in the Twin Cities area are among the least insured, the most segregated, and most affected by poverty. These are conditions which have a significant impact on the health status of a community. As a state, Minnesota is among the disparity leaders in several health categories. They include infant mortality and teen pregnancy rates. Disparities in the areas of, cardiovascular disease, breast and cervical cancer, and diabetes are also high. And, national studies have delineated the extent to which African Americans and other populations of color receive differential and unequal treatment when seeking and securing medical services.

It should be noted that the Council on Black Minnesotans played a significant role in the creation of the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health. In addition to working closely with this agency to reduce the levels of health disparities experienced by Black Minnesotans, the Council's health focus has been placed on the areas of teen pregnancy, tobacco use prevention and cessation, environmental health issues and other "public health" issues.

### **1. Teen Pregnancy and AIDS/STD Prevention**

Since 2002, the Council has been involved with the Saint Paul Urban League's Healthy Choices Program. Funded by a grant from the Minnesota Health Department, the program created a collaborative of at least eight service providers that focused on teen pregnancy and AIDS/STD prevention. The Council's was charge with assisting the collaborative in the development of a legislative agenda for youth. During 2003, the Council developed and presented three community forums. Black and other youth of color were the primary presenters at these events. The final forum was held at the Kelly Inn and involved nearly one-hundred youth and multiple policy makers. It ended up with a tour of the Capitol.

The format for the Council's involvement in 2004 changed significantly. In addition to identifying/prioritizing concerns, the Council provided youth with an overview of the American and Minnesotan political and policy making processes. Special classes on family and children, criminal justice, education, and health issues were presented in two hour segments for eight weeks. These classes were designed to prepare participants for a Black Youth Advocacy, Leadership and Empowerment Day on the Hill. This program has as its primary goal increasing the involvement and effectiveness of African American youth in the political and policy making processes in their communities. Presenters at the day on the hill event included legislators (Rep. Neva Walker, Rep. Keith Ellison, etal), and Sam Grant from Metro State University, a health lobbyist, and a Senate staff researcher. Toni Carter from the Saint Paul Public School Board, Tom Johnson of the Council on Crime and Justice, and Sen. Becky Lourey also made presentations. Youth participants subsequently met with other State Legislators and/or their representatives in the afternoon to discuss issues and concerns.

### **2. Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation**

The Council on Black Minnesotans played a critical role in the creation of the Minnesota African American Tobacco Education Network. Assisting MAATEN to secure a grant from the Minnesota Partnership for Action Against Tobacco (MPAAT), the Council became its fiscal agent and housed its programs and operations.



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MAATEN has played a valuable role in educating Black Minnesotans regarding the consequences of smoking. The Network has partnered with the Minneapolis Urban League and others in the presentation of several educational programs. And, it has aired its concerns through the media; particularly Insight News, the Spokesman and KMOJ.

The impact of tobacco usage on the health of Black Minnesotans has been well documented; particularly the extent to which youth of color have been targeted by special advertising campaigns of tobacco companies. The Council has been particularly concerned about the impact of second-hand smoke. And to this end, it has testified and supported municipal ordinances and legislation at the state level to promote smoke free environments for Minnesota's workers and consumers. The Council is also linked to the Mid-Regional Board of Directors of the American Cancer Society; a critical partner in the area of health.

### **3. Environmental Health Issues**

The Council has been working closely with, the Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota (E-JAM) in an effort to educate the community about environmental health issues. This is a relatively new agenda item for the Black community. However, it is an issue which is increasingly having a significant impact on the health of Black and other impoverished community residents. Residents of the central areas of Minneapolis and Saint Paul are disproportionately impacted by several environmental conditions; including poisoning from lead, mercury and vehicular pollution, and exposure to Atrazine (the most widely used herbicide in the world). Asthma has now been cited as one of the leading causes of school absenteeism among African American youth in Minneapolis and Saint Paul schools.

The Council of Black Minnesotans was one of the sponsors of an important community forum held at the Minneapolis Urban League. Over two hundred persons participated in a Minnesota Public Utilities Commission hearing. The Commission discussed and subsequently passed the Metro Emissions Reduction Project; a plan that would convert three Xcel coal burning plants in the Twin Cities to different energy sources. This is probably the largest voluntary emissions cleanup project in U.S. history.

### **4. Other Health Issues Involvement**

Currently the Council is involved in the process of developing an Urban Health Policy Agenda with representatives from the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support and other health entities. The Council has acted as a link to Minnesota's Black residents. For example, it provided health organizations like, Stratis and others, with needed contacts within Black communities in an effort to increase their outreach and service provision effectiveness. It has been a regular participant with the state's Division of Maternal and Child Health outreach and policy efforts and have been involved in the monthly meetings held by the People of African Descent health group.

**E. Other Council Priority Areas - Housing, Employment & Economic Development**

In addition to the four priority areas specified above, the Council on Black Minnesotans has involved itself in the areas of housing and employment policy and economic development issues. The focus of these efforts has been on the issues of accountability, equal treatment and requisite information systems. The Council has also participated in housing conferences presented by the Mayor's of both Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

**1. Tax Forfeiture/Tax Accelerated Policy**

This policy was developed and implemented in the late 1980's by the Minnesota State Legislature and was amended in 1996 to allow cities and counties to deal with tax forfeiture in targeted areas in a more expedited fashion. The expressed purpose of the policy was to prevent the development of slums in selected municipal areas through early intervention. In response to numerous complaints regarding the outcomes of this policy, the African American Leadership Council of Saint Paul requested that the Council on Black Minnesotans research the impact of this policy on African Americans.

Four community forums were provided that involved both "those impacted by the policy" and policy makers. Ramsey County Commissioner Susan Haigh, along with county staff, and Andy Dawkins from the City of Saint Paul made presentations on this issue. The African American Leadership Council recommended that a moratorium be placed on the implementation of this policy. A motion to accomplish this was passed by the City Council of Saint Paul. It was also recommended that the City develop an information system that would allow for empirically determining the extent to which African Americans are affected by this policy.

**2. Economic Exploitation in Housing: Rental Application Fees**

Professor Ed Goetz of the University's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute conducted a study to determine the extent to which non-whites continue to be exploited when attempting to secure rental housing. This 2004 study focused on the application fees paid by persons seeking rental housing and it was determined that the fees paid by whites averaged \$76.00. Non-whites, on the other hand, paid application fees averaging \$236.00. Numerous health and human service organization have worked on this issue over the past seven years or more.

The Council on Black Minnesotans supported and testified on behalf of an ordinance that would effectively address this issue. It was subsequently passed by the Minneapolis City Council. CBM representatives also recommended that this policy be closely monitored and evaluated by the City to assess its effectiveness – particularly regarding its impact on persons of color.

**3. Economic Development Issues: The Minneapolis Empowerment Zone and Metropolitan Council's Development Policies**

Black community residents and organizations of Minneapolis requested that the Council on Black Minnesotans provide assistance in assessing the impact of the Mpls. Empowerment Zone program on Black residents. More specifically it was asked to assess the operations of the program, including unfavorable audit reports from the U. S. Housing and Urban Development Department. It was also asked to explore the extent to which the Black community benefited from the distribution of million of dollars in resources to the City of Minneapolis. Several meetings with the Mayor of Minneapolis, the mayor's staff, and Empowerment Zone staff and Board Members were held. A request to have the process become more inclusive and responsive to Black needs was made – and it has been honored.

Unfortunately, the CBM was unable to determine if the distribution of resources was equitable because of the scope and content to the Empowerment Zone's data collection process. Except in the area of loan-making, the ethnicity of participants was not revealed. As a result, it was recommended that the Empowerment Zone agency modify its data collection process to include information on race and ethnicity of beneficiaries and program participants.

The Metropolitan Council developed its 2030 Plan, which was designed to guide the development of the metropolitan area for future decades. This agency has historically extolled the principles of equal opportunity, equal access and accountability. However, it is believed that actions and outcomes should be on par with expressed principles. In reality, the Metropolitan area has become more racially and economically segregated.

Despite the fact that more Black now reside in suburban areas, these individuals and families still remain segregated because they have been steered by realtors to specific neighborhoods and communities. Whites are not being steered to these suburban areas. It has been known for a long time that central city residents have subsidized the economic and housing developments for suburban areas; making housing and other opportunities much more affordable to persons of European descent. Representatives from the Metro Council were asked if they would be willing to set up an information system that would allow it to measure the extent to which populations of color are benefiting from the policies coming out of the Metropolitan Council.

**F. Operational Goal Areas: Compliance with the 2000 Biennial Report  
Action Areas and Recommendations**

**1. African Issues & African American Relations**

In 2002, the Council created the African and African American Relations Committee to help address the needs and interests of African immigrant communities. Since that time significant efforts have been made to become more involved in African events and with African organizations.

The Council on Black Minnesotans has worked closely with organizations that have a focus on African issues. For example, Collaborations have been formed with Stand for Africa Here and

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Abroad and the Coalition for Pan-African Minnesotans (C-PAM). These efforts were the most successful in developing and ensuring the passage of legislation designed to reduce the barriers faced by African trained nurses when attempting to secure employment in Minnesota. Voter registration, education and mobilizations efforts among African groups were also successful.

The Council, along with its many collaborators, met over several months to plan and organize efforts in support of an INS/Police Separation ordinance in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Council staff testified at hearings held by both City Councils and the proposed ordinances were subsequently passed.

The Council has sponsored special celebration events like the PEACE Festival held in south Minneapolis and independence celebrations of African Nations; particularly Nigeria, Liberia, Somalia Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone. It has also had significant dialogue with African dignitaries; including a diplomatic representative from Nigeria, the President and First Lady of Senegal, and Dr. Riek Machar Teny, Vice Chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army. Meetings with these personages were attended by a wide assortment of policy makers and their staff.

### **2. Extending the Council's Scope of Action Throughout Minnesota**

During the reporting period, the Council made considerable efforts to increase its contact and effectiveness with Black communities outside the Twin Cities metro area. It also made efforts to include Greater Minnesotans of African descent in state and local policy active-ties. In 2003, the Council made two special trips to Saint Cloud to address the issues of racial profiling and discrimination on the campus of Saint Cloud State University. The first meeting was held with the Saint Cloud Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. The second was a community forum and involved representatives from the Saint Cloud Police Department, the University, and interested and affected individuals; particularly students. As a follow-up, in 2004, Council staff attended a conference sponsored by the Minnesota Department on Human Rights in Saint Cloud.

The Council has attended and provided support for events held in Mankato and Rochester. Among them are at least three Pan-African Student conferences held at Mankato State University; where Council staff made presentations. And, a special presentation was made to the Graduate Students of Color organization at Mankato. A meeting was attended in Rochester to celebrate the Brown V. Board of Education decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court of 1954-55. It was sponsored by the Rochester N.A.A.C.P.

### **3. Alliances, Collaboration and Informed Involvement**

The Council has made substantial efforts to increase opportunities for individuals and groups to become more knowledgeable and more effectively involved in the development, monitoring and implementation of public policy issues. More specifically it conducted training sessions – Legislative and Policy Training on the Hill - at the Capitol to prepare more community residents to perform these functions. At the most recent training, a presentation was made on judicial policy making. The Council has also created alliances with organizations with which it has

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common interests. For example, when the policy makers of both the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul became involved in making changes in the status of their respective Civil Rights and Human Rights departments, the Council took action to oppose some of the proposed provisions. This involved the development of a coalition of communities of color, seniors, the disabled, GLTB groups and the impoverished.

The Council attempted to improve the operational capacity of selected agencies through the provision of technical and developmental assistance. Organizations receiving assistance include the Black Veterans Association and the MFIP Project. All of the above mentioned actions involved the goal of getting and keeping Black Minnesotans informed of legislative and public policy developments. The Urban League's series of community forums, "Community Pipelines," exemplifies this type of involvement.

#### **4. Civic Involvement: Redistricting, Voter Registration, Education & Mobilization**

Issues associated with the political infrastructure of Minnesota and the civic responsibility of citizens were also addressed by the Council. Staff testified on the issue of "reapportionment" and "redistricting" at a hearing held at the Minnesota Judicial Center. The Council also joined with the Minneapolis Urban League and N.A.A.C.P., other councils of color and community-based organizations in an effort to monitor and make recommendations regarding the creation of equitable redistricting plans.

The Council on Black Minnesotans was intricately involved in the voter registration, education and mobilization efforts for both the 2002 and 2004 elections. In both instances, efforts were made to increase the involvement of populations that have historically had low participation rates in the political process; particularly Black Minnesotans. Candidate forums were sponsored by the Council during both campaign years.

Special efforts were made in 2004 to involve the homeless and ex-felon population in the political process. Council staff participated in, and provided presentations, at least five community forums for these populations. However, the principal role played by the Council in the 2004 electoral process was in the area of educating the community regarding the implementation of the Helping America to Vote Act (HAVA) and monitoring the voting process and structure. In fact, the identification of critical problems regarding HAVA implementation were first aired at a Urban League "Pipeline" which was facilitated by Council staff and co-sponsored by the Council. It was made clear at this forum that the Office of the Secretary of State and various county election offices were not in sync regarding which registration card should be used and how missing information on rosters and other lists should be handled. The Council collaborated with the Minnesota Participation Project and the Election Protection Group to minimize barriers to the election process and maximize citizen involvement. In an effort to determine what works and what did not work, the Council formally requested the Office of the Secretary of State to conduct an evaluation regarding the implementation of HAVA. It also requested that a legislative hearing be held on this subject.

## **Specific Council Activities for the Next Biennium**

Over the past three years the Council has undergone significant change in its membership.

The Council views these changes as an opportunity to preserve the spirit of the Council, while exploring new ways to help bring about the involvement and success levels for Black Minnesotans. As a result, the Council has established a new structure to facilitate serving our constituencies through public policy, education and mobilization.

In order to increase its effectiveness the Council restructured itself into a three component infrastructure. These components have as their focus the areas of (1) internal operations, (2) marketing and public relations, and (3) legislative/policy initiatives.

- **Internal Operations** – The internal and external operations of the council will be monitored closely by the executive committee. Its goal is to ensure that the Council operates in a professional, efficient and effective manner. Activities of this committee includes exercising its fiduciary responsibilities, reporting development and compliance, committee effectiveness, budget develop and management and Council operations.
- **Marketing and Public Relations** – A Marketing and Public Relations Committee was formed to increase public awareness of the Council and increase the know-ledge of issues that impact Black Minnesotans. In addition, it will serve as a means of educating legislators, the governor, and citizens on issues impacting Black Minnesotans. In order to achieve increase awareness the Council has set forth the following three action goals:
  1. **Increase the level of information provided to the State Legislature, the Governor, and other policy makers regarding issues impacting Black Minnesotans.**
  2. **Systematically and routinely provide information to the Black Community and other Minnesotans on issues impacting their quality of life.**
  3. **Increase participation among Black Minnesotans in the development, assessment and advocacy of public policy.**
- **Legislative/Policy Initiatives** - A Legislative/Policy Committee was formed to increase the effectiveness of the Council in legislative/policy endeavors. For the next biennium the community agenda will include a focus on **increasing academic opportunities and positive outcomes for Black Minnesotans in the public school system and in higher education.**

### **Other Action Goals:**

- Promote the development of a systematic, uniform, comprehensive and “inclusive” data collection and reporting system for state agencies having a significant impact on Black Minnesotans (e.g. Health, DHS, Education & Corrections). Such a system would allow the Council to determine the levels of involvement and the extent to which Black Minnesotans have benefited from state policies and procedures.

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- Improve the Council's effectiveness in working with African immigrant communities.
- Work to reduce health disparities among Black Minnesotans, particularly infant mortality rates and teen pregnancy rates.

***APPENDIX 1***

**MINNESOTA STATUTES SECTION 3.9225**

Subdivision 1. **Creation.** A state Council on Black Minnesotans consists of 13 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. One member of the council must be a person whose ethnic heritage is from West Africa, and one member of the council must be a person whose ethnic heritage is from East Africa. Membership terms, compensation, removal of members, and filling of vacancies for non-legislative 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:

- (1) "Black" describes persons who consider themselves as having origin in any of the Black racial groups of Africa;
- (2) "East Africa" means the eastern region of the continent of Africa, comprising areas occupied by the countries of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Somalia; and
- (3) "West Africa" means the western region of the continent of Africa comprising areas occupied by the countries of Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and those parts of Mali and Niger south of the Sahara.

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



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- 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 260C.215, 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***

**RECEIPTS FOR FY 2003-2004**

GENERAL FUND	\$615,172
MLK FUND	37,500
MPAAT GRANT	122,496
GIFT FUNDS	6,585
<b>TOTAL REVENUES &amp; RECEIPTS</b>	<b><u>\$781,753</u></b>

Note: The receipts and expenditure data for the 2003-2004 Biennium in Appendices 2 and 3 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.

This figure also reflects carryover from fiscal year 2002.

*APPENDIX 3*

**EXPENDITURES FY 2003-2004**

**GENERAL BUDGET**

**Description**

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**Expenditure**

Salaries & Benefits	\$430,000	
Part-time, seasonal, labor service		
Overtime Pay		2,000
Other Benefits		10,000
Rent, Maintenance, Utilities		42,000
Repairs, Alterations & Maintenance		2,000
Printing/Advertising		7,000
Professional/Technical Services		3,000
Computer and Systems Service		1,000
Communications		15,000
Travel & Substance – In-State		8,000
Travel & Substance – Out-State		2,000
Supplies		19,000
Equipment		22,000
Employee Development		3,000
Other Operating Costs		
		13,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$590,000</b>

**THE GOVERNOR’S COMMISSION ON THE  
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CELEBRATION**

**Description**

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**Expenditure**

Rent, Maintenance, Utilities	\$15,000
Printing/Advertising	3,000
Professional/Technical Services	8,000
Equipment	2,000
Other Operating Costs 4,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$32,000</b>

**MPAAT GRANT – AFRICAN AMERICAN TOBACCO NETWORK**

**Description**

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**Expenditures**

Salaries & Benefits \$62,000	
Overtime Pay	2,000
Rent, Maintenance, Utilities	6,000
Printing/Advertising	4,000
Travel & Substance – Out-State	1,000
Equipment	2,000
Employee Development	1,000
Other Operating Costs	3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$81,000</b>

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**GIFT ACCOUNTS**

**AFRICAN AIDS PROJECT**

Repairs, Alterations & Maintenance	2,000
Travel & Substance – In-State	1,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>

**AFRICAN GALA**

Travel & Substance – In-State	3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES FOR FY 2003 & 2004** **\$709,000**