2016 *BENJAMIN M. KING* HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY CONTEST

2016 Topic: "A Welcoming Community"

"None of us can do alone what we can do together. Columbus is unique in that it has so many individuals - who see the possibilities, and step forward with their unique visions, talents, skills, and passion. And Columbus has a history and tradition of allowing and inviting us all to be a part."

- Sondra Bolte, 2008 Laws Award winner

Columbus Human Rights Commission · 123 Washington St. #5 · Columbus, Indiana 47201
812-376-2532 · humanrights@columbus.in.gov

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

The Human Rights Commission is sponsoring an essay contest in each division for the students in Bartholomew County in **grades 5 through 12.** The purpose of the contest is to **create an awareness and appreciation of our community's diversity and for human rights**.

There will be a winner for the contest from each division.

Division 1: Elementary (grades 5 –6);
Division 2: Middle (grades 7 – 8); and
Division 3: High (grades 9 – 12).

You are invited to share this information with your students and encourage their participation. You may want to include the essay topic in your classroom or youth group curriculum or you may want to leave it as an enrichment or special project for individual students.

1. ENTRY FORM: Each student must submit his/her essay with an attached, completed entry form. Judging is anonymous; therefore it is imperative that the student's name appears ONLY on the entry form and NOT on his/her essay. The information on the entry form is necessary for us to contact contest winners.

2. CRITEREA: Essays: Students must recognize key human rights values and where appropriate, relate these values to the world according to the student. Historical perspectives, current events, personal experiences, and creativity and concise writing are ideal. Essays should be no longer than **one thousand (1,000) words.**

3. DEADLINE: Monday, February 15, 2016. No entries will be accepted after that date.

Delivery to the Commission:
Students or teachers may either hand deliver or mail essays directly to the Human Rights Commission. All entries must be received by **5:00 p.m. on February 15th.**

OR

Pickup at Schools:
First, students or teachers should call the Human Rights Commission (812-376-2532) to arrange to have the entry picked up at the school by **Friday, February 12th at 5:00 p.m**. Then, on or before February 15th at 9:00 a.m., take the entry to the school's main office. Inform office staff that you are leaving an entry for pick up by the Human Rights Commission. Make sure to mark the entry(ies) with the following: "ATTENTION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION: ESSAY CONTEST."

4. JUDGING & AWARDS: A panel of community members will judge the essays. We will notify essay contest winners, their teachers, and their schools in the days following the judging. Winners will receive a $75 award, a book, and complimentary tickets to the **Commission's Annual Dinner** where the students will be recognized. Annual Dinner information will be forthcoming. Winning essays will be published on the Commission's website and in the annual report.

2016 Human Rights Commission Essay Topic: "A Welcoming Community"

BACKGROUND:

Today, many residents of Bartholomew County pride themselves in maintaining a welcoming community that is open to all people. Several organizations, such as the Columbus Area Multi-ethnic Organization (CAMEO), Interfaith Forum, the Pride Alliance of Columbus, Inclusive Community Coalition, the Islamic Society of Columbus, Indiana, and the Columbus African American Association, began as ways to celebrate diversity in the community. This idea of living and working in an inclusive and diverse community is a concept that developed over decades and has recently flourished. Historically speaking, Bartholomew County – and similar communities in Indiana – were not at all welcoming. Instead, hundreds of years of systemic discrimination by way of laws, policies, practices, and past cultural norms created communities that divided the citizens in classes of preferential treatment, and in essence, catering to the group of people with the most power.

When Indiana became a state in 1816, influential individuals, including government officials, created laws that directly impacted the type of population of local communities in the state. For instance, in 1831, a man named General John Tipton, who was an Indian fighter and member of the legislature, led around 700 members of the Potawatomi tribe in a march across Indiana and Illinois in an effort to remove all of the Native Americans from Bartholomew County.[1] This march, which became known as the Trail of Death, resulted in the death of 49 Native Americans and the incapacitation of 300 Native Americans from illness. By 1840, government officials and newly established Hoosiers removed all of the Native Americans from Indiana through coercion, intimidation, and violence.[2]

Following the removal of the Native Americans, Indiana government officials adopted state laws to prevent other racial minorities and ethnicities from settling in the state. One example is the Indiana State Constitution, which was amended in 1851 to exclude African Americans and biracial individuals from living and working in the state.[3] Although the Indiana Supreme Court found the provisions banning African American residence and business as unconstitutional in 1866,[4] the discriminatory mentality was still prominent, particularly among local communities.[5] Many small towns in Indiana became known as sundown towns because of their refusal to allow nonwhite residents outside after dark, which persisted into the early 1970s.[6] Also, hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan became popular by targeting African Americans and other groups, including Catholics. The Klan was even quite popular in Columbus, which at one point had 12% of its population identify as klavern in 1925.[7] The Klan still maintained a presence in

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[1] Gates, Paul Wallace. Introduction. *The Tipton Papers*. By John Tipton. 1809 - 1827. Vol. 1. Indiana Historical Society, 1942. 3 – 53. Print.

[2] Id.

[3] Bennett, Pamela, ed. "Indiana Constitution." *Indiana Historian*. Indiana Historical Bureau, 2002. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

[4] *Smith v. Moody*, 26 Ind. 299 (1866).

[5] McDonald, Earl. "The Negro in Indiana Before 1881." *Indiana Magazine of History* 27.4 (1931): 291—306. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

[6] Loewen, James W. "Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism." *The Homepage of James W. Loewen*. University of Illinois, 2010. Web. 16 Jan. 2015.

[7] McCrawley, Harry. "12% of population claimed membership in KKK in '25." *The Republic*, 6 Jan. 2006. Print.

Bartholomew County as late as the 1970s, when local Klan members marched through the streets of downtown Columbus.

Although discrimination has a deep seeded past in Hoosier history, many gradually became aware of the social and economic importance of embracing diversity in the community. They began to understand that cultivating diversity was not only an altruistic good for the community, but also made sense for good business. Many assisted in recruiting talented individuals for businesses and finding innovative ways to improve the community. As a result, many Hoosiers created an inclusive community by challenging prejudices of the time. For instance, during the 1950s and 1960s, citizens of Columbus began to integrate people of different races in areas for the general public, such as Donner Pool.[8] Also, in 1962, the Human Rights Commission was established in Columbus, making it the first local human rights commission in Indiana. Although the Human Rights Commission did not have legal enforcement powers at this time, it used friendly persuasion to resolve issues of racial discrimination in housing and public accommodations. These examples are noteworthy because they occurred before the Civils Rights Act of 1964.[9] This meant that many residents of Bartholomew County were aware of the community's need for diversity in order for it to become successful. Prominent figures who fought for civil rights included microbiologist Benjamin "Mickey" King, who was a critical member of the Human Rights Commission when it first began and a fair housing activist, and philanthropist J. Irwin Miller, who was instrumental in recruiting diverse people to Bartholomew County and a civil rights advocate. Throughout the following decades, many individuals continued to work to create a more inclusive community for an increasingly diverse population.

Even today, community members in Bartholomew County continue to work on welcoming new community members. For instance, the Heritage Fund of Bartholomew County and many prominent community leaders undertook the welcoming community initiative in order to make residents of Bartholomew County love their community. In 2004 and 2011, the Heritage Fund of Bartholomew County and several prominent community members decided to assess the welcoming factor in Bartholomew County by conducting two surveys among Bartholomew County residents.[10] These surveys measured several factors, including the general friendliness of residents, the community's openness to difference, and equal opportunity/ fair treatment for all people. Community members were able to identify areas where there needed to be improvements to Bartholomew County to make everyone feel welcome and areas where people already felt welcomed. As a result of these surveys, community groups and organizations formed to embrace the diversity in the community, including the CAMEO, where representatives from various ethnic groups meet on a monthly basis to discuss diversity in the community. Even in 2015, the SAFE Initiative was implemented as a result of the Heritage Fund surveys with the mission to create a safe and welcoming environment for members of the LGBT community by allowing businesses to acknowledge that they are LGBT friendly organizations.[11]

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[8] Columbus Human Rights Commission. *Lifting Up a Voice: Paving a Path to Justice in Columbus, Indiana*. Columbus Human Rights Commission, 2001.

[9] Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 2 U.S.C., 28 U.S.C., and 42 U.S.C.).

[10] Heritage Fund's Outreach Committee. "Welcoming Community II: Building a Community for All." *The Heritage Fund*. 6 March 2012: 1 – 14. Electronic.

[11] Covington, Olivia. "Businesses Join Welcoming Initiative for LGBT Community." *The Republic*. 30 June 2015. Web. 20. Nov. 2015.

QUESTION:

Is Bartholomew County a welcoming community? You can use examples from your own life if applicable.

Questions to consider:

- What is a welcoming community?
- Are there groups of people who are not treated fairly and/or are bullied?
- Have you or anyone who you know experienced discrimination based on your or his/her race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and/or veteran status?
- What aspects make Bartholomew County a welcoming community?
- Do you think that the residents of Bartholomew County are open to other people's differences overall?

YOU MAY, IF YOU WISH, USE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO YOU IN THE "ESSAY TOOL BOX" TO ASSIST YOU IN WRITING YOUR ESSAY!

ESSAY CONTEST TOOL BOX

Definitions:

Acceptance: The willingness to be receptive to an idea or person.

Bias: An unfair act or policy stemming from prejudice.

Community: A group of individuals who live together.

Dehumanization: To deprive of human qualities or attributes; divest of individuality**.**

Discrimination: The exclusion of an individual from equal opportunities because of race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or status as a veteran.

Diversity: Group differences (such as race, sex, color, national origin, religion, disability, etc.).

Hostile environment: A legal term describing the work or school atmosphere that can be created by harassment. Hostile environment can be created by:

- unwelcome sexual advances, other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or slurs or mistreatment based on race, religion, national origin, color, disability, and sex) by another student
- Must be either:
    - severe (can be only one time) or
    - happen over and over (persistent and pervasive)
- Affects student's education or activities so much so that no reasonable student would want to go to school or participate in that activity.

Klavern: Individuals who identify as members of the Ku Klux Klan.

Oppression: The harsh and cruel power of one group of people over another.

Prejudice: An uninformed opinion that is negative and harmful about a particular group of people.

Privilege: An advantage that one small group of people enjoys and benefits from, such as wealth.

Social justice: The act of improving a situation or correcting a wrong or a social problem.

Stereotype: An oversimplified image or concept used to describe and categorize specific groups of people.

Sundown towns: A term that refers to cities or towns that maintained laws and/or customs to prevent primarily African Americans from settling into their communities by posting signs that typically read, "Don't let the sun go down on you in [insert city name]."

Welcoming: Behavior that is accepting and hospitable.

Quotes:

"The Asian and Hispanic percentage of the population of Columbus is almost certain to grow in the next decade. Are these new members of our community going to be welcomed and automatically accorded their full human, social, and economic rights? Are we ready for a Japanese mayor some say soon, if he or she is clearly the best qualified candidate? Probably not, unless the citizens of Columbus work energetically to receive these new citizens into the whole life of this community and to ensure them all the human rights, tangible and intangible, legal and beyond legal, which you and I demand for ourselves." (J. Irwin Miller, CHRC Annual Dinner 4/7/1989)

"'I came to Columbus when I was 22. The racial attitudes have progressed very much. For example, there was discrimination at the Crump and Rio theatres. We had to sit upstairs. That was the general rule and you didn't question it . . . During the war, I found out that there were one or two places where blacks could not eat. We had some high ranking black officials and they'd come with the white officers and go to these eating places. At one place the black officers were asked to eat in the kitchen while the whites were told they could eat in the dining room. All of them walked out the place and it was put off limits.'" (Madelyn Smith, former secretary of the Columbus Human Relations Commission, qtd. in *The Republic*)

"'[Benjamin] Mickey [King] and I wanted to help the community understand how discimininination is defined, how subtle it is . . . We believed then and I believe now that we were, and even today are taught to discriminate illegally. It is part of our lifestyle, which can only be changed through education.'" (Owen Hungerford, former chairperson of the Columbus Human Rights Commission, qtd. in *The Republic*)

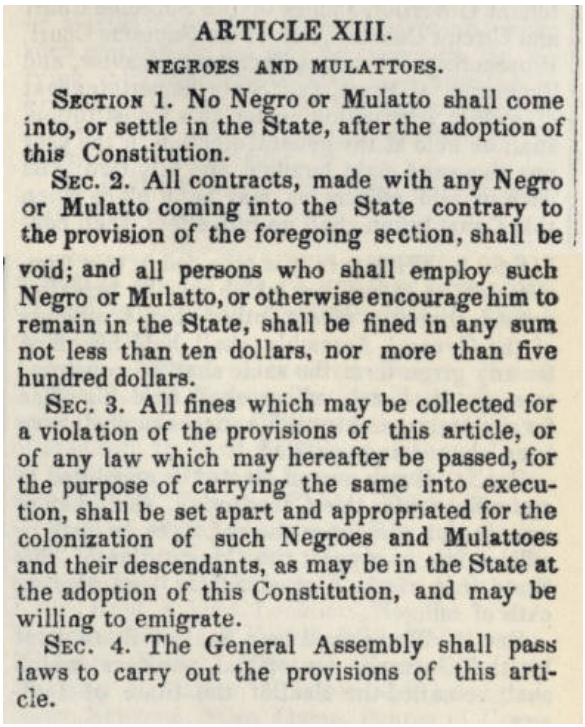
"A key fear of the human race is fear of the unknown. Being unfamiliar with a person, culture, or race makes the dominant class want to keep others away from them and out of power. Throughout history, individuals have been set in a lower class for just being different." (Jack Tregoning, 2015 Benjamin M. King Essay Contest winner)

"Thirdly, different perspectives provide valuable insight. People from different places can help provide information on the needs of different people. For example, those growing up poor could relate information on how to best help the underprivileged. A person of race who has been discriminated against can give information on how to prevent discrimination in the future. Women and girls can relate stereotypes and prejudice held by some men that have inhibited their success and have made it harder for them to succeed." (Sveni Thalor, 2015 Benjamin M. King Essay Contest winner)

"Not only did the lack of diversity deprive students of opportunities for learning and growth, segregation in schools also fostered intolerance by sharpening divides between groups of people." (Sarah Kilbarger-Stumpff, 2015 Benjamin M. King Essay Contest winner)

Pictures:

General John Tipton helped remove the Potawatomi from Bartholomew County in 1831 in what became to be known as the Trail of Death.
"Tipton, John." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* (U.S. Senate Historical Office). Web. 5 Nov. 2015.



ARTICLE XIII.

NEGROES AND MULATTOES.

SECTION 1. No Negro or Mulatto shall come into, or settle in the State, after the adoption of this Constitution.

SEC. 2. All contracts, made with any Negro or Mulatto coming into the State contrary to the provision of the foregoing section, shall be void; and all persons who shall employ such Negro or Mulatto, or otherwise encourage him to remain in the State, shall be fined in any sum not less than ten dollars, nor more than five hundred dollars.

SEC. 3. All fines which may be collected for a violation of the provisions of this article, or of any law which may hereafter be passed, for the purpose of carrying the same into execution, shall be set apart and appropriated for the colonization of such Negroes and Mulattoes and their descendants, as may be in the State at the adoption of this Constitution, and may be willing to emigrate.

SEC. 4. The General Assembly shall pass laws to carry out the provisions of this article.

Article XIII of the 1851 Indiana State Constitution prohibited African Americans from settling into the state. It was later found unconstitutional in 1866.
"Article XIII of the Indiana 1851 Constitution." *Indiana Historical Society*. 2014. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

Sundown towns were popular from 1890 – 1940 and eventually decreased in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Loewen, James W. "Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism." *The Homepage of James W. Loewen*. University of Illinois, 2010. Web. 19 Nov. 2015.

12% of population claimed membership in KKK in '25

Harry McCawley

IN a column last week, I expressed naïve amazement that there was once a Ku Klux Klan hall in downtown Columbus.

That fact jumped out at me from the pages of The Evening Republican in January 1928 in a story about a New Year's Eve celebration.

The celebration was at the Klan Hall on Washington Street in which a large cross was lighted to welcome in the new year.

From the vantage of an "enlightened and diverse" city in the 21st century, the open and acknowledged presence of such a bigoted organization in the heart of the downtown is depressing.

There's something even worse.

The Columbus "klanvern" had more than 1,200 members in 1925.

Actually, those 1,200 were from all over Bartholomew County but most were from Columbus.

The number of local Klan members was contained in papers discovered in the 1970s in a Columbus home being readied for sale.

When you consider that the population of Columbus in 1925 was approximately 10,000, that translates into a really troubling fact — 12 percent of the city was enrolled in the Klan.

It's even more troubling when you consider that Klan membership at the time consisted mostly of men. It doesn't take into account family members.

The statistics are staggering to today's society, but they do have to be taken into the context of the time.

Although Indiana was a northern state, the allegiance of many in rural southern Indiana was to the South, at least as far as race relations were concerned.

Then too, the attitudes of the Klan were not limited to the South or to rural communities. One of the most important silent movies ever made, D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation," was hailed — or condemned — for the positive way it treated the Klan.

But the most important context of all is that in the 1920s Indiana was a Klan state.

The infamous Imperial Wizard of the Indiana Klan — D.C. Stephenson — was a liberal kingmaker with the power to handpick political leaders, even up to the governor's office.

Stephenson's control over the state ended in 1926 when he was convicted for the sadistic murder of a woman.

Up to that time however, membership in the Klan was not regarded as a skeleton in the closet.

Although it is most clearly identified with the philosophy of white supremacy, there were other issues on the hate-filled agendas of individual klanverns.

Columbus, for instance, had a small population of blacks but there was a large concentration of Roman Catholics who were targeted for harassment and threats.

Their presence was felt in the local Catholic community, and anecdotes passed on by older residents testify to the fears of reprisals against people simply because of their religious beliefs.

There are those who would suggest that the evil of the Klan in Indiana is old history, completely unrelated to the community in which we live today.

1977 wasn't that long ago, and that's when the Klan staged a march through the streets of Columbus.

The organization is roundly condemned in the community today for its history of bigotry, but it was only two years ago that someone spray painted racial epithets on the doors of Calvary Community Church.

There is no evidence that the vandal was a Klan member or even knew about the Klan, but the ideas evidenced by the action are an echo of people in robes and burning crosses.

It is something to be reviled and always remembered.

Harry McCawley is associate editor of The Republic. He can be reached by phone at 379-5620 or by e-mail at harry@therepublic.com.

From The Republic Archives

In April 1977, members of the Ku Klux Klan marched through downtown Columbus. The group was met by protestors.

The KKK was popular in Bartholomew County during the 1920s.

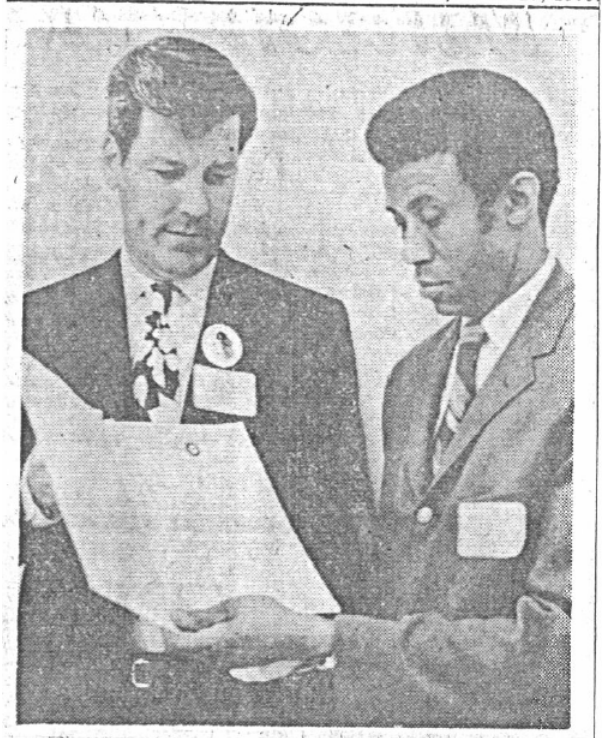
McCrawley, Harry. "12% of population claimed membership in KKK in '25." *The Republic*, 6 Jan. 2006. Print.

Donner Pool was one of the public accommodation areas that was racially integrated before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 became law.
Sechrest, David. "Columbus Indiana Pictures and Photos from Bygone Days." *Historic Columbus Indiana*. 2001. Web. 19 Nov. 2015.

SWORN IN — Columbus Mayor Eret Kline, at right, swears in nine members of the Columbus Human Relations commission at the board's first meeting Wednesday night. Taking the oath are from left, first row, Richard Miller, Benjamin King, Mrs. Madelyn Smith, Rev. R. Sherman Beattie and City Councilman A. D. Silva, Jr.; rear row, Councilmen James Brown, John Glick, J. C. Gosnell and Richard Fleming, Mr. King was named Chairman, Mr. Silva, vice chairman, and Mrs. Smith, secretary. (Staff Photo by Joe Holwager)

When the Columbus Human Relations Commission began in 1962, it first tried to resolve complaints of racial discrimination in the areas of public accommodations and housing by using friendly persuasion since it did not have any legal enforcement powers.
Taken from the Columbus Human Rights Commission archives.

C, COLUMBUS, INDIANA. WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 1970.



ANNUAL REPORT — Owen Hungerford, current chairman of the Columbus Human Relations commission, left, and Benjamin King, past president, look over the board's annual report which was read Tuesday night at a banquet at Donner center. Mr. King also was honored for his contribution to local human relations.

Benjamin "Mickey" King was an advocate for fair housing practices and the chairperson of the Columbus Human Rights Commission.
Taken from the Columbus Human Rights Commission archives.

J. Irwin Miller was a philanthropist who was instrumental in the Civil Rights Movement and diversifying the Bartholomew County area.
Mills, Jon. "Biography of a Great Cummins Leader, J. Irwin Miller." *Cummins*. Web. 20 Nov. 2015.

Online Resources:

John Tipton biographical information
Indiana Magazine of History
The Indiana Historian
Article XIII of the Indiana State Constitution
Sundown Towns
Historic Columbus Indiana
J. Irwin Miller biography
Economic Development Board
Laws Award winner Owen Hungerford
Heritage Fund
CAMEO
Pride Alliance
Interfaith Forum of Columbus
SAFE Initiative