





K.C.T.F.H.R. History



*Peace
Park*



The History of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations Policies, Programs Activities, and Partnerships to Promote Human Rights in the Pacific Northwest (1981-present)

The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations was founded the first week of February 1981, at the First Christian Church in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho in response to the victimization of a Jewish restaurant owner in Hayden, Idaho and a bi-racial family in Coeur d'Alene. Ms. Dina Tanners, a local activist and a member of the Jewish community, organized the meeting and thus became known as the mother of the Task Force.



1. The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations (K.C.T.F.H.R.) played a major role in the successful passage of Idaho's laws to combat hate crimes and laws to promote human rights starting in 1983 and continuing through the 1990's. The Idaho laws in



combating hate crimes, harassment or intimidation include the Anti-Malicious Harassment Law with both criminal and civil penalties, Domestic Terrorist Control Act (anti-paramilitary training and actions), Uniform or Bias Crimes' Reporting Act, Explosive Devices Act, Anti-Common Law Court's Act, and False Lien Act. Prior to the passage of these laws, Idaho already had a criminal law forbidding verbal assaults against citizens that would cover threats based on hate.

In 1990 the Idaho State Legislature enacted the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr./Human Rights State Holiday.



2. The K.C.T.F.H.R. has a major Victim Support Program/Committee advocating for victims of harassment and hate crimes including support for victims during their testimony in either criminal or civil cases. The K.C.T.F.H.R. has been an advocate for past victims such as the Connie Fort Family and Victoria & Jason Keenan. In carrying out the work of our Victim Support Committee, we work closely with law enforcement agencies and the prosecutors of the region.



3. The K.C.T.F.H.R. has historically sponsored many human rights public rallies including the July 12, 1986 "Coeur d'Alene City Park Human Rights Rally" with over 1,000 people in attendance from five Pacific Northwest states to counter the Aryan Nations three day congress. During the week of April 17-23, 1989 the Task Force sponsored a series of events called the "Human Rights Celebration" this time as a counter to the Aryan Nations' Skin Head Conference. The Task Force activities for the week included the displaying of 6,000 ribbons on cars, buildings, and trees in support of human rights. The center-piece for the week was a children's party celebrating the 20th birthday of the Idaho Human Rights Commission when 600 fifth grade students joined Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus in cutting a 20 foot-long birthday cake at North Idaho College. Another event of the week was a cowgirl and cowboy human rights picnic in Rathdrum, Idaho.



On July 18 and 19, 1998 the K.C.T.F.H.R. joined a number of civic and human rights organizations from Idaho and Washington in co-sponsoring events titled "Hands Across the Border for Human Rights". Among the successful events that weekend was a rally on Saturday at Gonzaga University attended by over 1,000 people celebrating human rights with music and speakers. The following day on Sunday, July 19th we joined interfaith groups with a service at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Coeur d'Alene with 700 in attendance. One final example of K.C.T.F.H.R. sponsored public events was held on July 10, 1999 with a human rights rally at North Idaho College featuring a keynote address by Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne that served as a counter to the Aryan Nations march in Coeur d'Alene on that day. We have sponsored many more such events over the years.



4. The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, the North Idaho College Popcorn Forum, the NIC Human Equality Club and the Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls school districts in January, 1986 initiated an annual "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Children's Week" for all 5th grade students in the two school districts. Doug Cresswell, former superintendent of the Coeur d'Alene School District and current K.C.T.F.H.R. board member, and Pam Pratt, a former Coeur d'Alene School District administrator and current K.C.T.F.H.R. board member, were instrumental in establishing this program in 1986. The program includes bringing a well-known civil rights speaker to our community who works with the children throughout the week. The week ends with a gathering of all the fifth grade students from Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene at a formal program. Since 1986, nearly 40,000 fifth grade students from Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls schools have participated in the program.



5. The K.C.T.F.H.R. assisted with the establishment of the NIC Human Equality Club at North Idaho College from 1991 through 2008. During that time the NIC Human Equality Club had one of the largest student club memberships on campus.

6. The K.C.T.F.H.R. conducts press conferences and issues press releases addressing numerous human rights issues, denouncing hate messages and hate crimes, and promoting major human rights events or initiatives.



7. The North Idaho College PBS TV Public Forum (1972-2008) and its program producer Tony Stewart starting in 1984 and continuing through 2008 joined with the K.C.T.F.H.R. to produce a number of broadcasts including several documentaries addressing human rights issues. The TV programs and documentaries were aired across the Pacific Northwest and Canada. These television productions are housed in the North Idaho College Molstead Library on the Coeur d'Alene campus.



8. Several years ago Tony Stewart, then president of the K.C.T.F.H.R. and political scientist at North Idaho College, served on the College's advisory committee that rewrote "NIC's Civil Rights and Anti-Malicious Harassment Policies for Employees and Students". The policy forbids discrimination or harassment based on race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual status (orientation), age, disability or status as Vietnam-era veteran).



9. North Idaho College and the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations co-sponsored and financed a week-long symposium titled "Racism: Prejudice and Progress" from September 23-27, 1985 with over 4,500 people attending for the week. The symposium featured major civil rights leaders from diverse communities across America with the programs taped and now housed in the NIC Molstead Library.



10. In addition to the NIC PBS TV Public Forum broadcasts featuring human rights issues and civil rights activists housed at the North Idaho College Molstead Library, the college's library's special human rights' collection is the depository of Tony Stewart's human rights collection. This collection, dating from 1980 to the present, detailing with events, issues, and personalities from not only the Pacific Northwest but from across America including organizations and leaders who have participated or supported the work of the K.C.T.F.H.R. and other local/Pacific Northwest human rights groups. Based on the K.C.T.F.H.R., the City of Coeur d'Alene in 1987 was awarded the Raoul Wallenberg Civic Award from the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States (New York City). The award was accompanied by a generous financial gift that was used to establish a human rights collection including a children's section at the City of Coeur d'Alene Library.



11. Due in part to the human rights work of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations along with the support of many community organizations and individuals, the City of Coeur d'Alene in 1990 became the first city in the state of Idaho to be honored with the highly distinguished "All American City Award".



12. In 1983 Robert Matthews, an associate of Richard Butler and the Aryan Nations, established what became known as The Silent Brotherhood, also known as The Order. The group has often been described as the most violent and notorious domestic terrorist group in the United States during the 1980's. Larry Broadbent, then the Kootenai County Under-Sheriff and a K.C.T.F.H.R. founding board member, discovered The Order and informed FBI Special Agent Wayne Manis. Members of The Order committed numerous crimes including a California armored car robbery totaling \$3.6 million, counterfeiting money, plotting to poison water wells in Los Angeles, and other crimes. Members of The Order also killed Denver radio talk show host Alan Berg in June of 1984. Based on Broadbent's information and the leadership of FBI special agent Manis, the FBI was successful in arresting the members of The Order. The perpetrators were tried and convicted in Federal Court in Seattle in December 1985 and given life sentences for major crimes. Robert Matthews, The Order leader, was killed on December 8, 1984 in a shoot-out with the FBI on Whidbey Island, Washington.



13. In September 1986, a dangerous hate group known as Order II and an affiliate of the Aryan Nations bombed the home of popular St. Pius X Catholic Church pastor and priest Bill Wassmuth, who was serving as president of the K.C.T.F.H.R. A few days later, the same group set off several bombs in Coeur d'Alene. Following the bombings, the K.C.T.F.H.R. organized and hosted a standing room only "Unity Rally" in support of Father Bill at North Idaho College. The program featured an address by Idaho Governor John Evans along with other speakers and a musical theme of unity and peace. Father Bill Wassmuth would become the Executive Director of the newly formed Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment and move its headquarters to Seattle, Washington. Father Bill passed away on August 27, 2002.



14. In a second example of the K.C.T.F.H.R. discovering serious criminal activity, the K.C.T.F.H.R. attorney and board member Norm Gissel received a call in August, 1996 from one of his clients and over lunch the client identified the Phineas Priesthood members responsible for both the bombings of the "Spokesman Review" and Planned Parenthood buildings in the Spokane valley and in a separate incident identify the same men as bank robbers in Spokane. Gissel and his client took the information to the FBI and the bombers/bank robbers were arrested and convicted.



15. The K.C.T.F.H.R. initiated the founding of the five-state Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment (NWCAMH) in 1986, as well as assisting several communities in establishing local task forces in the Pacific Northwest. The NWCAMH existed from 1986-2003. Based on a proposal by former Idaho State Senator Mary Lou Reed, the K.C.T.F.H.R. initiated a proposal that resulted in the 1998 creation of a sister human rights organization known as the Human Rights Education Foundation that would evolve into the Human Rights Education Institute in 2001.



16. On one occasion the K.C.T.F.H.R., in cooperation with the Inland Northwest Crime Stoppers, offered a financial reward in an attempt to apprehend a perpetrator of hate crime in the Inland Northwest.
17. Several officials from North Idaho College have been involved with the local civil rights groups. Christie Wood, a member of the North Idaho College Board of Trustees, serves on the Board of Directors of the K.C.T.F.H.R.. Al Williams, the college's athletic director, is a board member of the K.C.T.F.H.R. and he is a former board member of the Human Rights Education Institute. Dr. Jerry Gee, former North Idaho College Vice-President of Instruction, served on the Human Rights Education Institute's Board of Directors for several years. And during his tenure as president of North Idaho College, Dr. Michael Burke, served as a K.C.T.F.H.R. board member.

18. The North Idaho College Board of Trustees and the K.C.T.F.H.R. on July 18, 1987 joined Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus in dedicating the 3,200 feet of the NIC Coeur d'Alene Lake Beach to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. The Coeur d'Alene Tribal Council chose the name "Yap-Keehn-Um Beach" (The Gathering Place). The beach is open to the public for their enjoyment.

19. The North Idaho College Board of Trustees in 1997-1998 signed a nine-point agreement with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to promote a mutual understanding and cooperation in advancing human dignity and educational opportunities at NIC. The K.C.T.F.H.R. was present for the signing and praised the college and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe for this significant agreement.

20. The K.C.T.F.H.R. and "The Spokesman Review" newspaper on May 28, 1998, under the direction of then the northern Idaho regional "Spokesman Review" editor Ken Sands, co-sponsored a human rights seminar for hundreds of students from northern Idaho high schools. "The Spokesman Review" and the K.C.T.F.H.R. sponsored a group of diverse high school students from Seattle as the speakers/presenters at the seminar.

21. To assist the human rights efforts in the Pacific Inland Northwest, "The Spokesman Review" newspaper in 1998 produced 130,000 car and home display posters, along with an eight-week in-depth newspaper series titled "In It Together". The newspaper series ran from May 29 through July 13, 1998. The newspaper used 10 reporters, 3 editorial writers, 3 photographers and 5 additional staff for the series. Upon completion of the series, the newspaper compiled the 28 articles and letters into a published tabloid. At the same time, the K.C.T.F.H.R. launched a major regional human rights campaign to counter the Aryan Nations first march in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.
22. "The Coeur d'Alene Press" news paper for several years produced a children's human rights tabloid in January to co-inside with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Children's Fifth Grade week of activities sponsored by the school districts and the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations.
23. The K.C.T.F.H.R. and the religious community for several years co-sponsored an annual inter-faith service in honor of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
24. The K.C.T.F.H.R. for many years has funded extensive advertising campaigns including "Idaho Is For Everyone" posters, "Idaho Human Rights" billboards, brochures, newspaper ads, etc. During the Aryan Nations Coeur d'Alene march in 1998, numerous businesses in Kootenai County used their marquees that weekend to register their support for human rights. Marshall Mend, a current, as well as a founding board member of the KCTFHR and local realtor, organized all these advertising projects.
25. The K.C.T.F.H.R. is active and a participant in the work of the region's colleges and universities including a special relationship with the Gonzaga University Institute for Hate Studies.
26. Since 1986, the K.C.T.F.H.R. has staffed a booth at the North Idaho Fair and Redo during the last week of August. The K.C.T.F.H.R. presents materials and activities to some of the more than 70,000 Fair goers.
27. In October 1993, the K.C.T.F.H.R., the American Council of Learned Societies, the International Research and Exchanges Board, and North Idaho College co-sponsored the fourth in a ten-year series of conferences on the future of international human rights. The October 29-31, 1993 conference topic was "Empowering Women: Achieving Human Rights in the 21st Century". The conference drew 900 delegates from around the world. The first conference was held at The University of California at Berkley; the second conference was held in Moscow, Soviet Union; and the third conference was held at Columbia University in New York City.
28. July 18, 1998, Richard Butler and his Aryan Nations held a twenty-seven minute march in Coeur d'Alene. K.C.T.F.H.R. coordinated a counter response known as the Lemons to Lemonade Drive. Individuals and organizations voiced their opposition to the hate message and march by pledging donations to human rights organizations for each minute the march lasted. A total of \$35,000 was raised for several civil rights groups of which \$24,000 went to the K.C.T.F.H.R. - the Task Force gave the \$24,000 in grants to educators in northern Idaho and eastern Washington to create human rights and diversity lessons and programs in the public schools. The Lemons to Lemonade campaign was borrowed from the residents of Boyertown, Pennsylvania, who used this idea when the KKK came to their town for a rally.
29. In July 1998 Victoria Keenan contacted the K.C.T.F.H.R. after she and her son Jason were victims of a vicious attack by security guards from the Aryan Nations Compound. The K.C.T.F.H.R.'s attorney Norm Gissel took charge of the case. Gissel joined forces with Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center as well as Idaho prominent tort attorney Ken Howard in bringing a civil suit against the security guards. Richard Butler

and the Aryan Nations. A twelve-member Idaho jury on September 7, 2000, unanimously awarded civil damages of \$6.3 million to Victoria and Jason Keenan, victims of the Aryan Nations security guards who shot the Keenans' car several times, ran the car off the road and threatened to kill the Keenans ("Aryan Nations v Keenans"). The jury award bankrupted the Aryan Nations and their leader Richard Butler.



30. Following the successful civil court decision, Greg Carr of the Gregory C. Carr Foundation purchased the Aryan Nations compound from the Keenans in 2001, dismantled the compound, turned it into a peace park and gave the park to the North Idaho College Foundation in 2002.



31. The Gregory C. Carr Foundation in January 2002 awarded a \$1,000,000 gift to the Human Rights Education Institute in Coeur d'Alene as seed money for the establishment of a human rights center and program in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The center is located at 414 1/2 Mullan Avenue (208-292-2359).



32. The K.C.T.F.H.R. has sponsored an annual human rights banquet in Coeur d'Alene since 1998. The banquet profits go to the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) who in turn allocates some of the proceeds to fund four minority scholarships at North Idaho College in partnership with the North Idaho College Foundation. The highlight of each year's banquet program is the keynote speaker. The past prominent keynoters have featured former Idaho Governor Phil Batt; Jim Hood, Mississippi State Attorney General; Morris Dees, co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center; Greg Carr from the Gregory C. Carr Foundation; Nontombi Naomi Tutu, daughter of Archbishop Desmond Tutu; and Arun Gandhi, grandson of the renowned Mahatma Gandhi; and a number of other well known speakers.

33. March 22-29, 2003, the North Idaho College Popcorn Forum Lecture Series and the Gonzaga University Institute for Action Against Hate along with eleven other colleges hosted a nine-day symposium titled "Confronting Hate: Humanity's Greatest Challenge". The nine-day series was located on both campuses. Members of the K.C.T.F.H.R. were key organizers/partners in the series.

34. On September 15 & 16, 2000 North Idaho College and the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) co-sponsored a two-day symposium for 300 Idaho and Washington

educators titled "Celebrating Diversity in the Classroom." The HREI appropriated \$10,000 for the conference with no conference fee charged to the teachers. Prominent educators from across the United States presented at the conference. NIC president Michael Burke welcomed and addressed the conferees.



35. Starting in 1991, the K.C.T.F.H.R. co-sponsored with the Spokane, Washington Inter-Faith Community a P.E.A.C.E. (People Everywhere Are Created Equal) Camp for Spokane and Kootenai Counties' high school students. The students were not charged any fees for the camp. The camp was under the direction of Peggy Federici, Ph.D., professor of sociology and education at North Idaho College. The camp existed for 15 years.



36. The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations provides a newsletter to the "Friends of the K.C.T.F.H.R."

37. The K.C.T.F.H.R., beginning in 1990, has hosted an annual Gala event the January celebration of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday.

38. On August 21, 2009 the K.C.T.F.H.R. hosted a press conference at the Washington-Idaho border featuring mayors and police chiefs from throughout northern Idaho and eastern Washington as well as the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Police Chief, Spokane County Sheriff and the Kootenai County Prosecutor to denounce the recent distribution of hate literature in several Inland Northwest neighborhoods. Both the elected officials and law enforcement representatives addressed several recent incidents of hate crimes in the region and assured the victims that these crimes would be aggressively prosecuted when the evidence leads to the arrest of the perpetrators.



39. The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations has been an active member of the Greater Coeur d'Alene Area Chamber of Commerce since 1990.



40. Since the later part of the 1980's, the K.C.T.F.H.R. has provided speakers/consultants to communities across the United States who have been confronted with hate groups and hate crimes. For example, we have either visited or consulted with such out of state communities as Colville, Spokane and Bellingham, Washington; Noxon, Thompson Falls, Townsend and Bozeman, Montana; Gainesville, Florida; Asheville and Black Mountain, North Carolina; seven day tour of cities in Pennsylvania; statewide campaign in Wyoming; Pulaski, Tennessee; Las Vegas, Nevada; San Diego, California; and Grant County, Oregon. The K.C.T.F.H.R. contact person is Tony Stewart at (208) 765-3932.

41. Since 2000, the K.C.T.F.H.R. has been the recipient of the Coeur d'Alene and Lake City high schools' annual student human rights fundraising campaign. The proceeds from this fundraiser are presented to the K.C.T.F.H.R. at the annual Coeur d'Alene and Lake City men's basketball game featuring a fun competition known as the "Fight for the Fish" trophy. The K.C.T.F.H.R. receives more than \$1,000 per year from this student fundraiser.

42. On September 7, 2010, the K.C.T.F.H.R. hosted a public celebration on the grounds of the Kootenai County Courthouse to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the "Keenans v. Aryan Nations" civil trial. Speakers included the Keenans' attorneys Norm Gissel and Ken Howard, philanthropist Greg Carr, Coeur d'Alene Mayor Sandi Bloem, Kootenai County Commission Chair Rick Currie and Coeur d'Alene Tribal Council Vice-Chair Ernie Stensgar.

43. When the Westboro Baptist Church demonstrated at North Idaho College on October 22, 2010, the K.C.T.F.H.R. held a counter unity rally and press conference in Coeur d'Alene at the Human Rights Education Institute. The unity rally drew an overflow crowd with 18 speakers representing all segments of the Idaho and Washington Inland Northwest communities including statements from eight of the regions colleges and universities.

44. The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations Board on February 4, 2013 initiated a proposed anti-discrimination ordinance prohibiting discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression and presented the plan to the City of Coeur d'Alene Council. Following both the General Service's Committee and Council hearings with presentations led by the K.C.T.F.H.R., the anti-discrimination ordinance was adopted by the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho City Council on a 5 to 1 vote on June 4, 2013.
45. On September 25, 2013 the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations in a press conference with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the Kootenai Electric Utility Foundation presented a joint partnership of funding to the Coeur d'Alene School District for the implementation of an extensive long-range student centered culture anti-bullying system for the school district to be introduced by prominent internationally renowned expert and consultant Stephen Wessler from Portland, Maine. In its fourth year of implementation, the results have shown a remarkable decrease in bullying in the schools.

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