

# Empowering Columbus

## A Thought for Columbus

By: Director Lorraine Smith

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial: A Symbol of our National Values**

Symbols bombard us every day. We see them everywhere –advertising signs and graphics, memorials, statues – they’re all symbolic of something. These symbols send us messages that induce our brain’s synapses to conjure meaning of those symbols many times based upon our knowledge and experiences individually and collectively. Sometimes they conjure up what the maker of the symbol wants us to think about. What does the universal symbol for persons with disabilities mean when we see it? What about the Washington Monument? Or more recently, the 9/11 memorial? A symbol can be a representation of who we are as a company, an organization, a nation or a community. Symbols can make us have some type of story to tell; they educate; they uplift or they can change a heart. Or they can make us feel unwelcomed and disrespected. We have national symbols representing the values of our nation such as the Washington Monument, but there are symbols that can define a community and these are the ones that we should pay attention to as well. Many times we learn about a community just by the symbols displayed in the community- they can send a particular message to the viewer. Columbus has for example, its new symbol or brand “Unexpected. Unforgettable.” Does it say, explore and one will find something out of the ordinary for a town its size; does it say welcoming; does it say come live here? Each person has to decide, but I believe those are all the reasons behind the brand. One of the latest symbols to join our country’s national imagery is the recent opening of the Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial.



The memorial is miles away from Columbus, but the symbolism of the memorial is close to Columbus and every community in this nation. The Memorial won’t be officially dedicated until October 16 because of inclement weather which postponed the August 28<sup>th</sup> original opening date. Dr. King’s memorial tells a story of this nation’s journey toward a more inclusive society and it’s a memorial that gives us inspiration and hope for the future. It is a memorial to a man who was The “facilitator” of the

civil rights movement, but more importantly it’s a reminder of the important work and sacrifices that were made so that people can strive to be the best that they can be without regard to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age disability or sexual orientation. This memorial helps us embrace and learn from the past, rather than recoil from it. When I think about the soon-to-be dedicated statue of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., it is more than a pillar of stone. It represents this country’s civil rights story and the work done by Dr. King to help create a better country where all are welcomed. The memorial should serve as a reminder of the tangible sacrifices made by Dr. King and others who worked in the movement so that this country and Columbus could bear its own symbols of diversity. As we run across the various symbols of diversity in Columbus look at them with an insight that they are a visual metaphor for Columbus’ work on diversity and remember that they were borne out of Dr. King’s work - more importantly recognize the need to continue to build on Columbus’ current visual metaphor of inclusiveness:



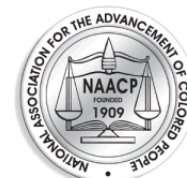
### Individual Highlights:

- SPOTLIGHT 2
- Quiz 3
- Issues 4
- Inside Story 5
- Last Story 6

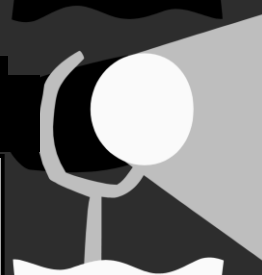
### Quote

*It is a denial of justice not to stretch out a helping hand to the fallen; that is the common right of humanity.*

Seneca (5 BC - 65 AD)



# SPOTLIGHT on Welcoming Community



## Rhonda Fischer, VP and Sec. of Pride Alliance Columbus



### What do you see as Pride Alliance's Role in the community of Columbus?

Pride Alliance is a safe resource for people who want to come out in the community. Often times, individuals don't necessarily feel comfortable with certain family members or friends, and we provide a good network of people that can be supportive during this time. We also see ourselves as a visible voice for the LGBT community in a applying pressure for positive change in Columbus.

### What are some of the activities the Pride Alliance is doing in the Community?

We have our monthly meetings on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month at 7pm in the

Xenia Miller Conference Room in the Commons Building- Everyone is invited to attend. We have an annual Picnic in August, and then we have an OUT SIDE Film Festival which will be next year on Feb. 4 that were currently preparing for it, check it out:

<http://www.outsidefilmfest.com/Home.html>

. We also have been very active in Empty Bowls each year that raises money and food to support food banks and soup kitchens. Participating in Empty Bowls is just one way that shows that were a part of the community, and although we focus on LGBT issues, we want to be viewed as a part of the community just like any other organization. We recently received our 501 (3) (c) status and we are currently working on a scholarship for a high school student who is a part and/or supporter of the LGBT community.

### How important is it for Columbus to fully accept the full spectrum of diversity?

It is critical to the long-term health of Columbus to provide all the liberties and rights to the LGBT community. A community that is diverse whole heartedly is bound to be more successful than a community that excludes certain groups. Its important for other minority groups to pay attention to how the LGBT

community is being treated to really determine the diversity of a community.

### With Camp Atterbury right up the road, what are your thoughts of the importance to an organization like yours, for soldiers now who are able to be openly gay and a part of your organization openly?

First of all, we are so thrilled to have the repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" to come into effect. It's cool to see our country moving forward in the right direction for the LGBT community. It's an interesting question that you ask, because the soldiers could always have been a part of our organization, but now I guess there's this ability to be open and in our organization, which is good for any organization like ours. So we are considering reaching out to the military community and the USO.

You can check out the Pride Alliance at their website: <http://pridealliancecolumbus.org/>

## Tribute: Lynn Bigley

Carol "Lynn" Bigley was a former chairperson of the Human Rights Commission when the commission was known as the Human Relations Commission. She was the first woman chair of the Commission and served the commission admirably. She was a champion of civil rights issues in Columbus during her tenure as the chairperson. Lynn was one of the first women to serve on the City Council and was also very vocal about her support for the Human Rights Commission while a council woman. We thank her for her service to the community. Lynn was always devoted to Columbus and she will be truly missed. The Human Rights Commission sends its condolences to her family.





## Enforcing Conduct Standards: Psychiatric Disabilities

### EMPLOYERS

**Q:** May an employer discipline an individual with a psychiatric disability for violating a workplace conduct standard? What if the disability caused the misconduct?

**A:** Yes, if:

1. The workplace conduct standard is job-related for the position in question and is consistent with business necessity; AND
2. The employer would impose the same discipline on an employee without a disability, i.e. the employer has a uniform disciplinary policy

**Example #1:**

A clinic employee with schizophrenia tampers with and damages medical equipment. She claims her schizophrenia caused her to do this. Can the employer discipline?

Yes, the employer may discipline the employee consistent with its uniform disciplinary policies because she violated a conduct standard – a prohibition against employee theft – that is job-related for the position in question and consistent with business necessity.

If the employer disciplined the employees with psychiatric disabilities, but has not disciplined non-disabled employees for the same mis-conduct, the employer would be treating them differently because of disability in violation of the ADA.

**Example #2:**

An employee with major depression works in a warehouse loading boxes onto pallets. He has no customer contact or regular contact with other employees. Over several weeks, he has come to work looking increasingly disheveled, with ill-fitting and torn clothes. He has become increasingly anti-social: Coworkers complain that he is abrupt and rude. His work, however, has not suffered. The employer's policies state that employees should have a neat appearance at all times and that

employees should be courteous to each other. The employer disciplines him for his appearance and treatment of coworkers. At the meeting, the employee explains that his appearance and demeanor have deteriorated because of his worsening major depression.

In this situation, the dress code and coworker courtesy rules are not job-related for the position in question and consistent with business necessity. The employee has no customer contact or regular contact with other employees. The performance of the employee's job has not decreased. Rigid application of these conduct rules to this employee would violate the ADA.

Information provided by



# Do you KNOW your stuff?

RACE LITERACY QUIZ: The Race Literacy Quiz was developed by California Newsreel, in association with the Association of American Colleges and Universities <http://newsreel.org/guides/race/quiz.htm>.

1. Humans have approximately 30,000 genes. On average, how many genes separate all members of one race from all members of another race?
  - A. None
  - B. 1
  - C. 23
  - D. 142
  - E. 1008
  - F. We don't know
2. Members of a race can be identified by their:
  - A. Blood group
  - B. Skin color
  - C. Ancestry
  - D. Genes
  - E. None of the above
  - F. All of the above
3. Which two populations are most likely, on average, to be genetically similar?
  - A. Italians and Ethiopians
  - B. Senegalese and Kenyans
  - C. Italians and Swedes
  - D. Chinese and Lakota (Sioux)
  - E. Saudi Arabians and Ethiopians
4. Which continent has the greatest human genetic diversity?
  - A. Europe
  - B. Asia
  - C. Africa
  - D. North America
  - E. South America



## New York Mayor Signs Landmark Law in Support of Sikhs and other Religious Groups

By: SIKH COALITION | Published on September 3, 2011

accommodations would impose a minimal difficulty or expense on the employer's business. The new law, signed by Mayor Bloomberg, will still allow employers to deny religious accommodations, but only by proving that such accommodations would constitute a "significant difficulty or expense."

general population.

Most egregiously, in New York City, Sikhs may not work for the New York City Police Department unless they remove their turbans. This policy exists despite the fact that turbaned Sikh soldiers currently serve in the United States Army in Afghanistan.

### A National Movement

**The proposed change in city law tracks a national movement to enhance federal employment discrimination laws. Every year Senator John Kerry (D-MA) introduces a federal "Workplace Religious Freedom Act." While efforts to change the standard at the federal level have not yet seen success, both state and local municipalities are moving to adopt a more faith-friendly workplace accommodation standard.**

"We congratulate Mayor Bloomberg, the City Council, Council Member Weprin, and Speaker Christine Quinn for their leadership today," said Sapreet Kaur, Executive Director of the Sikh Coalition. "We're thrilled that our city is demonstrating national leadership on the issue of workplace religious discrimination. We urge our federal government to also move in this direction."

### Sikhs Endure Discrimination in New York City

Sikhs suffer high levels of employment discrimination because of their Sikh identity. According to a research report issued by the Coalition in 2008, one in ten Sikhs in New York City reported suffering discrimination in employment. This is unusually high compared to the

Similarly, Sikh and Muslim workers who currently work for the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) are forced to brand their religious headwear with an MTA logo. The MTA began imposing this job requirement on Sikh and Muslim workers only soon after 9/11.

While the new law signed by Mayor Bloomberg does not force either the MTA or NYPD to accept Sikhs with their full articles of faith, it creates a legal framework within city law that makes it very difficult to continue to exclude them from city jobs.

"This bill sends the message that people should not have to choose between serving our city and adhering to their religious beliefs. All Americans should receive the full embrace of our country's constitutional freedoms," said Council Member Mark S. Weprin.

This article can be found at: <http://www.panthic.org/articles/5376>



New York, New York - New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg signed into law a bill -initiated by the Sikh Coalition- that will significantly enhance religion-based protections for employees working in New York City. Council Member Mark Weprin (D-Queens) is the law's primary sponsor.

"This new law will squarely focus an employer's eye on whether an employee can perform their job and nothing else," said Amardeep Singh, Program Director and Co-founder of the Sikh Coalition. "Today's law is a major step forward in ensuring Sikhs and other religious minorities are not unfairly excluded from jobs for which they are otherwise qualified. We thank Mayor Bloomberg for signing it into law."

### A Welcome Change in Law

The bill, called the "Workplace Religious Freedom Act" by supporters, would change the legal standard by which courts review claims of religious workplace discrimination by public and private city employees.

Under previous city law, employers are required to make 'reasonable accommodations' for the religious practices of their employees. However, employers can bypass this requirement by showing that such

## SUPREME COURT

*Thompson v. North American Stainless, LP*, 131 S.Ct. 863 (2011)

### FACTS:

Female employee filed gender discrimination charge against her employer with the EEOC. Three weeks later, the female employee's fiancé, also an employee of the company, is fired by the company.

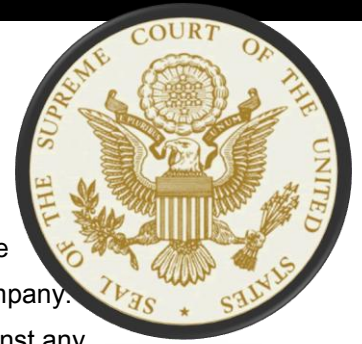
Title VII's retaliation provision states that it shall be unlawful for an employer to discriminate against any of their employee, because they have made a charge under Title VII. Nevertheless, the male employee files his own charge with the EEOC, and subsequently files a Title VII retaliation lawsuit against the employer

### ISSUES:

Whether a third party, who has not engaged in any statutorily protected activity, is covered under Title VII's retaliation provision?

### RULING:

Yes, a third party may sue under Title VII's retaliation provision. Injuring [the fiancé] was the employer's intended means of harming [the female employee]. Consequently, he can sue. He is an employee, and the "purpose of Title VII is to protect employees from their employer's unlawful actions." The Court declined to identify how close the relationship must be between the employee and the third party, but stated: "we expect that firing a close family member will almost always meet the... standard, and inflicting a milder reprisal on a mere acquaintance will almost never do so."



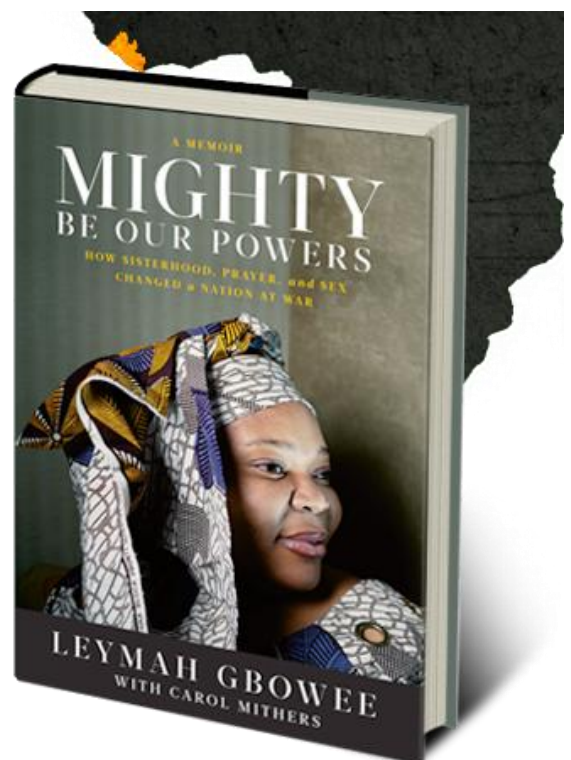
## BOOK REVIEW: **Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War**

A Liberian activist discusses how she united Christian and Muslim women to campaign for an end to war in her country.

*In a time of death and terror, Leymah Gbowee brought Liberia's women together—and together they led a nation to peace.*

As a young woman, Leymah Gbowee was broken by the Liberian civil war, a brutal conflict that tore apart her life and claimed the lives of countless relatives and friends. Years of fighting destroyed her country—and shattered Gbowee's girlhood hopes and dreams. As a young mother trapped in a nightmare of domestic abuse, she found the courage to turn her bitterness into action, propelled by her realization that it is women who suffer most during conflicts—and that the power of women working together can create an unstoppable force. In 2003, the passionate and charismatic Gbowee helped organize and then led the Liberian Mass Action for Peace, a coalition of Christian and Muslim women who sat in public protest, confronting Liberia's ruthless president and rebel warlords, and even held a sex strike. With an army of women, Gbowee helped lead her nation to peace—in the process emerging as an international leader who changed history. *Mighty Be Our Powers* is the gripping chronicle of a journey from hopelessness to empowerment that will touch all who dream of a better world

Read an excerpt from the book on NPR's website:  
<http://www.npr.org/books/titles/140401453/mighty-be-our-powers-how-sisterhood-prayer-and-sex-changed-a-nation-at-war#excerpt>



## Mission

To lead Columbus in building and maintaining an inclusive community by:

1. Enforcing the Human Rights Ordinance
2. Educating the Public
3. Challenging attitudes and systems that create barriers to equality
4. Empowering community members to advance this mission

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[humanrights@columbus.in.gov](mailto:humanrights@columbus.in.gov)

## Answers to the Quiz on Page 3

1. **A. None** - There are no characteristics, no traits, not even one gene that distinguish all members of one so-called race from all members of another race
2. **E. None of the above** - There are no traits, no characteristics, not even one gene that is present in all members of one so-called race and absent in another. The A, B, and O blood groups can be found in all the world's peoples (the percentage of Estonians and Papua New Guineans with A, B, and O blood are almost exactly identical). Skin color tends to correlate with the earth's geographic latitude not race; sub-Saharan Africans, the Dravidians and Tamils of southern Asia, and Melanesians from the Pacific all have very dark skin. Ancestry is difficult to trace; we all have two parents, four grandparents, etc. If you could trace your family back 30 generations, slightly more than 1,000 years, you'd find one billion ancestors.
3. **E. Saudi Arabians and Ethiopians** - Populations that live near each other geographically tend to be genetically more alike than populations that live far apart. That's because they are more likely to have intermixed in the recent past and therefore share more genes. So even though Senegalese and Kenyans or Italians and Swedes are traditionally placed in the same "races," they live farther apart from each other and have had less contact and intermixing than Saudis and Ethiopians.
4. **C. Africa** - We are all Africans. Modern humans (*Homo sapien sapiens*) originated in Africa, and we spent most of our evolution as a species together there. Some modern humans first left Africa 50,000 - 70,000 years ago and spread out around the world. All the other populations of the world can be seen as a subset of Africans. Every human genetic trait found elsewhere can also be found in Africa, with the exception of relatively few recent variations favored by the environment, genetic drift, or sexual selection - such as light skin.

## Upcoming Events

### THIS WEEK!!!

1. **RECONCILIATION DAY OBSERVANCE**- October 4<sup>th</sup> - North Christian Church – 5:15pm
2. **ETHNIC EXPO** - October 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> – Downtown Columbus
3. **“PRESSURE COOKER” - Final FEAST-ival Film of the Season!** - Hosted by the Columbus African-American Association- October 10<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm at YES! Cinema

### In OCTOBER

1. **Desperate Households Conference**, October 12, 2011 8:30am-Noon, Community Church of Columbus, 3850 N. Marr Rd
2. **CAMEO Membership Meeting** - October 12, 2011 at 6:00pm, Summerville Room, The Columbus Learning Center
3. **Pride Alliance Monthly Meeting**- October 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm, Xenia Miller Conference Room in the Commons building
4. **Human Rights Commission Meeting**, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 4:30pm, City Chambers



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