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Adult Chapter Meetings

Monthly, 3rd Thursday, 6PM
Virtual Meeting
(except in December)

Youth Council Meetings

At Lincoln High School

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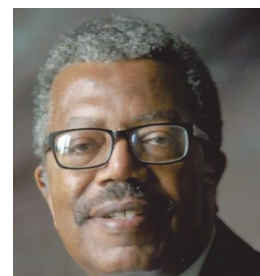
Message from the President

I have been telling people I meet that they have a story to tell, and no one can tell your story like you can. Therefore, tell your story or someone will tell it for you. We are searching for media where you can tell your story, a story that can make a difference in someone's life. Since I have been asking others to tell their story, I thought about a story that happened in college that still impacts me today.

I attended a small HBCU (Historical Black College or University) in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where we knew most of the people on campus, and we developed a close relationship with other students and faculty. One day I finally landed a date with this young lady that I had been trying to get to notice me. We were sitting on a bench for two around the reflecting pool, a treasured place frequented in budding relationships. As we were sitting there talking, I heard a passing voice say, "Hello, Mr. Mays." I looked around to see my physics professor, Dr. Gilmore, who never broke his stride. A cold chill suddenly over-came me. Dr. Gilmore was well known for being over-zealous about physics and less enthusiastic about seeing his students not using their time wisely. To Dr. Gilmore, physics was like eating a hefty slice of chocolate cake while conducting a symphony orchestra, but all in stride. He had no compunction about calling out students in class, and I didn't want to be his chocolate cake. So I immediately escorted my date back to her dormitory and went back to my dormitory room and studied as I had never studied before because I was sure he was going to ask me a question in class. The next day, sure enough, he asked me a question. Prepared, I rattled off the answer immediately. In fact, he asked me two questions. I was able to answer both questions (sigh and relief). For the rest of that semester, I made sure that I was always up to par in that class. I am proud to say I earned an "A" in that class. I credit Dr. Gilmore for motivating me in that class.

I never shared that information with him. Actually, I shared that story only the other day with the lady I dated that night who is now my wife. After a brief laugh, she asked "why didn't you tell me before now? I never knew this." I suppose I never thought it to be important,

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M. Dewayne Mays, PhD
President

Message from the President, con't.

just as others may doubt the significance of their own stories. Of course, I now understand that failure was not an option for me. I was the fourth of eleven children and the second to go to college. In my mind, the whole world was watching me (at least my ten siblings plus my parents), and I couldn't let them down. College was my salvation or my opportunity for a better life.

But to the matter of the moment now, **"Get Out The Vote"** is one of the more pressing issue. Our challenge is to encourage everyone we know to cast their vote. Each voting cycle reminds me that my parents in Arkansas had to pay a poll tax in order to vote. Poll tax was a hindrance to voting for people on limited income. I remember my dad offering to pay the poll tax for some persons who didn't have the money as long as they promised to vote. Nebraska's effort to pass a voter ID requirement is equivalent to a poll tax (a voter impediment). **Please vote no on voter ID.**

What are you doing to make this happen?

Dewayne Mays
President, Lincoln Branch NAACP

Letter to the Lincoln NAACP Dr. Paul Gausman Superintendent of Lincoln Public Schools

Hello! My name is Dr. Paul Gausman, and I am the new superintendent at Lincoln Public Schools. Suzi and I are excited to be back in this beautiful and vibrant community. Any community willing to rededicate the Cascade Fountain in the Sunken Gardens is a place where I am proud to live.

It was my pleasure meeting with some of you recently and hearing about what LPS is doing well, where we could do better, and what our priorities should be. I have been working to meet as many groups and individuals as possible. This work will help us craft a clear vision for moving the school district forward, not my vision, but our collective vision. LPS has so many things going well, yet we know there are areas where we can continue to improve. It is evident in every conversation I have that Lincoln values education, our schools, and the countless individuals who work daily to ensure our children have what they need to learn and grow.

One of the first tasks the Lincoln Board of Education assigned to me was to develop a framework and timeline for the next LPS Strategic Plan. The next strategic plan will also reinforce and integrate the LPS All Means All Action Plan. The four main goals of that plan include:

- **Graduation Rate Goal:** Raise the "All Students" graduation rate to 87.0%, and reduce existing differentials from "All Students" by 50%.
- **Positive Behavior Goal:** Reduce total suspensions for "All Students" by 20%, and reduce disproportionality ratios to 1.2 or less for all student groups.
- **Honors Course Enrollment Goal:** Reduce disproportionality by 75% between "All Students" who have completed at least one honors course and each student group.
- **Diverse Staff Goal:** Increase the percentage of certified staff from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds by 25% to a target of 8.1%.

This Strategic Plan will also include authentic input and ownership from staff, students, families, and the Lincoln community. You will play a key role in helping us shape the roadmap we will follow. Please watch for opportunities to participate in this important process.

For those I have met already, you may have heard me speak about one of my loves -- besides my family and my work in education -- and that is the arts.

When I was in second grade at Linden Elementary in Fremont, NE, I sat in awe as I watched Ernie from Sesame Street play



Dr. Gausman talks with an Equity Cadre

a drum set. I knew then I, too, wanted to learn how to play the drums. I did what any curious child would do, and I went to my music teacher at school and asked him to teach me how to play the drums. Mr. Olson could have easily dismissed my request and instructed me to come back when I was a fifth-grade student - the typical grade when elementary students started playing an instrument. Instead, Mr. Olson nurtured my interest and procured a snare drum for me. He continued patiently working with me outside of the school day, on his own time, to build my skills and my passion for music.

This same support is what our teachers, staff members, administrators, and Board of Education do every day. It is what drives them. They dedicate their skills, expertise, and resources to connecting our students to new growth opportunities.

I am asking you, our beloved and respected community, to continue supporting our mission of focusing on students' needs and fostering their growth. You can do this in many ways, but you can start by joining the conversation, visiting and volunteering in our schools, and learning about what we do and why we do it.

We are proud to serve our students. All are welcome and expected to be given extraordinary opportunities for growth in the Lincoln Public Schools.

Dr. Paul Gausman
LPS Superintendent

More about Dr. Gausman:

Dr. Paul Gausman joined Lincoln Public Schools as superintendent on July 1, 2022. Prior to coming to Lincoln, he was the superintendent for the Sioux City Community School District for fourteen years. During that time, the school district saw significant gains in academic achievement and the graduation rate. In December 2021, superintendents from across the nation elected Dr. Gausman as president of the Urban Superintendents Association of America.

Prior to his work in Sioux Falls, Dr. Gausman was the superintendent of schools for the West Central School District in South Dakota. His past administrative experiences also include those as coordinator of middle school education and coordinator of fine and performing arts for the Sioux Falls Schools in South Dakota. In addition, Dr. Gausman's teaching experiences include those as director of bands at Millard West High School in Omaha, Nebraska, and marching percussion instructor for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Cornhusker Marching Band.

Dr. Gausman holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota; an Education Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Sioux Falls; a Master of Science degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from the University of Nebraska at Omaha; and a Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In addition to his superintendent duties, Dr. Gausman serves as a performing artist and clinician with the Yamaha Corporation of America in percussion, is a consultant with McPherson and Jacobson Executive Recruitment and Development, and also a consultant with Guidepoint Global Market Research.

NAACP Members Testify at Nebraska State Board of Education Meeting

The Collaboration, an organization composed of members from NAACP Lincoln Branch, Nebraskans for Peace and Let's Talk Alliance, continues to observe the Nebraska State Board of Education meetings the first Friday of each month and the LPS Board meetings the second and fourth Tuesday evenings each month. If you are interesting and willing to be an observer, please contact Jackie Egan at egan@neb.rr.com or 402-435-6111. LPS Observers are needed for September 13, November 8 and 22 all beginning at 6:00 PM. We also need people willing to attend the NDE Board meetings.

The following testimonials were given by NAACP members at the August 5, 2022, meeting of the State Board of Education.

State Board of Education Testimony (Dick Vautravers)

My name is Dick Vautravers, and I am a resident of Lincoln. I offer this testimony both as an individual and as a member of the NAACP – Lincoln Branch. Our members have been observing State Board of Education meetings for the past 18 months. We have watched a number of public speakers give testimony opposing the Department's proposed Health Education Curriculum Standards, and also the teaching of Critical Race Theory in our schools, among other dislikes. I am speaking today in strong support of the policies, actions and plans of the State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education.

Our observers have found the Department of Education leadership and staff to be extremely knowledgeable, systematic, organized and current in evidence-based instruction. It appears the Department is providing excellent resources which are available for implementation in every school district in our state.

Our group strongly supports Educational Equity, which the Department is championing. We believe it is crucial, as the Commissioner states, "to address the inequities of the past by focusing on opportunities to learn for all students, and by a relentless focus on outcomes." We support NDE's efforts to reduce the disparity in test scores between student groups by using and recommending use of ESSER pandemic funds by districts.

I received a public school education in Grand Island and I am a proud graduate of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. The landscape in Nebraska is not the same as it was when I was in Grand Island Senior High School. I don't have exact data, but my guess is that 95% of our students were non-Hispanic white in 1965. In 2021, the percentage of non-Hispanic white students in Grand Island public schools was 39%, 24% in the Omaha Public School district, 64% in Lincoln Public School district, and only 14% in Lexington public schools. Statistics for the state as a whole showed 65% non-Hispanic white and 35% non-white.

With this shift in demographics, it is necessary for our State Board and our local school districts to change their approach to certain aspects of education.

Critical Race Theory is not being taught in our state's K-12 public schools. But I believe that all students should be taught age-appropriate, factual history that clearly demonstrates both the greatness of our country, as well as the areas in which we have fallen short of the words in our Constitution and Declaration of Independence. I loved American History in high school. But I didn't learn our history from all viewpoints. Since I retired, I have studied the Reconstruction period, post-Reconstruction period, the Plessy versus Ferguson Supreme Court Decision, the resulting coup in Wilmington, North Carolina, the court-sanctioned discrimination of "separate but equal" in the South and the lynching of accused black defendants. I certainly feel sympathy for the black Americans who had to endure these discriminatory acts and disappointment

and discomfort with the actions of white Americans, particularly southerners.

Likewise, reading "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" helped me understand the many broken treaties by our government with the First Peoples of North America.

But I don't feel personal guilt for something that happened 75 to 150 years ago. Only when I educate myself to past injustices am I able to think clearly and speak out against current or future injustices and advocate for reconciliation.

Our students of higher education and Nebraska public schools need to know and understand our whole history – not just the portions that our political leaders feel protect their group identity or point of view. All students should be taught to think critically, and that means understanding historical events from all points of view, including the contributions of people of all races, ethnicities and genders.

Thank you for your time. May you continue to serve all the citizens of our great state.

State Board of Education Testimony (Eileen Vautravers, MD)

My name is Eileen Vautravers. I am a retired pediatrician, who practiced 31 years in Lincoln, NE, where I am a resident. I am honored to speak to this esteemed Board and Commissioner of Education on behalf of the NAACP-Lincoln Branch as a member and on my own behalf, as a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the International Dyslexia Association and the Nebraska Dyslexia Association. I am speaking today in strong support of the policies, services, resources and supportive guidance the NE Board of Education has determined that the NE Department of Education, or NDE, must implement and provide for our public schools, private schools and parochial schools. As a product of an excellent K-12 education in the Kearney Public School system and public medical school education at UNMC, I commend NDE for providing cutting-edge, evidence-based, equitable, comprehensive information and services to our schools, staff, students and their parents.

Most of my volunteer time in the past twelve years of retirement has been spent addressing reading deficiency and dyslexia instruction and intervention. I applaud NDE, under the direction of Dr. Blomstedt, for developing the Dyslexia Technical Assistance Document in 2015, the first year after he was hired. In 2021, Amy Rhone, Director of Special Education, and her staff, under the guidance of Dr. Blomstedt, expanded it with assistive technology and accommodation suggestions and updated it with the current science of reading, so that the one in five students with dyslexia have the opportunity to learn to read accurately and fluently. I commend Amy and her SPED staff for knowing, even prior to the 2018 reading legislation, that struggling readers, in order to learn to read, require systematic, cumulative and explicit instruction in sound awareness, phonics or sound- symbols, syllables, base words with prefixes and suffixes, grammar and sentence structure, and semantics or meaning. This is called structure literacy instruction, which is essential for about 60% of students to even learn to read, and benefits the other 40% of students with improved fluency and comprehension.

Once LB 1052 and LB 1081, the NE reading legislative bills, were passed by the Legislature in 2018, NDE promptly embarked, it appears, on a massive review of reading research, starting with the 2000 National Reading Panel Report, hired highly qualified and knowledgeable staff and created extensive on-line resources for school districts and ESU's to develop programs using structured literacy instruction and high quality instructional materials. Both of these have been shown to benefit ALL students. I congratulate The Board, Commissioner and NDE staff, especially Drs. Cory Epler, Marissa Payzant and Amy Burke,

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State Board of Education, con't.

for promoting and providing the essential guidance for districts to incorporate structured literacy and the science of reading in their schools for all students and in the professional development of their educators. The NE READS and NE Instructional Materials Collaborative websites are excellent resources for parents, as well, to use to evaluate their local school's programs. The Board, Dr. Blomstedt and NDE have been visionary in developing these resources to address this reading legislation.

With your long-term commitment to adhere to the science of reading, the 60% of NE students in fourth grade who are reading below the proficient level and the reading score gaps between student groups will improve. Each of you is addressing the need for ALL children to learn to read, which is essential for success in school and life. This demonstrates your commitment to showing respect for each child and for the individual differences in children.

I would also like to laud NDE for providing quality professional development for administrators and educators. I was a participant a few times at NDE Day held each summer at the NCSA's Administrators' Days. The professional development for administrators was evidence-based and current. Dr. Blomstedt has abided by his commitment to equity and to his quote "Equity is at the forefront of our work at NDE." He programmed the entire NDE Day in 2018 around the title "Champions for Equity in Education" and in 2019 around the title "Agents of Change for Equity." In addition, I attended one of many all-day NE Multi-Tiered System of Support or MTSS Conferences, which was comprehensive, current and excellent. I also want to recognize NDE for their "Launch NE" website. This provided valuable guidance during the pandemic for "Return to School" and for "School Renewal and Acceleration." I praise Dr. Blomstedt for recommending that schools prioritize use of ESSER pandemic funds to address the greater learning loss experienced by marginalized students.

In closing, every parent and citizen here or listening today owes a debt of gratitude to you, the Board, Dr. Blomstedt and NDE staff, for all your efforts on every child's behalf. Board members, I applaud you for doing this time-consuming, hard work without compensation, but out of concern for every child's success in life. Thank you, Dr. Blomstedt, for your excellent compliance with the legislation, for being a visionary leader, and for doing what is right for EVERY child.

Thank You!

State Board of Education Testimony (Jackie Egan)

I'm a retired social worker who served HHS out of Dodge County in the 1980's when great political changes resulted in massive institutional changes not necessarily for the better for the people being served.

I am speaking today in support of Nebraska Department of Education as it is currently set up with duly elected representatives from districts across the State of Nebraska serving on the State Board of Education. These Board members select and hire their own commissioner who then searches, selects and hires deputies with specific expertise to address the educational needs of the State's students. The Commissioner uses (as required by state statute) many adequately and appropriately educated experts as deputies.

In contrast, some other states have their own departments of education set up as Code Agencies which are all governor appointed. Consistently people in other states operating under Code Agencies tell me having their department linked politically rather than by expertise and educational training is disruptive to operations due to frequent change of leadership occurring following elections. All the deputies and commissioners are appointed by the governor which becomes highly political, creating upheaval including but not limited to insecure jobs.

Our current NDE is Research based, Outcome based, and Effective as seen by performance graduation rates and many other

indicators. Our current NDE is stable, employs deputies who are appropriately educated experts who are committed to Nebraska's students including students of color.

As required by statute, NDE must gather a wide range of opinions from stakeholders. The governor retains authority to approve or modify requirements proposed by NDE as he or she must sign off on all proposed regulations.

Our current NDE employees are not just working a job to move up politically.

Our current NDE set up is more democratic and more participatory; more stable and more effective than a Code Agency such as the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, for example.

State Board of Education Testimony (Nancy Comer)

My name is Nancy Comer. Since the pandemic and the onset of Zoom meetings, I've been part of a collaboration of Let's Talk Alliance, the NAACP and Nebraskans for Peace. The common interest turned out to be education, and after many Zoom meetings, the group began to focus on six priority areas including literacy instruction, equity and inclusive curriculum. The bottom line was that all Nebraska students needed to receive an excellent education.

The pandemic stressed the system with schools closing, online and at-home learning, and the reopening of schools. The achievement gap, or as some prefer, opportunity gap, widened, disproportionately affecting students of color and those on free and reduced lunch, confirmed in recent data by NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress).

During this time the group has asked volunteers to sit in on school board meetings both at the state and local level. The intent was to listen and take note of what was happening regarding the issues we were pursuing for the good of all students. Then, a group member would ask to meet for a follow-up to ask for answers to specific questions.

One take-away that The Collaboration has, is the quality of the leaders hired by the Nebraska Department of Education to research and follow up with answers to the questions raised. The same was true of LPS. When the Zoom meeting began, the designated leaders, be they curriculum specialists, administrators, teachers, or school board members, they showed up prepared to answer the questions/concerns with specific data and research.

I should just quit, and say thank you, but will add a personal addition.

Thinking back on my own education, and in conversation with friends and neighbors, I find myself saying, "I didn't know that" when confronted with the history recently of the Tulsa Massacre, and when growing up not ever hearing about women who were doing extraordinary things, like Mary McLeod Bethune or Nebraska's Susan La Flesche Picotte. As multicultural materials began appearing on bookshelves and in curriculum in the 1980's, a school board member was heard to say that "white men" were being forgotten. Really!

Today some curriculum topics leave us feeling uncomfortable; it's easier to not talk about transgender or LGBTQIA because if you don't know about a problem or perhaps have information that might make you fearful of others, you won't be unhappy or need to worry about it.

But indeed, we do need to embrace new knowledge as we have in every generation. This is what keeps our children and youth safe from those that abuse them, often family members, clergy and trusted adults.

While some at today's board meeting are quite concerned about the proposed health standards, critical race education, I want to say to the board, please make your tweaks in curriculum, teacher standards, and areas for which you have been given responsibility, and continue to pursue quality education for all students as the ultimate goal.

Niskithe Prayer Camp Update

In August, Indian Center, Inc. and representatives of the Niskithe Prayer Camp, supported by Big Fire Law & Policy Group and the ACLU of Nebraska, filed an appeal with the City Board of Zoning Appeals to reverse an earlier approval of the Wilderness Crossing Housing Development. The appeal argued that city planning officials, in recommending approval of the project, disregarded guidance in the Lincoln-Lancaster County 2050 Comprehensive Plan, passed over the important environmental concerns of building the development next to Wilderness Park, and ignored feedback on the cultural and religious significance of the site. A hearing was set for October 7.

Before the hearing could take place, the City of Lincoln filed suit with the Lancaster County District Court asking for a dismissal of the appeal. City argues that the Board of Zoning is "without subject matter jurisdiction to hear or rule upon the issues raised in the appeal." The lawsuit also asks that an order be issued to prevent any further proceedings before the Board.

You can show your support, by asking City officials to reverse their earlier approval of the Wilderness Crossing project. Email the appeals board at plan@lincoln.ne.gov, Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird at mayor@lincoln.ne.gov, and your City Council representative.

For more information on opposition to the Wilderness Crossing Housing Development, see *Niskithe Prayer Camp, There's Still Time* by Dr. Margaret Jacobs, and ACLU Nebraska.

Dr. Vann Price: Excellence in Education Winner

Jackie Egan

The NAACP Lincoln Branch congratulates Dr. Vann Price on receipt of the 2022 Inspire Award for Excellence in Education presented on September 14 at the Pinnacle Bank Arena by the *Lincoln Journal Star*.

"Dr. Vann Price is the director of equity, diversity and inclusion, as well as the human resources supervisor for secondary personnel, for Lincoln Public Schools. Her professional journey began at the elementary level as a teacher and team leader, and she went on to become the associate principal and then principal of North Star High School. Dr. Price helped to open three brand new schools during her career with LPS, and has also served as an adjunct professor at Doane College. She currently serves, or has served on the EducationQuest Advisory, Food Bank of Lincoln, YMCA, Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools, and Lincoln Community Foundation Trustee boards" (*Lincoln Journal Star*, September 18, 2022).



Dr. Vann Price

It is a well deserved award for Dr. Vann Price. Congratulations again!

The State of Public Education in Our State

Carol H. McClain, Ph.D.

Public schools in Nebraska are being attacked by various groups with patriotic sounding names who are basically focused on a handful of issues. A Washington Post article earlier this year stated, "Political battles are now a central feature of education, leaving school boards, educators, and students in the crosshairs of culture warriors. Schools are on the defensive about their pandemic decision-making, their curriculums, their policies regarding race and racial equity, and even the contents of their libraries."

Advocating for public schools, open to all children, dates to the origins of the educational practices in Switzerland and Scotland. That paradigm was carried to the colonies as America was settled. Public schools were established to ensure that education was universally available to children, even those with financial difficulties and in parts of the country where few educational opportunities exist. A Gallup survey indicated that, for the first time since 2004, Americans are satisfied with the quality of K-12 education. Then why are groups across the nation, even in Nebraska attacking public schools? Is this movement focused on the quality of education provided in public schools, sometimes called "government schools," or are there other motivating factors?

What are "Government Schools"/Public Schools?

"Government Schools" is a phrase used by former U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, President Trump in his inaugural speech, and groups that advocate for alternatives to traditional public schools. It refers to tax dollars that fund public schools. To public school organizations and educators, the use of the term seems intentionally provocative, especially considering conservatives' distrust of government and desire to reduce its reach.

Objections Raised by Anti-Public School Factions

Critics of public schools often focus on three areas of contention, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). They object to

these constructs being incorporated into the curriculum; a better understanding of each may clarify these issues:

- *Critical Race Theory (CRT)* is based on the idea that racism is embedded in legal systems and policies. Opponents challenge the validity of culturally responsive training that addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- *Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE)* opposition focuses on non-binding Health Standards developed by the Nebraska Department of Education. The first draft was presented to the State Board in July 2021; immediately strong public opposition to the area of sexual development forced the Board to request a revision. That was withdrawn with no plans to reconsider.
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined as "skills, attitudes, behaviors, and values that help direct thoughts, feelings, and actions." Opponents to SEL believe it replaces family privacy with government indoctrination.

Propaganda Efforts Spread Across Nebraska

The *Mind Polluters*, a movie billed as a "documentary," has been shown in more than 20 locations in Nebraska. It claims to "expose the perverted sexualization of children across America through the education system." Based on testimonials from its purported "experts," children are being manipulated into denying their natural defense mechanisms to resist sexual content and behavior. Several elected officials and candidates for political office have promoted the film, including Kirk Penner, running for re-election to the State Board of Education.

National Spotlight on Nebraska's Controversy

The Nebraska furor resulted in an extensive article in the Washington Post in July 2022. The "Protect Nebraska Coalition" formed by pediatrician, Sue Greenwald, with support from Gov. Pete Ricketts with the specific purpose of opposing the Health Standards. They contend the standards incorporate grooming children to become victims of pedophiles. The term "groomer" has become an epithet hurled by the right wing against the left, particularly advocates for LGBT people.

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Developing Efforts to Privatize Education in Nebraska

Michelle Clifford (Seeing Red Nebraska website) posted a report summarizing the push for privately-owned, charter schools in the state. Support originates from wealthy conservatives, as well as religious groups looking for taxpayer money to fund their tax-exempt organizations. The Platte Institute, founded in 2007 by Mike Groene and Pete Ricketts, began promoting privatization even before Ricketts became governor. The Platte Institute claims to be a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, but is involved in lobbying state legislators for school privatization despite regulations forbidding political activity by nonprofits. It is connected to the State Policy Network, ALEC, and the Koch Brothers.

Earlier this year, a bill to create tax credits for donations to private school scholarship funds was introduced in the Nebraska Legislature. Senator Megan Hunt sponsored an amendment to the bill "prohibiting scholarship funds from going to private schools that discriminated on the basis of race, gender, sexual identity, or disability." The bill failed; had it passed, it would have resulted in a tax break 14.5 times larger than for donations to public schools, churches, or other charitable organizations.

"Members of the State Board have been the subject of ongoing vitriol and personal attacks during public comment periods at Board meetings, in editorials, emails, and public forums sponsored by anti-public education groups."

Nebraska State Board of Education Targeted

Members of the State Board have been the subject of ongoing vitriol and personal attacks during public comment periods at Board meetings, in editorials, emails, and public forums sponsored by anti-public education groups. As chair of the Health Standards development stakeholders' group, Deborah Neary, has particularly been attacked and derided. In the winter of 2022, a petition drive was launched to strip the Board of their authority and make a constitutional change to designate the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) a code agency. This would have placed all the power to appoint a Commissioner of Education in the hands of the Governor, eliminate the State Board, and politicize the agency. The petition drive did not gather the required number of signatures by the deadline, but it did signal a serious attempt to reassign control of education in Nebraska. All four incumbent Board members who are up for re-election in November 2022 are facing

challengers representing conservative positions. Dr. Matt Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education, announced his resignation effective January 2023; no doubt a decision based on the stress of leading an agency subjected to ongoing attacks.

Local Boards of Education elections have also attracted multiple candidates who are focusing on the issues related to Health Standards. Although school boards are non-partisan, their campaigners have clearly taken sides. The Washington Post article observed the "unsubstantiated claim (that grooming is the goal of CSE) activated an army of self-described Nebraska patriots who rose up against the standards, took over the local Republican Party and propelled a wave of far-right candidates for local and statewide school boards."

Anti-public school forces took their campaign to the Nebraska Republican Convention in March 2022. Delegates elected new officers from the ranks of people who had been involved in the sex-ed fight. The defeated incumbents had not supported the standards, but they had not been on the front lines to oppose them. James Clark, Buffalo County party's new vice chair told a local party meeting that, "Teachers are trying to usurp the parents' responsibility and teach our kids about sexuality, gender, you name it. And when did that happen, and why? As Christian conservatives, why would we ever agree with that?" In the next day's primary, all four of the state school board candidates endorsed by the Protect Nebraska Children PAC advanced to the general election, and three of their four candidates for Kearney school board gathered enough votes to be on the November ballot.

Conclusion

As taxpayers, parents, grandparents, and community members, the local public school system is a consistent conduit of learning and providing equitable opportunities to children across the nation. Allowing this institution to be subsumed by special interests, wealthy, and powerful individuals is a dangerous path to disruption of democracy and our values. Don Walton, Lincoln Journal Star, provided insight into battle that continues to attack all things related to public education. "It's certainly fair, and even vital, that families and taxpayers monitor public school performance. But, hopefully, the goal would be to seek and support quality public education rather than pursue political objectives."



Carol H. McClain, Ph.D.

Lincoln NAACP Committee Members

Chair of Education Committee

Thomas Christie

Chair of Legal Redress Committee

Catherine Wilson

Chair of Political Action Committee

Currently Open

Advisory Committee

Chassidy S. Jackson-Goodwin

Newsletter Editor

Frank Edler

Assistant Editors

Kathleen Rutledge, Mary K. Stillwell, and Micaela Fikar

Malcolm X Becomes First African American Inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame

Nebraska finally accepted her own native son, the internationally known civil and human rights leader Malcolm X, as the first Black member of the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Two earlier attempts to include him in 2004 and 2007 failed. The current vote



Malcolm X in March 1964

was 4-3 in his favor, but it was made unanimous when it was clear that he had won. Malcolm X will become the 27th member of Nebraska's Hall of Fame. The Sculptor Selection Committee is in the process of choosing an artist to sculpt Malcolm X's bust for the induction ceremony that will be held later.

According to Bill Kelly at Nebraska Public Media, Joanna LeFlore-Ejike who

is the executive director of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation stated that "recent events like the Black Lives Matter movement make the current nomination timely and relevant." In addition, Ejike said, "I think it's overdue, to be honest, that a Black man or a Black story, in general, is celebrated and recognized across Nebraska."

The *Nebraska Examiner* reported that "Yshall Davis, a volunteer at the Malcolm X Foundation, wiped tears after Malcolm X was voted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame." She said that *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* changed her life.

Former state senator Ernie Chambers in the *Omaha World-Herald* called it "a monumental thing for a state as backward as Nebraska, as racist as Nebraska" to have commission members be willing to add Malcolm X to the Hall of Fame. He said he felt appreciation that Malcolm X had "transcended so much negativism" to finally be chosen.

Dewayne Mays, president of the Lincoln branch of the NAACP, had these words to say after Malcolm X's inclusion in the Nebraska Hall of Fame: "Malcolm X without a doubt deserves to be included in the Nebraska Hall of Fame. His life and activism in a time of strife and oppression paved the way for the civil rights that impacted us nationally and internationally. His boldness in speaking the truth often caused conservatives to feel threatened. Nebraska can be proud of how he moved us to a higher level understanding."

Three Share Peacemaker of the Year Award

Nebraskans for Peace held their annual peace conference this year on September 24 and awarded three people the Frank LaMere Peacemaker of the Year Award: Kathleen Rutledge, Paul Olson, and Ken Winston.

Dewayne Mays, president of the Lincoln NAACP, presented the award to Kathleen Rutledge whose thirty-year career at the Lincoln Journal Star culminated with her position as executive editor. She was cited for her community involvement in such organizations as Let's Talk Alliance, Nebraskans for Peace, and the Lincoln NAACP. Most importantly, she has been one of the leading lights in the Truth and Reconciliation Project that was started in 2015.

Ken Haar, member of the Nebraska legislature from 2009 to 2017, was the presenter for the award to Ken Winston, Nebraska environmentalist. Winston has crafted legislation not only for environmental protection but also for wind development. In addition he played a leading role in defeating the Keystone pipeline.

Last but certainly not least, Brittany Cooper, state coordinator for Nebraskans for Peace, and Ron Todd-Meyer, board president of Nebraskans for Peace, presented the final award for Peacemaker to Paul Olson. Nebraskans for Peace was finally able to give the award to Olson because he had stepped away from the board. This enabled the board to finally give him the well deserved award. Olson has been a giant in Nebraska for peace advocacy and social justice for more than half a century. The long-time president of Nebraskans for Peace has been a moral center for three generations of Nebraskans.

Vote 'No' on Voter ID Initiative 432

Based on former President Trump's claims of voter fraud and stolen elections, both of which are unfounded, an initiative has been placed on the ballot to require a voter ID in order to vote. Both the Lincoln and Omaha Branches of the NAACP have come out strongly in opposition to Initiative 432.

If this Initiative is approved, it would amend the Nebraska constitution so that a voter ID would be required to vote.

However, there is no need to change the constitution because there is no voter fraud to speak of in Nebraska.

The political motivation for Initiative 432 is clear: make it harder for African Americans and other minorities, people who live below the poverty line, the disabled, and the elderly to vote. As Dewayne Mays, president of the Lincoln NAACP, said of Initiative 432, paying for a voter ID card is just another version of a poll tax.

Rebecca Gonzales, member of the Lincoln NAACP, said the following of voter suppression methods: "[a]ll they do is make it more difficult, expensive and time-consuming for Nebraskans to participate in elections that affect their day-to-day lives."

The *Lincoln Journal Star* in an editorial on October 6 recommended Nebraskans not to vote for Initiative 432 because "[e]ven if seen as a need to reassure voters that ballots are secure, it will make it more difficult if not impossible for many to vote."

If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

Vote NO on Initiative 432.

FREE MEDICAL SERVICES

Since May, 2003, Clinic with a Heart has provided free medical services with hospitality, dignity and grace to uninsured and underinsured adults and children in the Lincoln area. Clinics are held at 1701 South 17th Street Suite 4G every Tuesday and Thursday evenings, as well as the first and fourth Monday each month. All services are free and now include medical, dental, vision, hearing, physical therapy, chiropractic, mental health and spiritual care on select evenings.

Each clinic's mission team provides the coordinator of services and funding for that night. Mission teams are sponsored by seven different churches, a temple, two hospitals and an educational institution. After an individual's medical needs are addressed, staff will make referrals to various human service agencies in Lincoln that help patients find permanent health care homes. Staff may also refer patients to medical specialists for discounted consultations. If a prescription is required following an exam, and that medication is listed in the clinic's formulary, it will be paid for by the clinic.

Clinic with a Heart is a faith-inspired organization that provides urgent care and school and work physicals. Call 402-421-2924 after 2 PM or 888-317-8608 to schedule an appointment. No patient identification or proof of income is required.



Early Mexican-origin *Barrios* in Lincoln, Nebraska

In this issue of the Newsletter, Mary K. Stillwell and Frank Edler explore some of the history of the Hispanic American community in Lincoln and Nebraska in honor of National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15). As a matter of interest, USAFACTS states that of all the racial or ethnic groups in Nebraska, including the white (non-Hispanic) group, the one that had the largest increase in population from 2010 to 2020 was the Hispanic/Latino group. The Hispanic/Latino population grew from 9.2 per cent of the total population in Nebraska to 11.6 per cent, an increase of 56,382. Here in this question-and-answer format, we'll explore aspects of the early Mexican-origin community in Lincoln and the North Platte valley that resulted from the massive migration from Mexico to the U.S. roughly from 1910 to 1930.

Mary K. Stillwell: What brought on this mass migration from Mexico to the United States?

Frank Edler: One of the main reasons for the mass migration was the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). Mexicans fled their homeland to escape the violence and chaos of the revolution and at times to seek political exile. Another reason was the fact that America needed Mexican labor as American workers moved into the armed forces during World War I and as African Americans in their own Great Migration moved north from the rural South. For example, Julie M. Weise in her article "Mexican Nationalisms, Southern Racisms: Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. South, 1908-1939" has shown that by the mid-twenties "Mexicans

could earn more picking cotton in Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi than anywhere else in the country. Farmers there paid Mexicans an average of \$4.00 per day for picking cotton, as compared to \$1.75 in Texas and \$3.25 in California."

The workers needed in Nebraska were primarily associated with the railroads (track layers and section workers were called *traqueros*), farming, and the meatpacking as well as the sugar beet industries. By 1931 Mexican-origin workers had become nearly as dominant a group of beet field workers as the Germans from Russia. According to the figures presented by the Great Western Sugar Company in the *Scottsbluff Daily Star Herald* (May 15, 1931), 32 per cent of the total Nebraska acreage was worked by Germans from Russia while 28 per cent was done by Mexican beet field workers (*betabeleros*). As Roger Davis shows in his article "Latinos Along the Platte: The Hispanic Experience in Central Nebraska" (2001), from 1910 through 1932, "a permanent Mexican foundation was established in Nebraska."

The Great Depression, however, not only dramatically reduced the Mexican migration north, but also provided the context for eliminating jobs for Mexicans and Mexican Americans in order to set unemployed Americans to work. Although the federal government did not pass an act to expel Mexican-origin workers as it did the Chinese with the 1882 Chinese Expulsion Act, President Hoover supported a program of deportations as Francisco E. Balderrama, co-author of *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, has shown." This unleashed an ugly nativism and racism against hundreds of thousands of Mexican and Mexican-American workers to "persuade" or at times coerce them back to Mexico, literally dumping them across the border with no resources and no help. If "hire Americans" was one side of the Depression coin, the other side was "get rid of Mexicans."

MKS: What was it about the migration that made you think of Mexicans in Lincoln?

FE: I ran across an article in the *Nebraska State Journal* dated March 10, 1920, that mentioned "a colony of two hundred Mexicans in Lincoln" living in the area of Seventeenth and U Streets. That caught my eye. Clearly, there was a *barrio* already in existence in Lincoln in 1920! I wondered how old the *barrio* was and when it first began. Another article on the plight of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Lincoln during the Depression in 1932 revealed more information about the *barrio*: the "dates of entry for the heads of Mexican families in Lincoln run from 1907 to 1923. The interior states of Jolisco [Jalisco], Guanapisto [Guanajuato?], and Michuacan [Michoacán] were the points of departure for most of them" (*Nebraska State Journal*, "Destitute Mexicans in Lincoln Seek Ways to Get Back to Their Native Land," August 21, 1932, p. 27). As early as 1916, when James R. Danciger, Mexican consul for the Kansas City district, requested protection from Governor Morehead for Mexicans in Nebraska at the time of Pancho Villa's raids across the southern border, there were "several thousand Mexican railroad laborers and beet field workers in the state." (*Merriman Maverick*, "Consul Asks Protection for Nebraska Mexicans," June 30, 1916, p. 3). The Great Western Sugar Company recruited and brought in hundreds of workers into the sugar beet fields of Colorado, Nebraska, Montana, and Wyoming. According to Ralph F. Grajeda in his article "Mexicans in Nebraska," the hundreds increased by 1920 "to more than 13,000." To this day, the *barrio* that was established in Scottsbluff in the first decades of the 1900s by railroad and sugar beet workers still exists and is thriving.

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Mexican-origin Barrios, con't.

MKS: How did the Mexican beet field colonies in the North Platte Valley get started?

FE: The short answer is that the Great Western Sugar Company wanted to put them there. For example, the *Western Nebraska Observer* reported in 1923 that the "Great Western Sugar Co., is planning on starting a Mexican colony near Minatare and several other towns in the North Platte valley and Colorado." Rather than doing seasonal campaigns to recruit beet workers in Texas, New Mexico, and El Paso, and then having them leave after the harvest, the Great Western Sugar Company thought it would be more efficient and profitable to recruit Mexican-origin families to stay year-round in towns near beet fields and factories like Scottsbluff, Mitchell, Minatare, and Bayard. In 1929 an ad in the *Bridgeport News-Blade* in Bridgeport, Nebraska, by the Great Western Sugar Company proclaimed that "[l]ast year 2,712 Spanish speaking beet worker families stayed on farms or in the beet-growing communities of Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming" and touted "[t]his is FOUR TIMES as many as stayed over the winter in 1921."

Nevertheless, there was still a large contingent of Mexican-origin *betabeleros* who came in early May on special trains from Lincoln and Omaha to work in the beet fields. No doubt a contingent of workers came from the *barrio* in Lincoln at 17th and U Streets as well as from the population of Germans from Russia. The fact of the matter is that beet cultivation and harvesting is intense, back-breaking work, and American farmers and workers for the most part did not want to do it.

What surprised me most of all in doing this research from 1910 to 1930 was the number of small Mexican-origin/Hispanic/Latino communities that dotted Nebraska even in the first half of the twentieth century. And not just in the North Platte Valley or in larger cities like Omaha and Lincoln. For instance the *Evening State Journal* in Lincoln reported the "first wedding ceremony in the Spanish tongue" that took place in McCook, Nebraska. In July, 1921, "Salvador Ochoa and Fidencia Martinez, both of the Mexican colony here, were married in St. Patrick's Catholic Church." I had no idea there was a Mexican-origin community in 1921 in McCook.

MKS: If whole families went to the beet fields in the North Platte Valley, didn't this affect the education of their children? I would imagine that beet cultivation and harvest didn't fit neatly into a summer vacation schedule.

FE: Right you are, and it wasn't just a matter of missing a few days. Children would leave with their families in early May and miss about a month before school ended. They would return in the fall usually in November about a month or so after school started so they missed about two months out of a school year of nine months. In 1924 the National Child Labor Committee issued the results of a study entitled "Children Working in the Sugar Beet Fields of the North Platte Valley of Nebraska" (*The Mitchell Index, "Children's Labor in Sugar Beets,"* December 11, 1924, p. 1). Of the 355 families studied, "there were 995 children under 16 years of age working beets" which "comprised 52 per cent of the hand workers, who did all the hand work on 16, 981 acres." The results showed that nearly 50 per cent of the work was done by children, and nearly one third of them were under ten years of age. The school grade standing of 2,128 child beet workers showed that "877 or 41.2 per cent are retarded two years or more." This would include both Mexican-origin families as well as Germans from Russia. At that time the latter colony at Scottsbluff was still the largest.

These Russian Germans were considered members of the community while persons of Mexican origin were shunned as outsiders.

Schools tried to address the problem by setting up additional "Opportunity Rooms" to remediate beet worker children, but this was hardly sufficient to deal with the problem effectively. Although it may have been well intended, this separating out of Mexican-origin children from other children for remediation, reinforced the feeling of rejection the children already felt from the Anglo community.

MKS: Do we know of any political exiles from the Mexican Revolution who were living in the Lincoln *barrio* around 1920?

FE: Yes, I think we do. Fortunately, we have a good article written by Lynnelle Greer in the *Lincoln Star* (September 26, 1920) that focused on Victoria De Ortiz who was born and lived the first seventeen years of her life in Mexico City. Her father was American and her mother Mexican. She came to America with her family in 1914, sometime after the arrival of American troops in Mexico. President Wilson's invasive actions and the seizure of Veracruz by American troops caused a huge backlash in Mexico City that resulted in violent anti-American demonstrations as well as the looting of American stores. Her reference to the arrival of American troops may have been to the initial force that invaded Veracruz or the additional troops sent to Veracruz in early to mid-May not only to "protect" the city but also as a possible force under General Funston to march to Mexico City.



Victoria De Ortiz and her son Carlos, *Lincoln Star*, September 26, 1920, p. 17.

What leads me to believe that political exile may have played a role in their departure from Mexico was the fact that De Ortiz said, "[w]e left our house on two hours notice." They left virtually everything. The other indication pointing to political exile is the fact that her father as an American had grown deep roots in Mexico for seventeen years to the point that it was not important to him that she learned English. When she arrived in Lincoln, she couldn't speak English. She was also part of the middle or upper middle class; she didn't know how to wash dishes or sweep or do housework because this was done in Mexico by their servants.

What's interesting about De Ortiz's account is that for some period of time while she was living in Lincoln, she was not aware of the other *barrio*. Besides the *barrio* mentioned above at 17th and U Streets, there was another *barrio* consisting of families living in box cars on sidetracks among the *traqueros*. She states that "[o]ne day my sister brought a little girl home from school with her, and she told us there were other Mexicans living in Lincoln. She said that they were living in box cars" (*Lincoln Star*, "Victoria De Ortiz, Beautiful Mexican Girl,"

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Mexican-origin Barrios, con't.

Who Came to Lincoln Six Years Ago, Ignorant of Ways of America, Is Worshipped by all Her Countrymen," September 26, 1922, p. 22). This totally stymied De Ortiz because she had never heard of anyone in Mexico living in box cars.

After she learned English she became an intermediary between her people and the Americans when anyone needed housing, employment, or were in any kind of trouble. She became an interpreter for the police and the courts and opened a boarding house for Mexicans.

MKS: Were there any other leaders in the Lincoln *barrio*?

FE: Yes, there were. For example, Rev. Encarnation V. Garcia, pastor of the new Mexican mission located on West F Street in Lincoln, arrived from Los Angeles in 1924. He was born in Globe, Arizona, and attended the Spanish-American Baptist seminary in Los Angeles. The next year he went back to Los Angeles to marry Miss Carmen Arriaga, and they came back together to Lincoln. In 1926 he was called to Scottsbluff to minister to the Mexican community there, and she followed him in 1927. Lincoln's loss was Scottsbluff's gain. While teaching Spanish at Chadron State Teachers College, Mrs. Garcia was named Nebraska Mother of the Year for 1956.

IS IN CHARGE OF MEXICAN CENTER



E. V. GARCIA.

Lincoln Journal Star,
September 30, 1924, p. 1



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