



**Roll Call Number**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Agenda Item Number**

\_\_\_\_\_ 18 \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** September 28, 2009

Submission of Des Moines Human Rights Commission Annual Report for 2008-9.

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ to receive and file.

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNE				
COLEMAN				
BENSLEY				
KIERNAN				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
VLASSIS				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	

**CERTIFICATE**

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

# Des Moines Human Rights Commission



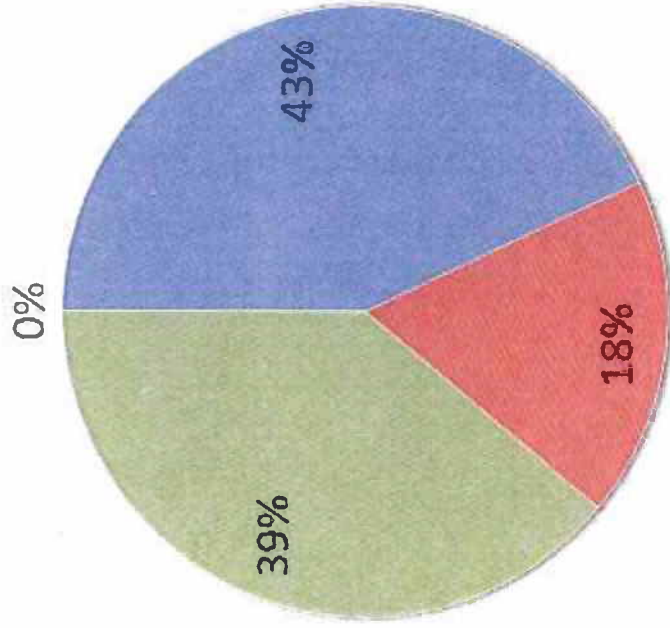
## Commemorating Sixty Years Universal Human Rights

Annual Report  
2008-2009

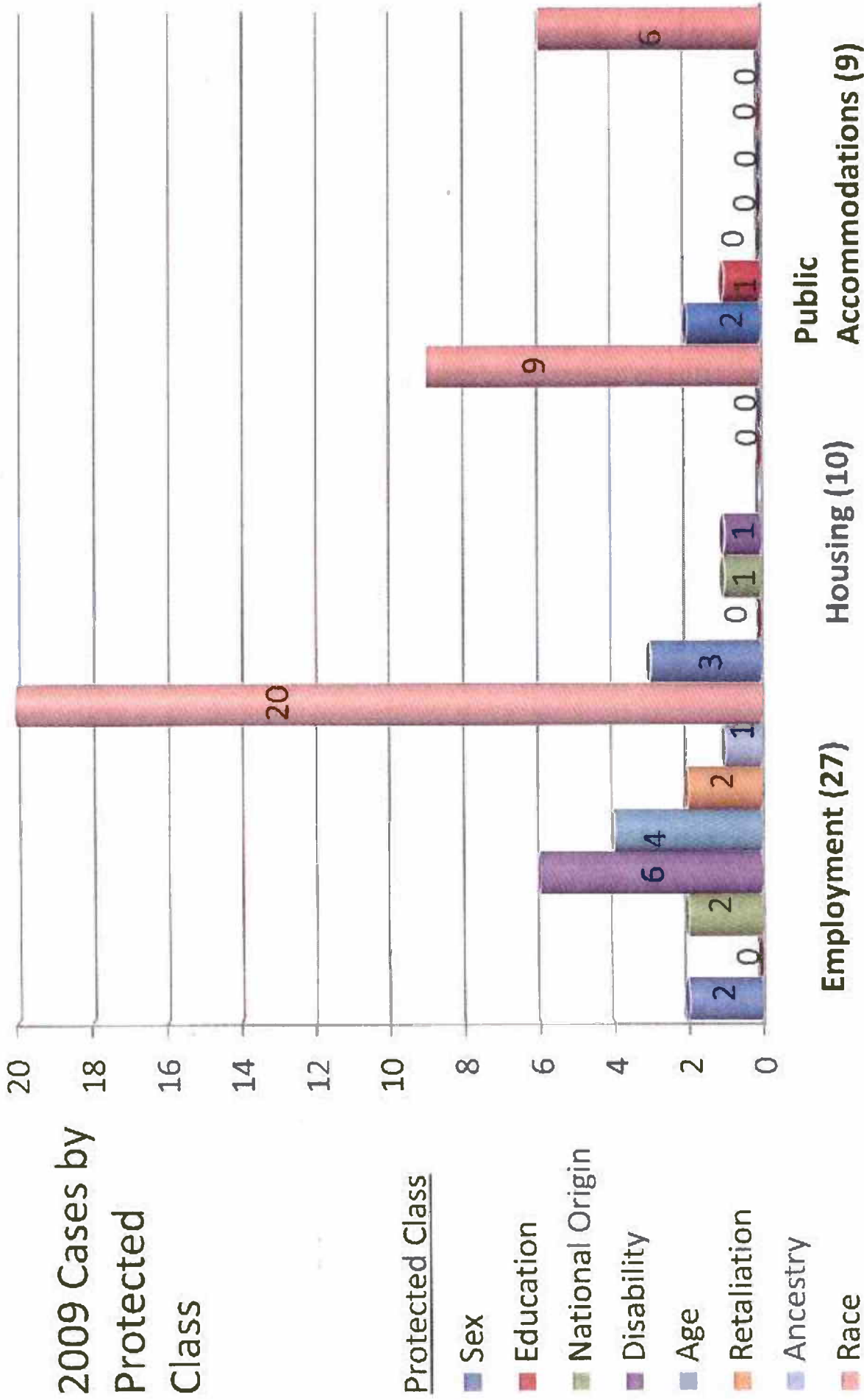
# FY 2008-2009 Cases

## By Protected Area

■ Employment ■ Public Accommodations ■ Housing ■ Municipal Practices



# 2009 Cases by Protected Class



Please note, some cases were filed under multiple classes.



September 16, 2009

Commissioners

Nancy Bobo, Chair  
Peggy Dandy, Vice Chair  
Michelle Bailey, Secretary  
Som Baccam  
David Drake  
Ruth Ann Gaines  
Stuart Juarez

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

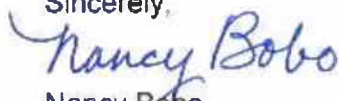
I am happy to forward to you the *2009 Annual Report of the Des Moines Human Rights Commission*.

Our activities this year focused on strengthening our community educational outreach, most notably in the area of fair housing. This was made possible by the support of two (2) full-time VISTA volunteers doing a great deal of outreach and education on the *mission, purpose and processes* administered by the Des Moines Human Rights Commission (DMHRC). Due to the ongoing hard work of our Director, Rudy Simms, the Human Rights Department has maintained our "Substantial Equivalency" status with HUD that had been under challenge and close scrutiny by Regional Office staff in Kansas City, KS, due to the lack of adequate case processing in the fiscal years between 2002 & 2006. Director Simms' diligent work in interpreting our case processing and community education improvements to HUD regional staff resulted in the tripling of our annual funding over the previous fiscal year. This year we have also had a modest increase in staff time allotted to case processing due to the addition of a temporary part-time employee and a focused effort on investigation. The additional staffing resulted in a 16% increase in the number of cases closed in the fiscal year.

Our 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Symposium, "Weathering the Storm: Preserving Human Rights in Tough Financial Times" drew over one hundred and fifty (150) participants to Des Moines University, the symposium presenting sponsor and underwriter, Region VII HUD Director Myrtle Wilson, was the keynote presenter. This year Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie made two Symposium presentations and representatives from nine (9) City Departments participated in the Symposium sessions which greatly enriched the experience.

In December we held our second International Human Rights Day Celebration. This marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* by the United Nations (1948). The cover photo features Eleanor Roosevelt who chaired the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* effort holding the Charter. Roosevelt later appeared in Des Moines in 1951 at the invitation of the Mayor's Commission on Equal Opportunity where she gave three (3) talks to advance the effort for addressing civil rights and equal employment in Des Moines. These efforts were the forerunner to the establishment of the Des Moines Human Rights Commission.

Sincerely,

  
Nancy Bobo  
Chair

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council:

The 2009 Fiscal Year marked the **fifty-fifth (55<sup>th</sup>)** year of implementing the mission of the Des Moines Human Rights Commission (DMHRC). The cover photo for this year's Annual Report remembers Eleanor Roosevelt's 1951 visit to Des Moines at the invitation of the Mayor's Committee on Human Rights. Roosevelt gave three talks during a two day conference attended by business, government and community leaders from all sectors. These organizing meetings

### **Des Moines Human Rights Commission (DMHRC)**

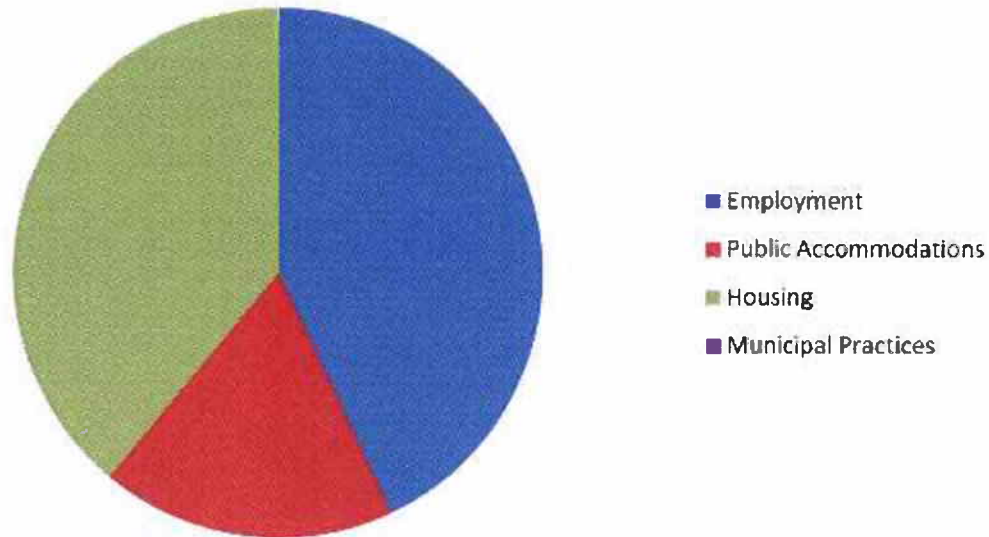
The DMHRC consists of seven (7) commissioners appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The commissioners serve without compensation, investigating allegations of discrimination in the areas of Employment, Public Accommodation, Housing and Municipal Practices. This year the Commission filled a year-long vacancy on the Commission by welcoming Dr. David Drake to the Commission as its seventh member.

Four (4) City employees (Director, Sr. Human Relations Specialist, Human Relations Specialist (.5 fte) and Sr. Executive Administrative Assistant) serve the DMHRC. The Commission is also currently assisted by two full-time and one summer part-time VISTA Volunteer(s). The staffing component also reflects the addition of a contracted (.5 fte) Human Relations Specialist.

### **DES MOINES HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINTS**

In FY 2009, DMHRC staff received and investigated forty-six (46) complaints filed by residents of the City of Des Moines. The complaints were in the areas of Housing, Employment and Public Accommodations. The commission investigated and closed twenty-eight (28) cases during the fiscal year. Forty-three percent (43%) of the case closures during the fiscal year reflected Employment issues, while eighteen percent (18%) addressed instances of Public Accommodation concerns and the remaining thirty-nine percent (39%) addressed Housing. There were nineteen (19) open cases on file at the end of the fiscal year. Eighty-six (86) other residents sought assistance at the Commission but did not file a complaint either due to their concern not being in the purview of the Commission's authority and/or the problem being resolved by information received through Commission contact and /or referral to other sources.

## 2009 Fiscal Year Closed Cases



### **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Working together the DMHRC Director, DMHRC Commissioners and volunteers were able to increase public education about and marketing of the vision<sup>ii</sup>, goals<sup>iii</sup> and legal reality of Fair Housing to businesses, churches, neighborhood associations, community centers, and human service agencies across the City of Des Moines. Increased visibility in the community resulted in increased inquiries from those seeking housing and human rights information, social service referrals and/or a greater understanding of their rights under the Des Moines Human Rights Ordinance.

### **COMMUNITY EDUCATION & OUTREACH**

Educational outreach is a deliverable of DMHRC's contract with the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This year a focused plan to inform residents of their rights under the Fair Housing Act was implemented. In January, over 66,300 Des Moines households received fair housing information in their Des Moines Waterworks monthly bill. Fair housing information was disseminated in two (2) issues of the *City Source Newsletter* which is mailed quarterly to 166,000 Des Moines residents.

## **HALF-TIME HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIALIST POSITION ADDED**

In May, the addition of a (.5 fte) Human Rights Specialist to Commission staffing brought the promise of increased efficiency in case processing and taking complaints from the community.

## **TWO VISTA WORKERS ASSIST DMHRC IN CAPACITY BUILDING & OUTREACH**

Again in 2009, two (2) VISTA volunteers have assisted the DMHRC staff in capacity building and outreach in the area of Fair Housing and Human Rights. The VISTA workers are assigned to the Des Moines Human Rights Commission through a grant partnership with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. The VISTA workers continue to design educational strategies and marketing materials and implement community programming initiatives. VISTA workers disseminate information about fair housing, interpret human rights issues and conduct local training opportunities to address human rights issues.

## **BRINGING THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MESSAGE TO THE CITIZENS OF DES MOINES AND IOWA**

Again this year, from February to April, DMHRC partnered with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission to air fifty-three (53), thirty (30) second commercial television spots on KCCI-TV during prime time. These spots reached 653,789 individuals who viewed them at least once (Neilson Company, quoted by Randy Vonahem-KCCI). Weekly New Iowa Bystander ads reaching 5000 people were purchased. Targeted marketing efforts using colorful posters with tear-off information cards were distributed across the community to 1200 *people-frequented* locations that are ordinarily not reached by print and/or television. Five hundred eighty nine (589) informational mini-posters on housing, public accommodations and employment were distributed to local agencies providing human and shelter services. Additionally, DMHRC continues to work closely with City Information Officer, Amelia Hamilton-Morris to make information available to the community through the City Source magazine and Channel 7 television programming.

Through the support of Greater Des Moines Friends of Human Rights and Prairie Meadows Race Track and Casino, and VISTA, DMHRC was able to train volunteer presenters for increased summer Fair Housing Education in the community.



