

2000

## State of Black Omaha, 2000: Executive Summary

Nebraska Urban League Inc.

Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR)  
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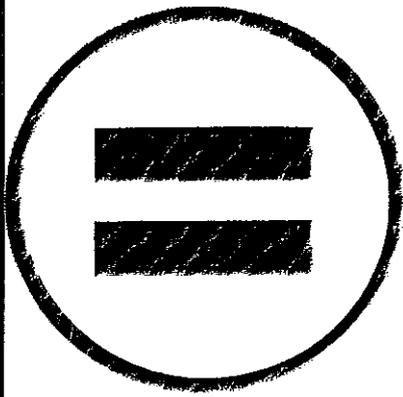
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The  
Nebraska Urban League Inc.  
Presents



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State of Black Nebraska  
2000



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### Disclaimer

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Cover created by Neville Murray and Deborah Taylor

# **STATE OF BLACK NEBRASKA 2000 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **Introduction**

The previous section reviewed the results of a survey that asked African American citizens of Nebraska their opinions on several issues and concerns facing Nebraska's African-American community. This section uses these results to develop actions and recommendations in several areas: Youth Issues, Government Issues, Jobs and Economic Development, Criminal Justice, and Health. Because some of these areas overlap, actions and recommendations suggested for one area may also apply to another area.

## **Youth Issues**

Results of the survey showed that youth issues were among the greatest concerns among the respondents. When asked what were the three most important problems the Urban League of Nebraska should be trying to address, over half of the respondents mentioned an issue related to youth. In Omaha Area 1, youth issues were mentioned by nearly two-thirds of the respondents.

As far as specific youth issues, education, better education, and schools ranked as the biggest problem. Education and schools were viewed as much more of a problem in Omaha Area 1 than in Omaha Area 2 or in Lincoln. In Omaha Area 1, 27.6 percent of the respondents said that education, better education, or schools was one of the three most important problems.

Activities for youth also was mentioned as a problem by a sizable portion of the respondents and ranked as the tenth most important problem area. Activities for youth were seen to be a major problem in Lincoln where they ranked first (26.6 percent of the respondents) of all problems mentioned by the survey respondents.

The State of Black Nebraska Survey asked respondents to indicate how satisfied they were with various services, facilities, and programs. Each person also was asked how important the service, program, or facility was to him or her. From this series of questions the greatest area of concern was activities for teenagers (63.0 percent important and dissatisfied). This was the case in all three survey areas. Furthermore, there has been no significant improvement since a similar question was asked in 1990.

Additionally, more than a third of the respondents indicated that elementary and secondary education was important to them and they were dissatisfied. Similar to the previous discussion on problems to be addressed, Omaha Area 1 again views education with more concern, particularly for elementary schools and junior high schools. Senior high schools, however, show less difference among the three survey areas.

The above results suggest that the Urban League of Nebraska should focus some of its effort into two aspects of youth issues: Primary and secondary education, and activities for youth.

### **Primary and Secondary Education**

Because the State of Black Nebraska Survey was conducted in the summer of 1999, some of the concern about education could be the result of the change in Omaha Public Schools' policy away from bussing and toward neighborhood schools. The Urban League of Nebraska has developed a committee to monitor and track the impact of academy schools in North Omaha.

### **Activities for Youth**

As expressed in the survey, activities for youth are an important area of concern, but the youth themselves have rarely been given the opportunity to express their concerns. The Urban League of Nebraska annually sponsors a Youth Summit. This year it will use the Youth Summit to find out from the youth what activities they say are important to them. A short questionnaire was distributed at the opening of the summit and the results will be used to help the Urban League of Nebraska determine what activities are import to African-American youth. A copy of the questionnaire that was distributed to the youth attending the summit can be found at the end of this section.

**URBAN LEAGUE OF NEBRASKA YOUTH SUMMIT  
STATE OF BLACK NEBRASKA YOUTH SURVEY 2000**

1. What are the three most important problems facing African-American youth in Nebraska today?

Problem 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Problem 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Problem 3 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you have a solution to any of these problems?

Solution to Problem 1 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Solution to Problem 2 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Solution to Problem 3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

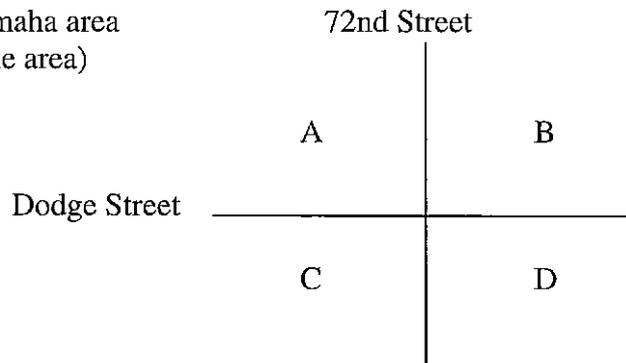
3. What grade will you be in next year? (circle the grade)

6      7      8      9      10      11      12

4. Are you male or female? (circle the answer)

male    female

5. Please indicate the part of the Omaha area where you live (circle letter of the area)



## **Government Issues**

Some of the major areas of concern expressed by African Americans concerned local government services. Greatest concern was expressed in Omaha Area 1, with the least in Lincoln. Compared to previous surveys the positive perception of government services and leadership has declined significantly. This is in sharp contrast to the respondents' overall view of the Omaha and Lincoln area and the economy where there is considerable optimism.

### **Major issues**

One of the biggest concerns is in the area of leadership. Government leadership is not viewed highly by the respondents. Less than 20 percent of the respondents agreed that Omaha (Lincoln) had good government leaders. In North Omaha this percentage dropped from 63.0 percent in 1990 to 17.9 percent in 1999.

A second area of concern is the condition of streets and roads.

Police protection is another problem area. Over half of the respondents (58.5 percent) said that police protection was an important area and they were dissatisfied. The perception of police protection has worsened since 1990. Consequently, other public safety areas such as fire protection and emergency rescue service also have declined.

A final area of concern is youth services, as 65.7 percent said that activities for teenagers were important and they were dissatisfied, 44.0 percent said the same about recreation programs and activities, and the percent for parks and playgrounds was 42.0 percent.

## **JOBS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Quality of Corporate Leadership.**

The results of the survey indicate that Omaha based corporations have demonstrated a turning away from support of minority businesses, and from statements of commitment to equal opportunity in the work place. The Urban league board of directors will develop a plan of action in cooperation with several major corporations to demonstrate that equal opportunity is alive and well in our community. And, the Urban league has begun to form partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, its corporate members, and other interested parties, to encourage economic development in the North/South Omaha districts, and to provide additional opportunities for small, disadvantaged businesses.

### **2. Quality of Political Leadership.**

The Urban League leadership believes that political leadership is most apparent and effective when constituents are actively demanding results. The Urban league voter registration program, coupled with an effective program of political education, can begin the process of making voters aware of effective community betterment programs and who is responsible for the success of such programs. Such activities will promote effective political leadership.

### **3. Outlook on the Future.**

The results of the survey indicate that although over half of the respondents agree with the statement that their area's future looks bright, a significant percentage of the respondents are not optimistic. The Urban league believes that improvements in corporate and political leadership will serve to improve the views of black Nebraskans.

### **4. Most Important Problems for Urban league of Nebraska.**

The Urban league agrees with the respondents that the number one problem is better education for children. In this regard, the Urban league has worked with other community groups to form a team of retired educators and administrators who visit "academy" schools to evaluate their effectiveness. In turn, this team has worked with the Omaha Public Schools toward making necessary improvements.

The matter of jobs, both unemployment and underemployment, has been a concern for the Urban league for some time. The League is continually working with corporations in Omaha toward providing both internal training, and insuring that an effective diversity program is in place. We will continue to form partnerships with those corporations who are committed to providing better opportunities for minorities. And, we will identify those corporations whose practices demonstrate a lack of commitment to equal opportunity.

## **5. Satisfaction and Importance Rating for Housing.**

The Urban League recognizes that quality rental housing is a scarce commodity, and believes that this issue can best be resolved through a partnership between the City of Omaha, nonprofit and for profit developers, and financial institutions. The demolition of housing projects was a necessary step toward providing decent housing for low and moderate income families. However, the replacement of those units with suitable housing is an immediate and necessary requirement. Research by the Urban league staff has revealed that a significant number of dollars have been made available through the federal government for development of affordable housing units in distressed neighborhoods. The League staff will do all in its power to accelerate the production of such housing.

The property tax issue is recognized as being a detriment for residents, and for attracting new businesses to Omaha. The business community, and the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, are working with concerned legislators to address this critical issue.