

# AAAC Newsletter

African American Advisory Council • Spring 2018

## 25th Annual African American Advisory Council Institute



### **B J Walker**

DCFS Acting Director

### **Inside This Issue:**

Expressions from the Chair • Conference Recap • Award Winners  
Rochelle Interview • Bremen Interview • BHM Celebrations  
National African American History Month

# Expressions from the Chair

by Tracy Marshall



**O**n behalf of the African American Advisory Council and our University Partners we would like to express our sincere appreciation for everyone who attended the Council's 25th Institute. We want to acknowledge presenters who took the time to prepare thought provoking and informative workshops which focused on adoption and the positive ways to achieve permanency for our youth in care.

Our keynote speaker, Victoria Rowell gave a phenomenal address which was inspirational, dramatic and enlightening. Her heart-wrenching speech was full of compassion as she shared portions of her life. She made it clear to all the need to continue our individual efforts and perseverance in our work, because lives can be changed for the better. Conference participants also were thrilled to have an opportunity to take photos with Ms. Rowell that can be cherished for years to come. We would be remiss if we did not express a heartfelt thank you to the vendors/exhibitors who transported their products and information to the venue and truly enhanced the event.

Our 25th Institute was definitely a major milestone that caused us to pause and reflect upon the many obstacles we've overcome and also guided our focus for the future. The AAAC is dedicated to continuing our fight to ensure the concerns of African American children and families are not only heard but addressed in a caring and effective manner. We look forward to much success and opportunities to inspire others to go above and beyond the call of duty for children, families and our communities. We encourage you all to be intentional in the work we do by being real, righteous and relevant.

Peace and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Marshall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy Marshall  
*AAAC Chairperson*

## 25th Annual AAAC Institute Workshops Recap



The African American Advisory Council celebrated the 25th Institute in partnership with their university partners while promoting the diversity of the Department of Children and Family Services. Last year's institute offered more than just words in a program book, it highlighted the Key Note speaker Victoria Rowell, an award winning actress, international lecturer, a teacher, advocate, mother and former foster youth. Her story and dynamic presence left the lasting impression with the audience that "all things are possible no matter what life brings your way."

Each Institute offered a variety of workshops that highlighted child welfare barriers, concerns, strategies, services and supports while sharing ways improve, inspire and cultivate the way we approach child welfare as a whole. The theme was, "THE HEART AND SOUL OF ADOPTION: Black Families, Black Children, and the Quest for Permanency." Participants were offered five workshops that supported the theme and addressed factors that promoted successful adoption of African American children.

### **Breakout 1:**

#### **The Pathway/Bridge to Adoption for Permanency**

*Presenters: Pamela Mills, Katie Friend*

The Department is focused on the importance of connectedness and how all children should have a forever home which comes with achieving permanency. This workshop bolstered and reinforced informative material on adoption subsidy components, new legislation in relation to permanency, Post Adoption Support

and Preservation services. The presenters noted the importance of having appropriate resources to ensure that families, workers, communities and stakeholders have the access to the information to achieve what, that's right – permanency.

### **Breakout 2:**

#### **Educational Support for Adoptive Families**

*Presenter: Diane Fitzhugh*

Facilitated another great workshop which accurately related to the topic at hand. This workshop explored the importance of education after the goal of adoption has been finalized. The focus was on linking the adoptive families to support and services to foster the growth of the child's education. Strategies were discussed to empower these families to be effective advocates for children to receive the best educational experience possible. It helped identify available service needs and accommodations that can provide to help each child reach their full potential, and achieve educational success.

### **Breakout 3:**

#### **"What you say goes a long way." The Power of Communication in Influencing Youth's School Life Success**

*Presenters: LaShawnda Kilgore, Camilla Davis*

This workshop was presented by two amazing young women that were once youth in care that was able to achieve permanency. They openly shared their individual stories, their battles and achievements while on the road to permanency. The ongoing theme throughout the workshop was the impact child welfare professionals have

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# 25th Annual AAAC Institute Workshops Recap

(Continued)

on the children they connect to daily. They stressed that being human centric about what is said and done by you could be the most important thing in a young person's life. These young women were able to keep it real and honest. They shared that when doors were opened for them they were intelligent and savvy enough to walk through them.

## **Breakout 4: Empowering Adopted Youth and Youth in Care through Lifebooks**

*Presenters: Dr. Jean Howard, John (J) Reeves.*

The significance of life books for youth in care and those who have achieved permanency were explored. Yes, adoption and permanency maybe the goal, but it is truly difficult to get to where you are going if you don't know where you come from. The presenters noted that life books are crucial and greatly needed for youth in care, especially to help preserve a child's major life events. Lifebooks are a "Living Document" that must be a consistent agency practice. Everyone involved in a child's life should be on board to make this a positive and memorable process for the youth.

## **Breakout 5: African American Children and Multi-Cultural Adoption**

*Presenters: Veris Van, Jennifer Walls.*

This presentation was geared towards informing and preparing families for adopting across racial lines. As we are all different, we all have one great need, and that is for love and stability. This workshop examined how CYFS is committed to helping families that are considering transracial adoptions by recognizing one's differences and learning to accept those differences. Honestly assessing and realizing that some differences may require self-reflection and the openness to make changes to meet the needs of the children. Another area that was touched upon was going the extra mile as it relates to food, hair and cultural traditions in efforts to help bridge the gap. The Bless It Beauty Salon was highlighted and information was shared about support and knowledge that they share with caregivers about hair and skin care for African American youth.

## **Mega Round Table Forum Making Adoption Successful**

*Moderator: Dr. Doris Houston; Presenters: Angela Barber, Dr. Venessa Brown, Dana Drummer, Kyle Johnson, Monique Smith, Flora Suttle, La'Rie Suttle*

This workshop addressed factors that promoted successful adoption of African American children. Issues related to pre-adoption, barriers to adoption, parent and child preparation, family mentoring, and culturally responsive resources were discussed. This was an open discussion with great participation from the audience as well as the presenters. Some highlights discussed were to reach back and let those know who made a difference in your life. You should reach beyond your familiarity. If you

can't walk through then go around it. Your best advocate is yourself! Be the voice for yourself and your children in your home. Foster parents are trying to maintain communication and are asking for help when needed. The Department is putting adoption back in the forefront. When someone is considering adoption know what you are looking for, study adoption so that you will know both the pros and cons of adoption and will be well informed. Adoption is about children feeling that connection and feeling loved and being part of a family. Children who need the

most love will ask for it in the most unloving way. The importance of mentoring is critical in any relationship and working with adoption and families. All children need caring adults in their lives; in essence, taking on that family and mentoring them as a whole.

The African American Advisory Council, University Partners, keynote speaker, and presenters of the powerful workshops optimistically offered insight into the intense work that is being completed daily on behalf of the children and families we serve. The needs of all youth in care were highlighted in efforts to improve and achieve permanency. Hopefully, the information as well as the presentations was spirited, enticing and provided you the ability to brainstorm, inspired dialogue and raised awareness in the key areas of Adoption. Lastly, we encourage you to be intentional in the work that you do to help give children and families the opportunity to be connected for life.



*June 2017, Victoria Rowell,  
award-winning actress was the  
Keynote Speaker*

# 2017 AAAC Institute Award Winners



*Dr. James P. Gleeson holding Chairman's Award*



*J. R. Robinson holding Chairman's Award*



*Angelo Militello,  
Chairman's Award*



*Sheila Freeman,  
Outstanding Achievement Award*



*Bernadette Thomas,  
Outstanding Achievement Award*



*Audrey Carter-Thomas,  
Outstanding Achievement Award*



*Renee Heard,  
Outstanding Achievement Award*

**ALSO CONGRATULATIONS  
OUTSTANDING  
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

*(not pictured)*

*Brigitte Broadway*

*Idell Harris*

# Farewell to the Chief

by Lori Welcher-Evans



**Rochelle Crump** has been employed with the Illinois (IL) Department of Children and Family Services

(DCFS) since June 2007 as the Affirmative Action Chief of African American Services. In (2010 - 2011) she served as the Interim Deputy Director/ EEO Officer and in 2015 in addition to her role in African American Services, she was the acting ADA Coordinator.

During her tenure at DCFS for nearly 15 years as the Chief of African American Services, Rochelle has served as the Liaison to the African American Advisory Council (AAAC), where she informs AAAC of Affirmative Action diversity and recruitment efforts and family cases that come to the attention of the African American Services, shares ideas and recommendations, advocates and supports staff for families to be reunified when possible. She assists with the annual institute day, newsletter and Host family program. Rochelle is also the Liaison to the CMS African American Employment Plan Committee, where efforts are made to hire and promote qualified African Americans statewide. She serves on the Birth Parent Steering Committee, Action Team, and Cook County Transformation Team from its inception in 2008. This committee was formed to examine child welfare disproportionality of children of

*“When we encounter challenges, we don’t give up, we fight harder.”*

color and disparate outcomes in the Child welfare system. In October, 2016 Rochelle implemented a partnership between the Chicago Police Department, DCFS legal and Guardian’s office, Juvenile division, Chicago Public Schools, Probations, the States Attorney office along with other important agencies to assist with an underutilized diversion project to keep DCFS youth out of the Corrections system.

Rochelle began recognizing DCFS military veteran staff in 2010 by providing an annual D-Net Veteran’s and Memorial Day Message to thank them for their service and to highlight the significance of these holidays. At 1911 Rochelle started bringing snacks, VA benefit information and crafts donated from the Help Veterans Heal organization for veterans.

Prior to joining DCFS Crump served an IL State Senate confirmation appointment as the Assistant Director for the Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs (IDVA) 2003 – 2007 making her the first African-American and woman to serve in IDVA’s Executive staff since its’ inception in 1945.

Before the appointment as the Assistant Director, Crump was appointed by the Mayor of Chicago with consent of the City Council Human Relations Committee to serve as the Director and Liaison for the City of Chicago Veterans’ Affairs, where she had previously

served for over a decade directing the 21 Mayoral appointed Council members. Crump’s first appointment to the Veteran’s Advisory Council was by former Mayor Harold Washington. She also served as a Board Commissioner for the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR) when the Mayor’s Advisory Council was moved under CCHR.

Rochelle was employed for 23 years with the U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs. During that tenure she served as a Veteran’s Service Officer, Federal Women’s Program Manager and EEO Officer. Crump served honorably in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) during the Vietnam Era (1971-1973) and received the National Defense Service Medal for honorable service during a period of national emergency (Vietnam) and a Certificate of Recognition from the Secretary of Defense for military service during the Cold War.

Crump is the Founder and President of the National Women Veterans United (NWWU) a not for profit women veterans’ organization that formed on March 26, 2005. Under her leadership they opened the only Women Veteran’s Center in Illinois and one of few across the nation. In addition she advocated for the Women Veterans License plate where she holds the number “1” plate. She has received numerous awards and recognition for her leadership and community service. She holds membership and elected positions with several veteran organizations.

# A Wonderful Talent and a True Gem

by Michelle Carter



**Bremen Campbell** started his Journey with the State of Illinois back in 1978 with the Department of Human Services

or what was then known as the Department of Public Aid. Within two years of State employment, he transferred to Department of Children of Family Services where he worked as a Child Welfare Specialist. Bremen transitioned from a Child Welfare Specialist to a Public Service Administrator in the Interim Services Department. Bremen explained that Interim Services was a department that offered short-term services to families that had been investigated for allegations of abuse or neglect. He further reported that the Interim program was eventually phased out in relation to the B.H. Consent Decree. Bremen went on to continue his career with DCFS as a Placement Supervisor in the following offices in Illinois: Harvey, Tinley Park and Kankakee. Bremen concluded his tenure with the Department of Children and Family Services as a Quality Assurance Specialist in the Division of Quality Enhancement.

In 2012, Bremen became a member of the African American Council after he had been intrigued by the work that was being done across the state on behalf of African American staff, children and families. Bremen

*“... his work will not stop here, and he will remain socially engaged.”*

reports that he was also moved to action by the council's newsletter publications. Once a member, he quickly began to make his mark on the newsletter committee. The AAAC has been blessed to have Bremen contribute his many talents including his management of the AAAC Group Share. Bremen served as the Chairperson of the Newsletter committee and provided them with outstanding support and coordination. He spearheaded and aided in the production of many memorable and thought provoking publications for the AAAC. The newsletters also shared and recognized the vital work as well as the struggles that DCFS and POS staff face daily as they strive to do what is necessary to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

Bremen reports that he enjoyed his work on the Permanency Enhancement Action Team. He feels it allowed him to look at and challenge the disparities and disproportionality of African Americans affected by DCFS and their family/social issues. Bremen knew that each family presented with its own dynamics but must be viewed without prejudices. Bremen expressed that the work of the council and action teams serve as a tool to assist others in viewing the families served without bias. Bremen believes that the work of the action teams has impacted the

way the department views family and ultimately proposed fictive kin. Ensuring that a child can stay connected and continue relationships that were formed prior to and even after being involved with DCFS is paramount to who they are and not who's they are.

Bremen imparted that being a member of the AAAC has enhanced his work in the social service field and has allowed him to be more socially conscious. Bremen states that social work is a demanding field and the AAAC has helped him to have a heightened awareness of the families that are involved with the department and child welfare. Bremen stressed that his work will not stop here, and he will remain socially engaged. He also shared that he plans to join the Black Social Worker's Organization in an effort to stay involved in this work. Bremen reports that he leaves DCFS and the AAAC knowing that all of his work is appreciated and he will continue to encourage others to volunteer and to get busy.

Bremen has been a great asset to the department and the AAAC. Bremen has bid his farewell to the Department and happily enjoying retirement. His days are now being spent appreciating his fondness for music, golf, and his love for traveling.

# Remembering Black History Month 2018

## Central Region

Colleagues in the Urbana and Champaign offices came together to break bread, play games and acknowledge the rich heritage of the African American culture. This event, spearheaded by DCP investigator, O’beckyo Quinn, highlighted the traditional foods that African Americans ancestors created from the scraps of premium meat, and dry goods that were available to them. The menu consisted of: oxtails, fried fish, chicken, dressing, beans, potato salad, macaroni and cheese, meatballs, greens with smoked turkey necks, cabbage, sweet potatoes, and other dishes along with desserts and a variety of beverages. While dining, the group played “How Well Do You Know Your Black History”? Winners of the trivia were given a Black History Inventors Calendar. Shout out to Becky for cooking the majority of the meal! It was enjoyed by all.



## Cook South, Emerald Office

*By James Bracey*

The Black History Celebration was a culmination of tradition, as well as celebrating the African American presence within the Department of Children and Family Services. The staff at “Emerald City” participated in various activities throughout the week which included panel discussions and various cultural events with persons from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. During the luncheon, we performed a legacy ceremony that symbolized the passing of the torch from the seasoned staff to the neo staff. We felt that it was imperative that we show our appreciation, honor and respect to those who will leave their legacy in the field of social service. The goal of the ceremony was for the seasoned staff to impart knowledge and support to the newer staff. We continue to strive to address, as well as decrease disproportionality for children of color in the child welfare system. We want to sustain family connections and embrace our concept “It Takes A Village!”



# National African American History Month

During the month of February, we celebrate National African American History Month to honor the significant contributions African Americans have made to our great nation. African Americans have endured egregious discrimination and bigotry. Though, they have always been determined to contribute earnest efforts to America's greatness. Throughout our history, members of the Armed Forces have fought to secure freedom and liberty for all, defending our country. For far too long, African Americans bravely fought and died in the name of freedom, while at the same time struggling to attain equality, respect and the full privileges of citizenship. Because of the love of their country, these heroes insisted on serving and defending America despite racial prejudice, unequal treatment, diminished opportunities, and segregation. Their various acts in the face of grave injustice revealed the true meaning of American patriotism – service before self.

It was not until 1948 that President Harry S. Truman ordered desegregation of the military, providing "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the Armed Forces without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."



We remember soldiers like **Sergeant Henry Johnson** of the Harlem Hell fighters, the all-black National Guard unit that was among the first American forces to arrive in France during World War I. Johnson suffered 21 wounds



during the front-line combat and received France's highest award for valor. To acknowledge his exceeding bravery, he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and a Purple Heart.



**Pilot Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.** is remembered for having commanded the famed Tuskegee Airmen and became the first African American General in the United States Air Force.



**Major Charity Adams Earley** is remembered as the commander of the only all-African American Women's Army Corps unit that served overseas during World War II. She was a trailblazer in her efforts to recruit more

women to military services in spite of rampant racism and segregation.

These and countless other African Americans triumphed over ignorance, oppression, and injustice to make indelible contributions, not only to our military history, but even more importantly to our American history. They are an integral part of our Nation's story.

# AAAC Notable Retirees

## THANK YOU

**Bremen Campbell**

**Diane Cottrell**

**James Robinson**

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## **DCFS OFFICE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (OAA) - EEO**

The Office of Affirmative Action is located at  
1911-21 S. Indiana Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60616  
(312) 328-2493

OAA is charged with the overall responsibility of ensuring that the Department complies with EEO civil rights rules and regulations and that the rights of all DCFS employees, applicants, and service providers are protected against unlawful discrimination. Unlawful Areas of Discrimination include the following:

- Race
- Color
- Sex Sexual Orientation
- Sexual Harassment
- Religion
- Age
- National Origin
- Physical or Mental Disability
- Military Discharge (unfavorable)
- Marital Status
- Citizenship Status
- Arrest Record
- Aiding and Abetting
- Coercion
- Veteran's Status

## **AFRICAN AMERICAN SERVICES**

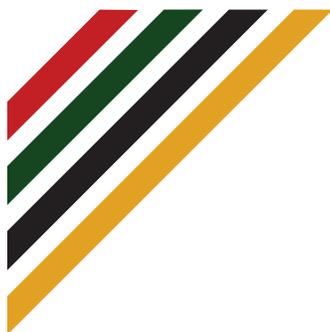
The African-American Services Chief advises the Office of Affirmative Action, Deputy Director, and DCFS on matters regarding service delivery to African-American staff, clients, and provider agencies. The Chief of African-American Services also evaluates DCFS policies and procedures to ensure that they are culturally sensitive and makes recommendations about how to remedy issues which adversely impact the staff and African-American community.

The Chief of African-American Services examines complaints from staff and clients alleging disparities, of services or service delivery to African-American clients and provider agencies. Provides information on career development for African-American staff and potential employees and external resources for foster/adoptive parents through a variety of culturally sensitive programs.

The Chief of African-American Services advocates for African-American children and families involved with DCFS and community agencies which contract with DCFS by participating in the development and implementation of corrective action for "at risk" agencies. The Chief

of African-American Services also serves as liaison and provides technical assistance to the African-American Advisory Council, African American Employment Plan Committee, Transformation and Action Teams and Birth Parents' Steering Committee and the Diversity and Recruitment Committee.

The Chief of African-American Services engages in external community outreach and serves as a resource for community-based groups and other stakeholders, inclusive of examining trainings and workshops on the unique cultural and programmatic needs of African-American staff, children and families; advocates for staff and families provides input and recommendation on informational community forums on DCFS initiatives, procedures, policy changes, and other DCFS programs which focus on children and families. She assists other DCFS Division staff in the recruitment of African-American employees and the development of community forums and culturally sensitive services in conjunction with sharing information regarding the interpretation and application of DCFS rules, procedures and policies relating to EEO and the Departments' Affirmative Action Plan.



## African American Advisory Council Members

### OFFICERS

Tracy Marshall, Chairman  
Keith D. Smith, Vice Chair  
Lori Welcher-Evans, Secretary

### MEMBERS

Robin Albritton  
James Bracey  
Michelle Carter  
Fayette Coleman-Gill  
Cheryl Dampeer  
Shirley Davis-Barsh  
Carole Freeman  
Veronica Gray-Mattison  
Angela Hassell  
Renee Heard  
Jacqueline Johnson  
Tracey King  
Rhonda Laye  
Kilonzo Musau  
Jataun Rollins  
Keith D. Smith  
Quincy Washington  
Reginald Riddle-Young

### EX-OFFICIO

Jere Murry

### CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

Michael Burns

### AFRICAN AMERICAN SERVICES

Rochelle Crump

Rev. 5/25/18

## Standing Committees

### MEMBERSHIP

*Chairperson: Robin Albritton*

The African-American Advisory Council's By-Laws stipulate a membership consisting of a maximum of thirty-one (31) department employees. The Council is a statewide organization. Seventy-two percent of the members are from Cook County and twenty eight percent are from the remaining three regions, this formula reflects the proportion of African Americans within Cook and downstate.

African-American Advisory Council members are, at this point, African American staff that was selected based on their expressed interest and willingness to work for African American issues in the Department. Employees may become members after two years of employment and submitting a brief narrative noting their interests in problems and issues affecting African Americans to the membership chair.

The Membership Committee meets periodically to review applications upon receipt. The committee prepares recommendations for selection by vote of council members at the next regular meeting.

### CONFERENCE

*Chairpersons: Robin Albritton and Tracy Marshall*

This committee plans the annual conference. Committee members develop the theme, workshops and presenters in addition to identifying keynote speakers.

### NEWSLETTER

*Chairpersons: Michelle Carter, Lori Welcher-Evans*

The newsletter is a quarterly publication of articles submitted by Council members or agency staff. Each quarterly edition presents information about how staff can better provide services using new policies and protocols, reflect judicial rulings, and effectively implement new legislation. Our Editorial Board reviews draft articles for professional content and relevancy to current events around the six regions. Sections of the newsletter include: viewpoint, book review, and resource identification. Those interested can submit articles to chairperson of the newsletter committee:

**Michelle Carter**  
800 W. Roosevelt Rd.  
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

### LEGISLATIVE

*Chairperson: Jere Murry*

The objective of this committee is to monitor General Assembly Legislation affecting African Americans and child welfare programs. Members also confer with legislators and the Director's Legislative Liaison. The Chair may designate AD HOC committees, as needed which may include staff who are not members of the Advisory Council.

### TRAINING

*Chairperson: Rhonda Laye*

This committee was established to present information regarding the Council to new employees during the Department's foundation training.

### AD HOC COMMITTEES

The AAAC Chair recommends formation of Ad Hoc Committees when key issues are brought to the council's attention.

# “Keeping Our Children First”



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the African American Advisory Council is to advise and make specific recommendations with solutions to the Director and Bureau Deputies concerning the Department’s provision of services to African American clients, staff and its contractual service providers in the following areas: recruitment, legislation, employment, community relations and development of professional issues.

## **INTERESTED IN JOINING AAAC?**

**Contact Robin Albritton, Membership Chairperson**

*robin.albritton@illinois.gov*

**312.814.6800**

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**[www2.illinois.gov/DCFS](http://www2.illinois.gov/DCFS)**

