

**Speech to Urban League of Nebraska 12/04/2009
Michael B. Adams (draft 14)
Theme: INCLUDE, INVEST, INSPIRE**

Hello everyone

Thank you for the warm welcome

**Thank you, Deidra, Jean, CEO Warren, Urban League
Family, friends and guests.**

Thank you Jamilah for the very kind introduction.

**I am happy to be home to visit family and friends and
to spend some time with all of you. Family here today
include son Anthony, and his son and daughter
Anthony and Jamilah, and Cousins George and Jean
who are my partners in deep thinking about serious
questions. I bring greetings from balmy San Francisco
where the Ocean never freezes and we can see Japan
from the Golden Gate Bridge.**

**Realizing that you have taken time from your busy day
to come together , exchange ideas and advance
knowledge and awareness about some of the
challenges and opportunities that face us in the
Omaha world of employment and contracting
decisions, I salute you for your commitment. I come
today to do my best to avoid wasting your time, and in
that endeavor I will confess to certain assumptions.**

**We are told, and choose to assume that You are here
because you care about your community, not just the
part where you live, but all of it, and because you
have a healthy unease, bordering on shame about
how Omaha is experienced so differently by different
sectors of the population.**

**We choose to assume that You are here because you
dare to accept personal responsibility for making a
difference in the opportunity gap between those who**

with reasonable effort can expect fulfillment of their desires and those who can only hope.

We assume that your personal commitment extends to understanding the nature of privilege, and how you might use your privileged roles within the great corporations and institutions that you represent here today to make a difference in the social and economic health of this potentially great city.

If these assumptions about your interest and commitment are close to accurate, please give yourselves a round of applause...now.

I am here to share some thoughts about the theme for today: 3 "I" words: Inclusion, Investment and Inspiration, but first and foremost, I would like to pay my respects to the many individuals who work tirelessly to make Omaha a place where everyone can thrive, and I do not presume to have any better insights about the current situation than Tommy Warren, Michael Maroney or Ernie Chambers, or Ben Gray or or Ola Andersen, or Tommie Wilson, or Marilyn McGary, or Bob Armstrong, or Rev. Leroy Adams, or Kainette Jones or Robbie Glover, or Tonya Williams or Cousins Jean, George or Bobby or son Tony or daughter Andria. I will tell you that Omaha was one of toughest and best activist training grounds for the work that I do in San Francisco, and when people ask me how I keep coming up with creative solutions to Inclusion problems, I just tell them "its an Omaha thing".

So with respect to those who work on the problems in Omaha every day, let's begin talking about the 3 "I" words Inclusion, Investment, and Inspiration, but in what context shall we explore these noble ideals? I am going to suggest to you that the context includes 3 other "I" words: Inequality, Illusion and Intent.

The evidence is in: If we apply Maslow's Hierarchy of needs we find that the top, the zone of self actualization is as white as an Omaha snowstorm and the bottom, the zone of bare survival measured by irregular access to employment, food and shelter is disturbingly black and brown, a condition with suspicious probable causes. Inequality is the context.

How can it be that the African American poverty in Omaha is worse than that in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina? Did we have a Hurricane in Omaha? Did the Missouri river overflow and wipe out North Omaha? Or was it just a steady, constant, persistent political and economic process that rendered Omaha as a tale of two cities – Rich Omaha and Poor Omaha.

Why is it that black children in Omaha suffer poverty at a rate higher than in any other city in the United States of America, and the black-white income gap is greater than in any other city except Minneapolis.

Why are the school dropout rates and the rates of sexually transmitted disease so high in this would- be-so-great city?

Unlike New Orleans, it was not a force of Nature, but a well planned, insidious and efficiently executed mission to deprive a community of viability, security and hope, so that once devoid of the energy to resist, would succumb to despair and the opportunism of economic exploitation. If this was a TV Program it would be called America's Least Wanted and Omaha would be the star. N-O, no inclusion, no investment, no inspiration.

As a former Omaha City Planner, Administrator and Community Organizer with GOCA, and administrator with Omaha Housing Authority, administrator with the

Omaha Human relations Department, Coordinator of Police Community Relations, administrator with the University of Nebraska Medical Center, I, like many of you, have witnessed in Omaha first hand the class-based politics of zoning laws, the manipulative influence of money on the urban master plan, the adverse social engineering of public housing policy that concentrated poverty, depression, post traumatic community stress disorders, the behavior of police, discriminatory redlining by banks, real estate restrictive covenants, destructive interstate highway design, school board neglect, westward relocation of employment opportunities, indifferent public transportation policies, and the cumulative effects of chronic racial micro-aggressions on the job and in the marketplace all working together in machine like precision to strangle Black Omaha, and then to employ high-minded rhetoric to justify the eventual gentrification of the community, with cheapened land as the center of attraction. It took intentional political and economic will to pull this off. If this bothers you, I am on your side.

In the famous words of a Major involved in the war crime in the village of Ben Tre during the American war in Vietnam, "We had to destroy the village in order to save it". The obvious question was..."to save it for whom?" The 50 year war on North Omaha can be summed up the same way..."we had to destroy it in order to save it". Mission Accomplished.

One of the seminal events in the initial assault on North Omaha was the severing of the vibrant 16th Street corridor by allowing the Hilton Hotel (now Doubletree) to be built as a barrier, a great wall with its ugly backside to North Omaha. Big money and big arrogance wounded both North Omaha and the City's master plan forever.

We also knew 40 years ago that Omaha's westward growth through annexation would reach a limit and require balance, a look in the rear-view mirror back to the east, back toward downtown, back toward the river, back toward North Omaha. The powerful influences controlling the City Planning process knew this. Some of their fingerprints are at the scene of the crime.

When the federal open housing laws finally gave some protection and incentive to people of color who aspired to suburban life, the practice of Redlining, the continued discriminatory bank lending practices in North Omaha made that movement west the only attractive option for middle class African Americans seeking modern housing near the new centers of retail, education and employment. The lenders knew that by gradually permitting, even supporting open housing for the financially able in west Omaha, while simultaneously squeezing the life from North Omaha, both the outward dispersal of mobile black wealth and the inward concentration of immobile poverty in North Omaha would increase, and in the words of Diane Myers, a very wise former Omaha activist, North Omaha would become a giant social services zone.

This conscious squeeze play created a kind of Gaza Strip, a Reservation of the left-behind, creating guaranteed employment for social workers and the police. "We had to destroy North Omaha in order to save it." This massive effort in cultural cleansing was chilling in its effectiveness. Let's all whisper under our breath..."I didn't do it, don't blame me!"

Clearly we cannot speak of inclusion, investment and inspiration today without speaking of power and intentions of the privileged. Those who hold power

and privilege would demand that we look at the half-full glass, at the things that give us pride, the fame of Omaha. They will remind us of Roger and Gale Sayers, Bob Gibson and Bob Boozer, Mildred Brown and Brenda Council, Malcolm X , Kathy Hughes, and Preston Love, and Rowena Moore, Rodney Wead and Whitney Young and John Beasley, Luigi Waites, and Ernie Chambers. They will point to the fame of North Omaha, but the fame cannot erase the shame or the blame. The conditions of North Omaha were not caused by social workers or the police or a hurricane, but by the applied consciousness of wealthy white power in Omaha, who now join the inclusion effort with a some welcome, albeit token, scholarships leading to some unremarkable job opportunities, but with no commitment to change the root causes of the problem. Shame.

The brilliance of this dominating collective corporate consciousness is highlighted by the ability of these same folks, acting through corporations and institutions, to tacitly tolerate the inclusion of just enough hyper-qualified African Americans and other people of color to provide highly visible but superficial imagery of inclusion. This tokenism provides cover for what I call the Illusion of Inclusion. The illusion of inclusion is acceptable to some of us who have no problem eating every day or taking a luxury cruise, and keeps too many of us comfortably satisfied in the discussion of how far we have come with no real incentive to care about how far we need to go or how long it will take. Tokenism is the clever antidote for otherwise justifiable outrage. If this troubles you, I am on your side.

In his book "When Affirmative Action Was White" author Ira Katznelson, Professor of Political Science and History at Columbia University reviews the

century and more of consistent government and corporate accommodation with racism that, following slavery, generally projected whites toward the great U.S. middle class and blacks toward continuous discrimination and limited opportunity. Professor Katznelson says: "There is something of a hierarchy. Individual private acts of prejudice and discrimination count for less than more pervasive institutional ones. Injuries dealt by government count for more than private patterns of institutional racism. The programs (of combined institutional, corporate and government action) did far more than cost people money or opportunity. They also projected humiliation, while stunting human imagination and possibility."

The evidence indicates that corporations and institutions in Omaha have willingly participated in Affirmative Action for Whites, by decisions made in the board room, the country club, the golf course, and the shower. Every Grandma in North Omaha knows the story of lost hope, and Grandma tells.

Herein we find the logic of cynicism, lack of trust, suspicion, ambivalence, and the proverbial chip-on-the-shoulder that may come face to face with the corporate workplace . Adding insult to inequality, some corporations have perfected the practice of going outside Omaha to find what pitifully little diversity exists in your professional ranks, avoiding instead of helping develop local talent. The pressing question for caring corporations is: How do you engage this view of reality when all you want is to attract some qualified diverse applicants to work in your organizational culture? You want to make a difference, but this corporate credibility thing is so frustrating isn't it. Can you repeat after me...it's not my fault???

North Omaha is experiencing a kind of dynamic instability now, due to the crowd of interested parties, influence vendors, and money makers. The good news. The Urban League is serious. The 100 Black Men are not waiting for City Hall. The Building Bright Futures program is adding value. The Omaha Economic Development Corporation has been working on this for 30 years. The Mutual of Omaha and Blue Cross/Blue Shield Customer service training programs are apparently off to a good but pitifully modest start. Interstate Printing and Lozier Corporations remain committed to the North Omaha economy. First National Bank and Wells Fargo are investing in the community, as lenders. So why isn't all this action eliminating more of the poverty in North Omaha? One hypothesis is that most large employers in Omaha see African Americans as service workers and not managers, with the exception of a Human Resource professional here and there. An implicit bias against large numbers of white workers being supervised by a black manager is a problem of corporate culture that must be addressed openly and candidly.

We arrive then at the topic of organizational cultural competence, intelligence and humility, which we find increasingly necessary in the current economic environment. Allow me to give you a few facts about the organization for which I have been privileged to work and helped to change over the last 21 years. Please see if you find any similarities with your organization's impact on the local community.

The University of California San Francisco is one of 10 campuses in the UC system and the only campus dedicated solely to health sciences. Our motto is "Advancing Health Worldwide" and we have research activities all over the planet. We have 3000 students in 4 professional schools (Dentistry, Nursing, Medicine

and Pharmacy, and the graduate division). Soon we will have a school of Global Health. We are engaged in the business of health care.

As a business, we are the 2nd largest employer in San Francisco with 20,000 employees: 64% women, 0.4% Native American, 6.5% African American, 10.3% Hispanic, 34% Asian, 48.7% Caucasian. With a 2B budget we drive the local economy more than any other employer. We are training world class scientists and clinicians. We have a temporary work program that has resulted in career ladder employment for over 45% of the temporary workers, and is the greatest single pipeline for under-represented minorities. In greater San Francisco 112 languages are spoken with the most common being English, Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Russian, and Vietnamese. We provide about 100 interpretations per day in our hospitals.

Our main campus is in mid city near the famous Golden Gate Park. We are building out a 45 acre brand new campus across town in the southeast quarter between the new ball park and abutting the Bayview/ Hunters Point area, mostly African American and very poor, plagued by toxic waste from an abandoned U.S. naval base, with chronic asthma, chronic unemployment, chronic educational neglect, gangs and crime, all the symptoms of associated traumatic stress disorder affecting whole neighborhoods, balanced by strong civic organizations and religious communities and courageous but struggling small businesses. Does this fit a familiar pattern? Omaha. .. new ball park, Creighton, North Omaha...get the picture? On that new campus we will soon break ground for a 1.7 B hospital complex.

Our new Chancellor, Susan Desmond - Hellmann is an MD who with her husband spent some time in central Africa on health missions and by her own words came to see the reality of white privilege in a global context. Because of her experience as the "minority" in a far away black culture, her perception is no longer simply Euro-American but somewhat more intelligent and humble. To suggest that every CEO go spend time in central Africa or other locations is tempting but impractical. How many would like to send your CEO to Africa...with no return ticket? Siberia? (Maybe a day in Little Africa – 24th Street...on foot...at night...alone...when the police are not around...no cell phone). Leaders must find the insight to understand that equal opportunity is more than the creation of a diverse workforce. It is also about removing barriers and biases against diverse experiences and backgrounds in a climate that can help the individual and the organization succeed. Listening is critical.

Starting with an unambiguous message from the top, we pursue inclusion through a strong affirmative action and diversity program and creative outreach, a temporary work portal to careers, and intern programs. We use technology to constantly monitor and measure both efforts and results. We invest in university-community partnerships, including sending our professors and students into the failing local public schools to strengthen the access to world class science for underserved school children. Our Pharmacy students and faculty have launched the Science Squad and they are treated like rock stars by the children in these science-starved schools. After a recent session learning to make electricity from vegetables, one 4th grader asked the last question of the day. It was not about the experiment. The question from this child of an under-performing school, under-privileged family situation, in

contradiction of the low expectations upon her, raised her hand and asked ..."how do I become a scientist?" How does she become a scientist when her future is at the mercy of those who only see her potential through, what George W. Bush joined in calling "the soft bigotry of low expectations". Low expectations inform the decisions about who fits. Are we guilty?

At UCSF for the last 16 years in our building construction and remodeling projects we require our prime contractors and subcontractors to agree to bidding terms that include a Memorandum of Understanding with community-based job preparation agencies that supply cleared and certified trade workers and apprentices through the union halls to our building program. By reviewing certified payrolls we monitor the contractors' utilization of workers by zip code. Proposition 209 has no effect.

We INCLUDE by finding opportunities to increase our purchasing of goods and services from neighborhood businesses, and reap the rewards of better service in many cases. For example, a small African American owned electric company with one truck is now removing and replacing dead florescent light bulbs at our new campus. He has to travel about a mile and provides same day service. The big company we used before was far away and had to schedule the service for several weeks ahead. Both used the same product.

As corporate Omaha decided 20 years ago to dress up the entrance to the city for visitors and business travelers, Airport to Downtown, private money built an arena and convention center (\$87 Million). The baseball stadium will be over \$40Million in private money. You built a new performing arts center downtown with private money (\$90Million), poured over a billion dollars of private investment into a

revitalized downtown. Mutual of Omaha committed \$350 Million on its midtown development, and of course 10s of millions on an exclusive gated community... for animals (Henry Doorly Zoo). Meanwhile for the Inclusion effort here in Omaha at 90th & Dodge we have the Great Plains Minority Supplier Development Council with membership from these same rich corporations. In their own newsletter they report: "Given that minorities represent 26% of the population, but MBEs represent 11% of all business people, 6% of gross receipts and only 3% to 4% of corporate purchases, much more can be done"...not will be done...can be done. Lukewarm, no urgency, no hurry. GPMSDC knows the successful psychology of tokenism and is counting on us to be satisfied. Shame.

We INSPIRE by making our diversity values and expectations clear at new employee orientation and new student orientation, and by publicly recognizing best practices in affirmative action and diversity through rigorous evaluation of departments and campus leaders.

Our year-round calendar of diversity events not only entertains and educates, but improves and normalizes the inclusive corporate culture.

The point of providing these examples is to argue for a comprehensive approach to the problem, and to suggest that large institutions and corporations can both individually and collectively coordinate efforts to address the full web of solutions. Imbedded in this effort must be an honest search for understanding of the perspectives of those we pretend to include. Ask those you are trying to help.

This brings us to the problem of misplaced intentions due to ignorance of the effects of dominant culture on

the process of inclusion. On the one hand we have the organizational cultures that you represent here today, the attitudes, communication styles, external references, and projections of image that coincide with an established set of norms. On the other hand we have the culture, perceptions, world views, expectations, and experiences that create norms for individuals. To the extent that the organizational and individual cultures diverge we may have a narrow bandwidth problem, an organizational culture that barely tolerates diversity.

Part of the solution is often referred to as Cultural competence, but to avoid the arrogance of claiming competence, we also embrace the concept of cultural intelligence which incorporates the ability to grow and improve knowledge.

How do we develop cultural humility and intelligence as business practices?

FIRST INVEST IN SELF ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

I trust that we all understand that inequality can occur at any phase in the employment cycle. Business must periodically review each aspect of the cycle through multicultural lenses to attempt to remove barriers to equal opportunity that seem unbiased on the surface, but may have discriminatory consequences.

You have all been exposed to conversations about who is or is not a good "fit". We help some people fit who don't and reject others who could. We fit the job to those like us and demand that others fit to the job. Close your eyes and visualize CEO, CIO, CFO and then visualize Call Center, Security Guard, Receptionist.

When we imagine a typical corporation, we too often comfortably envision Caucasians as naturally in charge and people of color as naturally in service. Research tells us that implicit bias will adversely affect the meaning of "fit" and the selection process for middle and upper level jobs.

INVEST in the workgroup. Has the team been prepared to embrace each unique new member? Listen to Human Resource expert Susan Heathfield, "Finally, team members understand that 20% of the problems they will experience as a team will fall within the context of the task or mission the team is assigned to accomplish. The other 80% of the problems will relate to their team culture and the processes team members establish and commit to for interacting."

Thus the idea of "fit" is not in the ability of newcomers to perform technical tasks, but in the interactive relationships in which support, confidence, trust, belonging, mutual responsibility, shared successes, and shared failures, occur with the issues of mutual respect and conflict management at the core. You all have heard it..."we just don't think she will fit". In her book "The Loudest Duck" Laura Liswood complains that "We hire for difference and fire because they are not the same". This is the illusion of inclusion.

Melanie Joy Douglas a Canadian organizational consultant describes cultural intelligence as a prerequisite to the process of INCLUSION. She States: Signs of one's culture appear every day -- in social norms, customs, symbols, humour, expectations, beliefs, communication styles, decision-making styles, attitudes toward conflict, approaches

to completing tasks, attitudes toward disclosure, and approaches to knowing.”

Cultural intelligence, then, is the ability to grow on a continual basis through understanding and learning of other cultures, and to deal successfully with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Well designed and delivered Diversity Training can help unpack the baggage.

INCLUDE: Increasingly employees have a primary language other than English. I have a staff of 12. Eight (8) were born in other countries, and only one was born in California. We speak 7 languages. The 2 most common assumptions by supervisors who focus on language– talking about me – not doing business. Our reply is ...”what makes you think you are that important? There are employees talking about you in English as well. They just do it in the parking lot. We have shown that workers who navigate in and out of their native language and English with each other, at the end of the day make fewer errors and complete more tasks because they use the language that is clear for the situation. We call it code switching, and it can add to improved performance.

INCLUDE AND INSPIRE Organizations must train mentors (supervisors and managers) to helping the newcomer. How does your organization feel to new hires from different communities? Are they confused? I have friends in San Francisco who watch television and think that if they came to work for Mutual of Omaha, they could watch the zoo animals from the office window. Confused.

We have an older professional trainee who came from California gang surroundings, the first in her family to

go to college, pursuing a goal to become a future faculty member. She was struggling, uneasy, self doubting ...could not be made to feel comfortable or successful...family accusing her of abandoning their traditions...did not fit. The faculty mentor could not get through and contacted me for help.

By first listening to her story we were able to discover a pathway. Instead of the unfamiliar corporate speech about how to "fit in" to the institution, we first asked how gangs in her neighborhood recruited and retained new members. The answer was as structured as it was chilling.

Then, translating from her familiarity with high-risk, complex gang rituals we employed a parallel vocabulary, by code-switching, to explain the equivalent rituals of belonging to and succeeding in the university. Once she was able to see that most organizations are at their essence merely sophisticated gangs she gained access to survival tools, has been very successful, and will serve her community well. Think territory, markets, protectionism, monopolies, and you're talking gang talk. Corporations do not admit to gang banging, so please don't go back to work saying I suggested you talk gangster-rap to the new African American employees!!!

INVEST AND INSPIRE Here is the Diversity Paradox that you must invest in solving. The more diversity you have, the greater the potential for tension and conflict. I can hear someone now saying ...who needs that??? Therefore you must invest in culturally sensitive Conflict Prevention and Management – President Obama did it with Beer at the white house for Professor Gates and Officer Crowley. Remember 80% of team work is the interpersonal element...with all the baggage that we each bring.

Corporations should INVEST in strong internal Discrimination complaint investigation functions which must be confidential and independent of HR and Employee Relations. A credible internal complaint management function can help an organization deal with conflicts and reinforce the values of inclusion. My office has 60-70 discrimination claims open at any given time. Mediation or other no-fault disposition resolves 95% of both internal and external cases. Culturally intelligent communication is the key..

INVEST/ INSPIRE Develop Inclusion measurement protocols at the profit center level and publish your inclusion data. Reward Best Practices and recognize Corporate Champions of Diversity. Make sure that diversity achievements are a core factor in performance evaluations and succession planning.

INVEST in supporting community business development. Every corporation has a purchasing program that could sustain suppliers from North Omaha, including new start-ups, with long-term purchasing agreements. Remember the fluorescent bulb supplier with one truck and same day service.

Not one more economic development study should be done to fatten the bank accounts of consultants, whether from Omaha or from New York City. For the \$750,000 that the Chamber is investing in the newest so-called-North Omaha development plan, 25 new business startups could be created.

All development projects permitted in the North Omaha Development program should have community based apprentice training and hiring goals as part of a Memorandum of Understanding. Measure 424 has no

effect on zip-code based local hiring programs. Therefore we should create a Community Construction Workforce Program that interfaces with the building contract awards. There should be a direct correlation between new development and new skills, between those who built the house and those who will move in, and those who will manage developments. African American Omaha must also be inclusive with regard to the 10,000 Sudanese, Somali and other African immigrants in our village.

INVEST. While we are at it, not one more work-live, or live-only development should be permitted unless solar energy is part of the solution. We are supposedly resurrecting a distressed community where paying utility bills or buying food and medicine are often a painful trade-off. North Omaha must benefit from a bigger vision despite predictable resistance from the Metropolitan Utilities District and Omaha Public Power District. Correct me if I am wrong, but have you noticed that not one African American sits on the board or management team of either MUD or OPPD?

Solar energy is perfect for creating North Omaha entrepreneurs, creates clean green jobs, earns tax credits, and saves utility costs over time. The Green Omaha Coalition should be asked to be a partner in all development plans affecting North Omaha. Alternative energy is part of the national environmental justice movement.

INCLUDE Real Community outreach partnerships in your business. Your qualified employees can become like the Science Squad and go into the failing schools to provide fresh tutoring, culturally intelligent mentoring, career story telling. Open up your corporation to more work /study opportunities. Adopt a failing school with a Memorandum of Understanding,

outlining mutual expectations, and tie your corporate reputation to the progress that they make in providing quality education and reducing failure and drop-out rates. There is a beautiful statue of musicians in a plaza on 24th near Lake St. Somewhere on 24th we need a beautiful, inspirational statue of an adult reading a book to a child right next to that book store that someone will open, and that you will support.

There should be a massive initiative to expand music education in the community. It is well established that musical training has a positive impact on reading and math skills. Ask Michael Dryver of Omaha Music School. The ancient game of Chess should be added to the math, life skills, and social studies curricula in the elementary schools and after-school programs in community centers. In Harlem New York inner-city youth are learning strategic thinking, decision making, fair and non-violent competition. Include Chess and music education in juvenile intervention programs. Your corporations can help sponsor a North Omaha Invitational region-wide chess tournament.

The Urban League should review the recent Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan for January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2011. Of 170 respondents to their survey, not one youth was involved and only 3 parents participated. That means that 98.2 % of the input for the study came from service providers, and court, education, law enforcement, and other government representatives. Where is the outreach to youth?

There is an important billboard campaign in San Francisco. The image is a stark black and white photo of an automatic handgun. The caption reads: "This gun is not the most dangerous thing on the streets of

San Francisco. The most dangerous thing is lack of opportunity.” It is an ad for the California Conservation Corp, a state agency which provides employment and training for youth ages 18-23. Somebody go ask the youth you have locked up what they need to turn their lives around.

INSPIRE Business executives should create a crime reduction business plan based in part on employment and school management accountability to integrate with community policing strategies in reducing crime, especially gun violence in Little Africa. The World Herald should do more stories like the November 9th article on the Upward Bound program to inspire others to avoid violence. The issue is simple: Dead Children do not do well in school.

INVEST in activities that bring respect to North Omaha, specifically 24th Street. Everyone responsible should be ashamed to have eliminated the 24th Street option for this year’s Native Omaha Parade, based on alleged safety concerns. When celebrations occur in other parts of Omaha, the Police are there as needed. Black people always show up at the Santa Lucia Festival to support the Italian culture. Little Africa deserves just as much respect as Little Italy and North Omaha has always supported police benefits. We are also part of that problem when we take our North Omaha memorial celebrations to Iowa. Every time we choose to reinforce the negative, we add to the internalized self hate, and external fear of our community. Your organizations, the churches, and remaining businesses can do more to sponsor Resurrection on 24th Street and bring back some of the lost community cohesion and pride.

INVEST Light rail, streetcar, and shuttle routes should be developed and the Corporations and Urban League should harass and embarrass the city into starting construction. It is about jobs. Omaha is on its 4th feasibility study for light rail since 2003, paying the same consultants to come to the same conclusions, as they laugh all the way to the bank. We already know that the first streetcar tracks are planned to be installed in Little Italy due to proximity to the ballpark and the zoo. We know that 24th Street once had the city's longest stretch of streetcar tracks that extended uninterrupted from far North to Far South. At its peak until 1955, Omaha had the largest per-capita streetcar system in the nation. Why is not 24th Street rail transit given priority in all the studies? The 2 routes most mentioned are from Downtown to the south and from Downtown to the west. Downtown to the north is missing or given last priority. Little Africa needs effective public transportation and jobs. Together with the Urban League, your organizations should immediately affiliate with ProRail Nebraska.com, and Omaha Streetcar.com to gain support.

INVEST in alternative food solutions. Poverty demands it. North Omaha should become a model in the urban garden movement which has been inspired by the First Lady. Invite Michelle Obama to town to kick it off. She has been to San Francisco. Vacant lots and portions of school yards have been converted to vegetable gardens for student participation. The garden is a horticulture lab and children are amazed to learn where food actually comes from, and how you can beat the supermarket prices.

There must be Farmers markets in the core area of North Omaha. ConAgra touts its healthy food products and could easily fund the startup for a Farmer's Market, perhaps in conjunction with Drew

Clinic? (what better place to reinforce healthy eating?) Con Agra, are you here?

INVEST INSPIRE INCLUDE. What a complex trio of challenges. I hope in the insufficient time available we have offered some suggestions that may stimulate further exploration. If North Omaha is a suffering village we must now save it by following the wisdom of the survivors, not the generals who ordered its destruction. The lack of massive outrage in greater Omaha is troubling, because it suggests a state of numbness and accommodation that borders on complicity in the neglect. How can any Omahan, black, brown or white, be proud of a city that leads most of the nation in black poverty? Can you say Shame?

The Mutual of Omaha and Blue Cross/Blue Shield Customer service training programs produce low end service jobs. How inclusive are the management ranks? Interstate Printing and Lozier Corporations produce the production and manufacturing jobs necessary for their industries. I wonder if they are unionized. First National Bank and Wells Fargo are investing in the community, as lenders, but what about as employers above the teller level? We pat ourselves on the back for providing college scholarships and then turn our backs to those young graduates who want to aspire to the management ranks in Omaha corporations. Why would you question them if they chose to move to Kansas City, or New Orleans?

Why is there no Memorandum of Understanding between the scholarship providers and the job providers? Why do you recruit at Historically Black colleges and avoid historically black students right

here? Is it because you want to only invest in black employees who have no historic connection with North Omaha, and thus make easier the gradual gentrification? Here is the tale of two airliners: one airplane is arriving at Eppley Airport with new African American corporate recruits from around the country, and another airplane is departing with native North Omaha graduates leaving Omaha for better opportunities. Air Traffic Control miraculously prevents a collision. While Tommy Warren and the Urban League are doing all they can to convince our students to stay in Nebraska, the corporations give and the corporations take away. Shame.

Contextual intelligence is the key. To the extent that we are open to understanding the history and complexity of the problem, we will be more successful at overcoming the illusion of inclusion and translating coordinated efforts into actually closing the opportunity gap in Omaha.

Like it or not, we are all in the game. There is no way to advance inclusive employment outside of the context of community conditions. We cannot really Include, Invest or Inspire without an aggressive campaign against chronic Inequality, comfortable Illusion and misguided Intent.

This is a conflict worthy of an Omaha victory. Success begins with rigorous, honest self examination, the pursuit of cultural intelligence, and respectful, inclusive engagement with a people-first vision of North Omaha and other similarly alienated communities. As the saying goes, "if it is for us, without us, then it is not about us." I am in awe of my people in Omaha who just will not give up. In every conversation I hear folks saying "ENOUGH!" I hear

Michael Maroney saying with pride that we (black people) are working together like never before! I

I did not offer much in the way of humor or entertainment, or much insight that you have not considered already, but if I added to your sense of urgency about the problem, then that is my contribution, and I appreciate your kind attention. Many of us who are from the Omaha Diaspora, living and thriving all over the planet, still occasionally speak fondly of Omaha. I also have no problem telling the story of Rich Omaha and Poor Omaha and the shame that corporate Omaha bears. Corporations run Omaha, not mayors, or City Councils, or School Boards or the State Legislature...Corporations.

**Fat Omaha Corporations own the shameful reputation of Rich Omaha and Poor Omaha. Corporations decide, and the politicians abide. They may be immune to criticism. That must change. To North Omahans here today, I know one thing, because I am from you. As a community force, you may be small but you are never outnumbered. You taught me how to make a difference. To everyone, North, South, East, and West, your attendance and attention today deserve our respect, and I know you will continue work on lasting solutions by following the community's leadership. I will help in any way I can. Perhaps we will meet again.
Best wishes and thank you.**