



# Western Region

February 2010 Edition



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## Director's Corner

Robert M. Tibi

NWS Western Region Director

As we celebrate February as Black History month, I ask that we each take time to reflect upon our country's civil rights history. While our accomplishments are impressive, there is still work to do. Lynn Swann, a former wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers once said, "I would like to ask people to celebrate the similarities and not focus on the differences between people of color and not of color."

We are similar on the inside, but at times, we let our appearances on the outside divide us.

NOAA's National Weather Service and Western Region remains committed to fostering an inclusive environment and promoting the best people and ideas regardless of color, race, or sexual orientation.

Please join me in my appreciation for all African-American employees within NOAA's National Weather Service. Together, we continue to successfully work towards NOAA's National Weather Service mission to save lives and property and enhance the Nation's economy!



NWS Western Region Director Robert Tibi

## SAIGE: A Society For American Indian Government Employees

Dan Valle

Native American Special Emphasis Program Manager

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

SAIGE, Society of American Indian Government Employees, is a national non-profit organization that serves the needs of American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) government employees. It's mission is to promote the recruitment, hiring, retention, development, advancement and equitable treatment of AI/AN in the government workforce. This organization provides a forum on the issues, opportunities and challenges of American Indian tribes and the government work community. They assist in identifying issues and coordinating projects that affect American Indian and Alaska Native government employees.

SAIGE is not limited to those of AI/AN ancestry, it is open to all federal, state, tribal, and municipal employees. To become a part of SAIGE, one must submit an application and pay the membership fee. More information can be obtained through the following website: [www.saige.org](http://www.saige.org)

## There were 15,000 of them and 100 came back

Susan Joliff

Diversity Focal Point

WFO Boise, Idaho

Holocaust Remembrance Day is Sunday, April 11. As I began to think about this, I gravitated to my local bookstore where I found a wonderful book entitled: "I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp 1942-1944."

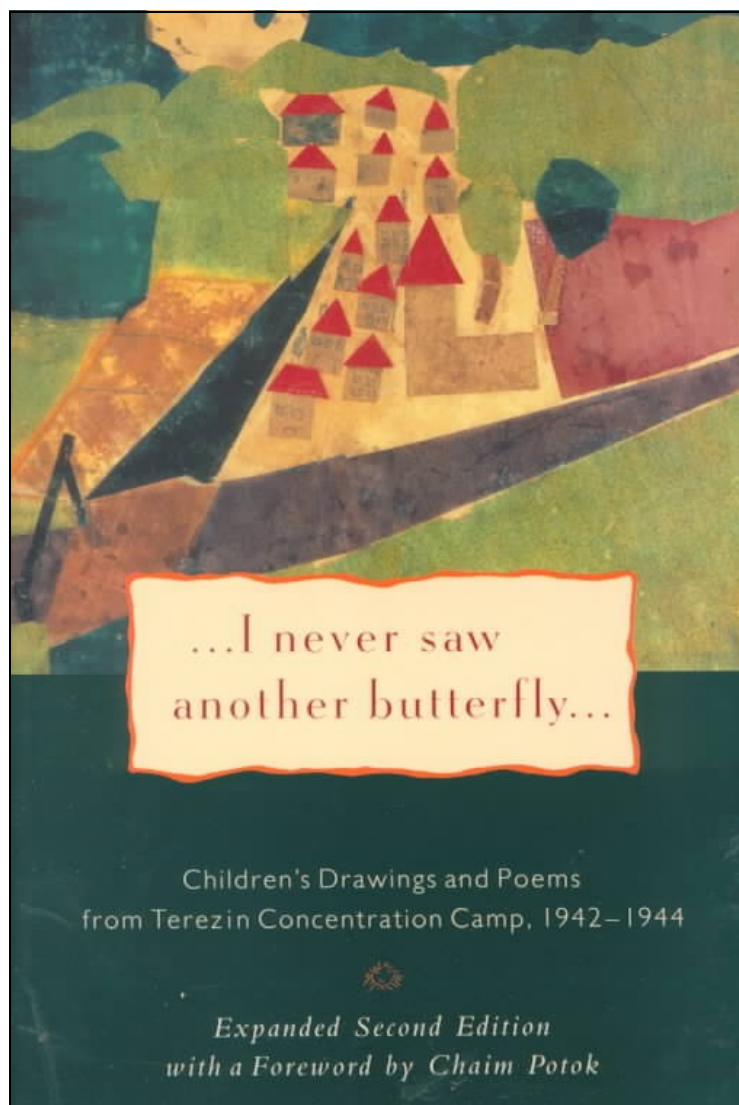
The book contains artwork and poetry from the children who were deported to Czechoslovakia between 1942 and 1944. A total of 15,000 children under the age of fifteen passed through this ghetto and less than 100 survived. The book depicts scenes from their lives; such as, the transport trains to the death camps, the guards with clubs, the barracks in which they slept, the hunger, the humiliation and their fear. They also seem to have the ability, as children often do, to see beyond the pain, beyond the ugliness and beyond the suffering. The art and poetry goes beyond the walls of their confines. It speaks of the beauty of the landscape and details their hopes and dreams. You can literally "hear" these children's voices as you reflect upon their words and their artwork.

When I finished the book, I thought it was important for us at the office to take the time to honor these "little ones" and remember this tragic moment in our human history. So, I created an exhibition of their artwork and poetry on a large bulletin board in our operations area. I also included small placards by each drawing and poem with the child's name and age, when they were deported, when they were sent to the death camps in the East and if they survived or not. I gave a brief introduction and unveiled the bulletin board at one of our morning briefings and asked everyone to stop by over the next week to view and reflect upon the exhibition.

The poems evoked a childhood memory for one of our staff members. He shared that his elementary school choir teacher had set some of these poems to music and he sang them as a child. Some staff members added various news articles to the bulletin board. These illustrated many other individuals who committed selfless and courageous acts in order to save lives of Jewish children during WWII. These poignant images and simple yet powerful words of these children immortalize shameful and tragic events during one of humanity's darkest moments.

May we never forget...

If anyone is interested in using these materials and even expanding upon them, please call me at (208-334-9860) and this can become a traveling exhibition.



## A Champion of Human Rights

Carol Ciliberti

Hispanic Special Emphasis Program Manager

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

Since the 1970s, the month of June has been set aside to honor the contributions of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender communities to our society. These diverse groups have traditionally been linked together using the acronym LGBT. While it may seem odd to combine such disparate groups into a single entity, the reason for doing so is based on the need to provide support and resources to people who are often subject to discrimination. Within the LGBT community, sexual orientation issues are often complicated by differences in race, ethnicity, political affiliation, and religion.

A person who exemplifies the complex nature of diversity is John Duran, a human rights activist, and former mayor and long-time city councilmember of West Hollywood, California. In his own words, Duran is a “three-fer” because he is not only gay, but also Latino and HIV positive. More importantly, Duran is a strong champion of equal rights and diversity, having worked to defend human rights throughout his career. Born and raised in the Los Angeles area, Duran earned a Juris Doctorate degree from Western State University in Orange County, and currently leads one of Southern California’s most prominent law firms on Gay and Lesbian rights and AIDS law.

In 2008 Duran was the introductory speaker for a panel discussion on LGBT politics. The taped version is available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eocyO69IX4>.

Duran spoke at length in support of diversity and human rights issues, and the history of the LGBT equality movement in the United States. He began by urging his audience to look for similarities when trying to understand a group of people, pointing out that focusing on differences works toward alienation rather than helping to create understanding. For example, during the 1970’s the gay



*Barry Dane, John Duran and Rita C. Gonzalez attend the Los Angeles Gay Pride Mayor's Reception at the Factory on June 4, 2008 in West Hollywood, California*

community in southern California did not include any L, T or B members and in fact excluded them, along with excluding racial minorities such as blacks and Latinos. However, in the face of discriminatory legislation it became important for these groups to work together in order to attain rights and equality. Duran described his part in the fight against the Briggs initiative, which sought to ban gay and lesbian school teachers from the

state of California.

Eventually a California state law was introduced to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace and a number of other states, including the District of Columbia, have followed suit. At the federal level, while there is no law that prohibits this type of discrimination in private employment, an executive order specifically outlaws discrimination based on sexual orientation in the federal government. This legislation is important because historically, many LGBT people have felt the need to hide their sexual orientation and, in effect, lead double lives. Duran mentioned that this type of severe oppression has been a key factor in HIV transmission in Latino communities of California: men who have wives also have boyfriends on the side and HIV is transmitted amongst both the men and women involved. He spoke of the terrible waste of a person's life when they must hide their true nature and live a dual identity.

The LGBT community, Duran noted, is a coalition of many different cultures and backgrounds, brought loosely together by necessity into a group that doesn't always fit well together. The group still feels plenty of friction today: there is the gender divide, along with racial and cultural differences. But, according to Duran, the fact that LGBT comes in all colors, all religions and all classes produces the ability to cross lines. He personally has experienced anti-gay sentiments in the Latino community of East L.A. and fielded racial slurs in West Hollywood. Yet experiencing commonality and discrimination on both sides helps him to bridge the gaps. This, he says, is essential in building our communities and our society: the ability to bridge difficult issues and look for things we share, leaving differences behind.



As of 2002, the NWS workforce included at least 4% self-identified gay, lesbian and bi-sexual employees, and in 2009 this number may well have increased. It is an important goal that every employee can live their life openly within the National Weather Service, no matter their sexual orientation, gender, race, class, or religion. Through our diversity program we acknowledge that everyone has an important contribution to make. As individuals, we must strive to find commonalities rather than focus on differences, work to bridge gaps in communication and steadfastly promote respect, tolerance and understanding. This is a path upon which we can make our great organization even better.

Note: Councilman Duran was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by Equality California in August 2009 for his work on marriage equality in the state of California.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eocyO69IX4>

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## Upcoming Observances

<b>February 1-28:</b>	<b>African American/Black History Month</b>
<b>March 1-31:</b>	<b>Women's History Month</b>
<b>April 4-11:</b>	<b>Holocaust Days of Remembrance</b>
<b>May 1-31:</b>	<b>Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month</b>
<b>August 26:</b>	<b>Women's Equality Day</b>
<b>Sept 15 – Oct 15:</b>	<b>Hispanic Heritage Month</b>
<b>October 1-31:</b>	<b>National Disability Employment Awareness Month</b>
<b>November 1-30:</b>	<b>National American Indian Heritage Month</b>

## Western Region Student Mentoring Program Expands To Arizona

Leslie Wanek

Federal Women's Special Emphasis Program Manager

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

Local university students have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience and career guidance by being paired with meteorologists and hydrologists through their active participation in the WR Student Mentoring Program, formerly WR Women's Mentoring Program. The Program is in its third successful year at WFOs Sacramento and Monterey, under the guidance of Program Co-Leaders and Forecasters Cynthia Palmer and Carolina Walbrun.

The Program has recently expanded to Arizona. Program Co-Leader Leslie Wanek (WR Women's Special Emphasis Program Manager), hosted the first Arizona State University (ASU) kickoff meeting. ASU's President's Professor Dr. Randy Cerveny chaperoned his third-year meteorology students as they visited the WFO for an exciting afternoon of NWS outreach, education, and an introduction to the WR Student Mentoring Program.

**NWS Western Region Diversity Sharepoint Page**

WFO Phoenix mentors Gary Woodall (MIC), Leslie Wanek (Aviation Program Leader), Austin Jamison (Outreach and Spotter Training Coordinator), Paul Iniguez (Climate Program Leader), and Valerie Meyers (Fire Weather Program Leader and IMET) have diverse backgrounds and experiences to share with their mentees and are anticipating a beneficial and rewarding experience this spring. The group will work with several ASU mentees, providing resume and career guidance, assistance with research projects, and pointers for public speaking. Mentors will also encourage and support students as they define their individual career goals and aspirations.

For more information about the WR Student Mentoring Program, the DAC encourages you to check out the Diversity SharePoint page where you will find the WR Student Mentoring Program handbook, a PowerPoint history of the Program, recommended readings and optional training material, and examples of locally defined Program guidelines and applications. Questions about the WR Student Mentoring Program can be directed to any one of the Program Co-Leaders at their noaa.gov email address (Leslie.Wanek@noaa.gov, Cynthia.Palmer@noaa.gov, Carolina.Walbrun@noaa.gov).