



**CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
CITY HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM 2B, 420 N. POKEGAMA AVE.  
DATE: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2016  
TIME: 4:00 P.M.**

4:00 CALL TO ORDER:

CALL OF ROLL:

	Present	Absent
Commissioner Becky LaPlant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commissioner Jackie Dowell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commissioner Mary Jo Wimmer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commissioner Frieda Hall, Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commissioner Doug Learmont	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commissioner Barb Sanderson, Vice Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commissioner Karen Noyce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commissioner Alice Moren	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commissioner John Schirber	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

MEETING PROTOCOL POLICY:

*Please be aware that the Council has adopted a Meeting Protocol Policy which informs attendees of the Council's desire to conduct meetings in an orderly manner which welcomes all civil input from citizens and interested parties. If you are unaware of the policy, copies (orange color) are available in the wall file by the Council entrance.*

SETTING OF REGULAR AGENDA:

This is an opportunity to approve the regular agenda as presented or add/delete an Agenda item by a majority vote of the Commission members present.

PRESENTATION:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:                    January 27, 2015 Regular Meeting

FINANCIALS:

CORRESPONDENCE:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

CIRCLE OF HEALING UPDATE:

DIVERSITY UPDATE:

BIG VIEW UPDATE:

OLD BUSINESS:                                Tracks in the Snow – Committee Report

NEW BUSINESS:                                2016 Blandin Survey Questions  
Wing Huie Art Exhibit  
Indigenous People's Day 2016

REPORTS ON CALLS AND INQUIRIES:

PENDING COMPLAINTS:

OTHER:

ADJOURNMENT:

## CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**CALL TO ORDER:** Pursuant to due notice and call thereof a regular meeting of the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission was held in Conference Room 2B of City Hall, Grand Rapids, Minnesota, on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 at 4:00 p.m.

**CALL OF ROLL:** On a Call of Roll, the following members were present: Commissioners Alice Moren, Frieda Hall, Jackie Dowell, Becky LaPlant, Barb Sanderson, Karen Noyce, and Doug Learmont.

Absent: John Schirber and Mary Jo Wimmer

Visitor: Nancy Sauer

Staff: Michele Palkki, Administrative Assistant

**CALL TO ORDER**                      The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm by chair Hall.

**SETTING AGENDA**                      Nothing to add

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**      January 27, 2016

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER SANDERSON, SECOND BY COMMISSIONER MOREN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 27, 2016.**

**Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

### **FINANCIALS**

A discussion was held regarding the 2015 Indigenous People's Day – We stayed within our 2015-budgeted amount.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

- 2016 Calendars were distributed to the Commissioners
- 2016 Commissioner Contacts were distributed to the Commissioners. A couple of changes was noted and will be corrected.

### **CIRCLE OF HEALING**

Commissioner LaPlant reported that there would be a meeting January 28 for any who wish to attend. The third training session for the Anishinaabe is complete. Commissioner Wimmer attended through Circle of Healing. The evaluations have been favorable. The upcoming sessions still have some room; the link will be emailed to the Commissioners.

### **DIVERSITY UPDATE**

Commissioners Moren, Noyce, and LaPlant attended a webcast regarding Economic Justice Equity. A panel met afterward and is working on some ideas to pass along to the group that is meeting on diversity. This group may bring some ideas to the Commission at a later date. The next meeting is open to the community and is scheduled for Monday, February 8, 2016 at 4:00 pm in Conference Room 2B.

### **BIG VIEW UPDATE**

Commissioner Moren reported that Emily Baxter, We Are Criminals, has moved to South Carolina. They will be working on finding someone who would be able to speak in her place. A 3 part series on Race – The Power of Illusion will be held February 18, 25 and March 1. Slavery by another name is March 15. All are open to the community.

A discussion was held regarding how they could work toward future presentations in the school districts for Martin Luther King. There was no presentation conducted this year.

Commissioner Moren will continue to keep the Commission updated as speakers come together for future Big View Events.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **TRACKS IN THE SNOW**

Commissioner Learmont reported that overall the event has been great. The three events that took place so far have been favorable. There are two remaining sessions on February 3; one at 1:30 at ICC and the conclusion at 6:00 pm at the Library.

Commissioner Learmont thanked all those who have helped in one way or another for this project. It may be repeated in Brainerd and Bemidji. The intent is to educate, inform and conversation.

**ISLAM PHOBIA** – Removed from the agenda.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **2016 SURVEY QUESTIONS**

Commissioner LaPlant reported that she is still working on putting these together and asked that it be kept on the Agenda for February.

Human Rights Commission

January 27, 2016

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### **WING HUIE ART EXHIBIT**

Katie Marshall, from MacRostie, would like to team up with the Human Rights Commission to bring this exhibit to Grand Rapids. She will write the grant on behalf of the City and should we receive funding, the exhibit would be held in the fall at MacRostie.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm

The next meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2016 at 4:00 pm in Conference Room 2B of City Hall.

Respectfully submitted, Michele Palkki, Administrative Assistant

February 18, 2016

Target Leadership Team  
Grand Rapids Store  
2140 South Pokegama Avenue  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Target Leadership Team,  
Stephanie Lundquist, Chief HR Officer  
1000 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, MN 55403

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in "support" of a recent long term (18 years) employee by the name of Aaron Itkonen who was terminated on Christmas Eve...December 24, 2015, from The Target Grand Rapids, MN. I would like to let you know a little about Aaron that you obviously have overlooked. Aaron is a hard worker and a happy worker and has been for 18 years. He does not stand around and "shoot the bull" like some of your other employees do. He exemplifies what a "hard worker" is all about. He is friendly, always remembers the customers, goes out of his way to help, and greet you, and is always working!! He constantly stays busy and is the first one to step up to the plate to assist the customer. That is "excellent customer service." He is not a gossiper, does not complain, nor does he frown at anyone. He is there to work and work only, always with a smile and knows what it means to work and be an employee.

I understand that you had 3 incidents in the past year regarding "alleged" complaints regarding Aaron. I know what the 3 alleged complaints are and were. There are always two sides to every story...always was and always will be. I also worked in HR for 16 years and so I know how "alleged" complaints work. Both sides need to be investigated. I am wondering what your leadership team OR HR Department did to help Aaron understand that sometimes what he says to a member of the public MAY come off the wrong way. You see...Aaron is a special needs adult/vulnerable adult. Aaron has some learning disabilities where he may not quite understand things he says and feels are fine, could be taken "out of context" by others...NOT all! This learning disability has followed him through his life...but again, that never stopped him from wanting to work, to be a good person, and to help everyone around him. What did you do??? You terminated him because of 3 alleged complaints, and on Christmas Eve...wow...what a gift. I know there is never any good time to terminate someone but on Christmas Eve? How do you people sleep at night? Did anyone bother to sit down with him and help him understand? Probably not!! Did HR provide him some training? Probably not!! But yet you terminated an 18 year Target employee.....and on Christmas Eve!!! Aaron is very religious and he took this very very hard. Now every Christmas Eve and for that matter, every day, he is going to think he is a failure when he is NOT. YOU failed him!!! Am surprised YOU...yes YOU, did not have a suicide because of this! I would sure hope you did your due diligence when he terminated him. Could you at least have given him

CC: OK Human Rights Commission

duties to perform while he was going through some training, that took him away from the public for a short time? Did you actually investigate these complaints or was it just easier to "get rid of him"? I also feel strongly that Aaron was picked on and bullied by others who may not understand his needs. So what does Target have in place for bullying???

Aaron has a lot of followers which are true friends. Yes...friends.....people he met while working at Target. Aaron has integrity and integrity is what you want your employees to have. He always, always had a smile on his face. He provided outstanding customer service and in this day and age....that is a blessing...especially with youth today! He remembered everyone who came to Target and he was very helpful to everyone, and he greeted them when they entered your store. I would like to know what his record was for calling in sick or for coming in late or for not showing up for work! I bet it is exemplary!!!

Aaron has friends and followers who are 2,000+ deep who are extremely upset and frustrated by your actions. If there are that many followers in support of Aaron, then HE made an impact on them while he was employed at Target. How many other employees are recognized by the general public? I am not talking about your fundraising efforts where employees participate either! I would surmise that there will be a lot of people who may never shop at Target again!

Target took a hit when YOU compromised checking accounts and debit cards. And you WILL probably take a hit with this one.

This letter is also going to the Department of Human Rights because WE, yes WE feel this is a wrongful termination of a special employees, (how ironic that the term used today "special" is exactly what Aaron is...he is special) and you denied him unemployment benefits...on top of it all.

I copied a "blurb" from your corporate website on team members and what Target "says" they offer to their team/employees: **"We're devoted to helping our team members throughout the world live well and achieve their goals, knowing that their diverse perspectives, talents and commitment make both our company and our communities the best they can be. We support team members' paths to health and well-being through resources, services and benefits programs for eligible team members, spouses, domestic partners and other dependents. And we develop leaders and invest in team members' futures through career development and networking opportunities."** What resources and services did you provide to Aaron? How did you develop Aaron and invest in his future with Target...being he had worked there for 18 years? What career development and opportunities did you provide to Aaron to help him? Someone needs to provide these answers and you need to ask yourself these same questions. Talk is cheap, and so are words on a piece of paper! What did you do about his diverse perspectives...being he is a special needs person??? You FIRED HIM!!!

And to add insult to this termination...you DENIED HIM UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS????? Really??? How cruel are you people?

There are two types of employees! One who is a hard worker, always smiling, and greeting customers, comes to work on time, never complains, never calls in sick or is late, and knows his job; and the other one who has a crappy attitude, never smiles, does not make you feel comfortable, there to collect a pay check, complains, picks on others, calls in sick, comes in late, never shows up. Who am I going to gravitate to in a store or business? The "Aarons"! Where am I going to shop? In a store that treats their customers and their employees the right way!

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

*M. Clayton*

M. Clayton

In Support of Aaron Ultkonen

P.O. Box 603  
*David Sagel*

\*\*\*No need to respond to ME, a very concerned citizen and friend for Aaron. Take care of Aaron and make it right!!!\*\*\*\*

February 20, 2016

**RE: Christmas Eve 2015 Termination of Aaron Itkonen, Cart Attendant and Customer Service Team Member, Target Corporation, Store T904, Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744.**

<https://www.facebook.com/WesupportAaron>



Dear Stephanie Lundquist, Chief Human Resources Officer and Target Corporation:

This letter is written to address a matter of concern I have about a 39-yr. old male, Grand Rapids Area resident, Aaron Itkonen, who was employed at Target T904 for over 17-yrs. – recently terminated on Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015, after two written warnings regarding boundaries/alleged employee misconduct.

Aaron Itkonen attended schools in Nashwauk, Minnesota, graduating in 1996. He was put in special education classes or classes for educational behavior disorders. He was a product of the 80's/early 90's generation when Autism spectrums were not something schools classically tested for. Aaron was eventually mainstreamed into high school and the community. He has not had any recent comprehensive diagnostic testing other than by his words of being told he was "slow and retarded." In spite of being "slow and retarded," Aaron always participated in his small school, earning his letter jacket by being the manager of many sport teams: football, basketball, track, and math team. He also participated as a distance runner in track explaining he felt his best when he could keep running. He has been described as former classmates as



“quirky,” “enthusiastic,” and “genuine.” His difficulties in school dealt with reading, comprehension and not understanding social dynamics. He was the target of bullies at varying times and he was teased often – though he still says that most people were nice to him – he remembers the not-so-nice incidents easily.

More than likely with a current comprehensive diagnosis, Aaron would fall into an Autism spectrum and a syndrome once referred to as “Asperger’s Syndrome.” He may also have other learning and intellectual impairments, even cognitive delays. He states he always struggled with reading and social awkwardness. When Aaron is nervous and he grows uncomfortable, his eyes dart and he does not always make direct eye contact. He states he will also chat with everyone because he was raised with old-fashioned values. He has told me he doesn’t always remember names but he remembers faces.

I came to know Aaron when he was first hired at Target, which was around March 1998. I have developed a friendly customer-oriented relationship with him for nearly two decades, first as a frequent guest shopper of Target T904 and then when Aaron, his wife and family frequented two places of business where I was employed. I was able to surmise that he had some disability issues early on. I also believe the general public was as aware as I was. Aaron is very animated. He wants to befriend everyone. He is not discriminatory – any age, any gender – he will be a friend to all. He also believes that everyone wants him as a friend. Most do, some have not.

Aaron’s weakness is that he does not understand social boundaries, meaning he may not have a filter to make him aware when he has asked a question that could be construed as inappropriate or perhaps, too personal. He remembers everyone and most every detail they have shared with him. This is important to him. He went beyond and above in his duties – this was visible to the general shopping public, as you could see him hustle and bustle – offering help and assistance to every customer. He was always on the run. Front windows were kept sparkly clean as he scrubbed handprints and grime. If you entered a Target bathroom and saw it neat and washed – chances are you would see Aaron’s name as the sign off on the wall board as you exited. He would ask a customer, what they needed and if he could help them out to their car. The Target carts were precisely in order – this was his expertise – no one could do this task as well. His concern was the customer. And he was friendly, open and talkative in the process. Many customers thought this trait was awesome. A few thought it was odd. More than likely those few did not understand his behaviors and that he had a learning and/or neurobiological disorder.

Aaron soon became the “face” of Target in Grand Rapids. You could ask most residents to name a Target employee and people would say “Aaron” or “the cart man,” a funny take off from the South Park satire. At the Grand Rapids Target, faces came and went - but with certainty there was Aaron, smiling, always awaiting every daily guest with dedication to his

work and our community. He might ask a person for a phone number. He might invite a person to his home. He invited lots of shoppers to his wedding reception – he was so excited about his marriage. He would share a funny story or a silly joke or two; mostly he just wanted to know how you were. It was important to him. Aaron is an “includer” – he does not want to leave anyone out.

Aaron is a deeply religious man, a devout Catholic who was an altar boy and is involved with Knights of Columbus. Aaron earned the top position of Eagle Scout and he has achieved different honors including a prestigious honor from the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce for his outstanding service to the public. Aaron also works part-time for Cub Foods in Grand Rapids bagging groceries. While employed with Target he continually offered to work for additional Target events like Grandma’s Marathon, The American Cancer Society’s Relay of Life, Meals on Wheels, annual Highway cleanups and he most always promoted Target’s climb back from the snafu of the great credit hack by encouraging guests to get their red cards.

Aaron was raised by his loving parents to be community-driven, to work hard and not let your disability define you. He has one brother who also works in retail. Aaron was taught it was acceptable to hug a friend and care for everyone. His father told him: “Go forward and be the best person you can be.” Aaron met and married an area girl who has the diagnosis of MMH – Mild Mentally Handicapped. She is unable to work and Aaron is the sole provider of their household.

This leads me to my concern over his termination. It is my understanding that Target Corporation has undergone many changes and certainly at our local store, it appears in more recent years that the turnover is rapid.

A couple of months ago two women (I do not have their names – I was contacted by several people who saw the posts) went on Facebook social media and referred to Aaron as a “creepy” and a “freak.” I have been told that people came to his defense and told the “mean girls” that he has disabilities and would never have any intent of harm.

See below for one person who provided some information:

[Sarah Marie Gassert to We Support Aaron Itkonen - Best Customer Service Agent in Grand Rapids.](#)

February 14 at 7:48am

“I’m wondering why he got let go.... I’m hoping it’s not because if a few comments I read a couple months back from a few snotty women who mistook Aaron’s kindness for being “creepy”. There were at least two women who thought he was too nice and supposedly followed them and made them uncomfortable. When they posted this info almost everyone who read it told them they were wrong. Aaron was just super nice and helpful. I sure hope target didn’t listen to those girls because Aaron was not creepy; he was amazing at customer service!”

I was provided with one commentary from a person who posted on Facebook with this nasty comment in regards to Aaron:

**Tammy Miller** He's a freak , I've personally dealt with him many times & he's tried hugging me several times & he's WAYYYYYYYYYY TOOOOOOOOO touchy feely .. Even my kid thought he was "off!"  
Like Reply 18 mins

\*Interesting note on the above comment – this woman’s child thought in her words that Aaron was “off” and yet, she had no awareness that he had a disability???

What followed in approximately late September – a person filed a complaint with Target that said that Aaron had followed them around the store and out to their car asked them to go skinny dipping at his home. Aaron and his wife live on a lake in a rental house condominium complex where there are other tenants and a beach area. Aaron has told me he might have told someone they could go swimming at his house but he never said anything in regards to skinny dipping. He also has explained to me that he often asks people he considers his friends to visit him. He has no discernment for the term “friend.” Anyone who responds to him; carries on a conversation or that he has met before is a “friend.” He was given a written warning, which he signed and stated he agreed to for fear termination. Aaron says that he was reprimanded by Target Management and told that “he was old enough to know better.” This description of the events related to me by Aaron shows me that members of the Grand Rapids T904 Leadership Team have not been educated in how to manage a person with Aaron’s disability nor did they afford him the opportunity of having an advocate present to help explain to him the seriousness of the accusations that were being made towards him. No additional training measures appeared to be offered to him and he was told to not do the action again and given a corrective action final warning.

Then on Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> while Aaron was on “final warning” – Aaron was alleged to have followed a guest around the store, asking her for her phone number, making her upset and uncomfortable. I would state that probably any customer with a misinterpretation of Aaron’s friendliness could make this claim. Again, I know from years of shopping at Target that Aaron does not follow a person with the intent to harass or stalk – he believes that he is maintaining a friendship and being of service to a person. He cannot read subtle clues that a person may be uncomfortable or may be trying to cut short a conversation. This is a genuine part of his learning disability.

Aaron explained to me he had not seen this person in a long time, considered them to be a friend and asked them for a phone number so they could “catch up.” Aaron would be most happy if he had 1000 numbers in his phone directory.

So two customers complained and management viewed the allegations as disorderly conduct, harassment and employee misconduct and Aaron was terminated on Christmas Eve, which in his mind, is the most egregious action of all. This is Jesus's birthday (his words) and now Christmas will forever be spoiled by this terrible incident. I have asked Aaron if at any time did Target offer to provide you with any specific training or assistance to show you what you were doing wrong or did they ever say they would take you out of the front of the store and remove you from cart attendance and customer service? Aaron said no. If Target's concern was so strong about Aaron's interactions with guests – I asked why did they not put you in an area where you did not have contact with the public – in particular after 17-yr's of service? He said he does not know.

Aaron has presented me with his unemployment paperwork and I have to say I am pretty appalled that nowhere in the paperwork is the mention that this employee has a disability. I can NOT imagine nor will not accept that with Aaron's length of service that management personnel did not know that he has a defined impairment and that he most likely required assistance and a different set of learnable objectives – perhaps actual demonstrations of what expectations were desired. Seriously, how could Target have failed this long-term employee in such a manner? I find it troubling on so many levels.

Aaron, the Cart Man was the most recognizable employee (positively) to the Grand Rapids Target Store. I can verify by a "We Support Aaron" Facebook Page – his termination is a tragic loss that has impacted a large portion of Target's shopping community in the Grand Rapids area. Two negative voices cancelled 17-plus years of a special man's dedicated career to the Bullseye. These allegations also tarnished a life of someone who has done nothing but good in every capacity he can, in spite of his learning behaviors.

I am absolute in my belief and as a frequent shopper to Target – Aaron's personality and behaviors have always been the same. Nothing has changed over the years. He remained his courteous, quirky, and talkative self – always stepping up to greet and help a customer.

I have asked Aaron how other managers dealt with any former complaints and Aaron said he doesn't remember anything being a big issue. He does feel a new management team and a clique of workers made many of his days difficult, if not just for dirty looks he received when he came into an area. He said there were whispers and people joking behind his back. This to me - is bullying and intimidation.

I have serious concerns after learning of the two young women on Facebook making catty and classless remarks about Aaron and how this name calling on social media may have aided or have coincided in the two complaints. I would hope Aaron was not targeted because he was

misunderstood. I worry that Aaron may have been treated harshly, feeling coerced to sign warning complaints without having full understanding of the alleged transgressions.

I think Aaron will always talk, want to be friends, and not know when to shut down a discussion while he serves people. I also believe he has never had intent to harm or scare anyone. He has stated one of his frustrations is that if someone would have thought he hurt or scared any person – he would tell them he was sorry. Aaron stated he even asked to see camera proof of how someone could have said he was harassing him and this was denied.

My bottom line with this letter is that I feel this Aaron Itkonen suffered a human rights violation and Target Corporation discriminated against him with any lack of understanding or empathy for Aaron's intellectual weaknesses and inability to fully understand social cues with an absence of filtering. Denying him his unemployment benefits and fighting his appeal is deplorable. Aaron has no assistance in trying to figure out the web of unemployment. He doesn't even fully understand his infractions and paperwork is confusing to him.

I think Aaron Itkonen's situation is a case for Autism/Asperger's Awareness and added or improved training for Target Corporation and their management teams. Target has lost their "face" in my Grand Rapids Community! And what a loss it is.

The Facebook page "We Support Aaron" has generated nearly 2,200 likes and has engaged nearly 35,000 people. The page received several hundred private messages of support and less than 1% of negative comments – the opposing and/or negative comments came from family members and friends of your management team in Grand Rapids – touting with affirmation that there was another side of the story with one of your manager's father stating on a public Exchange and Swap site that if people knew the story – they would know Target did the right thing for the public and for its employees by firing Aaron.

See below for the exact copy posted on the Grand Rapids Anything and Everything Swap and Exchange Site:

[William Olson](#)

10:49am Feb 14

"Before you all get on board with the lynch mob mentality, you should get the facts of this situation. What happened was definitely in the best interest of the other employees that worked there, and also some of the people that patronized the store. Target dealt with him fairly, and in the interest of avoiding litigation for not doing so."

I found the negative comments curious and wondered how Aaron's data privacy had been violated within T904 with this termination. It sure seemed like there were several out there with ties to management that knew of his alleged wrong-doings.

My hope in creating Aaron's FB support page was that it would generate a few hundred people to lift him up in support – but I was wrong – Aaron generous nature has touched thousands. The world needs more Aarons to greet them at the door and to help them to their cars. His termination is a tragic loss to our community. Tolerance must be learned and practices put in place to assist a guest in greater understanding of a disability should something arise with an employee who is learning behavior impaired. Target must do better.

I expect a response to this letter – in fact, as a Target guest; I have to ask you “What Would Jesus Do?” At minimum, was a termination on Christmas Eve necessary or just downright cruel?

Sincerely,

Pamela J Dowell  
210 NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cohasset, MN 55721  
Phone (218) 301-0257  
Email: grpam79@hotmail.com

Cc: Minnesota Dept. of Human Rights,  
Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission,  
Americans with Disabilities Act – Minnesota,  
EEOC – MN,  
The ARC – Greater Twin Cities

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I understand that you had 3 incidents in the past year regarding "alleged" complaints regarding Aaron. I know what the 3 alleged complaints are and were. There are always two sides to every story...always was and always will be. I also worked in HR for 16 years and so I know how "alleged" complaints work. Both sides need to be investigated. I am wondering what your leadership team OR HR Department did to help Aaron understand that sometimes what he says to a member of the public MAY come off the wrong way. You see...Aaron is a special needs adult/vulnerable adult. Aaron has some learning disabilities where he may not quite understand things he says and feels are fine, could be taken "out of context" by others...NOT all! This learning disability has followed him through his life...but again, that never stopped him from wanting to work, to be a good person, and to help everyone around him. What did you do??? You terminated him because of 3 alleged complaints, and on Christmas Eve...wow...what a gift. I know there is never any good time to terminate someone but on Christmas Eve? How do you people sleep at night? Did anyone bother to sit down with him and help him understand? Probably not!! Did HR provide him some training? Probably not!! But yet you terminated an 18 year Target employee.....and on Christmas Eve!!! Aaron is very religious and he took this very very hard. Now every Christmas Eve and for that matter, every day, he is going to think he is a failure when he is NOT. YOU failed him!!! Am surprised YOU...yes YOU, did not have a suicide because of this! I would sure hope you did your due diligence when he terminated him. Could you at least have given him

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Target took a hit when YOU compromised checking accounts and debit cards. And you WILL probably take a hit with this one.

This letter is also going to the Department of Human Rights because WE, yes WE feel this is a wrongful termination of a special employees, (how ironic that the term used today "special" is exactly what Aaron is...he is special) and you denied him unemployment benefits...on top of it all.

I copied a "blurb" from your corporate website on team members and what Target "says" they offer to their team/employees: **"We're devoted to helping our team members throughout the world live well and achieve their goals, knowing that their diverse perspectives, talents and commitment make both our company and our communities the best they can be. We support team members' paths to health and well-being through resources, services and benefits programs for eligible team members, spouses, domestic partners and other dependents. And we develop leaders and invest in team members' futures through career development and networking opportunities."** What resources and services did you provide to Aaron? How did you develop Aaron and invest in his future with Target...being he had worked there for 18 years? What career development and opportunities did you provide to Aaron to help him? Someone needs to provide these answers and you need to ask yourself these same questions. Talk is cheap, and so are words on a piece of paper! What did you do about his diverse perspectives...being he is a special needs person??? You FIRED HIM!!!

And to add insult to this termination...you DENIED HIM UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS????? Really??? How cruel are you people?



There are two types of employees! One who is a hard worker, always smiling, and greeting customers, comes to work on time, never complains, never calls in sick or is late, and knows his job; and the other one who has a crappy attitude, never smiles, does not make you feel comfortable, there to collect a pay check, complains, picks on others, calls in sick, comes in late, never shows up. Who am I going to gravitate to in a store or business? The "Aarons"! Where am I going to shop? In a store that treats their customers and their employees the right way!

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

*Matt Clayton*

M. Clayton

In Support of Aaron Ultkonen

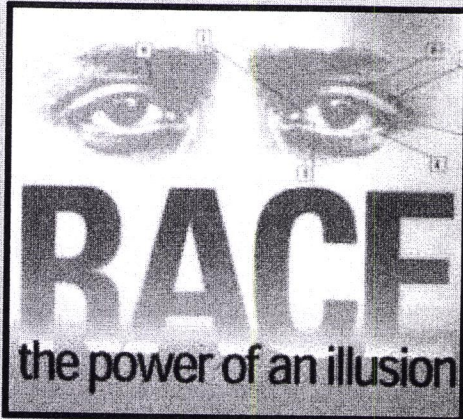
P.O. Box 4603  
*David R. Boyd*

\*\*\*No need to respond to ME, a very concerned citizen and friend for Aaron. Take care of Aaron and make it right!!!\*\*\*

# Big View Community Engagement

Hosted by Circles of Support

## RACE -the power of an illusion



**Race -the power of an illusion** challenges one of our most fundamental beliefs: that humans come divided into a few distinct biological groups. This definitive three-part series is an eye-opening tale of how what we assume to be normal, common sense, even scientific, is actually shaped by our history, social institutions, and cultural beliefs.

**Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup> 10:00 – 12:00** Episode 1- *The Difference Between Us* examines the contemporary science - including genetics - that challenges our common sense assumptions that human beings can be bundled into three or four fundamentally different groups according to their physical traits.

**Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup> 11:00 – 1:00** Episode 2- *The Story We Tell* uncovers the roots of the race concept in North America, the 19th century science that legitimated it, and how it came to be held so fiercely in the western imagination. The episode is an eye-opening tale of how race served to rationalize, even justify, American social inequalities as "natural."

**Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> 11:00 – 1:00** Episode 3- *The House We Live In* asks, if race is not biology, what is it? This episode uncovers how race resides not in nature but in politics, economics and culture. It reveals how our social institutions "make" race by disproportionately channeling resources, power, status and wealth to white people.

<http://newsreel.org/video/race-the-power-of-an-illusion>

### Audience input & discussion follows film

**Grand Rapids Library**  
140 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Grand Rapids  
Pizza served

RSVP: [brianaa@kootasca.org](mailto:brianaa@kootasca.org) or call 999-5883



Circles of Support is a program of KOOTASCA Community Action

## Human Rights Information for Contacts

When someone calls with a concern about being discriminated against, here is what I have been saying to them:

Thank you very much for calling me with your concerns. I am very sorry that you are facing this issue. I am a member of the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission. We are one of about 60 city and county commissions in Minnesota and our job is **not** to investigate issues brought to us but to put people in touch with the state department so their staff can investigate your concern.

If you believe you have been discriminated against in violation of the Minnesota Human Rights Act, please contact the Minnesota Department of Human Right's enforcement unit at 651.539.1100, 1.800.657.3704 or online at [mn.gov/mdhr/intake](http://www.mn.gov/mdhr/intake) [ <http://www.mn.gov/mdhr/intake> ]. The department is located at 625 Robert Street N. in St. Paul, MN 55155.

For more information about discrimination in Minnesota, visit [mn.gov/mdhr](http://www.mn.gov/mdhr) [ <http://www.mn.gov/mdhr> ] or follow the conversation on Twitter at Twitter @mnhumanrights [ <https://twitter.com/mnhumanrights> ].

The Minnesota Human Rights Act (#363) prohibits discrimination in business, education, employment, housing, credit services, public accommodations and public services. It is illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, age, sex, color, creed, disability, familial status, marital status, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or status with regard to public assistance or local human rights commission activity.

You are also welcome to attend the monthly meetings of the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission, which are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. in City Hall. Call 218-326-7600 for more information.

I always offer to send the caller one of our brochures and let them know that they can always call me back if they feel that their needs are not being met along the way.

***Tentative, For Grand Rapids Human Rights commission consideration  
24 Feb 2016***

**Tracks in the Snow financial accounting:**

**Costs/charges:**

\$ 500 IRG booking fee  
(\$ 500 waived by IRG)  
\$1,000 transportation and set-up  
(\$ 500 transportation waived by IRG)  
\$ 75 IRG easel rental  
\$ 575 net, not including speaker honoraria

\$ 500 speaker honoraria (tentative - assumes 3 presentations @ \$150 per  
presentation plus \$50 for participation at the exhibit opening)

\$1,075 total costs and charges

**Collaborator contributions:**

\$ 200 Itasca Community College  
\$ 250 Grand Rapids Police Department  
\$ 400 Grand Rapids Area Library  
~~\$ 225~~ Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission

\$1,075 Total financial contributions

*Copy of  
Minutes Attach to  
Bill*

*1000-*