Chicago's Black Women At The Top

In the wake of the recent and untimely passing of Chicago's Mayor Harold Washington, probably one of the greatest legacies he leaves behind are the many significant changes he made to open up city government to previously disenfranchised segments of the city's populace.

In keeping with his agenda and commitments to institute reform, the late mayor, drawing from the best the city had to offer put in place at City Hall a highly qualified. team of professionals, that for the first time truly mirrored the city's rich and diverse ethnic makeup.

Evidence of just this commitment to fairness can be found specifically among the ranks of the city's high - ranking commissioners and directors, where black women in particular fared very well.

When Washington first took office in 1983, his agenda on women was given credence as he moved quickly to create the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Women's Affairs, the first such commission in the city's history.

Before the Washington administration, women commanded only 12 percent of the top level advisory staff positions. But as of last year, that figure had more than tripled to equal 39 percent.

Further, staff positions that women historically had never been considered for, such as budget director, housing commissioner and deputy chief of staff suddenly found themselves staffed by women.

Respecting the clear mandate that the late mayor was given by the voters in this year's tumultuous election, and in deference to what Harold Washington himself stood for, the commitment of all Chicago citizens remains by and large to keep the movement he ignited pressing on ever forward.

Here are some of the many black women officials selected by former Mayor Harold Washington to help guide and manage the \$3.8 billion municipal corporation called Chicago, our nation's second - largest city. Madeline Murphy Rabb, Director,

Chicago Office Of Fine Arts

Since her appointment in 1983, Madeline Murphy Rabb, the dynamic executive director of the Chicago Office of Fine Arts, has committed herself to enhancing Chicago's cultural environment by increasing the public's level of arts awareness and involvement. while expanding opportunities for the city's artists and arts organizations.

For five years, Ms. Rabb owned and operated her own art studio, creating paintings, drawings and prints which have been exhibited nationally, and are included in numerous private and corporate collections across the country.

She has been instrumental in augmenting grants revenues for the arts by 150 percent, and the office now produces more than 500 programs annually. As the first visual artist appointed to this municipal agency, Ms. Rabb oversees a staff of 32 persons, and an annual budget of \$4 million.

Peggy A. Montes, executive director, Mayor's Advisory Commission on Women's Affairs

Since her mayoral appointment in August of 1985, Ms. Montes has seen the newly formed Women's Commission make great strides towards its' goals of fair representation for women in all aspects of city government.

When she assumed her position at the helm of the commission, Ms. Montes had a vision to "unite the MACWA with the women's and community organizations in the city." This mission, as is plainly evident, has been accomplished.

Mayor Harold Washington has called Ms. Montes "a constant and vigorous advocate for the women of Chicago," citing that she

She also served as director of the Provident Community Development Corporation, which is associated with the South Side Chicago Provident Medical Center, before re - joining DHS in 1984.

Sharon Gist Gilliam, Director Office of Budget and Management

As the city's director of the Office of Budget and Management, Sharon Gist Gilliam is responsible for the planning and implementation of a budget totaling some \$3.8 billion.

She was appointed to her position by Mayor Washington in 1984, after having served as deputy budget director for less than a year. Gilliam had also been the budget officer and director of budget operations for the Washington, D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development, and was acting commissioner of the Chicago Department of Consumer Services through 1979.

Her most notable accomplishments since that time however, have been erasing the \$168 million deficit left by the previous mayoral administration, and getting the city's budgets passed on time, given consistent city council opposition.

Bess Donaldson, Commissioner, Department of Housing



Murphy Rabb







Walker





Gist-Gilliam

Bess

had served as the advisory commissioner to the Women's Commission, and also the founder of the Women's Coalition for Parity prior to her appointment.

Judith Walker, Commissioner, Department of Human Services

As commissioner of the city's Department of Human Services (DHS), Walker had made some radical changes in the way the department does business. Much of the agency's 1,000 - strong staff-credits Walker with initiating a comprehensive approach to meeting the human service needs of Chicago resi-

Her hands - on approach was cultivated during her tenure as deputy regional administrator for the Department of Housing and Urban Development and previous positions held in the Department of Human Services.

Bess Donaldson is currently the city of Chicago's Commissioner of Housing, and just prior to this appointment was Deputy Commissioner for Rehabilitation, under the same city department. Since joining the Department of Housing in 1983, Ms. Donaldson has borne responsibility for all of the rehabilitation programs for the city's single and multifamily dwellings.

Programs in which she was instrumental thus far have helped to facilitate the rehabilitation of over 2,700 units of housing on properties situated in some of the city's least affluent areas.

Donaldson was also the architect of the department's Housing Abandonment Prevention Program, which, since its inception in 1985, saved over 400 housing units from abandonment and demolition, utilizing a system of cooperation between concerned

community groups and the city government.

Brenetta Howell Barrett. Commissioner, Department of Consumer Services

Brenetta Howell Barrett knows what it means to struggle. Having spent several years receiving public aid assistance, and at the same time raising four children virtually alone, she learned early on to fight back.

Recently appointed commissioner of Chicago's Department of Consumer Services by Mayor Harold Washington, Ms. Barrett is beginning to realize the fruits of her struggle.

As commissioner, Ms. Barrett will work to see that the department fulfills its' various functions including: investigating complaints regarding illegal, fraudulent or deceptive business practices; inspecting restaurants, grocery stores and dairy operations for proper sanitary standards; issuing licenses for and regulating all public vehicles, providing consumer education programs and enforcing environmental protection ordinances.

Audrey MacCrimon, Deputy Commissioner, Department on Aging and Disability

As Deputy Commissioner of the Department on Aging and Disability (DAD), Audrey advisory council on disability. Lucille Riley Dobbins

Assistant to the Mayor, Finance and Administration

Lucille Dobbins came to Chicago's City Hall kicking and screaming. Having spent ten years in the private sector, most recently as vice president of corporate banking for Harris Trust and Savings Bank, Dobbins was quite comfortable with the niche she had cut out for herself.

In 1970 she became one of the first of ten Black female certified public accountants (CPAs) In the United States.

When asked to come aboard as first deputy commissioner of planning and to work on the North Loop Redevelopment Project, Dobbins said, "I wasn't convinced that it could be done."

As evidenced by massive develoment now taking place in Chicago's north Loop, Dobbins still lives by the rule, "you don't know what you can't do."

Brenda Gaines Deputy Chief of Staff

Before joining the Washington administration, Gaines was deputy regional administrator of the federal government's Chicago-based Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency. There she shared responsibility with the HUD regional administrator, for directing the agency's multi-

The Office of Intergovernmental Affairs is responsible for planning and seeking passage of the administration's legislative package in City Council, State Legislature and Congress. It maintains lobbying offices in Springfield and Washington.

The Department is also responsible for tracking the actions of various boards and commissions, which are municipal corporations coterminous with the city of Chicago, and maintaining the city's liaison with other county-wide governments.

Robin P. Charleston. **Acting Cable Administrator**

With enthusiasm and spunk, Commissioner Charleston monitors local cable company compliance with city ordinances and local franchise agreements. She also runs the municipal channels CH-TV (City Hall-Television) and WC-TV (Windy City Television).

As head honcho of Chicago's cable operation, Commissioner Charleston is plagued by the growing pains associated with bringing cable to Chicago. She complains, "Too many people don't take cable seriously because it's new and there are still several

"I'm pleased to report," Charleston continued, "that we have collected our first fine for a cable company for non-compliance. This is a key accomplishment for the Cable Commission. One of the biggest challenges of this job," she said, "is to be able to regulate an industry that is, in large part, deregulated."



fabric.

dicapped (OSCH).



MacCrimon is a special individual with special

skills. She is not only responsible for for-

mulating and implementing programs that

provide basic services for people with

disabilities, but also for programs that help

them play a greater role in the city's cultural

A veteran in the advocacy field, Mac-

Crimon became deputy commissioner for

DAD in 1984, which was formerly known

as the Office for Senior Citizens and Han-

With the backing of Mayor Harold Wash-

ington, the Chicago City Council passed an

ordinance in 1984 that not only changed the

name of OSCH to DAD, but also elevated

the office to full departmental status with

an increased emphasis on disability issues. The

same ordinance also mandated the establish-

ment of an advisory council on aging, and an



MacCrimon







faceted programs over a six-state

geographical area, its' 2,000 employees and

Brenda Gaines joined the administration as

commissioner of the city's Department of

Housing. During her first year as commis-

sioner, she doubled the Mayor's 1984 hous-

ing goal by committing funds for construc-

tion, rehabilitation, weatherization or repair

of over 12,000 housing units, of which 75

percent were designed for low-and

In September 1985, Gaines was appointed

Mayor Washington's Deputy Chief of Staff.

Jacky Grimshaw, Director

Department of Intergovernmental Affairs

the city's Department of Intergovernmental Af-

fairs, a position she has held since vacating her post

as the deputy director of the department in June

Jacquelyne D. Grimshaw serves as director of

moderate-income level residents.

a \$4 million budget.









Charleston

Rae Jones, Director The Communications Project

Today, as director of the newly created Communications Project and staff, Rae Jones in methodically forging new ground for women, and hopefully writing a whole new chapter in city government communications.

As director, Jones encourages the more creative aspects of government communications to help position the Mayor, his administration and their accomplishments in the best possible light.

Although not yet bearing full departmental status, the Communications Project staff boasts talented communications specialists and special projects coordinators, whose functions and responsibilities include a myriad of project ranging from preparing briefing notes and speeches for the Mayor and chief of staff, to writing and editing city brochures, videotape scripts, newsletters and other publications.