

Report of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee

Submitted by Edward T. Ventura Jr., EMAC Chair, Omaha Education Association

“Children of Smithfield” was our nominee for the 2021 NEA Human and Civil Rights Award as well as our 2021 NSEA Great Plains Milestone Award. We honor NSEA member Maria Mendez-Rodriguez, a high school instructional coach in Lincoln, and her grassroots group for their selfless, humane and remarkable public advocacy to insist upon equal justice for all essential meatpacking workers shouldering such a burden and facing such a disproportionate risk during this public health crisis. In a time when workers face life-threatening danger at work, the “Children of Smithfield” have modeled solidarity by bringing attention to the risks of their parents and loved ones. Mendez-Rodriguez said, “I think our parents could be their own voice, but I don't think they're ready for it. But until they feel ready, we're going to stand by them and advocate for the protection they deserve.”

The NEA’s Minority/Women Leadership Training Seminar to Advance Racial and Social Justice was held virtually. It aimed to prepare and support educators to be powerful leaders and advocates for their students, their profession and their Association. The following NSEA members attended: Mar'Lakuittia Overstreet (Lincoln), Ed Ventura (Omaha), Stacie Blackmore (Cozad) and Megan Helberg (Burwell). Blackmore said, “My favorite session was Understanding Systemic Racism. It had so much information but presented in an approach that helped me build on what I learned in NSEA’s Conversations on Race and Belonging.”

NSEA EMAC has brought forth the following NSEA proposed resolutions:

- **NUTRITION:** Lunch shaming disproportionately affects marginalized families and goes beyond just hurting a student’s self-esteem.
- **HAIR DISCRIMINATION:** Penalizing individuals for wearing their hair in a non-European style is discriminatory and hair policing should not be tolerated.
- **INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S DAY:** Recognizing, observing and celebrating factual history is important to maintaining our academic integrity.

We are glad to report 1,050 have self-identified their ethnic minority status. This is an increase of 5.4%. A goal of the EMAC is to increase their membership by getting “unidentified” members to self-identify on the membership rolls. Contact your Organizational Specialist or call the NSEA at 1-800-742- 0047 to update your records.

NSEA EMAC presented at EdRising, Aspiring Ed and public events this past year. We called for speaking with educators and students about racial problems, teaching history that reflects all students and hiring more educators of color.

The NSEA EMAC approved the NSEA Minority Involvement Plan which encourages greater involvement of minorities in association activities at all levels. Working along with the NSEA Racial and Social Justice committee, self-identified ethnic minority members joined in a “Space for Conversation.” It was held in a virtual format and included facilitated affinity breakout rooms for check-ins and discussion. Books have been purchased for our Multicultural Outreach Activities. The books will be at NSEA events promoting equity and the elimination of discrimination. We hosted book clubs to empower and engage educators. The book clubs dealt with EMAC-related themes, facilitated discussions and gave opportunities for members to share their learning.