

EMPOWER OMAHA!

**Rise Up and Rebuild the Village
Do Your Part...Live the Covenant!**

**A Covenant for Individuals, Families and Leaders...
Developed by African-Americans in the Greater Omaha Area**

EmpowerOmaha! African-American Empowerment Network

INTRODUCTION

Across our nation, African-Americans have made great progress in many areas. Through many challenges, African-Americans have pressed on and persevered. Despite racism, oppression and many other factors, we have pressed forward. Omaha is no different.

There are over 64,000 African-Americans in the Omaha metro area. We spend an estimated \$700 million dollars each year. We have elected officials at the local, county and state level. We have administrators, principals and teachers in our schools. We have strong churches, large and small. We have professionals, business owners and skilled workers. We have health care professionals, social organizations, churches and others who are working every day to minister to and help those who are impacted, yet, in some areas we are going in the wrong direction. We have resources, organizations, ideas, visions, and much more. We have many success stories. Yet, we still lag when it comes to education, employment, housing, wealth, health, voting and other core areas.

Since the fall of 2006, over 400 leaders and community members have discussed key issues and opportunities facing African-Americans in the City of Omaha and the State of Nebraska. These individuals represent over 200 different organizations. As a result, an informal group, the EmpowerOmaha! African-American Empowerment Network, has been formed. We believe that by working together, collectively and collaboratively, we will produce greater results than if we act independently.

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The Empowerment Network has helped to facilitate us coming together to develop and implement solutions that will dramatically and tangibly impact the lives of African-Americans, North Omaha, and the city of Omaha as a whole. Things will not happen overnight, but we strongly believe that the Network and Covenant are vehicles that will help us to accelerate our progress! The Covenant helps all of us to focus on areas of common interest.

We have made significant progress on the Covenant (agreement) and strategic plan (action plan) to help address key challenges and take advantage of the opportunities. The covenant follows the model of the best selling book, *Covenant with Black America*, produced by Tavis Smiley. We have worked hard to gather the thoughts, ideas and involvement of our community to localize, create and implement our own covenant. We have identified issues, but have focused our attention on solutions. We have said from the beginning that we will be positive, proactive, and work to build partnerships. Our strategy has three parts:

- 1) Empower African-Americans in the Greater Omaha Area
- 2) Empower North Omaha
- 3) Empower the City of Omaha and Beyond

We are presented with unprecedented opportunities. Omaha has received international attention because of the education debate. The police department and community are working to respond to recent increases in youth and gun violence and answer questions regarding community/police oversight issues. The Omaha Chamber of Commerce has started hosting community input forums to help design a major new economic development plan for North Omaha. The official numbers show that African-Americans and North Omaha had measurable increases in voter turnout during the most recent election. Wealthy community leaders have stepped forward with a comprehensive plan to help improve educational opportunities for youth. City-wide, there are a number of initiatives and projects underway to help transform the Greater Omaha area into a model city. Omaha has an incredible opportunity to show what is possible by creating a new level of partnership.

The Empowerment Covenant is about all of us doing our part. Together, we can make it a reality. Every individual, every family, every group and organization can do something to help build a stronger community. Everyone has a role to play. Don't wait for someone else to do it. Review the covenants and see what you can do to help improve the quality of life in our community and city. More information and details will be announced within the next few weeks. There will be opportunities for everyone to get involved.

We pay tribute to every organization, business and ministry that works every day to make positive changes in our community. We're thankful for each and every person who has labored to move us forward. Working collectively, we can accelerate our progress and build an even greater future. Now, let us Connect, Communicate, Coordinate, Collaborate, Create, and Celebrate as we make a measurable difference!

Don't Just Talk About It, Be About It!

What is the EmpowerOmaha! – African-American Empowerment Network?

The purpose of the Network is to empower the Greater Omaha area by developing and implementing a covenant and strategic plan that accelerates the economic well being and quality of life progress of African-Americans, North Omaha and the City of Omaha. Our goal is to transform Omaha into a model city for all of its citizens. Our vision of the future is that African-Americans throughout the city, residents of North Omaha and citizens of the Greater Omaha area will be measurably successful and prosperous.

Structure & Mission:

We have established an informal structure for a diverse membership to create and implement a covenant (agreement) and strategic plan of action. We provide a variety of planning sessions and forums for individuals and organizations to come together to share ideas and work collectively in gaining valuable input, setting priorities and developing integrated strategies. The action plans are living documents, able to be adjusted based on the changing needs of the community.

Our mission is to ***Connect, Communicate, Coordinate, Collaborate, Create and Celebrate***. Our mission is not to duplicate the work of organizations that exist, but rather to support their efforts and help bring additional people and resources to the table. Where we identify gaps that are not served by any organization, we will work to find partners that can fill the need or in some cases help support the creation of a separate organization to assure that the needs of the community are met. We strive to facilitate positive, collaborative change through our member organizations and individuals.

Who:

Community Representatives, Neighborhood Association Members, Community Advocates, Pastors, Business Owners, Senior Managers, Elected and Appointed Officials, Entrepreneurs and Investors, Educators, and others from non-profit organizations in Economic Development, Social Services, Health, Crime Prevention, Legal, Accounting and other areas. Over 400 African-American leaders and community members, representing over 200 organizations, churches, groups, and businesses, have already participated in some way with this initiative.

The Empowerment Network includes people from all walks of life. Everyone can get involved. Every individual and family can participate with the Empowerment Covenant. You don't have to be in a leadership position to participate with the Covenant or Network. Read the Omaha Star. Go to www.empoweromaha.com. Look for opportunities to get involved. If you've been waiting for an opportunity to help develop and implement solutions that will impact our community in a positive way, this is your time. There's more than enough work for everyone to do. We're all in this together.

Values:

Faith, Unity, Love, Respect, Family, Community

Principles:

Positive, Proactive and Partnership

Goal:

To transform the City of Omaha into a model city for all citizens.

Mission:

Connect...bring groups and individuals together with a common purpose and plan
Communicate...share information, challenges, activities, and opportunities that are available
Coordinate...work together to better integrate our efforts; support existing successful projects and initiatives
Collaborate...identify opportunities for partnerships; pool resources where appropriate
Create...fill-in where we identify gaps
Celebrate & Challenge...measure and recognize successes while staying committed to developing and implementing solutions

RISE UP & REBUILD THE VILLAGE!

EMPOWERMENT COVENANTS

1. **Live our Faith** (Put it to Work!)
2. **Strengthen our Families** (Healthy Families & Extended Families)
3. **Prepare our Children** (Education and Youth Development)
4. **Embrace our Culture** (Cultural Arts, History, Events and Venues)
5. **Build our Wealth** (Employment, Entrepreneurship and Invest in Quality of Life)
6. **Protect our Health** (Physical, Mental and Emotional)
7. **Raise our Vote** (Voting and Political Engagement)
8. **Own our Homes** (Housing and Home Ownership)
9. **Clean our Neighborhoods** (Environmental Challenge)
10. **Love our Neighbor! Stop the Hate!** (Crime Prevention and Neighborhoods)
11. **Stand for Justice** (Civil Rights and Justice)
12. **Improve our Communications** (Media and Communications)
13. **Cross the Divide** (Digital and Technology)

EMPOWERMENT COVENANT FOR INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

1. Faith (Live our Faith)

Do my part...

1. Join a family of faith and actively participate. Pray, study and apply what I learn.
2. Actively discover and use my gifts and talents.
3. Support the ministry with my time and resources.

Support pastors and help the ministries tackle community issues.

2. Education & Youth Development (Prepare our Children)

Do my part...

1. Parents: Know what's happening at school. Get involved. Attend PT conferences/volunteer at school.
Read to children and have children read to you every day.
Use available people and resources for help. Ex: Library, Family, Tutors, Churches, etc.
2. Community: Get involved. Go to the classrooms.
Volunteer to read to, tutor, and mentor kids. Encourage ACT preparation/practice.
Attend board meetings and school functions.
3. Youth Development: Provide more opportunities and positive experiences for our youth.
Employment, internships, vocational training, scholarships, etc.

Support leaders and assist them with making changes necessary to help improve the education of African-American children. (ex: Pushing for more funding for schools)

3. Health (Protect our Health)

Do my part...

1. Become educated on health issues that affect African-American families.
2. Establish a relationship with identified medical and dental providers and get an annual medical, dental and behavioral health check-up or screening.
3. Actively practice a healthy lifestyle by eating healthy, not smoking, exercising, avoiding substance abuse and abstaining from high-risk behaviors associated with HIV-Aids, STD's and teen pregnancy.

Support leaders and encourage them to make changes that help improve African-American health and increase the number with health insurance.

4. Healthy Families (Strengthen our Families)

Do my part...

1. Create a safe and healthy environment that nurtures and sustains the spiritual, physical, emotional and economic needs of my family and community.
2. Spend more quality time with families.
3. Develop and understand the benefits of healthy marriages and stable families.

Support leaders and assist them with helping to create healthier African-American families.

5. Economics/Financial Empowerment/Employment/Entrepreneurship (Build our Wealth)

Do my part...

1. Wealth-creation: Create and build personal wealth through: Employment, equities, investments, ownership and entrepreneurship. Enhance and expand networking and professional support and services.
2. Support: Support black-owned business. Support businesses that support community efforts and businesses that employ African-Americans.
3. Educate: Ourselves and our children to understand and use our collective consumer spending power.
Reinforce the value of professionalism/service-oriented business practices for businesses that serve us.

Support leaders and assist them with implementing changes to help create more employment opportunities and successful African-American businesses.

6. Crime Prevention (Love our Neighbor...Stop the Hate!)

Do my part...

1. Develop stronger relationships with youth. Help intervene and provide positive options.
2. Partner with my church, neighborhood and/or organization to help prevent and reduce crime.
Citizen Patrols, Neighborhood Watch, "Don't Get It Twisted", Police Oversight, etc.
3. Partner with others to assist those currently in and coming out of the criminal justice system.

Support leaders and assist them with implementing needed policy changes and plans that reduce our involvement with the criminal justice system and decrease the recidivism rate.

EMPOWERMENT COVENANT FOR INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

7. Civil Rights and Justice (Stand for Justice)

Do my part...

1. Call Human Rights and Relations and other appropriate agencies to get information packets.
2. Contact NAACP and Human Rights & Relations if discrimination occurs and follow through with the process. Document everything.
3. Become aware of the judicial system process – voting for judges and awareness of rights.

Support leaders and assist them with plans and strategies to attain justice and equality.

8. Housing/Neighborhoods (Own our Homes)

Do my part...

1. Educate myself about my rights and responsibilities as a renter, the advantages and responsibilities of home ownership, and how home equity helps build personal wealth.
2. Budget, manage credit, control spending and work towards owning my own home.
3. Join my neighborhood association and actively participate. Help to address transportation issues.

Support leaders and assist them with plans to increase home ownership and improve neighborhoods.

9. Voting/Politics (Raise our Vote)

Do my part...

1. Educate myself, my family (including my children) and my community on the issues and candidates.
2. Register to vote. Voter early and/or take someone with me to the polls.
3. Support the development of African-American political strength with a focus on 2008.

Support leaders and hold them accountable for implementing needed laws and policies.

10. Environment (Clean our Neighborhoods)

Do my part...

1. Get educated on environmental issues. Share information with others.
2. Make sure my home is free from the impacts of lead.
3. Help keep my neighborhood clean.

Support leaders and assist them with plans to improve environmental conditions.

11. Technology (Cross the Divide)

Do my part...

1. Work to make sure that children in my home and community have access to computers.
(use available resources...libraries, neighborhood centers, schools when available, etc.)
2. Work to have a computer in my home.
3. Work to have internet access in my home. (with proper supervision)

Support leaders and assist them with creating technology centers and developing plans to have computers in homes, schools and community centers.

12. Communications/Media (Improve our Communications)

Do my part...

1. Educate myself, my family and my community regarding the influence of the media.
2. Limit television/video game playing and support positive African-American media outlets.
3. Voice my concerns to media that broadcast and print inappropriate material.

Support leaders and organizations that provide positive news, information and entertainment.

13. Cultural Arts, Activities, History, Events & Entertainment (Embrace our Culture)

Do my part...

1. Instill in our families and organizations the importance of keeping cultural traditions alive.
2. Support and attend cultural arts, activities, events, organizations and venues.
3. Understand the potential economic impact of the arts in our community.

Support leaders and organizations that provide positive African-American oriented arts, cultural activities and entertainment to our community. Ensure the future of arts in our community.

Name

Date

EMPOWERMENT COVENANT FOR LEADERS

These strategies have been or will be launched within 30 to 120 days.
(This is not the complete list of strategies that have been identified by the Empowerment Network Members, but a sample of what leaders will need to do and what we plan to do with some immediacy. There are a number of other significant strategies that are not listed here.)

EMPOWER OMAHA! Network/Leadership

Establish the African-American Empowerment Network

Mission: Connect, Communicate, Coordinate, Collaborate, Create, Celebrate

Gain AA Leadership, Organizational and Community Input, Recommendations

Develop and Implement the Empowerment Covenant and Action Plan

Host Monthly Empowerment Meetings, Quarterly Meetings and Annual Summit

Host Consistent meetings, forums and summits on specific topics

Establish North Omaha Empowerment Network and City-wide Empowerment Network

Faith

- 1 Quarterly Prayer for Covenant, Empowerment Network and Initiatives
- 2 Encourage congregation, members and community to "Live the Covenant"
- 3 Unite with other churches for City-wide Prayer, Unity, Repentance
- 4 Implement Church Economic Strategies – (Partner with Economics Team)
- 4a Engage church membership in financial empowerment training
- 4b Engage church membership in supporting specific African-American businesses
- 4c Support African-American businesses and businesses that support African-Americans
- 4d Use and/or pool resources to help spur Economic and Community Development
- 5 Implement an Adopt-A-School Strategy (Partner with Education Solution Team)
- 6 Implement a Cell Adoption Strategy (Partner with Crime Prevention Team)
- 7 Implement Raise the Vote - Help register and get people out to vote (non-partisan)

Education & Youth Development

- 1 Establish an African-American Think Tank on Education
- 2 Support Equitable Funding, with additional funding for different needs
- 3 Support strategies to extend learning time
*Year-round school, **after school programs, Sat. programs, Summer**, longer days*
- 4 Scholarships and financial support/incentives/Internships, Experiential Learning
- 5 Increase Parental and Community involvement
- 6 Launch an African-American Reading Campaign
- 7 Increase participation in Parent/Teacher Conferences - Visits to Schools/Classrooms
- 8 Increase the number and involvement of African-American Greeters/Nia Guardians
- 9 Increase the number of African-American Mentors and Tutors (Men & Women)
- 10 Support and Develop Targeted initiatives for African-American Boys
- 11 Support and Develop Targeted initiatives for African-American Girls
- 12 Intervention Strategy: Kindergarten, 4th Grade Program, 8th Grade Program
- 13 Youth Leadership Network & Entrepreneurship Training

EMPOWERMENT COVENANT FOR LEADERS

Economics

- 1 *Business of the Week - Focused support of businesses by churches and community*
- 2 *TMC (The Money Circle) Card - Discounts, Special Values from Black Businesses*
- 3 *Create an African-American Business Directory - Print and Online*
- 4 *Financial Literacy - Education, Advocacy - Financial Empowerment (with Housing Team)*
- 5 *Create Jobs for African-Americans, Bring Jobs to North Omaha*
- 6 *Develop and Implement a Capital Strategy - Venture, Individuals and Organizations*
Omaha 20/20 African-American Economic Initiative and Empowerment Fund
- 7 *Develop an African-American Business Association or Affiliation*

Housing/Neighborhoods

- 1 *Increase awareness of housing options available in North Omaha*
- 2 *Increase participation in Neighborhood Associations*
- 3 *Offer Education and Training Programs for Renters and Home Owners*
- 4 *Offer classes to help improve budgeting skills, debt/credit mgmnt and saving*
- 5 *Home Ownership Program/Campaign - (Based on availability of housing options)*
- 6 *Partner w/ Financing Orgs.-Competitive, Incentives, etc. to help increase home ownership*

Health

- 1 *Access up-to-date information and conduct inventory of resources*
- 2 *Create a HIV Awareness/Health Awareness Campaign*
- 3 *Introduce primary care behavioral health model to the Omaha community*
- 4 *Address Prevention and Health Behaviors - Assessment, Nutrition, Exercise, etc.*
- 5 *Address Education and Communication regarding Health Issues/Solutions*
- 6 *Get Fit Campaign - Fall Walk, Summer Walk and Encourage Prevention Behaviors*
- 7 *Health Challenge - Partner with Churches*
- 8 *Create a medical Resource Directory for Community - AA Physicians, Dentists, etc.*

Healthy Family

- 1 *Healthy Marriage Day Celebration, Black Family Day Recognition*
- 2 *Singles Conferences (United)*
- 3 *Marriage Conferences/Training (United)*
- 4 *Support and Develop Fatherhood Initiatives*
- 5 *Encourage and Provide Support Groups for Single Mothers*

EMPOWERMENT COVENANT FOR LEADERS

Crime Prevention

- 1 *Develop an Omaha 10 Point Plan - Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement, Recovery*
- 2 *Work to develop Stronger Relationships between Community and Police*
- 3 *Prevention: Adopt-A-Block, Walk/Engage/Talk, Street Teams*
- 4 *Prevention: Youth Programs - Day, Night, Summer, School Year*
- 5 *Intervention Programs: Address Truancy*
- 6 *Intervention Programs: Address Gangs*
- 7 *Recovery & Restoration - Programs for those coming out of the system*

Civil Rights & Justice

- 1 *Develop Plans to Address Discrimination - Housing, Education, Employment*
- 2 *Develop a Police Auditor and Oversight Plan that works for Community and Police*

Voting/Politics/Elected Officials

- 1 *Raise the Vote Campaign - Work with churches and other membership organizations*
- 2 *Teach children - Issues, Candidates, Mock Elections*
- 3 *Registration Campaign - Continuous registration of new voters*
- 4 *African-American Candidate Development*
- 5 *Establish an African-American Political Think Tank*

Media/Communications/Technology

- 1 *Develop and Implement a Empowerment Covenant Campaign*
- 2 *Hold media accountable for what they present - Print, TV, Radio, etc.*
- 3 *Support current media: Omaha Star, TV, Radio programs*
- 4 *Internet strategy: omahaurbanconnection.com and empoweromaha.com*
- 5 *Support new media outlets:*
- 6 *New Print Publications, Internet sites, etc.*
- 7 *New TV and Radio Programming, etc.*
- 8 *Increase and Expand Technology Centers in targeted areas*
- 9 *Partner to increase home computer access/Internet use (protected)*

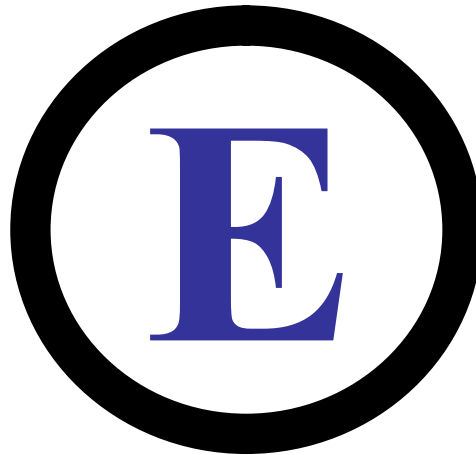
Cultural Arts, History, Activities and Venues

- 1 *Establish an African-American Arts Council and/or Cultural & Historical Association*
- 2 *Increase support for existing groups, organizations and venues*
- 3 *Groups: Tuskegee Airmen; Malcolm X Foundation, Community Kwanzaa, etc.*
- 4 *Venues: John Beasley Theater; Love's Jazz, etc.*
- 5 *Events: Native Omaha Days, Juneteenth; Blues and Jazz, etc.*

Over 400 leaders and community members representing over 200 churches, organizations, groups, and businesses have participated in the development of this covenant. We thank God for your dedication, commitment, and leadership.

Let's continue to work together in a collective way to transform our community and city. We look forward to partnering with individuals, groups, and organizations throughout the city, state, and nation to make this covenant a reality.

May God continue to bless this community as we Come Together, Work Together, Pray Together, and Stay Together! It's time to Rise Up and Rebuild the Village!



EMPOWER OMAHA!

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www.empoweromaha.com