



Advancing Diversity in the Northern Plains Area

# VOICES

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Winter 2013 / 2014

## What Color is 'Korean'? Insights on Diversity

**Editor's Note:** *The following essay was originally written in May 2011 in recognition of that year's Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.*

By Virginia Jin  
Research Soil Scientist, Lincoln, NE

As a child, I never knew how to answer the question "Are you Black or are you White?" I always answered "I don't know. I'm Korean. What color is that?" Growing up in what-was-then a small town in eastern North Carolina, other children often asked me this. The population in my town at that time was approximately 60% African American and 40% Caucasian. When there were only two other Asians in my public school (and one of them was my sister), it was a fair question. My family was one of three Asian families living there, and the third moved away shortly after we arrived. In short, there were not many of us in town, and we were easy to pick out in a crowd.

So what color was I? I never really thought about it unless someone asked. After all, I can't see myself. But I could see others, and there were only two colors – Black and White (pardon my political incorrectness, but that is what we all called it then). Like I said, it was a fair question. Racial identity, however, is ingrained in the subconscious. Despite the fact that I saw only two races and was presented with only two races to choose from when questioned about my own, I knew I was neither. As a kid, that meant that I didn't really fit in anywhere

### OUR VOICES

(or perhaps that meant I fit in everywhere). What ever personal confusion I felt about my race, it was clear that people around me were confused about my race, too.

This confusion lasted through high school. My high school (Go Fighting Knights!) had Student Body Co-Presidents: a "White" president and a "Non-White" president. No doubt this was left over from desegregation, an effort by the school to provide equal representation for a newly integrated African-American and Caucasian-American student body. Then 40 years later, there's me. I nominated myself to run for Student Body co-

President (no comments from the peanut gallery, please). In order to do this, I had to choose the correct nomination form: "White" or "Non-White." I picked "Non-White." What a great option! Finally, "Black or White" alternatives were being replaced with "White or Non-White" choices. I would have been equally happy with "Black or Non-Black," too. Either way, I was presented with a choice I could make with clarity.

I filled out the form, turned it in, and sat at my desk to wait for the class bell to ring. I saw the faculty advisor do a double-take as she glanced at my form, then she was standing before me. "Honey, you'll have to fill out the other form. When we say 'Non-White,' we actually mean 'Black,' and you're not 'Black.'"

Continued next page →

## ARS Among APANA Awardees

In May of this year, the Asian Pacific American Network in Agriculture (APANA) Awards Committee announced that the Agricultural Research Service was among three REE agencies selected to receive an Outstanding Achievement Award "for exceptional leadership and exemplary accomplishments achieved in FY 2012, resulting in positive impacts made on Asian American and Pacific Islander employees, as well as, to lives of Asian American customers and the general public." In announcing the award, Dr. Don McLellan, Director of ARS' Office of Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity, thanked ARS employees for making the recognition possible. "We continue to strive to be an employer of choice by all who seek an opportunity for employment and advancement within our organization," he said. "Thanks again to everyone and keep up the great work!"

The other REE agencies recognized during the Department's Asian Pacific Heritage Celebration event on May 23 included NIFA and NASS. APANA is the oldest Nationwide AAPI employee organization within USDA.

**Color...** *Continued from page 1*

I thought about that for a second. I agreed with the last part of her statement. And then I told her that I was not “White” either. The form said “Non-White,” and I was “Non-White.” What was the confusion? The bell rang, and I went on my merry way. And I won. The first order of business that the “White” Co-President and my self undertook was to motion for the repeal of our own positions in favor of having just one Student Body President. The motion was seconded, the vote passed unanimously. Change was good.

My hometown, indeed our entire society, has changed much in the last 20 years. Media representation of different races has increased. We see more diversity ourselves in our own towns and cities as people move in and out seeking opportunity and change. There are more inter-racial couples and mixed-race children. Public awareness of the diversity of we who call ourselves “Americans” is far greater now than it has ever been. I still get the occasional double-take from stakeholders who meet me for the first time after speaking with me over the phone. A cowboy boot-wearing Asian with a southern accent is not exactly what they are expecting. But change is good. Change keeps us on our toes, keeps us challenged, keeps us from getting too comfortable in our own skins, no matter what color it may be. And change is hard. We know that as an agency as we strive to provide opportunities for increasing diversity in our own workforce. The USDA’s Cultural Transformation Initiative, the NPA’s Diversity Task Force, each location’s EEO and Outreach committee — all of these efforts reflect how important it is to change, to meet our Mission in the context of a changing society, and to represent those changes in the make-up of our own workforce.

But I digress. So back to my hometown--how are things at the old stomping grounds now? I am happy to say that when I was last asked the race question by a kid back home, I was not asked “Are you Black or are you White?” but “Are you Mexican?” The Asian option has yet to make the scene, but at least times have changed enough for more alternatives than “Black” or “White.” And as we all know, there are always more alternatives than black-or-white. Thanks for reading. ♦

**CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS IN THE NPA**

**Christmas in Clay County**

*By Tammy Sorenson and Tara McDanel  
 Biological Technician and Research Geneticist, Clay Center, NE*

**T**he Clay County Giving Tree accepts donations and gifts to help those in need during the Christmas season. As a result of these donations and purchases, 425 individuals were given a brighter Christmas this season. There were approximately 1,000 gifts distributed in the towns of Clay Center, Harvard, Sutton, Saronville, Edgar, Ong, Glenvil, Deweese, Trumball and Fairfield. Current and former USMARC employees and their families were among the many community volunteers that purchased, helped gather gifts from the various locations, boxed, wrapped, sorted and eventually distributed the gifts on Dec. 18, 2013. Their hard work and dedication will make Christmas for others enjoyable and hopefully memorable. *(More holiday pictures on page 14.)* ♦

*The hundreds of gifts collected for those in need at Clay Center, NE. ARS employees help with the purchase, wrapping and delivery of the presents.*



# Message From the Director

By Dr. Larry Chandler  
NPA Area Director, Fort Collins, CO

I spent quite a bit of time deliberating on what type of message to write in this issue of "VOICES". So I decided to go back to the Spring 2013 issue and compare where we are today vs where I thought we might be at this time of year. As you might expect having a successful encounter with a 'crystal ball' is more fantasy than reality. Let me quote a sentence from the next to last paragraph in my Spring column: "Despite all the negatives we've encountered during the first six months of FY13 let's work together to have the remainder of the year serve as a positive catalyst for future endeavors for each of our labs and for ARS." Who knew that the next six months would be as challeng-

*"Who knew the next six months would be as challenging as the first six?"*

ing as the first six? Additionally who would have thought that we would spend more than half of the month of October on furlough due to a government shutdown? I guess a good lesson for me is that it's extremely challenging to predict the future with any degree of accuracy. Additionally, it's come back to me more than once that now more than ever we need to pull together as an Agency and work diligently to maintain our research mission and assist our employees in excelling at their assigned endeavors. Step by step we need to regroup and prepare for the future as best we can. So to truly prepare for the future we have engaged in a number of activities over the past year to help improve our ability to be a successful organization. Let me give you a couple of examples below.

Over the summer we conducted the Annual Resource Management Planning process (ARMP) at each of the NPA locations. It's always good to travel to the locations and meet with all of our employees. We had numerous conversations as a result of the questions asked during the all

employee meetings. Those questions caused us to more carefully think about what all of you were worried about and how you were viewing your future as well as that of ARS. I can honestly say that we learned a lot from those opportunities. I hope we can adequately address some of the concerns we heard and move forward in a positive way in the coming year. It's important for all of you to know that we had excellent budget reviews with the location leaders during the ARMP process that will serve us well this year and in years to come. All of the CDs, RLs, and AOs truly are working in the best interest of your locations and the Agency. Their diligence in managing funds and other resources is one of the key reasons we will be able to weather some of the challenges facing us. I know that not all of you will agree with the decisions we make that allow us to continue to move forward. However, those difficult decisions don't come easily and all of our leaders are doing their best to provide the best possible workplace for today and well into the future.

During the fiscal year I formed an NPA Communication and Feedback Committee to provide comments to me based on what employees needed to hear and learn more about. The Committee is made up of employees from all job categories across the Area. They have given our office excellent feedback on topics that need to be addressed and how best to provide information to everyone. The suggestions have been good and I believe have resulted in a much better understanding of the issues out in the locations. We've passed numerous suggestions on communication needs back to HQ for their consideration as well. I'll admit we still have a ways to go to provide everyone information in a timely fashion that covers all the topics people are interested in. However, it's a move in the right direction.

So is there positive news to share these days? Good question and I think it is best answered with a resounding "YES". Although the news from the administrative and budget related side of the organization is not always what we would like to hear we can point to some positives such as an improved ARMP process, the hope of a new and improved travel system later this FY, etc. The scientific accomplishments of our research staff remains outstanding even with reduced permanent budgets, fur-

loughs, and fewer personnel than in previous years. We continue to see many of our scientists recognized for outstanding contributions in their disciplines. Here are some recent award winners: John Gaskin - Sidney, Outstanding Paper in Invasive Plant Science and Management by the Weed Science Society of America; Ken Vogel - retired Lincoln, USDA Secretary's Honor Award; Rob Mitchell - Lincoln, Fellow Agronomy Society; Sharon Papiernik - Brookings, Fellow Agronomy Society and Soil Science Society; David Nielsen - Akron, Carl Sprengel Agronomic Research Award from the Agronomy Society and Fellow Soil Science Society; Guihua Bai - Manhattan, Fellow Crop Science Society; Laj Ahuja - Ft. Collins, International Soil Science Award; Merle Vigil - Akron, Fellow Soil Science Society.



Dr. Chandler



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# Director...

*Continued from page 3*

In addition I'm aware that scientists at Clay Center (Greg Harhay and Tim Smith), Brookings (Jon Lundgren), Logan (Steve Larson), and Manhattan (Scott McVey) recently received new soft fund awards to assist their research. I'm sure I've missed numerous others who have received some type of recognition. It's obvious that our science is well recognized across the U.S. and around the world. Congratulations to everyone listed above and who I may have missed!!!

Finally, I want to thank all of you for your hard work during the past year. I know that some locations recently had various events to recognize employees. The Area Office was pleased to be part of an activity here in Ft. Collins ("ARS Employee Appreciation Day") to recognize the great work everyone accomplished over the past 12 months. I know many of our other locations did something similar for staff. Despite the numerous challenges we've all had to face over the last few years we're still an extremely good Agency. I appreciate what you do each day and your dedication to do your very best to support science and ARS. Thank you!!

Best wishes for the New Year!!!  
 Larry

# Good Things in the NPA!

*By Dr. Bryan Kaphammer  
 Acting Associate Area Director  
 Ft. Collins, CO*

**T**he Federal Laboratory Consortium for Technology Transfer (FLC) is the nationwide network of federal laboratories that provides the forum to develop strategies and opportunities for linking laboratory mission technologies and expertise with the marketplace. The FLC is divided into six regions. The Northern Plains Area of ARS is part of the FLC Mid-Continent Region. The Mid-Continent Region honors outstanding technology transfer annually through their Excellence in Technology Transfer awards. All the Federal Laboratories, like DOD, DOE, EPA, and APHIS, within the region compete for this prestigious award.

*NPA scientists at  
 Manhattan, KS and Clay  
 Center, NE win technology  
 transfer awards!*

The good news is this year Northern Plains Area scientists received two FLC Mid-continent Excellence in Technology Transfer awards. I am proud to announce that Drs. John Tatarko, Larry Wagner, Larry Hagen, Edward Skidmore, Fred Fox, and Simon van Donk (now at UNL) located in Manhattan, KS won the Mid-continent Region FLC Excellence in Technology Transfer for development and transfer of the wind erosion prediction system (WEPS) and Drs. Tommy Wheeler, Steven Shackelford, and Andy King located in Clay Center, NE won the Mid-continent Region FLC Excellence in Technology Transfer for development improvements to the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC) beef carcass grading camera.

WEPS technology allows users, ranging from government agencies and researchers to individual farmers, to apply research findings to specific tracts of land to simulate and assess wind erosion soil loss and develop improved control strategies. The WEPS model, combined with a simple to use interface provides a means to input a basic field description,

calculate soil loss, and display outputs for designing erosion control strategies. It is designed as a complete stand-alone package. The WEPS innovative modular design allows for continual model updating as new knowledge is gained through research. The ARS WEPS Team developed the model primarily for the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Other recipients of WEPS technology include national, state, and local governmental agencies, universities, and managers of disturbed lands (e.g., construction and mining), international users, and individual farmers. WEPS was released to the NRCS and the general public in October, 2010 and is installed on 15,000 USDA computers including those in 2,200 NRCS field offices nationwide.

The USMARC beef carcass grading camera, which is commercialized as the VBG2000 (Vision-For-You, Inc., Dakota Dunes, SD), was designed to evaluate value determining characteristics of beef carcasses under large-scale industrial conditions. The grading camera was designed to be applied to the 12th rib cross section, which is exposed by "ribbing" the chilled beef carcass sides by cutting between the 12th and 13th ribs. Milestone accomplishments by the Beef Carcass Grading Camera team included completion of the required research for approval of the camera by the USDA – Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) for measurement of ribeye area, fat thickness, yield grade, and marbling score. Adoption of the technology by the industry lagged primarily because of differences between instrument-predicted grades, which were aligned to official standards, and observed grades as applied by AMS personnel. Recently, the team conducted analyses for AMS which were used as the basis for adjustment of instrument-predicted marbling scores. This allowed for a seamless transition to instrument grading and now assessments determined using the USMARC beef carcass grading camera are used to determine carcass merit payments in many U.S. and Canadian plants including the four major beef packers and several regional packers. The system is now used to grade ~85% of fed beef in the U.S.

Please join me in congratulating these two research groups for winning this FLC Mid-Continent Excellence in Technology Transfer Award. ♦



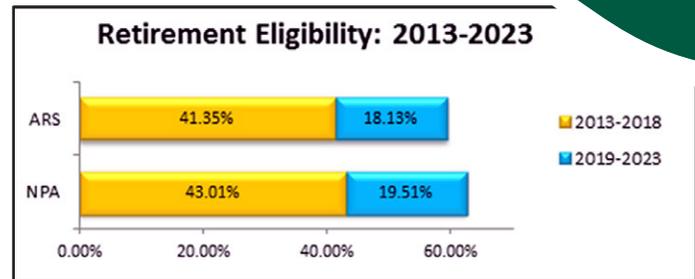
SPECIAL SECTION - RETIREMENT

# ARS Retirements

## Are You Ready for the Tsunami?

By Barbara King  
ODEO Program Manager, Fort Collins, CO

Retirement is the theme for this issue of VOICES. The past several years have been awash in predictions of a tsunami of retirements in the federal workforce, and the justifiable concern over what could amount to a relatively sudden loss of expertise throughout the organization and across all levels. For ARS and NPA, the percentage of the permanent workforce eligible for retirement in FY 13 stood at nearly 23% for NPA and 20% for ARS. The tsunami has not quite arrived, especially since many employees choose to retire years after they first become eligible, yet it is likely that separations will occur with



increasing regularity in the coming years. This loss of expertise could be mitigated somewhat with new hires, except that for the past few years, hires have simply not kept pace with separations. How soon that may change is anyone's guess. What is clear, though, is that the number of permanent employees in ARS and NPA have fallen every year since at least FY 07, and the combination of retirement eligibility, steady separations, and low hiring rates spell challenges for NPA/ARS in the coming years. ♦

# Planning for Retirement in Five Years

**Editor's Note:** The following information was condensed from the OPM website. For a full version of the information, go to: <http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/csrs-information/planning-and-applying/#url=Overview>

By John Gaskin  
Botanist / Research Leader, Sidney, MT

**Y**ou should begin planning several years before the date you have set for retirement so that you will know what is required to continue certain benefits into retirement. The best place to begin is with our NPA Human Resources Specialist, Jewel Vargas; [Jewel.Vargas@ars.usda.gov](mailto:Jewel.Vargas@ars.usda.gov) or (301) 504-4319.

Your health and life insurance coverage is of immediate concern now because you must carry coverage continuously for at least five years before your retirement or you may be ineligible to continue them.

You may also need some preliminary

information to make decisions about when you can afford to retire and whether to make any necessary payments to receive credit for military or non-contributory service or repay any retirement contribution refunds.

You should review your Official Personnel Folder (OPF) to make sure that there is verification of all of your military and civilian service.

You should ask for a form SSA-7004-PC, Request for Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement, from your local Social Security Office or search for SSA-7004-PC on the web. If you submit this form, you will get a statement that provides information on your future eligibility for Social Security benefits and estimates of these benefits at specified dates.

### Steps to Take When You Get Within One Year of Retiring

When you get within one year of retirement eligibility, you should:

- Confirm when you will be eligible to get a retirement benefit;

- Decide when you want to retire;
- Get information about other benefits to which you may also be eligible, such as Thrift Savings Plan payment options and any other entitlements based on employment, for example: Foreign Service, Social Security, pensions from private industry, and Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA). You should have a fairly comprehensive picture of all sources of your retirement income and when each is payable.
- Tell your supervisor about your proposed retirement date. You should give sufficient notice to allow for planning for someone to take your place.
- Attend a pre-retirement counseling seminar.
- Make an appointment with your Administrative Officer to review your Official Personnel Folder (OPF) or its equivalent to make sure all your records are complete and accurate, all service is verified, and your insurance coverage is documented. ♦

**SPECIAL SECTION - RETIREMENT**

# Retiring to a New Life at African Orphanage

By Barbara King  
 ODEO Program Mgr., Fort Collins, CO

**T**he theme of this issue of **VOICES** is retirement, from when to how to what after. Following is an interview with Larry Renner, who has been busy not only with his current job as an electronics technician at Mandan, but also busy reimagining the “what” after retirement. For Larry and his wife, Cindy, that “what” has been fairly well-defined and planned-out, as they will soon relocate to a country in Africa to work in an orphanage. Below are notes from a conversation I had with Larry looking back at his time with ARS and looking forward to his life reimagined.

**What drives you to make such a big change?**

A number of things led us to this decision. One, the need is so great, especially for children who have lost their parents and really have no one who can care for them. Two, neither Cindy nor I can imagine a better way of spending this next stage of our lives than by helping others in a very meaningful and personal way. Neither of us wants to just spend our retirement with our feet up. We still feel like we have something to give.

**Do you know yet what you will be doing, and where?**

Of the ten countries in which Rafiki Foundation has orphanages, we expect that we will be assigned to a school (K-12) in either Tanzania or Malawi. Regardless of where we go, we will be serving in a school for orphans. Each school has about 100 students. These orphanages not only help educate children, but provide a safe home and somewhat of a family setting. One of the goals of this program is to provide a home environment, education, and training, so that children can grow up in as normal a setting as possible, so that they can then turn around and help their country.



*ARS electronics technician Larry Renner, and wife, Cindy, with orphaned children in the Rafiki program in Tanzania. The couple plans to move to Tanzania following retirement to work at one of the organization’s African orphanages.*



*Children at a Rafiki Foundation orphanage in Tanzania. The Renners will be working with the Foundation in Africa when Larry retires this coming July.*

Continued next page →

SPECIAL SECTION - RETIREMENT

# Retiring...

*Continued from page 6*

## Why is there such a need for orphan-ages?

In Africa there are a large number of orphans, and widows, largely due to AIDS, poor access to medical care and accidents, especially car accidents. There are so many reasons people die young in Africa. Besides AIDS, malaria can also be deadly, and the ratio of physicians to patients can be as low as 1 physician per 100,000 people. Also, reliable and clean water sources are in short supply. In many African countries, when a husband dies, his parents and siblings can basically take everything, leaving his widow and children in near-instant poverty. The Rafiki Foundation has stepped in to provide a home, and school, and really a future, for orphans and widows.

## How did you become interested in this program?

As you may recall, from our previous conversations our original goal was to move to China after retirement, but we struggled finding a way we could serve there due to the difficulty of learning to speak Chinese. Close friends of ours in Bismarck introduced us to the Rafiki program, and we traveled to Tanzania with them to do a short term project last year. We had no intention of moving there permanently, but right away we were drawn to the possibilities of what we could do without a language barrier. Those friends are also planning to move to Tanzania after his retirement next November. He is a physician, and we are hoping to be assigned to the same location because Cindy is a Physician Assistant and this might make it possible to cast a wider net of health care services. Wherever we are assigned, we know that we will be making a difference and that is really what drove us to this decision.

## Does what you have been doing with ARS easily translate into this new role?

Absolutely! In the 3rd world technical skills are highly desired and extremely useful, and my electronic background will be of immense use. More generally, working in science requires personal



*Larry Renner with students at a Tanzanian school for orphans.*



*The beautiful natural setting of the Renners' likely new "retirement community" in Tanzania, a Rafiki Foundation orphanage and school in Tanzania.*

organization and the ability to look at problems and identify what needs to be done and how to move from there to solving the problem. One of the projects I hope to be involved in is the Rafiki Institute of Classical Education – or RICE program which has the goal of training

teachers and headmasters to better operate and staff African primary schools. Running a school requires the same set of problem-solving methods and organizational and administrative skills as I have been able to learn during my career.

*Continued next page* →

**SPECIAL SECTION - RETIREMENT**

**Retiring...** *Continued from page 7*

**Have you committed to any sort of time frame?**

We hope to last for 10 years, but commit to 2-year assignments, with six weeks off every year. Due to the cost of airline tickets, we will most likely not be able to come back to the states EVERY year, but hope to get back every 18 – 24 months. Before committing to this, we spent 3 weeks in an orphanage in Tanzania, and knew almost immediately that this was a calling that we wanted to pursue in a larger way. English is the primary language in the schools we will associate with which will make it much easier to jump right in.

**Have you always yearned for travel and adventure?**

I guess I always have had a desire to learn about other countries, other cultures, and other people. I grew up in North Dakota and after doing the college scene for a year I enlisted in the Air Force in the midst of the Viet Nam War. The Air Force trained me as a translator and I spent two years in Germany.

**Will Bismarck continue to serve as a sort of “home base” for you and Cindy?**

Not really, although our daughter and some of our extended family are in the Bismarck area. Cindy and I are selling our home in Bismarck and are relocating to Deland, FL where we have purchased a small home and where we will likely spend some of our furlough time. We have been downsizing, which hasn't been

as hard for me as it has for Cindy, since she has a more emotional attachment to the stories these objects and places tell. Every family needs a historian, and in our family that is Cindy.

**Is there anything that gives you pause about this next stage?**

Probably the only thing that concerns me a bit is contracting malaria or some other disease and not being able to receive adequate and timely medical attention. For far too many people in rural Africa, hospitals are a place to die, not places to heal. As far as personal safety, I'm not dwelling on thoughts of potential danger in terms of violence, although even in this country, we find ourselves avoiding mass crowds. Traffic is another concern since we'll most likely have to learn to drive on the left side of the road, but we'll just learn to be careful and vigilant.

**Is there anything in particular that you will miss, and what are you most looking forward to?**

I'm most looking forward to living in Africa and making a difference in the lives of others. I haven't given a lot of thought, but certainly will miss our garden, and the backyard we have worked on for 20 years, the easy proximity of friends and family, familiar surroundings, air conditioning and the amenities of urban and rural living. While our new home in Africa won't be as large, it will have many of the modern comforts of home.

**Sounds like you will be mentoring a lot**

**of young people. Was there any one person who you consider a mentor to you?**

Without a doubt that would be Jon Hanson, the former RL of the Mandan research lab. I started my career with ARS as a research assistant taking soil samples, which I started soon after finishing my BA at North Dakota State University. About 8 years ago, Jon saw that my real interests and skill sets had moved to electronics, education, and computers, so he changed my PD and the rest is pretty much history.

**Do you have words of advice for ARS colleagues?**

Don't be afraid to take chances and follow your dreams. I've loved this job and I can now look forward to positively impacting the lives of hundreds of people. Having a good pension and health insurance definitely help make it possible to give back, and for that I'm very grateful. For me, taking this step is leading me in the direction I want to take, and a legacy I want to leave.

Further information about the program we will be working with can be found at: [www.rafikifoundation.org](http://www.rafikifoundation.org).

*Larry's last day with ARS will be July 18, and he and Cindy will start this new adventure shortly after that. Larry, thanks for your enthusiasm with the NPA Diversity Task Force, and we wish you and Cindy all the best. ♦*

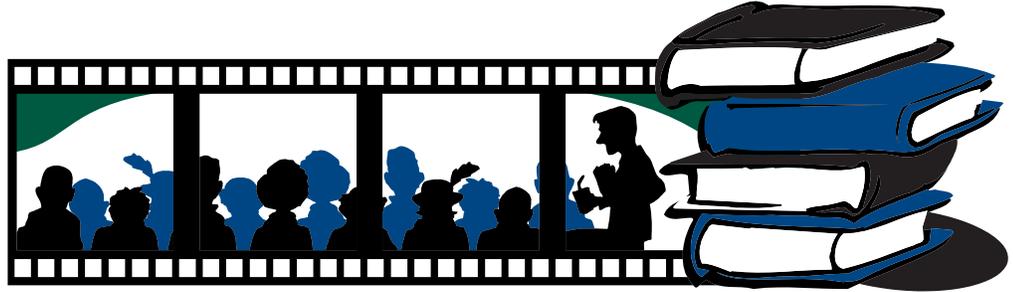


*Larry and Cindy Renner chatting with youngsters at a Tanzanian orphanage. The couple plans to return to Tanzania in retirement to help the many children there orphaned by AIDS and violence.*

# Diversity - On the Shelf and on the Screen

**Editor's note:** "On the Shelf and On the Screen" provides reviews of books and videos that deal with diversity as another means of learning about diversity. We invite you to contribute your recommendations for inclusion in future editions of "Voices" – simply email your recommendations with a short description to:

NPA-DTF@ars.usda.gov



## BOOK REVIEW

### "Lean In - Women, Work, and the Will to Lead"

By Sheryl Sandberg with Nell Scovell

Review by Carol Chitko-McKown  
Clay Center, NE

Despite this book being a national best seller, making the New York Times best seller list, and being short-listed by Good Reads for the best non-fiction category (eventually placing at number 3 behind "The Autistic Brain" by Temple Grandin, and "Gulp" by Mary Roach), I didn't expect to enjoy this book. I didn't read any reviews in advance and assumed it would be another "how you too can be a success" self-help book. However, I really, really, enjoyed this book. At 172 pages (not counting acknowledgments and footnotes and there are a lot of those) it is a quick and interesting read.

Author Sheryl Sandberg currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer at Facebook, and has held other "C-level" positions at Google and the U.S. Treasury Department and has plenty of experience being a woman in top leadership roles. Her writing partner Nell Scovell is a TV and magazine writer. The first three chapters mirror Sheryl Sandberg's 2010 TEDtalk

([http://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl\\_sandberg\\_why\\_we\\_have\\_too\\_few\\_women\\_leaders.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_why_we_have_too_few_women_leaders.html)) – if you're not sure this is the book for you, I recommend taking the 15 minutes to watch the video and then decide. What becomes very clear early on is that attaining success is very different for women and men. A major premise of this book is that despite being 50% of the population, women rather than serving in 50% of the leadership positions hold only

14% of the executive office positions and 17% of the board seats in Fortune 500 companies. Why? What is holding them back? Obviously this is not just true in corporate America – think of the leadership in our organization and similar trends are evident.

If you are a woman, the examples described in the book may be very familiar to you – they were a validation to me that differential treatment wasn't all in my head. Lest you worry this is a "man-bashing" manifesto, I assure you it is not. Differences exist for a number of reasons and although misogyny is one of them, many are due to cultural norms, and subconscious bias that is practiced by men and women alike. For example: in a meeting both men and women are more likely to interrupt a woman and give credit to a man for an idea first proposed by a woman! One important point made in Chapter 3 "Success and Likeability" is that in men success is positively correlated with likeability, but in women, the correlation is negative! We are all familiar with men appearing to be forceful while women are considered badgering or worse.

Chapters 4 through 10 focused more on how to work your way through the system, and include a chapter on the importance of having and being a good mentor. Having been blessed with good, and cursed with bad mentors throughout my career, I can vouch for this! Although clearly written from the viewpoint of a career in business, the advice and examples given are readily applicable to careers in research and/or federal service.

I highly recommend this book to young women soon to be entering their professional lives – or possibly even prior to that – so that they can recognize behaviors within themselves and others that can hold them back. I recommend this book

to managers at all levels so that they too can learn to recognize bias that may be holding back their female employees. I recommend this book to men so that they can become more cognizant of the challenges that their wives, daughters, sisters, mothers, and female colleagues deal with on a regular basis and that they, by virtue of their sex, never had to overcome. Until we all recognize the challenges exist, very little will be accomplished in achieving equality in leadership roles for men and women.

## FILM REVIEW

### "20 Feet From Stardom"

Review by Barbara King  
Ft. Collins, CO

"20 Feet From Stardom" tells the story of a handful of back-up singers and how they not only influenced but "made" many of the hit songs and careers of so many headliners and legends. This documentary deftly moves between interviews with several major back-up singers – Merry Clayton, Darlene Love, Judith Hill, Jo Lawry, Lisa Fischer, and Tata Vega – clips of their performances and studio sessions, and most of all, the incredible stories each has to tell. It's a musical and story feast for all.

The title of the film is a nod to the singers who literally were 20 feet from center stage, yet their rich voices and harmonies were the bridge between the star and the music. Imagine if you can how empty the hit R&B and rock songs would sound without the back-ups. While many of the back-ups enjoyed long careers and some financial reward, not all were content to remain in the shadows.

Continued next page →

## On the Shelf....

*Continued from page 9*

Many of the women portrayed in the documentary tried to forge solo careers with varying degrees of success. Despite their awesome vocal talents, the film shows that making it as a big-name soloist is incredibly difficult and requires good material and at a minimum the support of producers. The talented Darlene Love certainly had the skills and drive, but was blocked at nearly every corner by producer Phil Spector who kept her contractually obligated as a back-up to his business.

The documentary was released this past summer to high acclaim. Like most films, it is best watched on the big screen, but a home video will work also. There are so many scenes and clips – my favorite is Merry Clayton blasting out her part in the Rolling Stones’ “Gimme Shelter” album. I think I just may add this video to my wish list and treat myself to another viewing. It’s that good. ♦

## Connect... with your co-workers!

### R3 - ARS Cultural Transformation (CT) Website:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/YourTwoCents/ctblog/index.html>

### CT Blog:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/YourTwoCents/ctblog/Blog.html>

### Y2C:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwoCents/>

### Administrative Transformation (USDA Connect Website - use e-Auth):

<https://connections.usda.gov/communities/service/html/communityview?communityUId=d8f08ee1-a34a-4f66-ac0c-f6483b4acd97>

## VOICES - Technology Corner

By Heather Gossel  
 IT Specialist, Ft. Collins, CO

Welcome to the Technology Corner where we will share a few updates regarding technology in our Agency, which has been undergoing a number of changes lately. For example...

### The New ARS Web Site is Here!

<http://www.ars.usda.gov>

After overcoming many technical challenges that delayed our planned launch of the new ARS Web site in early spring, the site went live on November 9, 2013! ARS’s new site conforms to USDA’s Web Standards and Style Guide (2.0), which was updated August 2013.

Keep in mind that we’re still working out the kinks, and that we welcome input on content! If you have a photo to add to your Location’s Photo Carousel, news or events to add, or anything else you would like to see, please speak with your Location Webmaster.

**Did you know?** The People Listing in the right/middle section of all webpages can be overwritten to include important links or information!

### USDA Logo

USDA’s Visual Standards Guide addresses new regulations on using logos / marks / identifiers in agency products. It is part of USDA’s larger branding effort and initiatives to improve customer access to all USDA Web sites.

### USDA Visual Standards Guide – January 2013

<http://www.usda.gov/documents/visual-standards-guide-january-2013.pdf>

“The use of agency and staff logos in Signature lockups is being phased out and replaced with a signature model that features only the USDA symbol.”

### USDA Digital Style Guide – January 2013

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdhome?contentidonly=true&contentid=DigitalStyleGuide.html>



**New ARS web site - note no ARS logo**

### e. Branding (refer to Symbol standards and Branding guidance)

The USDA symbol is the official and sole identifying mark for the Department and all agency programs. USDA’s Visual Standards Guide provides direction regarding the use and application of the symbol for all information products regardless of medium in accordance with Departmental Regulation 1430-002, “Use of Logos/Marks at the United States Department of Agriculture.”

To sum it up, agencies should ONLY be using the USDA logo on new products and documents.

### Your Two Cents (Y2C)

Your Two Cents (Y2C) continues to be a valuable conduit of information for ARS employees, not only as a direct line of communication to ARS leadership, but also as a way to share important information about the budget and agency happenings—like the retirement of Administrator Dr. Edward B. Knipling, a 46-year veteran of ARS! Keep those ideas and best practices coming!

The Cultural Transformation (CT) Team is also busy working on the CT Action Plan for 2014, and this will be their most aggressive effort yet. One priority will be to form new, strong lines of communication with the Human Resources Division and other offices to ensure the success of ARS Cultural Transformation efforts in the coming year. As always, the Team wants to hear from you, so please continue to email us and let us know your plans and activities!

### ARS Intranet

The ARS Intranet Team is working hard to bring you the brand new ARS Intranet in 2014. Stay tuned for more! ♦

## A Taste of the NPA

# Central, South American Seafood Dish a Hit

Have you ever heard of Ceviche? According to Wikipedia: "Ceviche is a seafood dish popular in the coastal regions of the Americas, especially Central

and South America. The dish is typically made from fresh raw fish marinated in citrus juices, such as lemon or lime." This particular recipe is from David Toledo at

the Mandan, ND location. His assessment of the dish? "It is Delicious!!!" And here's your chance to give this unique dish a try. Enjoy!

## Ceviche

*Submitted by David Toledo and Becky Wald  
Rangeland Management Specialist and Bio Science Technician, Mandan, ND*

### Ingredients:

1 lb. of white fresh fish  
(i.e. Halibut, cod, tilapia)  
12 Limes  
2 White or red onions  
6 Roma tomatoes  
1 bunch of Cilantro  
Salt  
Other (Depending on region  
some of the following  
ingredients might be added:  
avocado, hot sauce, pepper,  
garlic)

### Preparation:

- Cut fish into small squares (1/2 inch x 1/2 inch or smaller) and put it into a deep mixing bowl
- Squeeze the juice of 9 limes onto the fish, add some salt and let the fish and lime mix sit in the fridge for about 2 hours while mixing it occasionally
- Chop up cilantro, onions and tomatoes and add into a second mixing bowl. Add salt and "other" spices or avocado.
- Once the two hours have passed, take the fish and lime mix out of the fridge and pour out the liquid from the bowl.
- Add cilantro and vegetable mix to the fish and squeeze the rest of the limes into this mix.
- Add salt to taste and let the whole mix sit in the fridge for another 30 minutes.
- The Ceviche is now ready to eat. Ceviche is eaten very differently throughout Latin America. In Peru (where ceviche is originally from) and other parts of South America, people eat it by itself or on top of some sort of chip or cracker. In Mexico people eat it on top of a tostada (fried corn tortilla).

## WHERE IN THE NPA?



*The Army Corps of Engineers is busy at work on this "gate" in one of the grade control structures being installed at what location?*

*Show your own location pride! Share your pictures of scenic landmarks, fun festivities or occupational oddities that make your location uniquely you!*

*(See page 15 for details.)*

# Impact of Supreme Court Ruling on Same Sex Spouses

By Kruger Bryant

Bio. Science Technician, Manhattan, KS

On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was unconstitutional and so struck down. Because of this many Federal Employees with legally married same sex spouses are now granted the same benefits for their spouses as heterosexual spouses have heretofore enjoyed.

There is still some confusion regarding the term "Legally Married" however so let's clear this up by stating that any same sex couple legally married in a state, or District of Columbia, that offered or offers same sex marriage (CA, CT, DE, HI, IA, IL, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, RI, VA, WA) now has access to benefits. For the purposes of the USDA, this is regardless of what state you may live in now. For example, my spouse and I were legally married in California but now live in Kansas, a state that prohibits recognition of same sex marriage. The state laws of Kansas are irrelevant to our USDA benefits so my husband now has dental, health, life, long term care and vision insurance through my policies with USDA-ARS. Because of a rule in OPM that adverse actions taken against employees within the last 6 years can be appealed, we were able to appeal a former denial of relocation benefits for my spouse when we were transferred to Kansas from Wyoming 3 1/2 years ago. This is because he was denied spousal benefits based upon DOMA at the time, which has since been declared unconstitutional.

This change in same sex couples status also affects those couples adherence to Federal Ethics Rules equally with the opposite sex couples. This includes matters such as filing public or confidential financial disclosure reports, a spouse's financial interests are now treated the same as the federal employees own. So criminal conflict of interest statutes are now applicable to all legally married same sex couples no matter what Agency you may work for. If you have any questions you will need to contact your ethics advisor in the Office of Ethics.

There are still some branches of the government that are struggling with the SCOTUS (Supreme Court of the United

States) ruling due to express language written into regulations that had nothing to do with DOMA. For instance, the definition of spouse used by the Social Security Administration is based upon the laws of the state of residence, not where you were married. This creates problems for more than same sex spouses as different states have different laws regarding common law marriages, marriages to first cousins, and within our lifetimes, laws against miscegenation, a polite (?) word for No Inter-Racial Marriages. The Social Security Agency, and others, are grappling with redefining their terminology but this will take time and various levels of legislative action to make the laws/regs consistent throughout the United States.

One final matter I would like to address

today is why Domestic Partners cannot share in spousal benefits. The answer is simply that now both opposite sex, and same sex couples all have the advantage of marriage if they really want these benefits. Hopefully that's not the only reason anyone would choose to get married-frankly, from my perspective, marriage is a lot of work and attention-worthy it overall but not to be entered into lightly. It's about a lifetime commitment and that has a lot of implications for a long time in any couple's life.

Following are some links where you may further explore access to Federal Benefits for same sex couples that are being offered since June 26. I hope that you find this information useful and will pass it along to whomever may benefit from its content. ♦

## Web Resources

- <http://www.dhs.gov/topic/implementation-supreme-court-ruling-defense-marriage-act>
- <http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/publications-forms/benefits-administration-letters/2013/13-203.pdf>
- [www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/carriers/#url=Carrier-Letters](http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/carriers/#url=Carrier-Letters)
- <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnnextoid=2543215c310af310VgnVCM10000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=2543215c310af310VgnVCM10000082ca60aRCRD>
- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/federal-eye/wp/2013/09/04/obama-administration-extends-veterans-benefits-to-same-sex-married-couples/?hpid=z3>
- <http://chcoc.gov/transmittals/TransmittalDetails.aspx?TransmittalID=5834>
- <https://www.chcoc.gov/transmittals/TransmittalDetails.aspx?TransmittalID=5700>
- <http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/publications-forms/benefits-administration-letters/2013/13-203.pdf>
- <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/press-releases/new-report-estimated-1-4-million-latino-adults-in-the-u-s-identify-as-lgbt/>
- <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/10/30/2013-25734/federal-employees-health-benefits-program-and-federal-employees-dental-and-vision-insurance-program>

# Mandan Interns Featured in Television News Segment

**Editor's Note:** The following is a transcript of a television segment from KXNews in Bismarck, ND, featuring three interns at the Mandan, ND location this past summer.

**W**hile men have dominated the fields for years, more and more women are becoming a part of the agriculture industry. Ag Reporter Sarah Gustin introduces us to three female interns with a passion for the land. From the pastures to the fields--these young ladies want to know what's happening in the outdoors.

**Allison Haider / Intern:** "This summer I am working on a project through my internship and we are focusing on Kentucky blue grass invasion in the rangelands. I get to be outside almost everyday in the field collecting samples and taking different data. I really like that aspect of it. But, my favorite part would be I get to work with three of the scientists on staff here."

The Northern Great Plains Research Lab south of Mandan has been hiring interns for decades. This year they have 11 new faces on staff. These three college students are all science majors, trying to discover what truly drives them.

**Ashley Bateman / Intern:** "The scientist that I work with he has three studies going on. Learning all those different things and I know my dad has integrated



2013 Mandan, ND interns (from left), Allison Haider, Ashley Bateman and Molly Bina in the field.

those into our own farming practices at home, so it's been really interesting to hear it first hand from the scientists."

While Allison and Ashley spend a majority of their days outside, Molly is taking a different approach. She's spending most of her waking hours in the lab.

**Molly Bina / Intern:** "I've always loved science in high school and stuff. I wanted to pursue it in college. I really liked the lab aspect of college, I thought maybe research would be a possible career field for me. So that is why I got started on it here. Thought it would be a good

opportunity to get into the day to day routine of being in the lab and working with lab professionals."

While all three of these ladies say they enjoy what they do--it might still be a little too early to make a career decision.

**Allison Haider / Intern:** "I really, really like it. I like being outside. I like the science of it, but I am really trying to figure it out. I know I want to do something in the Biology field, I just don't know what area yet."

The internships run from June through August. ♦



2013 USMARC Interns from left: Allison Hobson, Kassie Starkey, Matthew Johnson, Elaine VenJohn, Stephanie Schuler, Nathan Felder, Whitney Stuart, Tasha Womack and Emily Tosky. Also pictured is Center Director Dr. John Pollak.

## USMARC Interns

**T**he US Meat Animal Research Center at Clay Center, NE hosted nine interns this past summer. The students are all majoring in animal science fields at their respective universities which include SD State University, Ft. Hays State University; Kansas State University, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Texas Tech University; North Carolina State University, and Texas A&M University. Funding for the internships was provided by USMARC, NIFA grants, and the NPA Intern Program. The 2013 interns are pictured at left.

## USDA NATIONAL OBSERVANCES

### January

Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday

### February

Black History Month

### March

National Women's History Month

### April

Take Your Sons and Daughters to Work Day (ARS)

### May

Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

### June

National Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

### September 15 - October 15

National Hispanic Heritage Month

### October

National Disability Awareness Month

### November

National American Indian Heritage Month

# Famous Civil Rights March is 50!

**Editor's Note:** 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of the historic March on Washington at which Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Test your knowledge of that historic event with the brief quiz below. These questions and more can be found at the following PBS website:

<http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/connect/quizzes/march-on-washington-quiz-questions-and-answers/knowledge-test/>

## QUESTIONS:

1. How long did organizers have to plan the 1963 March on Washington?

- a. 2 months
- b. 6 months
- c. 1 year

2. Two individuals were instrumental in organizing the logistics and details of the March. Who were they?

- a. A. Philip Randolph / Bayard Rustin
- b. Whitney Young / Daisy Bates
- c. John Lewis / Roy Wilkens

3. 100,000 people were expected at the march. How many actually showed up?

- a. 250,000
- b. 100,000
- c. 500,000

4. What was the complete name for the March on Washington?

- a. March on WA for Equal Rights
- b. March on WA for Jobs & Freedom
- c. March on WA for Rights & Votes

5. Who delivered the final speech of the day?

- a. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- b. James Farmer
- c. John Lewis

6. What monumental laws did the March on Washington influence?

- a. Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965
- b. Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964
- c. Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972.

## ANSWERS:

1. a. 2. a. 3. a. 4. b. 5. a. 6. a.

*Interesting note:* Dr. King was originally allotted 4 minutes, but ultimately used 19 to deliver his historic "I Have a Dream" speech.

# Location Holiday Celebrations



Some of the costumes spotted at the USMARC 16th Annual Chili Cook Off Oct. 31, 2013. From left: Kim Kucera (Sister Kim), Sue Hauver (Boba Fett), Tara McDanel (Crazy Cat Lady), Tammy Sorensen (Maid Marian), Jan Watts (Pony Express Rider), and Sandy Fryda-Bradley (Medusa).



The Lincoln, NE Location's Administrative Staff got into the Christmas spirit with holiday headpieces. Pictured from left are Nikki Herrera, Amber Isenbart, Cheri Marshall, Donna Martin, Alvin Harding, and Amy Wheatley.

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Where in the NPA? - Answer Key

This construction is underway at the Roman L. Hruska US Meat Animal Research Center at Clay Center, NE.

Share Your Favorite Pictures!

E-mail your photos and captions to Barbara King or Beth Redlin (addresses on this page).

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