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Dear members of the Norman Human Rights Commission,

I am submitting a nomination letter to the Norman Human Rights Commission asking that they consider Ashley Nicole McCray as a recipient of this year's Human Rights Award.

McCray has been active on many fronts in securing equal treatment for Oklahoma's Indigenous Peoples. Her work and advocacy on behalf of Oklahoma's 36 federally-recognized tribes has yielded positive results for University of Oklahoma and the residents of the City of Norman. McCray's work is a great example of how a few dedicated individuals can contribute to making Norman a more inclusive and welcoming community for people of diverse backgrounds.

In early 2015, McCray led an effort to implement a new diversity policy requiring new and incoming students at OU to take a mandatory diversity training courses. This effort was well received by OU administrators and McCray helped develop the course materials. This also led OU to take a position against the overtly racist and culturally insensitive "Cowboy & Indian"-themed parties hosted by fraternities and sororities on the OU campus. The faux headdresses, feathers, and costumes worn by party goers at the Cowboy & Indian-themed events mockingly appropriate the cultures and spiritual significance of traditional tribal regalia which is held sacred by indigenous peoples. McCray was recognized by the White House's *Champions for Change* program.

[http://www.oudaily.com/news/alleged-cowboys-and-indians-party-prompts-mandatory-diversity-trainings/article\\_655bcaa4-a675-11e4-bd03-9f6f0a45438d.html](http://www.oudaily.com/news/alleged-cowboys-and-indians-party-prompts-mandatory-diversity-trainings/article_655bcaa4-a675-11e4-bd03-9f6f0a45438d.html)

Through September and October 2015, McCray, along with co-organizers from Indigenize OU, led a successful campaign to recognize the second Monday in October as Indigenous People's Day. The declaration of Indigenous Peoples Day makes the University of Oklahoma one of the first universities in the country to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. The City of Anadarko passed a similar resolution in late September 2015. Oklahoma City and the City of Norman have been

approached with similar resolutions, although those cities have not yet committed.

The OU declaration has received the enthusiastic support from student government associations as well as OU President David Boren.

[http://www.oudaily.com/news/ou-president-boren-issues-proclamation-in-support-of-indigenous-peoples/article\\_e4086a58-6bad-11e5-bf5c-fb1b6615145e.html](http://www.oudaily.com/news/ou-president-boren-issues-proclamation-in-support-of-indigenous-peoples/article_e4086a58-6bad-11e5-bf5c-fb1b6615145e.html)

The work of McCray and her fellow organizers has come with great personal risk. They have been subject to racist tirades from opponents and even death threats over social media. McCray is a doctoral candidate at the University and has often felt pressure from members of her department to either tone down her activism, or scale back her advocacy and campus-based organizing. She has not been intimidated into silence and continues her advocacy as before.

Thank you very much for considering Ashley Nicole McCray as a candidate for this year's Human Rights Commission Award.

Respectfully submitted,

Casey Holcomb

Norman Citizen

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