



Enis Ragland - Renaissance Man

by Betty Banks

Political life can be exciting, controversial, satisfying and unnerving. For Enis Ragland, it has been a combination of all of the above. He has worked in the State Capitol as an Aide to Senator Spencer Coggs and has served under 3 Mayors. Presently, he is the interim director of the Community Services Department for the City of Madison.

His cool demeanor and his impeccable appearance set him apart from others in City government. Most will say that on a local level, citizens want to see things getting done. And they want to know that they have been heard. Attend any City Council public hearing about a hot topic and you will get a taste of government in action.

Enis is part of that action. Watch him in meetings. It is obvious that he is listening and paying attention. This style of public service bodes well with those who are trying to access help from someone who can do so. It was early in his life that he knew that he wanted to be a



public servant.

"I am a child who grew up during the 50's and 60's and the civil rights movement. I was very much influenced by Malcolm X and Dr. King. I knew that non-violence was very powerful. And, the death of Dr. King had a great impact on me. I knew I would never just sit on the sidelines".

His interest was heightened after graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a degree in history. A stint as Legislative Assistant and then Policy Advisor for Senator Spencer Coggs, solidified his interest and opened the door to public service and municipal government.

"Government ensures that there are protections for citizens and that the health, safety and welfare of the community is maintained," Enis

says. When asked about the balance between the powerful and the powerless, he says that this balance is about the willingness of people in power to give access to the powerless so that they can have a voice. And, he goes on, "It is also up to people like me to help them understand how this can happen."

This has happened. "My door is always open to those who need someone to talk to," he emphatically adds. "I have helped many get what they need. This is not always widely publicized, but there are people out there who have walked through my door."

This is what is so satisfying for Enis, knowing that he can make a difference. "What motivates me is

decisions.

In addition to his work life, Enis is proud to talk about his involvement with the 100 Black Men. He is the founding president of this organization that has a commitment to helping youth. He described how the group came together, "After talking to a few brothers here in Madison, we decided to form a chapter. We strive to model behavior that can be emulated, such as taking care of family, working hard, giving back to the community and living every day lives that strengthen the community."

The "100" are known to reach out to youth through activities and mentoring. They encourage young people to work hard, stay in school, stay

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drug free and become productive members of their communities. Enis feels that they play an

important role in Madison. He also believes that voting is important, not only because people fought and died for Blacks to have the right to vote, but also because, "Politicians affect every facet of our lives, from health-care to taxes," he strongly emphasizes. It is his belief that being involved in the process is paramount for changes to be made, especially on the local level.

He knows this because he has watched and participated in the work of government for many years. But there is more to him than running to meetings and making tough

decisions.

Outside interests include art for Enis. He says if he were to choose something else to do instead of his present work, he would choose to get involved with the arts. "I would love to open a studio where artists could come to create.

It would be a place for performers and others to work and showcase their abilities." It is not surprising that an art studio and gallery for struggling artists would be his dream job. It fits his reason for wanting to go into public service. He just wants to make a difference in the lives of people.

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YW Transit Keeping Families Safe, Connected, & Healthy by Kristen Petroschius YW Transit Assistant Program Coordinator

With the unfortunate death of Kelly Nolan, everyone in Madison and Dane County is increasingly aware of the danger of being out late at night. Low-income women especially are looking for ways to stay safe but also get to the places they need to go - to a third shift job, to their family's to pick up their children from childcare, and to the grocery store.

With the aim of preventing sexual assault and violence, YW Transit began providing free nighttime rides for people in Madison with no other viable transportation options this past July. YW Transit also provides community assistance daytime rides for Medical Assistance patients traveling to doctor's appointments, and contracts rides with community agencies needing to get clients to services.

Already we are hearing stories of gratitude for our service, demonstrating how much this program is needed here in

Madison. One woman thanks us because before YW Transit started she had to sleep in the West Transfer Point bus stop. Having gotten off of work late at night, she put herself at high risk of sexual assault and violence because she had no transportation.

Another woman thanked us immensely for being able to give her a ride when a family member threatened to beat her if she didn't leave the house immediately. With no car and no money, YW Transit was this woman's only way to get out of a threatening situation. Thanks to YW Transit, this woman did not become another statistic of domestic violence.

In some ways the work YW Transit does seems like a little thing; it's just a ride. But that ride can prevent violence from occurring. Furthermore, riding the bus for two hours can be rather depressing. If a parent can get home earlier with the help of YW Transit, they are able to do schoolwork with

their kids and spend time with their family - which are crucial things we need for our mental health and happiness.

Rather than respond to sexual assault and violence after it has occurred, YW Transit takes a preventative approach to the problem by offering free, safe nighttime rides every night of the year between 8pm-2am. We are also looking to build a base of over 70 volunteers, so that we are able to offer rides commensurate with the demand.

While YW Transit is a new program, it builds off the foundation laid by Women's Transit Authority. Founded in 1973, WTA prevented sexual assault and violence by providing free nighttime rides to women. Unfortunately, WTA closed due to financial problems in January 2006.

YW Transit RIDELINE: 316-6888



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