

## **IRCO Speech -**

Thank you so very much for inviting me to join you at this special event of honoring diversity. I am so pleased to be able to address the many communities represented here and I am also honored to be able to represent all of you as your Portland City Commissioner.

During the few short months I have been Commissioner, we have hosted several events with the Refugee and Immigrant Program. The Slavic Youth Leadership Conference, Asian-American Youth Leadership and the Multi-Cultural Neighbors Fair are but a few of these conferences and they were very well attended.

Several weeks ago, we were pleased to welcome over 900 students from the Asian Youth Conference and many of my staff spent the entire day learning about issues of importance to these Youth. We were pleased to see such devoted students committed to helping make a difference in the world and in their communities. There was a real sense of hope in those young people and that is a lesson from our youth that we must never forget. Hope and determination. With all we see on television and in the newspaper, sometimes it is hard to remember those two simple words.

One of the many duties I have as Commissioner is to oversee the office of Neighborhood Involvement, which houses the Refugee and Immigrant Program. This critical service is going to become increasingly important as we continue to witness the unrest across the world.

We must all prepare to welcome even more of those who have suffered unspeakable atrocities in their own countries-and who have made the perilous journey to come to America. They are coming in search of a better life, protection, hope for a place to start over.

Reading through the *New Neighbor News*, I am constantly amazed at the number of immigrants moving into Portland. They are Afghan, Asian, Bosnian, Cambodian, Cuban, Czech, Ethiopian, Haitian, Hmong, Hungarian, Iranian, Iraqi, Laotian, Mien, Polish, Rumanian, Somalian, Sudanese, Former Soviet, Vietnamese. I know I have left many of you out, but the list is so long and is only getting longer.

Tonight I would like to talk to you about a time when MY family was on that list. The idea of family is something that so many of our new And future arrivals will have lost. It is my hope, that together, we can help to heal these victims from Bosnia, Former Soviet Republic, Kosovo,\_\_\_\_\_ by welcoming them into our loving and supporting family- the City of Portland.

What I ask of you this evening is to think about how can we be a better family to you? For those who have recently arrived here and those of you who have lived here for a long time, what is it about the City of Portland and the services we offer to you that could have made your transition easier ?

My goal as Portland City Commissioner is to make Portland the most Family Friendly City in America. But we need to work together to make that happen. I hope that you will think about this and reflect on your individual experiences and tell me what you think would help to achieve this goal. It is all of you here tonight and those who will soon be coming here that make Portland such a culturally rich and diverse community. It is all of you who are teaching us how to be a better community and to be a better family. It is all of you who are teaching us about our world and its heritage. Tonight I honor you and hope that together we can give all of the new arrivals to our city a sense of hope and the tools to start making a better world for them and for all of us.

Thank you.