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#### PERSONAL STATEMENT

##### 1. WHY DO YOU DO IT?

I'm motivated because I am a direct descendent of African American pioneers who were an integral part of settling the west. The descendants of Nicodemus pioneers are the only living testimony to their existence here on the high plains of Kansas. I want to make sure for future generations, that our ancestors are not forgotten. They have been overlooked by textbooks and TV movies and programs and it is through efforts such as my own, that we are making ourselves known to the world. We played a major role in settling the west and that needs to be known. My great grandfather, great great uncles, and cousins were buffalo soldiers that ended up here in Nicodemus and their history is also important and needs to be remember and told. I have always a had a keen sense of responsibility to the history, the town, and genealogically! I am related to all the people that live in Nicodemus today and both by parents were born and reared here. I know who my genealogy back to great, great, great grandfather and mother and I owe it to them, for they were the ones who endured slavery and finally experienced true freedom here in Nicodemus. (Named after the first African slave to purchase his freedom in the US). Motivation comes easy because I have the same spirit of determination, survival, and forbearance that my forefathers.

I see social change organizing most evident in the educational environment. Because there is a *great need* for social change in attitudes about our heritage and our historical accomplishments, many at the grass root level as well as the higher educational institutional environments are beginning to make their voices be heard. Our children, especially African American males, need a strong foundation rooted in a proud heritage. They need to look back to the 1800's and even as far back as slavery and know that we were a proud people who made major contributions and played a significant role in American history. The best example of the social change can be seen by the organization and sponsorship of multi-cultural educational conferences being held by school districts around the nation. Our society's ethnic make up is changing and cultural diversity is evident, creating a need to know who we 'all' are and where we have come from and what contributions we have made along the way. African Americans as well as the Native American have and will always be major players in the plays of American history and the role that was played needs to be understood and appreciated - academically! Our children and future generations need to know the full and diverse picture.

The most important issue facing my tiny, but historical giant of a community is 'total demise!' If we do not continue our efforts of historic preservation through National Site Designation we can almost assure our selves that Nicodemus will become just another dust spot on highway 24 in rural Kansas. Historical preservation of not only the oral traditions, written and photographic history, but the few remaining 1800's architectural structures that are remaining (AME Church, Baptist Church, 1 room school, and an original hotel). We are the only all African American town left that exemplifies the existence of the African American in the western frontier during the 1800's. This fact is of *national* significance and importance. Preserving our rich historic past so that we will not be forgotten in the future, is this generation's (our) responsibility. We cannot wait for others to do it for us, we must take the initiative, at whatever cost and *just do it!* My personal reward is that I know that I have done what history is requiring of me now. It is easier for me to take my education, experience and motivation and preserve what took, sacrifice, physical blood, sweat, tears and even death to create in establishing an all African American town in the wake of the Civil War!