

Bio for Interfaith

MacCanon Brown was born into a family of generational protestant clergy in Iowa in 1945, the middle of three daughters. Her faith-filled parents' ministerial commitments were full-time "24/7." They treated all people with love and respect.

Brown attended Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio. She participated in Black studies and interracial dialogue, did inner-city neighborhood work and attended civil rights events in nearby Columbus during the peak of the civil rights movement, 1963-65.

After 18 years being a rural homemaker and newspaper reporter in Iowa, and working as a literary artist-in-the-schools for the Iowa Arts Council she moved to Milwaukee in 1986.

As a Wisconsin transplant, Brown continued her literary career working for the Wisconsin Arts Board while employed as a church publications secretary. Eventually she served as a key staffperson for a consulting firm. In 1991 she was profoundly influenced by the life of Dorothy Day. She lived and worked briefly in a Catholic Worker House and converted to Catholicism. MacCanon Brown made a "vow" to help homeless people while participating in the Benedict Institute for Urban Ministry. Since that time she has lived in Milwaukee's Inner City and dedicated her life to homeless outreach and advocacy.

Brown was invited to be part of the founding group of Repairers of the Breach in late 1991 to take the leadership role in their homeless newspaper, in April, 1992 she became Board president and later became Executive Director in 1995. In 1994 the organization become Milwaukee's first daytime homeless center. It grew from a small grassroots band of committed individuals to a strong, vibrant, prosperous nonprofit organization with a critical mission and ability to serve people most in need. Under Brown's leadership many collaborative partnerships were formed with learning institutions, faith communities and other community groups. Influenced by her parents' ecumenicism, Brown encouraged an Interfaith perspective.

Under Brown's executive leadership over the course of 22 years, the needs of thousands of homeless individuals were addressed, creating a comprehensive and effective "one-stop shop" daytime resource center including a free medical clinic. Hallmarks of her leadership include fiscal integrity and no use of government funding. Completion of a renovation project costing \$2.2 million was achieved.

