

SPECIAL SEPTEMBER EDITION

# LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAM e-NEWSLETTER

## Language Access in the District

District Government

Community Advocates

LEP/NEP Community

### In this issue:

• **Feature Article:**  
Language Access in the District: *2011 Fiscal Year-End Briefing*

• **Focus-In:**  
Consultative Agencies

• **In the Spotlight:**  
Ngozi Nmezi, Director,  
*Mayor's Office on African Affairs*

Soohyun "Julie" Koo, Director,  
*Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs*

Roxana Olivas, Director,  
*Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs*

• **Asian and Pacific Islander Community Outreach Tips**

### Important Dates !

**Monday, October 17, 2011**  
4th Quarter Language Access Report due

**Monday, October 25, 2011**  
4th Quarter Language Access Coordinator's Meeting

## 2011 Fiscal Year-End Briefing



(Above) Director Gustavo Velasquez of the Office of Human Rights welcomes attendees to the 2011 Fiscal Year-End Briefing.

On September 15, 2011 the DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) held a briefing highlighting the FY 2011 Language Access Program achievements. This year's achievements reflect the set of directives that Mayor Vincent C. Gray gave to all agency heads at the onset of his administration. These directives are intended to: (1) streamline agency operations and processes; (2) improve customer-service; and (3) increase visibility and presence in local communities. Among the list of this year's achievements are the two **community forums** that addressed Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Non English Proficient (NEP) constituent rights and access to government services.

These two forums, which were held in collaboration with fifteen (15) local community-based organizations and eight (8) District agencies, involved a series of small group dialogues and information sessions ad-

ressing the quality of and access to employment and health and social services. Over 200 people attended the forums—120 attendees were LEP/NEP constituents and the remaining attendees were advocates and DC government employees. In addition to educating LEP/NEP constituents about their rights, the forums generated valuable constituent feedback. In particular, constituents identified challenges and barriers that continue to exist when accessing government services. Among the DC government employees were several District officials, including: five (5) District agency directors, one (1) General Counsel, and one (1) Chief of Staff, all of whom listened to stories about LEP/NEP constituents attempting to obtain services at various District agencies. Nicholas Majett, Director of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), ►►

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September 2011

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noted how these forums have helped to bring about positive changes within District agencies when he stated that, "Due to these forums, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs has already begun to make small changes within the agency to better serve the LEP/NEP populations. We have started with hiring a new bilingual staff member."

In FY 2012, OHR will continue leveraging the feedback obtained as a result of these forums to make District agencies related to employment and health/social services more accessible to the LEP/NEP communities. In addition, OHR will conduct more community forums in FY 2012.

#### ► **FY 11 Achievements**

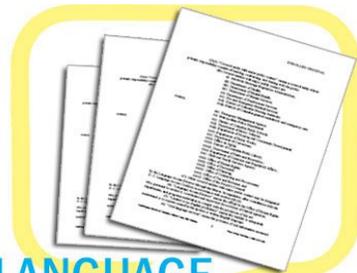
**Paperless Reporting System**—In collaboration with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer, the OHR created an on-line reporting system giving District

agencies the ability to electronically submit their Biennial Language Access Plans (BLAPs) and language access quarterly reports. This new system helps streamline government operations and make reporting environmentally responsible, saving the government money and increasing accuracy of data analysis.

**Quarterly Newsletter**—The OHR disseminated four (4) newsletters (one per quarter) that highlighted: (1) what occurred during that quarter, (2) what was planned for the next quarter, and (3) important deadlines. The newsletters also spotlighted advocates that demonstrated exceptional work in the area of language access. The goal of these newsletters is to increase internal and external communication about language access in the government.

► (Article continued on page 5)

## FOCUS-IN



### of LANGUAGE ACCESS ACT 2004

### consultative agencies

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**4 DCMR §1204.8** "The LA Director shall consult with the D.C. Language Access Coalition, the Mayor's Office on OAA, OAPIA, and OLA regarding the implementation of the Language Access Act.."

"**Consultative Agencies**" refers to the Mayor's Offices on: African Affairs (OAA), Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OAPIA), and Latino Affairs (OLA). The Consultative Agencies are written into the Language Access Act ("Act") and play a key role in providing technical assistance to the Language Access Program. In FY 2011, the OHR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Consultative Agencies to help ensure effective outreach to the LEP/NEP communities, particularly as it relates to their rights under the Act. The outreach efforts made by these agencies, together with those made by the DC Language Access Coalition and other local community-based organizations, resulted in a 120 LEP/NEP constituents attending the FY 2011 community forums.

For more information about the Consultative Agencies visit the following websites:

**Office on African Affairs**  
[www.oaa.dc.gov](http://www.oaa.dc.gov)

**Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**  
[www.apia.dc.gov](http://www.apia.dc.gov)

**Office on Latino Affairs**  
[www.ola.dc.gov](http://www.ola.dc.gov)

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## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: CONSULTATIVE AGENCY DIRECTORS



**Ngozi Nmezi** was appointed by Mayor Vincent C. Gray to serve as Director of the Office of African Affairs. Ms. Nmezi served previously at the DC Department of Real Estate Services as a risk-management specialist. Prior to serving in DC government, she was a proposal coordinator and partner liaison for the international-development wing of the global support-services firm AECOM and a contract coordinator with Health Services for Children with Special Needs/HSC Pediatric Center in the District. A native of Nigeria, Ms. Nmezi received her Bachelor's degree in Biology and a Master's degree in Public Health from Howard University. She lives in Southwest Washington.

**Soohyun "Julie" Koo** was appointed Executive Director of the Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs in March 2007. Ms. Koo is known as a leader who is very sensitive to the needs of ethnic communities and has an in-depth understanding about the District's Asian and Pacific Islander community. Ms. Koo has focused on working closely with community based organizations, community activists, business leaders, and other government agencies and officials at all levels in order to increase community access to city services and civic participation. Ms. Koo holds an M.A. in Interpretation and Translation from the highly regarded Graduate School of International Studies of Hankook University and earned a BA degree in History from Hallym University in South Korea.



**Roxana Olivas** served as the Special Assistant in the Office of the Chairman with a focus on Latino issues. While serving, she dramatically increased outreach to the Latino community. Olivas has almost 20 years of experience in private industry, nonprofit and local government management. She has served as a Legislative Aide and Bilingual Staffer for the Arlington County Board, Regional Director in the metropolitan area for the Casablanca Project, co-founder of Latinas Unidas for Obama and Program Director for New Avenues of Hope and Torch of Hope in El Paso, Texas.

She has lived in the Washington area for over 9 years, she presently lives in Ward 3. She is an active member of Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown where her son attends school. She attended the University of Texas and University of Phoenix. She presently holds a Bachelors of Science in Business Management.

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### Asian and Pacific Islander Community Outreach Tips

Contributed by **APIA**

**Language Lesson** – Translating your message is the most basic step in helping you get the word out to the API community.

**Knowledge is Power** – Understanding the history and make-up of the target audience, their behaviors, attitudes, and needs.

**The Usual Suspects** – A familiar looking face bridges initial fears by many in the API community.

**A Good Buy** – Getting buy-in by community leaders will help in creating advocates for your programs and efforts.

**Comfort Zone** – In going to where the target community feels comfortable, you break down one barrier of being in a new, unfamiliar place.

**Community Connectors** - Building a group of liaisons between an Agency and the community through existing networks or new approaches.

**Action, no Reaction** – Outreach before an incident happens is the an effective means to address issues in the community. It also helps build trust and avoid negative situations that could be linked with your Agency, giving a negative perspective of your Agency in the community.

**Relevant Information** – Distributing information that is unrelated to issues facing the community leads to a similar thinking people have towards junk mail. Make sure to distribute materials that are relevant to the community you are outreaching to.

**No Dead Zones** – Staying connected with the community on a regular basis is important to establishing familiarity and trust.

**Secret of Your Success** – Successful resolution of issues in the community play a significant factor in trust and reliance by the API community on the Agency. Positive and negative news flows throughout the community word of mouth and how many community groups get their clients coming to their doors.

**Don't Trick, Treat** – Providing giveaways or other items provides incentive to find out information many may not know is important—it helps get their attention.

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### 2011 Fiscal Year-End Briefing continued

**Citywide Interpretation and Translation Contract**—A citywide contract has been developed through the Office of Contracting and Procurement, in collaboration with the OHR and the Mayor's Offices on: African Affairs, Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, and Latino Affairs. This new citywide contract will create a pool of qualified vendors vetted for quality that all agencies can use, resulting in the streamlining of government operations and an increase in the quality of District government interpretations and translations.

**Telephonic Interpretation System Training Initiative**—The OHR organized, staffed, and conducted eight (8) trainings (two per quarter), open to any DC government employee, on how to use the telephonic

interpretation system called Language Line Services (LLS). The purpose of this training initiative was to proactively support DC government agencies in their requirement of administering LLS training to all of their public contact position staff on a yearly basis. The LLS DC government representative, Joe Matthews, co-facilitates the trainings.

**Education Campaign**—The OHR developed a new culturally competent language access "Know Your Rights" rights education campaign that was translated into: Amharic, Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese, and published in the newspapers relevant to those respective language populations. Similarly, in FY 2012, this campaign will be translated into French and Korean and published in the newspapers relevant to those language populations.

**Biennial Language Access Plans (BLAPs) Review Sessions**—As required by the Act, the OHR organized BLAP review sessions for all 34 major public contact agencies that included feedback from the Mayor's Consultative Agencies and representatives from the DC Language Access Coalition. These BLAPs are the two-year action plans that all 34 agencies with major public contact are required to develop. Helping ensure that these review sessions were organized and included community representation was also a priority for the OHR.

**District of Columbia Municipal Regulations Title 4 (Human Rights) Chapter 12 (Language Access Act (Act) Revisions**—The OHR, in collaboration with the DC Language Access Coalition, is in the final stages of revising the Act's regulation, an endeavor that the OHR has not undertaken since the passage of the law. Consistent with the OHR's aim for more government transparency, a working group of OHR staff members and the DC Language Access Coalition was created to help ensure that the necessary revisions to the Act were made.■

**The full 2011 fiscal year annual report for the Language Access Program will be available in November 2011 and accessible at [www.ohr.dc.gov](http://www.ohr.dc.gov).**