

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**



**INFORMAL MEETING**

January 10, 2012

One Judiciary Square, 441 Fourth Street, N.W., Conference Room 1117

**Commissioners:**

Christopher Dyer, Secretary

Nkechi Taifa, Commissioner

Michael E. Ward, Commissioner

**Commission on Human Rights Staff:**

David C. Simmons, Chief Administrative Law Judge

Dianne S. Harris, Administrative Law Judge

Eli B. Bruch, Administrative Law Judge

Andrew Costinett, Law Clerk

Erica Aiken, Law Clerk

**Office of Human Rights Staff:**

Jenni Stoff, Director

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Secretary Dyer called the Commission meeting to order at 6:36pm.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Secretary Dyer conducted the roll call. Three Commissioners were present at the meeting. Since only three Commissioners were present, neither a quorum nor a formal meeting could be held.

**III. REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Deputy Director Jenni Stoff gave the report on behalf of the Office of Human Rights (“OHR”).

The November and December 2011 statistics were passed out to the Commissioners. Thus far in FY2012, OHR gave 3 cases a probable cause finding and its total mediation/settlement benefits to date is \$520,000.

Deputy Director Stoff pointed out several of OHR's accomplishments for FY2011. They can be found in OHR's Annual Report.

#### **IV. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Judge Simmons delivered the report of the Commission and presented an overview of its performance since the last Commission meeting.

The Commission currently has a docket of 13 Commission cases, 5 Office cases and 40 Criminal Background Check Act ("CBX") appeals (10 of these CBX cases are before the CBX Tribunal). 2 cases have been remanded back to OHR.

In FY2011, the Commission closed 4.5 Commission cases, 5 Office cases and 35 CBX cases. Our goals for this fiscal year were met across the board. Our FY2012 goals have been established and we are hopeful to reach them this year.

Judge Simmons announced that the Commission will have a new law clerk this spring semester, Ms. Erica Aiken. Ms. Aiken is a 2L at Georgetown Law and took the employment discrimination course taught by Judge Simmons. Sadly, Andrew Costinett is going to move on with the next stage of his career and leave the Commission. He will be greatly missed.

In terms of regulations, Commissioner Ward and Judge Simmons will meet in the near future to move Chapters 2, 3, and 4 forward.

There is an urgent need for full Commission membership as all three current Commissioners are in holdover status. In June, the Commission will cease to function if new Commissioners are not confirmed. The Commission sent a letter to the Mayor and the Director of the Office of Boards and Commissions explaining our membership concerns.

The Commission is trying to achieve greater visibility in the District and

Commissioners should start thinking about new initiatives.

## **V. OLD BUSINESS**

### Report of the December 8<sup>th</sup> Event

Commissioner Taifa gave a report on behalf of the Planning Subcommittee and gave a recap on this year's International Human Rights Day/4<sup>th</sup> Annual Cornelius "Neil" R. Alexander, Jr. Humanitarian Award.

The event was a great success and approximately 200 people attended. The celebration was held on Thursday, December 8, 2011 from 5:00pm to 8:00pm at the Conference Center. The Inaugural Youth Human Rights Ambassador Awards were presented at the event. The Mayor, several departmental directors, and leaders of the civil right community were in attendance.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Neil Alexander Award was given to Georgetown Law Professor Peter Edelman who delivered a powerful and thought provoking speech.

The best overall creative piece, the song "We Need our Rights" written and presented by two students, each received an Apple Ipad. Other finalists were presented with Ipods and a Nintendo Wii.

Students who completed the human rights training were given certificates naming them Youth Human Rights Ambassadors.

On December 1, there was a wrap party for the students at Georgetown Law where the students exhibited their creative pieces.

Commissioner Taifa gave special recognition to Judge Simmons for his hard work on this new endeavor.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

No New Business was discussed.

## **VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## Community Comments

Michael Sindram spoke on his concerns surrounding his removal from the December 8<sup>th</sup> event. He also discussed his concerns that WMATA is not covered under the DCHRA.

Whit Kathner, of SEIU, spoke about his concerns with a D.C. regulation that prohibits employers from asking employees their sexual orientation. He proposes that the regulation should be amended to allow for the acquisition of these statistics assuming they meet three necessary criteria: the information is given voluntary, confidentiality will be ensured, and the information will not be used to discriminate.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34pm.