

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



COMMISSION MEETING

November 14, 2012
One Judiciary Square, 441 Fourth Street, N.W., Conference Room 1117

ATTENDEES

Commissioners:

Nkechi Taifa, Chairperson
Michael Ward, Vice-Chairperson
Edwin Powell, Secretary
Motoko Aizawa
Alexandra Beninda
Mathew McCollough
Denise Reed
Gabriel Rojo

Commission on Human Rights Staff:

David C. Simmons, Chief Administrative Law Judge
Eli Bruch, Administrative Law Judge
Dianne S. Harris, Administrative Law Judge
Rohini Singh, Law Clerk
Alex Berg, Former Law Clerk

Office of Human Rights Staff:

Elliot Imse, Policy and Public Affairs Officer

Members of the Community:

Michael Sindram

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Taifa called the Commission meeting to order at 6:37pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Eight Commissioners were present at the meeting. Since at least eight Commissioners were present, a quorum was reached.

III. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

The Commissioners adopted the minutes from the September Commission meeting.

IV. REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Elliot Imse gave the report on behalf of the Office.

Mr. Imse provided the Commissioners with detailed statistics on OHR's fiscal year 2012 ("FY 2012") performance. In FY 2012, OHR docketed 341 cases---271 employment, 31 housing, 21 public accommodations, 3 educational institutions, and 7 Language Access.

Settlements were reached in 41 percent of the cases during mediation with a total of 2.7 million dollars in settlement benefits.

In FY 2012, probable cause was found in 23 cases, or approximately 11% of cases which made it through OHR's investigation process. Of those cases, 13 were employment, 4 public accommodations, 4 Language Access, 1 educational institutions, and 1 housing.

In employment discrimination---which made up a majority of charges filed---retaliation was the most frequently filed complaint, followed by disability, race, sex, and national origin.

Mr. Imse discussed two major programs conducted by the OHR. First, OHR did a campaign on transgender and gender identity respect. This was the first campaign conducted on this issue by a government entity in the nation. The campaign can be seen in over 200 bus stops throughout the District. The second initiative was the formation of a bullying prevention taskforce which created a model policy for District government agencies.

Commissioner Aizawa requested information pertaining to OHR's current backlog. Mr. Imse stated he did not have that information with him, but would provide it to the Commission.

V. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Chief 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 16 Commission cases, 5 OHR cases and 5 CBX appeals. Additionally, the Commission has 3 cases involving attorney's fee petitions.

Thus far in FY13, 1 Commission case and 1 CBX case were closed.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business was discussed.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Report on the Awards Gala

The Commission will hold this year's Award Gala event at the Kaiser Family Foundation Building on Monday, December 17th from 5:30pm to 8:00pm. A caterer was chosen and a menu was selected, however, there will be no cash bar this year. It is likely 150-200 people will attend.

The event will include the honoring of the 1977 City Council members who enacted the D.C. Human Rights Act. Several members of the 1977 City Council and family members of deceased City Council members have agreed to attend. Additionally, current elected officials of the District government were invited, including the Mayor.

The winners of the Youth Human Rights Ambassador contest will also be honored. This year, the program received over 150 entries. On November 28th, the students will showcase their artistic pieces at the Georgetown University Law Center's Sport and Fitness Center from 3:30pm to 5:30pm. The judges are currently evaluating the artistic pieces and will be determine a winner by Thanksgiving.

The Commission needs to begin collecting money to pay for the Award Gala. The Commission would like to raise \$5100. If 51 people donate \$100 each, then we will reach our goal. We need to make sure we comply with District laws governing donations and follow ethical rules.

Invitations for the Awards Gala were made by Mr. Imse and will be emailed to the Commission's contact list. Commissioners are encouraged to invite people who may be interest in attending. Commissioner McCollough requested a copy of the invitation be made available in a Microsoft Word format for persons with a visual disability.

The idea of requesting a resolution from the Mayor honoring the 1977 members of the City Council was discussed. Commissioner Reed informed the Commission on how to get a Mayoral proclamation and how to get a pristine copy of the 1977 Human Rights Act from the Office of the Secretary of City Council.

Chairperson Taifa suggested the Commission award the Neil Alexander Humanitarian Award or give special recognition to Barbara Lett-Simmons. Chairperson Taifa will send out an email with Ms. Lett-Simmons' biography later in the week.

Mr. Imse informed the Commissioners of his strategy to publicize the event via press releases, distributing the information using various local

media outlets and community-based organizations, and using social network sites. Mr. Imse and Judge Simmons will meet next week to discuss the publicity for the Award Gala.

B. Assignment to New Tribunals

Commissioners were assigned to Commission Tribunals.

VIII. COMMISSION TRAINING

Alex Berg provided a training on the Rules and Regulations pertaining to fundraising for an agency of the District government. He explained in detail the complexities of donating money to the District government.

In terms of timing, donations should be made as soon as possible.

IX. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Michael Sindram spoke about his concerns with the Office and state of human rights in the District. Mr. Sindram stated his objection to having to request placement on the Commission's meeting agenda, as opposed to being allowed to speak without giving prior notice.

Commission Aizawa expressed interest in holding a Commission public forum.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Transgender Day of Remembrance will be held on Tuesday, November 20, 2012 at 6:00pm at Metropolitan Community Church.

Commission meetings dates for 2013 were distributed to the Commissioners.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:41pm.