

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



COMMISSION MEETING

November 13, 2013
One Judiciary Square, 441 Fourth Street, NW, Conference Room 1117

ATTENDEES

Commissioners:

Nkechi Taifa, Chairperson
Michael Ward, Vice-Chairperson
Edwin Powell, Secretary
Motoko Aizawa
Alexandra Beninda
Rahim Jenkins
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

Office of Human Rights Staff:

Monica Palacio, Director, Language Access

Members of the Community:

Jon Steingart, Legal Fellow for the D.C. City Council

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Taifa called the Commission's November meeting to order at 6:34pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Secretary Powell conducted the roll call. Nine 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 Commission's September meeting minutes.

IV. REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Director Palacio, OHR's new interim director, gave the report on behalf of the Office and gave a brief overview of its performance since the last Commission meeting.

Since the beginning of this fiscal year, OHR docketed 24 cases, 49 cases were closed, and mediation settlements reached \$177,838.

In terms of outreach, on September 29th, OHR participated in *Immigrants Contribute: America, We Sign Back!*

District bullying prevention policies were reviewed to ensure compliance with the Bullying Prevention Act of 2012.

OHR worked on the District Taxicab Commission Disability Advisory Committee which recommends how to make taxicabs in the District accessible for persons with disabilities.

In regard to upcoming events, *A Conversation to Prevent Bullying* will be held on November 20th, and the *Latino LGBT Health Fair* will be held on December 12th.

OHR conducted several trainings, including training for District agency EEO counselors, DGS security guards, EEO/DCFMLA/sexual harassment training for several District agencies, and private sector EEO trainings.

Director Palacio told the Commissioner about newly hired investigator: Aimee Peoples.

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 9 Commission cases, 3 OHR cases, and 5 CBX appeals.

The Commission reached its closure goals for the prior fiscal year.

The Chairperson and Chief Judge Simmons have come up with a couple of suggestions to get Commissioners more involved in the daily work of the Commission.

Former law clerks Ericka Aiken, Claire Schulmeister, and Rohini Singh all passed the bar exam.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Human Rights Award Gala

The Awards Gala will be held on December 5th from 5:00pm to 8:00pm at the Kaiser Family Foundation, Barbara Jordan Conference Center.

Over 300 invitations were sent out and 38 RSVPs have been received thus far. Commissioners are asked to invite their friends/family and professional contacts.

A press release stating our intent to honor Professor Edgar Cahn for the Neil Alexander Humanitarian Award was released by OHR. Information about the award was also put on OHR's website and Facebook page.

Chief Judge Simmons acknowledged the hard work of Commissioner McCollough, and OHR staff Elliot Imse and Stephanie Franklin, for their work on the Awards Gala.

All Points West chamber music group will perform at the Awards Gala.

We do not have a keynote speaker this year, but Professor Cahn will make remarks, and the Mayor is invited to speak.

Commissioner Budd and Judge Harris selected a menu for the event and will host a tasting in the near future.

The Street Law Program from Georgetown University Law Center taught 13 District public schools and charter high schools about human rights law, local and international. 162 students participated in the program and they submitted 112 projects. An exhibition of their projects will be held on November 20th at Georgetown University Law Center.

The top prize for this year's competition will be an Ipad mini, 2nd prize will be a \$100 gift card, and 3rd prize will be a \$50 card.

Chief Judge Simmons thanked previous OHR Director Velasquez for funding this year's event.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Monica Palacio introduced herself and gave an overview of her personal and professional background. Members of the Commission introduced themselves to the new director.

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

No community comments were brought forward.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Transgender Day of Remembrance will be held on November 20th at 5:00pm at the Metropolitan Community Church.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights issued a recent report: *A Second Chance: Charting a New Course for Re-Entry and Criminal Justice Reform.*”

X. ADJOURNMENT

The Commission’s November meeting was adjourned at 7:39pm.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Commission held an Executive Session closed to the public.