

**MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2009**

Commissioners Present: Joyce Abrams, Mary Alcock, Teresa Oyos, Les Williamson, Bruce Abrams, Mark Dillon, Shonee Henry, Gary Lynn, Gracia Molina de Pick, Nicole Murray Ramirez

Excused: Nghiep Le, Susan Hawk, Carolina Alcoser Ramos

Absent: None

Staff: Ashley Walker, Executive Director (ED); Lori Thacker, Deputy City Attorney

Chair Ramirez called the 207th meeting of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission (HRC) to order at 5:30 p.m.

- I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:** Guests Sally Smith (Committee for the Safety of Foreign Exchange Students), Judy von Kalinowski (Human Resources Department), Woo-Jin Shim (Human Resources Department), Danell Scarborough (OneSD), and Thyme Curtis (Council Representative, District 2) introduced themselves. The Commissioners introduced themselves to guest speaker Kevin Faulconer and guests.
- II. Roll Call:** 10 Commissioners were present, 3 excused, and 0 absent.

Minutes – The July 15, 2009 minutes were approved.

Chair Ramirez requested an attendance list of the Commissioners over the last several months.

- III. PRESENTATION - Kevin Faulconer, San Diego Council President Pro Tem, Council District 2:** Councilmember Faulconer from District 2 (Bankers Hill, Downtown, Little Italy, Mission Beach, Midway, Mission Hills, Ocean Beach, Pacific Beach, Point Loma, Old Town) presented on the City’s homeless problem and the steps his District is taking to help solve the problem. Downtown in particular has one of the most acute challenges with homeless issues. Over last year in a half, they have looked into the best practices of other cities. This was generated out of our winter shelter needs. Regarding the winter shelter, they have issued an RFP asking providers for their thoughts on addressing needs for the homeless population and look into getting a location on a permanent, year round basis. The homeless problem is getting larger, not smaller, and is not confined to only downtown. They have been spending a lot of time thinking of solutions. They are now trying to find a solution for downtown, and if successful, they hope to replicate it outside of the downtown area. Councilmember Faulconer encouraged the Commission to lend its thoughts on the issue.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Ramirez announced that on Tuesday at 10:00 the City Council proclaimed July 14, 2009, to be "Ashley Walker Day" in the City of San Diego, in appreciation of her endless dedication to the City of San Diego. Chair Ramirez presented ED Walker with a plaque, naming her an honorary Commissioner from 1996-2009. ED Walker thanked the Commission and encouraged them to keep going and to continue their good work in giving a voice to those in the community who do not have voice.

Introduction of new Executive Director – ED Walker introduced the new Executive Director, Danell Scarborough. Ms. Scarborough thanked ED Walker, and stated that she is honored to be able to serve and humbled by the mission of the Commission. She is ready to partner with and support the Commission and keep the Commission's work going. Ms. Scarborough worked for the City for 20 years – she did leadership development, was the project leader for the City's Diversity Commitment, worked for the City Attorney Casey Gwinn, and worked on strategic planning, conflict resolution and executive and community forums and seminars. Most recently she has been getting the City ready for OneSD, which is coming to a close, and is excited about starting this new opportunity.

- V. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – Commissioner Williamson stated that 3 years ago, some foreign exchange students were abused, and the Commission signed off on a package regarding the issue. Chair Ramirez asked ED Walker to provide information to the Commission regarding this past action.

Sally Smith from the Committee for Safety of Foreign Exchange Students commented on the pedicab industry and the mistreatment of foreign exchange students. There are federal regulations regarding the protection of foreign exchange students that are not being adhered to. Specifically, pedicab companies are taking advantage of foreign exchange students, who are wrongfully working on their own as sole proprietors rather than being employed as employees, so they are working unprotected. Also, pedicab drivers resent the foreign exchange pedicab drivers, as competitors. These students are invited to come to the United States to learn our language and culture, but instead are harassed and taken advantage of. More information can be found at www.csfes.org. ED Walker will get more information on this as well as the action taken by the Commission three years ago to provide to the Commissioners.

- VI. **PRESENTATION – Lorena Gonzales, CEO, San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council** – Lorena Gonzales presented on the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). The EFCA is going through Congress and hopefully through Senate in about two months. In short, it would make union organizing easy. Now, the employer has all the power; the EFCA would level the playing field. Unions have

been bargaining for protections in the workplace for over 30 years. Although California has progressive employment laws, employee protection is really needed in other states. Workplace protections are quicker through unions, such as protections against discrimination and unequal pay. The EFCA changes the way workers organize, takes power away from the employer to decide the best way to form unions. Support from the Commission for the EFCA was requested. All Commissioners previously received materials discussing the EFCA, including the arguments for and against the EFCA, for review.

Commissioner B. Abrams proposed a motion to support the EFCA. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lynn. 9 Commissioners supported the motion; 1 (Cmsr. Alcock) opposed. The motion passed by a majority vote.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT – Chair Ramirez reported on the status of the Camp Pendleton murder of the sailor, August Provost. They do not know if the murder was committed by skinheads or if it was of a homophobic nature. Congressman Filner was on base at the time of the incident and curiously he was not informed. The sailor was being harassed because of his sexual orientation and Congressmembers Filner and Davis has been called upon by Chair Ramirez to look into this as a possible hate crime. They were soon thereafter joined by Sheila Jackson, Congresswoman from Texas. The military is handling the investigation and he is optimistic it will be done right and will get the information that is needed.

VIII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – ED Walker reminded the Commissioners to complete their monthly activity reports. The Commissioners are working hard in the community and it is very critical to keep record of our activities.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Hate and Violence Prevention – Commissioner B. Abrams reported that he attended a vigil for August Provost. A diverse group attended the vigil. Commissioner Henry was quoted in several media outlets and has gotten lots of media attention.

Cmsr. B. Abrams provided an update on the private club in Philadelphia alleged to have discriminated against African American and Hispanic children by denying them access to the pool based on their race. He is friends with the President of their Commission who is looking into the situation. The club returned money on the contracts, there are potential federal violations for denying access, and the situation is a real mess. He will inform the Commission on any updates.

ED Walker reported that several victims have come to the United for a Hate Free San Diego to talk. She attended the court hearing for Rhythm

Turner yesterday, with the interns. It was not characterized as a hate crime because the defendant pled and the prosecution did not think they could win. There was also no sentencing. Approximately 20-25 people were there. There was a lot of support for Rhythm. ED Walker is also working with the couple in Mount Helix whose car was vandalized with “niggers get lynched.”

ED Walker stated that the County does not have a Commission. We are the only functioning HRC in the region, but through partnerships and consortiums, we can get through to surrounding communities, so these are very important. The Summit will be in late September, early October, and they are looking for an east county location, with USD as a fallback, but it is important to get it in the east county.

Chair Ramirez raised the issue of term limits for the Board of Supervisors. Currently, all are white males, there are no persons of color and that is a concern, in that they do not represent the diversity of our community. Chair Ramirez asked DCA Thacker if it was something the Commission could take a stand on. DCA Thacker replied that so long as the cause and concern is within the jurisdiction of the Commission (i.e, equal economic, political, and educational opportunity; equal accommodations; elimination of prejudice and discrimination), they could take a stand on this issue. Cmsr. Dillon requested that if the Commission is to vote on this issue that it be discussed thoroughly as he is not in favor of term limits.

Chair Ramirez stated that Lori Saldanez’s offered to speak to the Commission in August; ED Walker will follow up with scheduling a time.

- B. Immigration** – Cmsr. Dillon reported that on Monday, he heard a presentation by Foundation for Change and the US Census. They send out individuals to gather information for the census, but within certain communities, there is a real fear of the government. They want people in the community to be volunteer census takers, as people will be more willing to talk to people they recognize. If you know of someone who can participate, encourage them to contact the Bureau. For more information, contact: Ricardo Sanchez, Los Angeles Regional Caucus Center, 9301 Corbin Avenue, Suite 1000, Northridge, CA 91324; Ricardo.sanchez@census.gov; (213) 923-2506.

Commissioner de Pick stated she has always encouraged Hispanics, Latinos and women to be interviewers. We should also write a letter about the concern over the safety of gay servicepeople. Cmsr. de Pick also raised the issue of children who are born in California but to an undocumented worker gets a different colored birth certificate. She stated that this is horrendous and condemns children and something should be

done about this. ED Walker will send the Commissioners more information on this issue.

- C. **Educational Disparities** – Cmsr. J. Abrams attended a Youth Voice Partnership meeting in Mid-City. Dana Brown was the leader. It was a heartlifting meeting, and she can give more information if you would like to attend. Youths on probation are mentored and taught to be positive and turn their lives around. They meet two times a week. Also, Dana Brown stated she would interested in coming to speak again, to do a short presentation. Cmsr. J. Abrams will tell Dana Brown to email ED Walker, for the August meeting.

Cmsr. Abrams has not heard from San Diego City Schools regarding partnerships. She will try contacting Arun and report back.

- D. **Criminal Justice System Disparities Committee** – Cmsr. J. Abrams stated that she asked Sheriff Gore to speak to the Commission, perhaps in September. ED Walker will invite him to speak.

- E. **Safe Passage** - Cmsr. Williamson reported that he attended the meeting in July, last Thursday. Cameras are being installed in schools, to help identify persons they need to report to the police. Eventually they will be in all schools. He handed out HRC materials at parent group meetings, and answered their questions. As previously mentioned, there is a mentoring group by police officers that was to start in September, but they still do not have a place to meet. He will provide updates as they occur. Additionally, Cmsr. Williamson's term is up and Donna Frye indicated that she would like to keep him on the Stadium Board but wants to offer the HRC spot to another, to spread it around and give others the opportunity to serve. He will stay until replaced.

- E. **Legislative Update** - None.

X. COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Cmsr. Alcock expressed concern over the lack of visibility of the HRC website. She has received questions from members of the public, who were seeking information on the Commission but could not find the website. The new Executive Director will work on the new website for the Commission.

Cmsr. Lynn reported that he attended a presentation done by Edgar Hopida, PR Director of CAIR, on Islam phobia. There approximately 35 in attendance, and the discussion got pretty heated. Also, he and Cmsr. Williamson viewed Traces of the Trade, a film about slavery in the North. He ordered the film and suggests the Commission view the film.

Chair Ramirez suggested that the Commission look into setting up another retreat, with the new Executive Director, as the last one was in August of 2008.

XI. MEETING ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 7:25.

Prepared by Lori Thacker, Deputy City Attorney

Approved by Ashley Walker, Executive Director