

**MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2009**

Commissioners Present: Joyce Abrams, Teresa Oyos, Les Williamson, Bruce Abrams, Mark Dillon, Shonee Henry, Gary Lynn, Nicole Murray Ramirez, Carolina Alcoser Ramos

Excused: Mary Alcock

Absent: Susan Hawk, Gracia Molina de Pick

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

Chair Ramirez called the 208th meeting of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission (HRC) to order at 5:35 p.m.

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION: Guests Judy von Kalinowski (Human Resources Department) and Tiffany Harrison (SDSU student, Commissioner nominee) were present.

II. Roll Call: 9 Commissioners were present, 1 excused, and 2 absent.

Chair Ramirez requested an attendance list. DCA Thacker provided Chair Ramirez with an attendance spreadsheet provided by intern Carolina Prado.

Minutes – The July 15, 2009 minutes were approved.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- **Safety of exchange students, pedicabs:** ED Scarborough reported that in response to public comment at last month's meeting regarding exchange students and pedicab drivers, staff was asked to look into what action was taken by the Commission 3 years ago on the issue. ED Walker reported that because foreign exchange students were being abused and mistreated, the Commission asked that criminal background checks be performed on host families and all involved in the program. The result was state action requiring criminal background checks. ED Scarborough provided the State Department Final Rule on 22 CFR 62.25, which requires program sponsors to complete criminal background checks for officers, employees, agents, representatives and volunteers acting on their behalf and requires monthly contact with host families and students. Also part of the rule was that adult members of a host family must undergo a criminal background check. A requirement to report any allegation of sexual misconduct to the State Department and local law enforcement authorities was also adopted.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- **Commission resignations and open positions:** Chair Ramirez reported that 3 new Commissioners have been nominated – Tiffany Harrison, Mitz Lee, and Pastor Roberto Shim. Bruce Abrams, Joyce Abrams and Shonee Henry have been reappointed. Chair Ramirez spoke with Ms. Harrison and believes she will bring a unique perspective to the Commission. Ms. Lee is a former trustee and VP of the Board of Education, and will be a good addition to the Commission. Ms. Harrison is African-American, Ms. Lee is Filipino-American, and Pastor Shim is of Korean descent, which adds to the diversity of the Commission. The nominations will be presented to the City Council on September 1, 2009. Chair Ramirez expressed that it is important to get representation from the Muslim or Middle Eastern and disabled communities on the Commission and communication should be made to the Mayor to that effect. Chair Ramirez requested that ED Scarborough and he send a memorandum to the Mayor regarding getting representation from those underrepresented communities.
- **Keith Turnham Humanitarian Award:** Chair Ramirez reported that last year the Commission established the Keith Turnham Humanitarian Award. November 11 (Veterans Day) is the goal for the award. Chair Ramirez requested information about veterans advisory boards and committees to partner with the Commission. Commissioner Lynn stated that he is the chair of a committee to set up criteria for the award and processing of the award. Commissioner Lynn asked if anyone would like to work with him to get criteria together before the next meeting to let him know. Chair Ramirez clarified that the award should be called the “Keith Turnham Veterans Humanitarian Award.”
- **Ashley Walker Award:** Chair Ramirez suggested that the annual Ashley Walker Civil Rights Award, which will recognize outstanding work/efforts in civil rights, be presented at the annual MLK Breakfast. Commissioner Henry stated that she will be meeting with the Breakfast Committee on Friday and will consult with them. Chair Ramirez asked ED Scarborough to prepare a letter to the MLK Committee regarding presentation of the award at the annual breakfast.

- V. **PRESENTATION – Youth Voice:** Debbie Pelky, co-chair of Youth Voice, and Officer David Toss, Community Liaison Officer, presented on Youth Voice, a voluntary leadership group that partners with the police to break down barriers between kids and law enforcement. The youth consists of gang members and those who have never gotten into trouble, and are between the ages of 12 and 19. They provide free leadership training and have guest speakers. The program focuses on ethics, leadership, and moral/socioeconomic issues. The youth pick subjects they think are beneficial to the community from a youth perspective. Three of the students spoke about their histories, experiences, and accomplishments and how Youth Voice has helped them. Youth Voice started with 4 students in October of 2008 and now has over 20 students. They do not

receive any funding and is funded out-of-pocket by the co-chair and community officer. Chair Ramirez stated that he would contact their Councilman Todd Gloria to inform him of Youth Voice. They will be holding a Youth Summit on November 14 at Monroe Clark Middle School. Topics to be discussed include domestic violence, DUIs, and gangs.

- VI. CHAIR'S REPORT** – Chair Ramirez reported that he learned from a Los Angeles Human Relations Commissioner that the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies and the National Association of Human Rights Workers were going to have a joint conference regarding global and domestic human rights issues, but that the conference had been cancelled. Chair Ramirez expressed concern that he was not informed about the conference and its cancellation by ED Walker, and stated that it is very important that the Commission learn of any such meetings regarding CAHRO. ED Walker stated that CAHRO was not getting any responses or sponsorship of the conference, and as early as June they realized it was not going to happen and it was going to be cancelled. By the time she received information to pass on, it was already cancelled. Chair Ramirez stated that the Commission would like to receive all information on CAHRO's activities, and continue to be represented, now that ED Walker is no longer the Commission's representative for CAHRO. ED Walker stated that they have a meeting in September and will ask that they include on the Agenda a discussion on representation from our Commission.

Chair Ramirez stated that he has concerns over the lack of diversity on the Board of Supervisors. They have not had a person of color since Leon Williams. Chair Ramirez asked if the Commission would be allowed to take a stand on term limits for the Board. DCA Thacker stated the Commission could take a stand on term limits, provided the reason is within the Commission's mission - equal opportunity, elimination of discrimination, diversity, etc. Chair Ramirez stated that more information will be gathered and provided when available as the issue develops.

Presentations - Chair Ramirez stated that Lori Saldanez may be available to present to the Commission on hate crimes in October. Chair Ramirez and ED Scarborough will send a formal invitation to Sheriff Gore to speak to the Commission next month.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- **Library program on Radical Islam** – ED Scarborough reported they were recently able to assist the library department on repercussions they were experiencing regarding having a presentation at the library. In July, there was a presentation by Edward Hopida of CAIR. Someone in attendance with an opposing viewpoint wanted to also hold a presentation and approached the library. The library decided to allow Michael Hayutin, from ACT for America, speak on

the causes and roots of radical Islam at the San Diego Public Library. CAIR felt that the library did not do their due diligence, and was endorsing hate speech. Although the library got a lot of pressure, they let the presentation move forward anyway. ED Scarborough moderated the program. There was a lively discussion, a good exchange, and it was very civil. Commissioner Lynn reported that he attended Edward Hopida's presentation 2 weeks earlier. That presentation became quite abusive – those representing ACT (or presumed to be) were calling Hopida deceitful, non-American and non-patriotic – which is probably what prompted Mr. Hopida to protest the library's endorsement. Mr. Hayutin's presentation seemed to be toned down, and he did not say that all Muslims are radical or extremist. The library made it clear that they were not endorsing his statements. The two presentations were in stark contrast to each other, and Commissioner Lynn believes that all the attention put on the program helped to keep it civil.

- **Commission Retreat** – The Commission discussed whether to have the retreat in October/November or early next year, and who should be the facilitator. Commissioner B. Abrams suggested having it next year after the election. ED Walker suggested that we get a local facilitator. ED Scarborough and Vice Chair Abrams will work on setting up the Commission retreat, the best time to have the retreat, who will be the facilitator, and report back to the Commission.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. **Hate and Violence Prevention** – Vice Chair Abrams asked the Commissioners to join the United for a Hate Free San Diego email list so they can get the emails directly rather than having him resend the emails. The Hate Crimes Summit will be held on October 1, 2009 in El Cajon. The flyer is in the packet.

Commissioner Lynn reported that United Hate Free's focus lately has been on the Summit. They have also been involved in addressing the Rhythm Turner assault by going to court with her and supporting her. Sentencing is scheduled for September. They have also been following up on the Jamul incident and the graffiti/spray paint incident in East County. Attendance has been diminished so if you know anyone interested, have them come to the meetings.

- B. **Immigration** – Chair Dillon reported that the IRC is on hiatus. The next meeting is on September 14.
- C. **Educational Disparities** – Commissioner J. Abrams reported that she has been trying to get in touch with San Diego schools, and feels that ongoing meetings should be held with them. Commissioner Abrams also reported that on August 27, a breakfast meeting will be held on the homeless in San

Diego. Elizabeth Morris will be the moderator and Brian Maienschein will be on the panel. It will be at the Holiday Inn Embarcadero from 7:30-9:15. ED Walker reported that the Superintendent has been offered a lucrative job in Houston and may be leaving.

- D. Criminal Justice System Disparities Committee** – ED Walker reported that the court ordered review of the Troy Davis case. His execution had previously been stayed. The handout from the NAACP is in the packet. ED Walker stated that she heard from Carolina Prado that he may have already been executed, however.

Commissioner Lynn reported that UAAMAC will have a meeting on the Three Strike Law on October 22 at 6:00.

- E. Legislative Update** - Chair Ramirez stated that Lori Saldanez will be providing a legislative update when she comes to speak to the Commission.

IX. COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Henry reported that the San Diego County Bar Association will hold a dialogue on cultural competence and diversity on October 27, from 5:00-8:00. Bonnie Dumanis will be a panelist. She will email information if you are interested in attending.

Commissioner Oyos distributed information about the 20th Annual Aids Walk and Run, to be held on Sunday, September 27 in Balboa Park. For more information see www.aidswalksd.org.

Commissioner Lynn reported that the film premiere of “4 or 40,” which discusses the consequences of choices made by students, will be on August 27 from 5:30 – 9:00, at Lincoln High School. For more information see www.SanDiegoDA.com.

Commissioner B. Abrams reported that the Interfaith Community for Worker Justice will hold a breakfast entitled “Who Will Speak If We Don’t?” Commissioner B. Abrams is a co-chair and would like to get a table for the Commission. He will give more information to ED Scarborough.

Commissioner Lynn asked if anyone is interested in working with him on the Keith Turnham Humanitarian Award, to let him know.

Chair Ramirez mentioned the upcoming holiday reception and suggested they honor individuals/groups in the community and hold a special commendation reception, and include past Commissioners. Chair Ramirez will work with ED Scarborough on getting the food and location. It will be on the 3rd Wednesday in

December and will probably be at a restaurant or hotel. Commissioner J. Abrams suggested that that the group from Hoover who played music at the MLK Breakfast play at the holiday reception. Chair Ramirez stated that if anyone has any suggestions to contact ED Scarborough.

This was Commissioner Williamson's last meeting. Chair Ramirez expressed his appreciation to Commissioner Williamson for his contributions to the Commission. ED Walker also expressed appreciation for all the work Commissioner Williamson has done for the Commission and the community, and presented him with a token of appreciation on behalf of the Commission. Commissioner Williamson thanked the Commission, and wished the Commission the best.

XI. MEETING ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 7:40.

Prepared by Lori Thacker, Deputy City Attorney

Approved by Danell Scarborough, Executive Director