

**MINUTES  
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2012**

Chair Abrams called the 237th meeting of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission (HRC) to order at 5:40 PM

- **WELCOME**

**Roll Call**

**Commissioners Present:** Bruce Abrams, Mary Alcock, Monica Bauer, Mark Dillon, Tiffany Harrison, Shonee Henry, George Mitrovich, Roberto Shim, Lorena Slomanson, Joel Tramley, Patricia Washington

**Excused:** Joyce Singer Abrams, Gracia Molina de Pick, Gagandeep Kaur, Mitz Lee

**Staff:** Danell Scarborough, Executive Director; Pam Holmberg, Labor Relations

**Public Comment:**

Nicole Murray Ramirez addressed the Commission to express his appreciation for his time on the Commission and encourage the Commissioner's to continue to do their great work. They make a difference in the Community every day. He presented Executive Director Scarborough with a plaque thanking her for her service to him while he was on the Commission. He also encouraged the Commission to support the Harvey Milk National Stamp Campaign.

- **PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

**Crawford School of Law and Business High School Trip to Ghana**

**Debra Brown**

Debra Brown, a Counselor at the School of Law and Business at the Crawford Education Complex provided information on the school's upcoming trip to Ghana, Africa. Crawford has teamed up with SDSU and provides the opportunity for students to go to Africa over Spring Break to learn about the legal system in Ghana. Crawford has participated in this program in the past with anywhere from one to five students participating annually. The students are paired with a student from SDSU and attend planning classes at SDSU. All of the past participants in this program have gone on to attend college. Ms. Brown accompanies the students on the trips and helps all she can to help raise funds for the students. Ms. Brown creates dolls from recycled materials and contributes all proceeds to the students' funds. Participation costs \$3,500 per student. She asked for any suggestions or help the Commission could provide on raising funds. Chair Abrams thanked her for her presentation and encouraged the Commissioners to pass on this information to any outlet that may be able to help her and the students.

**SAFE California – Replacing death penalty with life without parole  
Catherine Thiemann, San Diego Co Chair and Gary Lynn**

Ms. Thiemann provided the Commission with an overview of the SAFE California Initiative. The initiative would replace the death penalty with life without parole. They are in the process of collecting signatures with the goal of placing the initiative on the November 2012 ballot. The Death Penalty costs California over \$100 million each year. Death Penalty trials are 20 times more expensive than those for life without parole. Death penalty trials in California take an average of 25 years from conviction to execution. The initiative would set aside \$30 million from the savings each year for the first three years to solve open murder and rape cases. Eliminating the death penalty would also ensure that no innocent people were executed. Since reinstating the death penalty 139 innocent men and women have been freed from death row. Ms. Thiemann passed out information to the Commissioners and asked them to consider their active involvement in the initiative. She will return to the next meeting to collect any sheets. If the initiative qualifies for the ballot she would like to team up with the Commission for public forums in the spring and summer.

**Addressing Homelessness and Domestic Violence**

**Heather Finlay, Executive Director, YWCA**

YWCA Director Heather Finlay told the Commission about the services the YWCA of San Diego County is providing for San Diego. Their services include assistance to the victims of domestic violence, homeless women and homeless families. They have three residential programs that provide services. Becky's House domestic violence program assists with a 24-hour emergency hot line, emergency shelter and has two transitional housing programs. The PASSAGES program assists single homeless women with transitional programs. The Cortez Hill family center provides accommodations for homeless families and case management to assist in the goal of self-sufficiency. Over 5,700 individuals were assisted by these YWCA services last year. The YWCA strives to reduce racism in the community by educating its clients, teaching love, respect, equality and by providing shared experiences that transform lives. She encouraged the Commission to continue their support and recognition of organizations throughout San Diego that share their goals.

**Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made by Commissioner Alcock to approve the November 17, 2011 minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harrison. The motion passed unanimously.

**- ACTION AGENDA**

**Old Business**

**1. Updates - Commission's 2011 Priority Issues**

**a. Hate Motivated Behavior**

Commissioner Harrison is working to plan a community forum on hate for the Latino Community for some time in February.

**b. Immigrant Rights and Reform**

Commissioner Dillon reported that the SDIRC has become a strong consortium of dedicated organizations and would like to evaluate the Commission's relationship with the SDIRC at the upcoming retreat.

**c. Educational Disparities**

No new information to report.

**d. Homelessness**

No new information to report.

**e. Outreach and Advocacy**

The Commission has a new intern, Christian Castro. He will work with the Commission in assisting the UMI Learning Center. UMI is making strides to better their situation and continue their education programs but is need of assistance in getting through red tape.

Chair Abrams reported that the County of San Diego is taking steps improve the CalFresh (food stamp) program. They are focusing on improving service and will be increasing staffing by 200%. He suggested the Commission revisit the program soon to see how the program is going.

- **NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Election for Commission Chair and Vice Chair – Commissioner Alcock**

Commissioner Alcock received one email nomination for Commission Vice-Chair for Mark Dillon. There were no additional elections from the floor. Commissioner Alcock made a motion for a vote to elect Mark Dillon as Vice-Chair of the Commission for 2013. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Henry and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Alcock received one email nomination for Commission Chair for Bruce Abrams. There were no additional elections from the floor. Commissioner Alcock made a motion for a vote to elect Bruce Abrams as Chair of the Commission for 2013. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Henry and passed unanimously.

**2. HRC Planning Retreat – February 11, 2012**

Executive Director Scarborough provided information on the upcoming planning retreat. It will be held on February 11, 9:00 – 2:00. There will be a new facilitator this year. She looks forward to having the chance to discuss the areas of focus for the Commission for 2012.

- **INFORMATION AGENDA**

**Chair’s Report:**

Chair Abrams attended the MLK All People’s Breakfast for MLK along with many of the Commissioners. The breakfast was very successful with over 1,200 participants and all felt the keynote speaker, journalist Jose Antonio Vargas was an informative speaker. Chair Abrams presented the Ashley Walker Social Justice Award to Estela DelosRios, who was moved and honored.

Chair Abrams thanked Vice-Chair Henry for her hard work on the HRC awards ceremony in November. There was discussion about last year’s ceremony and plans for 2013.

**Commissioners' Reports:**

Vice-Chair Henry invited the Commission to attend the Philippine American Society for Arts and Culture event. They are working to obtain a site for a permanent center.

Commissioner Bauer attended the Border Angels 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala. It was an interesting and fun event. She alerted the Commissioners to two upcoming events; a screening and discussion of "Not in Our Town" at UCSD on February 6 at 5:00 PM and a screening of "Free Men" on February 15, 7:30 PM at the Clairemont Reading 14 theater. Both should be very informative events.

Commissioner Harrison is working on a Youth Bill of Rights. She will forward more information as it comes available. She invited all to attend Kumbafest.

**Executive Director's Report:**

Planning is beginning for the Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast. Executive Director Scarborough is on the planning committee and will work with the Commission at the retreat to discuss this year's participation. The Commission will have an information table at the City Heights Human Rights Festival.

The student liaisons have been unable to attend a regular meeting so far. Commissioner Harrison will contact them and offer support.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.