



Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

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MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Meeting of February 1, 2010
Community and Senior Services (CSS) Building
3rd Floor Team Room
3175 West Sixth Street, Los Angeles, CA 90020

PRESENT: Michael Gi-Hao Cheung William Lambert
Grandmaster Tong Suk Chun Eleanor Montaña
Susanne Cumming Sergio Paz
Adrian Dove Sandra E. Thomas
Lea Ann King

NOT PRESENT: Rev. Zedar Broadous Vito Cannella
Donna Bojarsky Kathay Feng
Mario Ceballos

STAFF: Cynthia Banks, CSS Director Elena Halpert-Schilt, HRC Asst. Exec. Director
Grace Löwenberg Emily M Pacheco

GUESTS: Maureen Powers, Gemstone Foundation
Bob Hoffman, Gemstone Foundation
Terri Hoffman, Gemstone Foundation

- 1. Call to Order/Flag Salute and Moment of Silence:** The Commission meeting was called to order at 12:34 p.m. The flag salute and moment of silence were led by Commissioner Lambert.
- 2. Approval of Minutes of previous meetings:** It was moved by Commissioner Cumming, seconded by Commissioner Paz, to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2010 and January 12, 2010 meetings. The motion carried unanimously.
- 3. Public Comment:** President Sandra E. Thomas asked CSS Director Cynthia Banks to address the Commission. Director Banks reported that over the last month CSS and the HRC had been working on the 9% FY 2010-11 Budget Reduction Scenario requested by the Chief Executive Office. She was also happy to report that as of last week, the Chief Executive Office will not be asking the HRC to reduce its budget and no budgetary changes will be made at this time. She expressed that this action speaks volumes about the value of the Commission and its work. Director Banks and President Thomas initiated a round of applause.
- 4. President's Report:** President Thomas commended all commissioners and the work they are currently doing in and outside of the Commission to carry out its mission. She informed Commissioners that in the coming year they will be asked to attend and support Commission events occurring in their district. She also informed the Commissioners that she will be asking them to meet with their County District Supervisor to provide them with an update about what the commission is doing and what is needed to continue its

mission. She also urged commissioners to provide a written report their board offices as previously agreed upon.

- 4.1. **Special Meeting of Commission/Executive Committee on the Budget (L.A. County CSS/HRC Budget Reductions):** Addressed in agenda item 3.
- 4.2. **Need for New Orientation:** Tabled.
- 4.3. **Update on Black-Brown Summit on Re-Entry/CSS Youth Offender Re-Entry Planning Grant:** President Thomas reported that she and HRC Executive Director Robin Toma, Assistant Executive Director Elena Halpert-Schilt, CSS Director Banks, and staff member Tony Massengale met to discuss a youth and re-entry grant that may provide funding for a Black-Brown Summit on Re-Entry. She reported that CSS is requesting an extension on the grant, which is scheduled to end this fiscal year. She informed the Commission that a decision to have the summit during this fiscal year or next will need to be made within the next two weeks. Future developments will be provided at the next Commission meeting.

5. **Executive Director's Report:** Assistant Executive Director Halpert-Schilt reported that Executive Director Toma was called to Washington D.C. to attend a follow-up meeting regarding a national agenda on human rights and human relations.

- 5.1. **Cultural Diversity "Respect" Poster:** Halpert-Schilt passed out the final version of the cultural diversity poster to Commissioners in attendance. She informed the Commissioners that more posters would be made available upon request and asked that requests be made to staff member riKu Matsuda (213-738-2857).
- 5.2. **Sunset Review:** Halpert-Schilt reported that the Commission's current Sunset Review period is from 2002 to 2009. An extension from the Chief Executive Office was granted and the review is now due on February 25, 2010. CSS Director Banks clarified that the review is something that is done for all commissions and is just a matter of keeping up to date on the work of the Commission.
- 5.3. **Budget Update:** Addressed in agenda item 3
- 5.4. **Strategic Planning:** Halpert-Schilt reported that she and Executive Director Toma hoped to circulate a draft strategic plan to the Commissioners during the month of February to be reviewed and discussed at the March Commission meeting.
- 5.5. **HRC Calendar of Events:** Halpert-Schilt reported that staff is continuing to add to the Commission calendar and that the work being done by the staff, despite three vacant staff positions, is tremendous. She also added that the Media Image Coalition met to discuss free speech in the media and how that can turn into hate speech and prompt hate crimes. She reported that HRC Exec. Dir. Toma attended the meeting along with approximately 50 other individuals and he believed it went well. She also mentioned that the picture slide show being presented on the monitor was of the Washington Prep No Haters Here! Week and distributed a CSS intranet website article on the event. A collage of Project One photos was also distributed to commissioners, and it was mentioned that The Bricks, Project One band, may perform at the Midnight Mission on February 13, 2010, the same day that Commissioner Cheung has arranged for free meals to be served to the homeless.

6. **For Discussion/Action:**

- 6.1 **Review/Approval of Commission Committees for FY 2009-10:** It was moved by Commissioner Cumming, seconded by Commissioner Montano, to accept the list of committees for FY 2009-2010. (Please see February 1, 2010 agenda packet list of committees attachment) The motion carried unanimously.
- 6.2 **JAF Funds for Cultural Diversity “Respect” Poster:** Halpert-Schilt reported that no corporate funding had been secured for the printing of the Respect poster. Commissioner King proposed to use John Anson Ford trust funds to print a larger version of the poster. She requested that Halpert-Schilt provide the Commission with the cost so that funds can be approved for this purpose at the March meeting.
- 6.3 **Support for the Homeless:** Commissioner Cheung reported that his friend, Dr. Wong, has arranged to donate meals to feed the homeless. Dr. Wong emigrated from Hong Kong to the United States to attend medical school and would like to give back to society and others who are less fortunate. Commissioner Cheung also mentioned that the meals are scheduled to be served at the Midnight Mission on Saturday February 13, 2010. In addition to the meals, Dr. Wong will also be passing out red envelopes filled with money in response to the economic crisis and in celebration of the lunar New Year, which will begin the following day.

It was moved by Commissioner Lambert, seconded by Commissioner Cumming, to endorse the efforts for the homeless of Commissioner Cheung and Dr. Wong. The motion carried unanimously.

- 6.4 **Eye Disability at Detention Centers:** Commissioner Lambert introduced three guests from the Gemstone Foundation, a non-profit whose focus is helping people achieve visual efficiency. He informed commissioners that the Gemstone Foundation has identified a visual disability experienced by a large majority of youth who are incarcerated. Maureen Powers, Gemstone Foundation, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the occurrence of what Gemstone identifies as *Dynamic Vision Difficulty* in juvenile offenders. She urged the commission to communicate, to whoever they can, the existence of this problem and also communicate the efforts being made by Gemstone to help those who are affected by it.

It was moved by Commissioner Lambert, seconded by Commissioner Montano, to endorse this project of the Gemstone Foundation. The motion carried unanimously.

- 6.5 **Proposal for 2010 JAF Awards Event:** Commissioner King reported that the JAF committee met and are proposing a reduced cost approach to awarding JAF awards, while still maintaining JAF’s purpose and value. This reduced cost approach was developed in consideration of limited resources and the current economic environment. She reported that in the proposed format, JAF awards would be given out throughout the year, one per month and presented in front of the Board of Supervisors. The year’s awards would be recognized and concluded with a larger luncheon in October, which would be less costly than in previous years. A proposed calendar/timeline was distributed to commissioners. Commissioner King emphasized that the JAF committee would also be maintaining the fundraiser aspect of the awards and would seek corporate donations to the JAF fund. She reported that if this format was approved, nomination forms would be mailed to commissioners as soon as possible.

It was moved by Commissioner Cumming, seconded by Commissioner Paz, to accept the draft timeline and JAF awards proposal from committee as presented by Commissioner King. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Committee Reports:

7.1 **John Anson Ford Awards Event Committee:** addressed in item 6.5.

8. Commissioner's Comments/Announcements:

8.1 **Reports from Harbor Gateway Tour** Commissioner King, Commissioner Paz, and Commissioner Cumming reported on their Tour, given by staff member Raymond Regalado, of the Harbor Gateway Gang Reduction and Community Engagement Project (G.R.A.C.E.). Points of discussion included:

- Gang and Hate Crime areas within the G.R.A.C.E. project area
- High level of liquor availability in the Harbor Gateway area
- Lack of religious institutions/structures in the area
- An abundance of check cashing locations near or next to liquor stores
- The existence of only one grocery store in the area
- A lack of green/park space
- The establishment of the Cheryl Green Youth Center/Boys and Girls Club Trailer
- The needs and wants list of Toberman and the donation of dictionaries by Commissioner King

Assist. Exec. Dir. Halpert-Schilt reported that the G.R.A.C.E. project is currently funded by a Justice Assistance Grant through Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe's Office. She reported that funding was only awarded for one year and that staff hopes to return to Supervisor Knabe's Office to request funding for an additional year so that long term funding could be identified and obtained.

It was moved by Commissioner Cumming, seconded by Commissioner Lambert to support staff going back to Supervisor Knabe and asking for a year's additional funding. The motion carried unanimously.

8.2 **Other:** Commissioner Grandmaster Chun reported that the Martin Luther King Jr. parade was beautiful and that although it was raining, all participants proudly completed their walk, official representatives of foreign nations. He also reported that there were no left over Respect posters from that event. He requested that a discussion on how the Commission can help those in Haiti be placed on next month's agenda.

9. **Adjournment:** It was moved by Commissioner Dove to adjourn at 2:05 p.m. in of honor of today being the 50th anniversary of the day when African American civil rights leaders sat down and demanded fair treatment at the Woolworth's lunch counter.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathay Feng, Esq.
Vice-President/Secretary