



# Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

3175 West Sixth Street  
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MINUTES  
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
Meeting of April 5, 2010  
Community and Senior Services (CSS) Building  
3rd Floor Team Room  
3175 West Sixth Street, Los Angeles, CA 90020

**PRESENT:**

Donna Bojarsky	Kathay Feng
Rev. Zedar Broadous	Lea Ann King
Mario Ceballos	William Lambert
Michael Gi-Hao Cheung	Eleanor Montaña
Susanne Cumming	Sandra E. Thomas
Adrian Dove	

**NOT PRESENT:**

Vito Cannella	Grandmaster Tong Suk Chun
Sergio Paz	

**STAFF:**

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

**GUESTS:**

Ariel Bustamante, GSA Network  
Ari Gutierrez, Latino Equality Alliance  
Rodney Nickens Jr., Barbara Jordan/Bayard Rustin Coalition  
Daniel Solis, GSA Network

- 1. Call to Order/Flag Salute and Moment of Silence:** The meeting was called to order at 12:37 p.m. as a meeting of the Executive Committee, with three Executive members (Lambert, Montaña, and Thomas) present. The flag salute and moment of silence were led by Commissioner Montaña. Quorum was later reached at 12:48 and the regular meeting of the full commission was called to order.
- 2. Approval of Minutes of previous meetings:** Tabled.
- 3. Public Comment:** Commissioner King briefly reported on the Martin Luther King Jr. Visions of Unity Contest but held the full report for a full quorum. Due to time constraints the full report was tabled.
- 4. President's Report**
  - 4.1 HRC Sunset Review Submission:** President Sandra Thomas reported on the submission of the most recent Sunset Review which covered the period of the last eight years. She praised staff for their hard work on the document and stated that it adequately displayed the value of the

commission. She gave special thanks to HRC staff member Cherylynn Hoff and HRC Executive Director Robin Toma. Commissioner Lea Ann King added her congratulatory remarks as well.

**4.2 Black-Brown Summit Update:** President Thomas reported that final approval from the Department of Labor on the extension of the youth offender re-entry planning grant had not yet been received. She reported that the Commission plans to hold a sixth summit on black/brown re-entry issues. More information will be provided as it is received.

**4.3 Strategic Plan FY 2010-2013:** President Thomas urged the Commission to follow the project proposal process which helps to ensure that all projects that are carried out are in line with the strategic plan.

**5. Executive Director's Report:** HRC Assistant Executive Director, Elena Halpert-Schilt reported on behalf of Executive Director Toma.

**5.1 International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) Conference – Aug. 29-Sept. 1:** Halpert-Schilt reported that Toma will be attending the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) Conference which will be held in Mobile, Alabama. The program for the conference has not been developed but many people plan to attend. She reported that if commissioners would like to attend, their attendance and travel would need to be covered by private funds or the John Anson Ford Trust Fund.

**5.2 Update on Tracking Crimes Against the Homeless:** Halpert-Schilt reported that HRC Staff have been meeting monthly with representatives from LAPD, LASD, Long Beach Police Department, Santa Monica Police Department, and Pasadena Police Department, Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, and County of Los Angeles District Attorney's Office as members of the County of Los Angeles Countywide Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee Violence Against the Homeless Task Force. She reported that the Task Force has so far agreed on a common definition of homelessness and are currently looking for possible funding sources to ensure that crimes against the homeless can be accurately tracked. Further updates will be available as information is received.

**5.3 Other:** Halpert-Schilt also reported on the transition strategy for the HRC's work with Hart High School. The HRC is partnering with Evelyn Serrano, who is currently leading the project, Nomad Lab. The project is designed to utilize a vacant apartment in a low income housing complex to house a creative room as a way to build a culture of peace, especially amongst youth, within the complex. The project also was developed to help reduce conflicts between Latinos and African American youth within low income housing complexes. A flyer was made available for a community festival; commissioners were invited to attend.

**6. For Discussion/Action**

**6.1 JAF Funds for Cultural Diversity "Respect" Poster (King):** It was moved by Commissioner King, seconded by Commissioner Cumming, that commissioners approve the expenditure of \$5,000 from the JAF to print additional posters. The motion was carried unanimously.

**6.2 Possible Partnership on Annual Hate Crime Report:** President Thomas reported that commission staff is looking into the possibility of partnering with UCLA on compiling the annual hate crime report. Halpert-Schilt added that staff has found that producing the Annual Hate Crime Report has increasingly required more and more staff time and resources over the past few years.

Commissioner Ceballos expressed positive feedback and Commissioner Bojarsky stated that it would be a great and savvy move. Commissioner Broadous suggested that a brief pros and cons list about the collaboration be developed and submitted to Commissioners at the next meeting in May.

**6.3 LAUSD Controversy on Black History Month – GSA Request:** Commissioner King introduced the item and asked Commissioner Ceballos to lead the discussion. Commissioner Ceballos reported that three teachers at Wadsworth Elementary School were suspended for giving children pictures of OJ Simpson, Dennis Rodman, and RuPaul Charles to carry during a school parade in observance of Black History Month. Commissioner Ceballos added further that LAUSD Superintendent Cortines, Los Angeles City Mayor Villaraigosa, and the Wadsworth Elementary School principal commented on the issue and made a broad stroke of including RuPaul in the category of being an inappropriate role model, as they did with the two other individuals.

President Thomas opened the floor for public comment:

Daniel Solis, introduced himself and stated that he worked for Gay Straight Alliance Network (GSA). He requested that the Commission support a letter asking Superintendent Cortines and LA City Mayor Villaraigosa to retract their despairing comments regarding RuPaul Charles' inclusion in an LAUSD Black History Month celebration in order to clarify support for LGBT community. He also added that the GSA would like Cortines and Villaraigosa to make it clear to students that it is okay for them emulate someone like RuPaul Charles if that is something that they want to do.

Ariel Bustamante, also with the GSA network, stated that she believes RuPaul Charles has overcome a lot of challenges and that to group him with OJ Simpson and Dennis Rodman is wrong. She also stated that it would be the best for other students if they retracted their statement.

Rodney Nickens, with the Barbara Jordan/Bayard Rustin Coalition, stated that he strongly encourages the Commission to support the GSA in requesting an apology and correction of the inclusion of RuPaul Charles in a media list of negative role models. He stated that he believes Mr. Charles to be a positive role model for young people who identify with him as a performance artist, entertainer and as a business person. He also stated that Mr. Charles has helped dispel myths and misconceptions about gay and transgender people. He stated that he believed that by Cortines and Villaraigosa acknowledging their errors would help eliminate homophobic and transphobic climate in schools.

Ari Gutierrez, with the Latino Equality /Alliance, stated support for the GSA's and Jordan/Rustin Coalition's request to the Commission to support their efforts to request an apology and correction of LAUSD's designation of RuPaul Charles in a media list of negative role models.

A discussion followed amongst the commissioners about the intention of the teachers who provided the students with pictures of the aforementioned individuals and also the intentions of Superintendent Cortines and Mayor Villaraigosa. It was suggested that this incident be used as a teaching moment for both the elected officials and for educators on issues concerning the LGBT community and the Black community.

Commissioner King submitted a motion which was later amended by Commissioner Feng and seconded by Commissioner Dove, to draft a letter to Ramon Cortines and Antonio Villaraigosa, copying the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, requesting a meeting. Commissioner

Commissioner Broadous expressed concern that proper notice had not been given for motion. The motion carried with Commissioner Broadous opposing and no votes abstaining.

Commissioner Feng will draft the letter and provide it to the commissioners for review before it is sent out.

**7. Committee Reports**

**7.1 John Anson Ford Awards Event Committee:** Tabled.

**7.2 Interfaith Committee:** Tabled.

**7.3 Ad Hoc Committee on Review of Proposed Programs/Projects:** Tabled.

**8. Commissioner's Comments/Announcements**

**9. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 2:34pm in memory of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and renowned East Los Angeles Math Teacher Jaime Escalante.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathay Feng, Esq.  
Vice-President/Secretary