NEW YORK CITY
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

MAYOR
MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG

CCHR NEWSLETTER

COMMISSIONER
PATRICIA L. GATLING

Commission Rules on Religious Discrimination Case

In a landmark religious discrimination case, the Commission recently ordered the New York City Police Department to reinstate Jasjit Singh Jaggi, a Sikh traffic enforcement agent, and allow him to wear a turban while on duty. This is the first case in the nation where a law enforcement agency has been ordered to allow a Sikh to wear a turban while in uniform, performing enforcement duties.

Mr. Jaggi was represented by CCHR's Law Enforcement Bureau Deputy Commissioner Avery Mehlman and staff attorney Natalie Holder-Winfield. The case was argued before Administrative Law Judge Donna R. Merris of the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings.

CCHR's Final Decision and Order stated that the Sikh religion requires all adult males to wear a turban and does not permit them to wear a hat over or instead of a turban.

Commissioner Patricia L. Gatling (left) with Pritam Singh Bindra, case attorney Natalie Holder-Winfield and complainant Jasjit Singh Jaggi.

Mayor and Commissioner Co-Host Gracie Mansion Event

In February, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Commissioner Patricia L. Gatling co-hosted a Black History Month reception. The Gracie Mansion event honored six City employees for outstanding public service, including CCHR's Isaac Parsee (see p. 4).

Commissioner Gatling spoke of the history and importance of the event, highlighting its founder Dr. Carter G. Woodson. The week-long celebration founded in 1926 was expanded to a month in 1976.

Commissioner Gatling with Mayor Bloomberg.

Dr. Woodson began school at the age of 20, completed high school by age 22 and received his Ph.D from Harvard, becoming the second African-American to do so. He coined the often quoted phrase "It's never too late to learn" and also stated on many occasions that "knowledge was the key to success."

Commissioner Gatling likened Dr. Woodson's strong views on education to those of Mayor Bloomberg who also believes that knowledge is the key to success. She pointed out that early in his administration, Mayor Bloomberg became the City's strongest advocate for quality public education who repeatedly states that fair and equal quality education is a civil right and that a superior education will produce tomorrow's great achievers.

Schools Chancellor Joins Commissioner to Swear-In Student Mediators

Commissioner Patricia L. Gatling and the Department of Education Commissioner Joel I. Klein swore in 17 students as Peer Mediators in a ceremony at Washington Irving High School held in March. The Peer Mediation graduation, one of many held by the Commission throughout the school year, marked the completion of a rigorous ten-week after-school training program the students voluntarily undertook to become Peer Mediators.

A $52,000 grant from the JP Morgan Chase Foundation enabled CCHR to expand its Peer Mediation training in selected City middle and high schools. Emile St. Cyr, Program Director, reports that in less than a year, the young Peer Mediators have successfully mediated many student conflicts. One school has been so successful that they expanded the meeting locations and hours within their school.

Brooklyn Deputy Director Edwidge Menard guides young students during a peer mediation training session at Samuel J. Tilden High School in Brooklyn.

CCHR's approach to teaching young students how to resolve conflicts

(Continued on p. 3)

MOVING FORWARD

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Prominent journalist Charlayne Hunter-Gault, the first African American to gain admission and graduate from the University of Georgia, said it best: "If people are informed, they will do the right thing. It is when they are not informed that they become hostages to prejudice."

While we are firmly committed to enforcing the law and fostering positive relations among the City's diverse communities, we also have a moral obligation to inform New Yorkers of the rigorous City Human Rights Law to truly address discrimination.

We have stepped up our education efforts to increase community awareness of the Commission's programs and the many protections the Law offers by restructuring and expanding our community service programs, increasing our outreach efforts, expanding our testing efforts to uncover everyday and systemic violations of the Law, and highlighting the many successful cases, programs and activities of the Commission through the media.

In this school year alone, CCHR has reached over 7,000 students in 48 City schools through its School-Based Education Program and has trained over 100 students to be Peer Mediators.

Only through education will individuals understand that with all New York's rich diversity, most people are very similar in seeking a better life, and striving for the same rights, protections and opportunities as the next person. In 1839, essayist William Hazlitt wrote, "Prejudice is the child of ignorance." I believe this administration has made considerable progress in changing that viewpoint.

Patricia L. Gatling

Patricia L. Gatling Commissioner/Chair

THE LAW

THE NEW YORK CITY HUMAN RIGHTS LAW IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS IN THE NATION. THE LAW PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING AND PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS BASED ON RACE, COLOR, CREED, AGE, NATIONAL ORIGIN, ALIENAGE OR CITIZENSHIP STATUS, GENDER (INCLUDING GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT), SEXUAL ORIENTATION, DISABILITY, OR MARITAL STATUS. IN ADDITION, THE LAW AFFORDS PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT BASED ON ARREST OR CONVICTION RECORD AND STATUS AS A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, STALKING AND SEX OFFENSES. IN HOUSING, THE LAW AFFORDS ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS BASED ON LAWFUL OCCUPATION AND FAMILY STATUS. THE CITY HUMAN RIGHTS LAW ALSO PROHIBITS RETALIATION AND BIAS-RELATED HARASSMENT.

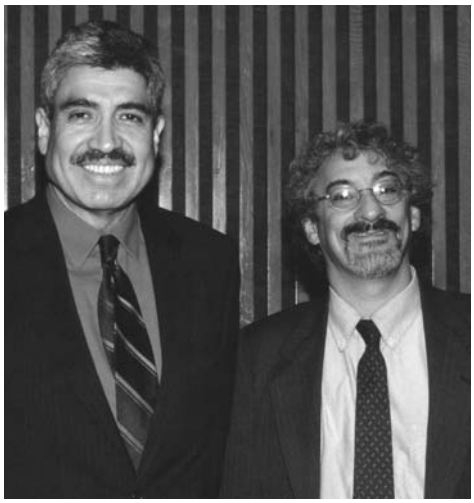
LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Commissioner Gatling testified before City Council's General Welfare and Finance Committees on March 23, 2004 and May 20, 2004, updating them on the work of the Commission and its budget.

Grants Honors

Isaac Liberman Public Service Awards

CCHR Human Rights Specialists Juan Fernandez and Ted Finkelstein were among 18 City career civil service employees who were honored in January with the Isaac Liberman Award, sponsored by the 100 Year Association of New York. Both were recognized for their outstanding achievements during a ceremony hosted by Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff.



Award winners Juan Fernadez (left) and Ted Finkelstein.

Mr. Fernandez, Director of the Immigrant Employment Rights Program and tireless advocate for the immigrant community, was awarded the top honor for his efforts in educating the immigrant community about unlawful discrimination.

Mr. Finkelstein, Director of Project Equal Access is a 23-year veteran of CCHR. He is responsible for developing and managing the Commission's access program which provides disability access assistance and education to senior citizens and the disabled community.

Employment Discrimination Study

The Commission is providing assistance to professors Bruce Western and Devah Pager from Princeton University with their study on the impact of race and criminal records on securing entry-level positions. The study identifies various discriminatory practices that employers use and measures whether and to what extent discrimination exists.

The project uses matched pairs of testers (Whites and African-Americans or Latinos) who apply for the same jobs with the same resumes and tracks call-backs, interviews, and job offers. The study is funded through a grant from the JEHT Foundation - an organization which promotes human rights and social justice.

Irish Heritage Award

Kathleen Bracken, Director of the Queens Community Service Center, was one of six City employees recognized for her service by City Comptroller William C. Thompson and the Breton Law Society during an Irish heritage event in April. Katie was honored for her work in protecting and advancing human rights.

among their peers is grounded in the principals that shape the NYC Human Rights Law – tolerance, human dignity, empathy and understanding. The Program also teaches young students valuable life skills such as patience, persistence, active listening and problem solving – showing them that there are alternatives to threats and violence.

Once the students graduate from the program and become Peer Mediators in their schools, they mediate conflicts referred to them by teachers, counselors, or administrators. CCHR remains in an advisory role. The Program is offered at no cost to the schools.

Commissioner Gatling and Schools Chancellor Klein address students at Washington Irving High School during Peer Mediation graduation.

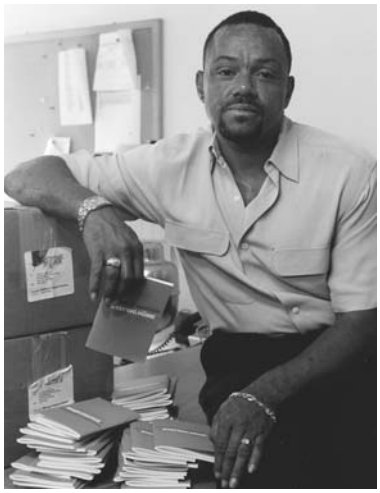
Restaurant Fined in Race Discrimination Case

The NY State Supreme Court ordered the Silver Dragon restaurant in March 2004 to pay a $5,000 penalty in a discrimination case based upon race after the Brooklyn restaurant appealed the Commission's Final Decision and Order. CCHR's testers found during their investigation that the restaurant was refusing to prepare take-out orders for African-Americans until they paid for the food. White customers, who placed the same order were permitted to pay for the food when they received it. The $10,000 fine that CCHR initially recommended was reduced on appeal.

Making It Happen & Staying Home

In February, the Commission began distributing 100,000 copies of its English/Spanish information and resource guide for individuals in prison or soon to be released. The pocket-sized booklet, Making It Happen & Staying Home, assists the formerly incarcerated with the many obstacles they face coming home. The booklet offers encouragement, direction and practical advice from individuals who have succeeded after incarceration. It also provides extensive information about the many City and State agencies that can help them.

The booklets can be found in City and State correctional facilities, parole and probation offices, and agencies that counsel and deliver services to the incarcerated or recently released. The publication was supported by a $35,000 grant from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. CCHR's Will Whitaker coordinated this groundbreaking publication.



Will Whitaker prepares "Making It Happen & Staying Home" booklets for distribution.

COMMISSION IN NEWS

Traffic cop's victory caps turban tussle

BY FERNANDA SANTOS
DAILY NEWS POLICE BUREAU

THE CITY'S HUMAN RIGHTS Commission has ordered the NYPD to reinstate a Sikh traffic agent and let him wear his turban on the job.

"Mission accomplished!" an ecstatic Jasjit Singh Jaggi told the Daily News yesterday from his home in Killington, Vt.

"I'm very excited, very happy," Jaggi said. "I can't wait to get my job back."

Jaggi, who quit rather than violate the tenets of his religion, must be put back to work immediately or the NYPD may have to fork over $100 for each day it vio-

NYPD did not prove its chief argument that failure to wear the regulation white, eight-point cap would make Jaggi unrecognizable as a traffic agent and might subject him to racist remarks.

"We are disappointed that the city commission did not recognize that the Police Department's enforcement of its uniform requirements for its traffic enforcement agents is necessary to maintain the safety of the public . . . and to encourage the

Daily News 7/01/04
Page 33

Police Violated Sikh's Rights, Judge Finds

By SHAILA K. DEWAN

The New York Police Department violated the civil rights of a Sikh traffic enforcement agent when it threatened to fire him if he did not cut his hair and remove his turban, an administrative law judge has found.

The judge, Donna R. Merris, found that the department had not shown a turban would significantly compro-

New York Times 4/30/04
Page B7

Commission probes ad agency minority hiring

Firms note long-term outreach efforts, but stats don't look good

BY TOMMY FERNANDEZ

Independent ad agency Reynardus & Moya has 27 minority employees who account for nearly three-quarters of its busi-

"The advertising industry simply needs to hire more minorities," says Panama-born Mr. Reynardus, whose clients include Pathmark and Time Warner Cable. "If over a third of the population in New York City are minorities, why wouldn't you want your staff to reflect that?"

The New York City Commission on Human Rights is asking similar questions, having launched an investigation into the industry's hiring practices. Insiders say that the

mission will take on an entire industry," says Lizabeth Schalet, a partner in employment law firm Lipman & Plesur who previously was a senior trial attorney at the commission.

Agencies aren't taking the investigation

Crain's NY Business
6/07/04 Page 3

한국 인권위 공보관 뉴욕시와 협력 협의

한국 국가인권위원회 남규선 공보관이 2일 뉴욕시인권위원회를 방문해 양국의 인권상황을 비교하고 협력을 다짐했다.

이 자리에서 남규선씨는 "인권국의 인권 실태를 알려보고 배우기 위해 왔다"며 "앞으로 시스템을 연구해 한국의 인권발전을 위해 힘쓰겠다"고 말했다.

남 공보관은 6일 아이오와주로 이동해 미국내 6개 도시를 순회할 예정이다. 김지훈 기자

다. 왼쪽은 유은희 인권위원회 커미셔너.

Korean Central Daily
4/05/04 Page 1

NEWS

In Brief

Judge Says NYPD Must Allow Sikh Traffic Agent to Wear Turban
A city administrative law judge ruled yesterday that the New York Police Department discriminated against a traffic enforcement agent, who is a member of th
fired if he continued t
ris, an administrative
Trials and Hearings, re
would create a danger to both himself and the public if he wore a turban rather than the standard-issue white cap. Rejecting the argument

NY Law Journal 4/30/04
Page 1

Agencies face scrutiny on race

Commission looks at employment figures

By LISA SANDERS

THE NEW YORK City Commission on Human Rights is gathering data

and an analysis of employee race and

Advertising Age 1/19/04
Page 3

CBS 2 | cbsnewyork.com

Shame On You: Racial Discrimination At Eden Cafe

- A CBS 2 Special Report

Mar 3, 2004 11:00 pm US/Eastern
NEW YORK (CBS) It's a **Shame On You** investigation that evokes memories of an America before the civil rights movement. Our exclusive hidden camera investigation rips the lid off the apparent practice of racial discrimination at a popular Manhattan bar-restaurant.

"But it looks so suspicious, it looks so suspicious when you tell the black couple and the white couple two different things," Arnold Diaz said. "Ah no, no, trust me," Alan Bresson responded.

Bresson is the manager of Eden, a popular bar-restaurant on Broadway and 105th Street. It's where

WCBS Channel 2
3/03/04

Agency proves no borough is an island

New human rights office quickly meets needs of S.I.'s rapidly diversifying populace

BY ANITA JAIN

STATEN ISLAND'S FIELD OFfice for the New York Commission on Human Rights has been in existence less than a year. But it's already making an impact

on the city's least-populated borough by addressing violence against Mexican workers and the concerns of immigrants, among other issues.

Despite having a long-standing presence in the four other boroughs, the city agency opened a Staten Island field office only last September, as the influx of immigrants and refugees over the last two decades created the need for new services and also sparked new

ethnic conflicts.

"The demographic explosion pointed to the need for these support services," says Roy Pingel, director of the field office. "It went from
the borough with t
diverse population
city to the most rap
versifying borough."

The evidence is starkly powerful. Staten Island's Hispanic community grew 77% between 1990 and 2000, expanding at a higher

rate in that borough than it has anywhere else in New York state. At the same time, the African-American presence rose 41% and the Asian population jumped 51%,

borough is from Africa; Staten Island is home to the largest Liberian population outside of the West African nation.

Crain's NY Business
6/14/04 Page 24

Muslim Unity Forum Gets Underway at MAS

By Adrienne Haywood-James

NEW YORK: Many welcomed the Muslim Unity Forum, the third of a series of informational programs designed by the New York City Human Rights Commission aimed at increasing awareness of the role, rights, and city services for the Muslim community. Ms. Debbie Almontaser moderated the affair at the Muslim American Society in Brooklyn,

The Thursday, May 13, program was developed through a joint survey project created by CHR, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Chhaya CDC, Coney Island Avenue

Shyconia Burden-Noten *U.S. Department of Homeland Security (From Right), Norman Eng-New York Immigration Coalition, Michelle Fratti and Verna Laurita - Department of Education, and Moderator Debbie Almontaser (standing in back). - Photo by Adrienne Haywood-James*

community police programs, and fire safety.

Muslim Weekly 5/21/04
Page 4

50th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education

How do today's adolescents see desegregation as having shaped where they are today? After dozens of years, a couple of generations and an information age later, a bright group of Brooklyn teens responded in spoken word, performance acting, chanting and the best "edu-tainment" this side of the Hudson in May. With a $5,000 grant from the Tiger Baron Foundation, headed by CCHR Commissioner Grace Lyu-Volckhausen. the Commission, in a partnership with the Brooklyn Children's Museum and the Department of Youth and Community Development, provided guidance to a diverse group of high-school students - teaching them about the historic 1954 Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education, that ruled racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

Staff Attorney Paul E. Labossiere, and Human Rights Specialists Sandra Costen and Pearl Cheng, led lectures and interactive exercises, including discussing and analyzing documentary film clips, historical decisions, legal correspondence, exhibits from the Brown case, and 50's and 60's era reaction through the media. The Commission explored with them how a decision made 50 years ago is still impacting their lives today.

Students from CCHR/museum program perform "Looking Back Flying Forward" in front of a mural created by their peers commemorating the historic 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision.

Students created this mural using copies of old photographs, legal documents, and newspaper clips reflecting the impact of Linda Brown's journey in Topeka, Kansas and the 1954 landmark Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education.

NEW YORK CITY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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Queens
136-56 39th Avenue, Rm 305
Flushing, NY 11345

Staten Island
60 Bay Street
Staten Island, NY 10301

Commissioners Meet

During a regular Commissioners Meeting in March, Commission/Chair Gatling and Executive staff members briefed the group on the Commission's enforcement activities, service programs and budget and discussed the new amendment to the Human Rights Law which includes victims of stalking and sex offenses as protected classes.

Mayor Honors Isaac Parsee

Many people talk of dedicating their life to making the world a better place, but Human Rights Specialist Isaac Parsee has actually done it. With 22 years at CCHR, Mr. Parsee has invested his enormous energy and experience into many City neighborhoods. He is currently the Deputy Director of the Queens Community Service Center and Director of CCHR's Mortgage Foreclosure and Pre-Purchase Counseling Program.

In February, Mr. Parsee was one of six City employees honored by Mayor Michael Bloomberg for outstanding public service, receiving an award at a special Black History Month reception.

As a living civil rights legend, Mr. Parsee served in VISTA – Volunteers in Service To America, and SNCC – Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee before going on to Ruleville, Mississippi to work on Freedom Farm with Fannie Lou Hamer. He also worked with poet and political activist Amiri Baraka in Newark, organizing minority groups to be more politically involved. Their work put the first African-American mayor in office on the East Coast.

He is a devoted volunteer in his community and sits on Advisory Board 14 in Far Rockaway and the Queens District Attorney's African-American Advisory Board. In 2002, Mr. Parsee received the Isaac Liberman Public Service Award for career civil service employees from the 100 Year Association of New York.

Due to Mr. Parsee's initiative and leadership with Mortgage Foreclosure and Pre-Purchase Counseling Program, CCHR expanded its mortgage counseling efforts. The Program counsels hundreds of homeowners and potential homeowners annually on the illegal predatory and discriminatory lending practices that often target minority communities.

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg honors Isaac Parsee during a special Black History Month reception.