

NEW YORK CITY
COMMISSION ON
HUMAN RIGHTS



MAYOR
MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG

CCHR NEWSLETTER

COMMISSIONER
PATRICIA L. GATLING

BACK ON TRACK

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's appointment of career prosecutor Patricia L. Gatling to head the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) has provided the agency with a huge influx of new energy and resources.

When Commissioner Gatling arrived at CCHR in February 2002, the hurdles she encountered were much higher than expected. She inherited a backlog of nearly 5,000 cases – many more than ten years old, and some even twenty years old.

Commissioner Gatling and her staff quickly rose to the challenge – tackling the situation aggressively and methodically. Currently, the case inventory is under 1,100, a number that includes approximately 500 new complaint filings last year. The dramatic reduction in case inventory was accomplished by: thoroughly reviewing the

merits of all 5,000 cases; retraining the attorneys and investigators; and beginning complaint investigations at the Intake stage.

Last year, CCHR reached settlements on over 160 of its cases. The benefits to complainants have included: the payment of nearly one million dollars in damages; the construction of 75 modifications for people with disabilities; and employer training and policy changes in 25 companies. In addition, CCHR's efforts have resulted in the reinstatement of ten individuals and the hiring of five individuals who were denied employment for discriminatory reasons.



LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

CCHR Testifies Before City Council:

Commissioner Patricia Gatling and Deputy Commissioner Cliff Mulqueen testified before the City Council on March 14, 2002, May 10, 2002 and July 25, 2002. The hearings regarded CCHR's vision for the future and expanding the protection rights of domestic violence victims.

Gender Defined:

The City Human Rights Law was amended in April 2002 by defining "gender" to include actual or perceived sex as well as a "person's gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior or expression, whether or not that gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior or expression is different from that traditionally associated with the legal sex assigned to that person at birth." Transgender individuals may now file gender claims under the City Human Rights Law.

MAYOR APPOINTS NEW CCHR COMMISSIONERS

Mayor Bloomberg's recent appointments to the City Commission on Human Rights represent the most diverse, highly qualified group of professionals in the agency's history.

All eleven new Commissioners and the two individuals previously appointed are trailblazers in their own community and leaders in civil rights. Each has worked tirelessly towards preventing discrimination and improving life for all New Yorkers.

Their depth is not only measured by their diversity of race, creed, color, age, national origin, gender or sexual orientation, but by their qualifications and the valuable contributions they

have already begun making to the Commission.

The Commissioners have been called upon to lend their expertise in such fields as: economic development, at-risk youth, disability access, employment for ex-offenders, and immigrant issues. Additionally, they will advise Commissioner Gatling on issues of discrimination.

The new Commissioners, along with the two individuals who were previously appointed, are: Reverend

Dr. Calvin O. Butts III, Matt Foreman, Dr. Edison O. Jackson, Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, Grace Lyu-Volckhausen, William Malpica, Omar T. Mohammedi, Derek Bryson Park, Bryan Pufolkes, Lisa Quiroz, Jenny Rivera, Susan R. Scheer, and Marta B. Varela.

Below, with Mayor Bloomberg and CCHR Commissioner/Chair Gatling (center), are (left to right): Rev. Dr. Butts III, Dr. Jackson (partially hidden), Lyu-Volckhausen, Malpica, Mohammedi, Forman (partially hidden), Pufolkes, Quiroz, Rivera, Scheer and Park.





MOVING FORWARD

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

The New York City Human Rights Law is one of the most rigorous civil rights laws in the nation. Mayor Bloomberg and I are committed to the vigorous enforcement of that law. That same commitment also extends to fostering racial and ethnic harmony among our diverse communities.

As a former career prosecutor and a child raised in the South during the civil rights era, I know firsthand the deleterious effect of discrimination.

Discrimination has no place in this City. When Mayor Bloomberg appointed me to head the Commission, I was eager

to serve and to make an impact.

Upon arriving at CCHR, one of my primary goals was to reduce the large inventory of cases while making sure that the complainants received a just resolution.

I am pleased that after an intensive and thorough examination of these cases, we have broken that backlog cycle and can now refocus the agency's resources on systemic human rights violations and meritorious claims. Today, with thorough intake reviews and investigations, we are able to reach determinations quickly.

The hiring of two retired NYPD officers now also allows us to conduct testing and undercover investigations – helping us resolve cases in a more timely fashion. They have conducted tests in all five boroughs and we have hundreds of locations lined up for testing in accessibility as well as racial and gender discrimination. And we intend to conduct random testing of employers.

Another top priority was to greatly enhance existing community programs under our Neighborhood Human Rights Program.

We conduct numerous outreach programs that offer a variety of services. Our *Equal Access Program* provides disability access assistance and education to senior citizens and the disabled community. We are conducting the *Immigrant Employment Rights Education* program, providing training for immigrant workers, employers and immigrant advocacy organizations advising them of their rights and respon-

sibilities. We also conduct a *Mortgage and Pre-Purchase Counseling Program* to help reduce predatory lending practices and the discrimination associated with them.

We are currently developing a *Community Mediation and Dispute Resolution* program to provide early intervention mediation services. And we have a *Training Institute* that provides instruction in the Human Rights Law to advocacy groups, employers, housing and public accommodation providers, government agencies and student groups.

Under our *HIV Prison Project*, we work closely with HIV positive prisoners, ex-offenders and their families experiencing HIV/AIDS-related discrimination. The Project also offers: a Spanish-English hotline; crisis intervention; referrals and short-term counseling.

I am proud to live in a City where the Mayor has the integrity and compassion to believe that all New Yorkers deserve protection from discrimination. And I am proud to serve under a man who is committed to fighting discrimination wherever it may appear. Our commitment to education, advocacy, and enforcement of the City's Human Rights Law will surely strengthen our diverse City.

Patricia L. Gatling

Patricia L. Gatling Commissioner/Chair

GRANTS HONORS

HIV PRISON PROJECT:

Now in its 13th year and funded with \$ 250,000 from the Ryan White C.A.R.E. Act, the HIV Prison Project serves HIV positive prisoners, former prisoners and their families. Services include: information on the NYC Human Rights Law; a Spanish/English hotline; crisis inter-

vention; referrals and short-term counseling. The number is 212.233.5560. Call collect if necessary.

POST 9/11 DISCRIMINATION SURVEY:

With a \$7,500 grant from NY Community Trust, CCHR has joined with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Arab-American Family Support Center, Chhaya CDC, Coney Island Avenue Project,

Council of Pakistan Organization, South Asian Council for Social Services and South Asian Youth Action with the goal of documenting discrimination against Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims since 9/11. The questionnaires, in Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi, and English, are aimed at recording unreported discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and bias

related harassment and educating the public on how the Human Rights Law protects people.

CAPSTONE PROGRAM:

CCHR Community Relations' proposal was selected by the NYU Wagner School of Public Service to participate in their prestigious Capstone Program. A Capstone team of graduate students is working with CCHR to explore the extent of discriminatory practice and fair

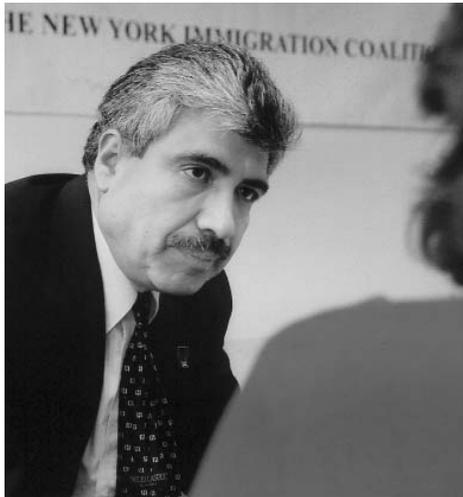
housing violations in home lending. The team is looking for discriminatory predatory lending, which includes: systemic targeting of vulnerable populations or protected classes for high cost financing; the withdrawal of less costly lending alternatives; and whether certain seemingly neutral policies within the home finance sector and the secondary mortgage market are causing adverse

impacts primarily on Black, Hispanic, Asian or elderly communities.

ISAAC LIEBERMAN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS:

CCHR Human Rights Specialists Kathleen Bracken and Isaac Parsee were among sixteen New York City career civil service employees who were honored with the Isaac Lieberman Public Service Award, sponsored by The Hundred Year

IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS TRAINING



CCHR Immigrant Employment Rights Project Director Juan Fernandez discusses types of discrimination that many immigrants encounter. Bilingual info cards describing the Project at right.

IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

IMMIGRANTES EMPLEO DERECHOS

CCHR has joined forces with the New York Immigration Coalition in kicking off a major initiative to inform immigrants about the protections against employment discrimination they have under Federal and City law. Working with a \$70,000 grant from the US Department of Justice, the CCHR Immigrant Employment Rights Project has been successfully reaching the diverse immigrant communities of New York through various workshops, ESL classes and meetings.

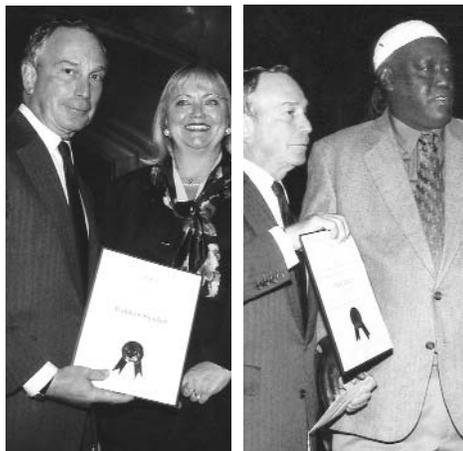
The informal discussions, literature and multilingual power point presentations are aimed at educating immigrant workers, employers, employee associations, business associations and immigration advocacy organizations on discrimination in employment based on national origin, citizenship status or alienage.

For more information about the Project or to schedule a presentation, call 212.306.7574.

Association of New York. Both were recognized for their

outstanding achievements during a ceremony hosted by

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. Ms. Bracken, Director of CCHR's Queens Community Service Center, oversees the borough's numerous outreach programs. Mr. Parsee is the agency's supervising foreclosure and default mortgage counselor, working with homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes because they have fallen victim to predatory lending practices.



Mayor Michael Bloomberg presents Kathleen Bracken (left) and Isaac Parsee with Isaac Lieberman Public Service Awards.

COMMISSION IN NEWS

Languishing Civil Rights Agency Gets New Life Under Bloomberg

By MICHAEL COOPER

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg has doubled the number of investigators and increased the budget of the city agency responsible for enforcing local civil rights laws, a body that some say was deliberately weakened by former Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani.

The agency, the Human Rights Commission, won a slight budget increase from Mr. Bloomberg this fiscal year even as the mayor was cutting most other agencies. The number of investigators and staff lawyers at the agency rose in 2001. And

New York Times 1/03/03 Front page

Snub spurs legal eagle's bias claim

By MIKE CLAFFEY DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Marcus Succes was skeptical when a Queens landlady refused his \$2,100 and told him an apartment he looked at hours earlier had just been rented.

ed and found probable cause to hold an administrative trial. The landlady, Nancy Dikeman, could be fined and ordered to pay compensation if

Daily News 1/21/03

Falun Gong Joins New Year Parade

By Bryan Virasami STAFF WRITER

Falun Gong practitioners will be allowed to march in tomorrow's Lunar New Year Parade in Flushing after they agreed not to hand out fliers.

Jian Feng Zhou, a practitioner from Elmhurst, said the committee's references to politics and religion were excused by organizers.

Newsday 1/31/03

Judge to deliver closure on 'pregnant firing' complaint

By STEPHANIE GASKELL Maria Kotowski filed a complaint more than a decade ago with the city's Human Rights Commission.

ing story," she said from her Brooklyn home. Kotowski was fired from the Mary Wilson fertility Unit in Manhattan, where she worked as a medical

and the case will go before a judge on March 13 as part of a major effort by the commission to clear out its backlog.

city's human-rights law," Gaskell said. Since being appointed by the Bloomberg administration, the commission has cleared out thousands of old cases.

New York Post 2/10/03

GIs NEED NOT APPLY

By JEANE MacINTOSH

Post, reads: "The tenant has advised the Owner that the Tenant is not in military service of the United States or New York State."

sign the waiver — in effect for nearly a decade — as the ISAC signing, but he insisted it isn't "part of the application process" and isn't a discriminatory "screening."

any military personnel when it comes to housing, is not only morally repugnant and unethical, but illegal," said Gaskell. "There is no full exemption."

Norman Siegel branded the waiver "discriminatory," adding, "it probably violates the purpose and spirit of the Soldiers and Sailors Act."

New York Post 2/03/03

**THE NEW YORK CITY
COMMISSION
ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

40 Rector Street
New York, NY 10006
(212) 306-7500
Fax (212) 306-7648
NY Relay Services (800) 421-1220 English
(877) 662-4886 Spanish

**COMMUNITY
SERVICE CENTERS**

**Manhattan and
Staten Island**

40 Rector Street
10th Floor
New York, NY 10006
(212) 306-5070

Bronx

1932 Arthur Avenue
Room 203A
Bronx, NY 10457
(718) 579-6900

Brooklyn

275 Livingston Street,
2nd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11217
(718) 722-3130

Queens

136-56 39th Avenue
Room 305
Flushing, NY 11345
(718) 886-6162

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. 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.

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40 Rector Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10006

*Promoting and Protecting
Human Rights Since 1955*

