

Christine Roundtree  
*Executive Director*



David N. Cicilline  
*Mayor*

**Providence Human Relations Commission**  
*"Building Pride in Providence"*

May 27, 2003

Michael R. Clement  
City Clerk  
City Hall  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Mr. Clement:

Enclosed are 20 copies of the Providence Human Relations Commission's 2002 Annual Report as required.

Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Christine Roundtree  
Executive Director

CR/bs

Enclosures

IN CITY COUNCIL

JUN 5 2003

READ  
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT  
THE SAME BE RECEIVED  
*Michael R. Clement* CLERK

**2002**

**Providence Human Relations Commission**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**David N. Cicilline**  
*Mayor*

**Christine Roundtree**  
*Executive Director*

*From the  
Executive  
Director*

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To the Honorable David N. Cicilline, Mayor of the City of Providence, and to the Honorable Members of the Providence City Council:

It is with pride that we respectfully submit the 2002 Annual Report of the Providence Human Relations Commission for your review. We are especially proud of our accomplishments during the past year. Our partnerships and collaborations with outside agencies and community groups allowed for enhanced effectiveness on a number of issues relevant to equity and access in the City and the State.

As we present this report in 2003, we look back over the past 40 years with gratitude to those public servants and community advocates before us who recognized the need and the value of creating this Agency.

It is our mission to carry forward what they began for the work remains unfinished.

Sincerely,



Christine Roundtree

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2001-2002**

## **PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

### **2002 COMMISSIONERS:**

Bishop Robert E. Farrow – Chair  
Thomas Foley – Vice Chair  
Syneth Buor – Secretary  
Sister Angela Daniels, C.P.  
Mary Dean  
Fitzgerald Himmelsbach  
Christopher Nocera  
Howard Phengsomphone  
Gary St. Peter  
Brett Davey

### **2002 STAFF:**

Christine Roundtree  
*Executive Director*

Pasqualina Bucci  
*Deputy Director*

Linda A. Callei-Fraioli  
*Employment Investigator*

Vincent McWilliams  
*Housing Investigator*

Frank Simeone  
*Housing Investigator*

Bouphavady Sath  
*Clerk II*



# ANNUAL REPORT 1963-64

## PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

### COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS:

Chairman: Honorable Dennis J. Roberts

Vice Chairman: Frederick C. Williamson

Secretary: Mrs. Isadore W. Miller

### COMMISSIONERS:

Rabbi William G. Braude, D.D.

Vito Carneglia

Reverend Percy A. Carter, Jr., S.T.M.

Dr. Sarah T. Curwood

Right Reverend John S. Higgins, D.D.

Harry Kizirian

Judge Frank Licht

Rev. John A. Limberakis, B.D.

John A. McConnell

Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, D.D.

### *1963-2003 Our Fortieth Year*

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The Providence Human Relations Commission was created 40 years ago with a staff of three, during a time of civil unrest in many urban centers throughout America. Providence was no exception. Mayor Walter H. Reynolds is credited, along with the original Board of Commissioners and community advocates, for having the vision to see the need for an agency such as ours and for possessing the courage to take a bold new step in actively addressing racial issues and intergroup community relations.

## *Celebrating Our Fortieth Year of Service*

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*Established in 1963, the Providence Human Relations Commission investigates complaints of alleged discrimination in housing, employment, credit, education, and public accommodations, and promotes understanding among the City's diverse populations.*

*If you feel discriminated against because of your race, color, religion, age, gender, physical or mental disability, familial status, sexual orientation, nationality, or marital status, please contact:*

Providence Human Relations Commission  
Providence City Hall  
Providence, RI 02903

(401) 421-7740

### **2003 PHRC Commissioners**

Sister Angela Daniels, C.P.

Mary Dean

Fitzgerald Himmelsbach

Christopher Nocera

Howard Phengsomphone

Sister Anne Keefe, SSJ

Mary Kay Harris

Molly Soum

Bishop Robert E. Farrow

### **2003 PHRC Staff**

Christine Roundtree  
*Executive Director*

(Linda A. Callei-Fraioli  
*Employment Investigator*)

Vincent McWilliams  
*Housing Investigator*

Bouphavady Sath  
*Clerk II*

# *Collaborations*

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How can one agency take on all the claims of discrimination that take place in Providence? Answer: It cannot. That is why our many partners are so important to us.

Any list of agencies and organizations that the Providence Human Relations Commission worked with over the course of the year is bound to be a partial one. Although this list is not a complete one, it demonstrates the effectiveness and necessity of a group effort in ensuring equality for all.

Among those we worked with in 2002: the National Conference for Community and Justice, Rhode Island Housing Mortgage and Finance Corporation, Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless, Providence Housing Authority, Governor's Commission on Prejudice and Bias, Rhode Island Coalition for Affirmative Action, the Rhode Island Civil Rights Roundtable, the Rhode Island Historical Society, and the Rhode Island Black Heritage.

The Providence Human Relations Commission is chartered to investigate complaints of alleged discrimination in housing, employment, credit, education, and public accommodations. This has been our mission for 40 years.

We are also charged with promoting understanding among the City's diverse populations. This is a more complex task. With the continued support and diligence of our partners, we feel confident that we can meet that goal.

## *Rhode Island Coalition for Affirmative Action*

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March is National Women's History Month and RICCA honored Rhode Island women in acknowledgement of the national designation. Among those recognized for their work to bring equity to issues faced by women and minorities were:

Myrth York

Leisa Young

Mary Sylvia Harrison

Lt. Col. Jeannie Vachon

Mary Santos Lima

Onna Moniz-John

Cynthia Hiatt

Christine Roundtree

## *Common Ground*

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“Below the surface, how truly different are people? Is there one race that cares more about the schools in Rhode Island? Do the followers of one religion feel more strongly than another about acceptance? Is promotion of understanding the stated mission of just one select group?”

Of course, the answer to all these questions is no. When it comes to unity among people, there are some built-in obstacles: fear, ignorance, intolerance, and history.

Can those elements be overcome to make our city, state, country and world a better place to live? At the Providence Human Relations Commission, we believe the answer is “yes”.

Years of experience have taught us that this is a difficult battle and a challenging mission.

There must be enforcement of existing laws and continued vigilance by our elected officials. True victory will only be won, however, in one place: the hearts and minds of our fellow human beings.

As was stated earlier, Providence is especially well-positioned to take a leadership role in this request. Our city could be a model for the rest of the country. The Providence Human Relations Commission is proud to be just one of the many groups committed to equality for Rhode Island and all its people.”

## *Partnerships*

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*Over the course of the year, the Providence Human Relations Commission meets and partners with dozens of organizations. Included among those organizations and projects are the following:*

- “Driving While Black” Coalition
- Mayor’s Advisory Commission for People with Disabilities.

- Leadership Rhode Island
- Camp Phoenix: a Partnership of Hope
- Camp Cronin (sessions for children with disabilities)
- Rhode Island Coalition for Affirmative Action
- Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission
- Dorcas Place Literacy Center
- Rhode Island Civil Rights Round Table
- Rhode Island Historical Society
- DARE
- State House testimony on racial profiling and seat belt issue
- National Conference for Community and Justice
- Sexual Assault & Trauma Resource Center
- Stop & Shop “Jobs for Teens”
- Supreme Court of Rhode Island Permanent Advisory Committee on Women and Minorities in the Courts
  - A. Education Subcommittee
  - B. Employment Subcommittee
- PERA (Providence External Review Authority)
- Choices Board of Directors (Center to Help Opportunities Ideas and Commitment Equal Success)
- Rhode Island College 1<sup>st</sup> Capital Campaign Steering Committee
- Task Force & Steering Committee on Racial Bias & School Discipline Rhode Island Department of Education
- Community Voices Project – Rhode Island School of Design
- New England Regional Advisory Board – “Fair Housing in the New Millennium” Conference

*“True peace is not merely the absence  
of tension; it is the presence of justice.”*

*- - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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“Justice is not a concept that most of us think about on a daily basis; we’re too busy living our lives. However, when discrimination or inequality arises, it’s comforting to know there is someone there to take up the fight of the oppressed.

That’s what the Providence Human Relations Commission is all about, ensuring that all Providence residents are afforded equal opportunity and equal treatment.

For people who are mistreated because of their race, color, religion, age, gender, or disability, justice is not merely a noble concept. It is something to be strived for, a means by which their humanity, dignity, and pride can be restored.

Thankfully, there are others who have taken up this cause. This report is a testimony of all those individuals, organizations, and agencies who have made equality and justice their business. Our work is not done but thanks to you, and with the efforts of all of us, Providence is a better place to live.”

*Civil Rights Icon*  
*PHRC/Rhode Island Foundation*

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*"The Problem We All Live With"*

Ruby Bridges was the 6-year-old girl with braids in the now familiar painting by Norman Rockwell entitled, "The Problem We All Live With." The artwork featured Ruby being escorted into the Michael Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans in, 1960, by 4 Federal marshals. The marshals were necessary because of threats to her life by white locals, as well as out-of-towners, who were opposed to the concept and practice of integration.

On January 22, The Rhode Island Foundation and the Providence Human Relations Commission co-sponsored a reception for Ms. Bridges. During her presentation, Ms. Bridges recounted her story; that of a 6 year old child integrating the New Orleans' school system during a time of racial strife, violence and limited opportunity for Black Americans. The South still maintained the Jim Crow standard which held to a strict separation of the Black & White races. Indeed it was the rule of the day in southern states to disallow Black citizens their right to vote. Several years later would see the emergence of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (a beginning but not the solution).

Many in the audience wiped away tears as Ms. Bridges gave graphic verbal background as the slide projector showed image after troubling image of crowds of White adults shouting threats and racist insults at a 6 year old Black child. Ruby Bridges became even more of a hero that evening at The Rhode Island Foundation when she told the audience not to be angry at what we had heard and witnessed. She said that it was her story and her life. "Those things happened to me, and I am not angry. So you do not have the right to be angry for me." Someone in the audience referred to Ms. Bridges as a hero, she did not accept the title. She said, "I am an ordinary person. Not everyone is a Dr. King or a Rosa Parks. Ordinary people did extraordinary things. Ordinary people still do extraordinary things." The PHRC is grateful to The Rhode Island Foundation for the privilege of co-hosting an event of such historical and current importance.

## *Making History*

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On November 14, 1960, the nation watched as 6-year-old Ruby Nell Bridges walked into William Frantz Elementary School and into history. A federal court ordered the New Orleans school system to desegregate, making Bridges the first African-American to attend the elementary school.

She says: "That first morning I remember mom saying as I got dressed in my new outfit, 'Now, I want you to behave yourself today, Ruby, and don't be afraid. There might be a lot of people outside this new school, but I'll be with you.' That conversation was the full extend of preparing me for what was to come."

Her walk inspired the 1964 Norman Rockwell painting "The Problem We All Live With," a small black girl escorted by four federal marshals walking to school beside a wall bearing a scrawled racial epithet and the letters KKK. Harvard psychiatry Professor Robert Coles witnessed the scene in New Orleans. He has written a children's book about Ruby Bridges experience called "The Story of Ruby Bridges." In the book Coles reminds children of the heroism of Bridges action, showing her facing an empty classroom because angry parents kept their children home and all but one teacher refused to teach a black child.

*- from an NPR interview*

*A Day of Reconciliation*  
*PHRC/RI Black Heritage Society/RI Historical Society*

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Sometimes justice, as recognition, arrives long-overdue. On Emancipation Day, August 1, 2002, seventeen years after the initial efforts of Dr. Rowena Stewart, creator/director of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, a bronze plaque was affixed to the stone wall of the John Brown House. "The Day Made History", read the Providence Journal's coverage of the event. The plaque's inscription included John Brown's ventures in slave-trading, a fact not widely known or acknowledged. Among those who fueled the project forward and took part in the "Day of Remembrance" honoring the Brown family's slaves, were The Honorable O. Rogeriee Thompson, Associate Justice, Rhode Island Superior Court, Joaquina "Bela" Teixeira, Director of The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society and Christine Roundtree, Executive Director of the Providence Human Relations Commission and a member of the Rhode Island Historical Society's Board of Trustees. Bernard Fishman, newly hired Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, and Roger Begin, Chairman of the Board, also are credited with lessening the established resistance of the Society to publicizing John Brown's slave-trading and slave-holding activities. Dr. Carolyn Fluer-Lobban of Rhode Island College, as she took the microphone, said of the day's significance, "This is a day of celebration and joy. We could spend a lot of time in bitterness, but let us not do that. I want to say to you, Emancipation Day is for everyone." Judge Thompson, a descendent of slaves, said of the Society's previous resistance, "History can't be changed, but it doesn't hurt us to acknowledge history." More than one hundred people braved the afternoon heat of one hundred plus degrees to witness the historic program.

*2002 Williamson/Kizirian Annual Human Relations  
Award & Scholarship Luncheon  
Providence Firefighters Respond to Ground Zero*

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Before an audience of 200 people, three Providence Firefighters who provided relief efforts in the immediate aftermath of the September 11, tragedy were honored with the PHRC's 2002 Human Relations Award. Battalion Chief Michael Blackburn, Lt. Gregory Crawford and firefighter Lisa Krapf were cited for their heroic actions in the wake of horror of unimaginable scope. Blackburn was summoned to Ground Zero on September 13, to "conduct a needs assessment that could be used to set up a critical-incident support system." Crawford, called to New York on September 11, "crawled through the rubble of collapsed buildings, searching for victims." Firefighter Krapf who arrived on September 15, "worked on the established critical-incident support system and "provided assistance to Blackburn and other members of the stress counseling team." We quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in describing the valiant work of the three, "The true neighbor will risk position, prestige and even his/her life for the welfare of others."

## *2002 Williamson/Kizirian Human Relations Scholarship*

Anthony Washington, La Salle Academy senior, was awarded the \$1,000 Scholarship for his essay "How Discrimination Through Education."

# Halt discrimination through education

Anthony Washington, a senior at La Salle Academy, is this year's winner of the Providence Human Relations Commission's Williamson/Kizirian Scholarship Contest. Approximately 30 entries were received from students who described how they would fight discrimination. The \$1,000 scholarship is named in honor of Frederick C. Williamson and retired Providence postmaster Harry Kizirian, who were members of the commission for many years. Williamson is currently state historic preservation officer. Washington's essay:

I do not fight discrimination; I try to inform people how discrimination is an important issue throughout the world. Before I continue, let me first explain to you what discrimination means.

According to Webster Dictionary, discrimination means, "to make a difference in treatment or favor on a basis other than individual merit." To me, it means to show favoritism toward others in any aspect, circumstance, situation and position. It is like a disease, but a disease that I feel can be cured.

How can I stop the spread of discrimination? First, we know discrimination does exist, no matter where we are or what situation we are in. We know how we feel when we are being discriminated against. We feel hurt, angry, mad, disgusted, cheated and most of all hated.

Everyone has been/felt discriminated against at some point in their life. Whether it is your physical color (too black, too yellow or too white), your origin of culture (French, African, Spanish, American, etc.), your language (pamphlets for Spanish speaking, but not for the French, Italians, etc.), your education (a B student vs. a C student or a college degree vs. years of experience), your religion (Catholic vs. Methodists vs. Baptist vs. Armenian, etc.), your dress (baggy pants

vs. fitted pants), your athletic proclivity (basketball vs. football vs. soccer or one team vs. another), your way of thinking, your freedom of speech (speaking your mind vs. saying what others want you to say), your perception of issues, or your age (too young or too old). These are just a few areas of discrimination that play a big part in our society and everyday life.

With such pervasive discrimination in society, the question becomes: How can we educate the public to keep discrimination from spreading further? How can we teach people to treat each and every human being equally and with respect? Where do we begin?

First, we must start with ourselves. To understand who we are, we must appreciate and accept ourselves. We cannot accept others for who they are if we do not take a stand and accept and respect ourselves for ourselves, our color, our creed, our origin, our appearance, our religion, etc. We need to respect and like ourselves because we are all different and special. We are human beings trying to learn how to do the right thing. We need to follow through with this throughout our everyday life. During the interim, while we continue to grow, we need to understand, while we are in school, church, activities, etc., to treat every individual with respect.

Learning about others will enable us to perceive each individual for who he or she is and for the gifts he or she possesses. By the time we have graduated from school and enter the work force, we, as the future of tomorrow, will help create a turnaround in the hiring, training and managing procedures. So how can I stop the spread of discrimination right now? — Through education!

Everyone needs to participate in a class called "Discrimination,

Who Me?" This class should be easy enough for a child in first grade to comprehend. These classes could be divided into sections and levels from first grade to fourth grade. The class should be entitled, "Being Happy With Yourself And With Others" and it should be in a picture format style. From fifth grade to eighth grade, a movie and discussion on "Why am I Me and You are You." For high school and college students, a half-credit requirement course on "Think, It Can Happen to You." At your job, a seminar for each new employee and every employee on "Discrimination, Who Me?" As for the public, we should learn to utilize our modern technology through the Internet, songs, videos, posters, newspapers, magazines, storybooks and communication with one another. Make it a positive epidemic by educating the public that discrimination is a problem that needs solving on a continuous daily basis. And, of course, let's not stop there! Teach everyone throughout our homes, our churches, within (and outside) of our community, through after-school programs, at recreation, etc., about helping to end discrimination.

Will this make a difference by doing this? I think it will. It is a start, and we have to start somewhere. I know it is hard and this won't happen overnight. This process will be slow and we must have patience. We have to take it day by day and step by step. A little at a time can turn out to be a big accomplishment in the long run. So why not start by working on yourself first and educating others along the way?

*Anthony Washington, recipient of a \$1,000 scholarship based on his essay, will attend Framingham College.*

## *Outreach*

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“The work of the Providence Human Relations Commission takes place in the hallways of businesses, large and small. It takes place in schools and apartment complexes. It involves advocacy, investigation, and action.

Whenever people in Providence are discriminated against, the Human Relations Commission is there to help. The chart on the right puts into numbers the quantity and types of complaints we are investigating. It does not, however, tell the whole story.

We believe a large number of cases of discrimination go unreported. These are only the cases that have been brought to our attention. There are assuredly hundreds, if not thousands, of other cases that happen each year. Our hope is that in time, people who are discriminated against will learn to trust the system and avail themselves of the resources that are available.

On the back of this report is contact information of the Providence Human Relations Commission. If you or someone you know needs assistance, please contact us. We're here to serve.”

## *Statistics*

July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002

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### **Housing**

Race.....	9
Gender.....	1
Sexual Orientation.....	0
Age.....	0
Marital Status.....	0
Disability.....	3
Ancestral Origin.....	1
Familial Status.....	3
Deposit Return.....	53
Retaliation.....	45
Code Enforcement.....	90
Sub-Standard Housing.....	34
Lead Paint.....	12
Request Materials.....	57
Request Laws.....	60
Miscellaneous.....	61
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>429</b>
Resolved.....	284
Referred.....	145

**Public Accommodations.... 0**

**Credit ..... 0**

**Education..... 0**

### **Employment**

Race.....	7
Gender.....	0
Sexual Orientation.....	1
Age.....	1
Marital Status.....	0
Hostile Environment .....	8
Disability.....	0
Ancestral Origin.....	0
Familial Status.....	0
Miscellaneous.....	0
Out of Jurisdiction.....	8
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>27</b>
Resolved.....	19
Referred.....	8

### **Police Statistics**

Traffic Violations.....	2
Harassment.....	2
Miscellaneous (non police)...	2
Out of Jurisdiction.....	7
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Police Department intakes</b>	
<b>received.....</b>	<b>116</b>
Notice of hearing of civilian	
complaints.....	87

## *“Camp Phoenix: A Partnership of Hope”*

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Teaching the young people of Rhode Island the lesson of equality has developed into an important piece of the mission of the Providence Human Relations Commission.

Since 1991, one of the ways we do this is through Camp Phoenix: A Partnership of Hope Summer Camp. Funding for the camps from a variety of sources. The partnership of the Commission, the Mayor’s Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse, and Nickerson Community Center recognizes the importance of this program. (Initially, the Providence Police Department, under Colonel Gannon, was a vital partner.)

Camp Phoenix engages youth from the Providence School System who are making the transition from elementary to middle school. A total of 42 youngsters attended this week-long, overnight summer camp.

Originally created as a bridge between urban youngsters and the Providence Police, the program expanded to include “Life Skills”, such as substance abuse and violence prevention. The ultimate goal of the camp was to start a dialogue with these youngsters that will hopefully better equip them for life’s challenges.

The youngsters interviewed after attending Camp Phoenix reported that they had a very positive experience. More than 90 percent of the participants said they had learned new skills in dealing with alcohol and drugs and 93 percent said they would recommend the camp to a friend. In addition, the campers took part in fun, athletic activities. Interesting art projects including photography, painting and design sparks the imagination and creativity of the campers.

## VIEWPOINT

### CHRISTINE ROUNDTREE

M. Charles Bakst's thoughtful piece, "In Black and White, Sad State of Affairs," (Sunday, Jan. 27) was one of the most revealing explorations on the subject of attitudes toward racial issues I have read. He is to be commended and I am grateful for his voice.

Before interviewing attendees at the Martin Luther King Jr. annual breakfast on Jan. 21, Mr. Bakst showed us a page from USA Today which featured photographs of the governors of all 50 states and which bore the headline, "These are America's governors. No Blacks. No Hispanics."

To know factually that there was not one black governor nor one Hispanic governor was dismaying. However, to see the 50 photographs assembled on one page was a profound visual assault.

Reading the replies issued by the black and Hispanic respondents, taken separately and together, provoked in me a sadness the magnitude of which caught me unprepared. The perception is clear that our people will not be elected to high local office for a long, long while; when "the time is right," no doubt. I am reminded of the 1960s' protest chant. "If not now, when? If not you, who?"

Evidently, 40 years later the time still is "not right." How does

that reality and its resounding implication — "not us, not yet." — affect our view of ourselves, our plans and the way we encourage our children to dream their brightest future?

What part does it play in our interactions with non-minority populations? Is there a veiled resentment which is not overtly expressed but lies beneath the surface? Or are we able, miraculously, to conduct ourselves with a sincere openness to, acceptance of and fondness for our non-minority peers, colleagues, neighbors and those at large?

I am proud that among my black and Hispanic friends and professional acquaintances the answer is that we indeed accept, without rancor, our white fellow citizens who do not face the obstacle of color. Further, to the many non-minorities who work with us every day, year after year, decade by decade, in an effort to finally achieve some real measure of equality, I say, "Thank you from the depths of my heart."

That black Americans can be so astute about our condition in this country, and locally, that we can continue to strive for justice even when the struggle wears our spirits and makes our hearts cry, that we know very clearly where we stand and are still able to function well and charitably, is

a tribute to all who have gone before us in the never-ending battle for equal rights. Our strength and endurance prevail despite our low measure of true hope.

Some years ago, when the great writer James Baldwin was asked what the Statue of Liberty meant to him, he said, "For many in this country, the Statue of Liberty is simply a very bitter joke, meaning nothing to us."

When will this change? "If not now, when?" Perhaps one day, with the continued dedication of a few impassioned, good people in many cities and towns across this country, there will come an outcry for equal rights the likes of which America has not witnessed since the 1963 march on Washington. Who will these good people be? "If not you, who?"

In the meantime, we get through our days with steady resolve. We have lived through the time of promise to the time of utter disappointment. The dream remains deferred. We will not, however, be defeated although our spirits at times may falter.

The saddest question of all though, is what do we tell our children about the circumstances awaiting them?

*Christine Roundtree is the executive director of the Providence Human Relations Commission.*