

Christine Roundtree
Executive Director



Vincent A. Cianci, Jr.
Mayor

Providence Human Relations Commission
Building Pride in Providence

May 21, 2001

Michael Clement
City Clerk
City Hall
25 Dorrance Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Mr. Clement:

Enclosed please find twenty copies of the Providence Human Relations Commission's Annual Report.

As you read this report, you will find that we have accomplished many goals in the course of the year.

We realize, however, that there is still much to be done and we look forward to a successful year ahead.

Sincerely:

Christine Roundtree
Executive Director

CR/kb

cc: Bishop Robert E. Farrow
Chairperson

Enclosure

IN CITY COUNCIL

JUN 7 2001

READ
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.

CLERK

Providence Human
Relations Commission

Annual Report 2000

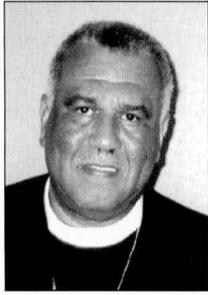


City of Providence

Vincent A. Cianci, Jr.
MAYOR

Christine Roundtree
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bishop Robert E. Farrow
CHAIRPERSON



From the Chairperson

To the Honorable Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., and Members of the City Council, and the People of Providence, to the Executive Director of the Providence Human Relations Commission, Christine Roundtree, the Administration and Staff of the Commission, to my fellow Commissioners, citizens and friends of our Renaissance City, allow me to take this time to say, "welcome to the Providence Human Relations Commission where liberty and justice is our purpose and objective."

As we continuously stand together and diligently seek and strive to better the lives in fairness to all the people of our city, we endeavor to hold onto this vision of equality for all, for without a vision, the people perish.

I find it both a privilege and an honor to serve in the capacity of Chairperson of the Commission.

As we continuously stand together and diligently seek and strive to better the lives in fairness to all the people of our city, we endeavor to hold onto this

vision of equality for all, for without a vision, the people perish.

So as Chairperson of the Providence Human Relations Commission, I am dedicated and committed to and concerned for the rights of all the people of our many communities and I am privileged to be an integral part of the Commission as we work to ensure that our city shall always be a "City of Providence" and "Rhode Island, a State of Hope."

God Bless You,
Bishop Robert E. Farrow



From the Director

Over the course of time, it is clear that the principles of social justice, civil rights and improved race relations require various approaches and applications. It takes many different voices to give life to the promise of those principles.

"An individual has not started living until he or she can rise above the narrow confines of individualistic concerns to the grander concerns of all humanity."

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

During my life, there have been those before me who have inspired me by their view of living as encompassing more than self-interest.

Contributing more than their measure. Establishing the standard by which I set my course.

They accepted the role given to them – seeing the larger picture for the greater good. Taking the road less traveled by most. And by so doing, their selfless efforts have enriched our city, our state and our lives.

They are beacons in the darkness to light our way.

They are my heroes.

"For the true believer, the true fighter – even the darkness is light enough."

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

B. Jae Clanton • Cleon Harvey • Bob Bailey • Ann Hill
Harry Kizirian • Melvin Roundtree • Adele Gamble
Eloise Gunthrop • Cora Murphy • Charles Thomas
Judge Corinne Grande • Mary Santos Lima • Jarvis Jones
Noreen Coachman, MD* • Norman Ododenker • Nancy Roundtree
Bennie Fleming • Judge Frank Caprio • Gertrude Goodman
Mary Bogan • Frederick Lippitt • Gene Booth • Howard Bucklin
The Reverend Naomi Craig • Mrs. Stevens • Mrs. Heathman
Mrs. Mello • Shirley Vines • Judge William Grande • Larry Turner
David Henderson • Andrew Bell • Yvonne Cabral • Rita Michaelson
Virginia Watts • Fred Williamson • Julius Michaelson
Phillip Addison • Sgt. Cornel Young, Jr.*

**People of remarkable and uncommon courage.*

Sergeant Cornel Young, Jr.

At last year's Dr. Martin Luther King observance at City Hall, I met Sergeant Cornel "Jai" Young, Jr. Major Young introduced his son to me with obvious pride telling me Cornel Jr. was also a police officer.

I'll never forget the radiance on both their faces when I said to the son, "So you're following in your father's footsteps." That was the last time I saw Cornel Jr., two weeks later, he was gone.

Sgt. Young's death made all Rhode Islanders face some unpleasant truths about race relations. His loss was a call to action for all of us. Suddenly, people became aware of issues which had not directly touched their lives before that. Some people were frightened at the perceived divisions they felt were created by his passing. But, they were wrong.

They were wrong because the divisions were there all along. Others knew it. Sergeant Young's death brought a lot of us together, across racial lines, in common cause. Seeking nothing more than truth; to acknowledge the

problems of racism and racial injustice and to rededicate ourselves to working tirelessly to correct ever-present discrimination, inequity and denial.

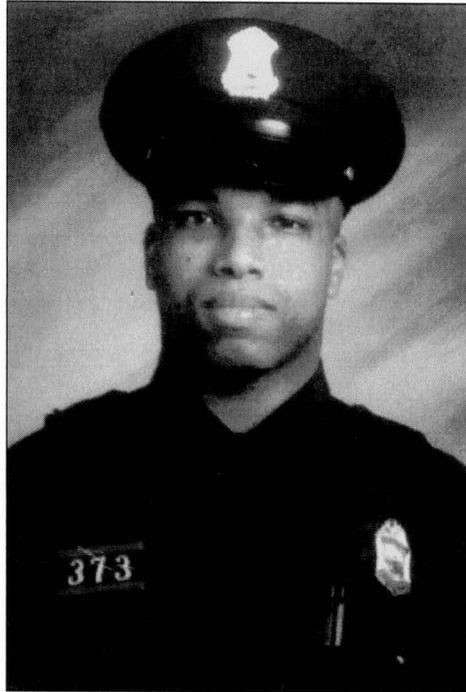
Our society is heading down the long and dangerous road of regression in racial matters. And if we do not acknowledge the truth of this circumstance we cannot hope to change this course – nationally as well as locally.

Now is not the time to be silent. Now is not the time to be comfortable by playing it safe.

Now is the time for courage to take stands and speak publicly advocating for those people and those issues needing our support. We must be actively involved in creating meaningful and substantive change.

For as Dr. King so aptly said, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people... but for the appalling silence of the good people."

Christine Fountaine



Sergeant Cornel "Jai" Young, Jr.

"We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people."

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

2000 Annual Report

Stop the Hate Poster Partnerships

Mayor Cianci joined with the Providence Human Relations Commission and Fitzgerald Himmelsbach, Liaison to the Gay and Lesbian Community, to publicly thank Johnson and Wales University for generously donating the design and printing of the poster at the agency's request. Thomas Wright, Senior Vice President for Development, and Lisa Kaufman, graphic designer, both from the University, were instrumental in creating a thoughtful and effective outreach piece.

The public awareness campaign was developed in response to targeted violence against members of the gay community and minority populations.

Racial Profiling Bill Signed into Law

Senator Rhoda Perry and Representative Joseph Almeida are the acknowledged champions responsible for the passage of the state's historic anti-racial profiling legislation. The so-called "Driving While Black" bill had a long and challenged up-hill battle but finally prevailed due to the sustained efforts by Perry and Almeida. A broad based coalition of individuals,



Ms. Roundtree, Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., Thomas Wright and Lisa Kaufman.

community and rights groups (including the ACLU, NCCJ, State Commission, East Providence EEO Office, the RI Coalition for Affirmative Action and the PHRC), were steadfast in seeing the bill through to its

triumphant conclusion.

Camp Phoenix: A Partnership of Hope

Now in its eleventh year, Camp Phoenix is a partnership consisting of the Providence Human Relations Commission, the Mayor's Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse and the Nickerson Community Center. Camp Phoenix is a week-long overnight camp offered during the summer, serving Providence youngsters who are making the transition from elementary to middle school in the fall.

The camp offers an array of activities, including substance abuse awareness and violence prevention, self-esteem building, team building, athletics, art projects, classical music performances, African drum-

ming and dance, and trips to the beach. Campers have an opportunity to make new friends and learn valuable skills to help ease their transition into middle school. Two camp sessions are held



Ms. Roundtree, Representative Joseph Almeida and Senator Rhoda Perry.

each summer, with sixty Providence girls and boys selected to attend each week. Camp is free of charge to the families.

New last year, was a ferry ride to Block Island and a barbecue for all once they arrived on land. In addition, the session saw campers, each equipped with a camera, taking part in a collective art/photography project instructed by a RISD graduate.

Camp Phoenix is staffed by personnel from all three sponsoring agencies, along with youth staff, including Providence high school teenagers. The older teenagers who serve as peer leaders are paid a salary for their time at camp as well as for the time they spend training before camp begins. Staff and campers reflect the ethnic and racial populations of Providence.

In response to increased violence in our society, the camp board has redoubled the emphasis on non-violence training and conflict resolution.



Meg Curran, US Attorney; Fitzgerald Himmelsbach, Mayor's Liaison to the Gay and Lesbian Community; Ms. Roundtree; Kate Monteiro, Gay and Lesbian Alliance President; Cliff Monteiro, Providence NAACP President; and Senator Jack Reed.

Camp Cronin Summer Program for Children with Special Needs

Initiated in 1997 by the Mayor's Advisory Commission for People with Disabilities (ADA), this program has brought hundreds of children to Camp Cronin in Narragansett during the past four summers. A scenic five-acre facility on the ocean with easy access to a public beach, the camp allows young people, ages 4-12, to enjoy the beauty of nature without regard to their physical or developmental challenges. As spon-

sor, the ADA Commission has been able to offer this opportunity to special-needs children enrolled in the Providence School Department's 230 Day and Extended School Year (ESY) Programs.

The children attend day sessions on Wednesday and Friday. Camp activities include time at the beach, tennis lessons, pony rides and a barbecue luncheon. In addition, due to the fundraising efforts of ADA Chairman W. Fitzgerald Himmelsbach, arrangements were made for the campers to attend the Big Apple Circus in Charlestown.

The program has been rewarding to all those involved and we have seen greater success each year. That success can be attributed to the leadership of Linda DeCiccio, Volunteer Program Coordinator, working directly with the ADA,

Public Safety Commissioner's Office, the Providence Department of Recreation, the Providence School Department and invaluable volunteers. Each year we

strive to expand the program to include more and more children. The PHRC is proud to be a part of Camp Cronin.

Federal Hate Crimes Law Local Support

Senator Jack Reed gathered a group of local rights activists to urge U.S. House passage of an expanded hate crimes bill which would protect people with disabilities as well as address issues related to orientation. Efforts failed.

Later, Senator Reed, expressing disappointment at the defeat said, "Hate crimes laws express society's judgment that a violent act motivated by bigotry deserves greater punishment than a random crime committed under the same circumstances."

It is important to note that the Providence Human Relations is not receiving charges of housing discrimination in the numbers we believe it is occurring. We hope to collaborate with other agencies gaining needed resources to implement a pilot testing program to determine the true picture. Also we plan to undertake a public awareness campaign telling citizens of their rights, signs to look for and remedies available to address discriminatory acts.

Stereotypes and Images

Ms. Onna Moniz-John, EEO Officer for the City of East Providence, returned with her extensive collection of Black Americana for our Black History Month observance. Ms. Moniz-John spoke to 150 Providence high school students about negative Black images, using pieces from her collection to illustrate her words.

A Mount Pleasant student, commenting on the negative images said, "I never knew anything about this. To make their faces look that way - it really shows the anger of the people who made them. I feel bad." Ms. Moniz-John said that she "has become increasingly aware of the need to balance her presentations so that her young viewers don't become overly angry." As to the

value and importance of the presentation, a Hope High School teacher added, "It's great because this is something we don't teach in school."

PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION	
Summary of Cases & Inquiries	
July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000	
Employment	29
Gender	0
Race	3
Retaliation	1
Out of Our Jurisdiction ...	13
Miscellaneous	12
Public Accommodations ...	0
Education	1
Race	1
Disabilities	1
Physical Barrier	1
Miscellaneous	5
Inquiries & Referrals	
Housing	712
Gender	1
Ancestral Origin	1
Request Materials	146
Deposit Return	94
Retaliation	67
Request Copies of Laws ...	97
Code Violations	116
Substandard Housing	29
Lead Paint Issues	24
Miscellaneous	137

HOUSING

EHOP Receives National Praise

The Providence Human Relations Commission's Equal Housing Opportunity Program was awarded the HUD honor of "Local 2000 Best Practices Winner" for our annual Fair Housing Forum. The program has evolved during the last decade from topics strictly related to discrimination in housing to a broad range of housing issues including landlord and tenants' rights and responsibilities, building good credit to obtain mortgage financing and cooperative buying/living arrangements. Our panel of speakers, each with an expertise in a particular area of housing, visits the Providence high schools. We make a special point of inviting ethnic and lan-

guage minorities and women, as well as signers for deaf and hearing-impaired students. Representatives from the NAACP, the Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy, RI Commission for Human Rights and PHRC staff presented at the Forum.

Locally...

Fair Housing presentations were made to 32 community groups and neighborhood centers. The staff received 712 inquiries and attended meetings

with the RI Civil Rights Roundtable, The RI Coalition for Affirmative Action, The Mayor's Council for Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Habitat for Humanity.

Partnerships

The PHRC staff met with The Housing Network, RI Coalition for the Homeless and the Governor's Commission on Prejudice and Bias.

We also served on the sub-committee for the RI Commission on Women's Legal Rights Handbook. When completed, the book will be a legal resource covering a multitude of issues including living wills, real estate taxes, discrimination and harassment, social security, child care, food stamp benefits and medical care. The handbook has been designed in a user-friendly format and will be distributed by the Commission on Women later in the year.



Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr. with Frederick Lippitt, 2000 Williamson/Kizirian Award Recipient.

efforts over the next five years into an effective, coordinated strategy. This strategy must meet the program goals of creating viable urban communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanding economic oppor-

tunities principally for low to moderate income persons." The PHRC is an active participant in this ambitious effort to ensure that all neighborhoods enjoy the burgeoning success of other areas of our capital city.

The Vision for Housing includes addressing

substandard conditions and lead paint hazards, using existing housing stock through their rehabilitation, and providing appropriate housing to

special needs families and individuals.

The Vision for Neighborhood Revitalization includes decreasing density through demo-

lition of derelict properties and expanding business development opportunities.

The Vision for the Public Service Network

includes an assessment of current services and retooling to meet new needs and balance recreational opportunities for all ages. The staff of the Department of

Planning and Development assembled a steering committee to provide "input and guidance" for portions of the plan.

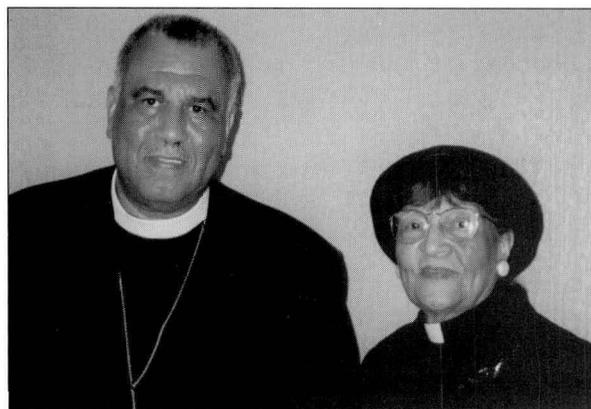
"The highest calling is to do justice—to trouble the comfortable and comfort the troubled."

STEVE BANKS, LEGAL AID SOCIETY'S NYC HOMELESS RIGHTS PROJECT

LOOKING AHEAD

City of Providence "Consolidated Plan 2000-2005"

A portion of the executive summary of the document reads, "The Consolidated Plan is a collaboration in which Providence establishes a unified vision for community development actions. It provides the opportunity for the City to shape the housing and community development



Bishop Robert E. Farrow, Chairperson, and the Reverend Naomi Craig, one of the first PHRC Commissioners

Agents of Change

Past & Present

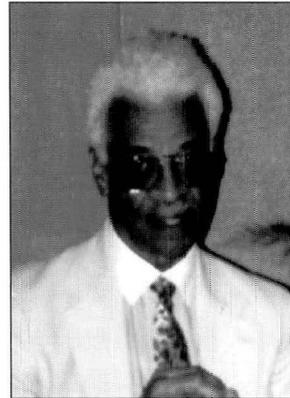


Harry Kizirian, B. Jae Clantor, and Fred Williamson at the 1997 Williamson/Kizirian Award Luncheon.

Persis Brown of HUD and Paul Holbrook, past Housing Chief, RI Commission for Human Rights, at the Fair Housing Forum.



Gene Eoeth, Executive Director, RI Commission for Human Rights, Christine Roundtree and Lawrence Turner, Senior Mediator, US Department of Justice and 1999 Williamson/Kizirian Award winner.



Cleon Harvey, past Commissioner, RI Commission for Human Rights.



Robert L. Bailey IV, Civil rights champion and 1994 Williamson/Kizirian Award winner.

Camp Phoenix

Classical music performances...

Team-building exercises...



...and just taking it easy.



In my view

Diversity: Call for Change or Meaningless Slogan?

Christine Roundtree

In the last several years, the word "diversity" came into prominence in our everyday conversation. One hears the word in connection with all manner and form of corporate life, government environs and academia. Symposia, conferences and training courses abound with the subject of "diversity." The concept was the theme of a four page corporate ad in the Sunday New York Times magazine section recently. Now, products of businesses are touted while "celebrating diversity."

Diversity is mentioned everywhere people strive to be politically correct and in tune with the jargon of the times. Very easily said. Not readily achieved. When one considers that diversity is what "integration" used to be, it seems a watered-down principle. Diminished in importance and not as intimidating a prospect in some resistant quarters. "Integration" implies government mandates and flashbacks to freedom riders and lunch counter sit-in's. "Diversity" pictures polite discussion groups with everyone agreeing on the importance of "harmony." Everyone concurs that diversity is wonderful and goes home self-satisfied at how far we have come as a

society. That, unfortunately, is where the problem reveals itself – in the negative. In the absence of real change. In the vacuum of inaction. The concept is all. No one notices that the status quo is still the status quo.

Paul M. Igasaki, a civil rights lawyer with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, said during a conference sponsored by the RI Commission for Human Rights recently, "Some people – particularly White people – will say that they don't know whether segregation still exists and yet they don't have any people of color in their workplace." If people of color are present, then in what numbers and at what levels of authority are they present?

To concentrate the placement of minority men or minority women in one department, or one class or group is not integration. True integration finds women and men of color at all levels in each department, each division, each class and in each group. Unless that is what you see before you in your present environment, the true spirit of integration is absent.

I submit that the term "diversity" is a smoke screen which handily diverts attention away from the reality of continued racial and ethnic discrimination. The result of failed attempts at diversity is

*Rhode Island College Conference:
"Fifth Annual Dialogue on 'Diversity'"*



Ms. Roundtree and Marcia Anne Gillespie, Editor-in-Chief of Ms. Magazine, presented at the conference. As part of her comments, Roundtree questioned how many minority women and men are employed as full-time faculty and staff at the state-funded college.

continued on page 11

exclusion – an innocent omission. The result of failed attempts at integration is segregation, a serious social ill and moral wrong. The emotional weight of the difference in perception is enormous. One easily understands why the language has been adapted and rendered more palatable. In very real terms though, the result is the same.

Just one example: The national NAACP has issued a call to action for the major television networks to integrate their programming in a substantive way. The same must be raised to our local electronic media. One need only take a cursory glance at any newscast to see the absence of Black people in the prestigious 6 pm “anchor” spots. Indeed, even non prime-time anchor positions are rarely filled by minorities. One Rhode Island station showcases its Weather team of five forecasters - not one woman, not one person of color. Locally produced commercials fare no better. Years ago, Sunday morning programming carried the unfortunate tag of “Sunday Morning Ghetto” – so termed because that is where the Black and ethnic minority shows were placed. Stations considered those time slots not of consequence for ad revenue.

Now, Sunday morning local talk shows have not one minority presence. Not one. Our state public television station’s discussion panel

program is devoid of a minority voice. During local analyses of political races, how many minority viewpoints were offered to the audience? Media-political polling – does the sample contain a portion of the rich mixture that comprises our area? “Reflective of our population” – great term. Not happening.

Our institutions, including our media, must undergo systemic change. We must challenge our systems and authorities – challenge their structure and question their composition. Society must submit to and respond to scrutiny because our society does not open the doors to its institutions to people of color, especially women of color, and to an extent all women – without loud and pro-

longed prodding. (EEOC’s Igasaki, “97% of Fortune 500 Company CEO’s are White and 95% are men.”)

There are faces belonging to every lost opportunity based on color. Not just numbers, not merely statistics, but real people who have been closed out who feel very real emotional pain and loss of hope as well as economic loss. Each of us bears the moral and collective responsibility to change this bleak landscape.

Promoting “diversity” is a placebo. We must actively work toward “integration” and put it into real world practice or “diversity” will continue to mean nothing at all to a good number of our citizens.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”
MAHATMA GANDHI

“I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and, as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It is sort of a splendid torch which I’ve got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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 you have been 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

151 Weybosset Street
Providence, RI 02903

(401) 421-3708 VOICE

(401) 751-0203 TDD

(401) 274-1070 FAX

PHRC Commissioners

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Vice Chairperson

Syneth Buor
Secretary

Sister Angela Daniels, CP
Mary Dean

Fitzgerald Himmelsbach

Pam Meyers

Christopher Nocera

Howard Phengsomphone

Gary St. Peter

PHRC Staff

Christine Roundtree
Executive Director

Pasqualina Bucci
Deputy Director

Vincent McWilliams
Housing Investigator

Frank Simeone
Housing Investigator

Kimberly Beausejour
Clerk II



Lift access at
Eddy Street entrance.