

Melba Depeña
Executive Director



PHRC
PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

David N. Cicilline
Mayor

Ms. Anna Stetson
City Clerk
Providence City Hall
25 Dorrance Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Ms. Stetson:

We respectfully submit the Annual Report for the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) for fiscal year 2009-2010, pursuant to Section 16-64 (K) of the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance. This report highlights the vital work that PHRC has done in the past year.

One of the city of Providence's strength is its tremendous wealth of diversity. As a result, we need to work together to enhance our values and attitudes towards this diversity. The goal is to create a culture of tolerance and acceptance of our neighbors, co-workers, employees, tenants or anyone whose opinions and values are different from our own. In this context, PHRC plays an important role in our City to protect individuals from discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodation, education and credit status.

PHRC continues to vigorously process complaints of discrimination and foster mutual understanding through our outreach & education curriculum. The purpose of our outreach and education program is to coordinate quarterly workshops and seminars.

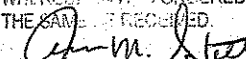
The Commission and our staff remain dedicated to achieve our mission as we prevent and eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote justice, equality and respect among all residents of the city of Providence. The purpose of this report is to share with you the Commission's accomplishments and activities for this fiscal year.

Sincerely,


Sister Ann Keefe
Chair


Melba Depeña
Executive Director

IN CITY COUNCIL
OCT 21 2010

READ
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.
 CLERK

PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

2010 Annual Report

MAYOR DAVID N. CICILLINE
PROVIDENCE THE CREATIVE CAPITAL

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INTRODUCTION

The practice or policy of discrimination against individuals because of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, disability, age or country of ancestral origin, is a serious concern for the city of Providence. Such discrimination threatens the welfare of our citizens as it lessens their standard of living, reduces their ability to provide for their families, and undermines our ability to thrive as a diverse city. The PHRC strives to safeguard the rights of Providence residents to be free from discrimination, and works to foster a climate of respect for the many diverse communities that make our City strong.

The mission of the PHRC is twofold:

- To seek, investigate, mediate and/or adjudicate complaints of discrimination filed with the Commission and promote compliance with civil rights law.
- To promote, facilitate, and foster positive relationships among and between the diverse groups and communities within the city of Providence through outreach, education, training and community building activities.

This year has been an exciting year of growth and development for the PHRC, as the staff has worked diligently to fulfill its critical mission of reducing discrimination and improving community relations in the City of Providence. PHRC heard and adjudicated complaints of civil rights violations, and provided education and training to the community on a wide range of civil rights-related topics. Even with limited staff, the number of new cases filed with the Commission during this fiscal year was 54. In addition, the PHRC staff provides valuable service for the residents of Providence by responding to inquiries (over 325 phone calls) from the public and referring non-jurisdictional cases to other agencies.

What follows in this report are specifics about the work of the Commission including its work hearing complaints, providing educational workshops, reaching out to the community, and building organizational infrastructure.

COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

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:

Commissioners

Sister Ann Keefe
PHRC Chairperson
Saint Michael's Church

Maria Alvarado
Guatemalan Association of RI

Rosamaria Amoros
RI Department of Health

Wendy Becker
Rhode Island College

Everett Brooks
Johnson & Wales University

Marilyn Cepeda-Sanchez
Access Employment of RI

Jodi Glass, Au.D.
Doctor of Audiology

Mary Dean
Retired

Padee Thao
GTECH Corporation

Raymond Watson
Mt. Hope Neighborhood Association

Donna Williams
Housing Network of RI

Staff

Melba Depena
Executive Director

Investigator
Janette M. Conway

Secretary
Wanda Escobedo

Olajumoke Akinrolabu, Esq.
Legal Counsel
Law Department

SPECIAL THANKS TO

**Sister Angela Daniels and
Kenneth Brown** for their
years of service to the
Commission.

ADJUDICATION OF COMPLAINTS

Any person aggrieved by an unlawful practice in violation of federal and state law covered under the City's anti-discrimination ordinance may contact the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) to file a petition. The Commission will commence an investigation after a petition has been completed and signed.

- When a complainant contacts the PHRC about an alleged discrimination, an intake form is completed by the administrative assistant.
- The intake form is then submitted to the PHRC investigator. The investigator meets with the complainant to discuss the case, get information, and explain the investigation & complaint process.
- The Executive Director then determines whether the case meets all of the requirements of the City's anti-discrimination ordinance. (Chapter 16, Article II Discrimination)
- If the case does not meet all of the requirements, the investigator may offer a mediation option or refer the complainant to another agency.
- If the case meets all requirements, a petition form is completed and signed by the complainant. Then the petition will be assigned a case number.
- The Executive Director notifies the respondent of the charge and respondent is asked for a written response.
- Thereafter, an investigation takes place, which may include fact finding meetings, site visits and interviews of all relevant parties/witnesses. Subpoenas may be issued by city council if necessary.
- At the conclusion of an investigation, the Commission will determine whether it is probable that an unlawful practice has been or is being engaged in by respondent. If so, the commission must attempt to encourage voluntary compliance with the City's anti-discrimination ordinance.
- If PHRC determines that probable cause does not exist to credit a charge of discrimination a notice will be sent to the complainant closing the case. The complainant may present additional evidence for reconsideration.
- If PHRC fails to effect the elimination of unlawful practice and to obtain voluntary compliance with the City's anti-discrimination ordinance the Commission may file a complaint and schedule a formal hearing.

FISCAL YEAR 2010 STATISTICS

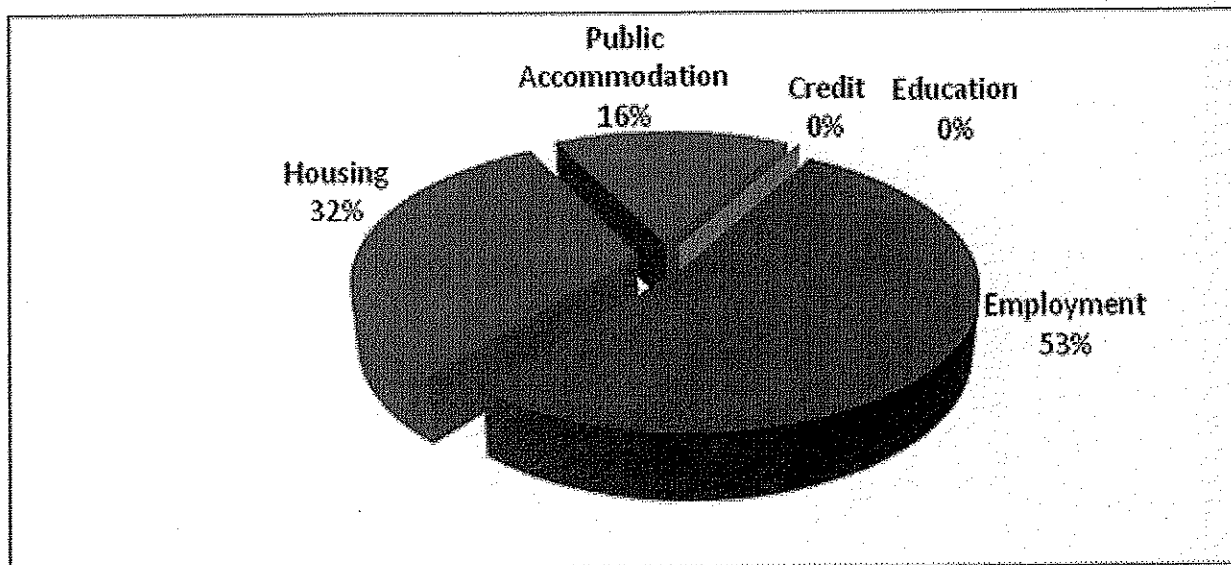
Overview of Status Disposition and Status of Complaints

Type	Number of Cases
Probable Cause	6
No Probable Cause	1
Out of Jurisdiction	2
Mediation	0
Withdrawal	0
Settlement	1
Open	10
Referred	25
Closed	8

OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS FILED FISCAL YEAR 2010

Area	Race/ Ethnicity	Religion	Disability	Age	Marital Status	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation
Employment	20		5	3			1
Housing	12		7	5		4	
Public Accommodation	6		4				
Credit							
Education							

PERCENTAGE OF CASES BY DISCRIMINATION AREAS



SELECTED CASES

The following scenarios are examples of real cases investigated by PHRC during this year. In order to preserve confidentiality, identifying information was omitted from the actual case.

- The complainant was a middle aged Spanish speaking man that alleged he was a victim of employment discrimination based on his race. Employed for over two years he strongly felt the company terminated him because he spoke Spanish among his coworkers. At a company meeting he was instructed never to speak English again or he would be fired. He questioned this policy. Shortly after that the company called a meeting alleging that his productivity was low. This case is still under investigation.
- The complainant was an Asian woman that owned her own business and alleged she was a victim of discrimination because of her gender and race. She had been in business for two years. She requested numerous times to meet with the management to discuss options available for her business because her sales were falling. During the investigation PHRC found evidence to support that she was being ignored and the management was not working in good faith. This case is still under investigation.
- The complainant was an African American woman employed in the health care profession for over two years who believed that she was terminated based on her race and color. The company stated that the termination was because she refused to provide care for a specific patient. During the investigation, PHRC found that the women's assignment was changed by a supervisor without notifying her. When a co-worker instructed her to take care of the patient, she refused because she was not aware of the change. The company never properly informed her of the new assignment which led to her termination.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

This year, PHRC worked decisively to increase its educational outreach program. The goal is to provide free, quarterly workshops and seminars to the general public about issues related to inter-group relations, civil rights and human relations as well as the discrimination areas the PHRC investigates.

The Importance of Mediation in Human Relations

May 4, 2010, University of Rhode Island, Feinstein Providence Campus

Mediation is often used, but many do not know what it means, especially as it relates to human relations. The purpose of this workshop was to inform the community the importance of mediation as a means to resolves tenant and landlord disputes, custody and visitation issues, discrimination and more.

Guest Speakers:

- Abigail Jones-Herriott
RI Mediation Center
- Frank P. Geremia
RI Mediators Association
- Moderated by PHRC Chairwoman Sister Ann Keefe

Talkin' About My Generation!

June 3, 2010 Classical High School

The purpose of this event was to have the youth share their experiences as it relates to diversity and discrimination. This forum was to see what our youth in schools face today and to give them information about the PHRC. The conversation was amongst the youth, brainstorming to create a better climate in Providence.

Guest Speakers:

- Chace Baptista
Young Voices
- Elana Rosenberg
Youth Pride
- Pitu Sim
PrYSM
- Moderated by PHRC Commissioner Wendy Becker

Meet & Greet - Providence Human Relations Commission

June 24, 2010, Colony House Apartments

The Commission invited residents of Colony House Apartments and surrounding community to meet PHRC Commissioners. At this meeting, we shared information about the PHRC, discussed the mission of the Commission, and where they seek assistance. Attendees received PHRC pens, tote bags and clips to kick off our new community outreach campaign.

Health Care as a Human Right

December 10, 2009, University of Rhode Island, Feinstein Providence Campus

The PHRC co-sponsored with RI Community & Justice and URI Providence Campus a forum entitled "Healthcare as a Human Right". The purpose of this event was to discuss the different perspectives on reforming our health care system. The forum encouraged many to share ideas and recommendations about health care reform. Stemming from a national debate, the event also explored the concerns many have about the health care system in our nation. This forum opened with videotaped remarks from Senators Reed and Whitehouse and Congressmen Kennedy and Langevin.

Guest Speakers:

- Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts
State of Rhode Island
- Nick Tsiongas, MD
Health Right
- Carrie Bridges MPH
RI Department of Health
- Andrew Douglas
Morrison Mahoney and Miller
- Shawn Donahue
Blue Cross Blue Shield of RI
- Michael Fine
HealthAccessRI
- Camblin Reyes
RI for Community & Justice Youth Action Council
- Moderated by Brandon Melton
Lifespan

IN THE NEWS

The Providence Journal

5:58 PM Thu, Nov 12, 2009 | [Permalink](#)
 Paul Davis [Email](#)

PROVIDENCE -- A nonprofit organization fighting bias and racism is sending a message to Rhode Island's congressional delegation:
 Health care is a fundamental human right.

"In arguments over specific bills or proposals for reforming the health care system ... we may lose sight of the values that underlie this debate," said Toby Ayers, executive director of the *Rhode Island for Community and Justice*.

RICI, said Ayers, "has a particular concern with those most harmed by an inadequate health care system: children and youth, the poor, individuals with serious health conditions, minority groups and low-paid workers. Any health-care reform must be structured and administered so as to prevent discrimination against those whom our current health-care system fails most."

RICI, the *University of Rhode Island* and the *Providence Human Relations Commission* will sponsor a forum on the topic at Paff Auditorium at URI's Providence campus on Dec. 10 at 4:30 p.m.

Providence en Español

Publicado el 05-07-2010

Comisión de Relaciones Humanas realiza taller de mediación

Los conflictos se pueden resolver sin ir directamente a la Corte, gracias a la intervención de una persona que sirva de mediador entre ambas partes.

[SHORT](#) [LARGO](#)

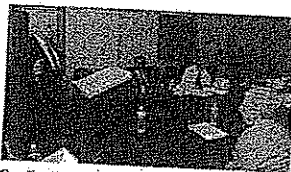
[Versión para imprimir](#)

Por Carlos Luis Rodríguez

PROVIDENCE.- Con la intención de mejorar la comunicación bajo un ambiente de conflicto, la Comisión de Relaciones Humanas de Providence ofreció el pasado martes 4 de mayo un taller denominado "Mediación en las Relaciones Humanas", el cual se realizó en las instalaciones de la URI Feinstein Providence Campus.

Los exponentes fueron: Abigail Jones-Herriott, directora ejecutiva del Community Mediation Center of RI, y Frank Geremia, presidente de RI Mediators Association, quienes transmitieron sus experiencias y aprovecharon la ocasión para impartir nuevos consejos sobre el tema.

Según los charlistas, mediación es un proceso informal, voluntario y



Credito Foto: Octavio Gómez
 Baba Sadr se dirige explica a los asistentes sobre las leyes de inmigración en los Estados Unidos.

PUBLICIDAD

The Jewish Voice & Herald



Sister Ann Keefe, of
 St. Michael's

Too few meals for too many Rhode Islanders

Jewish response is going strong

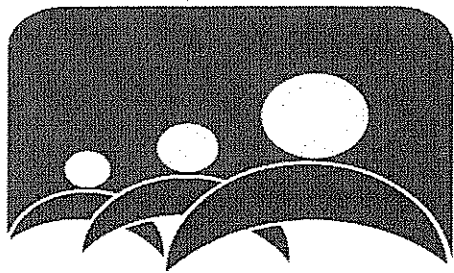
Editor's note: After writing in recent past issues about the dry schools' response to hunger in Rhode Island, we feature a wrap-up of the synagogue's activities, with a focus on The Full Plate and more on the needs of the greater Rhode Island community.

By NANCY KIRSCH
[nkirsch@jfi.org](#)

"IT'S LIKE HANUKKAH every day," said Andrew Schiff, executive director of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, about the outpouring of contributions of food and money. The Food Bank set a goal of 250,000 pounds of food in the Holiday Food Drive between November 2009 and Jan. 1, 2010; it's about two-thirds of the way there, with more arriving daily. "Everyone knows someone who is struggling... we've been blown away by the response of the community," he said.

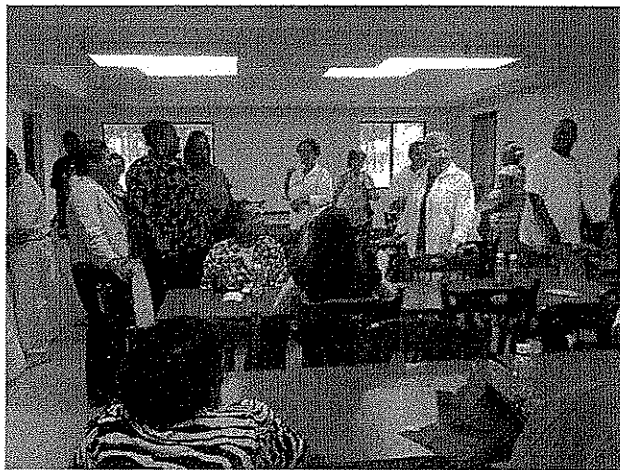
Getting through the day hungry, truly hungry, is a far-from-appetizing thought, and it's even less appealing during the holidays, when many other people experience a surfeit of food. As the weather grows colder, demand increases, said Schiff; as people divert dollars to pay for heat, they have less money for food.

RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY
 FOOD BANK



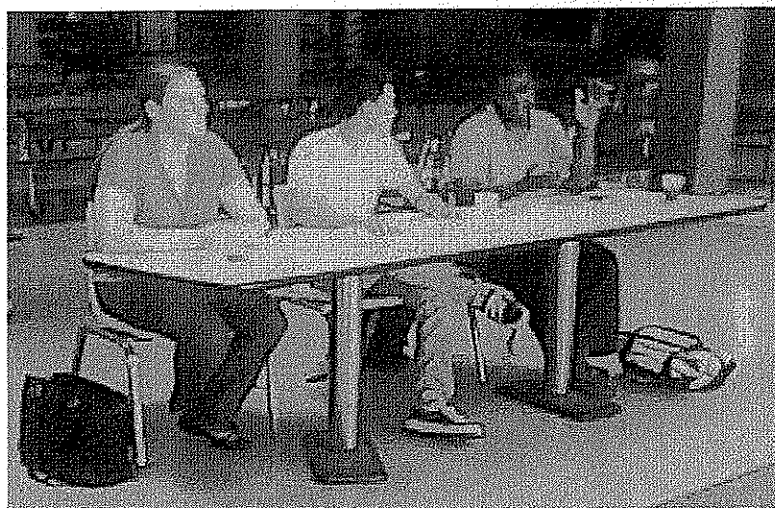
PHRC

PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION



Commissioners Speak With Residents of Colony House
During PHRC Open House.

2009 PHRC Youth Forum

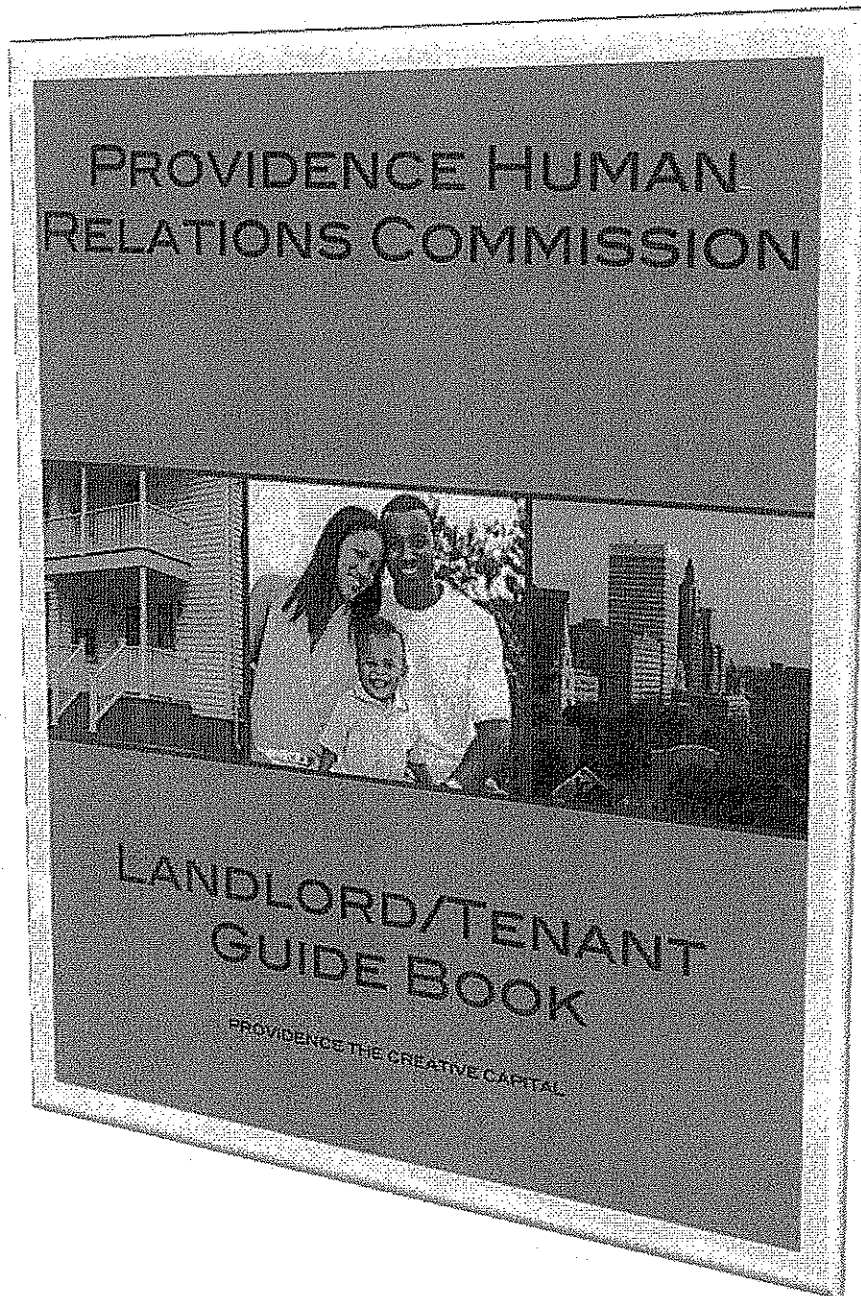


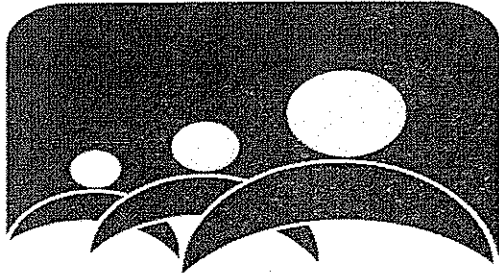
**Call the Providence Human Relations
Commission for 2011 Trainings and
Workshops at 401-351-0475.**



Or visit our website phrc.providenceri.com

Call our office for a copy of the New
Tenant/Landlord Handbook.





PHRC

PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

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PROVIDENCE, RI
OCT 12 A 10:29

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