

CHRISTINE ROUNDTREE

Executive Director



VINCENT A. CIANCI, JR.

Mayor

CHRISTOPHER NOCERA

Chairperson

Providence Human Relations Commission

"Building Pride In Providence"

December 27, 1999

The Honorable Michael R. Clement
City Clerk
City Clerk's Office
City Hall

Re: PHRC 1998 Annual Report

Dear Mr. Clement:

Pursuant to Section 1103 (b) (7) of the Providence Home Rule Charter, we are honored to present to you the Providence Human Relations Commission's Annual Report, 1998.

Sincerely,

Christopher Nocera
Chairman

Christine Roundtree
Executive Director

Enclosure

IN CITY COUNCIL
FEB 3 2000

READ
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.

CLERK

Providence Human
Relations Commission

Annual Report 1998



City of Providence

Vincent A. Cianci, Jr.
MAYOR

Christine Roundtree
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Christopher Nocera
CHAIRPERSON

PHRC Commissioners

Christopher Nocera
Chairperson

Thomas Foley
Vice Chairperson

Mary Dean

Victor Mendoza

Howard Phengsomphone

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Executive Director

Pasqualina Bucci
Deputy Director

Vincent McWilliams
Housing Investigator

Frank Simeone
Housing Investigator

Deborah Hudson
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**Multilingual
(English, Spanish, Italian)**

A Letter from the Chair

To the Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:
On behalf of the members of the Providence Human Relations Commission, I am proud to present you with our Annual Report and to provide you with an overview of the Commission's work over the past year.



Christopher Nocera

The most pressing issue before the Commission at this time is confronting hate crimes—and their root causes and their effects—that have occurred in our capital city, reflective of a proliferation of these heinous actions nationwide. In response, we continue to work closely with the City's liaison to the gay, lesbian, transsexual and transgendered communities. Together, we are reaching out to promote greater harmony and tolerance among all people.

On the same issue, we were proud to co-host a Hate Crimes Summit attended by federal, state and city officials, as well as by members of the gay and lesbian communities and the media. We were honored to welcome the participation of a professional of the caliber of the US Justice Department's, Mr. Lawrence Turner, who

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A Letter from the Director

Nationally, it was a difficult and tragic year regarding civil rights violations and discrimination. Throughout the country, death and violence were the result of an ever-growing trend of "mainstream" against "other."



Christine Roundtree

In New York, Amadon Diallo, an unarmed African immigrant, was shot 41 times by NYC police officers. Also in NYC, Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, was brutally assaulted by NYC police while held in custody. In Riverside, California, a young Black woman was shot, while in her car, by police, more than 20 times. Racial hatred drove Benjamin Smith to fire upon Jews, Blacks, and Asians in Indiana and Illinois ending with the murder of two men, one Black and one Asian, and the wounding of nine others. Smith "was a disciple of the World Church of the Creator which advocates the extinction of racial and ethnic minorities through a racial holy war."

Closer to home, in Pawtucket, a Black teenager was beaten by two White men because the young man was walking with his White

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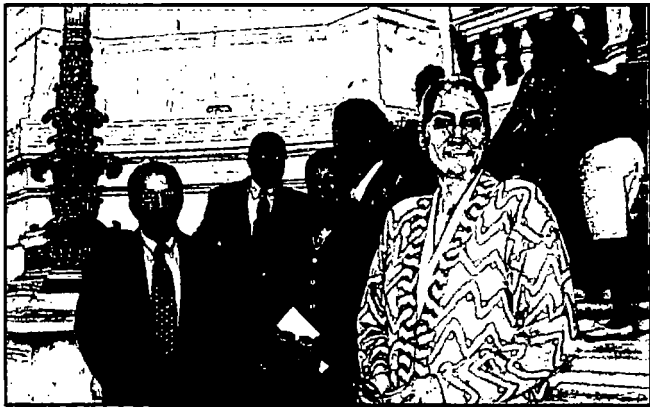
Summary of Annual Report

Racial Profiling

The Commission joined other civil rights groups calling for Senate passage of a bill requiring a two-year statistical study on traffic stops conducted by the state police.

The bill is designed to document whether racial minorities are disproportionately stopped and subjected to searches by the police.

Ms. Roundtree, concerned about all racial profiling, explained to the *Providence American* newspaper at a press conference at the State House on June 10, 1999, "There's a



At the State House speaking against racial profiling.

national trend that's definitely emerging in this country whereby the violence occurring against Blacks, especially in the last five or six years is disturbing and frightening. Racial profiling is just one example of what's happening."

Unfortunately, the bill has been stalled again. A Senate press release announced that it was worked out between the Senate and the state police to **voluntarily** collect statistical data. We believe this is not enough.

From Our Files...

At the request of our office, the collection of Black Americana of East Providence Affirmative Action Officer, Onna Moniz-John, was displayed at Providence City Hall. Covering many stages of Black life over the past 100 years, the collection depicts racially



The Commission celebrates Ms. Moniz-John's Black Americana collection.

negative stereotypical figurines, and beautiful prints and dolls. It has been called one of the best examples of Americana collectibles by experts in the field.

When asked why she collects and showcases such offensive pieces, Ms. Moniz-John stated, "...Black Americana is an example of oppression and it demonstrates our ability to overcome racial stereotypes."

Hate Crimes Seminar Hosted by the PHRC

On December 11, 1998, the Commission and the Gay & Lesbian Liaison of the Mayor's Office, W. Fitzgerald Himmelsbach, hosted a conference to raise public awareness about hate crimes, to disseminate information about resources available to victims, and to emphasize the importance of reporting such crimes.

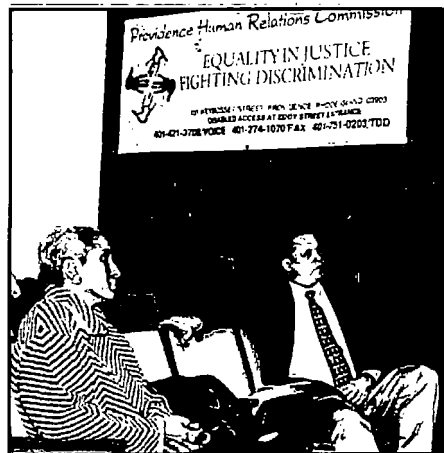
Participating agencies included the US

Department of Justice, the US Attorney's Office, the Providence Police Department and the Providence office of the FBI. Nearly 100 people, including several dozen activists from the lesbian and gay community, the communities of color, and municipal and state legislators, attended several presentations and participated in audience discussions.

Mr. Lawrence Turner, of the Community Relations Service at the US Department of Justice, told those gathered that, "Vicious hate crimes, such as the slaying of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas, and of college student Mathew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, could happen anywhere."

Equal Housing Opportunity Program

In an effort to educate students about fair housing laws, fair housing forums were held at Central, Classical, Hope and Mt. Pleasant High Schools. Speakers included representatives from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), RI Legal Services, RI Commis-



December's Hate Crimes Seminar.

"Discrimination is rooted in ignorance, fear or misunderstanding and in order to dispel those causes, communities must confront them and create constant dialogue about solutions."

WORDS FROM MS. JOSEPHINE SHAGWERT,
LAST YEAR'S SCHOLARSHIP WINNER.

sion for Human Rights, Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy, and the NAACP. We also presented five workshops to an audience of 15 to 20 people per session at Project Casa for Spanish-speaking future landlords. Translation was provided by the Commission's translator.

EHOP is currently working with the Rhode Island Commission on Women to publish a legal rights resource handbook. Staff serves on the lead paint, housing, and landlord/tenant issues

subcommittees. We anticipate the book being available the first of the year.

Mayor's Advisory Commission for People with Disabilities

In a joint venture with CityYear, we

initiated the painting of curb cuts for people with disabilities in downtown Providence. Following a kickoff celebration in Kennedy Plaza, the new class of corps members painted the curb cuts in order to render them more visible.



CityYear assists in painting curb cuts.

Employment

During fiscal year 1998-1999, out of the 51 employment inquiries that we received and investigated, three progressed to the fact-finding stage of our process which is an informal attempt to uncover the facts of the dispute and bring to light all relevant information. All parties directly or indirectly involved are requested to be present. Although established courtroom rules of evidence are not followed, legal counsel for the respondent often attends the proceedings.

We successfully conciliated a charge of gender discrimination brought by a woman against a local hospital. As a result, new guidelines were established and she is the first one to be considered for future departmental promotions. Another case involved a woman alleging racial discrimination and as a result of our fact-finding, we determined that there was probable cause. She was not discriminated against directly by her employer, rather she was racially harassed by a co-worker. We mediated between the parties, the woman



Frederick C. Williamson with award winners.

received the transfer she requested, the co-worker was reprimanded and the employer is now aware of his responsibilities.

In the coming year, a substantial amount of our time will be devoted to outreach education and awareness regarding employment rights and responsibilities.

Commission's Williamson/Kizirian Award and Scholarship Luncheon

On Friday, June 18, Lawrence Turner, Sister Angela Daniels, CP, and Reverend Daniel Trainor were presented with the 1999 Williamson/Kizirian Human Relations Award. Ms. Sindy Mojica, a Hanley Career and Tech-

nical School senior, was the recipient of our \$1,000 Williamson/Kizirian Human Relations Scholarship.

Mr. Turner is Senior Mediator with the US Department of Justice, Community Relations Service. He has been assigned to the New England region since 1972

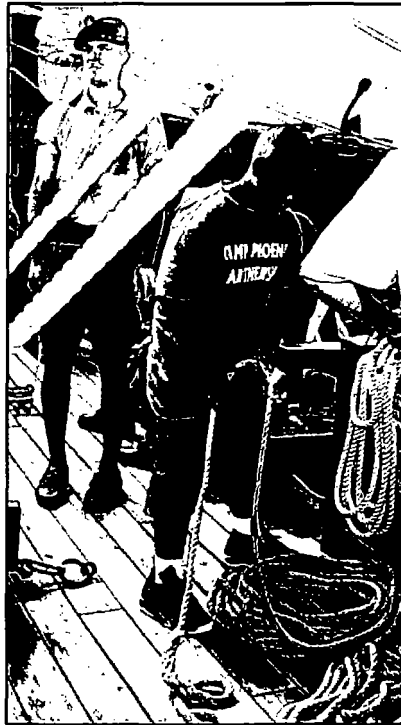
PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION	
Summary of Cases & Inquiries	
July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999	
Employment	51
Gender	3
Race	12
Retaliation	1
Out of Our Jurisdiction ...	27
Miscellaneous	8
Public Accommodations ...	2
Race	2
Education	2
Race	1
Out of Our Jurisdiction	1
Credit	1
Disabilities	1
Physical Barrier	1
Miscellaneous	5
Inquiries & Referrals	
Housing	554
Gender	1
Ancestral Origin	1
Request Handbook...	139
Physical Disability	3
Deposit Return	43
Retaliation	14
Request Copies of Laws	76
Miscellaneous	149
Code Violations	84
Substandard Housing .	29
Lead Paint Issues	12

to assist communities in resolving racial and ethnic conflicts and works with the parties involved to settle disputes based on perceived acts of discrimination relevant to race, color or national origin.

Mr. Turner recounts that he is most discouraged by society's "allowing a small group among us to create such discord, turmoil, and division through their hate and discriminatory behavior. We must bring to the forefront the power of our collective voices of opposition before there is a major catastrophe."

Longtime advocates for the City of Providence's large Southeast Asian populations, Sister Angela and Reverend Trainor co-founded The Genesis Center, a school and support center and the Indo-Chinese Advocacy Project, for refugees and immigrants. They now devote much of their

energies to a ministry they also co-founded, The Mathew: 25 HIV/AIDS Program, providing services to people living with HIV/AIDS and their families.



Camp Phoenix camper prepares the line to cast off aboard the Sloop Providence (crew member from Scotland in background). Summer, 1999.

Speaking about the trio Ms. Roundtree said, "As holds true with each and every award recipient through the years, these three winners illustrate all that is good in society: compassion and an eagerness to make a bad situation better."

Camp Phoenix

Camp Phoenix, a partnership of the Providence Human Relations Commission, the Mayor's Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse, and the Nickerson Community Center, is a week-long overnight camp serving Providence youths who are making

the transition from elementary to middle school in the fall. We offer a variety of activities including confidence and self-esteem enhancement, substance abuse awareness,

and violence prevention. Arts and cultural projects, classical music performances and field trips (such as to the ocean and to a glassblowing studio and gallery in

"We Africans speak of a concept difficult to render in English. We speak of 'ubuntu' or 'boto.' You know when it is there and it is obvious when it is absent. It has to do with what it means to be truly human. It refers to gentleness; to compassion; to hospitality; to openness to others... To vulnerability; to be available to others and to know that you are bound up with them in the bundle of life... For a person is only a person through persons."

DESMOND TUTU, THE ARCHBISHOP OF CAPE TOWN, SPEAKING AT THE FUNERAL OF A RESPECTED WHITE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST.

Newport) are offered to open new horizons for the campers. At Camp Phoenix, staff and campers reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the city of Providence.

A Letter from the Chair (continued)

served as moderator.

Our tenth Annual Scholarship Luncheon gave us the opportunity to honor Lawrence Turner, Senior Mediator, US Department of Justice, Community Relations Service, New England Region, Reverend Daniel Trainor and Sister Angela Daniels, CP, of Assumption Parish, for all the work they have done, and do, to eradicate prejudice, serve the refugee and economically poor, and to improve the quality of life in our capital city. We also, once again, awarded a \$1,000 college populations scholarship to Ms. Sendy Mojica, the winner of our essay contest.

We continue to make positive inroads in the areas of housing, employment and education. Through the hard work of our executive director, Christine Roundtree, and the Commission

staff, we are a valuable resource to Providence residents whose lives are impacted by the sting of discrimination.

We must always be mindful that our city and state were founded on the principle of tolerance and must continually strive to maintain Providence as a city that celebrates diversity and equality, and promotes peace and harmony.

We thank Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr. and the members of the City Council for their support and encouragement and look forward to continuing our efforts to improve human relations among all residents of Providence.



Christopher Nocera
Chairperson

A Letter from the Director (continued)

female friend. Each assailant was charged with felony bias motivated assault. In Braintree, two men were arrested in a department store after a clerk called police to report that "two Black men" had "fraudulently" charged \$15,000 to an American Express Card. The clerk did not question the men, did not ask for identification, nor did she telephone American Express to verify the validity of the purchase. Her first and only call was to the police. The men were confronted by police who threw them to the ground, handcuffed and arrested them in full view of shoppers. Only later was it learned that the card did, indeed, belong to one of the men and he was, indeed, authorized to charge \$15,000 (and more) to his credit card.

The problem has not escaped us in Providence either, with 15 bias motivated assaults against Gay men being reported during this past year. It is unclear how many more attacks go unreported.

To bring the problem of bias assaults to the attention of the public and to encourage victims to come forward and report the attacks, this Commission and the Mayor's Office of the

Liaison to the Gay and Lesbian Community assembled law enforcement and human service professionals for an educational seminar, December 11, 1998. Present were members of the US Department of Justice, FBI, US Attorney's Office and the Providence Police Department.

Close to 100 people attended and a follow-up conference will be held within the next year. Education and dialogue, while enlightening, are not enough. Strict laws and their strict enforcement and the diligent reporting of bias crimes and follow through of the judicial process are crucial if ever we hope to lessen what appears by all accounts to be an increasing threat to certain segments of our society.

Mayor Cianci was quoted as saying that in Providence, "...we will not tolerate to any degree such acts against any person because of race, age, creed, or sexual orientation."

We agree.



Christine Roundtree
Executive Director

*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, sexual orientation,
nationality, or marital status, please contact:**

Providence Human Relations Commission

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Lift access at Eddy Street entrance.

