Introduction

Dear friend,

The City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission has an enormous mandate. The ordinance that created us in 1968 tasks us with advising on programs and policies “ensuring that all residents are provided with an opportunity for full and equal participation” in City government, that “support efforts to create a City free from all forms of discrimination,” and that “improve inter-group relations,” among other lofty yet vital goals. By nature, our work is continuously pressing, necessary, and never fully complete.

Throughout the past year, the Human Relations Commission has worked toward this mandate in numerous ways. We brought together community members from the Black community in South LA to discuss policing in an intimate setting, providing new pathways for their voices to be heard by City leaders. We convened members of diverse Los Angeles faith communities to celebrate and examine the power of pluralism to unify and mobilize us behind important civic issues. We screened a film exhibiting the power of neighbors to rally around each other in the face of hatred, and heard from young people doing the same. We met with you, listened deeply, and explored new and existing ways to make this City welcoming, peaceful, and safe.

The work of maintaining positive and strong human relations is never easy, nor is it ever over. But it is essential to every aspect of a thriving City. Thank you for being our partner in this work.

Sincerely,
Human Relations Commissioners & Staff

Commissioners
Courtney Morgan-Greene, President
Angelica Solis-Montero, First Vice President
Irma Beserra Núñez, Second Vice President
Melany Dela Cruz-Viesca
Nirinjan Singh Khalsa
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About the HRC

The City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission is a Mayor-appointed advisory board mandated to promote equal participation in the civic process through innovative peace-building programs, models, and policy recommendations designed to reduce discrimination, increase cultural competency, improve intergroup relations, and promote civil and human rights for all.

Our Vision
The HRC envisions a pluralistic civil society free of racism, discrimination, and violence, where residents may live and work in an environment of respect, mutual tolerance, and human diversity.

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Strategic Focus Areas
- Race equity policy and racial healing
- Public safety and bridge-building
- Interfaith relations and pluralism
- Youth empowerment
- Immigration and human rights
- Transgender advocacy

How We Work
Convene communities to promote positive intergroup relations

Incubate innovative peace-building models

Advocate for equitable City policies and practices

2019 Operations
This year, the HRC worked to strengthen its operations to ensure its continuity and effectiveness. These efforts included:

- Drafting and passing Commission Bylaws
- Developing and approving a Commission Communications Protocol
- Launching an Ad Hoc Committee on Budget and Fundraising
- Developing intentional and regular relationship-building with stakeholders
Elevating Community Voices

The HRC remains committed to elevating community voices and participation in City government and policymaking.

The HRC completed an extensive report detailing the findings of its Dinner Dialogue Pilot Program in South Los Angeles. The HRC developed this program in partnership with the LA Police Commission with the goal of better understanding perceptions of law enforcement in the Black community and gaining actionable community-sourced recommendations for building trust. The HRC held 9 dinner dialogues with African American residents of South LA (both youth and adults dinners) to discuss policing. The dinners were held in neutral community spaces and facilitated by trained HRC staff. HRC and Police Commissioners were present as observers. The primary themes that arose fell under four categories: 1) Community Engagement, 2) Transparency, 3) Accountability, and 4) Training & Procedure.

The HRC also continuously supports the dedicated Transgender Advisory Council in its mission to make LA accessible, safe, and inclusive for the transgender community. The TAC and Council Member Mitch O’Farrell honored Jaden Fields, Rizi Timane and Patricio “Cacahuate” Manuel in City Council at the Transgender Day of Visibility in March. The TAC also held Transgender Day of Remembrance at City Hall in November, curating an exhibition honoring the trans women who were murdered across the country. The TAC continued its important work in the realm of public safety, employment, and homelessness as well.
Promoting Pluralism

Throughout 2019 the HRC convened leaders, community members, and advocates from across LA’s diverse faith communities around civic issues of shared concern.

The 5th annual Day of Religious Pluralism, in partnership with the Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti and sponsored by the Aga Khan Council and USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture, brought together faith leaders to learn about and discuss the strategies to foster resilient communities. They heard from experts about ways to bolster faith-led resilience in preparation for and response to disasters, and discussed their experiences of resilience with each other.

The HRC partnered for the first time with The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles to hold an Interfaith Passover Seder, co-sponsored by Council Members Paul Koretz and Bob Blumenfield. The program helped participants examined the different steps and rituals of the Seder in Jewish tradition, and showcased various community stories about the journey from oppression to liberation.

In partnership with Mayor Garcetti, the HRC held its 9th annual Interfaith Iftar in observance of the Holy Month of Ramadan. The HRC honored Justice Halim Dhanidina, the first Muslim judge in California, for his deep commitment to human relations. Participants also heard from interfaith leaders and from keynote speaker Mahershala Ali, the first Muslim actor to win an Academy Award.
Fighting Hatred and Stereotypes

The HRC curated learning experiences designed to combat hatred and stereotyping.

The HRC partnered with nonprofit Not in Our Town to hold its second screening of “Light in the Darkness,” a film about how one town came together to stand against hatred after the murder of a Latino immigrant. This film screening took place in partnership with Council Member Gil Cedillo, LA Mission College, and LAUSD Board Member Kelly Gonez. It was held as part of NIOT’s United Against Hate Week initiative and Latino Heritage Month, and was followed by a panel discussion of youth leaders discussing their experiences and approaches to fighting hatred. NIOT donated copies of the film, which are now available at the LA Public Library to foster more of these kinds of conversations.

The HRC also partnered with the Diversity, Inclusion & Racial Healing Ambassadors program, an initiative of the University of California Irvine, to host its high school students for a field trip examining the Boyle Heights neighborhood and Mexican history of Los Angeles. Students took a tour of La Plaza de Cultura y Artes museum and visited LAPD’s Hollenbeck Station in Boyle Heights. They then heard from a panel of leaders from Legacy LA, LURN, Building Healthy Communities, Inner City Struggle, and Homeboy Industries about building vibrant community, and discussed this topic with youth leaders from Legacy LA.
Engaging Community

Commissioners and staff deepened relationships with community stakeholders and stood with these communities in times of need.

Commissioners and staff represented the HRC and HCIDLA at LA Heart, an interfaith block party spearheaded by City Attorney Mike Feuer and his Interfaith Collective. Throughout the year, the HRC actively worked with this collective and with City Attorney Feuer to explore meaningful programming for youth in human relations.

Commissioners presented the human relations award each month at LAPD Recruit Graduations, and were also present to express condolence, outrage, and solidarity at convenings following the attacks in Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

The HRC also participated in the LA County HRC Anti-Hate Campaign, acted as a judge during the Mikva Challenge’s ActionCivics Project Soapbox, spoke about race relations at The Jewish Federation’s New Leaders Project, and took active part in the HCIDLA Commissioners’ Summit on Intersectionality.

Throughout 2019, the HRC was also represented at community events across the city, including the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation’s National Day of Racial Healing, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Homeless Count, the King Day Parade, the LA Pride Parade, and United Way’s annual Homewalk.
Thank you!

We appreciate your support and commitment to the essential work of human relations in the City of Los Angeles.

The work continues - here's to a more inclusive, equitable, and peaceful 2020.

Stay in touch with us

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