



Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

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FINAL MINUTES

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Meeting of April 7, 2025

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|----------|------------------------|---------------------|
| PRESENT: | Helen L. Chin | Isabelle Gunning |
| | Ilan Davidson | Preeti Kulkarni |
| | Dandy De Paula* | Kevork Keushkerian* |
| | Jeanette Ellis Royston | Fredrick Sykes |
| | Azusena Favela* | Gay Yuen |

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| ABSENT: | Michael Cheung | Guadalupe Montaña |
| | Lisa Dabbs | Jason Moss |
| | Derric J. Johnson | |

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| STAFF: | Pierre Arreola | Jenita Raksanoh |
| | Tony Cowser | Robin Toma |
| | Robert Sowell | Siranush Vardanyan |

GUEST: Grace Lowenberg

- 1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples:** Commission President Helen Chin called the meeting to order at 12:42 p.m. with a quorum in attendance. President Chin began by reading the L.A. County Land Acknowledgment, which can be found at the following link: [Land Acknowledgment – \(lacounty.gov\)](http://lacounty.gov). President Chin recognized the Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh, and Chumash Peoples as original inhabitants of these lands, honoring and paying respect to their elders and descendants; acknowledged that settler colonization resulted in land seizure, disease, subjugation, slavery, relocation, broken promises, genocide, and multi-generational trauma; and reminded us of our responsibility and commitment to truth, healing, and reconciliation, and to elevating the stories, culture, and community of the original inhabitants of Los Angeles County.

* This commissioner, and others marked by an asterisk, attended the meeting via internet video (MS Teams link), providing their location address for inclusion on the posted agenda, in compliance with applicable open meeting laws and policies.

** This commissioner, and others marked by double asterisks, attended the meeting via internet video (MS Teams link), but did not provide their location address for inclusion on the posted agenda, and were not in compliance with applicable open meeting laws and policies, causing them not to be accounted for in quorum and their votes not to count.

2. **Review & Approval of March 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes:** President Chin invited a motion to approve the proposed minutes of the Commission meeting of March 3, 2025, submitted by Vice President-Secretary Ilan Davidson. The motion was made by Commissioner Ilan Davidson and seconded by Commissioner Gay Yuen. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **President's Report**

- 3.1 **Spotlight on Staff Grace Lowenberg (retired as of March 28, 2025):** President Chin invited newly retired employee, Grace Lowenberg to speak as she shared words of gratitude for her hard work with the Human Relations Commission. Ms. Lowenberg expressed how much she enjoyed working at the Los Angeles County for fifty years and that she valued having the opportunity to get to know each Commissioner and staff, which she considers her lifelong LA County family. Ms. Lowenberg expressed her passion for helping people and shared that she will continue to do her work by mentoring students and through volunteering. The Commissioners individually thanked Ms. Lowenberg for her work ethic and voiced their love for her, adding that she will be missed.
- 3.2 **John Anson Ford (JAF) Human Relations Awards Event of March 20th:** President Chin reported that she participated in our John Anson Ford Awards event and enjoyed seeing the Commissioners and Human Relations Commission staff. President Chin thanked Commissioner Davidson for being the MC and the staff for organizing a successful event. Commissioner Davidson shared that it was an honor to be a part of this event.
- 3.3 **'Every Person Has a Name' event of March 22nd:** President Chin informed the Commissioners that although she was unable to attend the event opening, she had the privilege of reading publicly for at the event for 30 minutes the names of those who perished during the Holocaust. President Chin expressed thanks to Commissioner Jason Moss for inviting her to this event organized by his organization, the Jewish Federation of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys, and the significance of the reading of names as a way to appreciate that each had a story and history.

4. **Executive Director's Report**

- 4.1 **JAF Human Relations Awards and Every Person Has a Name Event:** Executive Director (ED) Robin Toma thanked Commissioner Moss for the opportunity to represent the Commission by speaking at the event. He expressed the importance of supporting one another to stand in solidarity against hate and violence to prevent the escalation to greater human rights violations such as genocide. He also informed the Commissioners that he was invited by Vic Gerami of the Truth and Accountability League (TAAL) to speak at an event to commemorate the Armenian Genocide on April 24th, 2025.
- 4.2 **Communications Update – Tony Cowser:** Public Information Associate (PIO) Tony Cowser presented a recap of the John Anson Ford Awards to the commissioners and showed photos of the event, including the new standing banners that enhanced and built the event's brand. PIO Cowser shared media coverage of the JAF Awards, from diverse outlets such as the LA Sentinel and Channel 36, as well as distribution in Supervisor Solis's and Supervisor Mitchell's e-newsletters, and that Supervisor Horvath and the Board of Supervisors' Executive Office shared social media posts of the event. PIO Cowser presented a video clip of the JAF Awards aired by LA36 TV. PIO Cowser also presented the media coverage of our first ever annual report on hate incidents in LA County that included the LA Daily News, ABC, NBC, Telemundo, Fox News, KNX Radio, ethnic media outlets such as the LA Sentinel and Jewish Journal. PIO Cowser indicated that we did not get coverage from La Opinión this time, but was hopeful the commission could get coverage from the newspaper in the

future, despite some recent changes the newspaper had been experiencing.

4.3 Other Program and Administrative (Budget) Updates: ED Toma recognized Commission manager Dr. Monica Lomeli and her team's hard work in putting together hundreds of hate incident reports, on top of the hate crime reports. He also noted that LA County has announced that \$4 billion is going to be paid out in settlement for child sexual abuse claims (AB 218), which will impact the overall county budget. ED Toma explained that our budget as well as all departments will likely be reduced, and hiring affected.

5. Committee Reports

5.1 Strategic Planning Committee (Kulkarni): Committee Chair Commissioner Preeti Kulkarni, announced that our Commission Strategic Planning retreat will take place on Wednesday, April 30, 2025 from 10am-4pm.

5.2 Transformative Justice Committee (Gunning): Committee Chair Commissioner Isabelle Gunning also shared that the Transformative Justice Committee also met and discussed their part of the Strategic Plan, and that they will have input for the entire commission retreat on the 30th.

5.3 Human Rights Committee (Yuen): Committee Chair Commissioner Yuen announced that the committee had met on March 23rd and reviewed the draft Strategic Plan section pertaining to human rights, ensuring that it represents their voice and is clear to understand. Commissioner Yuen said the committee will be ready for discussion by the time of the Strategic Planning retreat.

5.4 John Anson Ford Human Relations (JAF) Awards Committee (Davidson): Committee Chair Commissioner Davidson stated that there is no further information to be shared at this time.

5.5 LA vs Hate Committee (Montaño): Given Committee Chair Commissioner Guadalupe Montaño's absence, ED Toma shared that the committee met to review the proposed strategic priorities and goals that have to do with LA vs Hate and hate crime prevention. Additionally Assistant Executive Director (AED) Robert Sowell joined to explain that the Policy Advocacy Committee, also chaired by Commissioner Montaño, identified three of our strategic planning goals that called for policy change and policy involvement.

6. Public Comment: (3 minutes per person): None was offered.

7. Action/Discussion Items:

7.1 Custody Facilities Report: Staff member Pierre Arreola said the purpose of the Transformative Justice Committee visits is to have a deeper understanding of the criminal justice system. The Custody Facilities Report shares key observations of Commissioner and staff visits to all six LA County custody facilities run by the Sheriff's Department. The motion to approve the custody facilities report was made by Commissioner Davidson and seconded by Commissioner Kulkarni. The motion passed unanimously.

7.2 New HRC resource on international human rights for local government: ED Robin Toma said that the Commission staff's Human Rights team led by manager Aneisa Bolton and with support by AED Sowell, put together a guide to help people understand the purpose of their work and committee's background, which is included in the meeting

packet. He pointed out that this is an effort to support educating other individuals about human rights and building a human rights culture.

- 7.3 Special convening of community partners re anti-hate campaign:** ED Robin Toma referred to the press release in the meeting packet on the launch of LA vs Hate's newest campaign, "Signs of Solidarity." This event will start off at the first neighborhood, Westlake/the MacArthur Park area, and in San Pedro on Saturday, April 17th and 19th. He expressed how important it was to move the LA vs Hate campaign to a visibility campaign in key neighborhoods based on hate crimes and hate incident data over the two most recent full years of data. ED Robin Toma informed the Commissioners that this will build on the LA vs Hate Summer of Solidarity campaign which created murals for each of the most hate-targeted communities in the Los Angeles County. The Signs of Solidarity campaign will bring together community leaders in an effort to fill the neighborhoods with unity against hate signage, such as lawn signs and posters, to deter hate activity.
- 7.4 Specific actions to address new levels of reported hate:** ED Robin Toma shared that the team has worked with their partners, community and supervisors' office to develop a set of actions for the board's support. He expressed that the budget aspect will be critical in ensuring our anti-hate agenda can be fully carried out.
- 7.5 Collaboration with County Office of Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion (ARDI):** Assistant Director Robert Sowell briefly shared that staff continues to work actively with ARDI, despite the federal anti-DEI efforts.
- 8. Commissioner Announcements:** Commissioner Yuen invited the Commissioners to attend an event that will be held on April 16th from 6:00pm to 8:45pm at the Chinese American Museum with a panel of experts on birthright citizenship. The event will be co-sponsored by UCLA Asian American Studies Center by the Museum of Social Justice.
- 9. Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn in honor of Grace Lowenberg for her decades of dedication to the Commission was made by Commissioner Kulkarni and seconded by Commissioner Gunning. Commissioners expressed appreciation and affection for Grace and her service and support of the Commission. The motion passed unanimously. President Chin also acknowledged Jim Schwab, a senior human relations staff member who passed away earlier this year. President Chin adjourned the meeting at 2:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ilan Davidson
Commission Vice President-Secretary