



# Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

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## FINAL MINUTES

### COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Meeting of May 5, 2025

PRESENT:	Ilan Davidson	Preeti Kulkarni
	Dandy De Paula*	Guadalupe Montaña
	Jeanette Ellis Royston	Fredrick Sykes**
	Isabelle Gunning	Gay Yuen
	Kevork Keushkerian*	
ABSENT:	Helen L. Chin	Azusena Favela
	Michael Cheung	Derric J. Johnson
	Lisa Dabbs	Jason Moss
STAFF:	Tony Cowser	Robin Toma
	Robert Sowell	Siranush Vardanyan
	Jenita Raksanoh	

- 1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples:** At the request of Commission President Helen Chin who could not attend this meeting, Commission Vice-President/Secretary and commissioner (VP-Sec.) Ilan Davidson served as acting chair and called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. with a quorum in attendance. VP-Sec. Davidson began by reading the L.A. County Land Acknowledgment, which can be found at the following link: [Land Acknowledgment – \(lacounty.gov\)](http://lacounty.gov). He 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.
- 2. Review & Approval of April 7, 2025 Meeting Minutes:** The proposed minutes of the Commission meeting of April 7, 2025 was presented by VP-Sec. Davidson. A motion to approve was made by

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\* 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.

Commissioner Gay Yuen and seconded by Commissioner Preeti Kulkarni. The motion passed unanimously with no objections or abstentions.

### **3. President's Report**

**3.1 Spotlight on Partner:** Chair Davidson explained that there is no partner to highlight today and moved on to reflect on the recent Strategic Planning session (on April 30<sup>th</sup>).

**3.2 Reflections on our recent Strategic Planning Session:** Chair of the Commission's ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee, Commissioner Kulkarni, expressed her gratitude to those that contributed to the recent Strategic Planning session. She shared her eagerness about the Commission's plan for the next five years. Commissioner Kulkarni expressed it has been an honor to work with the Commission and staff in serving the needs of Los Angeles County residents. Chair Davidson thanked Commissioner Kulkarni and those who were involved in the work of the strategic planning.

### **4. Executive Director's Report**

**4.1 Launch of LA vs Hate Signs of Solidarity on April 19<sup>th</sup>:** Executive Director (ED) Robin Toma shared an update on the recent launch of the new LA vs Hate "Signs of Solidarity" Campaign (conceived in December 2024). He expressed that the first call to action was in the first zone at the Westlake MacArthur Park area. ED Toma reported that this zone (zip code) had the highest number of anti-Latino and anti-immigrant hate crimes and incidents in Los Angeles County for the two most recent years of analyzed data. Another of the eight (8) focus zones was in San Pedro, where Commissioner Davidson and former staff member Ray Regalado helped. ED Toma stated that there are locations where community members can go and pick up signs or posters. Commissioner Montaña shared that it was so nice to announce our campaign with LA City Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez whom she knows personally (and in whose district the zone is), and with the community, noting it was a great event.

**4.2 CEO Proposed Budget and Other Admin and Program Updates:** ED Toma shared that Fesia Davenport presented a budget to the public and the Board and explained the \$4 billion impact to the county budget because of the child abuse cases. Also, county collective bargaining is ongoing which will also potentially affect the budget. Lastly, there are changes that would possibly change the county and state revenues, which will lead to the elimination of some vacant positions but no layoffs.

- i. **Armenian Genocide Remembrance Event and Award of April 19<sup>th</sup>:** ED Toma briefly shared he attended the Armenian Genocide Remembrance event at the Glendale Public Library, where he received an award from the community organization Truth and Accountability League (TAAL).
- ii. **Tri-County Conference at USC- LA vs Hate- April 26<sup>th</sup>-** ED Toma also informed Commissioners that he had the opportunity to speak at this major conference at USC's health campus about our hate crimes and hate incidents reports, as well as LA vs Hate's Signs of Solidarity, in an effort to raise awareness.

**4.3 Trip to Sacramento on April 28<sup>th</sup>:** ED Toma additionally reported on his recent trip to Sacramento to meet with state legislators and staff to educate them on the record-breaking growth in reported hate crimes in LA County in our most recent annual report, and why the state hate crime data for that year showed a decline (because it reflected only reports to law enforcement agencies, not to community organizations via LA vs Hate).

**4.4 Communications Update – Tony Cowser-** PIO Cowser presented a recap of the Signs of Solidarity kickoff campaign in Westlake. PIO Cowser showed photos from the event and mentioned the presence of Anabel Martinez, Justice Deputy from the First District (in which the focus zone was). PIO reviewed the media coverage and noted that the coverage was more localized for this initial launch. He explained that there was an excellent opportunity to further this campaign by collaborating with the remaining Supervisorial districts 2, 3, and 5, as localized materials are created in the “Signs of Solidarity” focus areas within those districts. Cowser indicated he would send a link to all the commissioners so they can see the existing SOS creative in both English and Spanish. Lastly, PIO Cowser showed a short video clip from the May Day Parade on May 1 in downtown Los Angeles, where a very large circular LA vs Hate banner was seen in the parade from an aerial view.

## **5. Committee Reports**

**5.1 Transformative Justice Committee (Gunning):** Chair Gunning reported that during the last committee meeting, the custody deal report was finalized and sent to the Sheriff, and they have not heard back yet. Thus, the meeting this morning was a brainstorming on what they want to bring up and understand more about the inmate welfare fund, what projects the committee might be interested in joining, and enhancing the narrative work.

**5.2 Human Rights Committee (Yuen):** Commissioner Yuen stated that there is nothing to update since the last report.

**5.3 Strategic Planning Committee (Kulkarni):** Commissioner Kulkarni expressed her optimism on the productive Strategic Planning retreat. She raised that there are two open items-priorities two and five, which remain to be reviewed later today.

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

## **7. Action/Discussion Items:**

**7.1 Nominations Committee business (formation and/or slate presentation):** VP Sec. Davidson stated it is time to form the Nominations Committee and is aware that Commissioner Chin is open to continuing for another year as President of the Commission. A chair for the Nominations Committee as well as a representative from each district who is not planning to be considered for vice presidency are needed. Commissioner Montañó stated she will chair unless anybody else wants to; no other commissioner expressed interest. The committee was discussed as follows: Commissioner Gay Yuen representing District 1, Commissioner Azusena Favela representing District 2, Commissioner Montañó representing District 3, Commissioner Dandy De Paula representing District 4, and Commissioner Jason Moss representing District 5. The motion to approve the Nominations Committee as discussed was made by Commissioner Kulkarni and seconded by Commissioner Gunning. The motion passed unanimously.

**7.2 Strategic Plan Follow Up:** Assistant Executive Director (AED) Robert Sowell shared his screen to show the draft Strategic Plan document and note possible changes. There was a discussion and recommendation to change the 3<sup>rd</sup> from last bullet point to “building awareness of our programs resources with enhanced marketing, distributing branded materials, and amplified presence on social media.” A motion was made to approve the changes by Commissioner Montañó and seconded by Commissioner Ellis Royston, and was passed unanimously. AED Sowell moved on to Goals 5.1 and 5.2. A motion was made by Commissioner Gunning to approve 5.1 and 5.2 as presented and seconded by

Commissioner Kulkarni. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Kulkarni closed this item by stating that this will now go to stakeholders and the public for comment before finalizing.

**7.3 Collaboration with County Office of Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion (ARDI):**

AED Sowell stated that they have been working several months with a contractor from ARDI and a pilot project with the design work. They are now waiting for the consultants to draft proposals. AED Sowell also announced that in September there was a Board motion from District 5 for individuals from the county to come together to discuss how to fill gaps and to make sure that the people of Antelope Valley received equitable service. AED Sowell expressed that our staff took the step to present information on what can be done. The proposal was submitted and is currently awaiting response.

8. **Commissioner Announcements:** Commissioner Montaña stated the building trust summit work seemed to have ended because of the (federal) Department of Justice. However, she recommended continuing the work to build trust between law enforcement and the transgender community. She is also looking for help on how to manage the team's mental wellness due to trauma.
9. **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn in memory of the tremendous social justice/youth rights attorney/activist James Bell; and humanitarian His Holiness Pope Francis. Additionally, it was asked that we adjourn in memory of Commissioner Eleanor Montaña, who was a long-time member (over 30 years) who served as President and also served as President and member of the Sybil Brand Commission on Institutional Inspections. Montaña, who dedicated her life to public service, passed on April 29<sup>th</sup>. The motion was moved by Commissioner Kulkarni and seconded by Commissioner Montaña. VP Sec. Davidson adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ilan Davidson  
Commission Vice President-Secretary