



Commissioners

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Ilan Davidson
Vice President / Secretary

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Kevork Keushkerian
Fredrick Sykes
Vice Presidents

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Lisa Michelle Dabbs
Dandy De Paula
Jeanette Ellis Royston
Azusena Favela
Isabelle Gunning, Esq.
Derric J. Johnson
Jason Moss
Gay Q. Yuen, Ph.D.
Serena Zeise-Oberstein.

Honorary Member
Phillip R. Valera

Robin S. Toma, Esq.
Executive Director

Robert Sowell
Assistant Executive Director

**Intergroup Relations
Specialists**

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Salvador Avila
Yvette Baharyans
Aneisa Bolton
Tony Cowser
Valentina D'Alessandro
Roland Gilbert
Oscar Hernandez
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Monica Lomeli Joshua Parr
Gustavo Partida
Yadira Pineda
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Deysy Donis-Santos
Paul David Smith

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Chief Executive Officer

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Board Executive Officer

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

"Enriching lives through effective and caring service"

November 3, 2025

MEMORANDUM TO THE COMMISSIONERS

FROM: Helen Chin, President

SUBJECT: Meeting of the Commission/Executive
Committee on Human Relations, November 3, 2025

Our Commission will meet on Monday, November 3, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.,

at 510 S. Vermont Ave., 9th Floor, Room TK09, Los Angeles.

You may also join meeting **Via Teams Calendar Invitation** [Click here to join the meeting](#). If you are unable to do so, you may Dial: [+1 213-204-2512, 980587174#](tel:+12132042512)
Please Post Agenda in your location.

Parking is located at 523 Shatto Place. Please pull a ticket when entering the parking structure. Please take the elevator to the 9th floor and walk through the bridge, which is located towards the northwest corner of the parking structure, to reach Terrace (T) Level of the building. Call 323-719-9187 when you are in the lobby, (unless you have a key card to enter the elevators going up to the 15th floor). Prior to leaving the facility, please take your ticket to either security desk (Ground Level or Terrace Level) for validation. **Do not park at the 510 South Vermont Avenue structure. Violators may be towed at vehicle owner's expense.**

Please review and let me know if you have any questions.

If you are unable to join the meeting, please call me at (323) 719-9187 no later than 9:00 a.m., Friday, September 24th.

Brittany Martinez
L.A. County Commission on Human Relations
Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors
510 S. Vermont Ave., 15th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90020
(323) 719-9187



Los Angeles County Commission on
Human Relations - 510 S. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90020 (213) 738-2788

AGENDA

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Monday, November 3, 2025 – 12:30-2:00 pm

LA County Vermont Corridor Bldg. - 510 S. Vermont Ave. - LA, CA 90020
9th Floor Terrace Conference Room

Also via MS Teams Video and Audio Conferencing 213-204 2512,,980587174# [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Our mission: to transform prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice, and hostility into peace

- 1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgment (12:30)**
- 2. Review & Approval of October 6, 2025 Meeting Minutes***
- 3. President's Report (12:33)**
 - 3.1. Spotlight
 - 3.2. Tending to Relationships During Times of Polarization
- 4. Executive Director's Report (12:45)**
 - 4.1. Budget, Admin and Program Updates
 - i QPC Awards to HRC Training Team and more*; Hate and Political Violence Prevention for County Elections; and IAOHRA Conference* Oct 5-9
 - ii Budget actions and impact on HRC programs and services
 - iii LA vs Hate United Against Hate Week Oct 19-24*
 - iv Commission staff changes and known departmental organizational changes
 - v FIFA Human Rights Action Plan Stakeholder Feedback sessions
 - vi Upcoming events
 - 4.2. Communications Update
- 5. Committee Reports (12:55)**
 - 5.1. Transformative Justice Committee (Gunning)
 - 5.2. Human Rights Committee (Yuen)
 - 5.3. Policy and Advocacy Committee (Gunning)
 - 5.4. Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee (Kulkarni)
- 6. Public Comment (3 minutes per person) (1:05)**
- 7. Action/Discussion Items (1:10)**
 - 7.1. LA County Human Rights Award Nominations* "Continued from previous meeting"
 - 7.2. Impact of Sept 30th budget actions on HRC staff and services
 - 7.3. Federal Immigration Activities in LA County and Commission/Community responses
 - 7.4. Collaboration with County Office of Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion (ARDI)

8. Commissioner Announcements (2 minutes per Commissioner)

(1:55)

9. Adjournment in honor of retired Commission staff and LA vs Hate leader Terri Villa-McDowell* and Labor Leader and Human Rights Activist Kent D. Wong*

For translation to other languages o para más información en español, call (213) 738-2788 or email us.

* Denotes that this agenda packet includes written material regarding this agenda item.

Meetings are held in English. If interpretation in other languages or accommodations for persons with disabilities are needed, please contact the Commission at (213) 738-7288 at least 3 business days before the meeting. The meetings of the Human Relations Commission are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Note: The following Commissioners will be participating by teleconference communication from the following corresponding locations: Dandy De Paula, 21815 Pioneer Blvd. Hawaiian Gardens, CA 90716, Isabelle Gunning Esq. 6215 Acacia Street, Los Angeles, CA 90056.

PUBLIC COMMENT

When prompted by staff, members of the public sector may request to provide public comment after each item:

- If joining in person, staff will call upon individuals who signed up to speak on an item.
- If joining remotely via Teams, please use the “raise your hand” feature then unmute microphone once enabled.
- Callers by phone, dial *5 to raise hand, once called upon dial *6 to unmute.

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Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

510 South Vermont Avenue, 15th floor
Los Angeles, California, 90020
www.lahumanrelations.org
(213) 738-2788

PROPOSED MINUTES

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Meeting of October 6, 2025

PRESENT:	Helen L. Chin	Preeti Kulkarni
	Ilan Davidson	Jason Moss
	Dandy De Paula*	Fredrick Sykes
	Jeanette Ellis Royston	
	Azusena Favela*	
ABSENT:	Michael Cheung	Kevork Keushkerian
	Lisa Dabbs	Serena Oberstein
	Isabelle Gunning	Gay Yuen
	Derric J. Johnson	
STAFF:	Pierre Arreola	Robert Sowell
	Tony Cowser	Siranush Vardanyan
	Brittany Martinez	

- 1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples:** Commission President Helen Chin called the meeting to order at 12:36 p.m. with a quorum in attendance. President Chin began by reading the LA County Land Acknowledgment, which can be found at the following link: [Land Acknowledgment – \(lacounty.gov\)](http://lacounty.gov). She 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 September 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes:** The proposed minutes of the Commission meeting of September 8, 2025 as submitted by Vice President/Secretary Ilan Davidson (VP/Sec. Davidson) were presented by President Chin. A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Ilan Davidson and

seconded by Commissioner Fredrick Sykes. The motion passed with no opposition and no abstentions.

3. President's Report

3.1 Spotlight on our Staff: Brittany Martinez, Commission Secretary: President Chin welcomed staff Brittany Martinez, who is filling in the position as Commission Secretary. Brittany expressed her gratitude for being part of the meeting, highlighting how empowering and educational the experience is for her. She appreciates the opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives, particularly those relating to the immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities. Brittany values the chance to connect with different Commissioners, expand her knowledge, and gain a well-rounded understanding of current county matters. She offered her support to the group and thanked everyone for the opportunity to contribute. The group warmly welcomed her and expressed enthusiasm about continuing to work together.

3.2 Participation in Meeting on the EO Report on Commissions to the Board: President Chin shared that she participated in the meeting with the Executive Office (EO) report on Commissions to the Board and that the Executive Office has asked both ED Toma and AED Sowell regarding the first round of budget cuts (3%, 5%, and 8%). President Chin stated that she submitted a letter of concern to the Board however she is unsure how much her input was taken into consideration. President Chin moved to item 3.3 for more information from AED Sowell.

3.3 Actions taken regarding supplemental budget impact on the Human Relations Commission (HRC): AED Sowell stated that in these meetings, he and ED Toma were informed that 5 positions would be cut (23% staffing) including the 2 vacant roles- one for the position staff Grace Lowenberg held before retiring and the position which staff Roland Gilbert was holding before he passed away. Additionally, two Senior Human Relations Consultant positions and a Human Services Administrator I position (a manager), which are also currently filled, were identified for potential cuts. ED Toma and AED Sowell expressed concern and surprise at not being consulted prior to these decisions and requested the opportunity to present alternative solutions. Having recently reviewed the program budget, they believed there were areas of flexibility—specifically, potential program (S&S - service and supplies) dollars that could be reduced to preserve staff positions. The administrative lead agreed to consult with the CEO's budget liaison. However, later that same day, the team was informed via email that it was too late in the budget process to consider any changes. It was also noted that, while detailed information about the Commission's work and staffing was requested in June alongside other commissions, that input seemingly did not influence the final decisions. Additionally, that our staff Public Information Officer will be moved from HRC and be put with the department's communications team. Lastly, there was an email received last week from the EO requiring an additional 5% budget cut.

4. Executive Director's Report:

4.1 Budget actions and impact on HRC programs and services: ED Toma did not join this meeting due to him presenting at the annual IAOHRA conference, therefore AED Sowell touched on the subjects below.

- i. **Budget actions and impact on HRC programs and services:** Previously discussed in item 3.3.
- ii. **Known departmental organizational changes:** Previously discussed in item 3.3.

- iii. **FIFA Human Rights Action Plan Stakeholder Feedback sessions:** AED Sowell shared that the Commission is actively participating in stakeholder feedback sessions for the FIFA Human Rights Action Plan, in collaboration with the Host Committee's consultant. To date, nine hybrid sessions have been held, focusing on the rights and needs of various ethnic and identity groups, including specific sessions on immigrant rights, disability rights, and issues affecting unhoused individuals. These sessions have included participation from both community stakeholders and representatives from city and county agencies. Round one of the sessions concluded on Friday, and the next two weeks will be used to incorporate feedback. A second round of sessions will take place through the end of October, with the goal of releasing a draft Human Rights Action Plan by the end of December. Further revisions will continue into the spring, with finalization expected by May, per FIFA's timeline. While the need for human rights protections is clear across many groups, the primary challenge ahead will be implementation. The Commission is proud to serve as a full partner in this important and impactful work.
- iv. **Upcoming LA vs Hate United Against Hate Week Oct 19-24:** The upcoming LA vs Hate Week was highlighted by AED Sowell, with additional information available on pages 11 to 13 of the meeting packet. A launch event is scheduled for October 20th, and several cities and community groups have already committed to hosting events and activities throughout the week. Commissioners were encouraged to participate, promote the initiative, and engage their local communities. The Commission anticipates another impactful and successful LA vs Hate United Against Hate Week.

4.2 Communications Update (PIO): PIO Tony Cowser began by highlighting recent media coverage that featured the Commission's work. On September 10th, the Antelope Valley Press published a story about the Commission's animated film "Echoes of a System" which included a strong interview from Commission senior staff Paul Smith and received excellent engagement from the targeted community. A week later, on September 17th, the Santa Monica Daily Press ran an article titled "A Human Rights Lens on LA County Government," which Tony described as another positive and well-received piece. Links to both articles will be shared with Commissioners for further reading. Tony Cowser then provided a preview of upcoming fourth0quarter events. On October 20th L.A. vs Hate's United against Hate Week will take place at the San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, featuring the debut of a community-designed LA vs Hate mural. Supervisor Horvath is expected to speak at 8:40 a.m., and Commissioners were encouraged to attend. Tony Cowser also announced a second event, "Strength in Unity: Countering Hate Together," scheduled for October 23rd in Pasadena. ED Robin Toma will serve as one of the speakers, and attendance will be by invitation only with Commissioners asked to confirm their interest with Tony or AED Robert Sowell. Looking ahead to November 15th, Tony informed that the Commission will co-host an Awareness Forum for Building Safer Communities in partnership with multiple LA County employee associations. The event will focus on understanding hate crimes and hate incidents, featuring survivor testimonials, and provide opportunities for collaboration and discussion. On November 18th, the annual Hate Crimes Report will be released at 2:00 p.m., additional details forthcoming. Tony concluded by sharing that planning is already underway for the 49th Annual John Anson Ford Human Relations Awards, scheduled for March 18th, 2026. Tony Cowser closed by expressing excitement for the Commission's impactful schedule in the months ahead.

5. Committee Reports

5.1 Transformative Justice Committee (Favela): Chair Gunning was not in attendance, so Commissioner Favela reported on behalf of the Committee, announcing that the 60th Anniversary Commemoration of the Watts Uprising is scheduled for Saturday, November 8th, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Children's Institute. Commissioners were encouraged to attend and mark their calendars. Additionally, an update was provided on the Unhoused Narrative Collection Project in the Antelope Valley. The research team has made strong progress, including interviews with at least two veterans and five social workers, and is now

entering the next phase of interviews with law enforcement. This work is particularly important given the local political climate and recent statements from the mayor regarding the unhoused population. The data being gathered will be critical to understanding and informing responses to the issue in the region.

5.2 Human Rights Committee (Yuen): Commissioner Yuen, Chair, was not able to be present to give a report on the Human Rights Committee, so Commissioner Sykes reported on her behalf. Commissioners were encouraged to visit the LA County Commission on Human Relations website to view the recently released report, which features a beautifully designed cover and valuable content. The Commission also discussed the upcoming Human Rights Awards, with an important timeline presented and noted during the meeting. Additionally, updates were shared on the ongoing stakeholder engagement process related to the FIFA Human Rights Action Plan, with continued progress being made. The meeting concluded with a final call for questions or comments.

5.3 Policy and Advocacy Committee (Gunning): AED Sowell reported on Chair Gunning's behalf. Commissioners revisited the ongoing discussion regarding the definition under review, following initial conversations at the previous month's meeting. While the committee reached consensus on certain aspects, it was agreed that additional feedback from other organizations is necessary before finalizing the decision. The timing was also considered sensitive due to upcoming holidays and the anniversary of the October 7th tragic events. Therefore, further deliberations are expected in next month's meeting. Additionally, a proposal to support bill AB 715 was withdrawn due to timing concerns, as both the State Senate and Assembly had already unanimously approved the bill, which was pending the governor's signature at the time.

5.4 Strategic Planning Committee (Kulkarni): Commissioner Kulkarni, Chair, reported that the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee had not met in the past month due to difficulty achieving quorum. Commissioner Moss was the only other committee member present at this meeting, with two other members absent. Efforts continue to schedule meetings, and a more detailed update is expected next time. Additionally, there was concern expressed about the recent budget developments and their potential impact on the Commission's strategic plan.

6. Public Comment: No requests were received from members of the public for comment.

7. Action/Discussion Items

7.1 Status of LA County Human Rights Award Nominations: AED Sowell reported that the timeline for the Human Rights Award nominations was reviewed. Nominations are requested by the Thursday prior to the committee's final decision meeting on Tuesday, October 28th, allowing time to prepare materials for that meeting. The committee aims to finalize the nomination to present at the next Commission meeting on November 3rd. The goal is for the Board of Supervisors to recognize the award around Human Rights Day, scheduled for Wednesday, December 10th, with the Board meeting targeted for December 9th to conduct the recognition. This will be the second annual Human Rights Award; last year's event was combined with JAF (the John Anson Ford Human Relations Awards) due to timing constraints, but this year there is a strong focus on aligning the award with Human Rights Day (December 10th). Commissioners were invited to ask questions or discuss the item further, with Robert available to provide additional information via email.

7.2 Impact of Sept 30th budget actions on HRC staff and services: The Commission

discussed the impact of proposed staffing reductions on the LA vs Hate anti-hate bystander program. Currently, two senior human relations staff consultants and one HSA 1 (manager) staff member have completed the training to deliver these sessions. A potential loss of one-third of this team—due to the elimination of one senior consultant or the HSA 1—would significantly reduce training capacity. With only two teams of three senior consultants each, losing two senior consultants would represent a one-third reduction for each team. Additionally, among five HSA 1 managers, the anticipated loss of one could jeopardize leadership in specific program areas. While transferring an HSA 1 to cover a vacant program is possible, senior staff consultants cannot supervise staff, highlighting concerns about program continuity. These potential impacts are being carefully considered, though there is an emphasis on avoiding undue alarm until final decisions are made and that staff is also voicing concerns about these curtailments. AED Sowell continued to answer questions and shared that while departments were initially asked to make reductions of approximately 8.5%, recent communications have indicated an additional 5% cut at the departmental level. However, the Commission's estimated budget impact is around 24%. During the recent board meeting, it was reported that roughly 1,025 positions are being eliminated countywide, with approximately 7 to 8 of those being filled positions. This suggests that of all the eliminated positions with staff occupying them in the county, 3, or nearly half, are from our Commission, a figure that surprised and concerned Commissioners. Additionally, the Commission noted that union contracts require a 60-day notice for potential layoffs, which aligns with the current notification period. These developments highlight significant challenges ahead, underscoring the need for clear communication and equitable decision-making processes considering that there were no discussions with Commission leadership about eliminating five Commission staff positions.

7.3 Federal Immigration Activities in LA County and Commission/Community

Responses: AED Robert Sowell reported that the department continues collaborating with LA vs Hate partners to support community efforts addressing ongoing human rights concerns. He emphasized that the issue of protecting immigrant rights arises consistently across stakeholder sessions—not only in those focused specifically on immigration, but in nearly all discussions about advancing human rights in preparation for and during the upcoming FIFA games. Vice President/Secretary Ilan Davidson noted that since the FIFA World Cup is frequently discussed, he wanted to clarify whether the Commission was also engaged in conversations around a human rights statement for the Olympics. Robert Sowell explained that the two events involve different organizing groups: the Host Committee for the Olympics is led by the City of Los Angeles, with whom staff have already met and discussed the development of a human rights strategic plan. Robert Sowell added that while some individuals are involved in both the World Cup and the Olympic planning efforts, the department has not been formally invited to participate in the Olympic committee's work. However, he expressed optimism that successful collaboration on the World Cup human rights efforts could potentially lead to future involvement with the Olympics. Robert Sowell concluded by noting that the Commission continues to engage within its scope of authority, in close coordination with the County Office of Immigrant Affairs and community partners, to remain an active voice in this broader human rights landscape.

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

AED Robert Sowell reported that there were no major updates to share but noted that, similar to the department, partner organizations are also being affected by budget cuts. He reminded the group that a new year of work is about to begin, which includes four active workgroups. Robert Sowell has been serving as a co-lead for one of the countywide

workgroups but expressed uncertainty about continuing in that role given the additional responsibilities resulting from the current budget constraints. Robert emphasized that the department maintains strong relationships with these partners, both personally and programmatically, and intends to remain engaged even if his individual role changes. Commissioner Kulkarni asked whether other agencies, such as ARDI or similar divisions, are facing the same level of budget reductions. Robert explained that while he has a general understanding of the situation at a departmental level, specific details are unclear. He added that the Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion (ARDi) initiative operates within the CEO's office and therefore, office – or unit-level budget information has not been made available.

8. **Commissioner Announcements:** No Commissioner announcements were made and moved to adjournment.

9. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ilan Davidson
Commission Vice President-Secretary



Commissioners' Legacy Award

Change Agents - The EHR Training Team

Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors (Human Relations Commission)

In the wake of heightened racial justice movements, political polarization, and a rise in hate incidents, Los Angeles County faced urgent demands to transform not only policies but also workplace culture, public service delivery, and intergroup relations. While county ordinances and state mandates required training on bias and equity, there remained a critical gap: employees and departments lacked practical tools to operationalize these values in daily practice.

To bridge this gap, the County established the Equity & Human Rights Training Team within the Human Relations Commission in 2020. Building on the Commission's decades-long history of addressing prejudice through education, the team designs and delivers experiential, equity-centered training. Their sessions go beyond compliance, fostering psychological safety while equipping employees and partners with skills to address bias, manage conflict, and strengthen inclusion. Offerings range from systemic-change tools like *Equity Assessments* to practical skills-building

such as *Managing the Influence of Bias*, *Constructive Candid Conversations*, and *Conflict: Liability or Opportunity*. Trainings integrate storytelling, data, and restorative practices to inspire lasting change.

The impact has been significant. In FY 2023–2024, the team trained nearly 2,000 employees and leaders across 60 sessions, with a 96% satisfaction rate and measurable improvements in communication, conflict resolution, and inclusivity. Partnerships with departments like the Fire Department, Internal Services Department, and local schools demonstrate systemic and cultural transformation—embedding equity into leadership development, workplace collaboration, and school-based interventions.

Ultimately, the program strengthens LA County's equity infrastructure by transforming mandates into actionable practice, fostering inclusive workplaces, and enhancing public service delivery.





Outstanding Teamwork Award

Building Safety in LA Communities

Public Health with Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors (Human Relations Commission), Health Services, Justice, Care and Opportunities, LA County Library, Parks and Recreation, Probation, Public Works, Sheriff's Department, and Youth Development

Los Angeles County has faced persistently high levels of community violence, with over 50,000 serious violent crimes annually since 2021, including a sharp rise in homicides during the COVID-19 pandemic. Assault-related injuries alone cost the county more than \$500 million annually in medical expenses, lost work, and reduced quality of life. Communities of color have been disproportionately affected, underscoring deep inequities.

To address this, the County's Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) expanded its Trauma Prevention Initiative (TPI), first launched in 2016, into nine communities by 2022. TPI invests in community-driven strategies including Street Outreach and Violence Intervention, Hospital Violence Intervention Programs, Community Action for Peace networks, and the hiring of peer specialists with lived experience. The program also strengthens grassroots organizations through training, mini-grants, and alignment with county services such as Parks After Dark, youth development,

and incident response protocols. Partnerships with hospitals, law enforcement, schools, and community-based organizations form a coordinated public safety ecosystem.

The initiative has shown promising results. Between 2022–2024, nearly 1,000 people enrolled in street outreach services, over 900 survivors engaged in hospital-based programs, and intervention workers responded to almost 1,000 violent incidents. TPI communities saw slower growth in aggravated assaults (7.9%) compared to countywide trends (9.9%), translating to an estimated \$1.5 million annual savings in criminal justice costs. Trauma center visits for assaults also declined more in TPI communities than in comparison areas.

By centering community voices, investing in grassroots leadership, and fostering cross-sector collaboration, TPI advances equity and is nationally recognized as a best practice for community violence reduction.





SPECIAL MERIT AWARD WINNERS

(Continued)

Partnering to Prevent and Mitigate Trauma

Public Health with Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors (Human Relations Commission), Health Services, LA County Office of Education, Parks and Recreation, Sheriff's Department, and California Community Foundation

Food As Medicine: Prescribing Produce for Health

Public Health with Health Services, Asian Pacific Health Care Venture, Eat SF: Vouchers4Veggies, Northeast Valley Health Corporation, Venice Family Clinic, and The Wellness Center at the Historic General Hospital - Los Angeles General Medical Center Foundation, Inc.

Los Angeles County Water Plan (CWP), 2023 Edition

Public Works with Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors (Chief Sustainability Office), Fire, Parks and Recreation, Public Health, and Regional Planning

Children's Library Program

Sheriff's Department with Gordon Philanthropies, Inc.



International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies

CONFERENCE AGENDA

OCTOBER 5-9, 2025

"Strength in Unity: Human Rights in the Present"
Hilton Anchorage • Anchorage, Alaska

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2025

12:00 pm–2:00 pm	IAOHRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING Prince William Room
2:00 pm–6:00 pm	CONFERENCE REGISTRATION Alaska Ballroom
4:00 pm–5:00 pm	OPENING WELCOME & RECEPTION Top of the World (Rooftop) Dr. Alisa Warren , IAOHRA President <i>Executive Director, Missouri Commission on Human Rights</i>
5:00 pm–6:00 pm	FIRESIDE CHAT Top of the World (Rooftop) Dr. Calvin E. Williams <i>Bartlett Community Forum</i>

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2025

7:00 am–5:00 pm	CONFERENCE REGISTRATION Alaska Ballroom
7:00 am–8:00 am	BREAKFAST (ON YOUR OWN)
9:00 am–5:00 pm	Alaska Native Artisan Vendors (Monday only, Mezzanine Level)
8:00 am–9:00 am	OPENING CEREMONY
Alaska Ballroom	Alaska Native Dance Group Dr. Alisa Warren , IAOHRA President <i>Executive Director, Missouri Commission on Human Rights</i> Robert W. Corbisier , Executive Director <i>Alaska Commission for Human Rights</i>
	CONFERENCE OVERVIEW Diane Clements-Boyd , Conference Planning Committee Chairperson <i>Executive Director, Evansville-Vanderburgh Human Relations Commission</i>
9:00 am–10:10 am	OPENING PLENARY
Alaska Ballroom	Bringing Human Rights Home: We Rise Together Charles F. Coleman Jr. <i>Civil Rights Attorney/Legal Analyst/Guest Anchor, MSNBC</i> Introduction: Dr. Alisa Warren , IAOHRA President, Missouri Commission on Human Rights
10:10 am–10:20 am	REMARKS Jordan Long , The Carter Center
10:20 am–10:30 am	BREAK
10:30 am–11:45 am	BREAKOUT SESSIONS/TRAINING AREAS
Leadership	
Resilient Leadership: Building Bridges in a Divided Era Dillingham Room Cleveland L. Horton , Executive Director, Maryland Commission on Civil Rights <i>In today's climate of heightened polarization and uncertainty, leadership in human and civil rights work requires more than resolve—it demands resilience and a commitment to bridge-building. This session will explore how leaders can remain grounded in their mission while navigating divisive challenges, fostering collaboration across differences, and maintaining trust in the communities they serve. Participants will gain insight into strategies that strengthen resilience, inspire unity, and ensure that our collective pursuit of equity and justice continues even in the most challenging times.</i> Facilitator: James Davis , City of Durham Community Partnerships & Engagement	

Enforcement

"No Section 8": The Impact of Housing Choice Voucher Discrimination | Katmai Room

Kenneth Gunn, *First Deputy Commissioner, Chicago Commission on Human Rights*

This session will examine the far-reaching impact of Housing Choice Voucher discrimination on communities.

Facilitator: Tarnya Whitmire, *South Carolina Human Affairs Commission*

Policy

Leveraging International Human Rights Mechanisms to Advance and Promote State & Local Progress | King Salmon Room

Amy Bergquist, *Associate Program Director for International Justice, The Advocates for Human Rights*

Janica Puisto, *United Nations (UN) Office of Human Rights*

Robin Toma, *Executive Director, Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations*

Learn about the potency of the UN's global human rights accountability mechanisms, principally the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, by reviewing the U.S. participation in the process since the UPR's inception in 2007. A case study of Los Angeles County will provide an example of the potential value of IAOHRA member agencies to be engaged with the UN human rights system. Also highlighted will be the UN Human Rights Office's efforts to engage local and regional governments, such as the core human rights treaty on economic, social, and cultural rights.

Facilitator: Kyla Hanington, *Prince Georges County Office of Human Rights*

Social Justice

Building Capacity to Fight Misinformation | Iliamna Room

Theo Dolan, *Director, Civic Resilience Consulting, LLC*

This practical session will provide guidance for human rights agencies on how they can build their resilience to manipulative information of all kinds. The session will provide a building block for training staff (and citizens) on digital and media literacy and the psycho-social factors which shape human vulnerability to mis- and disinformation.

Facilitator: Heather McVay, *Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission*

11:45 am–1:00 pm

PRESIDENT'S LUNCHEON

Alaska
Ballroom

Greetings: Leon Russell, *Chairperson, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*

Artificial Intelligence: AI's Perils and Promise for Human Rights

Keynote Speaker: William Dyson, *Tech Visionary and Creator of Sojourner AI*

Presiding: Dr. Alisa Warren, *IAOHRA President*

1:15 pm–2:30 pm

BREAKOUT SESSIONS/TRAINING AREAS

Leadership

Harnessing the Power of the Next Generation of Human Rights Advocates | Dillingham Room

Melody Vidmar, *Dash-Muse Teaching Fellow & Supervising Attorney
Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute*

This session will address the changing role of state & local human rights agencies; discuss current trends in law students and recent graduates regarding human rights careers; cover strategies to begin building relationships between human rights agencies and law school programs to create pipelines and increase sustained student interest in working for human rights agencies.

Facilitator: Dr. Leah Raby, *Louisiana Commission on Human Rights*

Enforcement

Beyond Boundaries: Navigating Intersectionality in Discrimination Law Compliance | Katmai Room

Jennifer Booz, *Executive Director, Anchorage Equal Rights Commission*

This interactive workshop explores intersectionality and its impact on discrimination. Participants will engage in hands-on activities, analyze case studies, and develop inclusive strategies. The session aims to enhance understanding and practical application of intersectional approaches in ensuring compliance with discrimination laws, fostering empathy and solidarity across diverse communities.

Facilitator: Tierra Thompson, *Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations*

Policy

2024 Survey: A Snapshot of Alaskan Perspectives on Discrimination | King Salmon Room

Rob Corbisier, *Executive Director, Alaska Commission for Human Rights*

Diane Hirshberg, *Director of the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage*

Ivan Moore, *Public Opinion Research, Alaska Survey Research*

Learn what people across Alaska think about discrimination in their communities.

Facilitator: Keoki Kim, *Alaska Commission for Human Rights*

Social Justice

Tools for a Week of Action: Uniting Your Community to Address Hate and Bias | Iliamna Room

Justin Lock, *Executive Director, Not in Our Town; former Interim Director of Community Relations Service (CRS), U.S. Department of Justice*

Robin Toma, *Executive Director, Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission*

The goal of the session is to provide examples and tools for IAOHRA members to take back to their communities for a week of action and awareness on how to address hate and bias.

Facilitator: Anthony Lewis, *Michigan Department of Civil Rights*

2:30 pm–2:45 pm

BREAK

2:45 pm–4:00 pm

BREAKOUT SESSIONS/TRAINING AREAS

Leadership

**Navigating Inclusion in a Polarized Climate: Tools for
Courageous Leadership in Human Rights Work** | Dillingham Room

Tawana Marie Bhagwat, CEO, Organization At Its Best, Inc.

This session will equip public sector and nonprofit human rights professionals with tools to advance inclusive values that align with workplace culture while navigating political scrutiny and resistance. Participants will explore how to reinforce fairness, belonging, and equity through strategies grounded in legal compliance, policy alignment, and courageous leadership.

Facilitator: Cleveland Horton, Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

Enforcement

**Resolving Disputes in 2025: A Guide to Housing and Employment Mediations and
Conciliations in this New Frontier** | Katmai Room

Marci Y. Anavitate-Jordan, EEO and Housing Mediator/Conciliator
Texas Workforce Commission-Civil Rights

Join our roundtable discussion on mediating housing and employment cases. We will explore best practices, common fears, and challenges that can either lead to a successful resolution or an impasse.

Facilitator: Dr. Leah Raby, Louisiana Commission on Human Rights

Policy

Conflict Resolution and its Role in Threat Assessment and Targeted Violence Prevention | King Salmon Room

Randy Duque, Deputy Director, Community Relations Division, Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations

Learn about behavioral assessment and management and its function to prevent targeted violence. Expand understanding of how conflict resolution skills can be applied to targeted violence and extremism prevention. Discover possibilities to begin engaging in the space of critical incident prevention and response.

Facilitator: Tierra Thompson, Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations

Social Justice

Bridging Law and Practice: Collaborative Safeguards for Protecting Individual Rights | Iliamna Room

Steven R. Bryson, Attorney, van der Veen, Hartshorn, Levin & Lindheim

By the end of the session, participants will understand how foundational federal laws such as Title VII, the ADA, the Fair Housing Act, Title VI, and § 1983 provide a framework for rights-centered investigations. They will learn how to translate these legal principles into practical safeguards investigators can apply in their daily work, including trauma-informed interviewing, language access, retaliation prevention, disability accommodations, and bias-mitigation tools. The workshop will also highlight collaboration models that strengthen agency capacity and public trust, while allowing participants to practice applying safeguards through case studies and scenario-based exercises.

Facilitator: Anthony Lewis, Michigan Department of Civil Rights

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2025 (CONTINUED)

4:00 pm–6:00 pm

RECEPTION (Hors d'oeuvres) | Alaska Ballroom
Hosted by the Anchorage Visitor and Convention Bureau

ENTERTAINMENT: Pamuya
An Inuit-soul musical group that blends Yup'ik culture
with influences from around the world.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2025

7:00 am–8:00 am

BREAKFAST (ON YOUR OWN)
Please grab coffee in the Alaska Ballroom

HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE TOUR (Bring a coat)

8:00 am–5:00 pm

Buses will load on 3rd Street (1st level)

Ship Creek/Grandma Olga Statue
25 Small Boat Launch Road, Anchorage, AK 99501

Anchorage Museum
625 C Street, Anchorage, AK 99501

LUNCH

Alaska Native Heritage Center
8800 Heritage Center Drive, Anchorage, AK 99504

Mountain View Community Council
3701 Mt. View Drive, Anchorage, AK 99503

DINNER (ON YOUR OWN)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025

8:00 am–9:00 am

BREAKFAST (ON YOUR OWN)

9:00 am–10:15 am

REGIONAL MEETINGS

Atlantic Region, **Kyla Hanington**, *Regional Representative* | Dillingham Room
Midwest Region, **Angela Phelps White**, *Regional Representative* | Katmai Room
Southern Region, **Dr. Love Jones**, *Regional Representative* | King Salmon Room
Western Region, **Heather McVay**, *Regional Representative* | Iliamna Room

10:20 am–10:30 am

BREAK

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025 (CONTINUED)

10:30 am–11:45 am	PLENARY SESSION
Alaska Ballroom	Legal and Policy Updates Jurisdictional Justice: Rethinking Civil Rights from the Ground Up Carol Johnson, Attorney, Johnson Consulting Group <i>An examination of 2025 Executive Orders to end DEI and other protections, and the Department of Justice Civil Rights Fraud Initiative with discussion on national responses to the Department of Justice May 19, 2025, memo leveraging the False Claims Act against states and municipalities. How are state and local jurisdictions responding to its impact and what does this mean for DEI and Civil Rights?</i> Immigration Legal Update Daniel Cortes, Assistant Professor of Law, Villanova University School of Law <i>Participants will learn about common forms of immigration relief, an overview of recent changes, and practical application of the immigration law. Participants will have an opportunity to share some of the needs the immigrant community is facing, and panelists will provide resources for common needs within the immigrant community.</i> Facilitator: Paul Valenti, Office of Human Rights, City of Alexandria, VA
12:00 pm–1:15 pm	FAIR HOUSING LUNCHEON
Alaska Ballroom	Fair Housing Forward: NAR's Efforts to Advance Fair Housing & Home Ownership Opportunities in the Current Climate Keynote Speaker: Colette Massengale, Senior Policy Representative Fair Housing Policy, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® <i>Use NAR research to paint a picture of the obstacles first-time/first generation buyers are facing around discrimination, supply, accessibility and affordability, discuss NAR's legislative efforts, talk about the Fair Housing Policy Committee's priorities, highlight our progress with NAR's Fair Housing ACT! initiative, share success stories with NAR's fair housing grants, describe the fair housing resources we are developing, emphasize solutions that are having an impact.</i> Facilitator: Diane Clements-Boyd, Evansville-Vanderburgh Human Relations Commission



1:30 pm–2:45 pm

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Leadership

Why and How to Implement Human Rights in Your City, County or State Agency | Dillingham Room

Moderator: *Jordan Long, The Carter Center*

Aneisa Bolton and Robin Toma, *Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission*

Dr. Alisa Warren, *IAOHRA, Missouri Human Rights Commission*

Domenico Zipoli, *Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights*

Why should human rights be a priority for state and local governments? And as a practical matter, how can this be done? This will be an interactive workshop that will highlight a case study of a local government implementing human rights (such as major sports events); provide examples of the impact that state and local governments can have on national government; and identify useful resources for IAOHRA agencies (including tribal/indigenous nations) such as partner networks, digital tools, internet sites, to facilitate engagement with the UN's global human rights system. We will invite the audience to ask questions and present challenges as to how they can carry out human rights education and implementation in their cities, counties, and states.

Enforcement

What's In Your Toolbox? | Katmai Room

Jamie Reyes, *Human Rights Director, Lincoln Commission on Human Rights*

Rob Rowan, *Senior Civil Rights Investigator, Lincoln Commission on Human Rights*

Cailin Daly Dejillas, *Director, Omaha Human Rights and Relations*

Laura Aryeetey, *Senior Investigator, Omaha Human Rights and Relations*

To provide an opportunity to learn about different tools available to enforcement agencies during an investigation, discuss best practices, and take away ideas.

Facilitator: *Nikki Quintana, Fort Wayne Metropolitan Human Relations Commission*

Policy

Reimagining Human Relations for Success in a New Sociopolitical World | King Salmon Room

Anne Little, *Community Engagement Director, City of Salisbury, NC*

Dr. Anthony Wade, *Senior Consultant, Pontifex Consulting Group*

Public sector human relations and departments have historically promoted fairness within organizations and communities. However, the current political environment has led to reductions in staff and funding and/or the elimination of departments and commissions. If your commission or department is facing challenges, it is crucial to develop a new business case for its sustainability, taking this opportunity to adapt to changing sociopolitical climates and refocusing on effective practices that allow the continuation of the work.

Facilitator: *Ray Sexton, Lexington-Fayette County Human Rights Commission*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025 (CONTINUED)

Social Justice

Rise Up Against Racism | Iliamna Room

Elyse Applegate, Founder, Elysian World Editing

Alex Roider, Special Projects Attorney, Alaska Commission for Human Rights

The Heroes of the Last Frontier graphic novel represents collaboration between the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights, and the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission to bring to life the struggles and triumphs of individuals that changed Alaska's history. This commission required writing and illustrating stories from the ground up through months of research and interfacing with descendants of these real-life heroes to create storylines designed to entertain middle school-aged children while inspiring them about human rights and teaching Alaska history.

Facilitator: Charles Johnson, Henderson County Human Rights Commission

2:45 pm–3:00 pm

BREAK

3:00 pm–5:00 pm

**IAOHRA ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING | Fireweed
RESOLUTIONS, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIONS**

6:30 pm–8:00 pm

AWARDS DINNER

Alaska
Ballroom

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: TIM WISE

Tim Wise is among the most prominent anti-racist writers and educators in the United States. He has spent the past 25 years speaking to audiences in all 50 states, on over 1500 college and high school campuses, at hundreds of professional and academic conferences, to dozens of corporate, government, entertainment, media, law enforcement, military, non-profit, and medical industry professionals about issues of systemic racism and methods for dismantling racial inequity in their institutions. Wise is the author of nine books, including his latest, Dispatches from the Race War, and his highly acclaimed memoir, White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son. He has appeared on hundreds of radio and television programs and is a regular contributor to discussions about race on CNN and MSNBC.

8:00 pm–10:00 pm

UNITY CELEBRATION: DJ Ondago

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2025

9:00 am–10:00 am

PLENARY SESSION (BREAKFAST PROVIDED)

Aleutian Room

How Fair Are You: A Fair Housing Decision-Making Lab

Joshua Barr, Chief Strategist & President, Raising The Barr, LLC

Data-Driven Insights: Understand the prevalence and impact of housing discrimination through compelling real-life cases and statistical data. Identify your own potential biases and how they might influence your professional decisions. Learn how to navigate complex fair housing scenarios with confidence and legal compliance. Commit to specific actions to promote fair housing and create a more equitable housing market.

Facilitator: Tarnya Whitmire, South Carolina Human Affairs Commission

10:15 am–11:15 am	PLENARY SESSION
Alaska Ballroom	Why International Human Rights Should Matter to State and Local Governments, Especially Now Moderator: Dr. Alisa Warren, <i>Executive Director, Missouri Human Rights Commission</i> Jamil Dakwar, <i>Director, Human Rights Program, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)</i> Robin Toma and Aneisa Bolton, <i>Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations</i> Felix Kirchmeier, <i>Geneva Academy for Humanitarian Law and Human Rights</i> <i>Civil rights are human rights. The moral/ethical and legal responsibilities of city, county, and state governments to protect and strengthen human rights protections for our most vulnerable communities are supported and complemented by global human rights systems, especially when federal, state, and local civil rights programs are under attack. There are practical ways for state and local governments to engage, and a growing number of specific tools and resources available, and partnerships with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can be effective. The upcoming FIFA World Cup (2026) and the Olympics (2028) require human rights action plans of participating host cities/nations like Los Angeles, providing a chance to promote and strengthen human rights for our most vulnerable communities.</i>
11:30 am–12:00 pm	CLOSING REMARKS
	CONFERENCE ADJOURNMENT



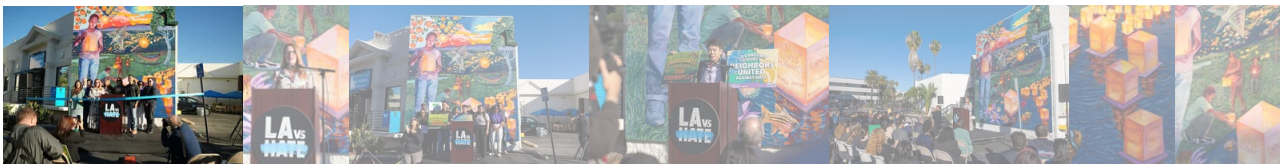
Oct 21 - Written By LA vs Hate

LA VS HATE JOINS SUPERVISOR HORVATH AND COUNTY LEADERS TO LAUNCH UNITED AGAINST HATE WEEK AND REVEAL NEW MURAL



This week, LA vs Hate launched **United Against Hate Week** in partnership with LA County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, the San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, and partners, activists, community leaders, and residents, who came together to call for action against the rise in hate.

The event featured the unveiling of "Sunset Luminaries", a new mural at the San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, a key member of LA vs Hate's Rapid Response Network. Created by Carlos Rogel, the mural reflects themes of peace, empathy, and inclusion—values central to the Center's work, providing both mental health services and support for anyone experiencing bullying, bias-related harassment or hate violence.



The new mural is part of LA vs Hate's newest [Signs of Solidarity](#) campaign, a grassroots initiative aimed at addressing alarming rises in hate by distributing community signage, including yard signs, posters, and murals, to deter would-be haters, and to foster a shared neighborhood identity rooted in inclusion and respect for diversity. "Sunset Luminaries" is LA vs Hate's 10th mural in Los Angeles, reflecting the program's focus on arts and culture to engage communities, foster safe spaces, and amplify messages against hate and offer assistance to anyone experiencing any form of hate or discrimination. To view all of LA vs Hate's murals, [click here](#).

"United Against Hate Week is more than a campaign—it's a call to action. At a time when fear and division threaten our most vulnerable communities, this mural and the solidarity it represents serve as declarations that hate has no home in Los Angeles County," said **Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath**. "We stand with our immigrant neighbors, with LGBTQ+₂₅

make a difference - the chance to ramp up our efforts to collectively overwhelm hate, no matter if it's coming from neighbor or a federal agent - with unity and action.," said **Robin Toma, Executive Director, LA County Commission on Human Relations**. "This mural reflects the resilience and diversity of the San Fernando Valley and stands as a visible symbol of hope and solidarity, especially for communities facing heightened fear and targeted discrimination. It reminds us of the ongoing work we must do to prevent hate and support those most affected."

According to the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations' [2023 Hate Crime Report](#), reported hate crimes increased 45% from 930 in 2022 to 1,350 in 2023—the highest number recorded since tracking began in 1980.

[United Against Hate Week](#) (UAHW), taking place October 19–25, is a statewide call to civic action against hate, discrimination, and bias. Each year, community leaders, activists, and residents come together to take action against the hate that threatens our communities.

Now in its eighth year in Los Angeles County, UAHW grew out of a 2017 Bay Area poster campaign responding to white supremacist rallies in Berkeley and San Francisco and was established as an annual event by Not in Our Town, a national anti-hate organization. Each year, communities across the country are participating, hosting webinars, screenings, art projects, community dialogues, and other events designed to engage residents and strengthen efforts to combat hate. For a list of UAHW events, visit the [2025 UAHW Calendar](#).

For more information and to report acts of hate and discrimination, visit [LAvsHate.org](#) or call 2-1-1.

#mural - unitedagainsthateweek

FROM FIRE TO FUTURE

A DAY OF DIALOGUE & EXCHANGE
COMMEMORATING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE WATTS UPRISING

RSVP:

bit.ly/Watts60

NOVEMBER 8, 2025

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE - WATTS

10200 S. Success Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90002



60 YEARS OF RESISTANCE RENEWAL AND VISION

STRENGTH IN UNITY: COUNTERING HATE TOGETHER

23
OCT
5PM

Western Justice Center
55 S Grand Ave, Pasadena, CA 91105

Join us for a presentation by Rachel Carroll Rivas of the Southern Poverty Law Center followed by a panel discussion on the dangerous rise of white supremacist narratives, how they are reshaping our nation, and how we can work together— across differences— to strengthen our democracy and what we can do to protect our communities.



RACHEL CARROLL RIVAS
INTERIM DIRECTOR
INTELLIGENCE PROJECT
SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW
CENTER



ROBIN TOMA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LOS ANGELES COUNTY
HUMAN RELATIONS
COMMISSION



JOHN WILLIAMS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
THE CENTER FOR RESTORATIVE
JUSTICE



RABBI SUSAN GOLDBERG
FOUNDER
NEFESH



SALAM AL-MARAYATI
PRESIDENT
MUSLIM PUBLIC
AFFAIRS COUNCIL
MODERATOR



MUSLIM
PUBLIC
AFFAIRS
COUNCIL



Private invitation only – RSVP Required

Human Rights Award – Criteria and Selection Process

The criteria are designed to be broad and flexible to allow for refinement and enhancement as the process evolves.

Proposed Award Criteria:

1. **Recognition of Human Rights Leadership:**

Honors an individual, group of individuals, agency, or program for outstanding achievement in advancing the fulfillment of international human rights treaties, principles, standards, and norms.

2. **Eligible Entities:**

Open to both governmental and non-governmental individuals, entities, or initiatives. Priority consideration will be given to LA County government-led efforts that actively engage and collaborate with community stakeholders.

Proposed Selection Process:

1. **Nomination and Recommendation:**

- Staff will solicit and compile nominations, including potential outreach to County departments and agencies to encourage submissions.
- The Human Rights Committee will review nominations and may consult with a panel of human rights experts, as needed, to assist in the evaluation process.

2. **Commission Vote:**

The Human Rights Committee will recommend a nominee (or nominees) to the full Commission, which will vote to select the award recipient(s).

3. **Award Presentation:**

The award will be formally presented by LACCHR in collaboration with the Board of Supervisors during their meeting on or near December 10th, in observance of International Human Rights Day.

Human Rights Award 2025 – Timeline

- **July 29 – Human Rights Committee Meeting**
Initial discussion of award criteria and key considerations for the 2025 selection process.
- **August 25 – Human Rights Committee Meeting**
Finalize award criteria and selection process.
- **September 8th – Formally request Human Rights award presentation during December 9th Board meeting.**
- **September 30 – Human Rights Committee Meeting**
Presentation and review of nominees for the 2025 Human Rights Award.
- **October 28 – Human Rights Committee Meeting**
Final decision on award recipient.
- **November 3 – Commission Meeting**
Human Relations Commission votes to approve the selected awardee.
- **November 4 – Board Notification**
Notify the Board of Supervisors of the awardee selection.
- **November 7 – Scroll Request Submission**
Submit request for the creation of scrolls to be presented at the award ceremony.
- **December 9 – Board of Supervisors Meeting**
Official presentation of the 2025 Human Rights Award to the recipient.



Passing of Former Commission Staff Terri Villa-McDowell - Celebration of Her Life - Sat. Nov. 8th, 12-5 p.m.

Dear all,

I have sad news to share: Terri Villa-McDowell passed away Tuesday.

Terri has had a huge role in my years at the Commission, having served in many roles over the years. She was Asst. Executive Director in the 2000s, and after leaving to focus on work in schools (she served on an advisory board for the state superintendent of instruction), she later returned to the Commission staff in 2018 to play a key role in building LA vs Hate, which would not be what it is today without her passion for justice, intelligence, and can-do attitude. Above all, Terri was a generous, caring and supportive colleague to all. After she retired, we missed her greatly. Always one to believe that "it may seem impossible until it's done," Terri overcame breast cancer twice. But when cancer reappeared in her lung a third time, despite success in treatments, the strain it placed on her heart proved to be too much.

Here is a link to her online bio which is from years ago, but provides more information about her background as a public interest attorney prior to coming to the Commission:

<https://hrc.lacounty.gov/theresa-villa-mcdowell/>

I spoke with her husband Mike McDowell, and he let me know there will be **a celebration of Terri's life on Saturday, Nov. 8th, from 12-5 p.m.** in the backyard of her home, **238 Coronado Ave., Long Beach, CA 90803**. There won't be a formal religious service, as she was open to many faiths, but it will be gathering to remember and honor her and her life.

Feel free to share the information with those who you think Terri would want to be part of the celebration of her life.

I'll be asking the Commission and the Board of Supervisors to adjourn their meetings in Terri's memory and honor.

Mourning our wonderful and dear Terri,

Robin

Robin S. Toma, Esq.

FW: Sharing of obituary of Kent Wong, champion for labor, nonviolence, and human rights, and former JAF Awardee

Dear Commissioners,

I'm sharing below the obituary of Kent Wong from the LA Times.

Our Commission and the Board honored UCLA Labor Center director Kent Wong with our Commission's countywide John Allen Buggs Leadership Award a few years ago because of his lifetime spent championing workers' rights, human rights, and nonviolent advocacy for justice. Personally, he was a friend and role model for me ever since I met him in my 20's. He is also the brother of Marshall Wong, the retired Commission staff member who led our hate crimes work for more than two decades.

I'll ask that the Commission adjourn in his memory at its next meeting.

Robin

Robin S. Toma, Esq.

(he, him)

Executive Director, L.A. County Commission on Human Relations

Executive Office, Board of Supervisors

County of Los Angeles

<https://hrc.lacounty.gov/>

www.LAvsHate.org

EXECUTIVE OFFICE



Report Hate to 211

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Kent Wong, a champion of nonviolent resistance in the L.A. labor movement, dies at 69



Labor leader and educator Kent Wong died on Wednesday at the age of 69.

(Genaro Molina/Los Angeles Times)



By [Suhauna Hussain](#)

Staff Writer [Follow](#)

Oct. 10, 2025 2:37 PM PT

Kent Wong, who spent decades teaching a doctrine of nonviolent resistance, died Wednesday at a hospital in Los Angeles at the age of 69.

The incursion of armed federal immigration agents in his beloved hometown of Los Angeles shocked Kent Wong.

The labor leader and educator spent the summer vigorously organizing training sessions for more than a thousand workers and union organizers to peacefully protest the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrant communities. It was work he had done for much of his life, but which he said had taken on more urgency now.

"This is a time that calls for thoughtful, mass action," Wong told The Times in an interview in July. "How could this blatant racial profiling, the terrorizing of the communities of Los Angeles, take place without a direct challenge to this injustice? That's why we came together."

Wong, who spent decades teaching a doctrine of nonviolent resistance, died Wednesday at a hospital in Los Angeles at the age of 69, due to cardiopulmonary failure with complications from endocarditis.

His family and his longtime colleagues said the principles of understanding and peace he advocated were reflective of how he also conducted himself in his personal life. He was also known for holding closely the cause of supporting immigrant workers, as well as fostering Asian American labor leaders.

"At the heart of everything Kent did was his unwavering commitment to protecting and uplifting immigrant workers," said California state Sen. Maria Elena Durazo, a former longtime labor leader who built deep ties with Wong over decades of working together, in a statement.

Susan Minato, co-president of hospitality union Unite Here Local 11 who was involved in organizing the training sessions over the summer with Wong, said when he founded an affinity group called the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance in the 1990s, he reached out and brought her into the fold.

"Embracing people and making people feel comfortable and like they belonged is nonviolence in an interpersonal way, and he practiced that," Minato said.

As a fifth-generation Chinese American, Wong had always understood the struggle of immigrants, and sought to connect the labor movement across borders.

He was the son of Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Delbert Wong, the first Chinese American judge in the continental United States, and Dolores Wong, a psychiatric social worker and leader in the effort to establish a public library in Chinatown.

Both of Wong's grandmothers, who were born in the U.S., lost their citizenship when they married male Chinese nationals — the impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which went into effect in 1882.

"He saw how citizenship is often a weapon used to divide communities and divide families," his son Ryan said.

Wong helped to [establish sister-city relations](#) between the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and labor councils in Shanghai and Beijing in China in 2007. Among his unfinished projects was to bring U.S. and Palestinian labor educators to meet in Jordan, to develop cross-border ties and curriculum.

Wong's son called him a "gentle, loving man," recalling how Wong would pack lunch for him and his brother daily while they were growing up, and cooked dinner nearly every night.

"He had this amazing ability to come home, look in the refrigerator and cook a bok choy dish, a pork dish, and rice and tofu dishes in under an hour," he said.

And he would talk his sons through conflicts patiently and rationally, "through all sides of what was happening," Ryan said.

"Rather than just say, it's that person's fault or your fault, he was always bringing his organizer mind to how we would repair the relationship and move forward together," he said. "I would say he lived by his principles of nonviolence and equality and love also in the home."

Wong had great admiration for worker and civil rights icon the Rev. James Lawson Jr., who served as a longtime mentor to Wong, as well as other stalwarts in L.A., including Durazo and the city's Mayor Karen Bass.

Wong grew up in Silver Lake, and attended the L.A.-based People's College of Law, which had been founded with the goal of training legal advocates for underserved communities.

Early in his career, Wong was the staff attorney for a local chapter of the Service Employees International Union. He served as the founding president of the United Assn. for Labor Education, and a vice president of the California Federation of Teachers.

He joined the UCLA Labor Center as its director in 1991, and greatly grew its ranks, expanding it from three staff members to 42. He helped to secure additional state funds to create a UC-wide network of labor research centers across nine campuses.

In 2021, with support from Durazo, Wong secured funding from the California Legislature to establish a permanent home for the UCLA Labor Center in the working-class neighborhood of MacArthur Park, with the office building named in honor of Lawson, who died last year.

Bass said that the city had "lost one of its greatest champions for justice."

"His legacy lives on in the Labor Centers across the UC system, in the thousands of organizers he mentored, and in every worker who stands a little taller because Kent Wong believed in them," Bass said in a Thursday statement.

Wong's death followed the unexpected passing of another person that roiled the local community, Buena Park labor leader Andrea Zinder, who was a 42-year veteran of the United Food and Commercial Workers union in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Wong is survived by his two sons, Ryan and Robin; his wife, Jai Lee; his sister, Shelley Wong Pitts; and a brother, Marshall Wong. Another brother of his, Duane Wong, died in 2016.

Robin S. Toma, Esq.

(he, him)

Executive Director, L.A. County Commission on Human Relations

Executive Office, Board of Supervisors

County of Los Angeles

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www.LAvsHate.org

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Report Hate to 211

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