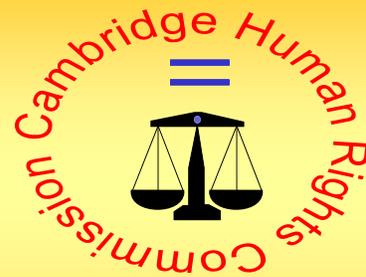


CAMBRIDGE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



DATELINE

Newsletter of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission



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“Fall, leaves, fall”

**Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away
Lengthen night and shorten day,
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.**

**I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow,
I shall sing when nights decay
Ushers in a drearier day.**

Emily Jane Brontë



Cambridge City Council

Kenneth E. Reeves, *Mayor*
Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., *Vice Mayor*
Henrietta Davis
Marjorie Decker
Anthony D. Galluccio
Craig Kelley
Brian Murphy
E. Dennis Simmons
Michael A. Sullivan

City Executive Administrators

Robert W. Healy, *City Manager*
Richard C. Rossi, *Deputy City Manager*

CHRC Staff

Quoc M. Tran
Executive Director
Carmen S. Negrón
Office Manager/ Project Coordinator
Sonja DeWitt
Investigative Attorney
Joseph Johnson
Outreach Coordinator
Christopher Moriarty
Law Intern

CHRC Board of Commissioners

Marla Erlien, *Chair*
Daniel Klubock, *Vice Chair*
William Donovan
Monroe Engel
Mercedes Evans
Charles Kavanagh
Susan Ostrander
Barbara Rabin
Randa Shedid
Barbara Siegel

WHAT IS THE CAMBRIDGE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION?

The Cambridge Human Rights Commission is a city agency that was established by city ordinance in 1984, and its main purpose is to protect the human rights of the citizens of the City. The Commission is in charge of receiving, investigating, and trying to mediate complaints of discrimination. We can receive formal or informal complaints, but the act of discrimination must have occurred in Cambridge. We do not have jurisdiction outside of Cambridge. Sometimes we receive calls from people with complaints out of our jurisdiction and what we do is refer them to the right agency. We receive cases of discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and education.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DISCRIMINATION AND BAD TREATMENT?

If you think you've been discriminated against you should know the difference between discrimination and bad treatment. Discrimination is when you are treated differently from others because of the following basis: race & color, national origin, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, family status, military status, source of income, disability, and religion. If you are treated badly by a landlord or by an employer but they also treat others in the same manner regardless of the above basis, then this would not be considered discrimination. It would only be considered bad treatment and this would not be covered under our ordinance. Sometimes discrimination is not so obvious, so when in doubt you can call us at 617-349-4396, and we can help you figure it out. We are here to help you, but we must be neutral. We are not your lawyers and we do not represent you, unless discrimination is found and we hold a public hearing.

WHAT DOES THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS DO?

Currently the Cambridge Human Rights Commission has only 10 Commissioners, but a full Commission has 11 Commissioners on board. We are currently in the process of interviewing candidates to fill a vacant slot in the Commission. The CHRC tries to find members who represent the diversity of Cambridge. The 11 Commissioners must be Cambridge residents and they serve on a voluntary basis. They are expected to actively participate in education and outreach, and be available to attend all monthly meetings. Members are expected to be knowledgeable about the civil and human rights issues facing the diverse groups in the Cambridge community, and to be willing to advocate on behalf of those groups.

This year the Commissioners put together a survey and distributed it to the students in Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School. From the response of the over 500 students, they saw the need to do an event in which students were allowed to speak out of discrimination they've experienced in Cambridge. There was a panel of respondents from the Cambridge Police, the business community, and the staff of their high school, to discuss the issues and decide on action steps.



Highlights of Recently Closed Cases by the Cambridge Human Rights Commission

- In a recently closed employment case, a black man claimed that he had been discriminated against because he was not hired for a bartending position and he believed it was because of his race and color. After investigation it was determined that there was no probable cause because Complainant was found to be less qualified than the person hired. Also, the other candidate besides having more experience was more flexible in his schedule and seemed to be more likely to stay on the job longer.
- A man who said that he had been discriminated in housing in Cambridge contacted the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston. The Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston conducted some testing and found discrimination based on family status. They then filed a complaint against the owners and the Property Manager of the local Apartment Complex. The Commission investigated and before making a final determination, the Respondent agreed to settle the case and to provide housing to all their tenants without regards to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, familial status, sexual orientation, marital status, military status, or source of income. They agreed to state in advertisement that children are welcome. The Respondent also compensated the man that complained and the Fair Housing Center.
- In another housing complaint, the Complainant who lived out of state found an advertisement of an apartment in the Craigslist. She was interested so she had a friend of hers who lives here to go check out the apartment. She contacted the daughter of the owners whom she was representing in trying to rent out the apartment. The Complainant was told she was at the top of the list and that she would refer the list to her parents, the owners of the building. Later on Complainant received a phone call from Respondent stating that they were not legally allowed to rent to her because she had young children and that if she did live there she could be accused of abusing her children. Complainant then told Respondent that it was against the law for them not to rent to her because of her children and the response was that as a private citizen they were not bound by the same law as a real estate agent. That Massachusetts laws doesn't permit her to rent to them. They weren't interested in listening to her suggestions of having the lead paint encapsulated or her suggestion of contacting the Cambridge Lead Safe program. The case was conciliated before any finding. This is called a Pre-Determination Settlement, which doesn't mean they are admitting to any discrimination. Respondents agreed to comply with the Fair Housing laws. They also agreed to pay Complainant \$1,000 and to attend a one-time training provided by the Cambridge Human Rights Commission regarding Fair Housing. They also agreed not to retaliate in any way against Complainant for having filed a complaint.

For more information on the Commission you can log onto our website at www.cambridgema.gov or call us at 617-349-4396 to request a brochure or to file a complaint if you feel you have been discriminated against.

13th ANNUAL NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING MONTH CELEBRATION

The City of Cambridge's Human Rights Commission held its annual Poster and Essay contest, on the theme "Fair Housing Is Not Only Your Rights, It's The Law", which culminated with an Award Ceremony, held on Thursday, April 27, 2006 at City Hall. The Hon. Mayor of Cambridge, Kenneth Reeves opened the ceremony by welcoming everyone. Quoc Tran, Executive Director of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission introduced special guests including some City Councilors, City Officials, Human Rights Commissioners, Presidents from sponsoring banks, and the guest speaker, Ms. Marcela Brown, HUB Director of FHEO from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. He also introduced the Master of Ceremonies, Joseph Johnson whom works in the Commission as an outreach coordinator and in the Police Review Board as an investigator. Quoc also commended his Office Manager/ Project Coordinator, Carmen S. Negrón, for planning the whole Fair Housing event. He thanked the restaurants that donated food for the Award Ceremony. There was a good turnout of students, parents, and teachers.

Every year the Cambridge Human Rights Commission staff offers training on Fair Housing Laws and encourages Cambridge school students in grades 6-8 to participate in the contest. Our goal is to educate students at an early age to increase their awareness and understanding of the housing laws that protect them and their families. Top prizewinners are awarded U.S. Savings bonds that are donated by *Cambridge Savings Bank, East Cambridge Savings Bank and Cambridge Trust Company*. Each year the banks also donate T-shirts for all participants. **Once again we would like to thank the above banks and the following businesses for their support and generous donations:** *Harvard Coop, Boston Duck Tours, Old Town Trolley, Izzy's Restaurant, ABC Pizza House, Cambridgeside Galleria, Lanes and Games, Frank's Steak House, California Pizza Kitchen, Cinderella's, Camie Bakery, Newbury Comics, 99 Restaurant, and a very special thanks to Picante Mexican Grill and Red Bones Restaurant who so generously donated gift certificates and also donated some food for the ceremony.*

Besides awarding the students for their great posters and essays, this year for the first time one of the teachers received an award. Ms. Karen Thompson of the Graham and Parks School was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award for her interest in Fair Housing, which she shows by having her students participate every year and allowing us to offer training on Fair Housing Laws to her classroom. We also presented the annual Margot P. Kosberg Award to Ms. Laura Booth, Public Policy Director at CEOC, a woman that works hard in promoting fair and affordable housing for the homeless.

Encourage your children to participate in next year's contest. Besides the opportunity of receiving prizes, it's an educational experience for them.



FAIR HOUSING MONTH GUEST SPEAKER

Marcella O. Brown



Marcella O. Brown is Regional Director for the New England Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She serves as principal advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity in all matters relating to equal opportunity in housing and facilities, economic opportunity, civil rights, and nondiscrimination in the implementation of the programs of HUD. She was the Director of the Fair Housing Assistance and Fair Housing Initiative Program Divisions in Washington, DC prior to coming to the New England Office.

She was also the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Congress of Southern California where she served as the Chief Administrative Officer.

She recently served as the Acting Director of the Office of Departmental Equal Employment Opportunities.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Joseph Johnson

Joseph Johnson served as the Master of Ceremonies. Joe is a native of Trinidad, who has lived in Massachusetts for over 30 years. He has a BS degree in communications from Emerson College Boston and he has been the Outreach/Investigative Liaison for the Cambridge Police Review Board and the Human Rights Commission for the past 4 years. Joe has over 15 years of Civil and Human Rights experience specializing in Outreach and Public Relations.



2006 Fair Housing Month Celebration Photos



Ms. Laura Booth receiving the Margot P. Kosberg Award



Teacher Karen Thompson receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award from Marcella Brown from HUD and the Chair of the Human Rights Commission, Marla Erlie



A student reads her winning essay

STUDENTS SPEAK OUT ON DISCRIMINATION IN CAMBRIDGE



By Sonja DeWitt and Marla Erlie

On Thursday, October 26, 2006, a full-house crowd of about 150 people including many notable city officials gathered in the Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School (CRLS) main cafeteria to listen to CRLS students speak about how discrimination affects their lives. Assembled to respond to the prepared comments and stories relayed by the students were Nicole Pacheco of the Cambridge Police Department, Laurence Kimbrough of CRLS, and Issie Shait from the Cambridgeside Galleria. Sponsored by the Cambridge Human Rights Commission and co-sponsored by the Cambridge Public Health Department and CRLS, with support from the Mayor's office, the event was a follow-up to a survey conducted in June by the Cambridge Human Rights Commission. More than 500 CRLS students answered questions about personal experiences of discrimination in education, housing, and with stores, restaurants, and police.



Nearly half of the students surveyed found racial discrimination in Cambridge to be a very serious or a somewhat serious problem. One in three students felt discriminated against during the past year in a Cambridge store. One in five students felt discriminated against in school; and almost one in five students felt discriminated against by the Cambridge police.

After City Councilor Michael Sullivan officially welcomed everyone, School Committee member, Richard Harding, the moderator of the roundtable discussion, asked the CRLS panelists, Sam Gebru, Nacar Ramirez-Reyes, Tsion Girum, and Tenzin Dotsang, to discuss their experiences with discrimination and stereotyping. The students were articulate and thoughtful in describing their experiences. As the evening went on, other students in the audience joined the panel.



Several students lamented that the school system did not motivate Latino and African American students to take Advanced Placement or Honors courses. One student whose family moved to Cambridge from outside the US described how her guidance counselor had enrolled her exclusively in ESL classes without meeting her first. Her English then was excellent and she joked that it has probably gotten worse since coming to Cambridge as she has learned a lot of slang.



Another student mentioned that the homeroom assignments seem segregated by race. A Dean from CRLS responded by explaining that homerooms are assigned randomly, and are not intentionally segregating. One panelist asked that teachers make a greater effort to get better acquainted with students, both inside and outside of the school. A student who is Muslim was frustrated by the ignorance of his faith by both students and teachers and wanted more education about Muslim practices such as Ramadan.

Students also described profiling by the police. One African-American student stated that she and her friends were staying in a hotel in Cambridge and were warned by the police not to cause trouble. She said that she didn't believe that they would have been talked to that way if they were white. Another student mentioned her experiences of being profiled by MBTA staff. The police responded by telling students that if they have complaints they should go to the officer assigned to CRLS or to the Internal Affairs Bureau. Police Commissioner Ronnie Watson answered that he wants to know if a particular police officer is guilty of profiling so that the police can correct such problems.



Panelists also discussed profiling by store personnel. Ironically, one related how a group of teens, four were Black and one was white, were at a mall and the store clerk followed the Black youth and missed the fact that the white teen was the one shoplifting. The students related a number of stories where they felt disrespected by store clerks who questioned their ability to buy the items they had chosen. Mr. Shait from the Cambridge Galleria stated that he had not had many complaints of racial profiling, but that students with complaints should come forward.

Mayor Kenneth E. Reeves asked students to help him respond to complaints about rude and rowdy behavior by CRLS students. One student drew cheers when she stated that students should not misbehave, not because it makes the school look bad, but because they are members of the human race. Another student said students must take personal responsibility for their actions.



The evening's roundtable discussion was a beginning. The Human Rights Commission plans to follow-up on the concerns raised by the students and helpful suggestions by those participating. The Commission thanks the Mayor, the police, Mr. Shait, and CRLS for their cooperation and help, as well as their shared concern for the human rights of Cambridge youth.

A summary of the survey and the survey questions are available at the Cambridge Human Rights Commission office.

LET US HELP

Do you feel you've been discriminated against when looking for a house or apartment in Cambridge, or do you feel like you're being treated differently at work because of your race, color, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, source of income, or disability? Give us a call at 617-349-4396 and we can schedule an appointment for you to come to file a complaint. You don't have to be afraid to file, you're protected against retaliation.

QUEREMOS AYUDARLES

Piensas que te han discriminado cuando has buscado casa o apartamento en la ciudad de Cambridge? O te estan tratando diferente a los demas en tu trabajo y piensas que pueda ser por tu raza, tu color, nacionalidad, sexo, género, orientación sexual, edad, fuente de ingreso, religión, o incapacidad? Entonces llamenos al 617-349-4396 para poder ayudarles. No tiene que temer a represalias porque está protegido bajo la ley. Hay una persona en la oficina que habla Español.



The Cambridge Human Rights Commission does not discriminate on the basis of disability. The CHRC will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request. Our office is wheelchair accessible, and the TTY phone number we can be reached at is 617-492-0235.



Newsletter Produced by: Carmen S. Negrón



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