WESTCHESTER COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT

2021 -2022

Submitted to County
Executive George Latimer
and the Westchester
County Board of Legislators

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Message from the Executive Director Tejash V. Sanchala

Although the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the nation in 2021 and 2022, under the leadership of County Executive George Latimer, Chair Rev. Doris K. Dalton, and Vice-Chair Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue, the Westchester County Human Rights Commission remained steadfast in its missions. This bi-annual report provides a snapshot of the Commission's work.

The Commission developed a multi-faceted approach of proactive and reactive measures to carry out its two-pronged mission – to educate the public on discrimination, hate, belonging, and solidarity while also enforcing the County's Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Law as needed.

While this report provides ample data on the Commission's enforcement efforts, it is more difficult to succinctly capture the Commission's robust education and outreach efforts. Yet this is the part of our mission that drives each member of our team, particularly now, as scapegoating and hate crimes are being reported at record rates. During this time, the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. became our credo, that "[p]eople fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other." With this in mind, the Commission worked to create opportunities for individuals from different backgrounds to come together, engage in meaningful conversation, and build authentic connections with the goal of replacing the barriers of fear and ignorance with bridges of understanding, empathy and unity. It is impossible to change hearts and minds unless they first are open.

In the past two years, the Commission worked with intentionality and consistency to empower the community with tools to fight against the rising tide of hate and discrimination based on xenophobia,

scapegoating, and stereotyping. The myriad of engagement activities in this area were wide-reaching. The Commission's team – both staff and Board members – are frequently sought out by community groups to speak at events and rallies that address all forms of hate, including anti-Asian hate, antisemitism, and anti-LGBTQ hate. The Commission was proud to speak at multiple Human Rights Day-related programs hosted by community partners. The Commission also held and/or participated in discussions on the importance of coalition building with a mosaic of communities, including interfaith groups. The Commission developed a solidarity building workshop with different community groups.

The Commission also brought several unique opportunities to the County as part of our efforts to create a community of upstanders whose compassionate action will create a ripple effect. To this end, we hosted multiple interactive bystander workshops to equip the community with the knowledge and tools to effectively intervene and support those facing hate or harassment as they encounter it or witness it in their daily lives. For one of these workshops, the Commission partnered with Westchester-based Achieve Martial Arts and multiple community groups to include a self-defense component. This innovative inperson workshop provided invaluable skill-building opportunities to build a sense of confidence and resilience that attendees carried with them.

We partnered with the American Group Psychotherapy Association to provide an interactive workshop on the emotional impact of discrimination and hate. In small-group breakout sessions, participants processed their experiences and learned techniques to build resilience.

The Commission's virtual Human Rights Day commemoration in 2021 was a huge success. We were proud to bring in PBS/NPR television host and acclaimed author Celeste Headlee, who shared actionable takeaways on how to have uncomfortable but necessary conversations on race and identity.

As in-person events started to come back in greater numbers, the Commission returned to participating at every heritage fair at Kensico Dam and Ridge Road Park and many other events. Dedicated Commission employees and board members engaged with the public on nights and weekends

about the Commission's mission, the protections under the County's Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Law, and provided resources for combatting hate and discrimination.

The Commission's partnership with United States Department of Housing and Urban Development remains strong. During this time, HUD recertified the Commission as one of only two Fair Housing Assistance Programs in the State of New York. This partnership assists the Commission to continue to engage in robust education and outreach on the importance of fair housing. For Fair Housing Month in April 2021 alone, the Commission spoke about fair housing at ten different events or trainings. For Fair Housing Month 2022, the Commission hosted a well-received training for co-op board members and property managers. Throughout the year, the Commission held additional fair housing events at public libraries and other locations and offered fair housing trainings to building departments throughout the County. We also developed an incredibly successful advertising campaign on sexual harassment and disability discrimination in housing that had a reach of over 28 million. Finally, the Commission partnered with the City of White Plains and nine other community groups on an education and outreach campaign on fair housing.

The Commission partnered with the District Attorney's office on programmatic events to speak with over 1,000 students on a proactive and reactive basis to discuss how to combat hate and bias and the importance of standing up and standing with individuals who experience hate or harassment.

On June 15, 2022, the Commission partnered with a mosaic of approximately 60 community and interfaith groups on the "Gather Against Hate" event in White Plains at Dr. Martin Luther King Plaza. Hundreds of attendees heard speakers from different community groups denounce hate and a call for solidarity and unity. The Commission's Chair Rev. Dalton served as emcee and speakers included New York State Senate Majority Leader and "Mother of the Human Rights Commission" Andrea Stewart-Cousins, New York Attorney General Leticia James, Westchester County District Attorney Mimi Rocah and Chair of Westchester County Board of Legislators Catherine Borgia. Westchester County Executive

George Latimer provided moving closing remarks. The event was a powerful reminder of how strong we are when we unite together against the forces that seek to divide us.

As Mpox emerged in New York, the Commission recognized the potential for the LGBTQ+ community to be scapegoated much as the Asian American community has been during COVID-19, and proactively reached out to provide our support and assistance.

To expand its outreach efforts beyond traditional means, the Commission joined the County's Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force and spoke about the interplay of discrimination issues in forced labor human trafficking cases. The Commission also spoke on panels and/or events about the intersectionality of wage theft and employment discrimination. Further, the Commission spoke to immigrant communities about protections under the County's Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Law.

During this time, both the Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Law were amended. In a pioneering expansion of the Commission's jurisdiction, protections were added against harassment based on a protected class outside of the traditional nexuses of housing, employment, or public accommodations. The Fair Housing Law's cooperative disclosure provisions were strengthened and clarified. And the Commission continued to investigate pattern and practice cases of discrimination in addition to individually filed cases.

The Commission also gave back to the community. It partnered on coat drives in both years that collected hundreds of coats, scarves and hats each year for donation to individuals at homeless shelters.

During this time, I was humbled to receive community awards and recognition but they belong to the team. The Commission's achievements are the result of a collective effort and would not be possible without the dedication and support of the Commission's dynamic staff and board. I am proud of the Commission's accomplishments, resilience, and dedication to advancing human rights and helping to building a community of dignity, respect, equality, inclusion and belonging in Westchester County.

In the year ahead, we will remain committed to expanding our reach, deepening our impact, and engaging more individuals in our mission to eradicate hate and discrimination. Let us remember the sentiment shared by acclaimed author Heather McGhee: When there is discrimination, we all lose; but where there is unity, the community benefits with a solidarity dividend.

With gratitude and hope,

Tejash V. Sanchala

Mission and History of the Commission and the Law

The mission of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission, an independent agency of Westchester County government, is to (i) enforce Westchester County's Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Law, (ii) engage in education and outreach to educate the public on their rights and obligations under these laws, and (iii) help promote equality and dignity.

The Human Rights Law and the Fair Housing Law

On December 10, 1999, the Board of Legislators passed the Westchester County Human Rights Law. Champions of the Human Rights Law's passage included then-Chair of the Board of Legislators and current County Executive George Latimer, and then-legislators Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the late Lois Bronz.

The Human Rights Law created the Commission and empowered it to receive, investigate, and adjudicate allegations of discrimination in Westchester County in the areas of employment, public accommodations, and credit lending. It prohibits discrimination based on a person's actual or perceived group identity. Over the years, the definition of group identity has been expanded and now includes sixteen (16) protected group identities - race, color, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), sexual orientation, age, disability (in all its forms), familial status (including pregnancy), marital status, status as a victim of domestic violence, status as a victim of sexual abuse, status as a victim of stalking, religion, creed, ethnicity, national origin, and alienage/citizenship status.¹

The Human Rights Law was pioneering when it was enacted, including protections based on sexual orientation and citizenship status not found in analogous federal and state laws. It continued to be pioneering when, in 2005, it became the first human rights law in the State to provide anti-discrimination protections in employment and housing for survivors of domestic violence, sexual abuse and stalking and in April of 2009, when the definition of gender was updated to include protections for gender identity and

¹ In October 2018, Section 700.03(a) of the Human Rights Law was amended to include certain protections in instances where an applicant's criminal background information on an arrest record or conviction record is sought. However, this protection is not explicitly included in the definition of group identity.

gender expression. Protections based on gender identity or gender expression were not included under federal or state law at that time. Both provisions were passed unanimously by the Board of Legislators.

Although the Human Rights Law protected against discrimination in housing since its inception, in 2008, the County unanimously passed and enacted the Westchester County Fair Housing Law (Chapter 700, Article II of the Laws of Westchester County) to create more robust protections against housing discrimination. The Fair Housing Law created the Fair Housing Board and empowered it to receive, investigate, and adjudicate allegations of housing discrimination in Westchester County. The Fair Housing Law was certified by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD") as substantially equivalent to the federal Fair Housing Act, which allowed the Commission to partner with HUD through its Fair Housing Assistance Program ("FHAP").

Over the years, the definition of group identity in housing discrimination cases has expanded to include seventeen (17) protected group identities – race, color, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), sexual orientation, age, disability (both physical and mental), familial status (including pregnancy), marital status, status as a victim of domestic violence, status as a victim of sexual abuse, status as a victim of stalking, religion, creed, ethnicity, national origin, alienage/citizenship status, and source of income.²

In November 2018, the Fair Housing Law was amended to create Section 700.21-a, commonly referred to as the "Co-op Disclosure Provision." This provision requires governing boards of cooperative housing corporations located in Westchester County to, among other things, timely respond to applications to purchase shares of stock in the corporation and to provide copies of the rejection notices thereof to the Commission. This provision was amended effective August 1, 2021, to require cooperative housing corporations to (i) provide a cover sheet with each application for the purchase of shares providing

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² In 2013, anti-discrimination protections based on source of income were added to the County's Fair Housing Law. Such protections were not available under analogous federal or state laws in 2013. The State's Human Rights Law was amended in 2019 to include source of income protections.

information on the Fair Housing Law; (ii) comply with deadlines and requirements for the receipt, review and rejection of applications; and (iii) provide minimum financial qualifications required or preferred by the Cooperative Board. Additionally, the provision requires Cooperative Boards to issue timely rejection notices that comply with the Commission's promulgated format and provide a reason for the rejection. Finally, all Cooperative Board members must complete a minimum of two (2) hours of fair housing training every two years. The Commission may issue fines against Cooperative Boards for noncompliance with these provisions.

Effective December 7, 2021, the Human Rights Law was amended to expand the Commission's jurisdiction through the addition of Discriminatory Harassment as an unlawful discriminatory practice. This provision prohibits threats, intimidation, or violence that (1) interferes with a person's civil or constitutional rights; and (2) is motivated in whole or in part by that person's actual or perceived group identity. The amendment was a timely and proactive approach to addressing a recent increase in hate incidents nationwide that did not otherwise fall under the traditional bases of jurisdiction. This protection is not covered by the State Human Rights Law, Title VIII, or the Fair Housing Act.

Effective November 6, 2022, the Human Rights Law was amended to require employers to post salary ranges in for any job, promotion or transfer opportunity in a job posting that are required to be performed, in whole or in part, in Westchester County, whether the duties are to be completed in the office, field or remotely.

Commission Staff

In 2021, the Commission's full-time staff included:

Tejash V. Sanchala, Executive Director Valerie M. Daniele, Deputy Director Joshua Levin, Fair Housing Director Diane Balistreri, Investigator John Baker, Investigator Sadie Heald, Community Work Assistant Natalia Sanchez-Bahr, Staff Assistant (Spanish Speaking) In 2022, the Commission's full-time staff included:

Tejash V. Sanchala, Executive Director Valerie M. Daniele, Deputy Director Joshua Levin, Fair Housing Director John Baker, Investigator Shivani Patel, Investigator Sadie Heald, Community Work Assistant Niurky Reynoso, Staff Assistant (Spanish Speaking)

The Commission was also awarded a competitive grant from HUD to fund a temporary Fair Housing Administrative Assistant in 2021.

Commission Board and Fair Housing Board

Under the Human Rights Law, the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the Board of Legislators, appoints individuals to the Commission Board. The Commission Board is to be reflective of the County's diverse population.

The following individuals served as members of the Commission Board during 2021 and 2022:

Rev. Doris K. Dalton, *Chair* Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue, *Vice Chair*

Maria Amado David Imamura, Esq. Harry Singh
Hon. Eddie Mae Barnes Farah Kathwari Gary Trachten, Esq.

Jennifer Bernhard Thomas Koshy Hon. Selwyn Walters
André Early Hanade Sarar Tom Watson
Sammy Gomez

The Fair Housing Board is appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation of the Board of Legislators, from the Commission's Board members. The following individuals served as members of the Fair Housing Board in 2021 and 2022:

Hon. Eddie Mae Barnes, Chair

André Early Harry Singh

Thomas Koshy Hon. Selwyn Walters

Administrative Law Judges

Administrative Law Judges preside over hearings in cases where the Commission or the Fair Housing Board has found probable cause to believe that a violation of the Human Rights Law or the Fair Housing Law may have occurred.

The following individuals served as Administrative Law Judges to the Commission and/or Fair Housing Board in 2021:

Epifanio Castillo, Jr., Esq. James Hyer, Esq. S. Kenneth Jones, Esq.

The following individuals served as Administrative Law Judges to the Commission and/or Fair Housing Board in 2022:

Epifanio Castillo, Jr., Esq. S. Kenneth Jones, Esq. Kyle McGovern, Esq. Steven Sledzik, Esq. Kim Berg, Esq.

Enforcement: The Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Law at Work

The Complaint Process

The Commission and Fair Housing Board are charged with enforcing the Human Rights Law and the Fair Housing Law. The process for filing a complaint under either of these laws remained impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2021 and 2022. The following describes how the Commission handled complaint processing during this challenging time.

Step 1: Complaint Initiation

A complaint can be initiated with the Commission or, in the case of housing complaints, the Fair Housing Board, in two ways. First, the Executive Director of the Commission/Fair Housing Board is authorized to initiate a complaint where the Commission/Fair Housing Board believes that a respondent may have engaged in a pattern or series of practices of discriminatory conduct that affects the rights of

more than one person. More often, the complaint process begins when an individual contacts the Commission/Fair Housing Board to request assistance.

In 2021, the Commission office remained closed to the public absent an appointment and Commission staff operated on staggered schedules to ensure appropriate social distancing. In 2022, staff returned in-person full-time but the office largely remained closed to the public absent an appointment. Therefore, individuals contacted the Commission primarily by telephone or online.

When a member of the public contacts the Commission, the Commission first determines whether it has jurisdiction over the potential claim. Generally, the Commission has jurisdiction over allegations of discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and credit lending that took place in Westchester County within the preceding year. Additionally, the Commission had jurisdiction over claims of discriminatory harassment that took place on or after December 7, 2021.

If the Commission does not have jurisdiction, it refers the member of the public to appropriate resources, if available. If jurisdiction is established, the prospective complainant is provided with a complaint form. Once completed, the complaint form is reviewed, perfected, and filed by the Commission. To assist complainants, the Commission provides notary services upon request.

Step 2: The Investigation

Once filed, the complaint is served upon the respondents (*i.e.* the parties alleged to have discriminated) and a thorough, neutral investigation is commenced. The investigation typically includes interviewing parties and witnesses, making field visits, making document requests, and reviewing all relevant documents and information. Concurrent with the investigations, the Commission/Fair Housing Board engages with the parties to attempt to conciliate each complaint. In 2021 and 2022, Commission/Fair Housing Board investigators worked to find creative ways to complete investigations that were both timely and thorough. For example, interviews were conducted primarily via online meeting platforms or by conference call.

Step 3: The Determination and Order

The purpose of the investigation process is to determine if sufficient evidence exists to establish "Probable Cause" to support the allegations in the complaint such that there is a public interest in advancing the matter to a public hearing. Where it finds that there is not, the Commission/Fair Housing Board issues a Determination of "No Probable Cause" and the complaint is then dismissed. Where the Commission/Fair Housing Board finds that there is sufficient evidence to support a finding of "Probable Cause", the matter is referred to a public hearing before an Administrative Law Judge.

Step 4: The Public Hearing

The Commission's Administrative Law Judges preside over public hearings after findings of Probable Cause. Every party is given a full and fair opportunity to present their evidence and witnesses before the Administrative Law Judge. When the hearing has concluded, the Administrative Law Judge issues their Recommended Findings of Fact and Decision. The Commission/Fair Housing Board reviews the Recommendation of the Administrative Law Judge and issues a Final Order affirming the Recommended Decision or amending it in whole or in part. Final Orders are appealable to the State Supreme Court.

Operating Statistics

Increase in Contacts and Filed Complaints

The Commission's education and outreach efforts yielded results. The Commission received twice as many requests for assistance in 2022 as it did in 2018 (*i.e.*, 568 v. 286), representing a 98% increase. In 2018, the Commission received 8 filed complaints. In 2022, it received 92 filed complaints. That is an increase of 1,050%.

Requests for Assistance

In 2021, the Commission received 560 individual requests for assistance (RFAs). This number represents consistent community contact that is in line with 2020 numbers. Of those RFAs that were

jurisdictional for the Commission or Fair Housing Board, approximately 61% related to matters covered by the Fair Housing Law, while 39% were related to matters covered by the Human Rights Law (*i.e.*, employment, public accommodations, etc.)

In 2022, the Commission received 593 individual RFAs. This number represents an increase in community contact from 2021 numbers. Of those RFAs that were jurisdictional for the Commission or Fair Housing Board, approximately 65% related to matters covered by the Fair Housing Law, while 35% were related to matters covered by the Human Rights Law (*i.e.*, employment, public accommodations, etc.)

The charts below provide further information about the RFAs. As many RFA's touch on multiple protected classes, the total number of protected classes exceed the number of RFAs.

Requests for Assistance by Protected Class

	Human R	ights Law	Fair Hous	Total	
Protected Class	2021	2022	2021	2022	
Age	13	18	19	29	79
Alienage/Citizenship	9	12	1	9	27
Color	46	79	55	81	253
Disability	34	64	54	88	236
Domestic Violence/Sexual Abuse/Stalking	0	1	3	12	16
Ethnicity	48	82	78	95	297
Familial Status	4	8	17	21	46
Gender	29	27	25	36	110
Marital Status	0	0	13	12	25
National Origin/Ancestry	7	19	19	25	66
Race	51	98	76	88	292
Religion	9	17	11	4	32
Sexual Orientation	3	12	6	13	30
Source of Income	N/A	N/A	22	49	71
Other	7	6	2	0	15
No Basis/No Jurisdiction	92	68	125	89	373
TOTAL	352	441	526	649	1968

Requests for Assistance by Self-Identified Race of Prospective Complainant

	Human R	ights Law	Fair Housing Law		
Race	2021	2022	2021	2022	
African-American	62	85	96	115	
Asian-American	4	11	14	12	
Caucasian	48	50	84	86	
Latinx	66	66	60	77	
Native American	1	2	1	2	
Other	7	7	16	17	
Declined to Answer	1	9	4	7	
Unknown	53	32	30	35	

Requests for Assistance by Self-Identified Gender of Prospective Complainants

	Human F	Rights Law	Fair Housing Law		
Gender	2021	2021 2022		2022	
Transgender	1	0	0	0	
Gender Nonconforming/Non-binary	2	2	0	3	
Male	76	104	97	93	
Female	156	139	209	241	
Unknown	8	17	3	11	

Complaints – Violations of the Human Rights Law or Fair Housing Law

In 2021, seventy (70) complaints alleging violations of the Human Rights Law or Fair Housing Law were filed with the Commission or Fair Housing Board. Approximately sixty percent (60%) of these complaints alleged violations of the Fair Housing Law. The remaining forty percent (40%) alleged violation of the Human Rights Law in either employment or a place of public accommodation.

In 2022, ninety-two (92) complaints alleging violations of the Human Rights Law or Fair Housing Law were filed with the Commission or Fair Housing Board. Approximately seventy-six percent (76%) of these complaints alleged violations of the Fair Housing Law, including twenty-eight (28) violations issued under the recently-enacted cooperative disclosure provision of the Fair Housing Law. The remaining twenty-four percent (24%) alleged violation of the Human Rights Law in either employment or a place of public accommodation or under the newly-enacted discriminatory harassment provision.

The chart below shows the bases of the complaints filed in 2021 and 2022. As above, one complaint may allege several different bases, resulting in bases totals that are higher than the number of Complaints filed.

Complaints by Basis

	Human R	ights Law	Fair Housing Law		
Protected Class	2021	2022	2021	2022	
Age	8	4	8	1	
Alienage/Citizenship	3	3	2	2	
Color	10	11	8	10	
Cooperative Disclosure Violations	N/A	N/A	N/A	29	
Disability	9	8	13	21	
Domestic Violence/Sexual Abuse/Stalking	0	0	0	4	
Ethnicity	11	10	17	14	
Familial Status	2	1	4	6	
Gender	10	5	8	4	
Marital Status	1	0	7	5	
National Origin/Ancestry	6	4	9	8	
Race	10	13	12	11	
Religion/Creed	2	2	3	2	
Retaliation	12	7	9	7	
Sexual Orientation	2	2	3	3	
Source of Income	N/A	N/A	3	12	

Determinations and Resolutions

In 2021, fifty-six (56) cases were investigated and resultant Determinations and Orders were issued. The Commission found Probable Cause to support the allegations in the Complaint in twenty-two (22) of these completed investigations and No Probable Cause in twenty-one (21) cases. In thirteen (13) cases, the Commission issued a mixed determination, finding Probable Cause on some allegations and No Probable Cause on others.

In 2022, fifty-four (54) cases were investigated and resultant Determinations and Orders were issued. The Commission found Probable Cause in sixteen (16) of these completed investigations and No Probable Cause in thirty-five (35). In three (3) cases, the Commission issued a mixed determination,

finding Probable Cause on some allegations and No Probable Cause on others. The outcome of these investigations is described in greater detail in the chart below.

Determinations and Orders

	Probable Cause (PC)		No Probable Cause (NPC)		Mixed PC/NPC		Totals
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	
Human Rights Law	5	2	12	9	9	2	39
Fair Housing Law	17	14	9	26	4	1	71
Totals	22	16	21	35	13	3	110

Determinations and Orders by Basis

	Human R	ights Law	Fair Housing Law		
Protected Class	2021	2022	2021	2022	
Age	8	4	6	2	
Alienage/Citizenship	2	1	1	2	
Color	8	8	6	11	
Disability	2	3	8	17	
Domestic Violence/Sexual Abuse/Stalking	0	0	0	1	
Ethnicity	8	6	10	14	
Familial Status	1	1	2	4	
Gender	10	4	11	6	
Marital Status	0	0	5	6	
National Origin/Ancestry	4	2	6	10	
Race	9	8	9	11	
Religion	3	0	0	3	
Retaliation	0	4	1	10	
Sexual Orientation	1	0	2	4	
Source of Income	N/A	N/A	5	6	

In 2021, twelve (12) matters were withdrawn or administratively dismissed after a complaint was filed. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, public hearings were not held in 2021. However, the Commission was able to facilitate thirteen (13) settlement conferences and mediations virtually. The Commission also strengthened its mediation program.

In 2022, ten (10) matters were withdrawn or administratively dismissed after a complaint was filed. Thirty-three (33) matters were referred to an Administrative Law Judge for public hearings. The Commission facilitated twenty-two (22) settlement conferences and mediations virtually.

Co-op Disclosure Provision

The table below shows the data regarding the co-operative disclosure provision in the Fair Housing Law.

Year	Rejection Notices Received by the Commission³
Dec. 2018	4
2019	253
2020	183
2021	276
2022	306

Twenty-eight (28) notices of violation were issued for non-compliance.

Education and Outreach

In addition to enforcing the Human Rights Law and the Fair Housing Law, the Commission and Fair Housing Board are tasked with conducting education and outreach regarding the laws and to speak to the Westchester County community about hate and bias. Several other County laws and Executive Orders direct the Commission's participation in other ways.

Immigrant Protection Act

The Immigrant Protection Act, Act 19-2018, was adopted on March 12, 2018. The Act extends to any service provided by any County agency, including County Law Enforcement Agencies ("CLEAs"), to all eligible individuals, regardless of citizenship or immigration status. County Agencies and CLEAs are prohibited from inquiring about, or requesting proof of, a person's citizenship or immigration status, unless the receipt of services or benefits is contingent upon an individual's citizenship or immigration status, or when required by federal or state statute, regulation or case law. The Act requires all CLEAs

³ The data in this chart reflects the date that the Commission received the Notice and not the date of the rejection.

provide their respective procedures regarding implementation of the Act to the County Board of Legislators and the Commission so that they are available to the public. The Commission maintains the policies and procedures developed by the Westchester County Departments of Correction, Probation, and Public Safety, which can be found on the Commission's webpage.

Language Access

On March 5, 2019, the County Executive signed Executive Order 1-2019, Westchester County's Language Access Policy. Under the Policy, applicable departments within Westchester County government that provide services to the general public must take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with limited-English proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to programs and services. Generally, this means that applicable departments must (1) translate documents designated as "vital;" (2) provide interpretation services; and (3) develop and implement a Language Access Plan.

Since 2019, the Commission has acted as a liaison between County departments and the County's language access service provider to ensure proper training and support were provided to all users. Language Access Plans are available at the Commission's webpage.

Safe Time Leave Law

Westchester County's Safe Time Leave Law ("STLL") went into effect on October 30, 2019. Under the STLL, covered employees have the right to use paid leave to attend or testify in criminal or civil court proceedings relating to domestic violence or human trafficking and/or to move to a safe location. The Commission was charged with developing and implementing an outreach program to inform interested parties of the availability of safe time leave under Chapter 586 of the Laws of Westchester County. Unlike the Earned Sick Leave Law, which was preempted by State law in 2020, STLL remains in effect and the Commission continues to provide the public with information regarding the law. The Department of Consumer Protection receives complaints under the STLL.

Community Outreach and Events

Unfortunately, traditional in-person, face-to-face community engagement was difficult for the majority of 2021 due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the Commission continued to tap into creative methods and virtual programming to engage with the community.

2021

As the year kicked off, the Commission participated in live discussions on the importance of coalition building with interfaith communities based on the film "Shared Legacies." The film, directed by Dr. Shari Rogers, documents the often-overlooked parallel struggles and solidarity between the Black and Jewish communities during the civil rights movement.

The Commission continued to provide virtual programing in its Education and Empowerment series. In 2021, there was a focus nationally on the continued impact of hate on the Asian American and Pacific Islander ("AAPI") community. Across the nation, in the midst of repeated hateful rhetoric, including calling COVID-19 the "China Virus," Asian Americans reported that they were the victims of over 11,000 hate incidents. The Commission spoke out at press conferences, programs and community events against the rising tide of anti-Asian American hate. Specifically, in March 2021, the Commission denounced anti-Asian hate at a press conference with the County Executive and community leaders. The Commission hosted and moderated a virtual discussion on Combating Hate Against the Asian American community, which looked at the history of xenophobia in America, the hyper-sexualization of Asian females, the model minority myth, the wedge created by White supremacy, and discussed ways to move forward.

The Commission also spoke about ways to combat antisemitism with community groups and at programmatic events hosted by State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, State Senator Shelley Mayor, and the New York State Division of Human Rights. The County, in partnership with the

District Attorney's Office, launched the #SpeakUpWestchester campaign to encourage everyone to report hate-related incidents to the appropriate resources.

To empower those who experience or witness hate or harassment, the Commission hosted multiple live, interactive bystander intervention workshops. The workshops, which were attended by hundreds of people, provided participants with techniques they could use to safely take action when faced with hate and harassment. They included scenarios on how to combat anti-Asian hate, antisemitism, online abuse and all forms of hate. Reports indicate that 79% of those who have been victimized wish someone had intervened. Workshops like these allow community members to practice these techniques safely so they are empowered to take action when the need arises. After each of the workshops, 100% of the attendees reported that they felt better empowered to stand up for themselves and each other against hate and to make our community safe and inclusive. It has been said that the opposite of hate is indifference and these programs create an empowered community ready to take action where appropriate.

Additionally, the Commission partnered with the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) to host a virtual, interactive workshop to address the emotional impact of hate and discrimination. Over ten trained psychologists from the AGPA facilitated open and constructive conversations on identity. In this safe and inclusive space, participants from diverse backgrounds courageously shared their indelible experiences with hate and discrimination. This powerful workshop promoted empathy, understanding, and mutual respect. It empowered participants with strategies to cope with direct and vicarious trauma. AGPA's dedicated team of trained psychologists generously offered pro bono counseling services to attendees helping them heal and regain their strength to stand against hate.

The Commission spoke at and/or participated in rallies and community gatherings against hate in Ardsley, Bedford, Yorktown, Scarsdale, Pelham, Hastings, and Pleasantville. These rallies were largely organized by the County's dynamic youth advocating for justice and change in a time of social unrest.

The Commission's engagement also included partnering on events, participating on other valuable panels, and tabling at street fairs and festivals during 2021. For example, the Commission spoke on a panel in New Rochelle on discrimination related issues. The Commission was proud to co-sponsor two virtual book discussions in 2021. Specifically, the Commission partnered with the White Plains Library Foundation and others for A Conversation with Anita Hill, author of *Believing*. Additionally, the Commission was an event partner on the Five Towns: One Book Series for discussions with and centered on Isabel Wilkerson's book, Caste. The Commission partnered with Pace University and others and spoke at an event called "Smashing Pumpkins, Smashing Stereotypes," where participants were encouraged to take sledgehammers to pumpkins emblazoned with the microaggressions they had faced. Commission spoke out on age discrimination as part of Senior Law Day Series and at a community event. The Commission spoke to the County's advisory boards and community organizations and at many outdoor events including events for Juneteenth and Pride. Participating in these vibrant events increased public awareness of the Commission's mission and fostered meaningful connections with individuals from throughout the County, allowing us to hear their concerns, and provide appropriate resources. The Commission's presence at these events and others further amplified its visibility and impact.

The Commission developed an in-person solidarity building workshop with multiple community groups. It was well received and provided an opportunity for different community members to engage with one another and develop proximity. Additional workshops are being planned.

The Commission, a partner with United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, engaged in robust fair housing education and outreach activities. In response to reported fair housing issues, the Commission, with the assistance of the County's Communications department, developed a countywide education and outreach campaign on housing discrimination centered on sexual harassment and disability discrimination. The ads ran on buses and bus shelters throughout the County. The campaign was incredibly successful as it generated a staggering 28 million impressions. The Commission celebrated

Fair Housing Month by hosting and/or speaking at over ten (10) programmatic events. The Commission also participated in a fair housing video in April. Throughout the year, the Commission provided fair housing trainings to real estate brokers, property/building management communities, community groups and the general public. The Commission conducted fair housing trainings as part of its continuing legal education program to the legal community.

The Commission ended the year with a virtual celebration of Human Rights Day in December 2021, with remarks by County Executive George Latimer and New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. The program featured a conversation with Celeste Headlee, award-winning journalist, NPR anchor, television host, and author of *Speaking of Race: Why Everybody Needs to Talk About Racism – And How To Do It.* Ms. Headlee, a "self-described light-skinned Black Jew" shared valuable takeaways on how to have uncomfortable conversations on race and identity. This event was designed to bring people together and to empower the community with tools to engage in productive dialogue with others. In addition, the Commission's team received training from the United States Department of Justice on having difficult community conversations.

Four (4) members of the Commission's leadership team (*i.e.*, Chair Rev. Doris K. Dalton, Vice-Chair Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue, Commission Board Member Andre Early and Executive Director Tejash V. Sanchala) continued to serve on the Training and Equipment and Community Engagement subcommittees and share their insights on the County's Reform and Reimagining Police Taskforce in 2021. The Taskforce's report was submitted to the Board of Legislators on March 22, 2021 and to New York State on April 1, 2021.

2022

In 2022, the Commission started off by speaking to over 60 community groups in the first two months about the newly enacted discriminatory harassment provision and other rights under the County's

Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Law. The Commission continued to conduct education and outreach to communities throughout the year.

The Commission spoke on panel hosted by New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Senator Shelley Mayer on "The Past, Present, and Future of LGBTQ+ Rights." The Commission spoke on a panel about anti-Asian hate. The Executive Director delivered the keynote address on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging at a community event.

Throughout 2022, the Commission continued to provide the community with critical tools to respond to hate and discrimination. For example, in March, during Women's History Month, the Commission hosted a program to combat gender-based harassment. The Commission also participated in the Yonkers March against Sexual Abuse. In June, the Commission, in partnership with multiple community groups and a martial arts studio, created an in-person dual pronged workshop with self-defense techniques. This innovative in-person workshop was well attended at Kensico Dam. Attendees learned basic self-defense techniques and reported very positive feedback.

As in-person events began to make a comeback, the Commission was proud to speak at and/or table at events like the third annual Solidarity Fair at Temple Israel of New Rochelle and every single heritage fair - Polish, Asian American, African American, Hispanic, Indian American, Ecuador, Jewish, Muslim and more - at Kensico Dam and Ridge Road Park. The Commission's presence at all of these events amplified its visibility and impact.

The Commission was a partner in with CURE and other community organizations for the Second Annual 5 Towns:1 Book Series celebrating and discussing Heather McGhee's book *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Us and How We Can Profit Together*. Ms. McGhee explained that racism is not a zero sum game and that equal rights for me does not mean less rights for you. The programmatic events discussed how racism and discrimination hurts everyone and how unity can lead to what she calls the "solidarity dividend."

April is Fair Housing Month and the Commission used the opportunity to host a virtual Fair Housing 101 for Co-op/Condo Boards and Property Managers. This event was open to the general public. It was well-attended and the feedback was extremely positive. In addition, the Commission partnered with local libraries, including the Mamaroneck, Greenburgh, and Irvington libraries, to bring virtual Fair Housing discussions to the public. The Commission also presented to the 9th Judicial District on discrimination-related issues and provided additional trainings to the legal community. Throughout the year, the Commission provided fair housing trainings to real estate brokerages, cooperative housing boards, building departments among others.

The Commission also partnered with the City of White Plains on a fair housing art based education and outreach campaign. The Commission and nine other community partners each designed a small model house to correlate with a fair housing theme. The Commission's Education and Outreach committee designed a home featuring a call to action for victims of housing discrimination. Reportedly four million instances of housing discrimination occur each year but only a fraction are reported. The City's campaign consisted of ten homes with different fair housing themes. The campaign's designed homes traveled throughout the County and amplified its message that fair housing is for everyone.

Continuing to reinforce and expand our reach, the Commission hosted a bilingual fair housing training with the Community Resource Center. This initiative ensures that vital information on housing rights and discrimination reaches the diverse communities we serve, fostering awareness and promoting justice for all, regardless of their language or background.

On June 15, 2022, the Commission partnered with a mosaic of approximately 60 community groups for a program called "Gather Against Hate" in White Plains. It was a remarkable testament to the power of unity and solidarity. Distinguished elected leaders, such as the New York State Attorney General Leticia James, New York State Majority Senate Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins, Westchester County Executive George Latimer, Chair of the Westchester County Board of Legislators Catherine Borgia, and

Westchester County District Attorney Mimi Rocah, joined a diverse list of community leaders to speak out against hate. The Commission's Chair Rev. Doris K. Dalton served as the program's emcee and delivered remarks. Drawing on the wisdom of Rev. Martin Niemöller's poignant poem, we recognized that hate against one is hate against all and that it is our collective responsibility to stand together in solidarity.

June also provided the opportunity for the Commission to celebrate Juneteenth in White Plains and Peekskill and Pride month events in White Plains, New Rochelle, Yonkers and Yorktown.

The Commission expanded its outreach efforts by joining the Westchester County Anti-Trafficking Task Force and speaking about the interplay of discrimination in forced labor human trafficking cases. The Commission spoke on a panel discussion on this topic and worked with community groups to identify discrimination related issues and available resources. Similarly, the Commission proactively expanded its outreach by speaking about the interplay of wage theft and employment discrimination. According to the Economic Policy Institute, wage theft costs U.S. workers as much as \$50 billion per year — more than robberies, burglaries and motor vehicle thefts combined – some incidents of wage theft include discrimination-related issues. The Commission also spoke with vulnerable communities including day laborers, immigrants, and domestic violence survivors about protections under the County's Human Rights Law and Fair Housing Law and available resources.

Looking Forward 2023

The past two years have highlighted the Commission's work in building bridges, breaking down barriers and investigating complaints of discrimination is more important than ever. We look forward to meeting the challenges before us in 2023.

To learn more about the Commission and Fair Housing Board, contact us by telephone at (914) 995-9500 or by email at HumanRights@WestchesterGov.com.



County Executive George Latimer announces passage of the Discriminatory Harassment provision, expanding the Commission's jurisdiction to cover acts of hate not necessarily connected to the nexuses traditionally associated with discrimination claims



Executive Director Tejash Sanchala speaks at a press conference denouncing acts of Anti-Asian hate and scapegoating

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HOUSING IS UNLAWFUL

Sexual harassment by a landlord, superintendent maintenance worker or anyone associated with your housing is against the law.

The Westchester County Fair Housing Law protects you from sexual harassment.

"He said that there were other ways for me to pay my rent."

Westchester County Human Rights Commission ☑ HumanRights@westchestergov.com

(914) 995-7710

IF YOU FEAR FOR YOUR SAFETY, CALL 91



someone you know, contact the Westchester County

SOME ANIMALS ARE NOT PETS

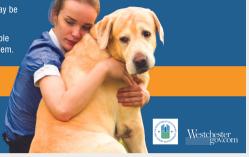
If your animal helps alleviate the symptoms of your disability, it may be reasonable for your housing provider to allow the animal to stay.

The Westchester County Fair Housing Law mandates that reasonable accommodations in housing are provided to people who require them.

Disability discrimination in housing is unlawful.

Westchester County Human Rights Commission ⊞ HumanRights@westchestergov.com

(914) 995-7710



The Commission launched a successful, multilingual campaign to educate the public on their fair housing protections. These images - posted on Bee Line buses and at bus shelters around the County - were seen over 28 million times!







Executive Director Tejash Sanchala, Westchester County Senior Assistant District Attorney Catalina Blanco Buitrago (C), and Attorney Mayo Bartlett (R) speak to middle school students on hate and the importance of being an upstander



Commission staff and Board members table at a Solidarity Fair

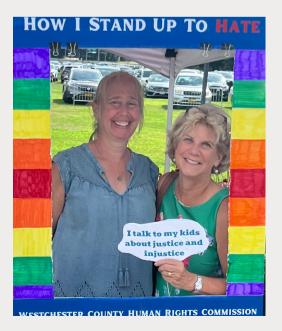


Executive Director Tejash Sanchala speaks at a Mosque in White Plains





Westchester County Executive George Latimer, Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins, elected officials, Commission Board Members, and community members show how they Stand Up to Hate at various festivals and celebrations







In-person events began to return, providing the Commission the opportunity to celebrate diversity and educate the public on our work!

(R) Deputy Director Valerie Daniele and Executive Director Tejash Sanchala celebrate Pride Month with local youth leaders at Yorktown Pride

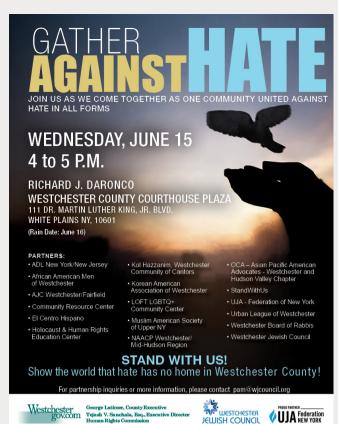
(Below) Executive Director Tejash Sanchala delivers remarks at a community event



(R) Many community members learn important self defense techniques at a Commission workshop, held at the Asian American Heritage Festival







Executive Director Tejash Sanchala, Commission Chair Rev. Doris K. Dalton, and Vice Chair Dr. Rev. Stephen Pogue are joined by County Executive George Latimer



(Below) New York State Attorney General Letitia James delivers remarks at the Gather Against Hate event



The Commission was a partner in the Gather Against Hate event, held in White Plains. One week after the racially-motivated killing of 10 people in Buffalo, approximately 300 people gathered to support each other in the face of increasing hate and bias.





County Executive Latimer and NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins deliver remarks at the Gather Against Hate event



The distinguished panel of speakers included (L-R) Imam Musa Abdul Ali; Commission Vice Chair Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue; Community Resource Center Executive Director Jirandy Martinez; LOFT LGBTQ Center Executive Director Judy Trolio; County Executive Latimer; County Board of Legislators Chair Catherine Borgia; NYS Attorney General Letitia James; Westchester County District Attorney Miriam Rocah; and Attorney Mayo Bartlett.



Commission Board and staff gather to celebrate their work and comradery!







The Westchester County
Human Rights Commission
staff and Board members
celebrate at the annual
Smashing Pumpkins/
Smashing Stereotypes event
held at Pace University.



Westchester County Human Rights Commission celebrates

Human Rights Day 2021

VIRTUAL PROGRAM



Featuring a conversation with award-winning journalist, NPR anchor, television host, and author of <u>Speaking of Race: Why Everybody Needs to Talk About Racism - And How To Do It</u>

Celeste Headlee

With remarks by County Executive George Latimer and NY State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins

AVAILABLE ON FACEBOOK

@WestchesterCountyHRC

ASL Interpreter Provided

THE AMERICAN GROUP
PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION (AGPA)
THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF
HATE & DISCRIMINATION

CO-SPONSORED BY
WESTCHESTER COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

A LIVE, INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP ON THE IMPACT OF HATE AND DISCRIMINATION.

FACILITATED BY
DR. LEO LEIDERMAN,
WITH BREAK OUT
GROUPS LED BY
MEMBERS OF THE AGPA
COMMUNITY
OUTREACH TASK
FORCE.

THOSE IMPACTED BY
HATE AND
DISCRIMINATION AND
THEIR ALLIES WILL
LEAVE EMPOWERED
WITH STRATEGIES TO
COPE WITH VICARIOUS
TRAUMA.

VIRTUAL EVENT THURSDAY JUNE 24 6 - 7:30 P.M.

ASL Interpreter Will Be Present

Space is Limited!Registration
Required

Phone: (914) 995-7710 Email: HumanRights@ WestchesterGoy.com

Please indicate if you have been

The Commission continued its Education and Empowerment Series



Westchester

gov.com

George Latimer, County Executive
Tejash V. Sanchala, Esq., Executive Director
Human Rights Commission



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EVERYONE