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CCHR, A Closer Look

October 1, 2020

WELCOME



Kenneth Gunn, Acting Commissioner

Welcome to this edition of CCHR, A Closer Look. We hope that you and your families have been doing well during these difficult times for our city and our nation. These challenges have forced us all to rethink how we do things, and for the CCHR adapting our work and services to the new normal has been a much-needed exercise in self-reflection.

Racism and discrimination have not taken a hiatus during the pandemic, and in fact have been exposed for cancers that they are. How we respond will be the difference in making lasting systemic change or allowing the problems to gain more footing and acceptance as being “just the way it is.” Individually and collectively, we can make a difference by speaking up, making a commitment to change, and being willing to work together. The CCHR welcomes the opportunity to join with you and your agencies to take on these challenges and make equity and freedom from discrimination and hate, our true new normal.

CCHR REOPENS TO THE PUBLIC



On September 21, 2020 the CCHR reopened its office to the public on a limited basis. As the City is still in Phase 4 of reopening in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now open to the public to accept new discrimination complaint filings by appointment only. To make an appointment, please call 312-744-4111. The CCHR has also resumed scheduling mediation conferences for discrimination cases and will soon offer mediation remotely for cases as well.

CCHR PARTNERS WITH IAOHRA TO HOST CIVIL RIGHTS WEBINARS

During the summer of 2020, the CCHR joined with the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) to produce two highly successful webinars addressing civil rights challenges during the pandemic. The first program was a virtual town hall meeting, "Human Rights in an Era of Uprisings and the Pandemic" on June 26, 2020. Speakers included Derrick Johnson, National President of the NAACP and Catherine Lhamon, Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The second webinar, "Fair

Housing Matters: The Challenge of Housing Access in a Racially Divided Nation During COVID-19” was held August 13, 2020. The speakers included a panel of national leaders in Fair Housing including Anna Farias, HUD Assistant Secretary, Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, and Chicago’s own Professor Michael Seng, UIC-John Marshall Law School. More than 1,000 people from across the country participated in the webinars.

IAOHRA
International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies
Presents
FAIR HOUSING MATTERS:
THE CHALLENGES OF HOUSING ACCESS IN A RACIALLY DIVIDED NATION
DURING COVID-19

Thursday, August 13, 2020 / 1PM EDT

This conversation on the current state of fair housing focuses on emerging issues and challenges communities are experiencing due to COVID-19; best agency practices while working remotely; and the discriminatory implications of the “double pandemic” through a gender and race equity lens.

SPEAKERS

Robin Toma
Welcome
President, International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies

Anna Maria Farias
Opening Remarks
HUD Assistant Secretary, Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity

Joe Pelletier
Remarks
Director, HUD Fair Housing Assistance Program

PANELISTS

Michael P. Seng
Professor
UIC John Marshall School of Law

Stella Adams
S J Adams Consulting

Steve Tomkowiak, Esq.
Law Offices of Steve Tomkowiak

Jeffrey May
International Development and Planning, LLC

Michael Allen, Esq.
Reiman Colfax, PLLC

Amy Nelson
Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana

Lisa Rice
National Fair Housing Alliance

MODERATORS

Paul Valenti
Pinellas County Office of Human Rights

Melody Taylor
HUD Regional Director

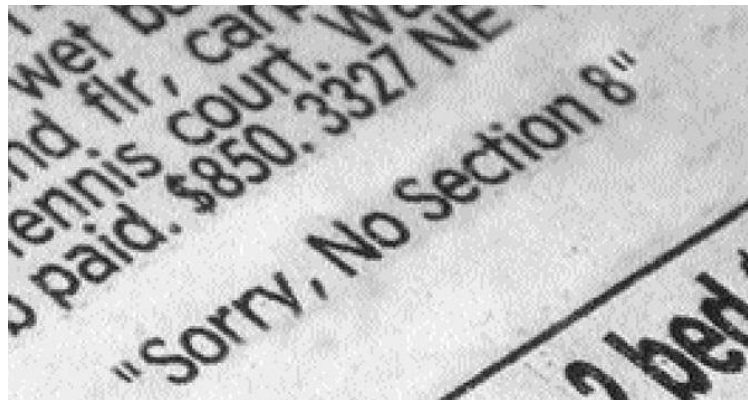
Jean M. Kelleher
Office of Human Rights at City of Alexandria

Please Register By: August 10, 2020

ZOOM Registration Link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mdWtRD80Rmeom2QOdeGp1A

If you require special accommodations, please email: iaohra@sso.org

SOUTHSIDE NOT IMMUNE FROM SECTION 8 DISCRIMINATION, STUDY FINDS



In a recent study conducted for the CCHR by the Roosevelt University Policy Research Collaborative, fair housing testing found discrimination against persons seeking to use Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) (aka Section 8) on both the North and South sides of Chicago. The study sought to determine in part, the prevalence of discrimination against participants in the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program

administered locally by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). The study used a sample of four community areas in the city with high concentrations of rental units, two on the Northside (Rogers Park and Logan Square) and two on the Southside (Chatham and Grand Boulevard). The tests for the Northside also looked at discrimination based on race and national origin.

The study found that HCV holders faced discrimination on both the North and the South sides, which suggests that race is often a factor in HCV discrimination, but not the only factor as Black HCV holders were discriminated against by Black landlords and real estate managers on the Southside. The study also showed in the Northside tests, White HCV holders were more likely to receive better customer service, while Black HCV holders encountered more obstacles when trying to rent units. To view the study in its entirety, go to [Fair Housing Testing Project, Final Testing](#).

COMMUNITY TENSION MEDIATION & EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

A Virtual Success

Lazina Amin, CCHR Intern

When it comes to tension among communities, it is essential to hear both parties clearly and create the possibility of a cordial conversation between them. The Community Mediation program under CCHR's Inter-Group Relations (IGR) Unit focuses on creating a dialogue between two parties involved in a conflict, which is arranged by a member of our team. The role of our community mediation specialist is to facilitate a conversation in a safe and confidential manner, while remaining completely neutral, where both parties feel heard and can express their concerns without the fear of being held accountable. Even though the focus of mediation is often aimed at reaching a mutually agreed upon resolution by the end of a session, it is not the goal of a mediation. Having the conversation is what's important.

With COVID-19 rapidly taking over our lives, virtual conversations have become the new "normal." That being said, all our mediation services have been moved to Zoom since the pandemic. Despite being completely virtual because of safety reasons, our mediation services have still been running smoothly and successfully. During the pandemic, IGR has continued to mediate many disputes, most often involving neighbors at odds with each other. IGR provides a platform for the parties to discuss their issues and decide what necessary steps they are willing to take in order to improve the situation.

In addition to mediation, IGR is also offering virtual workshops on Zoom which help educate individuals on issues that are prevalent in today's social environment such as bullying and implicit bias. These workshops are catered towards a range of age groups and communities - children, youth, adults, seniors, administrators and staff;

and can be tailored to fit needs that are specific to their respective groups. For more information call (312) 744-4111 or visit our [webpage](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- On September 1, 2020 former Director of Compliance/Fair Housing **JoAnn Newsome** was promoted to Deputy Commissioner.
- In July, Administrative Assistant III **Wessie Johnson** celebrated her 35th year anniversary with the CCHR (45 overall with the City!)
- Acting Commissioner **Kenneth Gunn** celebrated his 30th year anniversary with the CCHR in August.
- Hate Crimes Specialist **Norman White** was named to Who's Who in Hispanic Chicago, Government category for 2020 by Negocious Now.
- Human Relations Investor II **Toma Toma** is moving on from the CCHR. We wish Toma and his family all the best.
- The CCHR is happy to welcome our new Fall Intern **Lazina Amin**, Senior in Applied Psychology, UIC-Chicago. Welcome to the CCHR Lazina!



Wessie Johnson

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Board Meetings:
October 8, 2020
November 12, 2020
December 10, 2020
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
via Zoom

*Meeting times are subject to change.
Please call (312) 744-4404 for more information.

Chicago Commission on Human Relations

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Main: (312) 744-4111

Fax: (312) 744-1081

TTY: (312) 744-1088

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Filing Complaints

Employment: (312) 744-4111

Housing: (312) 744-5879

Public Accommodation: (312) 744-5879

Credit: (312) 744-5879

Hate Crimes

(312) 744-4874

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