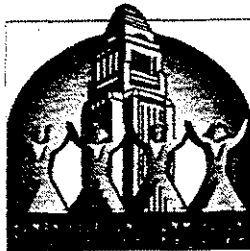


# **THE STATE OF HUMAN RELATIONS 2000**



## **INTERIM REPORT OF PHASE I**

**LOS ANGELES CITY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
AUGUST, 1999**

## PHASE ONE

(Interim summary/report)

Summer 1999

### Goal

The goal of phase one is two fold: (1) obtain a flavor of the diverse views that exist in the City of Los Angeles on the issues pertaining to race and human relations and, (2) simultaneously create an educational opportunity for community members to learn about the diversity that exists and how it does, and/or may, impact society and their own lives.

In order to achieve these goals the methodology explained below was implemented.

### Methodology

#### Stage 1: Preparation of lists of various organizations within the City.

Through discussions among staff and Commissioners a preliminary list of trade associations; community based organizations, and religious organizations was created. A search of the internet identified a number of political groups from whom we obtained a list of political affiliates. In order to supplement the preliminary list the offices of Council Districts that were under-represented in the preliminary list were contacted and lists of organizations that existed within their boundaries were obtained. Additionally, a list of Toastmasters Clubs was obtained as an avenue into the corporate and professional sectors of the Los Angeles Community.

Initially we were hoping to use student volunteers (particularly those in related fields) to assist in the implementation of the project. To that end a list of contacts at various universities and colleges in Southern California was compiled. Each academic institution chosen was contacted by letter and by phone. Unfortunately the response was so low that we had to abandon the idea. The main reasons given for the low student response was that the positions offered were unpaid and in some instances there was no guarantee that a student could get credit for any of the voluntary work done.

#### Stage 2: Contacting the various organizations in the Council districts

Once a list had been compiled phone calls and/or letters were sent to the individuals previously identified as possible/actual contacts. Several follow ups were done until we had at least two organizations from each of the fifteen council districts. Appendix B is a list of the organizations contacted.

The original cut-off date for the hearings was set for June 30<sup>th</sup>, however it became clear that some of the organizations that were interested in participating would not be able to accommodate that date and if the cut-off were to be strictly enforced we may not have all the council districts represented on the list of hearings. Consequently, though the official cut-off date remained at June 30 we allowed some exceptions beyond that date.

### Stage 3: Attending the hearings

In order to achieve the two-fold goal identified above we decided to use the medium of informal discussion. This would allow for conversation among participants leading to the exchange of ideas and views. Basic ground rules were set in the hope of encouraging honesty and reducing fear of expression. For most, though not all, of the hearings we used the services of Days of Dialogue.

The questions created were eventually condensed into six in order not to encroach too much onto each organization's schedule. The questions are deliberately controversial in order to stimulate conversation. As the participants spoke the opinions expressed were recorded and later transcribed. Handwritten notes were taken as a back-up. Appendix A is a list of the hearings conducted in each Council District. Appendix C is a synopsis of a sampling of the hearings and Appendix D is a copy of the six questions.

We found that the participants seemed to learn a great deal from each other and in some instances the session stimulated a strong longing to do more to ensure a more cohesive community in Los Angeles. Consequently, even without a report being published, the people of Los Angeles who agreed to participate in the project gained from the mere fact of taking part in a discussion on race and human relations.

### CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The responses to the various questions varied. Attached for your convenience as Appendix D is a copy of the six questions asked.

One fact that seemed to stand out was the issue of affirmative action. There seems to be a variety of views as to what the term actually means. One view was that it meant "quotas" and the promotion of unqualified people. Another view focused on the historical reasons. There was often an initial confusion between the way the program was implemented by a particular employer and the objective rationale for the program. For example, it was not unusual for a participant to initially say that affirmative action was a discriminatory project which promoted the under-qualified and therefore it should not have been implemented. When then asked if he/she would support the program if it merely redressed social ills and did not result in any promotion of unqualified members of staff, more often than not the participant would be willing to support "affirmative action". It thus became clear that what most had against the program was not the program itself but the method of implementation adopted by employers. Consequently, it appears that if the program had been executed as intended, i.e. given equal opportunity to equally qualified persons, there probably would have been less opposition to the program and modification of its implementation would have been the appropriate response rather than its outright abolition.

On the issue of homosexuality and whether it should be protected as a civil right. Many people did not have a mastery of the concept of a "civil right". Furthermore, it appears that there is a dilemma. The moral dilemma seems to be that most (if not all) wanted homosexuals to be physically protected from all physical harm and they believe that the government should step in to ensure that the well-being of gays and lesbians is safeguarded. However, some participants expressed concern that extending the protection to the level of a civil right would be tantamount to condoning the lifestyle. Consequently, when "push came to shove" many concluded that homosexuality should not be a civil right.

Even aside from the above, there is a clear need for more education and exposure to differences. One participant pointed out that in LA there was no real opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to mix. He contrasted this with New York where, because of the extensive public transport system, people from diverse backgrounds and races were forced to mix on a regular basis. In LA voluntary segregation is easy to achieve since the freeways allow many of us to permanently bypass "undesirable" areas and the absence of an extensive public transport system prevents the migration of "certain" types into the more "exclusive" neighborhoods. We therefore become almost totally dependent on the media for information about the "other" members of our own LA community. This places a great deal of power and influence on the media. It gives it "carte blanche" on the direction and manipulation of public opinion.

One thing was clear from the hearings, if LA is to move forward and properly integrate its people it must educate them on issues pertaining to diversity and the advantages, both commercial and otherwise, of embracing the differences that exist in the community. One way of educating people is by providing a regular forum (not limited to times of crisis) for discussion and the sharing of ideas. Many of the people we met in phase one wanted regular open discussions.

## APPENDICES

Attached for your perusal are the following:

- Appendix A - a list of all the hearings done to date in each council district.
- Appendix B - a list of the organizations contacted and invited to participate (contact consisted of a letter and 2 follow up phone calls)
- Appendix C - a synopsis of a sampling of the information obtained during the hearings.
- Appendix D - a copy of the questions asked
- 

The above is intended to serve only as general **interim** information pursuant to the request made by the Commissioners sitting on the ad hoc committee. Being "interim" means that the information contained may be updated and/or modified as events occur. More information can be provided on request.

## APPENDIX A

### Los Angeles City Human Relations Commission Community Based Discussion Group Sessions Spring/Summer 1999

The mandate was to obtain two hearings from each of the fifteen council districts. However, where more than two organizations, in a given district, expressed an interest we allowed them to participate in phase one, hence the variation in the number of organizations listed below in the various districts.

#### **Council District 1**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 1:

Asian Youth Center	July 12, 1999
Youth Fair Chance	July 13, 1999

#### **Council District 2**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 2:

Sunland Tujunga Rotary Club	April 21, 1999
Business & Professional Women	May 17, 1999
Stonehurst Garden Club	May 25, 1999
Private Groups/Sherman Oaks HOA	June 1, 1999

#### **Council District 3**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 3:

Jewish Federation/SFV	June 17, 1999
Guadalupe Community Center	July 20, 1999

#### **Council District 4**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 4:

Democrats For Neighborhood Action	April 7, 1999
Hollywood United Methodist Church	April 18, 1999
Constitutional Rights Foundation	July 20, 1999

#### **Council District 5**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 5:

Sherman Oaks HOA	April 21, 1999
Leo Baeck Temple	March 25, 1999
Miracle Mile Lions Club	May 25, 1999
American Cancer Society	July 6, 1999

#### **Council District 6**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 6:

Pacific Area Police Captains	May 27, 1999
Asian American Drug Abuse Program	June 7, 1999
Venice Family Clinic	June 9, 1999
People Assisting The Homeless	June 14, 1999
Adat Shalom	July 13, 1999
Venice Community Housing	July 8, 1999
Cheviot Hill Senior Citizens Center	July 9, 1999
Marina Mar Vista Venice Democratic Club	July 21, 1999
Westchester/Private home spin off from Cheviot Hill Senior Center	July 22, 1999

#### **Council District 7**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 7:

YWCA/Hispanic Group	March 25, 1999
NOVA Toastmasters	April 6, 1999
Mission City Community Network Inc.	July 2, 1999

#### **Council District 8**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 8:

USC/Republicans	March 10, 1999
Crenshaw Senior Citizen Center	March 16, 1999
Alta Loma/Democrats	April 3, 1999
YWCA/African American Group	April 10, 1999
S. Cal. Korean College Student Ass.	April 10, 1999
Ronald Brown/Democrats	April 17, 1999
Delta Sigma Beta Sorority	May 23, 1999

#### **Council District 9**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 9:

Essayons/Toastmasters	March 11, 1999
City of Angels/Toastmasters	March 23, 1999
ARCO Toastmasters	March 31, 1999
City of Angels/Toastmasters	April 6, 1999
Masjid Felix Belal Islamic Center	April 18, 1999
American Indian Commission	April 20, 1999
LA Civic Center/Toastmasters	May 3, 1999
S. Cal. Gardeners Fed./Toastmasters	May 18, 1999
Estelle Van Meter Multipurpose Center	May 20, 1999
SEIU	May 22, 1999
Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple	May 23, 1999
YWCA San Pedro	July 14, 1999
Youth Fair Chance	July 13, 1999

**Council District 10**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 10:

Wilshire United Methodist Church	April	20, 1999
Korean Health Educ. Info. Res. Ctr	June	11, 1999
Claude Pepper Senior Center	June	17, 1999

**Council District 11**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 11:

West Area LAPD	March	10, 1999
Valley Beth Shalom	March	18, 1999
YWCA - Van Nuys	April	14, 1999
YWCA/Persian Group	April	19, 1999
West LA Police Advisory Board	April	27, 1999

**Council District 12**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 12:

Granada Hills Chamber of Commerce	June	9, 1999
Northridge Chamber of Commerce	July	9, 1999

**Council District 13**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 13:

Hollywood Center Multipurpose Center	June	29, 1999
Islamic Center of Southern California	July	2, 1999

**Council District 14**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 14:

MTA Toastmasters Club	March	23, 1999
MTA	March	31, 1999
Volunteers of America	March	9, 1999

**Council District 15**

The following meetings fall within the boundaries of district 15:

Watts Senior Citizens Center	May	27, 1999
Kaiser Permanente Learning Center	June	23, 1999
Beacon House Association	July	7, 1999
Harbor City/Harbor Gateway Ch. of Com.	July	16, 1999
Kaiser Permanente/Youths	July	23, 1999

Not in the Boundaries of the City of LA but great interest was shown:

The Rainbow Center	April	21, 1999
American Inst. of Parliamentarians	April	24, 1999