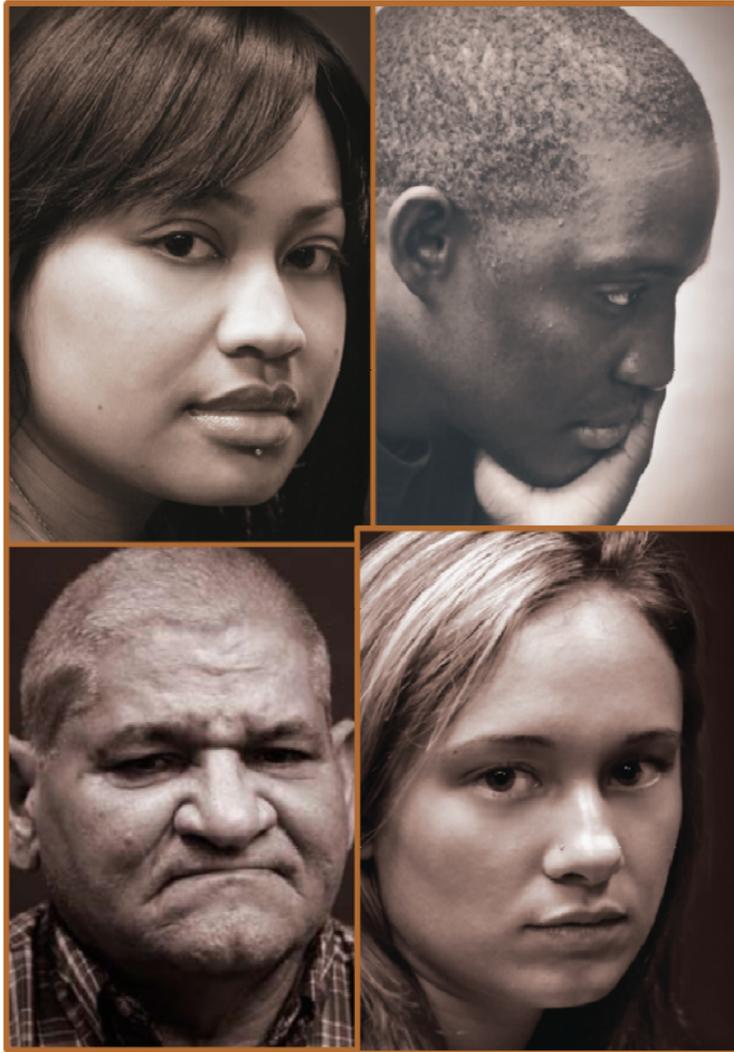


PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION



2009 ANNUAL REPORT

MAYOR DAVID N. CICILLINE
PROVIDENCE THE CREATIVE CAPITAL

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Melba Depeña
Executive Director



PHRC
PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

David N. Cicilline
Mayor

The Honorable David N. Cicilline
Mayor, City of Providence

The Honorable Members of the Providence City Council

Dear Mayor Cicilline and Members of the City Council:

We respectfully submit the Annual Report for the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) for FY 2008-2009, pursuant to Section 16-64 (K) of the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance. This report emphasizes the vital work that PHRC has done in the last year.

One of the City of Providence's strength is its tremendous wealth of diversity. As a result, we need to work together to enhance our values and attitudes towards this diversity. The goal is to create a culture of tolerance and acceptance of our neighbors, co-workers, employees, tenants or anyone whose opinions and values are different from our own. In this context, PHRC plays an important role in our City to protect individuals from discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, education and credit status.

PHRC continues to vigorously process complaints of discrimination and foster mutual understanding through our outreach & education curriculum. The purpose of our outreach and education program is to coordinate workshops and seminars quarterly.

The Commission and its staff remain dedicated to achieve our mission as we prevent and eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote justice, equality and respect among all residents of the City of Providence. The purpose of this report is to share with you the Commission's accomplishments and activities for this fiscal year.

We thank you for your continued support and leadership in this effort, including the allocation of the necessary funds to carry out our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Ann Keefe'.

Sister Ann Keefe
Vice-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melba Depeña'.

Melba Depeña
Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

The practice or policy of discrimination against individuals because of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, disability, age or country of ancestral origin, is a serious concern for the city of Providence. Such discrimination threatens the welfare of our citizens as it lessens their standard of living, reduces their ability to provide for their families, and undermines our ability to thrive as a diverse city. The PHRC strives to safeguard the rights of Providence residents to be free from discrimination, and works to foster a climate of respect for the many diverse communities that make our city strong.

The mission of the PHRC is twofold:

- To seek, investigate, mediate and/or adjudicate complaints of discrimination filed with the Commission and promote compliance with civil rights law.
- To promote, facilitate, and foster positive relationships among and between the diverse groups and communities within the city of Providence through outreach, education, training and community building activities.

This year has been an exciting year of growth and development for the PHRC, as the staff has worked diligently to fulfill its critical mission of reducing discrimination and improving community relations in the City of Providence. PHRC heard and adjudicated complaints of civil rights violations, and provided education and training to the community on a wide range of civil rights-related topics. Even with limited staff, the number of new cases filed with the Commission during this fiscal year was 42. In addition the Commission successfully resolved 12 new allegations of discrimination through mediation. Mediation interventions sometimes offer a resolution without the necessity of filing a complaint. In addition, the PHRC staff provides valuable service for the residents of Providence by responding to all inquiries (over 200 phone calls) from the public and referring non-jurisdictional cases.

What follows in this report are specifics about the work of the Commission including its work hearing complaints, providing educational workshops, outreaching to the community, and building organizational infrastructure.

COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

Established in 1963, the Providence Human Relations Commission investigates complaints of alleged discrimination in housing, employment, credit, education, and public accommodations, and promotes understanding among the City's diverse populations. If you feel you have been discriminated against because of your race, color, religion, age, gender, physical or mental disability, familial status, sexual orientation, nationality, or marital status please contact:

COMMISSIONERS

Sister Ann Keefe
PHRC Vice Chairperson
Saint Michael's Church

Maria Alvarado
Guatemalan Association of RI

Wendy Becker
Rhode Island College

Everett Brooks
Johnson & Wales University

Kenneth Brown
Community Activist

Marilyn Cepeda-Sánchez
Access Employment of RI

Sister Angela Daniels, C.P.
Assumption Church

Mary Dean
Retired

Padee Thao
GTECH Corporation

Raymond Watson
Mt. Hope Neighborhood Association

Donna Williams
Housing Network of RI

STAFF

Melba Depena
Executive Director

Janette Thomas
Investigator

Wanda Escobedo
Secretary

Olajumoke Akinrolabu, Esq.
Legal Counsel
Law Department

Special Thanks to:
Thomas P. Whitten and
Bishop Robert E. Farrow
who also served as
Commissioners during this
fiscal year.

INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In order to achieve the goal of the Commission more effectively, the staff was involved in numerous trainings over the course of the year.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (EEOC)

Boston Area Office

JFK Federal Building, Boston, MA

Entire PHRC staff attended this training

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is a federal agency responsible for enforcing employment discrimination laws. The Training Institute provides a variety of training to commissions to help them understand, and correct discrimination in the workplace. The training offered insightful and practical theories of discrimination, investigative interview, investigative techniques, circumstantial evidence, documentary evidence, testimony and review of federal laws.

Other Trainings:

- *Coalition of Human Rights Commissions--Fall Meeting*
- *EEOC Regional, State and Local Conference*
- *Introduction to Media and Communications*
- *Clarifying Your Mission, Vision and Purpose*
- *Financial Management*

ADJUDICATION OF COMPLAINTS

Any person aggrieved by an unlawful practice in violation of federal and state law covered under the city's anti-discrimination ordinance may contact the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) to file a petition. The Commission will commence an investigation after a petition has been completed and signed.

- When a complainant contacts the PHRC about an alleged discrimination, an intake form is completed by the administrative assistant.
- The intake form is then submitted to the PHRC investigator. The investigator meets with the complainant to discuss the case, get information, and explain the investigation & complaint process.
- The Executive Director then determines whether the case meets all of the requirements of the city's anti-discrimination ordinance. (Chapter 16, Article II Discrimination)
- If the case does not meet all of the requirements, the investigator may offer a mediation option or refer the complainant to another agency.
- If the case meets all requirements, a petition form is completed and signed by the complainant. Then the petition will be assigned a case number.
- The Executive Director notifies the respondent of the charge and respondent is asked for a written response.
- Thereafter, an investigation takes place, which may include fact finding meetings, site visits and interviews of all relevant parties/witnesses. Subpoenas may be issued by city council if necessary.
- At the conclusion of an investigation, the Commission will determine whether it is probable that an unlawful practice has been or is being engaged in by respondent. If so, the commission must attempt to encourage voluntary compliance with the city's anti-discrimination ordinance.
- If PHRC determines that probable cause does not exist to credit a charge of discrimination a notice will be sent to the complainant closing the case. The complainant may present additional evidence for reconsideration.
- If PHRC fails to effect the elimination of unlawful practice and to obtain voluntary compliance with the city's anti-discrimination ordinance the Commission may file a complaint and schedule a formal hearing.

FY 2009 STATISTICS

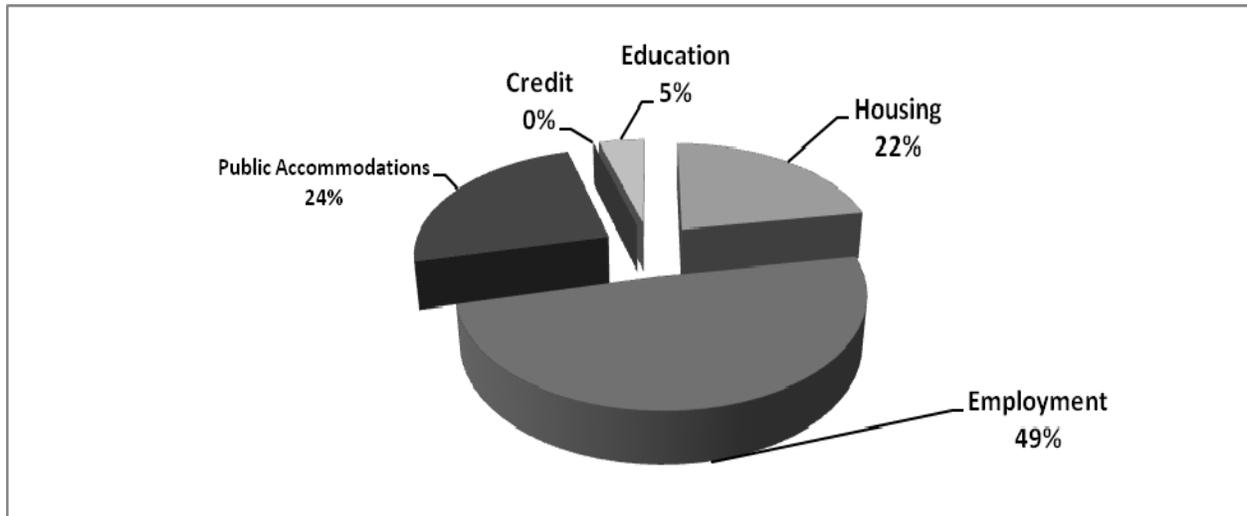
Overview of Status Disposition and Status of Complaints

Type	Number of Cases
Probable Cause	1
No Probable Cause	10
Out of Jurisdiction	4
Mediation	12
Withdrawal	1
Settlement	2
Open	8
Referred	6

OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS FILED FY 2009

Area	Race/ Ethnicity	Religion	Disability	Age	Marital Status	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation
Employment	14		5	1		1	1
Housing	4		2			1	
Public Accommodations	3		7				
Credit							
Education			1	1			

PERCENTAGE OF CASES BY DISCRIMINATION AREAS



SELECTED CASES

The following are case example of what the PHRC has investigated during the year. It as been a motivating second year with numerous cases from all walks of life. In order to preserve confidentiality, identifying information was omitted from the actual case.

- The complainant is a young Latino man alleged he was a victim of employment discrimination based on disability. Employed as a line cook, a position he loved, many times working over 40 hours a week constantly covering for co-workers, even working seven days consecutively. About six months into his job he became ill. He later found out he had contracted a very serious disease but one that would not interfere with his duty as a line cook. His doctor determined that to stabilize his health he needed to take two weeks off work. When the complainant asked the company for the time off he also informed them of his disease, they denied his request and terminated him.
- The complainant is an elder African American male alleged was victim of housing discrimination because he was disabled and African American. He claimed that the housing complex where he resides refused to make changes in his apartment to accommodate his disability. He was requesting a wider bathroom and kitchen, in order to fit his wheelchair around his apartment. During our investigation, we found that the Apartment Complex was in fact in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The man has received the services he requested and now lives in a newer handicapped accessible apartment.
- The complainant is an older Latino couple alleged they were victims of age discrimination. The couple went to a local adult literacy class to learn basic English. After completing the first half of the course they were not contacted to be part of the second phase. After waiting a few weeks they decided to contact the program director to enquire about the class. When PHRC contacted the Agency, they realized that they had made a mistake by not contacting the couple; they attributed the oversight to the fact that they were understaffed and had a long list of people waiting to take different class.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

This year, PHRC worked decisively to increase its educational outreach program. The goal is to provide free, quarterly workshops and seminars to the general public about issues related to inter-group relations, civil rights and human relations as well as the discrimination areas the PHRC investigates.



Thomas P. Whitten



Wendy Becker



Joe Fowlkes, Tom Whitten and Cliff Monteiro



Olayinka Oredugba

Training for Landlords:
Fair Housing Training For Landlords
August 28, 2008



Janette Thomas, Beatriz Perez and Wanda Escobedo attended the training.

This event was designed to inform new landlords about state and federal fair housing laws. The topics covered during this workshop were: defining fair housing, who is protected by the law, the proper way to select tenants, lead inspections and other safety issues that are important for landlords to keep in mind. Approximately 50 landlords attended.

Community Forum, September 25, 2008
The Foreclosure Crisis
Panel: Silvia Acevedo, Esdras Inirio and Emelda Benitez.



Partial view of landlords who attended the workshop.

This event was designed to provide information about foreclosures to Spanish speaking homeowners. We coordinated a panel of 4 HUD trained foreclosure counselors who presented their information in Spanish. The topics covered address the foreclosures process, the possibility of loan modification, how to avoid foreclosure and how and where to seek assistance. Approximately 180 people attended this event.

Community Breakfast, October 22, 2008

The Immigration Conversation

Guest Speaker: Dr. Pablo Rodriguez



The purpose of this forum was to explore the causes, benefits, challenges and impact of immigration. PHRC believes that it is important to begin a dialogue about immigration and to examine ways in which we can work together on this issue. PHRC collected written responses to the questions posted during the discussion and issued a report as a result of this event. The report was disseminated to the community including the recommendations that were discussed among attendees. If you would like a copy of this report, please call our office at 351-0475. Approximately 90 people were present. This event was broadcasted simultaneously on the air in Spanish by Latino Public Radio.

Community Luncheon, February 19, 2009

Forum: Improving Race Relations in Providence

Panel: Joseph Fowlkes, Victor Mendoza, Olayinka Oredugba; Hanna Resseger, and Molly Soum. Event moderated by Dennis Langley.



Panel and moderator

Subsequent to the election of President Obama, there has been much discussion about what the election of the first African American president means to race relations and racial equality in the United States. In this context, community leaders and Providence residents gathered to discuss how race relations can be improved in the City of Providence. The purpose of this workshop was to take advantage of that renewed sense of hope with regards to racial justice in the hopes of seizing the opportunity to establish a dialogue and bring more attention to this important and challenging topic. More than 100 people attended this forum.

Community Breakfast, April 28, 2009
Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation

Panel: Dr. Toby Ayers, Mr. Rodney Davis and Pastor Matthew Kai.
Moderated by Commissioner Wendy Becker



Mr. Rodney Davis, Dr. Toby Ayers and Pastor Matthew Kai.

This workshop explored the question if sexual orientation issues fit in the civil rights agenda. The following issues were addressed: full equality for gay, bisexual and lesbians, equal marriage rights for same sex couples, the role of religious groups who advocate for civil rights, and how can we help set an agenda that protects everyone's civil and human rights. Approximately 60 people attendance.

Call the Providence Human Relations Commission for 2010 Trainings and Workshops.

PHRC IN THE NEWS

The following pages provide a sampling of the Commission's coverage in the media for this fiscal year.



Boards find bias likely; storeowner apologizes

David C. Richardson also agrees to donate \$500 as a result of his confrontation with two Spanish-speaking customers at his Providence plumbing-supply business.

BY NAREN LEE DINEER
PROVIDENCE — Providence storeowner David C. Richardson has signed a public apology for demanding to see a customer's Social Security card last March after hearing the customer speak Spanish with a friend. Richardson signed the apology and agreed to give \$500 to charity after two human-rights commissions found probable cause that he discriminated against the customer.

José Genao, a state worker and U.S. citizen who brought the discrimination claims against Richardson, said Richardson told him during that encounter, "I can call ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] anytime I see an illegal immigrant," and "I can make a citizen's arrest." Richardson said he suspected Genao and his friend might be illegal immigrants, because "I think that the majority of people who don't speak English in Rhode Island — at least 91 percent or more — are illegal aliens."

Genao said he's pleased that Richardson signed an apology, and hopes it will serve to caution other storeowners against "intimidation" and racial discrimination.

Richardson says he signed the apology "just to get it over and done with," and when suspicion in the findings.

The Providence Journal

FROM PAGE A1

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

Apology

Continued from Page A1

get it over and done with," and when suspicion in the findings. The Rhode Island Commission also for Human Rights found probable cause to believe that Richardson broke state law (Title II, Chapter 24-1) of the Rhode Island Human and Public Places Act by discriminating against Genao on the basis of ethnic origin. Recently, the Providence Human Relations Commission found probable cause that Richardson violated a city anti-discrimination ordinance during that incident.

The encounter during the sale of an air conditioning unit, made national headlines. Richardson's story, Rhode Island Public Access, has since closed.

Genao, a native of the Dominican Republic who speaks fluent English, subsequently brought his claims. Genao said he first met a Dominican worker and a U.S. citizen, close to his in-store shop. Richardson has said that he only asked Genao's friend — whom he referred to as "the one who wasn't speaking English" — to show him Social Security card. The probable cause findings indicate otherwise.

The apology and charitable

donations were agreed upon after mediation by the Providence Human Relations Commission. Meanwhile, the Rhode Island Human Rights Commission case was closed out after Richardson requested a jury trial. He now said he cannot afford one.

Richardson's statement references an earlier acknowledgment that he has asked other employers for Social Security numbers, in similar situations. Genao returned the statement to the Journal, along with documents from the two commissions showing that they had found probable cause.

In it, Richardson offers a public apology to anyone who I have asked for a Social Security number in the past. My lack of knowledge about public accommodations law led me to see the wrong method to view the dialogue about illegal immigrants in our nation.

"I now know that it is not legal to ask anyone for a Social Security number. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage any business owners out to make the same mistake I did." The statement adds, "Immigration is an important issue to me and I had no intention of violating anyone's rights. My ultimate goal was to begin a dialogue about illegal immigrants and its role and management in the state of Rhode Island. I apologize for any

misunderstandings I may have caused." Genao said, "I'm pleased with it. My message got where it seemed to go, to make him [Richardson] knowledgeable that what he did was wrong, and just to agree not to harm who is trying to make the same method as he did — by trying to intimidate people."

Genao said, "I wasn't doing it for the money." He said Richardson was given the \$500 checks that by agreement will be distributed to the Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy (CHCPA) in Providence, Progress Latino in Central Falls, Casa de Dios (Cabrera) and St. Terence de Jesús Church in Providence, and to Rhode Island.

Richardson attended an anti-apoptosis conference, saying he signed the statement because "I was tired of being in the dialogue. I wanted to be on the other side."

He said, "It appears I broke a law." He said, "I do not agree at all with the probable cause findings. He said those were based on the allegation that I asked Jose for his Social Security card, which is completely incorrect." He explained that he asked Genao's friend — not Genao — to show him a Social Security card. He said he was only "trying to create a dialogue about alien with the two men."



A national Latino clergy group and Hispanic Workers Association of Rhode Island held a news conference with David C. Richardson's Providence store in March.

Richardson called the findings "a rash judgment, done in the same way as a hangman case." "Told of Richardson's remarks, Genao said last evening, "I am pleased that he signed the paper, and whatever he says from now on, I will not believe one word... I have no regrets. I don't do this just for me. I did it for all the other people who couldn't say anything to him, maybe because of the language barrier, or maybe because of intimidation." He added, "It's beside the point, whatever he says from now on, I

Genao said he continued to actively support "people that see me on the street, they comment and shake hands and say 'it's good, someone like me stood up for his rights.'"

Richardson / PHC/12/08

LA COMUNIDAD — COMMUNITY

El Latino Expresso, September, 19, 2008

Comisión de Relaciones Humanas de Providence invita a conferencia sobre ejecución hipotecaria o "Foreclosure"

PROVIDENCE-R.I. Con motivo de la celebración del Mes de la Herencia Hispana, la Comisión de Relaciones Humanas, invita a toda la comunidad a la charla de orientación sobre La Crisis de ejecuciones hipotecarias o "Foreclosure" el jueves 25 de septiembre a las 5:30 de la tarde en el Elmwood Community Center del 155 de la calle Niagara en Providence.

Reciba información de cómo evitar perder su casa y cómo obtener los beneficios

que ofrece la ciudad para la compra y reparación de casas.

Este evento es auspiciado por: Academia Internacional de Baseball; Comisión de Relaciones Humanas de Providence; Fundación Doña Teresa; HUDO; Internacional Modeling and Dance Academy and Visión Evangélica.

Para más información sobre este evento llame a Emelda al 524-9350 o Melba al 351-0475.

The Providence American, March 11, 2009

Social Happenings



PHRC IN THE NEWS

The Providence American
Vol. 23 No. 4 May 14, 2009
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www.providence.com

PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION Hosts Community Breakfast
By Dempsey Neal

"Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation: Where does it fit in the Civil Rights Agenda?"

On April 28th the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) hosted a community breakfast and discussion on the issue of "Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation: Where Does it fit in the Civil Rights Agenda". A panel consisting of Dr. Toby Agnew, Co-Chair, Civil Rights, Escudafalco, Rodney Davis, Chair, Rhode Island, Fr. Peter Matthew Kal, Pastor, Westside Tabernacle Baptist Church and Moderator Wendy Becker, Commission PHRC, providing opening statements to the audience addressing: 1) How it will equality for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people part of the larger civil rights agenda, 2) Should this include endorsement of equal marriage rights for same-sex couples and 3) What role should religious groups who fight for civil rights have in setting the agenda. The discussion was rich and the passion in the room was thick enough to feel with a knife during the questions and answer segment. However, it was clear that religion and the issue and a tremendous knowledge on each of these issues was held at the Providence Community Center on 4/28. There were other sessions last past. This event is well held was well attended and a tremendous success in the room.

Melba DePeña, Director of the Providence Human Relations Commission should be commended for bringing human relations issues to the citizens of Providence through open discussion and using a proven tool against discrimination.

PHRC is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to the promotion of human rights and the elimination of discrimination. The Commission is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic organization that is committed to the promotion of human rights and the elimination of discrimination. The Commission is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic organization that is committed to the promotion of human rights and the elimination of discrimination.

5 Questions to: Melba Depeña



1. ¿Qué es el PHRC?
El PHRC es una comisión que se dedica a promover los derechos humanos y a eliminar la discriminación. La Comisión es una organización multi-racial y multi-étnica que se dedica a promover los derechos humanos y a eliminar la discriminación.

2. ¿Cuál es el propósito de la Comisión?
El propósito de la Comisión es promover los derechos humanos y a eliminar la discriminación. La Comisión es una organización multi-racial y multi-étnica que se dedica a promover los derechos humanos y a eliminar la discriminación.

3. ¿Qué es el problema de la discriminación basada en la orientación sexual?
La discriminación basada en la orientación sexual es un tipo de discriminación que se basa en la orientación sexual de una persona. Este tipo de discriminación puede ocurrir en el trabajo, en la escuela, en el alquiler de una vivienda, etc.

4. ¿Qué rol tiene el PHRC en la lucha contra la discriminación basada en la orientación sexual?
El PHRC tiene un rol importante en la lucha contra la discriminación basada en la orientación sexual. La Comisión puede ayudar a las personas que han sido discriminadas a obtener justicia y a promover cambios en las leyes y políticas que protegen a las personas contra la discriminación.

5. ¿Qué consejo le da a las personas que han sido discriminadas?
Mi consejo es que las personas que han sido discriminadas no se desanimen. Deben buscar apoyo y trabajar con la Comisión para obtener justicia y promover cambios en las leyes y políticas que protegen a las personas contra la discriminación.

No. 398 • Jueves, Octubre 9, 2008 • Año IX

Siglo 21

Educación a familias sobre ese problema Ejecuciones hipotecarias

Franky Beron Siglo 21

PROVIDENCE, R. I. Con el propósito de que menos familias en el Estado sean afectadas por la ya conocida crisis hipotecaria o "foreclosure" que afecta a toda la nación, la Comisión de Relaciones Humanas de Providence (PHRC), en colaboración con Hispanic United Development Organization (HUIDO), organizó en inglés un panel sobre cómo evitar caer en un proceso de ejecución hipotecaria, en estos momentos tan difíciles en que se encuentra la economía.

En la charla, que tuvo lugar en el Elmwood Community Center en Providence, el pasado jueves 25 de septiembre, los asistentes recibieron informaciones desde cuales opciones disponibles para resolver la amenaza de pérdida de casa, cómo proseguir cuando se recibe notificación sobre la ejecución hipotecaria de su casa para tomar decisiones acertadas, cómo evitar evasión de su tal préstamo para determinar el tipo de intervención que el propietario necesita, las mismas fueron dictadas por los panelistas Silvia Acevedo, consejera de viviendas de Community Works, Lidia Baró, consejera de Viviendas de Acorn Housing Corporation, y Melba DePeña, directora ejecutiva de PHRC.

De igual forma, durante el panel, donde participaron más de un centenar de hispanos, se abordó sobre los recursos disponibles para personas que se encuentran en esta difícil situación, que ha afectado a muchos latinos de la ciudad de Providence, "usted tiene a su disposición personas entrenadas en ejecución hipotecaria, que le pueden aconsejar a usted para hablar con su banco" aseguró Silvia Acevedo.

"Cada día son más las familias que están enfrentando situaciones muy difíciles y que están a punto de perder sus casas. Y lo que es peor, existen personas sin escrupulos que quieren aprovechar esta situación para sacar provecho. Para nosotros la mejor opción es la "intermediación", señaló DePeña.

En el panel, llevado a cabo por iniciativa de Melba DePeña y Evelyn Beron, presidenta de HUIDO, a los presentes se les explicó qué hacer ante una crisis hipotecaria: no ignorar el problema, que hacer si tiene problemas con los pagos de su hipoteca, y cuáles son sus derechos hipotecarios.

RHODE ISLAND 17

Uno de los participantes del panel se dirige al público en ocasión de intervenir haciendo preguntas para aclarar sus dudas acerca de la crisis hipotecaria.



PHRC

PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION





Dennis Langley



Victor Mendoza



Michelle Duso



PHRC
PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION



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PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Established in 1963, The Providence Human Relations Commission investigates complaints of alleged discrimination in housing, employment, education and public accomodation, while promoting understanding among the City's diverse population.

If you feel you have been discriminated against because of your race, color, religion, age, gender, physical or mental disability, familial status, sexual orientation/gender identity, country of origin or marital status please contact us.

Discrimination is illegal...

(401) 351-0475

P

David N. Cicilline
Mayor

Melba Depeña
Executive Director



PHRC
PROVIDENCE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION