



County of Onondaga  
Office of Diversity and Inclusion

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**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

August 16, 2023 ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

**\*\*\*Draft: pending approval\*\*\***

**COMMISSIONERS:**

- |                                   |                           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>_Hassina Adams</b>             | <b>_Paul Harvey</b>       |
| <b>_Bishop H. Bernard Alex</b>    | <b>_Agnes McCray</b>      |
| <b>_Samia Al-Fareh</b>            | <b>_Liam O'Connor</b>     |
| <b>_Mbonimpa Banabas</b>          | <b>_Lauren Rosenstein</b> |
| <b>_Rev. Roosevelt Baums</b>      | <b>_Leo Sanchez</b>       |
| <b>_Rasheada Caldwell (Chair)</b> | <b>_Ryan Smith</b>        |
| <b>_Chris Gilkes</b>              | <b>_Mia Wade</b>          |

**Absent:** Mbonimpa Banabas, Chairperson Rasheada Caldwell, Chris Gilkes, Lauren Rosenstein, Leo Sanchez and Ryan Smith.

**Virtually:** Hassina Adams, Samia Al-Fareh, Liam O'Connor and Mia Wade.

**In-Person:** Bishop H. Bernard Alex, Rev. Roosevelt Baums, Paul Harvey and Agnes McCray.

**County staff present:** CDO Monica Williams and Exec. Dir. of HR Montanette Murphy

**Community Members present:** Jackie LaSonde, Alphonso Davis, Anni Bellows.

**Opening:** Meeting began at 5:40 – Meeting was in-person and also held via Zoom.

**Introductions and Welcome:** Montanette Murphy ODI office and Chief Diversity Officer Monica Williams.

**Chair's Report:** None – No report submitted by Chairperson Rasheada Caldwell.

**Administrator's Report:**

- ODI office will begin interviewing for a new Human Rights Specialist; Johanna Sellers resigned July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- Dina Montes, Communication Specialist, from the NYS Division of Human Rights invited Onondaga County Human Rights Commissioners to join the state DHR at Great New York State Fair Booth.
- Division of Human Rights asks whether the Onondaga County/Syracuse HRC has a youth initiative.
- Pride Parade at the State Fair. Who's marching? Let our office know.
- Montanette gave a National Night Out round up.

**Discussion: J-E School Board** – Commissioners discussed attending the August 23<sup>rd</sup> school board meeting to emphasize their support for the two J-E students who were racially harassed and mistreated. Commissioners commented on the August 9, 2023 package from Superintendent James Froio and the school board. Included in the package was the contents of the school district’s implicit bias training for administrators and staffers. The package also included the district’s new Code of Character, Conduct and Support in draft form. Mr. Froio stated that the final draft of the Code of Conduct would be completed very soon and in time for the August 23, 2023 public comment period during the J-E school board meeting.

Among the comments from Commissioners:

1. Code of Conduct doesn’t delve into racial bias and racial discrimination. The Code of Conduct should address intersectionality, cultural awareness, disability training, and it should include attainable Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals.
2. The topic of reaching out to legal counsel again was discussed.
3. Commissioners want to know what steps are being taken by the district to restore and fix the racist encounters and harassment the two students endured.
4. Commissioners were reassured that they are charged and have permission and authority to address such matters as those within the J-E school district.
5. It was decided the Commission would write a follow up letter to the superintendent’s August 9, 2023 letter/package acknowledging that the measures taken by the district addressed the social and emotional injuries to the young students.

**Public Comment period:**

Jackie Lasonde and Alphonso Davis spoke about the number of families who are homeless because of the lead crisis in our community, specifically the city of Syracuse. Lasonde is going to provide the names and properties of those families who need help and Monica will follow up with the county DSS and other officials. Anni Bellows spoke a few minutes about a Food Justice symposium that is set to take place in 2024.

**Meeting ended at 7:05 p.m.**

*Minutes submitted by Montanette Murphy on August 17, 2023.*