

# Kentucky Commission On Human Rights

Protector of Civil Rights. Voice for Equality. Catalyst for Positive Change.

## Human Rights Report

### Complaints high in 2008

Discrimination complaints during the 2008 reporting year (July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008), were high for the second year in a row. The commission received 421 discrimination complaints last year coming in second to the 48-year agency high of 423 complaints in 2007. The report was released in December.

Cases alleging discrimination based on race and color, the protected class most often listed in complaints, have decreased in the last 10 years. There were 219 cases alleging discrimination based on race and color in 1998, while in 2008, complaints alleging race and color discrimination appeared 158 times.

The highest increase in the last five years has been with the protected class of disability; 46 disability cases occurred during 2003 and 99 cases in 2008.

Commission officials believe one factor causing the raised number of complaints is public awareness. As education has reached into the state population, "Kentuckians with disabilities are starting to challenge owners of restaurants, retail stores and rental property, as well as employers," Commission Executive Director John J. Johnson said. "Providers need to bring their facilities and policies into compliance with these laws that guarantee equal opportunity," he said.

According to the US Census Bureau American Community Survey three-year estimate of 2005-2007, Kentucky has one of the highest disability rates

in the nation. Among Kentuckians age five and above, 21.2 percent claim at least one disability. The national average is 15.1 percent. The report is online at the commission website: [www.kchr.ky.gov](http://www.kchr.ky.gov).



### Status of African Americans in Kentucky

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights released a report, Status of African Americans in Kentucky, at the February Black History Month event in the Capitol Rotunda in Frankfort.

Based on statistics from a variety of reports and sources, the commission produced the paper to encapsulate statistics on major issues that demonstrate the remaining results of past and continued racism in the state.

Executive Director Johnson noted the election of the first US African American president "marks an almost indescribable triumph over the struggles and heartaches endured by people who worked so hard to gain civil rights." Nevertheless, he urged, "This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or taking the tranquilizing drug of gradualism."

The paper cites statistics like these:

- Results of the 2008 Democratic Primary exit polls show 20 percent of Kentucky voters considered race to be a major factor in voting for a candidate;
- Census statistics revealed that 15 percent of white Kentuckians live in

poverty compared to 30 percent of black Kentuckians;

- 67 percent of white Kentucky families own homes compared to only 43.16 percent who are black Kentucky homeowners;

- While African Americans make up approximately 7.5 percent of the state population, African American children account for 43 percent of the total amount of children in public assistance programs;

- In the Louisville area alone, African Americans die from stroke 66 percent more often than do whites, 29 percent more often from heart disease, and 25 percent more often from cancer. These figures reflect a national trend. The report is on our website at [www.kchr.ky.gov](http://www.kchr.ky.gov).

### Complaint draws public attention in Paducah



Paducah Television Channel Six aired this scene in February of Commission Managing Attorney Morgan Ransdell as he helped Paducah Police Officer Rene Long fill out a discrimination complaint against the police alleging Long was denied promotion to detective because of his race. Paducah television and newspapers drew attention to the complaint in stories that said Long has been an officer for 19 years and ranks third in departmental seniority. The commission conducts impartial and neutral investigations of all complaints.

# Annual Martin Luther King motorcade and memorial service

The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Motorcade and Rally in honor of the late Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday was held on Monday, January 19. The service began in the morning with Kentucky Human Rights Executive Director, John J. Johnson, laying a wreath in memory of Civil Rights activist Louis Coleman Jr. who died last year. The memorial began in downtown Louisville near the federal offices on Martin Luther King Place.

"Reverend Louis Coleman was instrumental in getting the downtown area called Federal Place renamed to Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. Place," George Burney, president of Pride Inc. said. "This was just one of many efforts during the last 40 years by Rev. Coleman to promote equality and civil rights in Kentucky," he said. Burney has organized and led the motorcade and memorial service in recognition of Dr. King for 37 years.

Coleman was a longtime friend to the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights executive director. "Louis, like Martin Luther King, left a legacy to young people of speaking out and standing up for what you believe is right, for the people who need an outstretched hand, and for the good of society," Johnson said.

Following the laying of the wreath was the motorcade line-up that began at 28<sup>th</sup> and Broadway. This year's grand marshals were Lizabeth Abramson, Kentucky Supreme Court Justice, Reverend James Tennyson, and Angelisia Simone Bright. The day filled

with remembrance ended with the rally and memorial service at the Hill Street Missionary Baptist Church.

## Commissioner appointments

Gov. Steve Beshear appointed four commissioners to the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights on October 2, 2008. The commissioners replaced members whose terms were expired. The commission has 11 members and the newest commissioners' terms will expire September 12, 2011.

Samuel R. Coleman Jr. of Middlesboro, Ky., represents the state at large. He replaces Henry L. Blythe of Mayfield, Ky. Coleman is the director of the Small Business Development Center at the Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College.

Virginia L. Burton of Lexington, Ky., represents the state at large and replaces William H. Turner of Lexington. She is a graduate of the University of Kentucky with a degree in English. She is a former political campaign coordinator. She is presently a free lance writer and Fayette County school substitute teacher.

Governor Beshear appointed George W. Stinson of Louisville, Ky., the chair of the commission. Chair Stinson represents the First Supreme Court District and replaced Betty J. Dobson of Paducah. He followed Commissioner Curtis as chair. He is a real estate developer of SLS Management LLC in Louisville.

Commissioner Curtis continues to serve, representing the Fifth Supreme Court District of Frankfort.

Timothy W. Thomas of Madisonville, Ky., represents the Fourth Supreme Court District and replaced Thurmond Coleman

Sr. who retired from the commission in September after 16 years. Thomas is president of the Hopkins County United way and chair of the Hopkins County Joint Planning Commission.

Executive Director Johnson thanked outgoing Chair Curtis for his excellent service. He thanked the retiring members for their service and welcomed the new chair and commissioners at the October Commission Board meeting in Louisville.

## Fair Housing training in Campbellsville

The commission gave training on fair housing at the University of Campbellsville on Feb. 27. Approximately 25 people participated; they represented local human rights commissions, housing providers, the Center for Women and Families, fair housing agencies, state NAACP chapters, and local real estate agents. The commission produced the event to help people who work in housing fields better assist their clients when dealing with discrimination issues.

Discrimination in the area of housing continues to occur across the state. In 2007, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reported that people filed 116 housing discrimination complaints in Kentucky. Most of the complaints alleged discrimination on the bases of disability, race and familial status.

Experts like Morgan Ransdell, managing attorney of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, and Arthur Crosby, executive director of the Lexington Fair Housing Council, were on hand to answer questions and address concerns.

The commission chose Campbellsville

## Kentucky Commission on Human Rights

John J. Johnson, Executive Director

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as the location of this particular training because of the strong partnerships that have developed with Campbellsville University and Greater United Campbellsville. Dr. John Chowning has helped the commission foster a climate that seeks to allow all people to thrive in the Campbellsville region, free from discrimination. The commission credits the success of the recent training to the university.



## ***Fann named as Covington Human Rights Commission Chair***

The Covington Human Rights Commission has undergone a recent change in leadership. Charles D. King, who was chair of the Covington Human Rights Commission for a number of years and a member for a decade, stepped down from his position of the nine-member panel to concentrate on his position as head of the Covington Board of Adjustments.

King was instrumental in helping Covington pass its Fairness Ordinance in 2003, which resulted in protection in housing, employment and public accommodations based on sexual orientation, a first for Northern Kentucky cities. The ordinance also increased the Covington Human Rights Commission from five members to nine, including a designation for a youth commissioner.

Known for his style of building coalitions, King continues his work by volunteering with various human rights events. He was succeeded by Reverend Charles Fann, pastor of Crucifixion Baptist Church in Covington. Rev. Fann is known as a leader of the African American

community in Covington and has been a member of the Covington Human Rights Commission for over two years.

## **More Local Commission News**

### *Covington, Kentucky*

The Covington Human Rights and the state commissions are working with The Cincinnati Reds to set the agenda for Major League Baseball's Civil Rights Weekend June 19-June 21, 2009, in Cincinnati. The event will feature a Civil Rights Roundtable discussion on June 19 at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. The Civil Rights Game will be played on June 20 in Cincinnati between the Reds and The Chicago White Sox. President Obama has been invited to the game but it is uncertain whether he will attend. Covington Mayor Denny Bowman has asked our Field Supervisor John C.K. Fisher and the Covington Human Rights Commission to get Northern Kentucky civil rights leaders to participate in the event.

### *Paris, Kentucky*

The Paris Human Rights Commission is working with about 50 middle school students to document their vision of civil and human rights through pictures. Debra Pate, the chair of the Paris Human Rights Commission, has secured free cameras for the students to take pictures of people, places and buildings in the community. The pictures were displayed at a local photography shop in March and the event was attended by the students, their parents, teachers and civic and business leaders. John C.K. Fisher and former Covington Human Rights Commission Chair Charles King spoke to the students on Feb. 26 and gave them background information on civil and human rights leaders in Kentucky. Mr. King also spoke

to the students about historic buildings in the area. Ms. Pate said the program was designed to get students involved in civil rights through their art.

### *Shelbyville, Kentucky*

We are pleased to announce that the Shelbyville, Simpsonville, and Shelby County Commission on Human Rights has been reactivated. We proudly recognize our representative, Glenda Green, for her excellent work on helping to bring this about. The commissioners were sworn in during February at which time they received training by Ms. Green. In March, Gary L. Walls was made chair. Mayors Thomas Hardesty and Steve Eden along with County Judge Executive Rob Rothenburger are very excited about the reactivation of the local human rights commission. "The selected commissioners represent diversified backgrounds and bring with them a wealth of talent and experience," Rothenburger said.

## **Report on Kentucky Women**

In recognition of the Women's History Month of March, the commission released a report, "Overview of Women in Kentucky in 2009." It was compiled from a number of studies and census statistics. Women in the United States make 77 cents for every dollar that men make, but in Kentucky, the average is 4 cents less with women making 74 cents to the male dollar. In Kentucky, men with bachelor's degrees on average make nearly 51 percent more than females with the same degree. Women account for 60 percent of Kentuckians, aged 25 and up, who live in poverty. Kentucky is ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation regarding women's economic progress. Only 15.2 percent of all elected officials in Kentucky are women, the largest segment of the population at over 51 percent. See the report on our website at [www.kchr.ky.gov](http://www.kchr.ky.gov).

## **Board of Commissioners**

Chair George W. Stinson, Louisville . Henry Curtis, Frankfort . Robert Asseo, Florence . Timothy W. Thomas, Madisonville  
Virginia L. Burton, Lexington . Samuel R. Coleman Jr., Middlesboro . George McDade Staples, Pineville . Robert S. Peters, Lexington  
Alma L. Randolph Patton, Owensboro . Duane Bonifer, Greensburg . Ann Newman, Ashland

# Human Rights Report

## Kentucky Commission on Human Rights

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### Citizens' Advocacy Hearing in March

The commission held its first citizen advocacy hearing of 2009 on March 18, which focused on issues Kentucky women face. The panel discussion was held at the United Way Conference Room in downtown Louisville and featured Eleanor Jordan of the Kentucky Commission on Women, Joy Hoskins of the Kentucky Department for Public Health, and Carol Young of Kentucky Refugee Ministries. Over 100 people attended. This was our best attendance, yet, at an advocacy hearing, a project the commission started last year. Many of the audience members were women students who traveled from a Shelbyville school with their instructors after seeing the event listed in the Courier-Journal calendar. "We thought it a great idea to take time out of our classes to come learn about the issues we deal with as women in Kentucky," said one student. "It's not always easy," another woman said.

### Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians Curlee Brown

On February 18, the commission announced the 45<sup>th</sup> member of the Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians educational poster series. The commission unveiled the poster of Curlee Brown Sr. of Paducah, Ky., in the Kentucky Capitol Rotunda during the Annual Black History Month Celebration. Over 100 people attended.

"Curlee Brown spent his life fighting to end segregation and discrimination," Executive Director Johnson said, "and his work contributed greatly toward many of the freedoms and opportunities that we in Kentucky can enjoy, today."



At the Unveiling

Brown was an early pioneer and fearless warrior in the struggle for human rights. During an era of unrest and turbulence, before and after the passages of the US Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Kentucky Civil Rights Act in 1966, he led many efforts in Paducah and throughout the state to integrate public facilities and encourage inclusiveness and equal rights for African Americans. He won the lawsuit he initiated to integrate Paducah Junior College, where his son, Curlee Brown Jr., later became the school's first African American graduate.

Curlee Brown Sr. served as president of the Paducah Branch of the NAACP for over 30 years until his death. He is well known for acting as the steady hand that helped hold together the NAACP in Kentucky during periods of various kinds of pressures and conflicts.

Once asked, "What do you want?" his response was simple: "I want the same things you want; a good job, a good education for my children, a car, and a nice home." He died on November 18, 1976.