



2024

Annual Report



PHILADELPHIA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

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As we approach the upcoming year, it is vitally important that we fortify our commitment to fighting discrimination, ensuring equality, and building strong communities.

Our mission remains steadfast: to amplify the voices of those too often unheard, confront systemic inequities, and protect the rights and dignity of every individual. In the months ahead, we will deepen our engagement with the community by strengthening programs and services that directly address their needs, broadening our advocacy to confront emerging challenges, and investing in initiatives that empower individuals and families to overcome obstacles and succeed.

Transparency and accountability will continue to guide our work. The trust placed in us is a responsibility I hold with the utmost seriousness, and it is a privilege to serve alongside those who share this vision. This is not a journey any of us can take alone. True progress comes through the collective efforts of individuals, organizations, and communities united in purpose.

To everyone who has supported this mission — through your time, resources, advocacy, or simply by believing in the possibility of change — thank you. Your commitment inspires and strengthens me to keep pushing forward.

As we look ahead, let us remain united in our shared belief that justice, dignity, and opportunity are not just ideals but promises we can fulfill together. Here's to continuing the work and building a brighter, more equitable future for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kia Ghee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kia" and last name "Ghee" clearly distinguishable.

Kia Ghee, Esq.
Executive Director
Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations

Kia Ghee, Esq.,
Executive Director

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Cherelle Parker
Mayor

Kia Ghee, Esq.
Executive Director

Administration:

Satteria Kersey, *Public Information Officer*;
Jennifer Hayes, *Administrative Officer*;
Shaunda Perkins

Central Intake and

Fair Housing: Alison deMedeiros, Esq., *Deputy City Solicitor*;
Rosemary Branigan, *Supervisor*; Lateefa Boone; Yomaris Castro-Olmeda; Alexis Enlow; Michael Fontain; Kyle Fraiser; Evelyn Graves; Belinda Holguin; Brenda Madera; Jorge Pagan; Libertu Pastor-Bey

Compliance Division:

Pamela Gwaltney, Esq., *Deputy Director*;
Karen Forman, Esq., *Principal Assistant*;
Miranda Branch, *Supervisor*; Lynette McClain, *Supervisor*;
Karla Acosta-Pizarro; Monica Gonzalez; Adriana Iraci; Alexander Rudolph; Anthony Table; Adrienne Stokes; Abigail Su; Alexandra Williams

Community Relations

Division: Randy Duque, *Deputy Director*; Shawna Holts, *Supervisor*;
Carlos Aviles-Marcano; Chanese Drinks; David Oliver; Bunrath Math; Tierra Thompson

WHO WE ARE

The **Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR)** is the city's official civil rights agency, dedicated to enforcing anti-discrimination laws and fostering equity and equality. PCHR achieves this by educating residents, schools, and community organizations about their legal rights and protections, mediating disputes, and actively promoting goodwill throughout Philadelphia's communities.

The **Fair Housing Commission (FHC)** is committed to ensuring that renters have safe, secure living spaces and that landlords comply with housing laws. We believe fair and equitable rental housing benefits everyone, making Philadelphia a stronger and more vibrant community.

Equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment, housing, and public accommodations are essential for Philadelphia's success. In addressing the city's challenges, we must welcome diverse ideas, perspectives, and attitudes to foster growth and unity.

This report highlights key programs and activities facilitated by PCHR and FHC in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, which covers a period from July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024. Over the past year, the Commissioners and staff of the PCHR and the FHC have initiated and participated in numerous programs that foster neighborhood cooperation and bring people together in greater understanding.

WHAT WE DO



implement and uphold civil rights laws while actively resolving inter-group conflicts throughout the city



deliver educational programs to promote equal rights and opportunities for all Philadelphians

investigate discriminatory practices by conducting public hearings to gather information and share findings with the community

OUR MISSION

PCHR is the City's official civil rights agency. The Commission's mission is to fight discrimination, ensure equality, and build strong communities. PCHR enforces an important set of laws that prevent discrimination and promote equality. The PCHR works to: enforce anti-discrimination laws, especially the City's Fair Practices Ordinance; administer the "Fair Chance Hiring" law that prevents discrimination against people with criminal records; investigate complaints of discrimination and violations of civil rights laws; resolve community conflicts through dialogue and other dispute resolution methods; and educate the public on their legal rights and responsibilities.

OUR HISTORY

Established in 1951 under the City Charter, the Commission is the quasi-judicial agency empowered by the City to enforce its civil rights laws and to deal with all matters of inter-group conflict within the City. The Commission has the authority to receive and investigate complaints, may initiate its own investigation of practices of discrimination, and may hold public hearings for purposes of investigation and to make the findings public.

The Commission also has the power to compel the attendance of witnesses and to compel the production of documents. The Commission is further mandated to institute and conduct educational programs to promote the equal rights and opportunities of all Philadelphians. The Commission's Dispute Resolution Program provides mediation, conciliation, counseling, and referral services to neighbors and others who have ongoing conflicts.

Established in 1993, the City's Fair Housing Commission (FHC) addresses unfair rental practices and other landlord-tenant disputes. The Commission has the power to hold hearings and conduct investigations in connection with any unfair rental practice upon complaint or upon its own initiative.



HOW WE DO IT

PCHR is composed of nine Commissioners who the Mayor of Philadelphia appoints. The Commissioners are the governing and adjudicatory body of PCHR. They support the agency in establishing policies and regulations which describe how the law is to be enforced. They also hold public hearings and render decisions in cases brought before them. Formal complaints are investigated by the Commission's staff and reported during the Commission's monthly public meeting, which is held every 3rd Friday, for determination.

FHC is composed of five Commissioners who are appointed by the Mayor. The Commissioners conduct hearings on properties that are alleged to be unsafe or in poor condition and verify that landlords have necessary rental licenses and certificates. They also educate tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities and connect landlords and tenants to resources and assistance. Tenants also may file complaints with the Commission if their landlord is engaging in other unfair rental practices or is otherwise retaliating against the tenant for having filed a complaint.

COMMISSIONERS

Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR):

Shalimar Thomas,
Chairperson;
Rabbi Rebecca Alpert;
Tue Ho, Esq.;
Sarah Ricks, Esq.;
Kareem E. Thomas;
Donald Tibbs, Esq.

Fair Housing Commission (FHC):

Juan Baez, Esq;
Shalisa Brunson, Esq.
Darlene Butler;
Jennifer Sang, Esq.



Deputy Director Randy Duque (far left) and Executive Director Kia Ghee (far right) attended the Faith Leaders Forum hosted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office as part of the Department of Justice’s United Against Hate initiative.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

In FY24, we welcomed new employees, each bringing unique talents and perspectives that strengthen our mission.

September 2023

- **Alexander Rudolph**, Human Relations Intake Coordinator

October 2023

- **Satteria Kersey**, Public Information Officer
- **Michael Fontain**, Data Support Services Clerk

November 2023

- **Yomaris Castro-Olmeda**, Data Support Services Clerk

March 2024

- **Kyle Frasier**, Service Representative

June 2024

- **Lateefa Boone**, Human Relations Intake Coordinator

LANGUAGE ACCESS

PCHR and FHC staff members are available who are fluent in:

Spanish
Khmer
Mandarin

PCHR recognizes that the population eligible for services includes individuals who are Limited English Proficient (LEP). PCHR is committed to ensuring these individuals have proper access to services. It is the City’s policy to grant access to services or programs to every person, even when the person has a limited ability to speak, understand, read or write English.

PCHR intends to take reasonable steps to provide LEP persons with meaningful access to service and programs.

Our Language Access plan can be found online:

<https://tinyurl.com/languageplan>



COMPLIANCE DIVISION



The Compliance Unit enforces Philadelphia's laws prohibiting discrimination and promoting equal rights and equal opportunity for all. As Deputy Director of PCHR's Compliance division, I manage the unit charged with conducting neutral, confidential investigations of complaints filed with the PCHR. Parties may opt to settle during the investigation or upon a Probable Cause recommendation, a Public Hearing may be held where conciliation between the parties and the PCHR is not an option.

The ultimate goal of our work is to remedy and alleviate discrimination by ensuring compliance with the important laws PCHR enforces.



REVENUE GENERATED FY 24

Settlements	\$169,905
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EEOC/FEPA: The PCHR has a work-sharing agreement with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Under contract with EEOC as a Fair Employment Practices Agency (FEPA) that aligns with the federal fiscal year, the PCHR receives dual-filed discrimination cases, which it investigates and closes.

In FY24, the PCHR closed 138 cases, a joint FEPA project, and other trainings, generating \$79,030 from the EEOC for its case closings and outreach activities.

Mediation: The Compliance Division also operates a Discrimination Mediation Program, which resolves employment, housing, and public accommodations discrimination cases efficiently by drawing upon support from volunteer lawyers who have trained in mediation. Mediation makes processing cases more efficient by settling issues at an early stage and avoiding lengthy investigations.

Bill NO. 240060 (Protection Against Source of Income Discrimination) - On February 1, 2024, 3rd District Councilwoman Jamie Gautier introduced legislation to amend the Fair Practices Ordinance to strengthen source of income protections for renters in Philadelphia. The amendments explicitly name programs like the Housing Choice Voucher (commonly known as “Section 8”) as a protected source of income. The expansion makes it unlawful for anyone to claim that a property owner does not accept voucher programs or was ineligible for rental assistance programs.

The law also prohibits individuals from refusing or restricting housing availability, services, examinations, repairs, or improvements based on a tenant’s use of a rental assistance voucher. It requires individuals to cooperate with tenants in completing and submitting necessary documentation for Section 8 or other rental assistance programs.

Additionally, the law states that complainants could request and receive a Notice of Right to Sue if PCHR does not complete its investigation within 100 days. It requires PCHR to publish conciliation agreements on its website within 30 days of execution. The amendments extend the right to appeal to 90 days from the mailing date of the notice and require the agency to notify complainants of the resolution of their complaints within 100 days of filing.



“Everyone deserves a fair chance to secure a home, regardless of how they pay. This new legislation paves the way for safe and accessible housing throughout Philadelphia.”

Kia Ghee, PCHR
Executive Director

BY THE NUMBERS

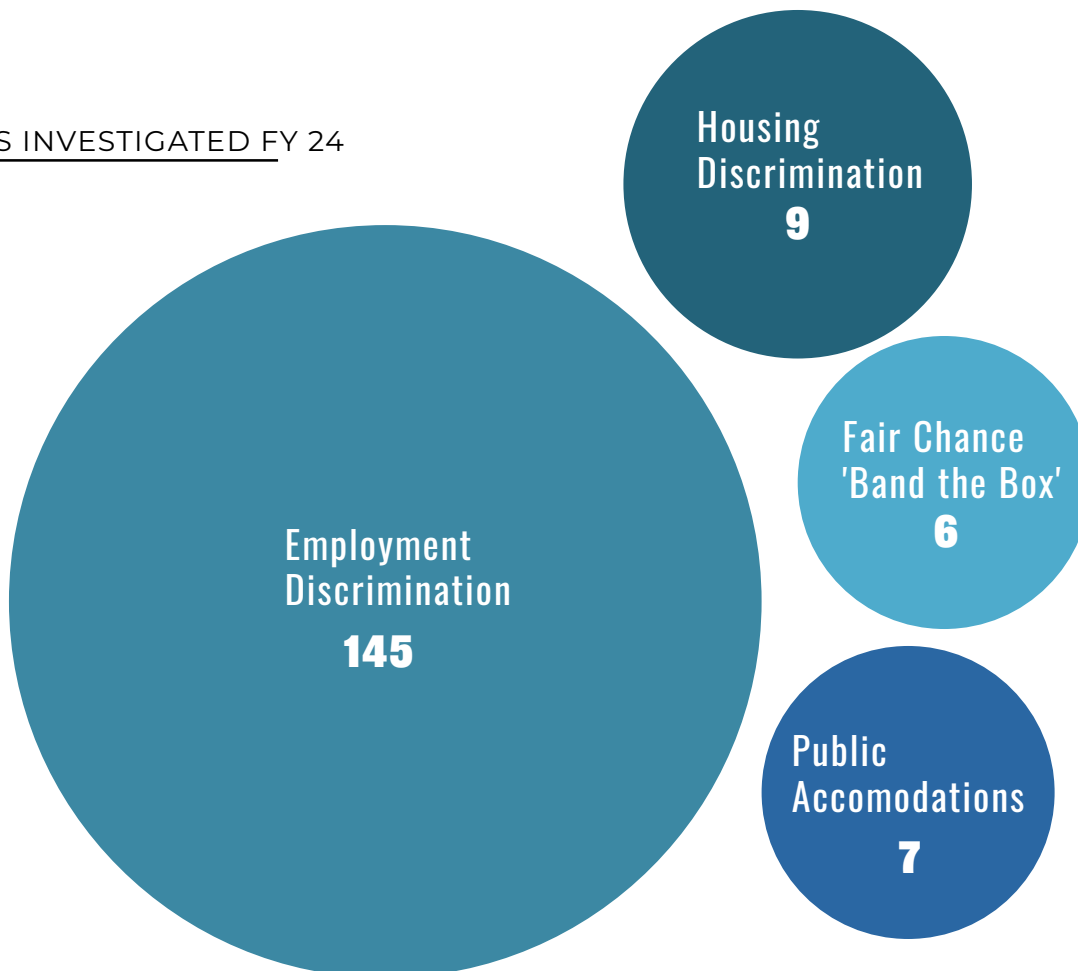
LEGISLATION

City Council passed Bill No. 230005, amending the "Verification of Life Partnerships" to remove gendered language pertaining to same-sex and same-gender couples. This change expanded access to Life Partnerships to individuals regardless of gender. Following the bill's passage, the responsibility for registering and recording Life Partnerships was assigned to the Register of Wills.

REVENUE TYPE FY 24



CASES INVESTIGATED FY 24



COMMUNITY RELATIONS DIVISION



Randy Duque,
Deputy Director

As the Deputy Director of the Community Relations Division (CRD), I lead a team focused on addressing intergroup conflicts and neighborhood disputes across the City. We employ a range of strategies to foster mutual understanding and respect among Philadelphia's diverse communities.

A core function of the CRD is empowering communities by building coalitions that collaborate to address shared challenges. Additionally, we offer informational sessions and training programs to schools, community organizations, and government agencies, promoting cultural diversity awareness and enhancing intergroup harmony.

NOTEWORTHY CONFLICT RESPONSES & PREVENTION ACTIVITIES



HR representative David Oliver works regularly with the Pennsylvania Parole Board to train parolees in conflict resolution and the Fair Chance Hiring Ordinance.

Deputy Director Randy Duque connected representatives of a West Philadelphia mosque that was vandalized with Philadelphia police and stayed with them during the interview to provide support to the victims throughout the process.

HR representatives Carlos Aviles and Chanese Drinks provided mediation services for a dispute involving 5th graders and their families at a school in the lower Northeast.

Deputy Director Randy Duque and HR representatives joined police in their districts for the National Night Out. National Night Out is an annual community-building event that promotes strong community-police partnerships.

HR representative Bunrath Math successfully mediated an agreement between a nationally recognized local restaurant and surrounding neighbors in South Philly after escalating complaints from neighbors about the business's patrons and its business owner saying disparaging things about neighbors on social media.



Interagency Civil Rights Taskforce & Rapid Response Team

The Interagency Civil Rights Taskforce (IACRTF) is an interdisciplinary group of civil rights-focused individuals from city, state, and federal agencies, the school district, and advocacy groups that meet to discuss local trends in civil rights and intergroup tensions. The Civil Rights Rapid Response Team is a subgroup of IACRTF, whose purpose is to have a well-coordinated response for the city that can be activated when hate affects local communities. It creates educational programs to help prevent and mitigate the effects of hate on impacted stakeholders.

CRD SERVICES	FY2024
Intergroup Conflict cases Investigated	125
Neighbor Dispute Cases Investigated	254
Hate & Bias Incidents Investigated	111
Prevention/Education Activities	436

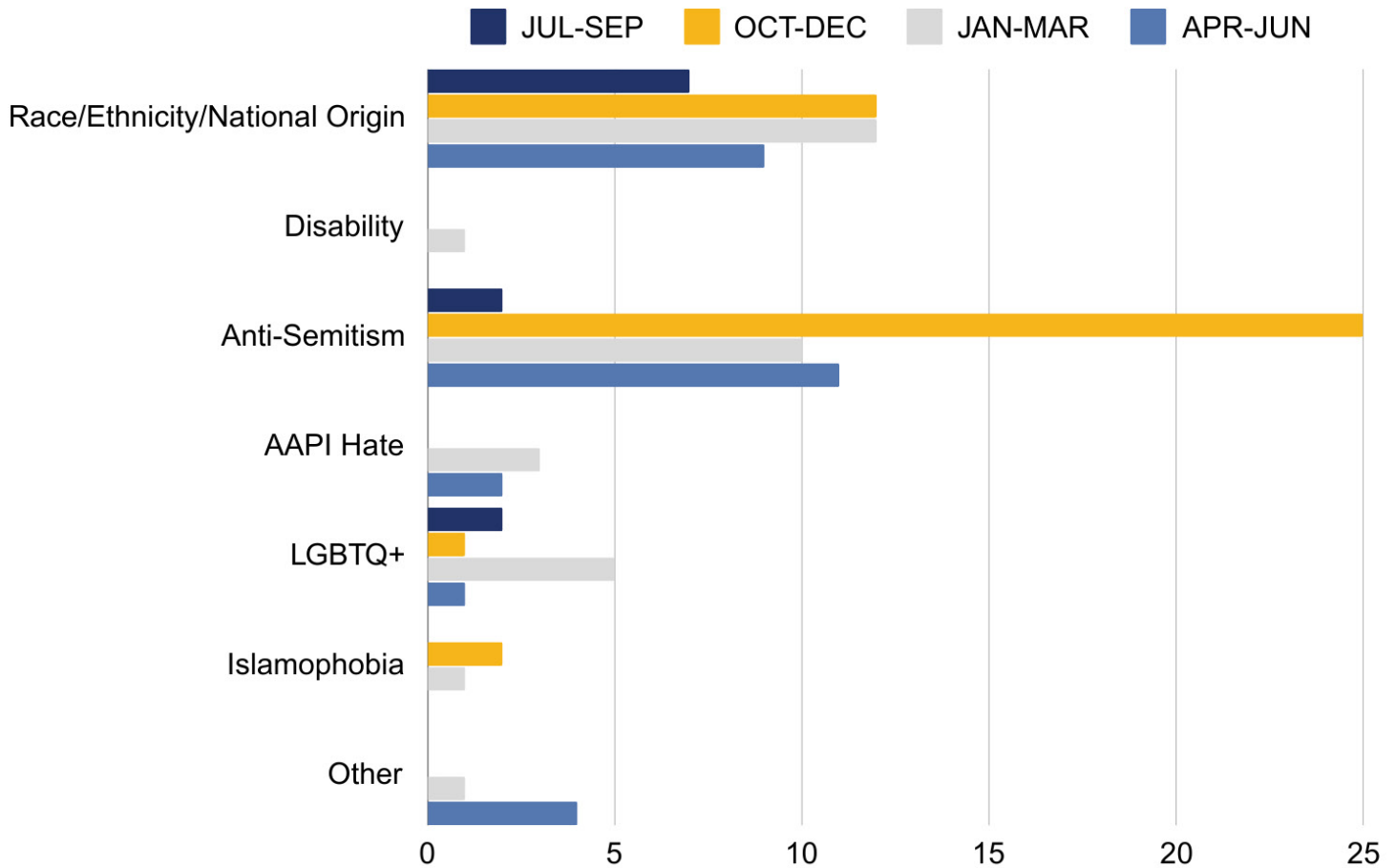
EXAMPLES OF HATE/BIAS REPORTED

- Graffiti using a derogatory term for people with special needs was found on the building of an organization that serves people with special needs.
- A flag of Israel along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway was vandalized with red paint.
- A complainant was called an anti-Hispanic/Latino slur and threatened to have his family "taken out" and his house burned down by his neighbor.
- "White Lives Matter" signs were posted on poles around an elementary school in the Germantown section of the city.
- A woman in the Gayborhood was harassed and degraded about her gender identity by two unknown males working in the area.
- A residential property in South Philly that displayed a Palestinian flag in the window was vandalized with pro-Israel stickers.



PCHR staff members gather in support of victims of domestic violence during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We ensure domestic violence or sexual assault victims' rights are protected for employment and housing.

HATE AND BIAS INCIDENTS





New look, same commitment

We are pleased to announce that the FHC has adopted a brand-new logo which we believe will help the public to better recognize the work of our office and connect to the protections we offer.

The FHC enforces the Fair Housing Ordinance (FHO) (Chapter 9-800 of the Philadelphia Code), which addresses unfair rental practices in housing, particularly when a property has been cited for code violations.

The FHC is a neutral agency that advocates fairness in rental property relationships. A Fair Housing complaint may be filed if:

- A tenant is being threatened with illegal eviction;
- A landlord is raising rent in the face of housing code violations;
- A landlord is retaliating against a tenant for reporting housing code violations to the Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) or for filing a complaint with the FHC

FHC SERVICES	FY 2024
Number of Reported Cases	1,330



Fair Housing Month

On April 18, 2024, Councilmembers Rue Landau, Jamie Gautier, and Council President Kenyatta Johnson introduced a resolution to name April as Fair Housing Month in Philadelphia.

This resolution commemorates the anniversary of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, a landmark federal civil rights law that protects individuals and families from housing discrimination.



Scan the QR code to read the blog on Fair Housing.

Each year, hundreds of tenants file complaints with the FHC seeking redress after their landlords engage in unfair rental practices, such as terminating a lease when a property is cited for code violations or retaliating against tenants for exercising their legal rights. The FHC also conducts educational outreach to inform tenants and landlords of their legal rights and responsibilities.

In FY24, the FHC adjudicated more than 1,000 cases alleging violations of the Fair Housing Ordinance to resolve unfair rental practices occurring in Philadelphia. The FHC also provided training on the Fair Housing Ordinance and its protections to the Philadelphia Eviction Diversion Program as well as the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

In FY24, the FHC paid for 14 transcripts for 14 parties in need out of the 24 appeals filed since the pilot program. The initial year of the program resulted in less dismissals and delays for lack of transcripts.

The Eviction Taskforce FHC leadership has played an active role in the Mayor’s Eviction Task Force since the task force’s formation. The task force is charged with issuing recommendations on how to ease or end the eviction crisis that is affecting many low-income Philadelphians. Among other initiatives, members of the task force have focused on promoting and strengthening the Fair Housing Ordinance to provide greater protections for tenants and landlords in the city.



Executive Director Kia Ghee joined voting rights and criminal justice advocates in Harrisburg to speak at a rally advocating for voting rights for incarcerated individuals.

CENTRAL INTAKE UNIT

CENTRAL INTAKE SERVICES	FY 2024
Clients Assisted - Total Requests for Information	2,471

The Central Intake Unit reviews client concerns of discrimination, unfair rental practices, and neighborhood disputes. The Central Intake Unit determines if a client has a jurisdictional complaint that can be addressed by either the PCHR or the FHC. If a concern is not within the jurisdiction of either the PCHR or the FHC, the client will be notified and, if appropriate, referred to another agency.

OPERATING BUDGET

EXPENDITURE DESCRIPTION	FY24
Personnel services	\$2,436,529
Services	\$69,347
Materials/supplies	\$21,670
Equipment	\$12,813

An operating budget for PCHR and FHC is the financial plan that outlines a company's expected revenues and expenses over a specific period, usually a fiscal year. It is a blueprint for managing day-to-day operations and ensuring financial goals align with business objectives.

JULY 2023

- Deputy Director Randy Duque participated in a transatlantic exchange on racial dialogue and community-police relations with the Gustave Stresmann Institute resulting in PCHR's hate prevention network model which the police department of Lower Saxony, Germany is replicating.
- Deputy Director Pamela Gwaltney represented the agency at Philadelphia CeaseFire's launch party for Stronger Together, a public health violence intervention initiative. The program, funded to operate in the 14th and 35th Police Districts, aims to address and reduce violence in the community.



OCTOBER 2023

- Executive Director Kia Ghee (pictured above) spoke at the World Summit on Women and Girls commemorating the United Nations International Day of the Girl at City Hall.
- Attorney Karen Forman, Executive Director Kia Ghee, and Deputy Director Pamela Gwaltney facilitated a training session for the Philadelphia Bar Association on anti-discrimination protections afforded to employees under the Fair Practices Ordinance.

NOVEMBER 2023



- Executive Director Kia Ghee (pictured above) participated on a panel for the National Urban League's Equity Refined Event where she spoke about nuanced forms of housing discrimination.
- Deputy Director Randy Duque presented on "Partnerships for Peace – the Importance of Strategic Networks across Government, Law Enforcement, NPOs, and Communities" at the 2023 Peace & Conflict Resolution Conference in Thailand.

- Deputy Director Pamela Gwaltney, Attorney Karen Forman, and PCHR Investigator Abigail Su facilitated a 3-part series on the maternity and breastfeeding protections afforded under the Fair Practices Ordinance and the Pregnant Worker Fairness Act. The sessions were held in English and Chinese.
- CRD team members met with the City's 2-1-1 Anti-Violence Hotline leadership to strengthen collaboration. This partnership is crucial for providing referrals in situations that could escalate into violence. (pictured below)



DECEMBER 2023

- Deputy Directory Randy Duque facilitated ongoing meetings with members of Jewish, Arab, and Muslim leaders. The meetings ensured ongoing dialogue focused on preventing anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Arab acts throughout the city.

MAY 2024

- Deputy Director Pamela Gwaltney presented on a Consumer Protection Discrimination/Fair Housing panel hosted by the Pennsylvania Bar Institute.
- Attorney Karen Forman participated in a panel hosted by the Philadelphia Bar Association's Committee on the Legal Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The discussion focused on navigating a tenant's housing discrimination claim when requests for reasonable accommodations are ignored or denied.

JUNE 2024

- PCHR joined the Department of Records at its screening of Gaining Ground: The Fight for Black Land (and panel discussion). This film examines the causes, effects, and solutions to the issue of Black land loss, which is known as tangled title in Philadelphia.

APRIL 2024

- PCHR co-sponsored a Gun Violence Education Summit with the Quaker City Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. The summit launched a weeklong campaign to raise awareness and provide resources focused on reducing gun violence, promoting conflict resolution, and supporting victims.





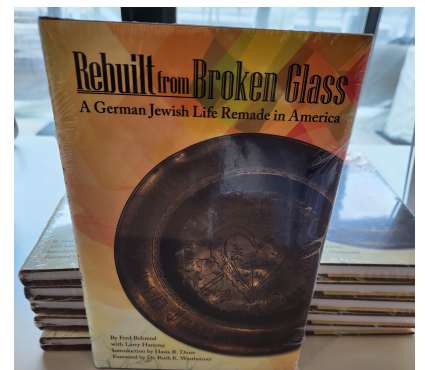
INTERFAITH IFTAR DINNER

PCHR, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood & Community Engagement, and the Peace Islands Institute Pennsylvania co-sponsored the second annual Interfaith Iftar dinner at Philadelphia City Hall. Centered on the theme One Philly: Stronger Together!, the event united diverse faith and community leaders to foster understanding, unity, and collaboration through the shared tradition of breaking the Ramadan fast.



'REBUILT' DOCUMENTARY SCREENING

The PCHR hosted a screening of the Holocaust documentary *Rebuilt from Broken Glass*. The film is based on Fred Behrend's memoir, which chronicles his early life in 1930s Germany during the rise of the Nazi regime. As a Jewish boy, Fred endured mounting persecution under Adolf Hitler's rule, culminating in the traumatic events of Kristallnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass") in 1938 — a turning point that forced his family to flee Germany in search of safety.



HIGHLIGHTS



YOUTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

To expand its conflict resolution programming to further its outreach efforts to young people to help them identify positive responses to conflict in school and in their communities, PCHR created a program that works with high-risk youth to develop skills to mediate conflicts that might otherwise turn violent.

The program was a youth-focused prevention initiative that taught participants the skills needed to recognize and resist the pressures leading to violent activities through a multi-pronged approach that allowed students to share ideas, interests, and concerns. It also prepared students to be ambassadors in school-wide activities, social events, and communities.



Scan the QR code to view photos from the 6-week program



Ensuring civil rights in Philadelphia since 1951

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Visit our social media @PhillyPCHR