

compassion



Seattle  
Office for Civil Rights



2017

ANNUAL  
REPORT

integrity



## MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM DIRECTOR

The pursuit of racial and social justice is an on-going, often uphill battle. This was especially true in 2017, a year of turmoil and sweeping changes for our nation, our city, and for the Seattle Office for Civil Rights.



Our nation struggled with a political climate that normalized racist, xenophobic, and misogynist viewpoints, fostering an environment of impunity for open hatred and fueling a disturbing rise in hate crimes and violence. Our city was deeply impacted by a turnover of leadership that saw four different Mayors in a span of two months. Our office felt the growing pressure of greater and more complex responsibilities, with limited resources to meet them.

And yet despite the many challenges, SOCR reached many great milestones in 2017. For the first time in Seattle's history, it is now illegal for landlords to use criminal records to deny someone housing. Our testing program is now fully established in-house, helping us to spot discriminatory practices in housing that would otherwise go unreported. More single stall public restrooms are now available to people of all genders.

Both our new Mayor and City Council affirmed their commitments to the goals of the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), Seattle's groundbreaking effort to end institutional racism. In fact, in her swearing in ceremony at the Wing Luke Museum, Mayor Jenny A. Durkan signed an executive order to strengthen RSJI during her administration. More City departments are applying a racial equity lens to their decisions and policies, helping to reduce their negative impacts on people of color and marginalized communities.

While I was not leading SOCR in 2017, I witnessed these achievements as a member of the community. I was appointed as Interim Director at SOCR by Mayor Durkan in January, but in my short time in this post, I have been impressed by the creativity, resilience, work ethic, and commitment to anti-racist values of the staff at SOCR. The milestones and outcomes of this tumultuous year were achieved under the leadership of Patricia Lally, who served as Director of SOCR from 2014 until December. I thank her for her service.

The following pages will provide a short overview of the scope of the work SOCR achieved in 2017. My staff and I will be happy to expand on any of these topics, and to update you on the great work being done in 2018 — just contact us at (206) 684-4500 or visit our website at [seattle.gov/civilrights](http://seattle.gov/civilrights).

Sincerely,

**Mariko Lockhart**

*Interim Director, Seattle Office for Civil Rights*

# Seattle bans the use of criminal records to screen out renters

Augustine Cita had a good union job, working for \$28 an hour as a marble mason. By the usual standards, he should have been a great candidate to rent an apartment.

But he could not get past the first interview.

without any legal issues since, he found that his past was standing in the way of his future.

**If this had happened after February 19, 2018, he would have had a way to address the unfair treatment he faced. That's the date when the new Fair Chance Housing law took effect, banning landlords from unfairly denying applicants housing based on criminal history. The law was unanimously passed in August 2017.**

The legislation capped a decade-long effort by community groups and SOCR. Groups such as the Village of Hope, Sojourner Place and the FARE Coalition advocated for policy changes in housing to address bias against people with a criminal history.

"The Office for Civil Rights was super open to coalition building," said Alex Bergstrom, legal assistant at Columbia Legal Services, one of the advocate groups that helped to

pass the legislation. "The intention of SOCR was to make sure the City was following the lead of communities and hearing their voices."

Though Augustine did not have the option to file a complaint with SOCR in 2013, his story came to a good ending on its own. He eventually found a landlord who was willing to rent him a small apartment. That opportunity marked the beginning of a new, better stage in his life.

Today, he is the Vice President of Operations at the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle. He teaches reentry classes at the Monroe Correctional Facility. He and his wife Zakiya have also started FAZ (From A to Z), a company providing re-entry and job training programs for men leaving the prison system.

And that landlord who, unlike others, treated him with fairness and trust? When Augustine found a new, larger place to live 18 months later, she asked him if he knew any other people who had served time who would like to apply for the vacancy.



"I put in applications at 10 to 12 places," Augustine said. "Nobody would touch me. It was very stressful and very depressing, looking for a place to live."

The reason? Augustine was incarcerated in 2006. Even after completing his sentence in 2013 and living

## Policy

SOCR's Policy division supports community-driven solutions to advance race and social justice and bring equity to all Seattle residents. This work comprises research, community engagement and partnership, policy development and awareness-building. Policy staff lead work on gender justice, criminal justice equity, and ensuring equity in housing access. In addition, the division provides support to the City's four civil rights commissions.

## REENTRY WORKGROUP

The Reentry Workgroup, launched in 2016, is an advisory group that includes individuals with experience transitioning from incarceration, stakeholders who represent individuals impacted by the criminal justice system, and relevant City department staff.

The group is tasked with examining barriers faced by those living with criminal history and making recommendations to the City Council that would reduce those barriers and strengthen support for those reentering.

In the fall of 2017, the workgroup presented preliminary recommendations to the City Council. These included policy solutions and investment strategies around reentry, housing, employment, jail contract management, diversion, decriminalization, rethinking legal debt, and targeted support for the Indigenous community. The group emphasized the importance of having solutions developed in partnership with communities most affected by inequities and the justice system. The workgroup hopes to share their final recommendations and report to the City Council in fall 2018.



Kris Larsen and Eddie Howard

## ZERO USE OF YOUTH DETENTION

In 2015, the City Council unanimously passed Resolution 31614, endorsing a vision that Seattle become a city with zero use of detention for youth. The resolution directs SOCR to support a community-centered process to achieve zero use of detention for young people.

In 2017, the Office for Civil Rights launched the new Criminal Justice Equity Team (CJET), comprised of staff from several City departments. The CJET is tasked with creating an action plan for the City that will help eliminate the need for youth and young adult incarceration, by developing and investing in alternatives to incarceration and strengthening accountable

relationships with communities impacted by incarceration. The CJET is developing a shared analysis regarding decarceration and the City's role in reaching zero youth detention. The CJET hopes to release its action plan in 2018.

The office also provided technical support to the City Attorney's office's Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) analysis on the Young Adult Pre-Filing Diversion Program, a program that gives youth an opportunity to avoid criminal charges upon successful completion of a seminar. The RET support included coordinating training on institutional racism, provided by the People's Institute Northwest for Survival and Beyond.

## GENDER IDENTITY TRAINING

In 2017, SOCR staff working with the Gender Justice Project continued delivering training to help City of Seattle employees create more gender-inclusive environments for their colleagues and customers. The training, titled "Understanding Gender Diversity in our Communities," focuses on providing culturally appropriate customer service interactions for Seattle's transgender and gender non-conforming community members.

The training builds competence in understanding transgender identities and civil rights. Participants

learn language and terminology, and gain comfort using them. They also learn how to uphold the City of Seattle's All-Gender Restroom Ordinance and develop skills and strategies to deal with confrontational scenarios in gender-specific facilities.

Staff also provided training and guidance to the Mayor's Office, the Seattle Department of Transportation, the Seattle Department of Human Resources, and Seattle Parks and Recreation on the topics of gender identity, gender-neutral language, gender transitions in the workplace, and more.

## GUIDANCE ON GENDER IDENTITY IN THE WORKPLACE

The Gender Justice Project collaborated with the Seattle Department of Human Resources and a group of stakeholders to develop guidance on gender identity for City of Seattle departments. This guidance was released early in 2017 and defines the City's expectations for welcoming

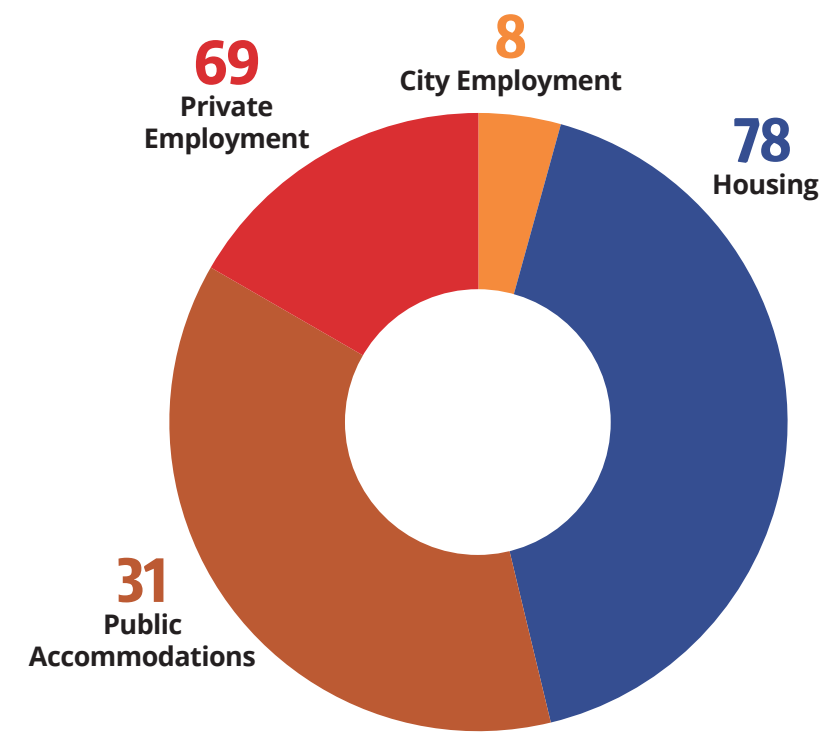
and supporting transitioning, gender diverse, and transgender City employees. It also provides a roadmap to help departments better serve employees who transition gender while on the job, and an overview of fundamental concepts related to gender identity and gender diversity.

# Civil Rights Enforcement

The Seattle Office for Civil Rights enforces the laws against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, fair contracting, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which prohibits discrimination in programs or activities receiving federal funds), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, we enforce Seattle's law against providing conversion therapy to minors, and the All-Gender Restroom ordinance.

## 2017 SNAPSHOT

Last year was a busy one for civil rights enforcement in Seattle, with investigators handling claims of discrimination for 21 protected classes (more than are protected by the federal and state governments) in housing, employment and public accommodations.



2017 Civil Rights Cases by Type

161

Customer Cases Filed

25

Director Charges<sup>1</sup>

186

Total Civil Rights Cases Filed

1,004

Total Inquiries Handled

\$50,361

Settlement Awards<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Director charges are filed by SOCR when the office becomes aware of a discriminatory practice but there is no individual complainant.

<sup>2</sup>We only track settlements made through our office, not those reached privately by the parties.

# Melissa "echo" Greenlee

Music festivals should be reasonably accessible to everyone who takes the time and effort to attend. Or so thought Melissa "echo" Greenlee, when she bought tickets to attend the 2016 Bumbershoot Festival at Seattle Center.

echo is deaf, and she enjoys musical performances with assistance from a specialized American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, who can convey the lyrics and the emotions of spoken and instrumental music.

But when she requested ASL interpretation for the 11 shows she wanted to see, the festival organizers would only provide interpretation for four shows — none of which were on her list to attend. And for those four, the interpreter was not in an accessible location and with the necessary lighting for echo to see their signing.

"I didn't want a simple refund of my ticket. I wanted to be able to see the shows that I wanted to see," echo recalls. "The disappointment that I experienced sitting on the lawn, watching Michael Franti from Spearhead, in tears because I couldn't access the lyrics nor fully experience that moment, runs deep."

**echo contacted the Seattle Office for Civil Rights, which pursued her case. An investigator worked with her and the festival organizers to seek remedies.**

**In the end, echo was refunded her tickets, given complimentary passes to the 2017 Bumbershoot festival, and paid \$1,500 in damages.**

**More important, the organizers changed their accessibility policies and procedures, hiring an interpreter coordinator, committing to providing prompt accommodations within two weeks of a show, providing multiple formats for interpretation, and other measures.**

"I was happy with the results," echo said. "While I didn't get 100% of what I felt was needed to really impact policy changes within AEG/One Reel/Bumbershoot, I am hopeful that the new standard of accessibility has been experienced and can impact positively future events for Deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing audiences."



## ALL-GENDER RESTROOMS

The All-Gender Restroom Ordinance allows the use of single occupant restrooms by any person, regardless of sex or gender identity, and prevents those restrooms from being restricted to a specific sex or gender identity. Single occupant restroom facilities must also be labeled with appropriate signage.

Our enforcement staff, working from tips from the public (including the use of the hashtag **#AllGenderRestroomSEA** on Twitter), investigated 42 cases of improperly signed bathrooms in 2017. We reached out, explained the law to business owners, and offered examples of correct signage.



In each instance, business owners agreed to install the new signs, with no penalties levied. Panda Express, a national franchise, proactively adopted our gender-inclusive signage for all its locations because of our outreach.

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The Enforcement Division handles public outreach and community education on civil rights rules and regulations. We also provide technical assistance to businesses to help them comply with our laws. This past year, staff organized training opportunities on new fair housing laws, immigrant rights, and Civil Rights 101. We hosted tables and distributed materials at events such as PrideFest, Human Rights Day, and the Spirit of Indigenous Peoples festival.



### How you pay your rent is your business

If you've been denied housing because you rely on Social Security, vouchers, or some other form of assistance, call 206.684.4500 or visit [seattle.gov/fairhousing](http://seattle.gov/fairhousing)



# Alice Eidson

Alice Eidson is a transgender woman who, in October 2016, sought shelter at a facility for homeless women operated by a local nonprofit agency.

While standing in line for available beds, she was taken aside and told that she would have to be more feminine to be allowed to use their services.

"I was told that I needed to wear a dress, put on makeup, and shave better," Alice recalls. "I'm a transgender woman. I legally changed my name. I just can't afford to dress a certain way."

Alice was hurt by the treatment, but she sought help elsewhere. After sharing her story with a social worker, she followed their advice and contacted the Seattle Office for Civil Rights.

**Our investigators looked closely at her case and sought remedies from the shelter.**

**Eventually Alice received a payment of \$1,000, and the agency agreed to draft new and more inclusive policies for how to treat transgender and non-binary users of their facilities.**

"A lot of the other transgender people I met during my homelessness also said they experienced discrimination," Alice said. "Hopefully the policy change is good enough, so transgender women and non-binary women can have a safe place to stay when there's nowhere else to go."



# 56

Trainings Provided



# 22

Outreach Events



# 331

Technical Assistance Sessions

## CIVIL RIGHTS TESTING PROGRAM

In the past, the Seattle Office for Civil Rights has worked with outside organizations to carry out field tests of housing opportunities, with the goal of exposing unreported discriminatory practices. Over the history of the program, SOCR has found that many landlords treat people differently based on their race, gender, disability or other classes protected under the anti-discrimination laws.

In 2017, SOCR designed an in-house civil rights testing program. The program relies on trained testers to see how people fitting different profiles are treated. Most of the tests use a matched-pair design, where two testers with similar profiles are matched to control for all essential differences except what is being measured, such as a protected class.

The testing program also reviews online advertisements for housing to see if their language or application criteria are discriminatory.

In 2017, the program conducted 192 matched pair tests with conclusive results. In 110 of those (57%), the testers received different treatment because of their perceived race, disability, or other protected class status.

Nine tests resulted in a discrimination charge. Eight of the discrimination charges were resolved through settlement and are closed, and one remains open. The terms of the settlements included a monetary penalty, mandatory training, and requirement of public notification of fair housing protections in Seattle. The discrimination charges were based on Section 8 subsidies, disability, race, national origin, and familial status.



### Pronoun buttons spread message of respect

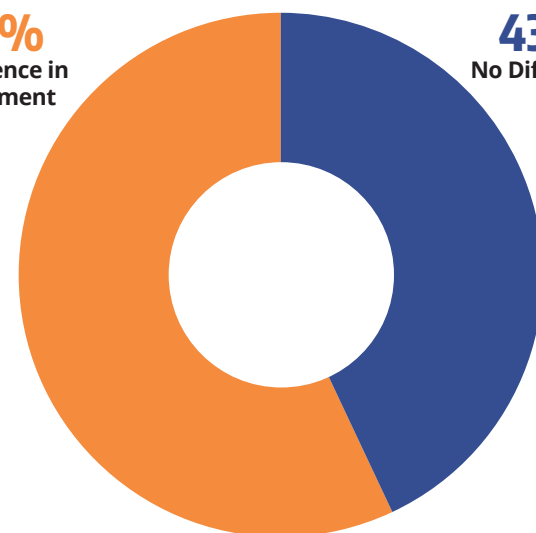
Buttons often state our support or opposition to a policy, action or political candidate, or affirm our membership in a group. In this case, they can also help others to treat people with respect and dignity.

The Seattle Office for Civil Rights, in collaboration with c89.5 radio, sponsored a name tag button that offers people the option to list their preferred personal pronouns.

The buttons were released during Transgender Awareness Week to raise the visibility of transgender and gender non-conforming people and the issues they face.

The buttons were available at our downtown office, the Greater Seattle Business Association, Cupcake Royale, Julia's on Broadway, Seattle Area Support Groups, and Neighbours Bar.

**57%** Difference in Treatment



**Matched-Pair Tests: 192 Total**



# RSJI history

In 1996, Ven Knox (then Director of the Human Services Department) attended a four-day People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISB) workshop in New Orleans on undoing institutionalized racism. It was a life changing moment, leading Knox to invite PISB back to Seattle to train her department employees. Within a few years, PISB had become established in Seattle and a movement for racial justice was born. Advocacy from communities organizing for racial justice led to the City establishing RSJI in 2004.

# Race and Social Justice Initiative

The Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) is a testament to the City's enduring commitment to address institutional and structural racism within city government. It also demonstrates our intent to shift power and material resources to communities most impacted by racism in Seattle.

**RSJI utilizes a comprehensive organizing strategy to advance this goal:**

- 1) build foundational awareness and move towards a shared analysis;
- 2) create capacity and a will to shift internal culture;
- 3) utilize anti-racist tools to change how programs, services, policies, and budget decisions are made; and
- 4) develop and sustain accountable community relationships to align racial justice priorities and goals.

RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE



**In 2017, the RSJI team returned to its roots and re-committed to its goal of building a multi-racial movement for change by adopting the racial justice principles of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond.**

**The principles are:**

- Undoing Racism®
- Learning from History
- Sharing Culture
- Developing Leadership
- Maintaining Accountability
- Networking
- Analyzing Power
- Gatekeeping
- Undoing Internalized Racial Oppression
- Identifying and Analyzing Manifestations of Racism

**RSJI also drafted a new strategic plan in 2017 to guide its work. The 2018-2021 Strategic Plan committed the team to three main goals:**

- Building an anti-racist culture within City government to bring racial justice
- Shifting power and resources to communities most impacted by racism
- Working with regional and national leaders to advance racial justice

## RACIAL JUSTICE TRAININGS

RSJI continued one of its main organizing functions by providing trainings to City employees. These trainings provide employees with a foundational understanding of race, racism and power by developing a shared analysis and definitions to support a citywide movement for racial justice.



In 2017, we updated the curriculum for “Race: Power of An Illusion,” making it more interactive. The training still relies on the groundbreaking PBS documentary to examine the history and root causes of racism in the United States.

We also continued to offer training on Implicit Bias and on the use of the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET). The RET is an analysis process that considers the racial and social justice impacts of policies, programs, and decisions about resources. Executive departments are required to apply four RETs a year.

### In 2017, the RSJI team created four new courses:

- **Implicit Bias 2:** a deeper exploration of Implicit Bias and how it manifests in our daily lives, our workplace and in our City programs.
- **Internalized Racial Superiority:** an internal exploration of the process through which conditioning, socialization, and history has led those who identify as white to internalize superior and racialized notions, beliefs and behaviors.
- **Internalized Racial Inferiority:** an internal exploration of the process through which conditioning, socialization and history lead those who identify as non-white to internalize negative racialized beliefs, ideas, and behaviors.
- **Understanding Power:** delves into the nature power: who has it, how it is acquired, how it is racialized, and how can it be used to create racial equity within programs and departments.

## RSJI CHANGE TEAMS

Change Teams are change agents within departments who support racial justice efforts such as developing RSJI workplans, trainings, RETs, and employee events.

In 2017, we continued to provide policy guidance, technical assistance, and training. We also organized monthly meetings for the leads in these teams.

## CORE TEAM V

The fifth generation of CORE team recently graduated. The CORE Team is a cohort of 30 employees who attended our racial justice and leadership training to become change agents within their departments.



## RACIAL EQUITY FUND

The Seattle City Council approved funding in 2016-17 for grants to Seattle’s community-based organizations to address structural racism. The fund totaled \$75,000 for 2017 — \$60,000 of that was managed by SOCR, and \$15,000 by the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture.

Community groups that applied were required to incorporate a structural analysis of racism, align with existing community anti-racist efforts, assess opportunities with the greatest impact for eliminating racial injustice, and model accountable practices.

Two organizations were selected for funding in 2017: Community Passageways and the Freedom School.

## 2017 RSJI Summit educates and builds community

The Race and Social Justice Initiative held its 2017 Summit at the historic Washington Hall, offering a day of presentations, racial justice organizing, and community building.

The two key speakers — John A. Powell and Sonali Balajee of the Haas Institute for Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley — shared information and personal anecdotes about the challenges of pursuing anti-racist work in the current political and social climate.

The audience also heard from a panel on Indigenous Invisibility that included author Gyasi Ross of the Blackfeet Nation.



John A. Powell



Sonali Balajee



Gyasi Ross



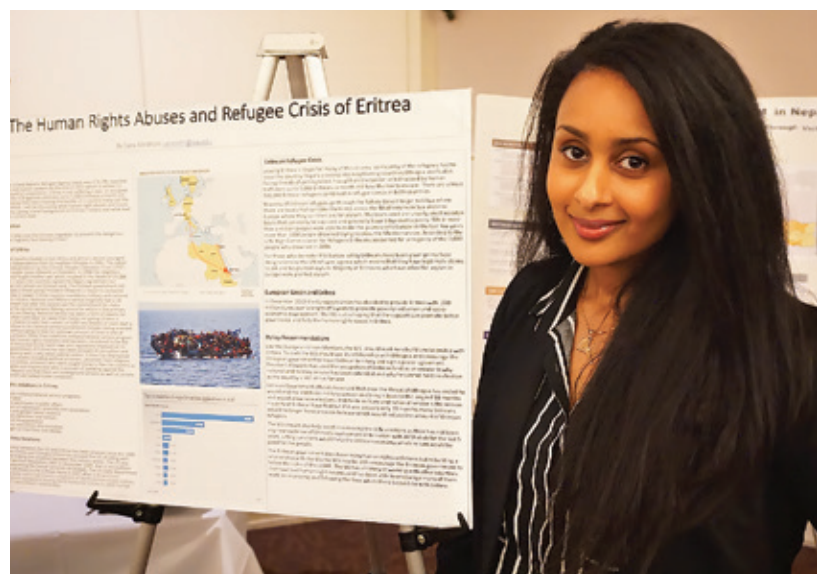


# Commissions

SOCR provides administrative support to four of the City's commissions: the Seattle Human Rights Commission, Seattle Women's Commission, Seattle LGBTQ Commission, and Seattle Commission for People with Disabilities. Commissions are independent, volunteer, resident advisory boards created under the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC 3.14). They are established to provide the Mayor, City Council and City departments with guidance and policy recommendations.

## SEATTLE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The commission sponsored and organized the annual celebration of Human Rights Day. They joined the Trump-Proof coalition and advocated for a City income tax, safe-consumption sites, the removal of confederate monuments, and for homeless services and support.



## SEATTLE WOMEN'S COMMISSION

The Seattle Women's Commission hosted the biennial Jeanette Williams Award event and community celebration to honor community members who demonstrate significant leadership and service in advancing the cause of women in Seattle. The 2017 Jeanette Williams Award recipient was Riddhi Mukhopadhyay, Legal Director of the Sexual Violence Legal Services, at the YWCA Seattle | King | Snohomish. The event was held at Columbia City Theater.

After many years of advocating for paid family leave at the City and state level, commissioners were finally able to celebrate a victory in 2017 when Washington state passed a paid family leave bill that will go into effect in 2019.

## SEATTLE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER COMMISSION

The Commission planned and coordinated the City's contingent in the Seattle Pride Parade, Seattle Trans Pride, and other LGBTQ Pride events. They helped to compile an inventory of City resources for the LGBTQ community. Commissioners also advocated for safe consumption sites, the approval of non-binary birth certificates, and against immigration and

travel restrictions for people from Muslim-majority nations. They also reached out to Seattle Parks Department leadership on a proposal to create an LGBTQ Community Center and provided recommendations of how Parks can be more inclusive to the LGBTQ community.

## COMMISSION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The commission co-sponsored Human Rights Day and organized the first Inclusion Jubilee at City Hall to mark the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It hosted a candidate forum at the central Seattle Public Library. Commissioners also started a discussion on the inequities of allowing subminimum wages for workers with disabilities, a dialogue that led the City Council to ban the practice in 2018, making Seattle the first city in the West Coast to take on the issue.





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transparency

access

honesty

reflection

truth

