



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPEAKS OUT



Executive Director **Robert J. Brothers, Jr.** was recognized by **Dennis King**, the Chairperson of the Martin Luther King Holiday Commission during the Bell Ringing ceremony to commemorate the life and contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The ceremony was marked by a reading of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. "I was inspired by the speech and there was definitely cause for pause and reflection", said Director Brothers. The **Chairperson of the CHRO, Andrew Norton** and **Commissioner Shelly Best** also attended this notable event. **Governor Dannel Malloy** and **Lieutenant Governor, Nancy Wyman** were recognized and joined in the festivities. The CHRO serves as the Secretariat for MLK Holiday Commission. Director Brothers looks forward to a continued long lasting relationship with the Commission and "applauds the efforts of the MLK Commission to keep Dr. King's dream alive".

LEGAL UPDATE



CHRO Attorneys are appearing in courts across the state in Housing election cases and it seems that the number of Housing elections is increasing. In accordance with Connecticut General Statutes

Section 46a-83 after a finding of reasonable cause to believe discrimination has occurred in a housing case, either party may elect a civil action in lieu of an administrative hearing. If a party makes an election, a CHRO Attorney shall commence an action in Superior Court within ninety days of receipt of the election. CHRO attorneys are currently appearing in Housing election cases in Hartford, New Haven, Litchfield, New London, Norwich, Bridgeport, Norwalk and Torrington. Two cases: CHRO v. Litchfield Housing Authority and Arnold v. Forvil are currently slated to be argued before the CT Supreme Court this spring by CHRO Attorneys **Michelle Dumas Keuler** and **Robin Fox**, respectively.

SPOTLIGHT ON CAPITOL REGION

Capitol Manager, Epifanio Carrasquillo and his Admin. Assistant **Dedra Morris** work hand in hand with the investigators in the Capitol Region to expedite the processing

of discrimination complaints filed with the region.



The Regional Manager is very concerned with educating the public about their civil rights through the intake and investigation process and also believes that community forums where information is disseminated to the public is helping the CHRO to meet its mission of eliminating discrimination. The fiscal year for the Region begins in July and since that time the Region has **received 268 complaints, retained 232**, closed 198 cases and settled cases in the amount of **\$772,221.76**



The investigators in the Capitol Region who receive and investigate complaints of discrimination include: **Ann Galer, Arnaldo Guadalupe, Renee Sonnenblick, Anita Zakrzewski, Ronald Simpson, Yvonne Duncan, Raymond DeLucia** and **Sancha Works**. **Bertha Minnifield** is the Secretary for the Region and **Dedra Morris** is the Administrative Assistant.

The Capitol Region Office is located on 999 Asylum Avenue in Hartford and covers the following towns: Avon, Bloomfield, Canton, Collinsville, Granby, East Granby, Farmington, Hartford, Rocky Hill, Newington, New Britain, Suffield, Plainville, Simsbury, West Hartford, Windsor Wethersfield, Windsor Locks and Unionville.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS



For the fiscal year to date (July 1, 2010 to January 31, 2011): the referees have conducted **one hundred conferences**, four (4) default hearings, and four (4) public hearings (trials). Thirty-five discrimination cases have been certified and eleven whistleblower retaliation cases have been filed. Twenty-nine discrimination cases and eleven whistleblower retaliation cases have been closed. The total settlement figure for discrimination cases for the fiscal year to date is **\$70,000.00**. These settlement figures do not include the dollar amounts for settlements in confidential agreements. For the fiscal year to date, the total amount awarded via final decisions following trials is **\$5,000** for discrimination cases and **\$177,917.98** for whistleblower retaliation cases.

MLK CELEBRATION AT YALE PEABODY



CHRO Attorneys **Alix Simonetti**, **Cheryl A. Sharp**, **Dave Kent** and

Robin Kinster Fox participated in the Dr. Martin Luther King Celebration sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection at the Peabody Museum in New Haven on January 16th and 17th.



The CHRO booth was visited by thousands of attendees during the two day period. Literature, posters, activities and coloring pages related to civil rights and notable civil rights leaders were distributed to the public.

MANY FACES OF CHRO



The CHRO has many dedicated employees whose background and experiences led them to work in the area of civil rights. The many faces of CHRO are diverse, dedicated, forward thinking and believe in the mission of the agency to eliminate discrimination through education, enforcement and advocacy. One of the faces, **Renee Sonnenblick**, pictured

above is an HRO Representative in the Capitol Region and the daughter of Holocaust survivors. Renee's mother was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp during WWII, while her father was sent to a Siberian Labor camp, both being punished for being Jewish. Renee's parents survived the Holocaust and left her with a strong desire to do her part in trying to rid the world of harmful discrimination. We can change the mind of one person at a time and make them believe in fairness and equality. Renee said, "To some, it may not seem like much, but I believe that our work is like a stone thrown into a still pond, where the ripples move outward and effect larger changes in Connecticut."

One of my duties as a CHRO Representative is to help draft people's discrimination complaints. A Complainant asked Renee during an intake, if it was hard listening to people's complaints for the whole day. Renee smiled and said, "my parents survived the Holocaust, my motivation to help people comes from them."

CHRO Attorney, **Kim Jacobsen** identifies with Renee Sonnenblick's experience. "I was motivated to work at the CHRO due to discrimination growing up", she said. "I grew up in upstate New York and my family was one of the only Jewish families in our neighborhood. When I was a kindergartner on the school bus older classmates discovered I was Jewish and asked if I had horns." Neighborhood kids painted a swastika on my family's lawn." As my colleague Renee Sonnenblick expressed, my experiences influenced my decision to fight against discrimination. "I was taught early on to be part of the solution and to work to end unlawful discrimination," she said. My Great-aunt and Great-uncle were involved in the founding of the holocaust museum in Washington DC.