



# Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, Governor

**Oregon Commission on Black Affairs**  
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"  
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## MINUTES

### **Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA)**

**April 19, 2014**

**9:00 AM-12:00 PM**

**Portland Community College Cascade Campus**

**Terrell Hall, Room 112**

**705 N. Killingsworth St., Portland, OR 97217**

#### **Attendees:**

**Chair:** James I. Manning Jr.

**Vice Chair:** James Morris

**Commissioners:** Robin Morris Collin, Julie Grey (phone), Gwen Trice (phone),  
Representative Frederick

**Absent:** Karol Collymore, Kayse Jama, Senator Monroe

**Guests:** Former OCBA Commissioner Dr. Isaac E. Dixon; Lawanda Manning;  
Commissioner Brad Avakian, Bureau of Labor and Industries; Jennifer  
Duncan, Executive Director of Justice Honor Service Multicultural Film  
Festival; Erious Johnson, Director of Department of Justice Civil Rights  
Unit; Amy Platt, Oregon Historical Society; Gary Simms, Director of  
Diversity and Inclusion, Oregon Department of Corrections

**Staff:** Lucy Baker, Nancy Kramer

#### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 am. A quorum was established.

#### **II. Review and approval of agenda and OCBA February 2014 Meeting minutes**

The minutes were accepted by common consent.

The agenda was reviewed and approved by common consent with an agreed change: to move Item VII. Administrator's Report, A. OACO 2015-17 Position Descriptions, earlier in the agenda.

#### **III. Public Comment**

Jennifer Duncan, Founder and Executive Director of the Justice Honor Service (JHS) Multicultural Film Festival, spoke about the film festival's history and current program. The films are always free to the public, with a different film each month from October through May. Each season the festival has a social justice theme; 2013 -2014 is "Journeys that Transform Us".

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Duncan for her presentation.

Erious Johnson, the new Director of the Civil Rights unit at the Department of Justice, introduced himself to the Commissioners. He is conducting community outreach and invited the Commissioners to contact him about issues of concern.

Nancy will circulate his information to the Commissioners. Commissioner Collin invited Mr. Johnson to attend a meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Johnson for his presentation.

Chair Manning closed the Public Comment section.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair**

Chair Manning opened nominations for Chair.

James Morris and Robin Morris Collin jointly nominated James Manning for Chair.

Chair Manning called for any other nominations for Chair. Chair Manning called for nominations from the floor for Chair a 3<sup>rd</sup> time. Hearing none, Chair Manning closed the nominations for Chair. He was deeply honored and accepted the nomination.

Chair Manning opened nominations for Vice Chair.

Robin Morris Collin and Rep. Frederick jointly nominated James Morris for Vice Chair.

Chair Manning called twice for any other nominations from the floor and hearing none closed the nominations for Vice Chair. Vice Chair Morris accepted the nomination.

The Officer elections will take place at the June 2014 OCBA meeting.

##### **B. Commissioner Avakian, Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI)**

Commissioner Avakian updated the Commission on restoring shop classes in Oregon high schools and Equal Pay for Equal Work. He explained that two years ago an environmental scan identified the aging of Oregon's work force. In the Trades an apprentice used to begin study at age 19, whereas today the average age is 28. The average age of skilled workers in the Trades is much higher than it once was. There is concern amongst the business community about where the future skilled workforce will come from. A connection was made between the increase in the average age of apprentices and skilled tradespeople, and the elimination of shop classes in schools.

In 2013, BOLI submitted a bill to the legislature to restore shop classes and was successful. The goal is restore shop classes to all public middle and high schools in Oregon. The criteria is to teach a curriculum that meets the needs of a future work force. The class offerings at various schools now include how to write and use

Computer Assisted Design (CAD) software, used in robotics creation, and biomedical development, such as artificial knee construction. Another change is that students can now receive credits for math and science by taking shop classes.

Another initiative is teaching students how to prepare themselves for a life of work, which focuses on resume writing and time management.

Commissioner Avakian then spoke about the Equal Pay for Equal Work initiative. It is well-documented that women earn less than men for the same work, and that people of color earn less than that. He established the Oregon Council on Civil Rights (OCCR) to address issues like these. Currently the OCCR is focused on how to eliminate wage gaps. BOLI will create an action plan and begin to implement it. Actions include how to modernize Oregon's workplaces, with women and family-friendly policies, onsite and/or subsidized daycare, and classes on negotiation skills. The set of recommendation is on the BOLI website:  
<http://www.oregon.gov/boli/docs/Pay%20Inequality%20Report%20FINAL%202-26-2014.pdf>.

Commissioner Avakian thanked the Oregon Advocacy Commissions for their active support and appreciated being invited to speak to the OCBA once a year or more.

Chair Manning invited the Commissioners to ask questions. Animated discussion followed and included the following topics: Companies such as NIKE and Intel are doing better at retaining employees of color, whereas law enforcement, education and government can do better; recruiters might do better to focus on areas where the black population is small, so moving to Portland will not be so unfamiliar; the cost of higher education in Oregon is currently prohibitive to many people; the importance of connecting existing and pre-retirees to current students.

Commissioner Avakian added that BOLI is making a concerted effort to reach out to communities of color and women regarding apprenticeships. However, people may not have the resources to pay for the tools of the trade or transportation. There is now a fund to help apprentices cover these costs. For the first time he is seeing an increase in the number of people of color and women entering apprenticeship and he thinks this is due in part to the fund.

Commissioner Trice will follow up with Commissioner Avakian regarding building partnerships to keep the city of Joseph's young workforce in Joseph. OACO staff will make that connection.

The Commissioners thanked Commissioner Avakian for his presentation.

C. Djimet Dogo, Executive Director, Africa House

Mr. Dogo introduced himself. He talked about the many issues a new African immigrant faces after settling in Oregon, such as only receiving public assistance for the first 120 days after they arrive. He explained that some of the refugees were born and lived their lives in refugee camps, never learning how to read or going to school, which makes finding a job in Oregon extremely difficult. Professional credentials earned in Africa, Europe or Russia are not transferable in the United States. Many refugees have seen and experienced war atrocities suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and need counseling. The refugee population in Oregon includes members of various warring tribes in Africa, who are expected to be civil and tolerant of one another now that they are in the United States, when in fact reconciliation and mediation work is needed. Housing is an issue, as is culture shock for leaders and community members. The need for funding and connections is huge.

The Africa House program began in 1999, as an effort to develop coalitions amongst the different represented tribes. It is now part of IRCO (the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization), and offers multiple services to African immigrants and develops leaders in the community who can advocate for their needs. This year was the first time members of Africa House attended the Urban League Legislative Day which was very successful. The program also encourages students to choose a career in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) areas.

Mr. Dogo referenced the Coalition of Communities of Color Report, which Africa House collaborated on, as an excellent resource for better understanding the challenges these immigrants are facing, and what can be done to improve their situation: [http://coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/docs/CCC\\_AfricanReport\\_FINAL.pdf](http://coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/docs/CCC_AfricanReport_FINAL.pdf)

The Commissioners discussed what the OCBA can do to assist Africa House in carrying out its mission. Several ideas were mentioned, such as partnering with the Oregon Commission for Women regarding the importance of counseling for immigrants and refugees who are victims of rape and the importance of cultural competency for mental health therapists and medical professionals. Chair Manning volunteered to serve as a cultural informant for African immigrants in the Eugene area, and to raise awareness in the Eugene police department about the importance of cultural competency. Culturally competent rape counseling is essential.

Commissioner Collin proposed reaching out to the Oregon Commission for Women (OCFW) regarding these concerns. She and Chair Manning expressed interest in attending an upcoming OCFW meeting. She also proposed identifying a network of local sponsors for immigrants and refugees across the state. The Commissioners will consider who could host this network. The Hmong community went through a similar process, and it would be worthwhile to identify best practices learned as they assimilated.

Representative Frederick pointed out the importance of remembering cultural competency includes differentiating between African Americans and Africans.

The Commissioners also discussed the concerns of immigrants that the professional licenses they earned in another country do not currently transfer to accreditation in the U.S. and that it may be most worthwhile to focus on instituting changes at the administrative level or via administrative rule (rather than legislation).

Chair Manning read a letter of congratulations from the OCBA to Djimet Dogo for being awarded the title of News Maker of the year, by the Royal Rosarians and the *Skanner*, and presented him with it, signed by the Chair and Vice Chair.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Dogo for his presentation.

**D. Oregon Studies Project – Amy Platt, Oregon Historical Society**

Amy Platt explained that the Oregon Studies Project is focused on developing more inclusive history curricula and resources available to teachers in Oregon. There have been several efforts in the past to grow resources available to social studies teachers for curricula that include the many cultural and racial groups that make up Oregon's history. The Oregon Legislature passed the Oregon Studies bill in 2013 that appropriates a modest amount of General Fund for its implementation in Fall, 2014.. The Oregon Department of Education is tasked with overseeing the compilation of existing curricula and adding more inclusive resources and curricula in consultation with the Oregon Advocacy Commissions and others. The Oregon Historical Society (OHS) has contributed to the effort as well, and created the Oregon History Project, an online resource for learning about Oregon's past. OHS has also created the Oregon Encyclopedia, and later this year will be launching a portal combining the 2 resources.

Representative Frederick has a list of topics to be included that he will submit. His list includes black cowboys in Oregon, mule skimmers through Applegate Pass, the Black Panthers, model cities leaders, Pullman porters, the Golden West hotel, the Colored Women's Club, "Our Kind of People", Jack and Jill Clubs and The Links. Frank Garcia in the Governor's Office has met with Andrea Morgan in the Oregon Department of Education to offer his support. He and the Advocacy Commissions are supportive of future modest funding to keep this project growing.

Amy will connect with Dr. Dixon, outgoing OCBA Commissioner, about additional historical suggestions.

The Commission thanked Amy Platt for her presentation.

**V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. Internship updates**

1. Apprentice to Journeyman Disparities – Vice Chair Morris

This internship topic has been distributed again, with plans to have an intern begin in either summer or fall. The intern will examine graduation rates for apprentices of color to the journeyman level.

B. Committee Reports

1. Advocacy Committee

The next Advocacy Committee meeting is May 27<sup>th</sup>.

2. Legislative Committee

Commissioner Robin Morris Collin, Committee Chair reported that the committee met and discussed the following issues:

- a. Enforcement of the Minority Teacher Act – recently there have been community meetings with Armando LaGuardia, a local educator, to address the lack of enforcement in Oregon’s schools regarding this act. It was agreed that an OCBA Commissioner should attend future meetings of the workgroup on the Act, to learn how the OCBA can be of assistance.
- b. Air Quality Monitoring - The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has \$350,000 to build a new air quality monitoring system, which will address serious concerns about air toxics in North and Northeast Portland communities.
- c. Disproportionate Discipline, part 2 - This externship for a law student is the continuation of an internship begun in 2013, has been filled. Currently, the School Discipline Advisory Committee (SDAC) within the Oregon Department of Education, one of the internship partners, is reviewing school policies statewide regarding school discipline with a focus on revision of those policies to require best practice. It will be important for the new rules to be understood and well-known. This involves connecting with major education staff organizations, such as COSA (Confederation of Oregon School Administrators), OSEA (Oregon School Employees Association) and AFT (American Federation of Teachers) as part of the work of the SDAC and ensuring they are knowledgeable of these new policies.

The next Legislative Committee meeting is Friday, May 16th, 9am – 10am.

**VI. Administrator’s Report**

A. OACO 2015-17 Position descriptions

Lucy summarized the steps the OAC’s have already taken in their discussion of potential additional office staff as part of the 2015-17 OACO Budget Request. All the OACs considered and agreed that 3 new positions and 1 reclassification will improve the ability of the Advocacy Commissions to fulfill their statutory missions. They are:

- General Office Assistant to cover meeting logistics and other task support for the Commissions and their growing committee structure;
- Operations and Policy Analyst to help with legislative work and public policy research, analysis, and recommendations;
- Community Affairs Specialist to support the Commissions in their engagement discussions with their communities, and communications support for web, social media, media plans, and consistent message on policy issues.
- Executive Support Specialist 2 with is a reclassification of Nancy's current position (ESS 1) because the Commissions' work has grown in scope and complexity and needs the higher level of support. Nancy has been working at a higher level regularly in support of the Commissions.

The next step will be for the OACs to prioritize the staff requests.

#### B. Internship Broadside

Lucy discussed the OAC's new Public Policy Research broadside. It is still being revised and will eventually be printed. She will include at least one chart and graph about the growing number of public policy research internships the Commissions have supported, the number of agency, education institutions and community group partners involved, and the various strategic priority areas covered.

#### C. Direct Deposit forms

Nancy explained that there are 2 kinds of direct deposit programs: 1 for direct deposit of the \$30 per diems given to eligible Commissioners for regular meetings, and 1 direct deposit program for travel reimbursements submitted. She encouraged Commissioners who have not already signed up for both types of direct deposit to consider doing so by contact her at [nancy.kramer@oregon.gov](mailto:nancy.kramer@oregon.gov)

### VII. For the Good of the Order:

The next OCBA meeting is Saturday, June 21, 2014, and Officers' elections will be held at this meeting.

Commissioners recommended several books and articles on issues of civil rights and diversity. Rep Frederick recommended - *American Nations*, a book by Collin Woodard, looking at the 11 nations that are on the North American continent. Isaac Dixon recommended a *New Yorker* article by Thomas Piketty, an economist, about the ever-growing divide of income levels in the United States.

Chair Manning read a letter from the Governor thanking Dr. Dixon for his work on the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs at the close of his term on the OCBA, and presented it to him. The Commissioners thanked Dr. Dixon for his service as past Chair and as a Commissioner.

**VII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56am by common consent.