

Metropolitan Human Relations Commission sets new course

"The first thing we have to do is increase our credibility and contact with the community."

— Jeanette Pai
Executive Director, MHRC

BY ANNDEE HOCHMAN

To locate the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, you first must find a parking space downtown. Then you ride the elevator to the fifth floor of the Portland Building. You wait in a chair for, say 15 minutes, because the new executive director is on the phone.

The office is pleasant, filled with bright posters and cheerful staff. It's just a little hard to find. And that inaccessibility — both literal and figurative — is what new MHRC director Jeanette Pai wants to change.

The MHRC, a joint advisory group to the city of Portland and Multnomah County, is designed to be a watchdog on civil and human rights issues. But in recent years the commission has gained a reputation of being more like a sleeping hound.

Pai, 32, became head of the MHRC in October with the intention of bringing back the commission's bite.

Her first task has been to let the public know the commission exists. By opening satellite offices on Portland Community College's Cascade and Southeast Center campuses, Pai hopes to boost the MHRC's visibility. And a series of six speak-outs in different sections of Portland are intended to let communities set priorities by telling commission members what's on their minds.

"The first thing we have to do is increase our credibility and contact with the community," Pai said recently. "We want to be the ones who call 20 people [about an issue] and ask them to sign on with us."

Pai, who formerly served as staff liaison for human rights for the Salem city government, said the current emotional climate in Portland is ideal for human and civil rights work.

The public feels a growing urgency about the increase in hate crimes, gang and drug

activity, she said. And such problems are no longer confined to Portland's urban core. Her office receives reports of hate crimes and intimidation from Beaverton; even in her own neighborhood of Raleigh Hills, Pai has seen swastikas painted on street signs.

"People are feeling like they need to do something," she said. "We see neighborhood groups pulling together."

The increase in hate crimes is a particular concern for Pai. To respond, the commission recently published a brochure titled, "Hate Crime: Your Rights and Responsibilities," which details new Oregon laws requiring the reporting of crimes based on race, color, religion, national origin and sexual orientation.

The brochure defines hate crimes and lists steps individuals can take to combat such behavior, including lobbying, starting a neighborhood watch and joining community groups to address supremacist violence.

"A lot of what we're talking about is education and empowerment," Pai said. Under her direction, she said, the commission will shift its emphasis from analysis and reports to action and visibility.

"I feel like I've been talking for two months straight," she said. "People are starting to say — well, it looks like the commission is going to come back. The track record we have right now isn't so hot. I think we're really starting from the ground up."

Schedule of Metropolitan Human Relations Commission speak-outs for January:

Tuesday, January 9, at Harvey Scott School, 6700 NE Prescott, 7:30 pm.

Wednesday, January 10, at the Northwest Service Center conference room, 1819 NW Everett, 7:30 pm.

Tuesday, January 16, at the St. Johns Community Center, 8427 North Central, 7:30 pm.

videos and discussion of AIDS activism throughout the United States.

While one leg of ACT UP is education, the other is direct action: once we know, we need to act. Acting up in ACT UP is not simply getting arrested (many members never have been). Vitality important is the variety of skills people bring to the group: planning and organizational skills, communication and networking abilities, access to resources, familiarity and enjoyment of research, and/or simply a desire to affect change. PWAs are especially important in bringing their anger and experience to help set the ACT UP agenda. Your voice is important; come and give your input.

Take this opportunity to get involved. Gain a sense of pride, reclaim your voice. Alone our voice has no power; as a group our shout brings change.

For more information, call 288-7853.

*ACT UP/Portland
MCC Church basement
NE 24th and Broadway
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm
1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month*

— Jeffrey Hart and Michael MacKillop

Time to register for Gay Games III dwindles

Now is the time to register for Gay Games III before the registration fees increase. Athletes intending to participate in the Games are reminded that January 31, 1990 is the last date they can register before the fees increase 50 percent from \$36 to \$54 for most sports. Vancouver officials stress that individuals must pay in full and complete all required documentation by January 31 in order to get the lower fee. Team Portland can assist individuals with the process, but it is important to get started and not wait until the last minute.

Co-Chair Richard Brown also points out that those seeking hosted housing in Vancouver need to register before January 31 for no-cost housing. Vancouver officials have reported that only 20 percent of a possible 10,000 registered athletes and artists will have the option of free accommodations. Billets will be allocated on a first come first served basis to registered athletes.

Team Portland has been actively promoting early registration with extensive publicity over the past several months. In late December the organization held a "registration fair" at the downtown Portland YWCA. Spokespersons say the event was successful, but there is still a long way to go to have the targeted 100 athletes registered before the final deadline of May 31, 1990. For information about registration call Tyler at 289-2226 or Richard at 245-5301.

Team Portland has T-shirts bearing the Team Portland logo which are available in three different colors and sell for \$10 each. The group also has plans for promotional buttons to be sold for \$1.

In addition to registering athletes for the Games, Team Portland members have been active in fundraising efforts. The group plans to raise sufficient funds through individual donations, fund-raising events and business sponsorships to defray the cost of a team uniform which is now being designed. Persons wishing to make a contribution or participate in fundraising events may contact Team Portland treasurer Geoff Pleat at 234-1629.

JoAnn Loulan comes to Portland for a lecture Saturday, Feb. 24, and a workshop Sunday, Feb. 25. Portion of proceeds benefits A Woman's Place Bookstore.

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