



County of Onondaga
Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Onondaga County/Syracuse Human Rights Commission

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ONONDAGA COUNTY/CITY OF SYRACUSE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

Pending approval ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

DECEMBER 17, 2025, ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC Meeting

*****Hybrid meeting*****

<u>Chairman</u> - H. Bernard Alex	<u>Adam Leslie</u>
<u>Mary Grace Almandrez</u>	<u>Agnes McCray</u>
<u>Duane L. Reese II</u>	<u>Paul Harvey</u>
<u>Lauren Rosenstein</u>	<u>Lyla Hua (appointed June 18, 2025)</u>
<u>Julianna Sanford (appt. Aug. 21, 2025)</u>	<u>Taylor McFadden (appt. Aug. 21, 2025)</u>

Absent: Commissioners Julianna Sanford, Taylor McFadden, Mary Grace Almandrez, Adam Leslie.

Present: Chairman H. Bernard Alex and Commissioner McCray (both in person). Commissioners Duane Reese II, Lauren Rosenstein, Paul Harvey, Lyla Hua (all attending virtually by phone)

County staff present: Montanette Rocker and Anthony Heard.

Opening: In-person and virtual session began at 5:52 p.m.

Welcome and opening of meeting: Chairman Alex opened and welcomed everyone.

Community members present: None

Report and updates from ODI admin: Staffers from the New York State Division of Human Rights would like to introduce themselves to HRC and discuss how the two can collaborate. It was discussed that the HRC should send thank you letters to the law enforcement panelists of the Oct. 22, event. Upper management of the law enforcement agencies were already thanked.

Discussion: Preparing to host events for the first quarter of 2026. Chairman Alex urged everyone to think first quarter events in 2026: MLK Day, the diaspora in CNY, and human rights in CNY. A commissioner noted that “the human rights of people in CNY are causing people to feel depressed and pressured.”

Upcoming HRC events: Reading of “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Follow up discussion: Commissioners discussed the “Letter to the Editor” celebrating International Human Rights Day and the law enforcement forum on 21st century policing.

Discussion: Commissioners discussed their ideas and vision for the first quarter of 2026. The Commission recognized there are quite a few historical markers during the first few months of the year, including Black History Month and Women's History Month. Commissioners decided to host a public reading of "Letter from Birmingham Jail," on Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2026, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The Commission wants to use the gym at the Syracuse Community Connections, also known as the Southwest Community Center. Chairman Alex and commissioners want to invite students from school districts throughout Onondaga County to participate. The HRC would like to invite the Syracuse City School District, Jordan-Elbridge Central School District, West Genesee School District, Cicero-North Syracuse School District, Jamesville-DeWitt, the Westhill Central School District and other districts. The HRC will reach out to the various school districts asking for their attendance and/or participation. Chairman Alex encouraged commissioners to read the "Letter from Birmingham Jail." The community and HRC will celebrate the literary piece written by Dr. King and discuss its relevance in 2026. Commissioner Hua agreed to create a flyer and the flyer will be done in advance of the event with the location included. Staff from Diversity and Inclusion will contact the Southwest Community Center.

Reflect on 2025: Commissioners discussed the success of the police forum and the Letter to the Editor celebrating International Human Rights Day. Commissioner Reese thought the October forum was excellent. Chairman Alex said he "got great feedback from law enforcement officials who had only positive things to say" about the forum. Commissioner McCray said she felt that law enforcement wants to participate again in such a police and community forum again. Chairman Alex thanked Agnes for writing the letter and said he was very impressed with the content of the letter. Commissioner Rosenstein wants to know when the commission is going to do this again – a letter to the editor. It was asked whether the HRC has a logo. Montanette confirmed yes. All commissioners were impressed with the letter to the editor written by Commissioner McCray.

NYS Division of Human Rights visiting HRC: The commission would like to have staffers from NYSDHR present at the March 18, 2026, HRC meeting. Montanette will reach out to Kelly and Emilie from the Division of Human Rights about joining commissioners in March.

Meeting ended at 6:40 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Montanette Rocker on December 23, 2025