

N E W S

FROM THE

Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations



Office of Media Relations ☎ (213) 974-7654

For Immediate Release:

For further information, contact:

Ava Gutierrez

(213) 974-7654 Telephone

(213) 687-4251 Facsimile

(213) 208-0017 Pager

email: agutierrez@hrc.co.la.ca.us

December 3, 2003

Or,

Ara Khachatourian

L.A. County Anti-Discrimination
Campaign Director, Rock The Vote,

(310) 234-0665

(310) 234-0666, fax

email: ara@rockthevote.com

Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, Quality and Productivity Commission Help the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations Reach Out to County Youth

Los Angeles—When the idea of funding a campaign to address bias and discrimination came before a county agency dedicated to supporting innovative work, the agency's leadership didn't hesitate. The result was a grant that will fund the zerohour.com youth public education campaign designed by the County Human Relations Commission and Rock the Vote, the 13 year old non-profit organization dedicated to protecting freedom of expression and empowering young people to change their world. Both Rock the Vote and the Commission will lead this multi-year, countywide campaign by utilizing mass media and specially-developed programs to reach out to the more than 6 million young people in the county.

The campaign is largely financed by the Los Angeles County Commission on Quality and Productivity, an innovative agency that catapulted the idea of a public/private partnership to address hate and discrimination among teens.

“Our kids go to school in crowded, under-funded schools that lack books, and even clean bathrooms. We need to straighten this out – today,” says Jaclyn Tilley Hill, Chair of the Quality and Productivity Commission.

This engaging campaign calls for 14-to 18-year-olds to take a stand against discrimination and prejudice in their schools and communities with the ultimate goal of changing the county school milieu from one of apathy to one of civic participation where students are encouraged to support one another in a positive way.

Additionally, funding for a youth-based website was provided by the County’s Information Technology Fund. Both the County’s Information Office and Quality and Productivity Commission approved HRC’s vision of working with youth in schools to address systemic problems.

The campaign could not have been conceived at a better time: Last year, 31% of all felony prosecutions involving hate crime involved youth under the age of 18. If prosecution complaints involving youth under the age of 25 are added, that number jumps to 61% of all L.A. County District Attorney prosecutions. Between 1999-2001, over 50% of all district attorney hate crime prosecutions were against juveniles. Interracial and inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts have continuously plagued county schools and neighborhoods, according to media reports and the aftermath of 9/11 brought an increase of anti-Muslim/Middle Easterner hate crimes, frequently in schools.

“After 9/11 my best friend told me that I was a terrorist, and I was made to feel very unwelcome at my school, by both students and teachers,” says Farah, a current member of Youth ACT, a Commission sponsored youth group that helped shape the Zerohour.com Youth Public Education Campaign. Since 9/11, Farah created a school-wide peace rally that helped bring Muslim and non-Muslim students together.

Other county departments have rallied around the soon-to-be launched campaign, and materials will be distributed through the L.A. County Office of Education schools and L.A. County Public Library system as well as through L.A. County Park and Recreation recreational centers.

The Quality and Productivity Commission’s fund consists of loans, grants and loan/grant combinations which can be awarded to department projects to fund pilot projects with the potential for best practices. The projects are usually focused on improving the department’s quality and/or

productivity efforts. The projects, need not show cost savings or revenue generation but may demonstrate an increase in a department's quality of service to the public.

The Quality and Productivity Commission seeks to further the strategic goals of the County by advising, assisting, and supporting the County's elected officials, managers, and employees to promote and improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of County processes, policies, activities and public services. Since 1982, Commission sponsored programs have generated an estimated \$1.6 billion in savings, cost avoidance, and additional revenue.