

Michigan
Civil Rights
Commission



40th
Anniversary

About the Michigan Civil Rights Commission

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC) was created by the Michigan Constitution of 1963, as a bipartisan, eight member body appointed by the governor for alternating terms of four years. It is the duty of the Commission, in a manner prescribed by law, to investigate alleged discrimination against any person in the enjoyment of the civil rights guaranteed by law and the constitution, and to secure the equal protection of such civil rights without such discrimination. The Commission is in charge of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) and appoints an executive director to oversee the department. The primary roles of the Commission are to set policy for the department, hold hearings on topics of concern to the citizens of Michigan and issue final decisions and orders on complaints of discrimination, requests for approval of affirmative action plans and requests for bona fide occupational qualification exemptions. As further stated in Article V, Section 29, the state constitution directs the Commission to investigate alleged discrimination against any person because of religion, race, color or national origin. Public Acts 453 and 220 of 1976 and subsequent amendments have added sex, age, marital status, height, weight, arrest record, and physical and mental disabilities to the original four protected categories.

This booklet was created as part of the MCRC's 40th anniversary commemoration to honor and remember those that have served on the Commission since its inception.

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MEET THE COMMISSION

THE 1960's

* **REV. A.A. BANKS, JR. (1964-1977)**

was one of the original eight commissioners of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. He was elected Commission co-chair in 1967, a position he held until 1968. For decades, he was the pastor of the historic Second Baptist Church in downtown Detroit. He also served as president of the Metropolitan Detroit Council of Churches, the Wolverine State Missionary Baptist Convention and as a board member of the National Council of Churches. Long before his appointment to the Commission, Rev. Banks was active in the civil rights struggle. He was a board member of the Detroit Urban League, the Downtown YMCA, and a member of the City of Detroit Commission on Children and Youth. As a Commissioner, Rev. Banks took a keen interest in the legal, moral and ethical aspects of issues that came before the Commission.



EDWARD L. BARRERA (1969-1974)

was the first Latino member of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and held a variety of positions, including chair. Mr. Barrera was a district manager for State Farm Insurance Company at the time of his appointment. He later resigned from the Commission in order to devote more time to his business.



* *Deceased*

JULIAN A. COOK, JR., J.D. (1968-1971)

was a partner in the Pontiac law firm of Hempstead, McGrath & Cook at the time of his appointment. Judge Cook was the chair of the Continuing Legal Education Committee, vice-chair of the Civil Liberties Committee and chair of the Constitutional Law committee of the Michigan State Bar Association. He was a member of the Legal Redress Committee of the State NAACP, a member of the board of directors and president of the Pontiac area Urban League. He currently serves as a federal district court judge in Detroit.



*** *RICHARD CROSS (1964-1965)***

was a member of the first set of commissioners of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. His tenure on the Commission was brief. In 1965, he declined Governor George Romney's request to reappoint him because of pressing business interests.



*** *JOHN T. DEMPSEY (1967-1969)***

was a professor of political science at the University of Michigan Dearborn when he joined the Commission. Other positions in his career at the university included chair of the school's division of Literature, Science and the Arts, and director of the Center for Urban Studies.



JOHN FEIKENS, J.D. (1964-1967)

was, together with Damon J. Keith, the first co-chair of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. He was appointed a U.S. District Court judge for the Eastern District of Michigan in 1970. Judge Feikens served as chief judge from 1979 to 1986. He assumed senior status in 1986. He is a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, and in recent decades has received honorary doctoral degrees from the University of Detroit and the Detroit College of Law. He is a member of the Michigan, Detroit and American Bar Associations. He is a director of the Detroit Economic Club and Habitat for Humanity Detroit, and is a member of Grosse Pointe Memorial Church.



**** WILLIAM T. GOSSETT, J.D. (1964-1966)***

perhaps one of Detroit's most illustrious lawyers, was a pioneer member of the Commission. In the early 1960s, after stints as general counsel and part of the management team for Bendix Corp. and the Ford Motor Co., Mr. Gossett accepted an appointment from President John F. Kennedy as deputy to the special representative for trade negotiations. He was chair of the United Negro College Fund from 1961 until 1967. He also received awards from the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Jewish Congress and the Detroit Council of Churches. Mr. Gossett served as head of the American Bar Association from 1968 until 1970. He was a partner of the Detroit law firm of Dykema, Wheat, Spencer, Goodnow & Trigg, now known as Dykema Gossett.



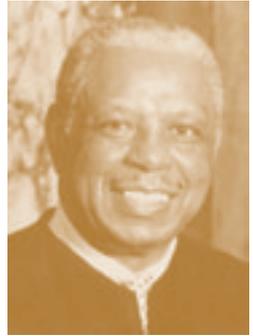
* ***GEORGE E. GULLEN, JR. (1967-1972)***

Wayne State University's sixth president, brought a distinguished track record in civil rights with him to the Commission. As president of Wayne State from 1971 until 1978, he initiated an affirmative action policy for the college. He also appointed the first female vice-president in the school's history.



DAMON J. KEITH, J.D. (1964-1968)

was, along with Judge John Feikens, the first co-chair of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. But his devotion to civil rights predates his appointment to the Commission. As a lawyer in Detroit in the 1950s and 1960s, Judge Keith played a prominent role in championing the rights of Black clients in civil and criminal cases. In his capacity as co-chair of the Commission, Judge Keith helped cool tempers during the 1967 Detroit rebellion that claimed dozens of lives. In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed him a federal district judge. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed Judge Keith to the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals. He assumed senior status in 1995 and remains very active in civic affairs in metro Detroit and on the national scene.



* ***KENNETH W. ROBINSON (1964-1967)***

was one of the original eight members of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. He often represented the Commission at various public events. Mr. Robinson served on the Commission's public hearing panel investigating racial discrimination in housing at an apartment complex in Ann Arbor.



**FATHER THEODORE E. LaMARRE
(1964-1981)**

was one of the original members of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and an active participant in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. For many years he was the pastor of Visitation Parish in Detroit. He was a member of the Community Affairs Department for the Michigan Catholic Conference and the Bishops Commission for Human Relations for the Diocese of Saginaw. He also served as pastor at Saginaw's St. Joseph Parish where he initiated the Catholic Interracial Council.



*** SIDNEY SHEVITZ (1964-1971)**

was one of the original members of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and served as its first secretary. He served with distinction and was noted for his eloquent discourse at Commission meetings. Mr. Shevitz died near the end of his second term.



*** MARTHA R. WYLIE (1965-1972)**

who served two terms, became the first female member of the Commission when she was appointed by Governor George Romney. Mrs. Wylie was president of the United Community Services of Metro Detroit and was involved in a host of other civic causes. She was a board member of the Legal Aid and Defender Association of Detroit, the Merrill-Palmer Institute Corporation and the Urban League Guild. In 1970, Detroit Mayor Roman S. Gribbs appointed her to the Statewide Institute of Community Relations in the Administration of Justice. In 1972 she was elected the Commission chair.



CAROLE T. WILLIAMS (1969-1972)

was the second woman appointed to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. At the time of her appointment, Ms. Williams was executive director of the Volunteer Placement Corps in Detroit, a job training and placement program for inner-city youth.



THE 1970's

BEATRICE BANKS (1979-1984)

was director of customer and marketing services for the Detroit Edison Company when she was appointed to the Commission. She was elected chair of the Commission in 1983. She was a member of the Dearborn and Greater Detroit Chambers of Commerce, the executive committee Detroit Branch NAACP, the Urban League, Booker T. Washington Business Association, Women's Economic Club, and the American Association of Blacks in Energy. She was also a member of the advisory boards of Horizon Upward Bound, Don Bosco Home for Boys and Black Family Development.



CATHERINE BLACKWELL (1973-1984)

a Black studies and performing arts consultant for the Detroit Public Schools, served one term as vice-chair and two terms as chair. She was active with the Detroit Branch NAACP and was a member of the African Gallery Committee for the Detroit Institute of Arts. Ms. Blackwell traveled extensively throughout Africa and studied at several universities there.



In 1973 she received the first Whitney M. Young, Jr. Memorial Award from the Detroit Public Library for her contributions to African-American history and culture. She also served on the education committee of New Detroit, Inc. and was a charter member of the International Afro-American Museum.

CAROLE CHIAMP, J.D. (1975-1981)

was an attorney with the Detroit law firm of Chiamp & Wenger, P.C. at the time of her appointment. She specialized in the areas of negligence, mental health and family law. She had previously worked in the legal division of the Detroit Department of Transportation. She was an active member of the Women Lawyers Association, the American Arbitration Association, the American Trial Lawyers Association and the American Civil Liberties Union.



AVERN COHN, J.D. (1972-1975)

was an attorney at the highly regarded Detroit law firm of Honigman, Miller, Schwartz and Cohn when he was appointed to the Commission. He was elected Commission chair in 1974. He resigned after the state's ethics board held that a lawyer could not serve on a board or commission if the law firm of which the lawyer was a member appeared before the board or commission. At the time of his appointment, he was a board member of the Detroit chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and a member of the advisory board of the American Jewish Committee. He was appointed a federal judge in 1979. These days, Judge Cohn is a familiar name around the Detroit metro area as a commentator on public affairs through the many letters to the editor he authors.



SHARON TEVIS FINCH, J.D. (1973-1975)

was one of the first women appointed to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. At the time of her appointment, she was in partnership with her father in the law firm of Finch & Finch. She was active in the State Bar of Michigan, serving on the Young Lawyers Commercial and Criminal Law sections and on its Criminal Jurisprudence Committee. Ms. Finch was a member of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan and the Michigan Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. She also served in an advisory capacity to the National Organization for Women (NOW) in its study of large retail credit policies and general credit investigations. Her tenure on the Commission was brief, however. Ms. Finch resigned her seat less than two years later upon her appointment by Governor William Milliken to take a judgeship in the now defunct Common Pleas Court for the city of Detroit.



HILDA GAGE, J.D. (1975-1978)

a graduate of Wayne State University's law school, was a practicing attorney when she was appointed to the Commission. Among the positions she held on the Commission were secretary/treasurer. She was a member of the American Bar Association, the Michigan Bar Association, the Detroit Bar Association and the Women Lawyers Association. She resigned her seat on the Commission after being elected to the Oakland County Circuit Court. She presently sits on the boards of Children's Hospital of Michigan, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Michigan Opera Theater, and National Center for State Courts. She is now a Michigan Court of Appeals judge.



BERRY GOODLETT (1975-1981)

was director of special needs/placement at Charles Stewart Mott Community College when he was appointed to the Commission. He was elected Commission chair in 1977. He was vice-president of the United Way Board of Trustees and a member of the Flint Board of Education Affirmative Action Association. His other activities included board memberships of the YMCA and the United Fund of Genesee County. He was a member of the National Alcoholism Association and the Genesee County Maternal and Child Care Council. As a Commissioner, Mr. Goodlett advocated the strengthening of the roles of state civil rights agencies and municipal human relations commissions.



PAULETTE LeBOST, J.D. (1971-1974)

was a Detroit attorney with the law firm of Jobes & LeBost, P.C. when she joined the Commission. She eventually became the Commission's secretary. Before going into private practice, Ms. LeBost worked as staff and supervising attorney for the Wayne County Neighborhood Legal Services office in Highland Park. There, she helped organize the Free Legal Aid Clinic, Inc. The clinic, which was staffed by Wayne State University law students and representatives of the Lawyers Guild, was designed to assist indigent clients. Ms. LeBost was forced to resign her position on the Commission in September 1975 after the state Board of Ethics issued an opinion that held it was improper for any member of a law firm to serve on a state board or commission if the firm represents clients before that body. She is currently a hearing referee for Wayne County Probate Court Juvenile Section.



* ***PAUL HABRECHT, J.D. (1975-1982)***

who served two terms on the Commission, was a professor of law at Wayne State University. As a commissioner, he held a variety of positions, including secretary-treasurer and chair. He joined the Commission with a mission to ensure that civil rights laws enacted to protect women and minorities remained in place.



He served on the boards of the American Civil Liberties Union and the Wayne County Neighborhood Legal Services. He was vice-chairman of the Michigan Housing and Development Authority and a member of the Michigan Fair Campaign Practices Committee. He was the public representative on the U.S. Secretary of Labor's advisory council on employee welfare and pension benefit plans.

GILBERTO IBARRA (1974-1984)

was a teacher of Spanish and the humanities in the Lansing Public Schools. He became the Commission's vice-chair in 1975 and assumed the position of Commission chair in 1978. For a few years, he was coordinator of the Lansing School District's bilingual program. He was also an active member of both the Michigan Education Association and the



National Education Association. He promoted chess and Latino clubs in the Lansing public schools. In 1966, he was named teacher of the month by the Lansing Jaycees. In 1969, he was appointed to the Michigan Education Association Legislative Commission. A man of many talents, he had his Spanish musical play published in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1972.

DALTON A. ROBERSON, J.D. (1972-1974)

was a Detroit lawyer when he was appointed to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. He resigned two years later after getting a seat as a judge on the old Detroit Recorder's Court. Although his tenure on the Commission was brief, Judge Roberson served for a while as chair. He retired from the bench in 2000.



**** REV. DR. FREDERICK G. SAMPSON (1977-1983)***

an internationally renowned preacher and spellbinding public speaker, brought to the Commission the benefit of having served on a similar body in another state—the Kentucky Human Rights Commission. He was pastor of Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit until his death late in 2001. Dr. Sampson was a member of the board of the Detroit Urban League and New Detroit, Inc. He was a past president of the Detroit Branch NAACP, a member of the Detroit Round Table of Christians and Jews, the Boy Scouts Council and the Detroit branch of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).



THE 1980's

* *SONDRA BERLIN (1985-1997)*

who served three terms, became the first and only person with a disability appointed to the Commission. Ms. Berlin, who was appointed by Governor James Blanchard, had been wheelchair bound since contracting polio at the age of nine. She never let her disability get in the way of her passion for community involvement. She was a board member of the Detroit area Centers for Independent Living and a member of the Friends of Kaplan Medical Center. As a Commission member, she strove to be a voice for people with disabilities. In the spring of 1994 she was elected Commission chair. She was elected Commission secretary in February 1997. She died shortly afterwards.



BEVERLY CLARK, M.A., J.D. (1982-1991)

a Detroit lawyer, made history when she became the first American Indian on the Commission following her appointment by Governor William Milliken. Prior to her appointment, she had been active in several legal and American Indian organizations, including the board of directors of Michigan Indian Legal Services. She was the first female president of the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association and also served as president of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan. She also chaired the Detroit Human Relations Commission. She held several positions on the Commission, including vice-chair and chair.



EVA L. EVANS, Ph.D. (1985-1992)

was an educator who retired as deputy superintendent of the Lansing Public Schools. Nationally and locally she was a visible presence. In Lansing, she served on many community organizations. She was vice-chair of the Lansing Board of Water and Light, and chair of the board of the Capital Area United Way. She was the Supreme Basileus, or national president, of the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority, Inc. She also served on the national board of directors of the United Negro College Fund. She was active with the American Association of School Personnel Administrators, the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the International Society of Educational Planners. She served as vice-chair and chair of the Commission.



*** *DOROTHY HAENER (1983-1991)***

who became Commission chair in 1985, was a founding member of the National Organization of Women (NOW). Throughout her life, she was involved in a variety of civil rights causes. She was a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging, a life member of the NAACP and a member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women-Affirmative Action Task Force. Ms. Haener served on the staff of the International Union of the United Auto Workers (UAW) for 30 years. She was co-chair of the Michigan Task Force on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and a recipient of the Harriet Tubman Award from the Detroit Coalition of Black Trade Unionists.



MICHAEL HIDALGO, J.D. (1984-1991)

was a former assistant executive secretary and legal adviser to the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners and a member of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement. He was in private legal practice at the time of his appointment to the Commission. Mr. Hidalgo is currently a hearing referee for Wayne County Probate Court Juvenile Section.



REV. WILLIAM HOLLY (1983-1991)

is the founder and pastor of the New Star Rising Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit. He is also the founder of the NRS Credit Union. Dr. Holly is the president emeritus of the Council of Baptist Ministers of Detroit and Vicinity. Former Governor James Blanchard appointed Rev. Holly to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. He has been married to Tommie Holly for 54 years. He is the father of seven children and grandfather of 12.



ALAN MAY, J.D. (1981-1985)

is a Detroit attorney, shareholder and vice-president of the law firm Kemp, Klein, Umphrey, Endelman & May, P.C. He is widely published in the field of probate law. He has been a lecturer and instructor for the Institute of Continuing Legal Education, the Michigan Trial Lawyers' Association, Wayne State University and Oakland University. He was a delegate to the 1984 and 1988 Republican National Conventions and served on the Platform Committee and the Department of Defense sub-committee. He is a member and past president of



Temple Beth El in Birmingham, a past president of the Franklin Hills Country Club, a member of the board of directors of the Anti-Defamation League and a life member of the NAACP. He served on the national board of the National Conference of Community and Justice (NCCJ) and was a vice-chair. He is a former president of the Michigan region of the NCCJ.

BENNY NAPOLEON, J.D. (1984-1991)

was a Detroit police sergeant when he was appointed to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. In time he would become chair of the Commission, a post he held for three consecutive terms. As a police officer, Mr. Napoleon also rose to great heights. In rapid succession, he became a lieutenant, inspector, commander and executive deputy chief of the Detroit Police Department. In the late 1990s, he succeeded his mentor Dr. Isaiah “Ike” McKinnon as chief. Mr. Napoleon, who retired from the Detroit Police Department in 2001, remains active in civic and political life in the Detroit area.



PHILIP VAN DAM, J.D. (1982-1991)

is a former United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. During his time on the Commission, Van Dam was a partner in the law firm of Reicker, Van Dam, Barker & Black, P.C. He was a member of the American Bar Association, the Michigan Bar Association, the Midland County Bar Association and the Midland Area Chamber of Commerce. He was recently appointed to a district judgeship. Late in his tenure on the Commission, he served as secretary/treasurer.



THE 1990's

TIM ATTALLA, J.D. (1991-1998)

has been in legal practice since 1988. In 1991, he became the first Arab-American appointed by Governor John Engler to serve on the Michigan Civil rights Commission for a four-year term and was subsequently reappointed for a second four-year term. Currently, he is a board member of the Detroit-based Arab American and Jewish Friends (a subgroup of the National Conference for Community and Justice), a board member of the New York-based Seeds of Peace that fosters friendship and understanding between children from some of the world's most intractable war zones, as well as a member of the State Bar of Michigan, and a former member of the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association.



DR. YAHYA MOSSA BASHA (1999-2003)

has been the founder, president and radiologist of Basha Diagnostics, P.C. in Royal Oak since 1980. He attended medical school at the University of Damascus in Syria, and did residency at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak. He is a member of the American Medical Association, the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine, the Michigan State Medical Society, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation for the U.S. Department of Education, and the Oakland County Medical Society. He is also the national chair of the American Muslim Council. He was a former board member of the Islamic Association of Greater Detroit and the Dearborn Mosques.



EVELYN L. CRANE, Ed.D. (1994-2002)

served as co-chair of the Bias Crime Response Task Force and as the co-chair of the Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes (MIAAHC). Dr. Crane, a retired educator, received her bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees from Wayne State University. Dr. Crane served as Commission chair during the re-engineering of the Michigan Civil Rights Department. She is the president of Crane's Unlimited Enterprises Consulting Firm. She is also a life member of the Urban League and the NAACP.



RICHARD J. GARCIA, J.D. (1996-2000)

was an experienced litigator at the time he was appointed to the Commission. He later became Commission chair. He served as co-chair of the Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes and the Michigan Bias Crime Task Force. He left the Commission after Governor John Engler appointed him a judge on the Ingham County Probate Court where he serves as presiding judge of the Family Division of the Circuit Court.



ARCHIE HAYMAN, J.D. (1991-1994)

a lawyer at the time of his appointment, was chair of the NAACP Grievance Commission and a member of the State Bar of Michigan, the Genesee County Bar Association and the American Trial Lawyers Association. A former labor relations representative at the General Motors Truck and Bus Group in Flint, he was a board member of the Mass Transportation Authority. In 1992, Judge Hayman became vice-chair of the Commission. He left the Commission in 1994 after being appointed a judge.



HARRY G. HUTCHISON IV, J.D. (1991-1994)

was an assistant professor of law and economics at the University of Detroit Law School when he was appointed to the Commission. He was a member of the board of advisors and a senior policy analyst for the Mackinac Center, and a co-chair of the foreign, comparative and international law section of the State Bar of Michigan



* ***RICHARD D. LETTS (1993-1997)***

had just retired after serving 28 years as director of the city of Lansing's Human Relations Department when Governor John Engler appointed him to the Commission. In the past he had served as president of the National Association of Human Rights Workers (NAHRW), a board member of the Lansing campaign for the United Negro College Fund and a board member of the Michigan chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. He died near the end of his first term on the Commission.



ARTHUR J. LOMBARD, J.D. (1991-1994)

was dean of the Detroit College of Law (DCL) when he was appointed to the Commission. He was educated at Columbia University and Harvard Law School. He clerked for the chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and taught at Harvard Law School and Wayne State University before coming to DCL. While at Wayne State, he chaired the committee which drafted the state's class action rule, served on the university's women's commission and litigated a landmark case guaranteeing equal pension rights to women. Since 1994 he has been a judge of the Wayne County Circuit Court. He chaired or co-chaired the Civil Rights Commission from 1992 to 1994.



MARIE ELENA MARTELL, J.D. (1995-1996)

was an East Lansing public schoolteacher who later became a lawyer. She served as an adjunct professor at Thomas M. Cooley Law School and as a faculty member of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After serving one year on the Commission, Governor John Engler appointed Marie to the Michigan Tax Tribunal where she served three years. She was later appointed by the governor to the Worker's Compensation Appellate Commission where she currently serves. She also serves on the Michigan Attorney Discipline Board.



LAURA REYES KOPACK, J.D. (1991-1994)

is an attorney with the law firm of Brashear, Tangora, Gallagher, Creighton & Amann LLP. At the time of her appointment to the Commission she served as an attorney in claims and litigation for the Detroit Edison Company. She was vice-chair of the Michigan Republican State Committee and a member of the board of commissioners of the State Bar of Michigan. She served as a member of the Detroit Chamber of Commerce as well as several Hispanic boards and committees. Currently she is on the board of directors and executive committee of Holy Cross. She served as Commission co-chair together with Judge Arthur Lombard.



FATHER ROBERT A. SIRICO (1994-1997)

was a staff member of the Catholic Information Center in Grand Rapids at the time of his appointment. He was the president of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty in Grand Rapids, the American Academy of Religion and the Philadelphia Society. He was also involved with Rose Haven, a ministry for women leaving prostitution, and served as an adjunct scholar at the Mackinac Institute.



PASTOR EDGAR VANN, JR. (1991-2000)

is one of Detroit's best-known religious and civic leaders. For more than 25 years, he has been the senior pastor of Second Ebenezer Baptist Church near Detroit's midtown. In 1995, he became the youngest man ever elected president of the powerful Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit and Vicinity, an organization of more than 400 Baptist ministers. He is a member of the Detroit Police Commission. Pastor Vann served two terms on the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. He held a number of posts, including vice-chair. Pastor Vann remains involved with the Commission. He serves as co-chair of the coordinating committee for the Commission's 40th anniversary commemoration.



THE CURRENT COMMISSION

MOHAMMED ABDRABBOH, J.D. (2003-present)

was a practicing attorney and partner with the Dearborn law firm of Ayad & Abdrabboh at the time of his appointment to the Commission. The firm represents clients in the areas of criminal law, immigration, and civil rights. Previously, Abdrabboh was a legal researcher, spokesperson, and consultant to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights-Geneva and for Al-Haq-Law in the Service of Man in Ramallah, West Bank. He also spent a summer in Jerusalem in 2000, teaching master's degree students a course in American law at Al-Quds University Law School. Abdrabboh is a member of the Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes, as well as a board member, chairman of the advisory board, and legal counsel to the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. Abdrabboh earned his law degree from the University of Toledo and holds a bachelor's of science degree from Mercyhurst College in Pennsylvania.



BISHOP GEORGE E. BROWN (2000-present)

is the pastor of Living Truth Temple, located on Detroit's east side. He has been in the ministry for more than 30 years, and because of the leadership of Bishop Brown, Living Truth Temple has a feeding kitchen for the hungry and homeless. The church also repairs abandoned, tax reverted properties and offers them to low-income families.



ALBERT CALILLE, J.D. (1998 - present)

the Commission's vice-chair, is legal counsel for Ameritech. He is a 1976 graduate of the University of Michigan Law School and a 1973 graduate of Michigan State University. His professional affiliations include the Michigan Bar Association, the Detroit Bar Association, and the American Bar Association. He has taught legal courses at the Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University, the University of Michigan-Dearborn and Madonna University. He is a hearing panel member for the Attorney Disciplinary Board and a mediator for the Wayne County Circuit Court. He frequently lectures on employment law issues and has authored several legal publications. In 2001 he was named Lawyer of the Year by the Michigan Lawyers Weekly.



DR. TARUN K. SHARMA (2001-present)

is a gastroenterologist whose interest in human rights began in his native India. He grew up learning about the effects of colonialism, economic imperialism and racism from the writings of Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Hume and many others. He is a graduate of Indira Gandhi Medical College in Shimla, India. He completed his internal medicine residency and fellowship at Sinai Hospital in Detroit. He has published several scholarly medical journals. His current interest is in human rights education at all academic levels.



VALERIE P. SIMMONS, J.D. (1998-present)

a partner with the Grand Rapids law firm of Warner, Norcross and Judd, was appointed to serve on the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in 1998. She is the Commission's secretary. She has significant experience in civil rights litigation, having represented several corporations in discrimination lawsuits.

She is on the board of directors for the Grand Rapids Service Corps, Inc., Ronald McDonald House of Western Michigan, and Nurses Unlimited. In 2002 she won the prestigious Leadership Grand Rapids Distinguished Community Trustee award for her commitment and service to the Grand Rapids community.



GARY TORGOW, J.D. (1998-present)

is the chair of the Commission and has served as a member of the Commission since his appointment by Governor Engler in June 1998. Mr. Torgow, a lawyer and businessman, has taken a keen interest in the redevelopment and renaissance of the city of Detroit. He currently serves as chair of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, is a member of the boards of Detroit Renaissance, the Detroit Urban League, and is on the executive committee of the National Conference of Community and Justice. He is the president of Michigan's largest Jewish day school, the Yeshiva Beth Yehudah, and is on the board of directors of the Bank of Bloomfield Hills. Mr. Torgow and his wife of 23 years, Malke, are the proud parents of five children.



MARGARET M. VAN HOUTEN, J.D. (2003-present)

is a new member of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. She is an attorney with the Detroit law firm of Evans & Luptak, PLC, where she specializes in commercial litigation, probate and estate planning. Ms. Van Houten previously served as a law clerk for Judge Brian K. Zahra in the Michigan Court of Appeals and the Third Circuit Court, where she worked on numerous cases brought under the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. Ms. Van Houten is a lifelong resident of Dearborn Heights, where she serves on the city council and is active with the Kiwanis Club. She is the chair of the Wayne County Republican Committee, the Michigan Lawyers Chapter of the Federalist Society, the Catholic Lawyers Society and the Michigan and Dearborn Bar Associations.



FRANCISCO J. VILLARRUEL, J.D. (1994-present)

a Detroit lawyer, was elected Commission chair in 2000, a position he held until May 2002. He is now the Commission treasurer. His professional affiliations include the State Bar of Michigan, American Bar Association, Association of Trial Lawyers of America, Latin American Bar Activities Section of the State Bar of Michigan, Hispanic Bar Association, National Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys, and Criminal Defense Attorneys of Michigan.



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