

# CAMBRIDGE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



## DATELINE

### *Newsletter of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission*



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#### MEET OUR NEW INVESTIGATOR COLLEEN JOHNSTON



#### *WE WELCOME COLLEEN ABOARD!*

As you might have heard, our previous Investigator, Sonja DeWitt, left the CHRC in December 2007. We are pleased to announce that we have a new Investigator on board. Colleen Johnston joined us in May as our new Investigative Attorney. Colleen earned her Juris Doctorate from Boston College Law School and her Masters in Gender/Cultural Studies from Simmons College. Most recently Colleen worked in Student Affairs at Brandeis University. Colleen brings experience working in civil rights and human rights, as well as utilizing mediation and conflict resolution skills.

Colleen is responsible for investigating and mediating discrimination cases that are filed with the Commission. If you feel like you have been discriminated against, call our offices at 617-349-4396 to make an appointment for an intake interview.



### Cambridge City Council

E. Dennis Simmons, *Mayor*  
Brian Murphy, *Vice Mayor*  
Henrietta Davis  
Marjorie Decker  
Craig Kelley  
David P. Maher  
Sam Seidel  
Kenneth E. Reeves  
Timothy J. Toomey, Jr

### City Executive Administrators

Robert W. Healy, *City Manager*  
Richard C. Rossi, *Deputy City Manager*

### CHRC Staff

Quoc M. Tran  
*Executive Director*  
Carmen S. Negrón  
*Office Manager/ Project Coordinator*  
Colleen Johnston  
*Investigative Attorney*  
Joseph Johnson  
*Outreach Coordinator*

### CHRC Board of Commissioners

Marla Erlie, *Chair*  
Daniel Klubock, *Vice Chair*  
William Donovan  
Mercedes Evans  
Charles Kavanagh  
Susan Ostrander  
Barbara Rabin  
Randa Shedid



### WE BID FAREWELL TO WINIFRED JACKSON

Winifred had been working in the Commission for almost 2 years in the capacity of receptionist. She works for Operation A.B.L.E.; an employment program designed to provide employment and training services for older workers. Winifred is a retired teacher who graduated from Salem State College with a BS in Ed and from Framingham State College with a Master in Education degree.

There is an article in our last newsletter on predatory lending and sub-prime mortgage loans that was written by Winifred. She leaves us because this program is required to rotate their clients unless an agency decides to hire them. Unfortunately we didn't have enough money in our budget to keep her. Winifred has been offered another job elsewhere helping other seniors with their resumes and job placements. We wish her the best of luck in her new job.

### HAVE YOU BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST? WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

*The Cambridge Human Rights Commission wants to reach out to the Cambridge community to let them know that housing discrimination is against the law, that everyone has the right to equal housing opportunities and that we are here to help if you feel like you have been discriminated against. Our offices are open Mondays 8:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m., Tuesdays-Thursdays 8:30- 5:00 p.m. and Fridays 8:30 - 12:00 (noon) and our telephone is 617-349-4396.*

*Hablamos Español.*

The Cambridge Human Rights Commission does not discriminate on the basis of disability. The CHRC will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request. Our office is wheelchair accessible, and the TTY phone number we can be reached at is 617-492-0235.



# THE CAMBRIDGE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION'S 15<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING MONTH CELEBRATION

The Cambridge Human Rights Commission celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual National Fair Housing Month with an Award Ceremony and Reception at Cambridge City Hall, Tuesday, April 29<sup>th</sup>. This year was really special because we were also celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> year Anniversary of the signing of the Fair Housing Act. Attendees included 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade Cambridge School student winners of the Poster and Essay Contest, teachers, parents, and city officials including City Councilors, Human Rights Commissioners, and Bank Presidents and Officials. Although the date conflicted with this year's Science Fair, we still had a good attendance at our event. The first and second prize essay winners were the first ones invited on stage to read their winning essays based on this year's theme "Be Fair; We All Need A Place To Call Home". They were very impressive. First prize winner was Sydney Fisher, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader from the Cambridgeport School and the second prize winner was Vikram Krishnamachari also from Cambridgeport. There were many winners in the Poster Contest as well. The first prize went to Zeyla Anderson, from the Graham & Parks School and Aubree Andres won second prize. There were many beautiful posters decorating City Hall that night.

A moment of silence was dedicated to the memory of Margot P. Kosberg, past Director of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission who passed away over 9 years ago and was the person that initiated the Annual Fair Housing Poster and Essay Contest in the Commission; and also for Maria Toledano, a student who was the second prize essay winner in 2003 when she was attending the Morse School, who died in a car accident this past April.

This year's Master of Ceremonies was Cambridge Human Rights Commissioner, Mercedes Evans. She presented the awards to the students as well as the Margot P. Kosberg Award which this year went to the Cambridge Human Rights Commission's Office Manager/Project Coordinator, Carmen S. Negrón; for all her dedication and work all these years following in Margot's footsteps. Each year Carmen contacts all of the Cambridge Public Schools to promote the contest and offer Fair Housing trainings to the students. Carmen decides on the theme and makes the design and donates it for the t-shirts. Each year she contacts the different businesses to solicit gift certificates for the winners. The teachers that have their students participate are also given an award in appreciation for their efforts and interest in including our contest in their already tight curriculums. Besides the U.S. Savings Bonds that the **Cambridge Bank's Housing Association** have been donating for the last 15 years, they also have donated the t-shirts all these years. This year we received generous donations from **Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, Boston Duck Tours, California Kitchen, Cambridgeside Galleria, Charles Hotel, Cinderella's, Harvard Coop, Lanes and Games, Newbury Comics, Picante, Redbones**. Many thanks to these businesses that even in tough times continue to collaborate with us. Michael Demakakos, an ex-employee of the Commission, received an Appreciation Award for all his help during the past couple of years with the Fair Housing Celebration.



## MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Commissioner Mercedes S. Evans



Mercedes S. Evans is the longest serving Commissioner of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission. She has been on the board since November, 1989 and served as Chair for many years.

# 2008 Fair Housing Month Award Winners



Meet *Sydney Fisher*, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader from the Cambridgeport School who is the 1<sup>st</sup> Prize Essay winner



And this is *Zeyla Anderson*, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader from the Graham & Parks School and 1<sup>st</sup> prize winner of the Poster contest.



*Carmen S. Negrón*, of The Cambridge Human Rights Commission received the Margot P. Kosberg Award



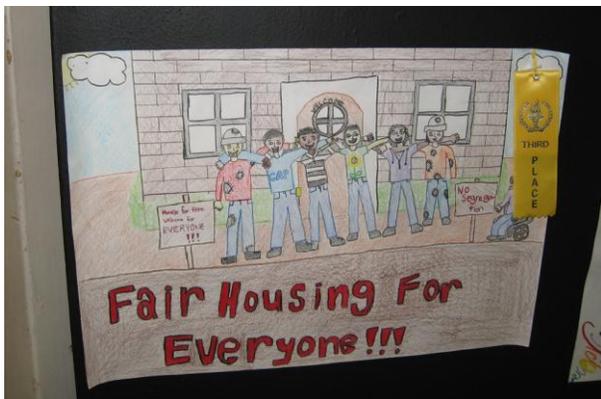
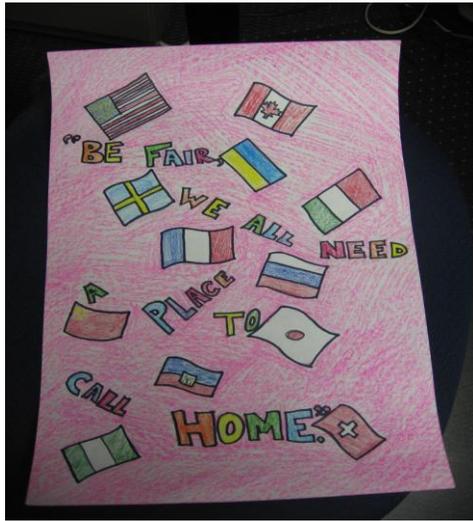
*Michael Demakakos* was the recipient of an Appreciation Award



**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE WINNERS!**



# WINNING POSTERS



# Winning Essays

NOTE: *Essays were typed exactly how students wrote them.*

**Sydney Fisher**  
**First Prize Essay Winner**  
**Grade 5**  
**Cambridgeport**

## Be Fair We All Need A Place To Call Home

To be clear everyone needs a place to call home. I once heard a commercial that said several messages were left on an answering machine. These calls came from a Chinese female, then a black male, an Indian woman and a Cuban man. This was all determined by their language or lack of language. None of these calls were returned. The landlord never picked up the phone. Then a white male called the land lord quickly picked up the phone and sold the home. The land lord waited for someone he wanted to call that would fit in the neighborhood. Sometimes landlords even lie just so they can sell the house to whom they want or to whom they choose.

I commend Martin Luther King on what he has done but if no one reported the horrid acts of others his work on this earth would be small and unnoticed. There behaviors of selfish landlords would continue to spread poison if it was not for MLK. Martin showed the world the behaviors of some bad people. If known, one would say fair housing problem would continue, landlords think they can do it over and over again. Discrimination would have grown and racism and sexism would be larger. The fair housing project protect us from Jim Crow coming back it saves us from racism and people who don't like kids and freedom to be gay and freedom to be free.

My best friend in the whole world mom died and she was living with her sister. They had trouble finding a house because land lords wanted someone else for the home. She had to live in a shelter for the longest time, she had to deal with loosing her mom and not being able to find a house. If no one says anything about these problems then it would allow landlords and home owners to get away with it. If no one reports these problems then it will allow some people to be treated better than others. Everyone should be treated equal. I don't think anyone should loose a friend just because no one would sell them a home. Let all of us work together to stop this bad behaviors. Let us work together to save our communities!

## Home

Home is a place, where you can settle down,  
Have some peace,  
And happiness.

It's where you can be yourself,  
Not be sel-conscious.

It's like your mind and body's headquarters,  
Where they feel comfort and peace.

Home is where,  
You should spend at least a third of your day,  
Knowing that you are safe.  
It's where you know,  
You are welcome anytime.

Be Fair! We all need a place to call home.

- **Vikram Krishnamachari**  
**Grade 5, Cambridgeport School**

## Poster and Essay Winners

Zeyla Anderson  
Aubree Andres  
Raymond Han  
Tinsley Galyean  
Jillian Ho  
Kayla Blackborow  
Elie Shapiro  
Susana Barthelemy  
Amy Campbell  
Miranda Hutchison  
Emma Payne  
Rosa Booth  
Hannah Gibson  
Yanthia De Jesus  
Lydia Lewis  
Julissa Gonzalez

Jenny Charles  
Ruby Pendergast  
Porter Hall  
Sarah Daniels  
Nelson Normil  
Isaac Yablo  
Patrice Carrie  
Gabriel Sanchez  
Eunice Offre  
Javier Fernandez  
Dylan Green  
James Keefe  
Tyler O'Keefe  
Giselle Hernandez  
Sydney Fisher  
Vikram Krishnamachari



## Five Facts Every Parent Should Know About Their Housing Rights



Did you know that federal law makes it illegal for housing developers, landlords, and even homeowners associations to deny housing to families with children or to place unreasonable restrictions on children?

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fair Housing Amendment Act, which protects the rights of parents to buy, rent, and live in the home of their choice. On this occasion, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) wants to tell parents five things they should know about their housing rights.

### **1. You Cannot Be Denied Housing Because You Have A Child**

Although it has been illegal for 20 years, many housing developments and apartment buildings still have rules prohibiting families with children or families expecting a child. With the exception of senior housing and small properties where the owner resides, such provisions are always illegal. HUD takes these matters seriously and will take action when it sees developments keep parents out.

### **2. You Cannot Be Evicted From Housing Because You Have A Child**

While the birth of a child is usually a time of celebration, some landlords feel it is also the time for new parents to find another place to live. Though such actions are illegal, many facilities evict parents because they are expecting or have given birth to, adopted, or obtained custody of a child.

### **3. Families Cannot be Restricted to One Area of a Building or Complex**

Some housing complexes allow families but restrict them to lower floors or to certain areas of the property. Both restrictions are illegal.

### **4. Rules Cannot Unfairly Target Children**

Many parents are unaware that it is illegal for landlords to make rules specifically against children. For example, a landlord cannot forbid children from a common area that adults are allowed to use. There was a case in St. Louis against an Apartment Complex that had restrictive rules. Anyone under the age of 18 had to be supervised anytime they were out of their apartment. The rule was so strict that teenagers weren't allowed to talk to their friends in the hallways without a parent present. The case was investigated and so the owners and managers agreed to a \$170,000 settlement to compensate the families and create an after-school program for children on the property.

### **5. Advertisement Cannot State that Children Are Not Wanted**

Finally, no property, other than senior-only housing, is allowed to advertise that it is restricted to adults or that it will not allow children.

*This information was taken from the HUD News Release dated March 20, 2008. If you need further information you may contact Shantae Goodloe at 202-708-0685.*

**BE FAIR; WE ALL NEED A PLACE TO CALL HOME**



*Newsletter Editor: Carmen S. Negrón*

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**Cambridge Human Rights Commission**  
51 Inman Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
(617) 349-4396