



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 26, 2020

CONTACT: Alicia McCauley, amccauley@cchr.nyc.gov, 212-416-0105

YOUR POWER, YOUR RIGHTS: NEW YORK CITY YOUTH IN ACTION

NYC COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS LAUNCHES YOUTH PROGRAMMING INITIATIVE TO REACH 5,000 STUDENTS

The Commission is partnering with over 60 schools and diverse youth organizations to bring the agency's human rights framework to more students than ever

NEW YORK— The New York City Commission on Human Rights, in partnership with over 60 schools and organizations (complete list below) that educate and work with young people, announces the launch of a new comprehensive program called [Youth for Equity and Solidarity](#). The program will educate over 5,000 young people this year, ages 13-21, and includes the creation of the Commission's first youth advisory council (YES Council). The program will educate over 5,000 young people this year, ages 13-21, and includes the creation of the Commission's first-ever Youth for Equity and Solidarity (YES) Council. Youth for Equity and Solidarity incorporates student-led community and school action plans, expanded programming in issue areas relevant to the lives of young people in New York City today, and a tailored human rights reading list. The kickoff event, entitled Your Power, Your Rights: New York City Youth in Action, is taking place at the Queens Central Library in Jamaica, Queens.

"Youth leaders are human rights leaders. Today's leaders and tomorrow's young people need to be empowered to stand up for their rights and take action in their communities," said **Carmelyn P. Malalis, Chair and Commissioner of the NYC Commission on Human Rights**. "The launch of Youth for Equity and Solidarity will allow young people across this city to lead the human rights conversation for the next generation, and become stewards of change to ensure an equitable city for all."

"Young people are the voice of the future, and when I meet with students across the City, I am filled with hope for the ways they will change the world," said **Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza**. "I'm proud to partner with the NYC Commission on Human Rights on this initiative to serve the City's students and look forward to the work ahead."

The Commission is tasked with educating New Yorkers on the NYC Human Rights Law, one of the most protective anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws in the nation and to foster inter-

community dialogue, and routinely conducts free workshops and programming across the city for young people and adults alike. For the past several years, the Commission has strengthened its engagement in schools and youth-focused spaces, expanding youth-oriented programming, and piloting youth-focused initiatives. Today's launch is the culmination of these efforts. The event will: feature student presentations of action plans developed with the Commission; announce the expansion of the Commission's comprehensive youth curriculum; mark the beginning of the application period for the Human Rights Youth Advisory Council; and launch a human rights reading list with tailored recommendations based on age and interest for parents, young people, and educators.

"Young people are leading global efforts to address issues of inequality, discrimination, and hate. At the NYC Commission on Human Rights, we understand the value in centering youth as we work to address these issues and the impact they have," says **Franck D. Joseph II, Deputy Commissioner for Community Relations, NYC Commission on Human Rights**. "The programming and youth advisory council being launched today are a direct result of our deep engagement with young people across New York City, and are meant to empower them to make a positive change in their schools and communities. It is important for young people to know that they have allies who will not only hear them, but who will support and follow them as they work to foster healthy and thriving spaces for themselves."

Youth for Equity and Solidarity (YES) Council

Interest from students in ongoing opportunities to work with the Commission led to the creation of the YES Council, a first for the agency and an integral part of the Youth for Equity and Solidarity initiative. The purpose of the YES council is twofold: to build long-term engagement with young people interested in and committed to the mission of the Commission; and to empower young people to become actively engaged in fostering environments of inclusion and respect. The council will help guide the Commission's YES programming by providing feedback on curriculum, informing the Commission of issues and incidents of bias and discrimination in their communities, and planning youth-focused events. Commission staff will support council members through trainings and opportunities that will advance their advocacy and organizing skills using human rights as a framework. The Commission will recruit young people between the ages of 13-21 who have participated in, or are interested in participating in, programming and organizing around human rights to apply. The council will consist of 20-25 young people representing different ages, boroughs, and backgrounds who will serve from spring 2020 to summer 2021 meeting on a bi-monthly basis, or six times per year. [Applicants can apply on the Commission website](#) or via webform on the [Commission's Facebook page](#).

Stories for All: A Human Rights Reading List

It is critical that young people see themselves and their communities reflected back at them in the literature they read. Curated by the Commission, Stories for All is a reading list highlighting authors, characters, and stories that tackle the issues and experiences facing diverse communities. Featuring books by authors and illustrators from different racial, ethnic, religious, LGBTQI, and disability communities, the books in this list explore everything from loving your hair and skin to gender transition to immigrant and refugee experiences, and more. This reading

list is intended as a reference guide for parents and educators for young people age pre-K through 12th grade. [Download the reading list here.](#)

School and Community Action Plans

The Commission's expanding engagement with young people led to the development of individualized and community-specific human rights action plans, in which young people who have learned about human rights through the Commission's programming apply what they've learned to tackle the needs of their community. This work has allowed young people to step into leadership roles to create positive change. At today's kickoff event, students who have worked with the Commission will present their action plans, which include: making a gender-neutral school bathroom accessible for people with disabilities; creating school-based LGBTQI programming throughout Pride month with activities geared toward students in each grade and culminating in a Pride celebration; working with school guidance counselors to provide racial justice workshops for incoming freshmen; and utilizing social media to host online conversations about gender equity in youth culture.

Expanded Curriculum

Over the past several years, the Commission has expanded its programming focused on young people both in scope and in reach. In 2019, the Commission began piloting new workshops in partnership with over 35 schools and youth organizations. The expanded curriculum is now available for schools and youth organizations to select to best fit their needs.

We Speak: Young Women Rising

Tailored for students of all genders to build self-esteem, amplify young women's voices, and address issues of gender equity. The program's five sessions cover human rights issues, women in history, gender diversity, and empowering young women in education and employment.

Be Loud Be Proud!

Gender, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation

A three-part series for young people to create a space for dialogue and action within Gender and Sexualities Alliance (GSA) students in schools regarding discrimination, harassment, and bullying as experienced by LGBTQI youth. Through facilitated conversations, students discuss their experiences with discrimination through the lens of gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, as well as ways to combat bias. It also provides youth with information and resources to support safer and welcoming school learning environments and using the Commission as a resource.

Resisting Oppression and Racism (ROAR)

Human Rights Law and Protections Against Discrimination Based on Race and Color

Provides historical context for race-based and color-based discrimination and how it has impacted the lives of New Yorkers, institutions, and the delivery of services and resources in New York City. The three-session program educates students on their rights and protections against discrimination under the NYC Human Rights Law. Students analyze concepts related to race and color, learn about efforts and resistance to combat racism, and find ways to become the voices for social and racial justice.

Students for Human Rights

A one-hour workshop informs students about the NYC Human Rights Law and protections against discrimination, harassment, and bullying in relation to the protected classes under the law. Resources to combat discrimination, harassment, and bullying are provided.

No Hate No Fear

Understanding Muslim Experiences and Combating Anti-Muslim Bias

Promotes understanding of the City's diverse faith communities. The workshop addresses what is referred to as anti-Muslim racism, introduces Muslim beliefs and practices, outlines best practices in working with Muslim New Yorkers, and elaborates on the protections under the NYC Human Rights Law against discrimination based on religion.

Peer Mediation

Ten sessions that help schools de-escalate tension between students, as well as empower students to develop their leadership skills, understand the nature of conflict and design their own solutions to conflict in a constructive and peaceful manner. Students develop communication skills, and work with school coordinators and teachers to resolve and mediate conflict among their classmates. The participants also learn to enforce a code of conduct to encourage respect and confidentiality during the mediation process. Students interested in participating in the program go through an interview and selection process.

Human Rights Law 101

Emphasizes the rights and obligations under the NYC Human Rights Law in employment, housing, public accommodations, and prohibitions against discriminatory harassment and bias-based profiling by law enforcement.

The Commission is finalizing a workshop on anti-Semitism that will examine the historical roots of anti-Semitic discrimination and its effects on Jewish people through the present day, as well as provide information to understand Jewish cultural and religious experiences. The program will also demonstrate how anti-Semitism connects to other forms of prejudice and violence against other oppressed groups and offers historical examples of diverse communities working in coalition to address anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination.

In addition to programming for students and young people, the Commission has provided human rights trainings to faculty, staff, administrators, and PTAs on an ad hoc basis for several years. In 2019, the Commission reached 2,500 young people through workshops and youth programming. With the launch of Youth for Equity and Solidarity, the Commission aims to reach at least double that, or 5,000 young people, in 2020.

The New York City Commission on Human Rights enforces the NYC Human Rights Law, one of the most comprehensive in the nation. There are 27 protected classes in housing, employment, and public accommodations. If you believe you have been the victim of discrimination, call 311 and ask for human rights, or contact the Commission online at nyc.gov/humanrights.

Participating organizations

Foundling Center - Staten Island
Women for Afghan Women
Forest Hills High School
Thomas Edison High School
Miraj Islamic School
Turning Point for Women and Families
SAYA
Irwin Altman Middle School
Bedford Academy
CMPS 327
Union Square Academy
Queens High School of Science at York
College
Franck McCourt High School
Townsend Harris High School
Brooklyn Technical High School
Eleanor Roosevelt High School
Leon M. Goldstein High School
EBC High School
United Nations International School
Sikh Coalition's Junior Sikh Coalition
John Adams High School
IS 187
Bronx Academy for Software Engineering
High School
MS 890
Queens Law Associates
Chinese-American Planning Council
Arab American Association of New York
New Visions Charter HS IV
Casa Yurumein
SCAN
Girls for Gender Equity
Hillcrest High School
Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy
Legal Momentum
DOE Queens South
Flushing International High School
Brooklyn International High School
UFT
Sauti Yetu
Richmond Hill High School
IS 291
CEC30
PS 118
FDR High School
Elizabeth Blackwell Middle School
Friends Seminary
Staten Island Youth Justice Center
United Activities Unlimited
New World Prep School
M.J. Petrides High School
Curtis High School
Academy for Young Writers
Read Alliance
Tottenville High School
Young Israel
Wagner High School
Young Mothers Program at the NY
Foundling
Pride Center of Staten Island - Grrl Power
Project Hospitality - Eye Openers
YMCA - Castle Hill
Hispanic Federation
Girls Scouts Troop 6000

###

“Through the NYC Commission on Human Rights' Young Women's Empowerment program hosted at Women for Afghan Women, I learned to value the rights I have, and to help others know their rights. I learned that although the laws put in place seem fair, sometimes they do not protect everyone equally. We must try and raise awareness around our rights and fight against unjust laws.” – **Khadija Rahimi, 15-year-old youth participant from Women for Afghan Women, Afghan Youth Rising Program**

“If we believe in all aspects of our Human Rights, we must stand up strong and fight courageously because our inner strength is the manifestation of our audacity to build a new and more humane world for our youth. We are inextricably bound to this duty as change agents for our youth in the New Age of Enlightenment” – **Human Rights Commissioner Bishop Sylveta Hamilton-Gonzales, Founder and Principal of MACADEMY School of Science and Technology.**

“It is with great excitement that Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) supports and endorses the Commission on Human Rights' launch of their Youth Programs. At GGE, we believe that today and always, girls of color and TGNC youth of color deserve a reminder that they're loved, and that people are working with and for them to ensure their protection. This is a crucial step in the Commission on Human Rights amplifying the voices of young people and connecting them to information about their rights.” – **Michelle Grier, Senior Director of Programs, Girls for Gender Equity**

“As the nation's first and oldest legal defense and education fund, we are honored to partner with the NYC Commission on Human Rights in helping young women of color recognize, avoid and escape violent intimate relationships while providing them with tools to advocate for themselves if affected by sexual abuse at home, in their dating life, or at school. Collaborations such as these are essential in this critically important work” – **Carol Baldwin Moody, President/CEO Legal Momentum**

“We are grateful for all the Commission has done to inform and inspire our city's youth on issues of human rights. Their past programming has provided a platform for Sikh youth to speak out about issues that are important to our community, and we look forward to finding more opportunities to work together in the future.” – **Harleen Kaur, Community Development Manager at the Sikh Coalition**

“The Commission's youth programs are both engaging and informative. Pride Center youth participants learned about what human rights violations might look like in day to day life and what resources they can call upon or connect others to.” – **Lisa Sloan, Deputy Director. Pride Center of Staten Island.**

“Read Alliance is founded on the belief that young people are strong, capable, and empowered. We are proud to support the NYC Commission on Human Rights in their initiative that elevates

youth voices to make positive change in our city, as it aligns with our organizational mission and values” – **Danielle Guindo, Executive Director, Read Alliance**

“EyeOpeners Youth Against Violence supports Your Power Your Rights NYC Youth in Action. EyeOpeners has greatly benefited from trainings in human rights law and looks forward to this new initiative which will empower more youth on Staten Island” – **Rev. Karen Jackson, Minister for Social Justice at Project Hospitality**

“CPC commends the NYC Commission on Human Rights on the launch of their youth programming and curricula. Education and community empowerment are two of CPC's pillars in our approach to supporting Asian American and immigrant youth and young adults. Through our partnership with the Commission, our youth will engage in important discussions on the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in a safe and inclusive space, and will develop an empowered voice to address bias, discrimination, and equity issues in their communities.” – **Wayne Ho, President and CEO of the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC).**

“Hispanic Federation is proud to be a partner in this groundbreaking youth program by the New York City Commission on Human Rights, especially at a time in our history when anger and harsh rhetoric on social media, in the political discourse, and in our everyday lives, are negatively influencing young people. Children are never too young to learn basic human rights; to understand that bullying in any form, whether on the playground or on social media are unacceptable. By instilling values that will prevent discrimination against any person, today’s children will be well-prepared for their future careers.” – **Hispanic Federation President Frankie Miranda.**

“UNIS students have greatly benefited from the various teachings and programs offered by the NYC Commission on Human Rights Office. We have worked with their education department in helping students secure speakers and workshop leaders to present and share their knowledge and expertise at our annual two-day, student-run Human Rights Conference held at the school as-well as the UN Headquarters. In addition to UNIS students, Middle School and High School students from around NYC and beyond have attended our Human Rights Conference who also shared in the same learning experiences provided by various members of the Commission. We are truly appreciative of the time, efforts and dedication offered by the many professionals from the NYC Commission on Human Rights Office to teach and uphold values associated to principles of social justice. We look forward to continued learnings and collaboration with the NYC Commission on Human Rights for future programs and helping shape a better world.” – **Zakaria Baha, Director of Student Activities at United Nations International School**

“Our research and programming relating to the mental health and well-being of young people point to the importance of simply listening to them. Their voices matter. We applaud the New York City Commission on Human Rights on the launch of an initiative that will empower them to stand up for their rights, be heard, and take action.” – **Dr. Michael A. Lindsey, Executive Director of the NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research.**

“The Center welcomes over 1,200 young people every year who engage with our youth programming and services, ranging from leadership development to sexual health education to simply connecting with LGBTQ community. We know first-hand how innovative these young

people are, and The Center applauds the New York City Commission on Human Rights for creating the Youth for Equity and Solidarity program to ensure that youth voices are an integral part of shaping our city's schools.” – **Glenda Testone, Executive Director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center.**

“We have to teach our children to be activists – people who see problems and do something to bring solutions – so that the world can evolve. I teach my 5 children to connect the dots, from civil rights to women’s rights to LGBTQAI rights to Black Lives Matter, Me Too movements, and human rights broadly. That communal fight, for something larger than ‘me’ makes children strong. Protecting all human rights is the job of the modern-day revolutionary, I commend the NYC Commission on Human Rights for the work it continually does to empower our children.” – **Jodie Patterson, Chair of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation Board.**

“It is with gratitude and excitement that Repair the World NYC commends the NYC Commission on Human Rights' launch of their Youth Programs. As an organization that engages young adults in social change work, we are proud to partner with NYCCHR on an initiative that aligns so closely with our values, and makes a positive change in our city.” – **Liza Freed, Program Manager, Repair the World Harlem**

“We commend the efforts of the Commission on Human Rights to introduce youth to the fundamental principles of human rights. Getting youth involved early on these issues - as we have seen similarity with our Muslim Youth NYC leadership program that Immerses Muslim students in social justice activism - is incredibly critical in developing skills of empathy and human solidarity that is so needed in these times of fast technological advancements and economic growth. We look forward to working with the Commission on their youth councils and curriculum that will advance the mission of this project.” – **Aniqa Nawabi, Executive Director at Muslim Community Network**

“As a veteran educator and leader that has served in the NYC School System, I applaud the Commission for Human Rights and the NYC Department of Education on the creation of Youth for Equity and Solidarity Program, an important and timely program to equip middle and high school students with the tools to become upholders of equity and justice. I join the 30 partnering organizations in extending my support and commitment for the success of this program.” – **Dr. Debbie Almontaser, CEO & Founder of Bridging Cultures Group Inc.**