



**CITY OF TOPEKA
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

**2022
ANNUAL REPORT**

The mission of the Topeka Human Relations Commission (HRC) is to conduct outreach and educational activities that promote justice and cultural understanding, and improve relationships among all people of the City of Topeka.

February 13, 2023

To Mayor Padilla and City Councilmembers,

On behalf of the Topeka Human Relations Commission (HRC), I am submitting our 2022 Annual Report to the governing body as required by City Code.

We welcome you to review the 2022 HRC Annual Report and send us any comments, concerns, and suggestions for 2023. We are dedicated to the HRC mission and look forward to planning outreach and educational events for our community this year.

Our Commission is a diverse and talented group of individuals who volunteer their time to the City of Topeka. Many of the commissioners further their civic engagement by attending monthly meetings, public forums, seminars or other events that address the concerns of our citizenry. We are proud to serve our neighbors, all residents and our city in this capacity.

We appreciate your continued support and look forward to collaborating with the governing body to serve fellow residents of the city.

Best regards,



Carol Roberts
Commissioner
Topeka Human Relations Commission

Cc: Stephen Wade, City Manager
City Council Office
City Clerk's Office
Mayor's Office

CITY OF TOPEKA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Human Relations Commission is to conduct outreach and educational activities that promote justice and cultural understanding, and improve relationships among all people in the City of Topeka.

ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The Topeka Human Relations Ordinance requires that the Commission be non-partisan. By historical custom, the Commission's composition reflects a varied geographic representation; individuals with disabilities; a diverse gender, racial, religious, and ethnic mix; a variety of professional backgrounds; and, a demonstrated interest in civil rights. The Commissioners shall reside within the corporate limits of the city.

Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor from Council nominations and are confirmed by Topeka City Council for two (2) year terms, or until their successor is appointed.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In 2010 the Commission's role changed from filing and investigating complaints and holding public hearings when the Human Relations Department was abolished in late June 2010.

The Commission supports the efforts to eliminate prejudice and further goodwill among all people of the city and promotes positive relations among our citizens and guests through community outreach. The Commission continues to promote and facilitate Town Hall meetings and public forums on issues of interest and concern; participate in outreach activities and public education; and partner with groups that share similar goals.

2022 HRC ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Topeka Human Relations Commission found itself in a transition period during the year of 2022. With a few changes in City government leadership as well as Commissioner involvement, the focus and purpose of the THRC came under review. As such, no achievements of record can be reported.

MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

By ordinance, the City Manager shall designate staff to assist the Commission. Staff coordinates meetings of the Commission, Committees formed by the Commission, and other requests made by the Commission. Staff is responsible for answering the Commission phone line and assisting in the referral to other supporting agencies. Staff also assists with other Commission outreach into the legal support, assistance, research, and training on an as needed basis.

Chair	Carol Roberts	Term Expires 2/2024
Vice Chair	Carmen Romero-Nichols	Term Expires: 6/2024
Commissioner	Cynthia Hopp	Term Expires: 3/2024

Commissioner	Luc Bensimon	Term Expires: 6/2024
Commissioner	Alexis Simmons	Term Expires: 7/2024
Commissioner	Pamela James	Term Expires: 9/2024
Commissioner	Sean McGimpsey	Term Expires 2/2025
Commissioner	Zachary Surritt	Term Expires 2/2025
Commissioner	Unfilled	

COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

TROY SCROGGINS AWARD

The City of Topeka's Human Relations Commission hosted the first Troy Scroggins Award Ceremony in 2008. The Troy Scroggins Award recognizes individuals, public and private entities, and youth whose efforts at eliminating discrimination and prejudice and advancing diversity in Topeka are outstanding, singular and noteworthy.

The 2022 Recipients: *There were no nominations taken, nor awards bestowed.*

STEPHANIE MOTT AWARD

The Stephanie Mott Award recognizes people living in Shawnee County who have helped the Topeka Human Relations Commission (THRC) accomplish its mission by exemplifying the work of Stephanie Mott, which is advocating for the disenfranchised and the less fortunate, and giving a voice to the voiceless.

2022 Recipient: *There were no nominations taken, nor award bestowed.*

ATTENDED OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

INVITED GUEST SPEAKERS FOR EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

- Ed Collazo-Independent Police Auditor (January-September)
- Ruth Glover, Kansas Human Rights Commission (July)

OTHER MEMBERSHIP COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Cynthia Hopp	Woman's Foundation, Member Community Action Board Mosaic Partner Pairs
Luc Bensimon	Equality Kansas Topeka Chapter Capital City Equality Center (The Mott House) Black Transmen, Inc

ISSUES WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

None.



MEET THE 2023 HRC COMMISSIONERS

CHAIR CAROL ROBERTS

Carol Roberts was born and raised in Topeka. She is a wife, mother to seven children and grandmother to eight grandchildren. Carol attended elementary through high school in the Seaman School District. Upon graduation from high school she attended Washburn University where she graduated in 1988 with a degree in court and conference reporting. Carol has been a freelance court reporter, worked in the Johnson County District Courts as an official reporter and now owns a transcription company that serves law enforcement agencies, courts and a variety of other clients. Carol also owns a health and wellness business dedicated to the science and study of nutrition and genetic expression with regard to the prevention or treatment of disease.



Carol has served in various capacities in city and community groups such as the Law Enforcement Partnership Panel established under Police Chief Ron Miller. She has served also in Kansans for Life as well as been involved in radio and newspaper ministries. She is active in her church and serves in several roles there. Carol is involved with Trash Mountain Project which serves people living in trash dump communities worldwide. Carol is passionate about her faith and encouraging others. She believes that all lives are precious and every human should be treated with dignity and respect.

VICE CHAIR CARMEN ROMERO-NICHOLS

Carmen Romero-Nichols joined the Human Resource Commission in May 2022. She is originally from Mexico City, though Topeka has been her home for the majority of her life.

Carmen moved to Kansas with her family over 20 years ago. She graduated from Topeka High School, received her undergrad from Washburn University, and an MBA from Baker University.

The City of Topeka as well as the State of Kansas hold a special meaning to Carmen. She understands the importance of being involved in the community and decided to get involved in being a part of shaping our community for her two daughters.



COMMISSIONER LUC BENSIMON

I am a 48 year old man of Trans experience born and raised in Topeka, Kansas. I was born with three strikes against me being assigned female at birth, being Afro-American and born with a disability all of which I have been discriminated against in different areas of my life. I have two degrees in Human Services youth and children emphasis and a BA in Criminal Justice. I wear a few different hats when it comes to activism. I am the current president and one of the founding members of Kansas statewide transgender education project (K.S.T.E.P), current chairperson of Equality Kansas Topeka chapter, and the president of Capital city equality center (The Mott House), the president and founder of the Black Transmen Inc. Kansas chapter (BTMI Kansas). Mr. Black Trans Kansas 2019-2020, ward captain and ward 1 precinct 3 precinct committee Man. I am an activist for the LGBT community but my true passion Trans people of color.



COMMISSIONER CYNTHIA HOPP

Cynthia Hopp has been a teacher for the Topeka public school system since 2013 and has been teaching for the last ten years. She recently graduated with a Masters of Educational Leadership at Kansas State University.

Cynthia is a member of the Minority Leadership Academy and a Kagan Cooperative Learning instructional coach. After school hours, she serves at the Woman's Foundation and is also a Human Relations Commissioner for the city of Topeka.

With an evident passion for education and volunteering, Cynthia enjoys helping people achieve their goals.

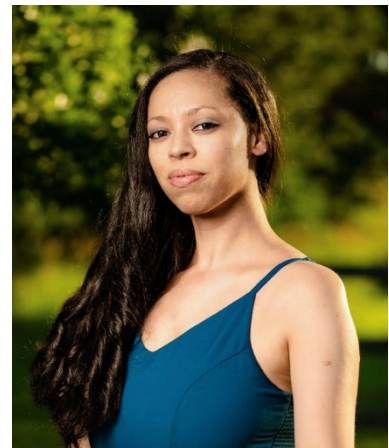
Cynthia is married to Kevin Hopp and is the mother of two children, Mikaela and Mauricio. In her spare time, she enjoys learning how to play the cello, meditating, and doing yoga.



COMMISSIONER PAMELA JAMES

Pamela James first moved to Topeka in 2010. She was born and raised in a small town about 4 hours from Topeka, Hutchinson, Kansas. She graduated from University of Phoenix in 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Business and General Management.

Pamela has been a State of Kansas employee for several years and is passionate about helping people and her community become the best that it can be. She is an active member of the National Society of Leadership and Success and has become a member of the Human Relations Committee in her pursuit to continue helping others.



COMMISSIONER SEAN McGIMPSEY

Sean McGimpsey was born in Fort Riley, KS, and has lived in several areas of eastern Kansas before moving to Topeka. Sean has deep ties in Kansas – attending Manhattan High School, receiving a bachelor's degree from Kansas State University, and recently beginning a master's program at Fort Hays State University.

In a professional capacity, Sean has repeatedly worked to promote social good within their communities. While not an attorney, they are currently employed by the Kansas Bar Association. Sean leads the Association's community outreach efforts while managing select programs intended to improve various aspects of the Kansas legal system.

Sean is a committed activist, advocate, and supporter of those seeking inclusion, equity, and understanding. In addition to community and international volunteerism, Sean is a published author on contemporary ethics – often addressing how to approach complex issues ethically.

Sean hopes to use their experiences to serve the Topeka community while championing the insight of its diverse population.



COMMISSIONER ALEXIS SIMMONS

Alexis Simmons is a graduate of Washburn University (Go Bods!) where she majored in political science and served as student body president. After graduating from Washburn, she obtained a masters degree in American politics and government from American University's School of Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

While in D.C. Alexis helped train women to run for office and wrote a weekly newsletter about women in politics for the Women & Politics Institute. After joining a boutique consulting firm, Alexis and a small team advised Fortune 500 companies on creation and implementation of forward-thinking, socially responsible policies.

After moving back to Topeka in 2020, Alexis returned to work where her love for public service started: the Kansas Legislature. She serves as the Communications Director for Vic Miller, Kansas House Minority Leader, and the Kansas House Democrats. As a former intern, her favorite part of the job is helping coordinate the internship program for the House of Representatives.

Alexis is a graduate of the 2021-2022 Kansas Chamber of Commerce's Emerging Leaders program, Democratic precinct committeewoman, EMILY's List Ignite Change Fellow, National Organization of Women (NOW) scholarship recipient, Bryce Harlow Foundation honoree, and adjunct professor in Washburn University's political science department.



NOT PICTURED: COMMISSIONER ZACHARY SURRITT

There is one vacancy as of February 13, 2023. The Commission looks forward to working with the newly appointed Chief DEI Officer Ernestor De La Rosa to strengthen relationship between City Government and the Topeka Community.