

Civil Rights Reporter

Journal of the Texas Workforce Commission Civil Rights Division

Bryan Snoddy - Division Director

ISSUE

01

OCTOBER

2020

Equal Employment & Fair Housing

Texas Workforce Commission Commissioners

Bryan Daniel - Chairman and Commissioner Representing the Public

Julian Alvarez - Commissioner Representing Labor

Aaron Demerson - Commissioner Representing Employers

Midland ISD Board Names Chalisa Fain as the District's Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

By: Ellena E. Rodriguez



Fain has more than 10 years of experience promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in Dallas, Texas. In 2007, she joined the City of Dallas Fair Housing Office as a fair housing investigator where she investigated complaints relating to violations of the Fair Housing and Human

Relations ordinances. In 2009, she became the senior public information representative for the Fair Housing Office, where she designed and developed programs to include diversity and inclusion for community organizations and raised awareness regarding forms of discrimination. She currently serves as the Civil Rights Investigations Supervisor (EEO/Housing) for the Texas Workforce Commission, Civil Rights Division.

We virtually sat down with Fain to learn more about her career goals and what she hopes to achieve along with many, many congratulations from the CRD family.

Welcome, Chalisa Fain! Thank you for taking a few moments for the Civil Rights Reporter and sharing with us who is Chalisa Fain.

I'm a person who has always believed in equity and justice and have been fortunate to work within the civil rights arena for most of my professional career. This next opportunity allows me to immerse myself in the educational arena, where I can be as instrumental in ensuring that Black, Hispanic and children w/ disabilities are not overlooked and are receiving the tools needed for their educational success

Ellena E. Rodriguez: How did you decide to enter the education arena of civil rights?

Chalisa Fain: It decided for me - I have children in the school district (not the district I'm working in) but I know the inequities first hand, so I've always made sure that I kept my finger on the pulse of what goes on and unfortunately, most school districts have under-scoring

Mission Statement

The mission of the Civil Rights Division is to reduce discrimination in employment and housing through education and enforcement.

Vision

The vision of the Civil Rights Division is to help create an environment in which the people of the State of Texas may pursue and enjoy the benefits of employment and housing that are free from discrimination.



test scores (across the board) when it comes to Blacks, Hispanics and children with disabilities. I believe that it's because the curriculum (not the teacher, necessarily) doesn't teach to the student. Most curriculums are centered around white-middle class students/families and that doesn't work for all students.

(1 liked)



Photos courtesy of CRD

Ellena E. Rodriguez: Can you tell me a bit about your career path and what led you to the role as Director of Diversity for Midlothian ISD?

Ellena E. Rodriguez: Congrats on the unanimous board vote too

Chalisa Fain: Sure - It started in college, while attending Xavier University in Louisiana, I found ways to volunteer with organizations who served the low-income and minority communities, it was through

these efforts that I found constant disparities in treatment and knew that I wanted to help, in any way I could.

Ellena E. Rodriguez: Wow can't image what that was like...were you nervous? assuming you went before them all, right?

Chalisa Fain: I was very NERVOUS... so much so, that I thought about not even going to the 2nd round - literally was thinking about turning around going back home and then a train passed - it gave me time to breathe and calm my nerves before going and then when i got there, I just spoke to them about my passion for equity, civil rights and how it's sometimes difficult "just showing up Black or minority and what we need to do as partners to help each other.

Chalisa Fain: They were very welcoming and accepting, so that eased my nerves, too.. none of them looked like me but they were open to listening about how i want to partner with the school/ staff/teachers and not come in as a dictator, like they've been doing something wrong.

Ellena E. Rodriguez: Seems to me there's plenty of 'finger pointing' these days and less 'how can we do better?' An it all starts with respectful communication and listening skills w/out judgement. IMHO. While in school or life for that matter who was your greatest mentor?

Chalisa Fain: My greatest mentor has been the life of Fannie Lou Hamer - she was a civil rights activist in Mississippi - she led voter rights/education drives and was fired for doing so - she had little education but she was a fighter for civil rights, who believed her own words, "nobody's free until everybody's free" and I feel like that - it's what drives me to disrupt inequities.

Chalisa Fain: I am so EXCITED!! I'm hoping to have an influence with TEA - I'm following them more closely, learning as much as i can about what's there and what may be needed.

Chalisa Fain: my biggest goal is gaining the trust of the parents and teachers - I'm an outsider but don't

“I’m excited to join the MISD family because I am passionate about the mission, vision and beliefs of the school district,”

want to stay that way for long, I believe if i form relationships, they will know that my intentions are pure and for equity - so to that end, I’ll take time to listen - listen to the parents, students and teachers who have been affected and move from there.

Ellena E. Rodriguez: Again, CONGRATULATIONS!! What else would you like to share, about yourself, your experiences, your goals?

Chalisa Fain: Thank you...

Chalisa Fain: I’m thankful for my time @ CRD

Ellena E. Rodriguez: How does your experience at CRD prepare you for your next step to MISD?

Chalisa Fain: Dealing with difficult customers, how empathy goes a long way in some situations - different viewpoints with staff - I’ve learned how to accept another’s viewpoint that doesn’t align with mine and still maintain professionalism. A lot of times, people want to make sure that you hear them and not invalidate their feelings - this is a common theme with co-workers, complainants and respondents

Ellena E. Rodriguez: Thank you so much for your time today. Thank you for being a positive assertive knowledgeable and experienced professional and leader during our time together at CRD.

Ellena E. Rodriguez: May this promotion bring all kinds of new challenges and opportunities for you!

Chalisa Fain: Thank you so much!! I appreciate this.



Photos courtesy of Getty Images



In 2019, leadership entrusted me with the care and awesome responsibility of guiding TWC's Civil Rights Division (CRD). First, I would be remiss if I didn't expressly thank my predecessor, Lowell Keig, for his great work, efforts and the solid foundation he worked to establish during his time at the helm.

Next, I am also grateful to the many support staff within human resources, business operations, information technology and external relations just to name a few. Finally, let us take a moment to consider the sacrifice of the team of 46 persons that make up the CRD.

The CRD operates the one of the largest Fair Housing Assistance Program and Fair Employment Practice Agency within the country, by some measures. We process, collectively, thousands of inquiries per year and routinely achieve our legislative goals of roughly 1,300 combined resolutions and 6,500 individuals trained in equal employment and fair housing practices every single year. Every six (6) years, we review each state agency to ensure full equal employment opportunity compliance. This occurred prior to my arrival and I know that it will continue long after I am gone. The one constant is the people that sacrifice to make it happen.

Over the course of the past year, we began analyzing our business processes and asking critical questions. Are we solving problems or are they merely being shifted? Do we have a plan to proactively achieve goals in a rapidly changing landscape or are we simply reacting to problems? Are we more in love with our solutions than our customer's concerns? By working to arrive at answers to these tough problems, we derived the CRD Road Map 2020.

We remain committed to serving Texans in 2021. Our motto is unaltered, and we are dedicated to "Protecting

Dignity at Home and in the Workplace." Likewise, we believe that through the collective core principles of 1) providing comprehensive customer service; 2) engaging in critical thinking and analysis; and 3) being steadfastly focused on being proactive and courteously assertive that we deliver a durable and robust program that permits our team to remain fully engaged and deliver consistent results.

Our next challenge in the new year is to maintain and reinforce the achievements made in the past year – even amidst the face of a pandemic, a high level of social unrest and a general anxiety over the future. Every organization, and person, will face a dynamic tension point between convention and innovation. While we naturally dream at night, it should not be the only time that we dream.

Because of that ability to dream, the CRD was nearly fully ready to shift into a work-from-home posture as Covid-19 ravaged the nation. We have been able to establish a quality assurance process that is being replicated by others, and we are using technology to give our customers and stakeholders enhanced access to information critical to their lives.

In the new year, the CRD will establish a new CRD Roadmap for 2021 where we will seek to build upon the dynamic work model that we have established using technology, creative thinking and problem-solving. Additionally, we will be focusing on elevating each team member to a higher level of expertise and engaging in a model of business that permits maximum ownership by every single team member. I believe that this is a winning mindset that will permit CRD to more rapidly respond to our customers, stakeholders and an evolving world. Our simple goal is to take our dreams and translate those into reality to arrive at a better and more just world.

Taking Down the Ropes of Segregation

By: Vanessa Hernandez



Did you know that Billy Graham (William Franklin Graham, Jr. Nov. 17, 1918 – Feb. 21, 2018) was nearly as influential for the Civil Rights movement as Martin Luther King, Jr? It's true. These two great giants in humanity were friends, worked together and confided in one another

on these issues.

In the days of segregation, Billy received death threats on his life and the lives of his family for his stand to end racism. But Billy would not back down or change his message. He refused to accept any invitation that divided the races.

On one occasion, ropes were up and he asked the usher to remove the ropes so everyone could sit together. When the usher refused, Billy personally

pulled the ropes down and mixed the crowd together. Billy Graham and Martin Luther King, Jr. had the same heart and goal to end racism, each with his own method.

Please join me in paying tribute to these two great men by visiting the link below to watch this powerful, eye opening video with excerpts from Bernice King (Martin Luther King, Jr.'s daughter) and former President Bill Clinton , and witness Billy Graham and Martin Luther King, Jr. on the same platform.

Please visit:

<https://billygraham.org/video/taking-down-the-ropes-of-segregation/>



Photos courtesy of Getty Images

Caselaw Review

By: Alex Stewart



On August 24, 2018, Complainant filed a Charge with the Civil Rights Division (CRD) alleging she was subjected to sexual

harassment, a hostile work environment, and constructive discharge because of her sex. Complainant alleged her supervisor would remove major business accounts from her client list when she refused his unwanted sexual advances. Complainant worked on commission, so her refusal to submit to her supervisor's demands would have a direct and negative affect on her income. Although Complainant stated she asked her supervisor to stop this behavior, she never reported his conduct to upper management.

The Respondent provided substantial evidence that the Complainant failed to timely and properly do her job, which resulted in reduced service levels to customers, increased customer complaints, and multiple requests from customers to be assigned to work with a different employee. The Respondent stated many of her accounts were reassigned to better performing employees.

The Respondent asserts that the Complainant never made them aware of her supervisor's unwanted conduct. By failing to alert them, the Complainant effectively hampered their ability to fully investigate her allegations. Additionally, in October 2015, this same Complainant filed a sexual harassment complaint, with this same employer, against another fellow employee. Respondent conducted an investigation and the offending employee resigned in lieu of termination. Following that investigation, the Complainant stated that she was pleased with the Respondent's actions and the resulting solution. The Respondent maintains that the Complainant understood the complaint process and she knew they would have taken her complaint seriously.

The Respondent provided evidence that all employees had recently attended required annual sexual harassment and anti-discrimination training as required by policy. The supervisor had also recently attended additional sexual harassment and anti-discrimination training which was designed for members of management.

In 1998, The U.S. Supreme Court issued two decisions which provide guidance on an employer's liability for sexual harassment which

is committed by a supervisor: *Burlington Industries, Inc. v Ellerth*; and *Faragher v City of Boca Raton*. Both cases ruled that the Respondent has vicarious liability when a supervisor's sexual harassment results in a tangible employment action. However, in sexual harassment cases, an employer may escape liability when no adverse employment action was taken; the Respondent exercised reasonable care to prevent and correct any sexually harassing behavior; and the Complainant unreasonably failed to take advantage of the preventative or corrective opportunities that the employer provides.

Because the Respondent provided evidence that: The Complainant was not performing well, their discrimination policies were reinforced through required annual training, and that they had previously taken action on another sexual harassment complaint from this same Complainant, the CRD made a preliminary determination of No Reasonable Cause.

To protect the parties' confidentiality as required by Chapter 21 of the Texas Labor Code, CRD is refraining from providing specific details of this complaint.

Civil Rights Division Education, Training & Outreach



Antonio Cañas was born in El Salvador but at 8 years old he moved to Los Angeles, California. He joined the United States Army (Army) at the age of

18 and recently retired after 24 years of service. Antonio was a Human Resources (HR) administrator for over 10 years, Petroleum Distribution Manager for over 7 years and a M1 Armor Crewman for over 5 years. Antonio commissioned as an Army Officer in 2009 with dual Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees in Political Science and History from Tarleton State University out of Stephenville, Texas. In 2016, Antonio earned his master's degree in Political Science from the University of West Florida out of Pensacola, Florida and is three classes short from completing his master's in Human Resources with Webster University. He is certified as a Six Sigma Lean/DFSS Green belt from Aveta Business Institute and is currently working to earn his Professional Human Resource (PHR) certification.

Throughout his military career, Antonio earned a wide range of experience in working and interacting with a diverse group of individuals. While in the military, Antonio deployed to Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq and was station in Korea where he was able to work with the host nation workers and soldiers. He enjoys meeting people from different cultures and backgrounds.

One of Antonio's favorite hobbies is traveling to new places. In 2018, he had the privileged of visiting some beautiful nations such as Japan, Vietnam and Kenya. Antonio's hobbies and activities also include reading historical and political books, planting flowers/trees, TED talks, running, family time and church services.

He enjoys charity works and is a member of the Knights of Columbus, a catholic organization, and is currently applying to be a mentor with Reset Mentoring program which works with the Williamson County Juvenile Services.

Antonio is married to Stacy Cañas, a native of Laredo, Texas, and they have been married since 2003. They have two kids Antonio Jr. and Iliana

Cañas. He feels blessed to be part of the of Outreach, Compliance, Resolutions (OCR) team and is looking forward to contributing and enhancing the OCR team's mission and objectives.



Jeff Riddle comes to us from the United States Army where he served over the last 23 years. He enlisted out of Arlington, Texas as an Infantryman

while in still high school and started his career right after graduation. Jeff has served in numerous roles outside of the Infantry throughout his career, some of which included Program Manager, Patient Coordinator, Recruiter, and Operations Manager. He was stationed at Fort Hood, Fort Benning and Fort Stewart, as well as in Germany, South Korea, and Iraq. A graduate of American Military University, Jeff earned his bachelor's in History. A native Texan, Jeff is looking forward to the opportunity to serve and assist the people of Texas.

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