



December 21, 2009

INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
OF OFFICIAL
HUMAN RIGHTS
AGENCIES

Season's greetings to the IAOHRA family;

I want to take this opportunity to wish each of you a joyous and happy holiday season. As the year draws to a close, it provides an excellent observation point for looking back and looking ahead. 2009 has been a hectic year filled with both good and bad, but I hope that all of you have a balance sheet that is in the black.

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In looking back, the most obvious issue has been the problem of shrinking budgets and lost staff. This is true whether you are in Ontario, California or Ontario, Canada. All of us have had to make extremely difficult decisions about staffing, training, conference attendance and in some instances, the very existence of our agencies. It has not been easy and the work load has not gotten any less difficult. However, here we are at the end of another year preparing to celebrate or celebrating holidays that speak of a new light, a new beginning, of hope, family and tradition. I hope that all of us will take stock of where we are and decide that what we do is worth it and resolve to continue the struggle for social justice, human and civil rights into the New Year. If nothing else, we should all try to be a little more helpful to each other and, as much as possible, available to each other. After all, our shared experiences are the greatest resource we have.

2010, is shaping up as a year of great possibility. First and foremost, the vast majority of our member agencies are still here to fight the good fight. We have survived another round of budget cuts, down sizing and speculation that there is no longer a need for civil rights organizations in order to continue the struggle to make the victims of discrimination whole. That is a great thing in and of itself.

More over, the Congress has endorsed our efforts by providing increased funding for both of our federal partners and in the case of EEOC specifically restored a portion of the funding that State and local agencies have lost during the past few years. Thirty million dollars for State and local programs is not nearly enough, however, it offers great hope to those who saw the pendulum swing to a low of twenty-six million in last year's appropriation. So there is hope and the prospect of additional resources to do the work that we do. Of course along with this hope, comes the need for vigilance and advocacy. We must make sure that money intended to support state and local civil rights enforcement is indeed channeled to that end, and not allocated for other purposes. Your Board of Directors is dedicated to being your advocate and we hope that when we sound the alarm that you will be there to watch our backs and step up whenever necessary.

2009 was a difficult year, but together, we can make 2010 a banner year for civil rights enforcement. I implore each of you to dedicate your self anew to our mission to enforce and protect the civil and human rights of all people.

A District of Columbia
Nonprofit Corporation

HAVE A HAPPY AND JOYFUL HOLIDAY!!!

Leon W. Russell