



The New York Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights Celebrates the Accomplishments and Mourns the Death of Chair Alexandra Korry

September 30, 2020

We are profoundly saddened by and mourn the death of our outstanding Chair, Alexandra D. Korry, who led the New York Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights for nearly a decade, where she persistently advanced the civil rights of New Yorkers.

Under her steadfast leadership, the Committee investigated and published several significant reports documenting civil rights violations in New York State, each culminating in a set of findings and recommendations to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Alexandra believed deeply in the dignity and promise of every individual and was committed to creating a fair and just society where equity prevails. She was particularly committed to protecting the civil rights of children and youth as among our most vulnerable.

In 2014, the Committee, led by Alexandra, published [*The Solitary Confinement of Youth in New York: A Civil Rights Violation*](#), which examined the disparate impact and serious and far-reaching harm inflicted on adolescent inmates, primarily youth of color, who were subjected to prolonged harmful isolation in solitary confinement in New York's Rikers Island RNDJ jail as well as New York's state prisons. The Committee's investigation, findings, and recommendations highlighted by Alexandra's testimony before the New York Board of Correction influenced the Board of Correction and the City of New York to abolish solitary confinement for incarcerated youth less than 22 years of age in 2015. And, in part due to NYSAC's recommendations, the Board now requires the City to provide these incarcerated youth with age-appropriate rehabilitative educational, physical and mental health, developmental, and social services, instead of harsh punishment, to improve their chances of success upon release.

In 2018, the Committee investigated the City of New York's policing of communities of color and released [*The Civil Rights Implications of "Broken Windows" Policing in New York City and General NYPD Accountability to the Public*](#), which addressed the disproportionate and negative impact of 'broken windows' policing on communities and youth of color in the City of New York, including in its schools, and the significant

problems inherent in the New York Police Department's approach to accountability, transparency, and oversight. Many of our recommendations have since been adopted.

Most recently, in Spring 2020, the Committee published [*Education Equity in New York: A Forgotten Dream*](#), which documented its significant findings and recommendations regarding the persistent and harmful inequity in K-12 education funding. We found that New York students of color are being deprived of the right to participate in civil society as a result of a lack of access to a fundamental quality education, simply based on their poverty or their color. Alexandra had stated in our recent press release: "It is shameful that in an era in which we build skyscraping apartments that sell for mega-millions we cannot dream big enough to provide a quality education to our most underserved students. New York's failure to provide a decent education to its poorest students, many of whom are students of color, violates the very precepts of a civil and just society and deprives our children of even the possibility of participation in society."

While Alexandra earned a reputation for brilliance and tenacity as a top corporate lawyer at Sullivan & Cromwell, the Committee observed her deploy her formidable talents in the service of racial justice and civil rights. "Alexandra has had an outsized impact in advancing civil rights," Vice-Chair Bryanne Hamill said. "As a member of the Committee, she never ceased to amaze me with her intellect, energy, passion, determination, and extraordinary efforts to improve the lives of others by documenting the need for government to account for, and remedy, its civil rights violations." Long serving Committee member Iris Chen said, "I will always treasure the opportunity I had to serve under Alexandra's leadership. Her commitment, integrity, and resolve were on full display as she battled to protect and safeguard the rights of our most disenfranchised. She embodied what it means to live life fully and to deploy one's gifts in service of others."

This June, Alexandra welcomed a newly appointed advisory committee at the start of her third term as Chair and subsequently led us through vigorous discussions of New York's most pressing civil rights issues. In light of Alexandra's passing, Vice-Chair Hamill said, "We will honor Alexandra's memory and legacy by continuing her tradition of conducting exhaustive investigations, holding balanced briefings, and issuing comprehensive reports documenting our findings and recommendations. She has set the bar high."

Commission Chair Catherine E. Lhamon said, "Civil rights advance through tenacious commitment; as we mourn Alexandra's death and celebrate her legacy I so appreciate this Committee's pledge to advance the important work to which she was so fiercely dedicated and from which New York and the country deeply benefit."

The Committee members extend their deepest sympathies to Alexandra's family, friends and colleagues. We will miss her and will always be grateful for, and inspired by, her leadership and invaluable contributions to advancing the civil rights of all.

About the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the New York State Advisory Committee

The Civil Rights Act of 1957 created the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Since then, Congress has reauthorized or extended the legislation creating the Commission several times; the last reauthorization was in 1994 by the Civil Rights Commission Amendments Act of 1994. Established as an independent, bipartisan, fact-finding federal agency, our mission is to inform the development of national civil rights policy and enhance enforcement of federal civil rights laws. We pursue this mission by studying alleged deprivations of voting rights and alleged discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice. We play a vital role in advancing civil rights through objective and comprehensive investigation, research, and analysis on issues of fundamental concern to the federal government and the public.

The Commission maintains 51 State Advisory Committees (SACs), one for each state and the District of Columbia. Each is composed of citizen volunteers familiar with local and state civil rights issues. The members assist the Commission with its fact-finding, investigative, and information dissemination functions. The Commission seeks to ensure that advisory committees are broadly diverse and represent a variety of backgrounds, skills, experiences and perspectives. This diversity promotes vigorous debate and full exploration of the issues. All appointments are made in a non-discriminatory manner.