



Application for Boards and Commissions

City of New Haven, CT

Submitted On:

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Full Name	First Name: Chrishana Last Name: White
Email	chrishanawhite17@gmail.com
Are you a current New Haven resident?	Yes
Full Address	Street Address: 185 Kneeland Road City: New Haven State: CT Zip: 06512
Phone Number	718-812-5192
Are you a registered voter in New Haven?	Yes
What political party do you belong to? [This information is only requested as it is required by the city charter (Article X Sec. 2-551) to ensure minority party representation on boards and commissions]	Democrat
What is your current occupation?	Director of Equity
Please upload a resume or personal statement of interest	CMW Resume October 2021.docx.pdf
New Haven Boards & Commissions Listed	Civilian Review Board Commission on Affirmative Action Commission on Equal Opportunities Cultural Affairs Commission Youth Commission
Please explain why you are interested in serving on this board/commission?	I am interested in serving on the Civilian Review Board as I know that the current CRB terms have expired. I see this as an opportunity to serve my community and continue doing the important work of amplifying community members' voices and enhancing transparency and accountability which promotes the safety of all Elm City residents. As a newer New Haven resident looking to build community and become involved in my community intentionally, I think serving on the CRB is a perfect way for me to understand the pulse of the city while leveraging my ability and experience of examining facts and making recommendations based on what is presented to me. I have also checked off the other boards and commissions that I am interested in given my experience and

Why do you believe you are a good fit for this board/commission?	personal interests. As a lawyer and strategist who is a new addition to the city, I think I am an excellent value add to the CRB because I bring a fresh and maybe a different perspective based on my lived and work experiences. I lead based on understanding and listening, and I have a growth mindset. I am not wedded to a particular side, group, or outcome. Moreover, I work from home which allows me to be flexible and committed to the CRB as is necessary.
Do you have any time commitments that would prevent you from participating in the board/commission meetings?	No, I don't. I work from home and have a lot of flexibility.

Chrishana M. White

New Haven, CT | 718.812.5192 | chrishanawhite17@gmail.com

Alex Guzhnay
Legislative Liaison to the Board of Alders
Mayor's Office
165 Church St., 2nd Fl.
New Haven, CT 06510

Dear Alex Guzhnay:

As a proud New Haven resident of four years, I am seeking to become more actively involved in advancing equity and justice in the community I now call home. I am writing to express my strong interest in serving on the Commission on Equal Opportunities, an entity whose mission aligns deeply with my personal values and professional experience.

I bring a unique combination of legal expertise and strategic equity leadership. As an attorney, I have extensive experience litigating on behalf of marginalized communities, having served as a public defender at Brooklyn Defender Services where I represented parents accused of abuse and neglect. My clients were overwhelmingly from low-income, overpoliced communities—primarily Black and brown families—navigating a system that disproportionately regulated and surveilled them. This work sharpened both my legal acumen and my understanding of how systemic inequities manifest at the community level.

Beyond the courtroom, my career has centered on operationalizing equity within complex institutions, from government agencies to national nonprofits. At the NYC Department of Education, I worked in both teacher accountability and equal opportunity roles, investigating discrimination claims and ensuring compliance with civil rights laws. I later served as the inaugural Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at a public defender office, and currently lead racial equity strategy at Planned Parenthood Federation of America. In each role, I've worked to analyze the root causes of disparities and build systems that promote fairness, dignity, and access for all, rather than just temporary fixes.

I am deeply relational in my leadership approach and grounded in community-centered values. I believe that equity work is most effective when informed by those closest to the impact. I would bring this lens to the Commission's mission of fostering harmonious intergroup relations and identifying systemic barriers to opportunity in New Haven. It would be an honor to contribute to the Commission's critical work and help shape policies and programs that improve outcomes for all residents, particularly those who are often left behind.

Thank you for considering my application. I welcome the opportunity to further support the Commission's goals and the broader movement toward justice in our city.

Sincerely,

Chrishana White

WORKPLACE EQUITY STRATEGIST | CULTURE BUILDER | ATTORNEY

Equity strategist and attorney with expertise in fostering inclusive workplace cultures, embedding equity into organizational policies and leveraging data to drive strategic decisions. Adept at designing and implementing employee experience measurement initiatives, coaching leaders on embedding equity into the employee lifecycle, and aligning policies with values to drive institutional transformation. Skilled at facilitating dialogue, supporting others through conflict, and building consensus across perspectives. Known for leading with curiosity, care, and a deep commitment to fostering inclusive environments where employees feel valued and engaged.

KEY COMPETENCIES

Relationship Building | Data Analysis | Strategy Development | Leadership Coaching | Team Building | Program Management | Process Improvement | Change Management | Conflict Resolution | Legal Compliance

EQUITY LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE EXPERIENCE

Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Associate Director of Culture and Equity

New York, NY
2025- Present

Reading Partners

Remote

National Director of Equity

2022 - 2025

- Developed and executed a national multi-year Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) strategy for a \$40 million national educational organization
- Provided strategic guidance on communications, policies, and procedures, and ensured alignment with organizational racial equity goals
- Designed and implemented REDI programming and employee experience initiatives, including leadership coaching, affinity group support, and team-building experiences for 500+ employees and AmeriCorps members
- Analyzed qualitative and quantitative data to measure cultural impact and progress, ensuring initiatives were data-informed and sustainable

Brooklyn Defender Services

Brooklyn, NY and Remote

Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

2019 - 2022

- Tapped to be first-in-role to design and implement the inaugural DEI multi-year strategy for a \$60 million multidisciplinary public defender office with 500+ employees
 - Conducted an organizational climate survey with 90% participation, leading to increased trust and engagement
 - Established the organization's inaugural affinity groups and DEIB committee and coached leaders to foster an inclusive and engaged workplace
 - Partnered with HR to improve hiring processes and performance management through an equity lens
 - Supervised a team of 3 and a consultant team of 3, while managing a \$150,000+ annual budget
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LEGAL EXPERIENCE

New York City Department of Education

New York, NY

Diversity Counsel

2019 - 2019

- Trained investigators and attorneys on Title VII, NYS Human Rights Law, and NYC Human Rights Law compliance
- Investigated sensitive and complex discrimination and sexual harassment allegations
- Developed policies to increase Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBES) in procurement and contracting
- Evaluated the Department's talent management cycle and identified areas of underutilization

Litigation Attorney 2017 - 2019

- Managed a portfolio of 50+ disciplinary labor relations cases with a 90% resolution rate
- Represented the Department in labor arbitrations, achieving 75% trial success rate
- Counseled 150+ school principals on performance documentation

Brooklyn Defender Services Brooklyn, NY
Staff Attorney 2014 - 2017

- Represented 80+ parents in complex family law cases, litigating trials and hearings from inception to completion
- Conducted training for attorneys and facilitated Know Your Rights workshops across NYC
- Served on the hiring committee and participated in legal recruiting efforts

The Honorable Martha T. Mainor, J.S.C., Superior Court of NJ Jersey City, New Jersey
Judicial Law Clerk 2013 - 2014

- Conducted legal research and drafted memoranda on complex civil litigation issues
- Managed a motion calendar of 150+ motions per cycle
- Mediated small claims cases, achieving a 98% resolution rate

CONSULTING EXPERIENCE

Johanna Steinberg Law PLLC Remote
Assistant Counsel 2024

- Provided legal and strategic guidance on employment policies to ensure compliance and alignment with equity goals
- Supported affinity groups and identity-based initiatives to foster inclusion and engagement

Smith College School for Social Work Remote
Adjunct Professor and Community-Based Anti-Racism Experience Instructor 2023 - 2025

- Led an interactive course on racial justice in communities and organizations
- Guided and supported master's level social work students apply theory to practice in their racial justice organizing efforts

Shriver Center on Poverty Law Remote
Racial Justice Institute Coach 2021 - 2022

- Advised the National Center for Youth Law's (NYCL) Juvenile Justice and Youth Justice Initiative teams on racial justice strategies related to education and juvenile justice

EDUCATION

Seton Hall University School of Law, Newark, NJ
Juris Doctor
Disadvantaged Applicant Student Selection Committee Member
Academic Success Program, Teaching Fellow

Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA
Bachelor of Arts, English and Communications
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Iota Chapter President
Black Student Forum, Vice President

BOARD SERVICE

Cafe con Libros, Brooklyn, NY
Reading Allowed, Philadelphia, PA

BAR ADMISSIONS

New York and New Jersey
Connecticut (Admission pending)

INTERESTS

Making pottery, reading memoirs
Powerlifting, collecting socks