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**CONTACT:** Alicia McCauley, [amccauley@cchr.nyc.gov](mailto:amccauley@cchr.nyc.gov), 212-416-0105

**NYC COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS LAUNCHES NEW CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN NYC**

*The “While Black” campaign will run in city bus shelters, subways, NYC Link, community media, storefront posters and on social media through Memorial Day*

**NEW YORK**—The New York City Commission on Human Rights today launches a new ad campaign to combat anti-Black racism. The campaign, entitled “While Black,” acknowledges some common forms of discrimination that Black people face while doing everyday activities, affirms the rights of all Black New Yorkers to live their lives free of bias, and provides information on how to report discrimination to the Commission. The NYC Human Rights Law has one of the strongest protections against harassment and discrimination based on race and color in the nation. The Commission received 584 race-based complaints in Fiscal Year 2018 and saw an overall 20% increase in complaints since 2016.

The campaign ads target anyone who identifies as Black, including African American, Afro-Latinx, Afro-Caribbean, and African New Yorkers, as well as entities that have responsibilities, and potential liability, under the law, including housing providers, employers, employment agencies and business owners. The launch of this campaign comes on the heels of the release of the Commission’s groundbreaking legal guidance on race discrimination and hair in employment and public accommodations, which identifies discrimination based on natural hair and hairstyles most commonly associated with Black people as racial discrimination. The release of the guidance in February 2018 resulted in national and international public and media attention and resulted in other jurisdictions developing their own guidances.

"Human rights recognizes the dignity and equality of all people, it is the foundation for democracy and justice. Meaningful and poignant black activism in our city and nation has understood the ever-relevant concept of human rights, especially in difficult political times," said **Deputy Mayor For Strategic Policy Initiatives Phillip Thompson**. "This public information campaign captures just that. Building on the struggles of black people to achieve equal treatment and access to opportunities requires bold advocacy from government and we are working to make sure Black New Yorkers who have been discriminated against get justice and accountability."

“In New York City and the nation as a whole, there is a long and painful history of discrimination against Black people, and efforts to limit their rights and activities” said **Carmelyn P. Malalis, Commissioner and Chair of the NYC Commission on Human Rights**. “This campaign references the deep connections between the fight against anti-Black racism and the fight for human rights. It affirms the experiences of Black people who have been targeted for discrimination, harassment and intimidation while simply going about their day-to-day lives, and puts those who would seek to discriminate, harass or intimidate Black New Yorkers on notice that bigotry and bias will not be tolerated in our city.”

Because anti-Black racism occurs at the interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels of everyday life, the “While Black” campaign highlights common scenarios in which Black New Yorkers are targeted for harassment and discrimination, including while driving, shopping, working, walking, and renting. These ads seek to establish the Commission as a venue for justice and encourages victims and those who witness harassment to report it by calling 718-722-3131 or dialing 311 and asking for Human Rights.

The ads will appear in English and Spanish in over 1000 placements across the city, including in subway cars, bus shelters, LinkNYC kiosks, and in storefronts in every borough including nail salons, barber shops, and bodegas. The ads will also run in community media in English and Spanish including in *El Diario*, *Harlem Community News*, *New York Caribbean News*, *Amsterdam News*, and *Haiti Liberte*, among others.



All five of the ads in English and Spanish are on the [Commission's website](#).

The Commission has increased its public education and outreach efforts in regard to anti-Black racism in the City, including hosting artist-in-residence Tatyana Fazlalizadeh, who will later this year be unveiling a series of citywide street art projects addressing anti-black racism and a series of events focused on empowering communities in the face of gentrification and racial tensions. Additionally, the Commission recently settled several cases involving racial bias, including:

- The Commission settled a case in which a JC Penny customer was racially profiled at checkout. The national retailer agreed to create, implement, and train staff on anti-bias policies, as well as paid \$6500 in damages and \$6500 in civil penalties.
- The Commission settled a case in which a landlord refused to rent to a couple because one person in the couple was Black. The landlord made disparaging statements about Black people as justification for the refusal. The Commission settled the case awarding \$15,000 to the couple in emotional distress damages and fining the landlord a \$2500 civil penalty.

- The Commission settled a case with a bank in which a Black employee was required to monitor Black tellers more closely than tellers of other races. The Commission awarded the employee \$15,000 in emotional damages and ordered anti-discrimination training for all bank employees.

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“Videos of Black and Brown Americans being harassed while going about their daily lives seem to have proliferated in recent years, but the painful truth is that the only new aspect of this phenomenon is the attention it’s getting,” said **Janai Nelson, Associate Director-Counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.** “We’ve long challenged policies in New York that disproportionately target communities of color, but so much more work remains to be done to rid the city of anti-Black discrimination. We appreciate this first step from the city towards raising awareness that all New Yorkers have the right to live at peace with dignity and respect and free from harassment because of their race.”

“This is an important and timely campaign for the City of New York, and it’s particularly important that this campaign is being launched by our local human rights agency,” said **Hazel Dukes, President of the NAACP New York State Conference.** “The vision of the NAACP is to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights without discrimination based on race, and we’re glad that the city has taken such a clear stance. The current national climate has made racism and bigotry more prevalent, but campaigns like this help push against hatred. The New York State NAACP is proud to continue work with the NYC Commission on Human Rights.”

“While being Black, I have come to realize that systematic racism and the individual prejudice still exist. While being Black, the struggle continues, not for racial equality, not for academics achievement but there is a spirituality of being human. The recognition of humanity within one self and nation, unfortunately is not shared by all. Our accomplishments are obvious, and our achievements are great. There is only one race and that is the human race and we are divided into tribes and nations; thus tribalism and nationalism is an operational component that others use to keep us down. We must rise above...Black is not a color but a state of mind.” - **Imam Zulqarnain Abdu Shahid**

“As people of faith, we have a moral duty to support movements challenging the public consciousness to recognize and most importantly redress both overt and glaring systemic racism that remains so prevalent in places even like New York City.” -**Drs. Floyd and Elaine Flake, Pastors of Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York**

" Haitian Americans know all too well what it feels like to be discriminated against. In the 1980's we were accused of bringing AIDS to the United States, and recently our country was referred to as a 'sh\*t-hole' by President Trump. Such sentiments have no place in our society today and ought to be eliminated if we are to truly embody everything, which this country purports to exemplify. As one of the largest Caribbean groups in New York, City, The Haitian American Caucus is proud to work with the New York City Human Rights Commission and support their While Black Campaign to help our people understand their power and place in our great city.”-**Samuel Pierre, Executive Director- Haitian American Caucus**

“African Services Committee applauds the NYC Commission on Human Rights’ efforts to directly and very publicly address racism in our communities,” says **Asfaha Hadera, Founder and Co-Executive Director of African Services Committee**, a human rights organization dedicated to improving the health and self-sufficiency of the African community in New York City. “NYC Commission on Human Rights data informs the services African Services Committee provides to the thousands of newcomers who come

through our doors in Harlem each year, showing an increase in number of Black New Yorkers who are victims of discrimination. Resistance to acts of prejudice needs to be nurtured in the City.”

"The While Black campaign is a great platform for African immigrants in NYC to become more aware of their rights when facing anti-Black discriminatory acts. Living while Black is a human right and this campaign will illustrate this affirmation." - **Amaha Kassa African Communities Together**

“The “While Black” campaign is an absolute necessity in our current society,” said **Malachi Davidson, membership Engagement Organizer for Rockaway Youth Task Force.**

“Unfortunately, youth of color have become accustomed to overt forms of racism that exist both in real life and online, as well as the effects systematic and institutional racism, and as a result, one can lose sight of their own self-worth. A campaign like this, especially coming from a government agency, not only acknowledges the issues we deal with on a day to day basis, but highlights the need for change, and that’s powerful as it provides hope for both our youth and the future of our city.”

“I think this campaign is very important to help bring awareness and visibility to issues that are overlooked within society ESPECIALLY in the TRANS /GNCB community.” – **Kim Watson, Co-Founder of Community Kinship Life**

“This campaign will be beneficial to New York residents from the African diaspora and Black people in New York because it promotes respect for the rights of these marginalized groups, and encourages all New Yorkers to view Black people as equal beings who are entitled to exist in their identity as Black people and still be protected by the rights enjoyed by all other groups such as not being discriminated in the housing process, or in the streets while doing everyday things. Exposing all New Yorkers to this campaign is very important because it will make everyone think about the role they play in the society that might be promoting discrimination of Black people, and can, therefore, reevaluate their role and separate stereotypes from real experiences. The campaign takes away the dangerous view that a specific kind of person does not deserve certain freedom because of their identity, in this case, their Black identity.” -**Gambia Youth Organization**