

Application

Please demonstrate your interest in serving by completing the application below. We recognize there may be barriers to completing a written application. Please contact the Foundation Staff for assistance in identifying alternatives.

Name: Rika Valladares Date: 3/14/2024

Street Address: [REDACTED]

City: Lynden Zip Code: 98264

Mailing Address (if different from street address): _____

Preferred Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Preferred Email Address: [REDACTED]

(if you may not be reached via email, we will work with applicants to contact them in different ways)

If appointed, would you prefer to serve a 2- or 3-year initial term? ☐ 2-year ☒ 3 year ☐ Open to either

In our pursuit that each applicant is given the greatest opportunity to join the WREC, **we are asking applicants to self-identify ALL the roles they would be eligible for and comfortable representing** on the Commission. Please check all roles you would like to be considered for:

1. Community Member (Up to 7 members)
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 - ☐ A business owner, manager, or independent contractor;
 - ☒ A youth or young adult aged 16 to 24 at the time of appointment;
2. Diversity officers or staff members engaged in DEI work in educational institutions (2 total members)
 - ☐ Working in local higher education institutions
 - ☐ Working in local K-12 schools;
3. ☐ Human service providers, including, but not limited to, victim or offender services, housing or houseless services, and mental health services;
4. (Not being seated at this time) Subject matter expert, individuals with expertise in, and/or specialists in the commission's areas of concern;
5. ☐ Social justice advocate or activist whose area of focus is racial equity;
6. ☐ Philanthropic organizations;
7. ☐ Faith leadership;
8. ☐ Multilingual health care provider.

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Applicant Statements

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If you are submitting materials while working with the Foundation Staff, the staff member will ensure your materials are submitted.

Rika Valladares
360.594.8734
erikavalladares208@gmail.com
WREC Application

Describe your lived, community activity related, professional, educational, and/or personal experiences that may support and advance the work of the Commission. You may include a list of experiences if needed in this response to capture additional information.

I am a BIPOC youth that grew up and currently lives in Lynden, Washington. Lynden is a very conservative area and their views on People of Color vary, but most of them aren't that friendly. If you go to the high school in Lynden, its easy if you're white, but its hard if you are a person of color. Racial discrimination happens in the schools against people of color by staff and students. I am a child of immigrant and grew up speaking Spanish and English. When we were younger, we were with my dad and he got pulled over and the police looked at us children in the back and asked for IDs of the children. The white officer asked my dad to prove that he was our dad and was judgmental and hostile towards my father and my mom who he had to call for proof was very upset. Whenever we travel across the border, my dad is always stopped and challenged on whether or not we are his children.

I've been on the Youth Action Board at NWYS for 10 months and we work to address systemic issues within the housing system like the disparities experienced by BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth and young adults.

I have a history of doing public speaking and event planning. I helped organize my school's silent auction and raised \$12,000.

Please describe why you're interested in serving on this commission.

So that other kids don't have to go through what I did. So other kids aren't afraid to go out and be with their family without getting looks on the street or fearing for their safety. To be able to speak my languages without being asked what I'm saying and "offending" people when we're having our own conversations they can't understand. For other kids to not be scared that they have a higher chance of going to jail because of the color of their skin. To help Whatcom County to be fair to people who look like me.

Please describe one goal you would have for the Commission, one challenge in reaching that goal, and how you envision the Commission achieving the goal

That kids of color have equal and fair standing in schools. So they aren't automatically labeled a target based on the color of their skin. One challenge in reaching that goal is racism, but also blanket favoritism in schools towards white students. I envision the commission achieving the goal through hard work – by talking about it and working together with the schools and showing teachers and staff how to address their internal bias and showing up for students of color and letting them know they are loved and belong in our community.

Application

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Name: Erik McFrazier Date: 02/29/24

Street Address: [REDACTED]

City: Bellingham Zip Code: 98229

Mailing Address (if different from street address): _____

Preferred Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Preferred Email Address: [REDACTED]

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Describe your lived, community activity related, professional, educational, and/or personal experiences that may support and advance the work of the Commission. You may include a list of experiences if needed in this response to capture additional information.

- I am a local business owner
- I serve on multiple non-profit and community organizations
 - TagNW
 - Brothers to Brothers
 - United Professionals of Color
- I've lived in different communities with different cultural identities from the inner city of Los Angeles, to predominantly white suburbs, to large multicultural cities, and remote island communities with a strong indigenous culture.
- I've experienced different levels of income, from houselessness to middle income business owner.
- I live in a multi-cultural and multi-national home providing multiple perspectives.
- I am a husband and a father, my son is in 8th grade at Fairhaven Middle School and my daughter is a Freshman at WWU.
- I've lived in both religious and non-religious households.
- I founded and Co-chair a community organization called United Professionals of Color dedicated to the equity of this community's BIPOC professionals and business owners.
- My lived experience as a Black man in America and having lived in a number of varied community environments, means I offer an important perspective for the work of this Commission.
- I believe I have the ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives.

Please describe why you're interested in serving on this commission.

I love this community and I recognize the need for and believe strongly in the purpose, goals, and functions outlined for this commission. I would like to be a part of moving forward these goals in our community.

Please describe one goal you would have for the Commission, one challenge in reaching that goal, and how you envision the Commission achieving the goal.

An important goal for me, which is related to one of the guiding principles, is finding a way to capture and include the voice of the community, especially the historically underserved populations, in the Commission recommendations.

One of perhaps many challenges to this goal will be engaging, reaching, and establishing trust with these folks to facilitate authentic and meaningful contributions.

Part of the solution here will be to leverage Commission members' relationships with these communities to establish trust and engagement. In this area, as a Commission member I would offer a number of connections to community groups that center Black or BIPOC populations, as well as a number of minority owned business peer networks.

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Name: Gabriela Montenegro Date: 02/20/24

Street Address: [REDACTED]

City: Lynden Zip Code: 98264

Mailing Address (if different from street address): _____

Preferred Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Preferred Email Address: [REDACTED]

(if you may not be reached via email, we will work with applicants to contact them in different ways)

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1. Describe your lived, community actively related, professional, education, and/or personal experiences that may support and advance the work of the Commission. You may include a list of experiences if needed in this response to capture additional information.

As a multilingual immigrant from Central America, I bring a unique perspective to my application for a position on the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission (WREC). My journey to Whatcom County has provided me with firsthand insight into the needs, barriers, and challenges faced by marginalized communities. I understand the complexities of navigating systems as an immigrant, and I am deeply committed to advocating for equitable access to for our community.

In my role as a Housing Resource Access Coordinator for the Opportunity Council, I have had the privilege of engaging with individuals and families from diverse backgrounds who are experiencing homelessness. My primary goal has been to reduce barriers to housing and serve as a voice for those who may not fully understand the complexities of the system. Through data collection and analysis, I have identified specific barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized communities in our county. By working collaboratively with community members and local organizations, I have been able to develop strategies to mitigate these barriers and increase access to stable housing and supportive programs.

My educational background in criminology has further enhanced my ability to understand and address the underlying factors contributing to inequality and injustice in our society. I am passionate about preventing crime by addressing root causes and promoting social equity. My experiences working with local non-profits and serving as co-chair for the Whatcom Center for Early Learning (WCEL) for DEI have deepened my understanding of the multifaceted barriers faced by marginalized communities on a daily basis.

In summary, my lived experiences, professional background, and commitment to this community make me well-equipped to contribute to the important work of the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission. I am dedicated to advancing equity and inclusion in Whatcom County and am eager to collaborate with fellow members to drive positive change.

2. Please describe why you're interested in serving on this commission.

I am particularly drawn to this opportunity because I am eager to contribute during the startup phase of the commission, laying down a solid foundation and setting precedents for our future work. Given my role as a Housing Resource Access Coordinator, I see direct correlation between my work and the objectives of the commission. Despite the challenges I encounter in my role, I have gained invaluable experience and insights through daily engagement with marginalized communities.

Being part of the initial group is crucial to me because I believe my experience positions me well to make meaningful contributions right from the start. I want to make Whatcom County is a place where people of all races live, thrive, and belong for who they are as they are. I am passionate about using my unique perspectives and experiences to drive positive change and promote racial equity in our community.

Lastly, I am interested in shaping the strategic vision for the future of the commission and am driven to ensure the success and effectiveness of the commission in the long term.

3. Please describe one goal you would have for the Commission, one challenge in reaching that goal, and how you envision the Commission achieving the goal.

One of my primary goals for the Commission is to serve as a voice for marginalized communities, ensuring that every individual in our community is heard and represented. However, a significant challenge lies in the diverse range of voices and experiences within our community. Many individuals encounter barriers to participation in decision-making processes, such as language barriers or limited access to resources. Moreover, there may be lingering distrust towards institutions, including the Commission, stemming from past experiences of neglect.

To address this challenge, the Commission must prioritize comprehensive community engagement and outreach efforts. This involves actively soliciting input from the community through various channels, including community forums, focus groups, and outreach events. Additionally, making partnerships with grassroots organizations and community leaders who possess established relationships and trust within the community is essential.

Lastly, the Commission must ensure that outreach efforts are accessible to all members of our community. By actively engaging with our diverse population, building trust, and amplifying voices, the Commission can effectively fulfill its role as a representative body and advocate for meaningful change.

Application

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Name: José Manuel Reta Date: 2/16/2024

Street Address: [REDACTED]

City: Ferndale Zip Code: 98248

Mailing Address (if different from street address): _____

Preferred Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Preferred Email Address: [REDACTED]

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Note from CHF Staff:

2/16/2024.

J Manuel Reta was able to do a phone interview to provide his applicant statement. He had a conversation with Shu-Ling Zhao. The conversation was recorded using Otter Ai to capture the audio and to support summarizing the conversation for the review process. The summary is provided below but it is not comprehensive of the details included in Mr. Reta's story. The audio recording of the conversation has been included for review by the committee.

Audio Link: [J Manuel Reta Applicant Statements.mp3](#)

Lived Experiences and Community Involvement:

J. Manuel Reta's story is one of overcoming adversity and embracing diversity. Immigrating from Mexico as a child, he faced language barriers and economic hardship. Yet, his resilience shone through as he excelled in school and never forgot the kindness of the Lummi Nation who provided food during a difficult winter. These experiences instilled in him a lifelong commitment to helping others.

Mr. Reta's dedication to the community is evident in his extensive involvement:

- Founding the Northwest Washington Hispanics Chamber of Commerce
- Serving on the Washington State Hispanic Commission
- Advocating for immigrant rights in Forks, Washington
- Acting as a multicultural advisor for the Ferndale Police Department
- Establishing a cultural pod for Spanish speakers in Lynden
- Leading a youth cultural awareness group

Motivation for Serving on the Commission:

Mr. Reta's passion for racial equity stems from his personal experiences with discrimination and his observations of the lack of representation for people of color in Whatcom County. He believes the Commission offers a crucial platform to address these issues and promote a more inclusive community. Mr. Reta expressed an interest in learning what the current racial demographics are of public employees and would like to find pathways for people of color to find careers working as city or county staff.

Goal, Challenge, and Solution:

- **Goal:** Increase representation of people of color across different sectors in Whatcom County.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming potential resistance to change and ensuring equitable hiring practices are implemented.

- **Solution:** Mr. Reta proposes fostering open communication and understanding among commissioners. He emphasizes sharing personal stories, practicing active listening, and learning from history. He suggests recording conversations to promote transparency and accountability.

Strengths and Key Points:

- Extensive experience in building bridges between diverse communities.
- Proven leadership qualities and commitment to collaboration.
- Strong advocate for open communication and education to foster positive change.
- Belief in forgiveness and learning from the past to move forward.

J. Manuel Reta's remarkable journey, exceptional community service, and unwavering commitment to racial equity would make him a great member for consideration on the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission. His lived experiences, diverse perspectives, and emphasis on open communication and collaboration will undoubtedly contribute to the Commission's success in creating a more equitable Whatcom County for all.

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If you are preparing your materials personally, you may submit materials via email to
WREC@ChuckanutHealthFoundation.org

If you are submitting materials while working with the Foundation Staff, the staff member will ensure your materials are submitted.

Response for the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission application:

- 1) Describe your lived, community activity related, professional, educational, and/or personal experiences that may support and advance the work of the Commission. You may include a list of experiences if needed in this response to capture additional information.

Below are examples of my work that may support and advance the work of the commission:

- I am a respected youth leader in the Punjabi Community and have earned this standing by helping many community members in need, to overcome barriers, such as language and literacy, through various interactions such as extending help to fill out employment applications, filling forms and correspondence on immigration cases, attending calls to navigate through health insurance applications, car insurance, as well as providing financial literacy on terms and bank/credit card processes and disputes, advice on tax returns, Indian passports and embassy procedures as well as information on county elections and voter registration.
- My husband is a farmer and I advocate for more representation of small scale farmers who are either Punjabi or Hispanic so there can be unity and strength for the farming community as well as a sense of belonging.
- I was born and raised in the Philippines, yet I am a 100% Punjabi (Indian) by blood. I have the experience and perspectives of different cultures, that define my diversity to the fullest. I am fortunate to have experienced both Christianity (in early life) and Sikhism (current practicing faith).
- I currently serve on the Lynden Planning Commission and Lynden School Board. It is my honor to serve in both the roles, to represent Punjabis in the community and Lynden as a whole, in a unique way that allows for unity and collaboration across different cultures and ways of life.

- 2) Please describe why you're interested in serving on this commission.

- I am interested in serving on the commission as I believe I have the required depth of knowledge and life experience on what it means to be diverse and how it can affect one's daily life, career, family life, education and children- in both good and bad ways.
- I have a good grasp on the community's thinking and struggles that I would want to advocate for in an effective way on the county's level as Whatcom County is home to people of different cultures and background.

3) Please describe one goal you would have for the Commission, one challenge in reaching that goal, and how you envision the Commission achieving the goal.

- One goal I have for the commission is to be able to raise awareness for the Sikhs and Punjabi community, their faith and way of life.
- After 9/11, Sikhs have been a target of hate due to the misunderstanding of their appearance and faith. There was no justice given to those who were victims of such hate crimes. I truly want to raise awareness to what a beautiful community the Punjabi community is. How our cultures have more similarities than differences. How love can be cultivated, if only we look past our material and physical differences. We all call Whatcom County our home and deeply care for it the same.
- I do not see a challenge in reaching this goal. Raising awareness is not the same as forcing anyone to accept us Sikhs/Punjabis. One challenge that I think might arise is some hate speech and vandalism towards the Sikhs/Punjabis from people who don't understand the language of love. This problem is prevalent whether we like it or not and is not limited to our community/faith but rather to other cultures and communities across the county as well.
- The envision the commission to achieve such goal/s by partnering with local agency/ies, departments, cities and school in raising awareness and education of other cultures that live within the County. Raising awareness and educating other people on cultures and ethnicities is not a matter of force but of love.

Application

Please demonstrate your interest in serving by completing the application below. We recognize there may be barriers to completing a written application. Please contact the Foundation Staff for assistance in identifying alternatives.

Name: Terrance "TeeJay" Morris Date: 2/28/2024

Street Address: [REDACTED]

City: Bellingham Zip Code: 98225

Mailing Address (if different from street address): _____

Preferred Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Preferred Email Address: [REDACTED]

(if you may not be reached via email, we will work with applicants to contact them in different ways)

If appointed, would you prefer to serve a 2- or 3-year initial term? ☐ 2-year ☒ 3 year ☒ Open to either

In our pursuit that each applicant is given the greatest opportunity to join the WREC, **we are asking applicants to self-identify ALL the roles they would be eligible for and comfortable representing** on the Commission. Please check all roles you would like to be considered for:

1. ☒ Community Member (Up to 7 members)
 - ☐ A student living in Whatcom County;
 - ☒ A community member with experience caring for a student currently attending a Whatcom County public school such as parent, foster parent, grandparent, caregiver, or guardian;
 - ☒ An immigrant, migrant, or refugee;
 - ☒ A business owner, manager, or independent contractor;
 - ☐ A youth or young adult aged 16 to 24 at the time of appointment;
2. Diversity officers or staff members engaged in DEI work in educational institutions (2 total members)
 - ☐ Working in local higher education institutions
 - ☐ Working in local K-12 schools;
3. ☒ Human service providers, including, but not limited to, victim or offender services, housing or houseless services, and mental health services;
4. (Not being seated at this time) Subject matter expert, individuals with expertise in, and/or specialists in the commission's areas of concern;
5. ☒ Social justice advocate or activist whose area of focus is racial equity;
6. ☒ Philanthropic organizations;
7. ☒ Faith leadership;
8. ☐ Multilingual health care provider.

All candidates under this section shall have an interest in or have been impacted by racial equity issues. (2.107.060 Additional Appointed Members.) It is not required that members of the Commission speak a specific language and translation/interpretation services can be made available to members.

Please note that the 2.107.060 (4) *Up to Four subject matter experts, individuals with expertise in, and/or specialists in the commission's areas of concern* are not being seated at this time. As the seated Commission determines its "areas of concern", the seats will be open for individuals with expertise in those areas.

Applicant Statements

In addition to the information above, we will use responses to the prompts in our evaluation of potential candidates. To reduce barriers, we are offering various ways to respond.

Please respond to the following 3 prompts:

- Describe your lived, community activity related, professional, educational, and/or personal experiences that may support and advance the work of the Commission. You may include a list of experiences if needed in this response to capture additional information.
- Please describe why you're interested in serving on this commission.
- Please describe one goal you would have for the Commission, one challenge in reaching that goal, and how you envision the Commission achieving the goal.

Response format options:

- **Attach a document.** We recommend a length of up to 3 pages, but the page count will not be a factor in determining who to appoint.
- **Record your response.** We will be accepting recorded audio or video in response to these prompts. We recommend 2-3 minutes per prompt. We want to emphasize that in assessing this audio or video essay, we will prioritize the content over production quality. The depth of your ideas and the message you convey are of utmost importance to us.
- **Work with Foundation Staff.** We recognize there may be barriers to completing a written version of this application for a variety of reasons. The Foundation Staff is available to provide technical support in completing the written application and, utilizing transcription software, summarize responses to the prompts for applicants.

Please do not submit a resume, letters of recommendation, or personal references for this process. Please be detailed and specific in your responses. The Committee will be considering both lived and learned experiences in this process. The prompts and application have been designed to support the deliberation and recommendation drafting by the Appointment Committee. Should additional follow up be needed with an applicant, that individual may be contacted by the Chuckanut Health Foundation Staff and the Appointment Committee.

Application Submission:

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Note from Staff

2/26/2024

Terrance "TeeJay" Morris was able to do a phone interview to provide his applicant statement. He had a conversation with Shu-Ling Zhao. The conversation was recorded using Otter Ai to capture the audio and to support summarizing the conversation for the review process. TeeJay preferred to have the conversation summarized. A summary has been prepared by CHF Staff and is included below.

Key details about Terrance "TeeJay" Morris' experience and expertise:

- **Personal:**
 - Identifies as Black, Afro-Caribbean, openly gay, disabled, and immune-compromised man.
 - Experienced racial discrimination throughout his life as well as experienced childhood in a country where he was not a racial minority.
 - Serves as a godfather and witnessed firsthand the impact of racial bias on a young child.
- **Professional:**
 - Holds a degree in theology from Howard University.
 - Extensive experience working in various sectors, including juvenile corrections, housing, and non-profit organizations with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.
 - Worked as a consultant for racial equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives.
- **Community involvement:**
 - Engaged in community leadership activities since a young age.
 - Founded Bellingham Unity Committee and has hosted community events such as Juneteenth celebrations, Unity ball, and other events.
 - Participated in the development of the WREC.
 - Developed the qualitative study and facilitated focus group sessions.

Motivation for serving on the Commission:

- Deeply invested in creating a more equitable and inclusive community, especially for future generations.
- Aims to represent and advocate for the experiences of people who share his background.
- Personally experienced the challenges faced by minority communities in Whatcom County.

Goal for the Commission:

- Increase youth involvement in the Commission's work through educational programs and outreach efforts.

Challenge:

- Overcoming resistance from individuals who may deny the existence of racial inequities in the community.

Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Building partnerships with educational institutions and community organizations.
- Creating innovative and accessible outreach programs that meet young people where they are.
- Fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment within the Commission.

Overall, Terrance "TeeJay" Morris demonstrates a strong commitment to racial equity and a passion for making a positive impact in his community. His personal experiences, professional background, and dedication to youth empowerment make him a valuable candidate for the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission.

Essay:

Building Bridges, Empowering Youth: TeeJay Morris and the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission

Terrance "TeeJay" Morris brings a unique blend of personal experience, professional expertise, and unwavering commitment to the fight for racial equity to the table as he seeks a position on the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission. Shaped by his personal journey as a Black, Afro-Caribbean man who has navigated the complexities of identity and discrimination throughout his life, Morris is deeply passionate about creating a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

Morris' professional background is equally impressive. From working in juvenile corrections and housing to his current role as a consultant for diversity and inclusion initiatives, he possesses a deep understanding of the systemic challenges faced by marginalized communities. This multifaceted experience allows him to approach the issues of racial equity from a well-rounded perspective.

Driven by a burning desire to empower the next generation, Morris proposes a bold goal for the commission: to significantly increase youth involvement in its work. He recognizes the crucial role young people play in shaping the future and envisions the commission serving as a platform for their voices to be heard. His plan involves building partnerships with educational institutions and community organizations, creating innovative outreach programs, and fostering a welcoming environment within the commission.

However, Morris acknowledges the significant challenge of overcoming resistance from those who may deny the very existence of racial inequities within the community. He emphasizes the importance of education and open dialogue, aiming to not only raise awareness but also bridge the gap between understanding and action.

Terrance "TeeJay" Morris embodies the spirit of the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission. His lived experiences, dedication to youth empowerment, and unwavering commitment to building a more just and equitable community make him a highly qualified candidate and a valuable asset to the commission as it strives to fulfill its mission.