

# **City of Seattle**



## **Director Office for Civil Rights**

**Confirmation Packet  
March 1, 2023**

**Derrick D. Wheeler-Smith**



# City of Seattle

Mayor Bruce Harrell

---

March 1, 2023

The Honorable Debora Juarez  
President, Seattle City Council  
Seattle City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Council President Juarez:

It is my pleasure to transmit to the City Council the following confirmation packet for my appointment of Derrick D. Wheeler-Smith as Director of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

The materials in this packet are divided into two sections:

**A. Derrick D. Wheeler-Smith**

This section contains Mr. Wheeler-Smith's appointment and oath of office forms, his resume, and the press release announcing his selection.

**B. Background Check**

This section contains the report on Mr. Wheeler-Smith's background check.

Derrick Wheeler-Smith has dedicated his life to uplifting and empowering the voices of the historically marginalized. In the 13 months Derrick has served as Interim OCR Director, he's worked with his committed team to build the skills and foster an office culture needed to tackle the challenges ahead. He's invested in his staff by offering mentorship and training opportunities, recognizing that a functional department requires an OCR team that is healthy, energized and has the skills they need to succeed. He managed to clear the considerable and longstanding civil rights investigations backlog, a critical office function with meaningful impact. He also brought a sense of stability to the office, beginning his role with a 35% employee vacancy rate, with only two vacant positions remaining to fill today. Derrick shows up for work every day with a dedication to connect community to government to advance equity and justice.

Derrick Wheeler-Smith formerly served as the Director of Zero Youth Detention for King County Public Health, overseeing the implementation of the Zero Youth Detention Roadmap and the development of a regional public safety plan to address gun violence. He played an integral role in mapping initial steps for King County's declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis and was a co-organizer of the "We Want to Live" march in South Seattle, bringing together thousands of community voices in response to the murder of George Floyd. Derrick began work as a youth outreach worker and coach at Franklin High School, has served as a teacher and a counselor at Seattle Urban Academy, architect of the Federal Way School District's first Racial Equity Policy, and National Director of Youth Engagement for World Vision. He believes the work of anti-racism is the work of becoming a better human toward your fellow humans.

In recent weeks, my office consulted with stakeholders regarding Derrick Wheeler-Smith's performance. We also engaged in a series of one-on-one interviews with a random selection of 25 percent of OCR staff to hear their perspective about Interim Director Wheeler-Smith's leadership since serving as Interim Director. The Seattle Department of Human Resources also administered a voluntary all-employee

survey to the OCR staff to solicit their perspective about what the department needs in a Director. We solicited the advice and feedback from the four commissions that operate under OCR: the LGBTQ Commission, the Women's Commission, the Disability Commission, and the Human Rights Commission. Separately, my office consulted with external stakeholders including representatives from the Regional Peacekeepers Collective, CHOOSE 180, the Boys & Girls Club of King County's Southeast Network SafetyNet, Equitable Development LLC, and the YES! Foundation. Derrick's lifetime of service to our community, review of the solicited feedback, and evaluating his impressive work since being nominated Interim Director is what informed my decision to advance his nomination for your review today.

Derrick Wheeler-Smith is an insightful, approachable presence who looks to reframe challenges by offering constructive solutions through a positive lens. When I reviewed responses to the survey in which OCR staff offered the characteristics they seek in a Director, it's as though they were describing Derrick himself: "compassion," "trustworthy," "empathy," "deeply entrenched in the Seattle community." He leads from a place of grace, humility, and a commitment to serving others. He takes a consensus-building approach and has served as a key bridge between OCR, my office, the Legislative Branch, and the community throughout the development of the proposed legislation to codify the Race and Social Justice Initiative.

I am grateful Derrick accepted the opportunity to lead this essential office, as the City benefits every day from his demonstrated lifetime commitment to advancing equity and investing in people. I trust that after reviewing Derrick Wheeler-Smith's application materials, meeting with him, and following the diligent review of his abilities and vision through Councilmember Morales' Neighborhoods, Education, Civil Rights & Culture Committee, you will find that he is the right choice to serve as Director of the Office for Civil Rights.

If you have any questions about the attached materials or need additional information, Deputy Mayor Greg Wong would welcome hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Bruce A. Harrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Bruce A. Harrell  
Mayor of Seattle

## **SECTION**

**A**



**City of Seattle**

Mayor Bruce Harrell

---

February 15, 2023

Derrick D. Wheeler-Smith  
Seattle, WA  
Transmitted via e-mail

Dear Derrick,

It gives me great pleasure to appoint you to the position of Director of the Office for Civil Rights at an annual salary of \$182,000.

Your appointment as Director is subject to City Council confirmation; therefore, you will need to attend the Council's confirmation hearings. Once confirmed by the City Council, you serve at the pleasure of the Mayor.

Your contingent offer letter provided employment information related to the terms of your employment, benefits, vacation, holiday and sick leave.

I look forward to working with you in your role as Director and wish you success. We have much work ahead of us, and I am confident that the Office will thrive under your leadership.

Sincerely,


A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce A. Harrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Bruce A. Harrell  
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Seattle Department of Human Resources file



## City of Seattle Department Head Notice of Appointment

<b>Appointee Name:</b> <i>Derrick D. Wheeler-Smith</i>	
<b>City Department Name:</b> <i>Office for Civil Rights</i>	<b>Position Title:</b> <i>Director</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Appointment</b> OR <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Reappointment</b>	<b>City Council Confirmation required?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Appointing Authority:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> City Council <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <i>Fill in appointing authority</i>	<b>Term of Position: *</b> Council Confirmation <b>to</b> Mayor's Discretion <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Serving remaining term of a vacant position</i>
<b>Background:</b> Derrick D. Wheeler-Smith formerly served as the Director of Zero Youth Detention for King County Public Health, overseeing the implementation of the Zero Youth Detention Roadmap and the development of a regional public safety plan to address gun violence. He played an integral role in mapping initial steps for King County's declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis and was a co-organizer of the "We Want to Live" march in South Seattle, bringing together thousands of community voices in response to the murder of George Floyd. Derrick began work as a youth outreach worker and coach at Franklin High School, has served as a teacher and a counselor at Seattle Urban Academy, architect of the Federal Way School District's first Racial Equity Policy, and National Director of Youth Engagement for World Vision. He believes the work of anti-racism is the work of becoming a better human toward your fellow humans.	
<b>Authorizing Signature:</b>  <b>Date Signed:</b> March 1, 2023	<b>Appointing Signatory:</b> <i>Bruce A. Harrell</i> <i>Mayor of Seattle</i>

*\*Term begin and end date is fixed and tied to the position and not the appointment date.*



CITY OF SEATTLE ▪ STATE OF WASHINGTON

OATH OF OFFICE

---

State of Washington

County of King

I, Derrick D. Wheeler-Smith, swear or affirm that I possess all of the qualifications prescribed in the Seattle City Charter and the Seattle Municipal Code for the position of the Director of the Office for Civil Rights; that I will support the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Washington, and the Charter and Ordinances of The City of Seattle; and that I will faithfully conduct myself as the Director of the Office for Civil Rights.

---

Derrick D. Wheeler-Smith

Subscribed and sworn to before me

this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

[Seal]

---

Elizabeth M. Adkisson, Interim City Clerk

## DERRICK D. WHEELER-SMITH



### QUALIFICATIONS

- Highly motivated and skilled professional with twenty years' experience managing programs for children and young adults.
- More than 25 years' experience counseling historically marginalized youth resulting in the outstanding counselor of the year award.
- A leader, mentor, and trail-blazer with a strong background in advocacy and community relations.
- Effective writer and exceptional public speaker
- Developing program strategy including data-driven design, implementation, technical support, monitoring and evaluation resulting in the expansion of a National program from 12 to 17 cities.
- Proven facilitator of meetings and presentations.
- Excellent analytical, problem solving and administrative skills.
- Self-starter with the ability to balance multiple priorities.
- Ability to partner and work interdependently with a wide spectrum of people, organizations and institutions across social, ethnic, religious and cultural lines.

### EXPERIENCE

#### **Interim Director, Seattle Office for Civil Rights**

**2022-Present**

- Serve as Chief Executive Officer of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR), providing overall leadership and responsible for all aspects of management, budgeting, operations, and professional development and support of SOCR staff.
- Oversee and administer the overall enforcement system to ensure compliance with federal and local civil rights laws, covering the highest number of protected classes of any municipality in the country.
- Direct and guide the Citywide implementation of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI).
- Ensure that equity is embedded in the foundation of all City Departments' and Offices' policies and practices.
- Provide subject matter expertise to all City Departments' and Offices' executives, elected officials and department heads related to RSJI.
- Support and coach City Departments' and Offices' executives and department heads, stakeholders' institutions, and community leaders on RSJI issues, concerns, challenges, problem-solving opportunities and enforcement.
- Regularly oversee highly sensitive requests, inquiries, complaints/concerns from and actions by community members, the public, Mayor's Office, elected officials.
- Anticipate and strategically react to new issues and political changes that affect community members most impacted by structural and institutional racism and other forms of discrimination and oppression.



- Oversee consultants for strategic planning with SOCR Staff and Commissions (including needs-specific facilitation and support to the Disability Commission) and training providers for department directors and Mayor's Office staff.
- Serve as Co-Executive Sponsor of City's Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

### **Project Director, Zero Youth Detention**

**2019-2022**

King County – Department of Public Health

- Build effective working relationships across a diverse array of community partners and system allies to create support for and participation in implementing strategies and related opportunities.
- Supervise staff assigned to implementing the Road Map to Zero Youth Detention including the Public Health approach to the juvenile legal system.
- Convene and support a structure of committees and teams that oversee and enact implementation of the Road Map through following results-oriented, equity focused, collaborative, and transparent approaches.
- Represent the department and King County in internal and external forums and to the public. Resolve politically sensitive issues in consultation with the Department Director, elected officials, and other leaders.
- Establish consistent and intentional practices for involving youth, families, and employees at all stages of developing, implementing, and evaluating strategies.
- Provide briefings and reports to the Department Director, elected officials, and other leaders.
- Lead development of annual work plans.
- Ensure alignment of efforts with Best Starts for Kids and its emphasis on stopping the school to prison pipeline.
- Develop with the support of the communications team multiple channels for engaging diverse communities and transparently reporting on progress.
- Track and meet legislative requirements such as annual reports.
- Participate in national learning communities to share King County's experience, learn from other communities and jurisdictions, and stay current with relevant research and trends.
- Ensure efforts are consistent with County policy and that the County's resources are deployed appropriately and efficiently to maximize outcomes.
- Ensure that policies and procedures are consistent with the County's Equity and Social Justice plans and values.

### **Facilitator of Scholar Empowerment & Engagement**

**2017-2019**

Federal Way School District

- Lead for equity and social justice while systemically overseeing the development, implementation, and evaluation of a Racial Equity Policy.
- Ensure anti-bullying and harassment policy is enforced in all schools. Assist the District and schools in resolving educational issues affecting educators, students, parents, and the community by serving as a compliance officer.
- Assist educators in creating culturally supportive learning environments that ensures high expectations for the academic achievement of all students.

- Develop and provide professional development for administrators, principals, and site staff to effectively integrate Restorative Practices.
- Increase the capacity of each district High School to provide opportunities, services, and support to promote positive development of Scholars. Increase Scholar Voice through Scholars Organized Against Racism Initiative.
- Develop and maintain data-driven standards to qualitatively and quantitatively measure and assess the programs, services, and community resources in the department.
- Facilitate Racial Equity Trainings across the District that provide staff with culturally competent professional development to ensure high expectations of all student-scholars intellectual capabilities and create a culture of inclusivity, equity and accountability.

**Community Liaison**  
City of Seattle

**2017-2020**

- Constituent support at City-hosted events.
- Feedback and expertise on cultural concerns and barriers.
- Accurate records and reports of participant feedback and concerns.
- Community workshops and events that parallel larger City-hosted meetings.
- Meet with individuals, organizations, small businesses, and others based on the needs of the community and each City department's outreach goals.
- Connect groups with services, respond when issues arise, and provide technical assistance.

**Independent Consultant**

**2015-Present**

- Project management planning and oversight.
- Coaching and Leading for Racial Equity.
- Community Engagement.
- Plan & execute research development.
- Data mapping & stakeholder input integration.

**National Director of Youth Engagement**  
World Vision U.S. Programs

**2010-2015**

- Direct and manage short and long-term national strategies which led to the development and expansion of the Youth Empowerment Program in various locations across the United States.
- Provided technical support and coaching to U.S. Programs staff ensuring that programs are carried out with a high standard of excellence in varying contexts.
- Developed and implemented national standards and protocols to ensure desired impact of programs.
- Supervise a staff team, several contractors, interns and volunteers and support 14 field staff.

- Support fund development for projects through collaboration with integrated funding teams.
- Develop and maintain strategic alliances with affinity national organizations and partners.
- Oversee a budget of \$1M ensuring fiscal responsibility, stewardship and appropriate allocation to strategic projects.
- Serve as a Subject Matter Expert on trends related to youth empowerment, youth-led advocacy, and civic engagement.
- Create curriculum resources to support field implementation of various national projects and initiatives.

### **EDUCATION**

Bachelor of Arts, Ministry Leadership, Northwest University, WA	2008
Certified Pacific Educational Group Affiliate Trainer	2017
Soul Formation	2018
Advancing Leadership	2018
Youth Engagement 800 hours of training World Vision	1998-2002

### **CIVIC / COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Board of Directors, New Horizons Ministries	2009-2012
Board of Directors, Jeff Smith & Associates	2010-2015
Leadership Foundation	2023- Present
Juvenile Justice Steering Committee	2017-2022

### **AWARDS**

Seattle Public Schools Outstanding Counselor Award	2010
World Vision Service Award for Alabama Tornado	2011
Community Icon Award	2019

# Press Release

## For Immediate Release

### Contact Information

Jamie Housen

Phone: 206-798-5002

Email: [jamie.housen@seattle.gov](mailto:jamie.housen@seattle.gov)



**City of Seattle**  
Office of the Mayor-Elect

## Mayor-Elect Harrell Makes Additional City Leadership Announcements, Including Kendee Yamaguchi as Deputy Mayor and Gael Tarleton as Head of Intergovernmental Relations

*Harrell announces hires for Deputy Mayor of External Affairs, Chief of Staff, Legal Counsel, and Gun Violence Prevention Liaison, along with changes in department leadership*

**Seattle** – Today, Seattle Mayor-elect Bruce Harrell announced the latest round of hires joining his administration's cabinet as he prepares to enter office next week and continues to build out his executive department and cabinet.

"Over the past several months, I have heard – in transition meetings and on the street, with city leaders and with everyday neighbors – calls for a representative and responsive City government. My executive team and cabinet are being built with that priority front of mind," **said Mayor-elect Harrell**. "I'm excited by the team of leaders we've convened to effectively move Seattle forward. In my administration, you'll see our staff truly engage with the community – visible

and accessible to all, empowered to take action, and committed to seeking the solutions that drive positive change.”

Drawing on the input and stated priorities of community leaders, Harrell has hired Kendee Yamaguchi to serve as deputy mayor of external affairs. Yamaguchi, a former City employee who currently serves as executive director for Snohomish County, will be tasked with fostering strong and collaborative relationships between the City of Seattle and community groups, non-profit organizations, and local businesses.

Yamaguchi will help support the City’s COVID response, direct the mayor-elect’s external relations team, and coordinate mayoral priorities around cultural initiatives and events, including in the arts, film, music, sports, job creation and nightlife sectors.

Harrell will appoint Gael Tarleton as interim director of the Office of Intergovernmental Relations. Tarleton will bring her experience as a former state legislator and port commissioner to facilitate collaboration across all levels of government, advocate for federal and state investments, and ensure the City of Seattle is a trusted and engaged partner in regional efforts.

“Gael Tarleton’s proven leadership will be a huge asset for Seattle,” **said Harrell**. “Her unique ability to build and sustain productive relationships will greatly enhance Seattle’s ability to increase its resources and develop favorable legislative policy.”

Also joining the Harrell Administration will be Matt Chan, who will serve as special advisor for public engagement, advising the mayor on the City’s strategic use of digital technology to enhance public engagement, strengthen transparency, and address the digital divide. Chan brings over 45 years of award-winning success in the television industry and has served on the KCTS Board of Directors. His work landed him a spot as one of the few people of color on the Hollywood Reporter’s ‘Top 50 Reality Power Producers’ list.

“I am pleased when people like Matt Chan answer the call of public service to help Seattle reach a new level of meaningful public engagement where all voices are heard,” **said Harrell**. “This is a critical part of our vision.”

Harrell will also appoint Derrick Wheeler-Smith, currently King County’s director of Zero Youth Detention, to serve as interim director of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR). Wheeler-Smith will focus on implementing the mayor-elect’s equity and justice priorities, including the Race and Social Justice Initiative, expanding housing and workforce opportunities, and delivering youth support and mentorship.

Current SOCR Director Mariko Lockhart will rejoin the Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) as a deputy director, where she and Director Dwane Chappelle will continue to drive major equity initiatives and deliver high-quality support to Seattle students. **Harrell added**, “The combination of Ms. Lockhart’s previous leadership in education coupled with Mr. Wheeler-Smith’s leadership in equity work will produce outstanding results in our major equity initiatives with education and mentorship being primary components.”

Harrell also announced the hiring of Jennifer Samuels as chief of staff and Jeremy Racca as legal counsel. Samuels will be responsible for overseeing the workings of the Mayor’s Office – from directing office staff to addressing constituent needs and improving office efficiencies. Racca will provide analysis and support on policy and legal issues facing the City, as well as interface with the City Attorney’s Office and City departments.

Finally, executing on his campaign pledge to elevate the pressing issue of gun violence to the top of his administration, Harrell is announcing the hire of DeVitta Briscoe, who will serve as gun violence prevention liaison. Briscoe is a respected community leader and strategist who will focus on community-driven solutions to address and prevent gun violence, coordinating with local nonprofits, the Regional Peacekeeper Collective, law enforcement, and impacted community members.

“There are few people and few leaders more committed to gun violence prevention than Ms. Briscoe,” **said Harrell**.

Learn more about Mayor-elect Harrell, his team, and his transition structure at [seattle.gov/mayor-elect](https://seattle.gov/mayor-elect).

---



**Deputy Mayor of External Relations Kendee Yamaguchi**

Kendee Yamaguchi brings to the City of Seattle more than two decades of service at all levels of government, having held leadership roles in the White House and Washington State's Department of Commerce, Office of the Attorney General and Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs. In the private sector, she worked both as an attorney and television executive for a leading international cable network. Most recently, as Executive Director for Snohomish County, she led the early COVID-19 economic response strategy where the first case occurred in the United States. She earned a

bachelor's degree from American University and law degree from Seattle University. Yamaguchi has served on the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, Washington State Bar Association Professionalism Committee, and local and national boards.



**Interim Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Relations Gael Tarleton**

Gael Tarleton represented Washington's 36th legislative district in Olympia for eight years before retiring last year, including posts as House Finance Committee Chairwoman and House Majority Floor Leader. Previously, Tarleton was elected twice to the Port of Seattle Commission. Before elected office, Tarleton spent a career in the national security field: strategic adviser at the University of Washington;

Vice President for international business at a Fortune 300 science and technology company; and senior defense intelligence analyst at the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency. Tarleton holds an M.A. in Government and National Security and B.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. She and her husband, Bob, have lived in Ballard for nearly 30 years.



**Special Advisor for Public Engagement Matt Chan**

Matt Chan has spent 45 years in the television industry, winning awards and driving storytelling success by focusing on audience. Chan has worked in every facet of the industry, from operating television stations to running national television series. His creative work led the Hollywood Reporter to include him as one of the very few people of color on their “Top 50 Reality Power Producers” list. His focus on refining the science and art of storytelling

has come in the form of personal projects, teaching at the University of Washington’s Communication Leadership program, and consulting on network television programs. His passion is to give back to the community, training and educating new generations of citizen journalists and storytellers for the new world of media.



**Interim Director of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights Derrick Wheeler-Smith**

Derrick Wheeler-Smith currently serves as the Director of Zero Youth Detention for King County Public Health, overseeing the implementation of the Zero Youth Detention Road Map and the development of a regional public safety plan to address gun violence. He played an integral role in mapping initial steps for King County’s declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis and was a co-

organizer of the “We Want to Live” march in South Seattle, bringing together thousands of community voices in response to the murder of George Floyd. Wheeler-Smith began work as a youth outreach worker and coach at Franklin High School, has served as a teacher and counselor at Seattle Urban Academy, architect of the Federal Way School District’s first Racial Equity Policy, and National Director of Youth Engagement for World Vision. Wheeler-Smith believes the work of anti-racism is the work of becoming a better human toward your fellow humans, and recognizes marrying his wife Stephenie as his life’s greatest decision and the raising of his children as its most important work.





### **Chief of Staff Jennifer Samuels**

Jennifer Samuels brings a diverse background in government and law office management. Previously serving in Mayor-elect Harrell's office during his tenure at the Seattle City Council from 2008 through 2019, Samuels' primary responsibilities included managing the Council President's committee work, full council briefings, human resources, constituent services, and community priorities. Samuels also served at the Washington State Supreme Court as

lead judicial aide to State Supreme Court Justice Robert F. Utter. In Olympia, Samuels served as a liaison between the judicial, legislative and executive branches.



### **Legal Counsel Jeremy Racca**

Jeremy Racca served as a legislative aide for then Councilmember Harrell for seven years, where he staffed civil rights and public safety matters, and is particularly proud to have worked on 'Ban the Box' legislation, police accountability policies, and digital privacy protections. Racca joins the administration from the global law firm Clyde and Co. in New York City. His practice focused on domestic and international litigation and arbitrations involving insurance, energy, trade and commodities, infrastructure, and transportation. Racca also volunteers for organizations that provide support to

people with Crohn's Disease.



### **Gun Violence Prevention Liaison DeVitta Briscoe**

Drawing on her own experience as a survivor, as well as a mother who lost her son Donald McCaney to gun violence in 2010 and as a sister who lost her brother Che Taylor to police violence, DeVitta Briscoe has worked toward intervention and frontline support for youth of color to reduce gun violence, ensure police accountability, and empower grieving families. Briscoe launched the Black Women's Coalition to End Violence to address root causes of urban gun violence and center Black women's leadership, and is trained to facilitate Restorative

Justice-based healing circles, and the Alive & Free™ violence prevention methodology. Briscoe is a graduate of Evergreen State College.

## **SECTION**

**B**



# City of Seattle

---

## Seattle Department of Human Resources

Kimberly Loving, Interim Director

**March 16, 2022**

TO: Adam Schaefer, City Budget Office

FROM: Annie Nguyen, Seattle Department of Human Resources

SUBJECT: Background check for Derrick Wheeler-Smith

The Seattle Department of Human Resources has received a copy of **Derrick Wheeler-Smith** background check provided by Global Screening Solutions. There were no findings that would impact their employment eligibility.

Cc: Personnel File

---

Seattle Department of Human Resources

Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Suite 5500, PO Box 34028, Seattle, WA 98124-4028  
(206) 684-7999 • TTY: 7-1-1 Fax: (206) 684-4157 • Employment Website: [www.seattle.gov/jobs](http://www.seattle.gov/jobs)

An equal employment opportunity employer. Accommodations for people with disabilities provided upon request.

