
City Services and the Justice System:

Do Korean American Storeowners in Baltimore, Maryland Get Equal Treatment?

Maryland Advisory Committee to
the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

July 2004

This report of the Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was prepared for the information and consideration of the Commission. Statements and viewpoints in this report should not be attributed to the Commission, but only to the participants at the community forum, other individuals or documents cited, or the Advisory Committee.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency established by Congress in 1957, reconstituted in 1983, and reauthorized in 1994. It is directed to investigate complaints alleging that citizens are being deprived of their right to vote by reason of their race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices; study and collect information relating to discrimination or a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice; appraise federal laws and policies with respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice; serve as a national clearinghouse for information in respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin; submit reports, findings, and recommendations to the President and Congress; and issue public service announcements to discourage discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws.

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By law, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has established an advisory committee in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The committees are composed of state citizens who serve without compensation. The committees advise the Commission of civil rights issues in their states that are within the Commission's jurisdiction. More specifically, they are authorized to advise the Commission on matters of their state's concern in the preparation of Commission reports to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public officials, and representatives of public and private organizations to committee inquiries; forward advice and recommendations to the Commission, as requested; and observe any open hearing or conference conducted by the Commission in their states.

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in Baltimore, Maryland
Get Equal Treatment?

Letter of Transmittal

Maryland Advisory Committee to
the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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The Maryland Advisory Committee submits this report, *City Services and the Justice System: Do Korean American Storeowners in Baltimore, Maryland, Get Equal Treatment?* as part of its responsibility to advise the Commission on civil rights issues in the Free State. The Committee approved this report in a vote of 11 to 0, with no abstentions.

The Asian American population in Maryland, which includes Korean Americans, grew over 60 percent in the last decade according to the 2000 census. While Korean Americans reside throughout the Baltimore metropolitan area, they own and operate many small businesses in the predominately African American inner city. In the 1990s, frictions between the Korean American community and the African American community developed amid complaints about the treatment of African American patrons by Korean merchants and the quality of food sold to African Americans by Korean grocery stores. Adding to the tension were the growing fears of personal safety after a rash of violent robberies, shootings, and murders of Korean Americans. The simmering tensions reached a boiling point in the mid-90s after a mostly black jury acquitted an African American suspect accused of murdering a Korean American college student in a robbery.

Questions arose as to whether these crimes were racially motivated with accusations that it was “open season” on Korean Americans and their establishments. Korean American storeowners and Korean community representatives complained to the Committee that law enforcement and city government failed to respond to their need for police protection and other city services. In addition, leaders of both the Korean American community and the African American community sought ways to foster better relationships between the groups.

The Committee conducted a community forum to investigate the allegations of discrimination that helped bring attention to the concerns of Korean American storeowners. As a result, Baltimore City’s mayors, municipal departments, and police and fire officials have expanded communication with the Korean American community, and recently enacted federal and state laws now require that language assistance be provided by law enforcement and government agencies. While the report documents

events from several years ago there are, nevertheless, issues that still need to be addressed by government officials. The Committee hopes the observations made in this report will help inform these agencies so that they can better respond to the needs of Korean Americans and other new immigrant groups, as required.

Sincerely,

Rev. Douglas B. Sands, Sr., *Chairperson*
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Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Background

Purpose of the Forum

Since the 1970s, many Korean immigrants to the United States have chosen small-business ownership as a livelihood and path to mobility, and have purchased or started corner groceries, convenience stores, liquor stores, dry cleaners, and other small enterprises in large U.S. cities. Seeking low rents, the storeowners found a niche in inner-city neighborhoods shunned by large retailers as too poor to be profitable and abandoned by earlier generations of mainly white merchants fleeing the urban core. In the process, Korean Americans, some of them new immigrants, most of them residents of the suburbs, became property owners and retailers both serving and profiting from a customer base made up mainly of racial minorities in impoverished city neighborhoods.

During the mid-1990s a series of events in Baltimore, Maryland, sharpened existing tensions between African American residents and Korean American storeowners in the city (see chapter 3). Efforts by churches and city agencies to bring the two communities together and air the issues that divide them met with limited success. The tensions peaked in January 1997 when a spate of robberies and shootings in Korean-owned businesses killed two grocers and wounded another, raising fears in the Korean American community of racial targeting.

These events in Baltimore mirrored similar conflicts elsewhere in the nation, some of which erupted into violence during the 1980s and 1990s.¹ In a 1986 report, *Recent Activities Against Citizens and Residents of Asian Descent*, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights noted that African American residents in various cities had complained that Korean merchants were disrespectful of black customers, did not hire blacks, and took profits out of the community, while Korean American merchants complained of harassment, vandalism, and robberies against their stores.² In a 1992 report, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s*, the Commission noted that “anti-Asian activities are often targeted at Asian-owned businesses”; among the reported incidents were ones in which white residents had attacked Korean American stores because of racial bias.³ The 1992 report also noted

¹ During the 1980s there were nine firebombings of Korean American-owned stores in Washington, D.C. In Brooklyn, New York, in 1990, an altercation between employees of a Korean American market and a Haitian American customer led to a yearlong boycott of local Korean-owned stores. In Los Angeles in 1992, a Korean American grocer fatally shot a black teenage girl suspected of shoplifting and received only probation for the killing; outraged African Americans responded by looting 800 Korean American businesses in the city during the Rodney King riots. See U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR), *Recent Activities Against Citizens and Residents of Asian Descent*, Clearinghouse Publication 88, 1986, pp. 53–56; and U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s*, 1992, pp. 34–40.

² USCCR, *Recent Activities Against Citizens and Residents of Asian Descent*, pp. 53–56.

³ USCCR, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans*, pp. 32–33.

problems in the relationship between the Asian American community and the police “that leave many Asian Americans without effective access to police protection.”⁴

Following the shootings in Baltimore, Korean American representatives complained to the Maryland Advisory Committee about the services and protection provided to them by the Baltimore City government. They alleged that because of anti-Korean racial and language bias, city agencies do not provide them equal access to city services, especially in the areas of police protection, public safety, and emergency services, such as fire and ambulance. They suggested that the Baltimore City government, then under the administration of Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke,⁵ was bringing pressures on their businesses at a time when many of the small stores were already struggling economically. They raised concerns about the justice system, questioning whether Korean Americans who are victims of crimes can get justice in the Baltimore courts.

In organizing a public forum in July 1998, the Maryland Advisory Committee sought to provide an opportunity for the Korean American community to voice these complaints and for other city residents to share their perspectives on these issues. In addition, the Committee sought to provide Baltimore City officials, and their state and federal counterparts, an opportunity to publicize their agency responsibilities and commitments to civil rights protection, and to address the specific question of whether Korean American merchants receive equal access to city services.

Although the broader panorama of intergroup relations between African Americans and Korean Americans forms the backdrop for some of the issues addressed, intergroup relations were not intended to be the focus of the forum; rather, the purpose was to explore the question of equal access to city services. In addressing the latter topic, however, many participants spontaneously brought up their experiences and views regarding relations between Korean Americans and African Americans, since the latter make up the majority of the stores’ customers and many of the personnel providing city services, and also dominated the top levels of Baltimore City government during the period in question.

Organization of the Forum

In preparation for the forum, the Maryland Advisory Committee contacted more than 60 people in Baltimore to gather background information and invite them to attend the event. Those contacted included Korean American storeowners and community representatives, African American clergy and community representatives, the office of Mayor Schmoke, state officials, and the U.S. Department of Justice.⁶

Respondents to this broad outreach included Korean American storeowners, as well as the daughter of one storeowner and the employee of another; representatives of several statewide Korean American organizations; African American clergy and grassroots activists involved in outreach efforts to the Korean community; city officials from the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore Fire De-

⁴ Ibid., p. 192.

⁵ Current Baltimore City Mayor Martin O’Malley was elected in 1999.

⁶ Chester Wickwire, chairperson of the Maryland Advisory Committee, telephoned approximately 40 Korean American storeowners in Baltimore, explaining that the Committee was conducting a survey to discover whether there were complaints about city services, public safety, or the justice system, and offering the storeowners an opportunity to speak at the upcoming forum. Mr. Wickwire, accompanied by Ki-Taek Chun and Edward Darden of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Eastern Regional Office, then visited five of the storeowners previously interviewed by telephone who had agreed to be contacted in person.

partment, and the Community Relations Commission;⁷ two U.S. Department of Justice officials, the U.S. attorney for the District of Maryland and a deputy assistant attorney general for civil rights; and other interested members of the community.

Organization of This Report

Following this background chapter, the report has six chapters as follows:

- A sketch of relevant **demographic and socioeconomic characteristics** of the Baltimore area, including the city and adjoining suburban counties, based mainly on U.S. census data.
- A **chronology of key events** leading up to the forum, including the renovation of two city markets, the boycott and closure of Canaan Food, the campaign to close Chang's Mart, the Joel Lee case, and the shootings of January 1997.
- A chapter on **Korean American merchants and the communities surrounding their stores**, looking at the economic and social role of Korean businesses in the inner city, African American residents' perceptions of the merchants, the merchants' perceptions of African American residents and customers, and efforts to improve relations between the two communities.
- A chapter on **provision of equal access to city services to Korean Americans**, including law enforcement, fire and ambulance services, and financial assistance to businesses and community organizations. The interaction between Korean American businesses and city regulatory agencies is also discussed.
- A chapter on **Korean American perceptions of the justice system in Baltimore**, centering on the community's reactions to the Joel Lee case.
- A **summary of key observations** based on the testimony at the forum and limited additional research.

The primary source document for this report is the transcript of the Committee's public forum entitled "Municipal Services, Public Safety, and the Justice System: Do Korean American Storeowners in Baltimore Get Equal Treatment?" (July 23, 1998). See appendix 1 for a complete listing of forum participants.

To ensure a factually up-to-date report, the Committee, in June and July 2002, obtained a significant amount of new information from forum participants, newly installed organization representatives, and government officials, which is incorporated in the report. There are also added footnotes, comments, and appended correspondence as follows:

- Appendix 3: Letters from Martin O'Malley, mayor, Baltimore City, and M. J. "Jay" Brodie, president, Baltimore Development Corporation, regarding the effects of redevelopment on Korean American merchants in Baltimore.

⁷ The director of the Baltimore Community Relations Commission, Alvin O. Gillard, attended as Mayor Schموke's representative. The Committee notes, however, that Mr. Gillard's comments may be more reflective of his personal views and may not fully reflect the mayor's position of the issues. His letter appears in appendix 6.

- Appendix 4: Letter from Peter Beilenson, M.D., M.P.H., commissioner of health, Baltimore City Health Department, regarding reasons for revoking a Food Service Facility Permit of the Canaan Food Outlet.
- Appendix 6: Letter from Alvin O. Gillard, director, Baltimore City Community Relations Commission, regarding the 1998 forum series on Korean American concerns.
- Appendix 7: Letter from Robert M Stanton, colonel/chief, Criminal Investigation Division, Baltimore Police Department, regarding serious crimes involving Korean Americans as victims, outreach initiatives to the Korean American community, and workforce utilization of Asian Americans and Korean Americans.
- Appendix 8: Letter from L. Kim Hale, president, Korean Society of Maryland, regarding updated information and accuracy of report's content.

Chapter 2

Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Baltimore Area

The questions raised at the forum must be understood within the context of population trends in Baltimore and its suburbs.¹ These trends largely resemble those found in other large Eastern and Midwestern cities in the 1990s: a continuing exodus of the white and black middle class from the central city to the suburbs, an African American majority in the city with a high degree of urban residential segregation and poverty that is disproportionately higher among African Americans, and the concentration of white and Asian American residents (including those who own businesses in the central city) in the higher-income suburbs. Maryland and Baltimore also show several distinguishing traits, notably their unusually large percentages of businesses owned by African Americans and Asian Americans, and within the universe of Asian-owned businesses, the predominance of Korean American enterprises.

Urban Losses, Suburban Gains

For the last half-century most large Eastern and Midwestern cities have been losing population, and Baltimore is no exception, having dropped from almost 950,000 residents in 1950 to just over 650,000 in 2000.² Baltimore stands out, however, for its continued pace of population decline: in the 1990s, among the nation's larger cities, Baltimore had one of the highest population losses in both real and percentage terms, losing 84,860 residents, or about 11.5 percent of its population. By contrast, the suburban counties surrounding Baltimore all had population increases, ranging from 9 percent for Baltimore County to 32.3 percent for Howard County. These figures reflect both an outflow of city dwellers to the suburbs and the tendency of new arrivals to the area to choose suburban residence. Since the middle class, both black and white, is the core of the suburban exodus, this population loss is also draining resources from the inner city.

¹ The U.S. Census Bureau considers Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, along with several smaller cities in Maryland and Virginia, to comprise a single "Washington-Baltimore Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area," the fourth largest such area in the nation. However, the present report is concerned only with Baltimore City and, to a lesser extent, its suburbs. This approximately corresponds to the "Baltimore Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area" defined by the Census Bureau, consisting of Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and five surrounding counties of Harford, Queen Anne's, Anne Arundel, Howard, and Carroll. Unless otherwise noted, documents attributed to the U.S. Census Bureau are available on the bureau's Web site, <www.census.gov>.

² Data in this section are from the Baltimore Department of City Planning, "Census News 2000: Issue One: Population and Race," December 2001, <www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/planning/census/index.html> (last accessed June 5, 2002), and are based on data from the 2000 census.

The Central City: Majority Black, Highly Segregated

Maryland and Baltimore City are among the places in the nation with the largest African American populations, in both absolute and percentage terms.³ Maryland is one of 10 states with the largest African American populations and one of just six where the black population exceeds a quarter of the total. African Americans significantly increased their share of the state's population in the last decade, from 24.9 percent in 1990 to 27.9 percent in 2000 census (nationwide, African Americans are 12.3 percent of the population).

Baltimore City, with almost 419,000 African Americans in 2000, ranks sixth among large U.S. cities in both the size of its African American population and the percentage of its population that is black. In the 2000 census, 64.3 percent of the city's residents identified themselves as black or African American, up from 59.1 percent in 1990. Nonetheless, the number of African Americans in the city decreased during the decade of the 1990s, mostly due to migration to adjacent Baltimore County. Whites make up 31.6 percent of Baltimore City's population, with a sharp decrease of more than 28 percent since 1990. Residents identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino (of any race) are 1.7 percent of the city's population, and Asian residents of the city are an even tinier minority, 1.5 percent.

Like other large U.S. cities where African Americans are concentrated, Baltimore shows a high degree of residential segregation. Large swaths of the central city, including most of the western part and an area northeast of downtown, are more than 89 percent African American, with whites accounting for less than 7 percent in most of these neighborhoods. In other areas of the city, whites make up more than three-quarters and blacks less than one-quarter of the residents; these include neighborhoods south of downtown and a north-central area beginning around Johns Hopkins University and stretching north and west to the city limits. The city's small Asian population lives mainly in neighborhoods that are either majority white or relatively integrated between black and white; few Asians live in the majority-black neighborhoods.

Sharp and Rising Inequality

With its strong economy based on research and development, biotechnology, information technology, science, and engineering, Maryland is a wealthy state. Its median household income of nearly \$52,000 was the highest of any state in the nation in 1998–1999,⁴ and its poverty rate of 7.3 percent was one of the lowest.⁵ However, not everyone is sharing in the prosperity. The statewide figures conceal wide disparities in income, and inequality among Maryland families has grown dramatically in the last two decades, following nationwide trends. The economic growth of the 1980s and 1990s benefited the already wealthy much more than the poor: from the late 1970s to the late 1990s, the poorest fifth of Maryland families increased their incomes by 21 percent, while the richest fifth increased their incomes by 51 percent. As a result, the gap widened between rich and poor: in the late

³ Data in this section are from U.S. Census Bureau, "The Black Population: 2000," August 2001; Baltimore Department of City Planning, "Census News 2000: Issue One: Population and Race"; and U.S. Census Bureau, "Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000: Baltimore City, Maryland."

⁴ Maryland Budget and Tax Policy Institute, "How Well Are We Faring? Prosperity, Poverty, and the Impact of Policy Choices in Maryland," February 2001, <<http://www.marylandpolicy.org/chartpoorwebintro.htm>> (last accessed June 5, 2002).

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty in the United States: 2000," September 2001. The figure is for 1998–2000.

1970s the richest fifth had average incomes 6.9 times as large as the poorest fifth, but by the late 1990s that ratio increased to 8.6.⁶

There are sharp disparities in wealth between different parts of the state, especially between Baltimore City and the surrounding suburban counties. Baltimore City's median household income, at \$28,398, is the lowest in the state. By contrast, the six adjacent counties have some of the highest median income levels, ranging from \$46,577 in Baltimore County to \$72,187 in Howard County, the highest in the state. Baltimore City also has the highest percentage of people in poverty, 21.8 percent, while the suburban counties have far lower poverty levels, ranging from 3.9 to 5.5 percent.⁷ The gap between urban poverty and suburban affluence in the Baltimore area is wider than for the nation as a whole (nationwide in 2000, average poverty rates were 16.1 percent for the central cities and 7.8 percent for the suburbs).⁸

Whites and Asian Americans Concentrated in the Suburbs

Just as Baltimore City is disproportionately African American in relation to statewide population percentages, the city's suburbs are disproportionately white.⁹ Whites make up 64 percent of Maryland's population, but percentages of whites in the suburban counties around Baltimore range from just over 74 percent in Baltimore and Howard counties to more than 95 percent in Carroll County.

The Asian American share of Maryland's population has risen in the last decade, from 2.9 percent in 1990 to 4 percent in 2000, and is slightly above the nationwide average of 3.6 percent. Koreans are the third largest Asian American group in the state, behind Asian Indians and Chinese, but the Korean population in Maryland has not increased as fast as the Asian American population as a whole. Statewide, 0.7 percent of the total population reported Korean ancestry in the 2000 census, barely changed from 0.6 percent in 1990.¹⁰ This mirrors nationwide trends: among the five largest groups of Asian-born persons in the United States, Koreans were the only group whose numbers did not grow significantly between 1990 and 1997.¹¹

Of the 39,155 Korean Americans in the state, fewer than 2,000 live in Baltimore City. The great majority are concentrated in a few suburban counties: Montgomery County outside Washington, D.C., and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Howard counties outside Baltimore City. Montgomery and Howard counties, with 15,130 and 6,188 Korean Americans, respectively, have the largest concentrations in the state; these two counties also lead the state in median household income.

⁶ Economic Policy Institute/Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends," state fact sheet for Maryland, April 2002, <<http://www.cbpp.org/4-23-02sfp.htm>> (last accessed June 5, 2002). Income gaps also widened in most other states in the nation.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, "County Estimates for Median Household Income for Maryland: 1998" and "County Estimates for People of All Ages in Poverty for Maryland: 1998," December 2001. These estimates are based on the March 1999 Current Population Survey.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty in the United States: 2000."

⁹ Data in this section are from U.S. Census Bureau, "Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000" for Maryland, Baltimore City, and the counties; U.S. Census Bureau, "Profile of General Demographic Characteristics for Maryland," 1990 and 2000; and U.S. Census Bureau, "From the Mideast to the Pacific: A Profile of the Nation's Asian Foreign-Born Population," September 2000.

¹⁰ Other Asian American groups in Maryland include Filipinos, Vietnamese, Japanese, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and a number of smaller groups.

¹¹ The four other major groups are Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, and Vietnamese.

Business Ownership by African Americans and Asian Americans

While a large majority (79 percent) of Maryland businesses are owned by whites, minority business ownership in the state is nonetheless above the national average, with African Americans and Asian Americans particularly well represented.¹² Maryland ranks second in the nation, behind only the District of Columbia, in the percentage of firms owned by blacks. Almost 12 percent of Maryland businesses, 47,614 firms, were owned by African Americans in 1997, triple the national average of 4 percent. The state ranks sixth in the nation in terms of the number of African American-owned firms.

Maryland is also one of the 10 states in the nation with the largest number of Asian-owned firms as a percentage of all firms in the state. Almost 6 percent of Maryland businesses, 22,164 firms, were owned by Asian Americans in 1997; in only three states was the percentage higher.¹³ Maryland is further distinguished by the leading position of Korean American businesses within the universe of Asian-owned firms. Korean Americans owned 5,831 Maryland businesses in 1997, followed by Chinese with 5,085, and Indians with 5,054; whereas in the nation as a whole, Korean-owned businesses rank third behind those of Indians and Chinese.

Korean Americans have high levels of business ownership in relation to population, with one Korean-owned business for approximately every seven Korean Americans in Maryland. There is one white-owned business for every 11 whites in the state and one black-owned business for every 31 African Americans.¹⁴

In Baltimore City, African Americans owned 16,712 businesses in 1997, 9 percent of all firms in the city. Black-owned businesses in Baltimore are small, however: only 1,795 had any paid employees, and those that did averaged eight employees each, compared with an average of 20 employees each for all Baltimore firms with a payroll. Businesses owned by blacks had average revenues of only \$81,367, compared with an average of \$833,933 for all firms in the city.

Korean Americans owned 2,875 businesses in Baltimore City in 1997. Koreans are the leading Asian American entrepreneurs in Baltimore, owning almost as many businesses as Indians and Chinese combined. These Korean American businesses are small: less than half have any paid employees, and those that do average fewer than three employees each. Korean businesses in Baltimore had an average of \$186,036 in revenues.

The Baltimore-Washington corridor has a particularly high rate of immigrant entrepreneurship compared with large urban areas nationwide. A 1999 study comparing the nine U.S. metropolitan areas that have the most immigrants found that Baltimore-Washington had the highest rate of self-employment among foreign-born residents. It was also the only area where self-employment among the foreign born (almost 14 percent) significantly exceeded that among natives (10 percent).¹⁵

¹² Unless otherwise noted, data in this section are from U.S. Census Bureau, "1997 Economic Census: Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises: Black," March 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, "1997 Economic Census: Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises: Asians and Pacific Islanders," May 2001; and U.S. Census Bureau, "1997 Economic Census, Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses in Maryland."

¹³ Hawaii, California, and New York.

¹⁴ Calculated using population figures from the 2000 census and business-ownership figures from the 1997 economic census.

¹⁵ Center for Immigration Studies, "Reconsidering Immigrant Entrepreneurship: An Examination of Self-Employment Among Natives and the Foreign-Born," January 1999, <<http://www.cis.org/articles/1999/selfemployment/index.html>> (last accessed June 5, 2002). The study is based on Census Bureau sampling data from 1997 and 1998.

Chapter 3

Chronology of Key Events Leading Up to the Forum

Participants in the July 1998 forum referred frequently to five chains of events that received extensive press coverage in Baltimore between 1993 and 1998 and largely set the tone for public discourse on issues involving the city's Korean American community. The following summaries are drawn mainly from press accounts and give further context to testimony at the forum.

The Renovation of Lafayette and Belair Markets

In 1994, as part of an ambitious plan to revitalize depressed areas of downtown Baltimore and give an economic boost to low-income residents, the Schmoke administration undertook the renovation of Lafayette Market, a dilapidated facility where Korean American merchants ran 19 of 21 stalls.¹ Stated goals of the renovation included honoring the African American cultural roots of the historic Pennsylvania Avenue neighborhood and increasing the number of African American merchants in the market. The city's announcement that all leases would be terminated at the end of that year to make way for the renovation raised anxiety in the Korean American community and helped spur nascent political activism, including formation of a political action committee for upcoming municipal races. The following year, the city announced plans to partially demolish a second market, Belair, where Korean Americans owned 22 of 27 stalls.

By the end of 1996, Lafayette Market had been transformed by a \$4 million renovation and reopened as Avenue Market, featuring African-themed decor. Market developers told the *Baltimore Sun* that the goal of having two-thirds of the 26 shops in the market owned by African Americans had been met; Korean Americans owned the rest. Many of the Korean American stall owners who were forced out by the renovation have been unable or unwilling to return.

During the update, the Committee received letters that appear as appendix 3 from current Mayor Martin O'Malley and M. J. "Jay" Brodie, president of the Baltimore Development Corporation, regarding redevelopment of the Lafayette and Belair markets, the impact on Korean American merchants, and the support system provided for displaced merchants. According to current estimates, the percentage of African American and Asian American merchants in the redeveloped Avenue Market has reversed, since reported to the *Baltimore Sun* in 1996. Then, African Americans were estimated to hold 66 percent of the businesses in Avenue Market, and today, Asian Americans hold 65 percent of the businesses in Avenue Market, according to Mr. Brodie. He estimated that African American entrepreneurs hold 35 percent of the Avenue Market businesses today. In 1995, the Belair Market was partially closed in anticipation of potential redevelopment of the entire area, Mr. Brodie reported. Underscoring the current administration's emphasis on small-business development as essen-

¹ Sources for this section: "Plans for Baltimore Market Threaten to Split Blacks, Koreans," *Washington Post*, Apr. 23, 1995; "A Welcome Gift to the Neighborhood," *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 23, 1996.

tial to the health of neighborhoods, the Baltimore Development Corporation created an office of Small Business and Neighborhood Development whose mission is to reposition business districts to better serve the customer base, strengthen the capacity of business associations to promote business district interest, reduce vacancies, coordinate city service delivery, expedite the permit approval process, and connect those who have commercial property for sale with interested parties. Pursuing these aims, the director of the newly created office and a representative of the Baltimore City Liquor Board met with the three principal officers of the Korean American Grocers Association (KAGRO) of Maryland. In the meeting, the officials outlined available services and discussed community relations. The KAGRO representatives are continuing to have a direct voice with city leadership, according to Mr. Brodie, through their participation on the Small Business Neighborhood Development Team. Furthermore, as indication of current support for Korean Americans, Mr. Brodie referred to the mayor's recent appointment of Joshua Lee as the mayor's liaison to the Korean American community. (Lee was dismissed December 31, 2002, and the office is now on its third liaison since the position was created. Portions of the Web site describing the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods appear as appendix 2.) These steps by the O'Malley administration are intended to ensure inclusion and opportunity for Korean Americans and other minority businesses, Mr. Brodie said.

The Boycott and Closure of Canaan Food

For six weeks in the fall of 1996, a boycott targeted Canaan Food Outlet, owned by Korean grocer Eun Mu Lee, amid complaints that the store was selling inedible food.² African American spokespersons emphasized that the community was fed up with unscrupulous merchants selling shoddy and overpriced goods to black customers. As residents picketed the Park Heights Avenue store, the protests became a daily topic on a radio talk show hosted by C. Miles Smith, a controversial figure known for his black nationalist views and scathing criticisms of local black leaders. While some African American clergy tried to ease the mounting tensions, Mr. Smith urged his listeners to defend the black community against Korean "bloodsuckers taking our money." Initial inspections by the city health department found no violations, but amid escalating public pressure inspectors returned to the store for multiple visits and cited Mr. Lee for various violations, including selling moldy meats and leaving eggs unrefrigerated. A public hearing on the case held by the health department on December 6 was combative and racially charged.³ On December 11 the city revoked Mr. Lee's business license permanently, closing Canaan Food and another store owned by Mr. Lee.

In the update, Peter Beilenson, M.D., M.P.H., the Baltimore City commissioner of health, provided extensive additional information about the Canaan Food Outlet case that is referenced in appendix 4. The attachments to Commissioner Beilenson's letter are too voluminous for the appendices and include investigator reports, hearing records, and numerous items related to the Lee case.

Commissioner Beilenson vigorously rejects any inference that may be drawn from statements by others that the revocation of a Food Service Facility Permit of Eun Mu Lee, owner of the Canaan Food Outlet, was based on anything except his failure to meet required safety standards. In the attached

² Sources for this section: "Angry Residents Pack Grocery Store Hearing," *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 7, 1996; "City Takes Business License of Grocer in Park Heights," *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 11, 1996; "Koreans and Blacks at Odds, Again," editorial, *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 14, 1996; "Radio Show Host Makes Waves," *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 27, 1996; "Korean-American Group to Meet on Closed Store," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 11, 1997; "Koreans, Blacks Clash at Grocers' Meeting," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 13, 1997.

³ The *Baltimore Sun* reported that radio host Smith had urged listeners to "pack that room with strong black men," and the paper noted in an editorial that the hearing had featured "racist and stereotypical remarks."

materials, the commissioner maintains there are numerous examples of recurring violations of both city and state standards at the Canaan Food Outlet that constituted dangerous health hazards for customers and the general public.

The Campaign to Close Chang's Mart

Since 1984, Kun Soo Chang has operated a liquor and grocery store called Chang's Mart from the basement of an apartment building for the elderly and people with disabilities on Eutaw Place in central Baltimore.⁴ The store is located between a mostly low-income black neighborhood and Bolton Hill, where affluent professionals have been moving in to restore elegant 19th-century townhouses. Contending that the store attracts litter and "a criminal element," Bolton Hill's white-led neighborhood group, the Mount Royal Improvement Association, has pursued a campaign since the mid-1990s to force Mr. Chang to close the store or move it farther away from Bolton Hill. But Mr. Chang has strong support from his customers, almost all of them African Americans, including many seniors from the apartment building, who praise the storeowner for his services and friendship and want the store to stay.

The improvement association has filed numerous complaints with the city liquor and zoning boards and has sent a flood of letters to elected officials. The liquor board has attempted to mediate the dispute and Mr. Chang has spent money to meet a number of the association's requests, including hiring a part-time security guard. However, Mr. Chang was cited and fined twice in 1997 for selling liquor to buyers under age 21, apparently in connection with police sting operations.⁵

The Joel Lee Case

In September 1993, Joel Lee, a Korean American student at Towson State University, was accosted by a group of young men in a northeast Baltimore parking lot and robbed of his wallet; in the course of the robbery he was shot and killed.⁶ Davon Neverdon, a 20-year-old African American man, went on trial in Baltimore City Circuit Court in July 1995 on first-degree murder, robbery, and deadly weapons charges. Before the trial, the defense attorney offered a guilty plea in exchange for a 40-year sentence, but the Lee family and the prosecutor decided to go to trial and seek a harsher sentence because of what they thought was compelling evidence from four eyewitnesses and another witness who said Mr. Neverdon had bragged of the crime.

On July 28, 1995, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty on all counts. The Korean American community, stunned and furious, protested that the acquittal was racially motivated, noting that the jury consisted of 11 African Americans and one Pakistani. About 150 people, mostly Korean Americans,

⁴ Sources for this section: "Two Cultures Clash Around Corner Store," *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 1, 1998; "Bolton Hill's Struggle for Stable Community," *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 14, 1998; "17 City Businesses Charged with Sale of Liquor to Underage Buyers in Sting," *Baltimore Sun*, March 1, 1999; Mount Royal Improvement Association minutes on Bolton Hill Online, Apr. 3, 2001, <www.boltonhill.org> (last accessed June 5, 2002).

⁵ Subsequent press reports revealed that as a result of police sting operations, Mr. Chang was cited again for selling to underage buyers in 1999 and 2000, and in early 2001 his liquor license was suspended for five days. At that time the Mount Royal Improvement Association was still trying to get Mr. Chang's liquor license revoked permanently, according to the association minutes of April 3, 2001.

⁶ Sources for this section: "Verdict Shocks Koreans," *Baltimore Sun*, July 30, 1995; "Jurors Defend Verdict in Slaying of Student," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 2, 1995; "Korean Americans Protest Verdict in Slaying Trial," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 3, 1995; "Lee Case Reviewed for Potential Civil Rights Probe," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 23, 1995; "U.S. Ends Rights Probe in Lee Death," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 16, 1997.

rallied in front of the courthouse protesting the verdict and demanding justice. Some other observers also raised the question of jury nullification. But several jurors who spoke to the press after completion of the trial adamantly denied that race had played a role, saying they doubted the credibility of the prosecution witnesses on whose testimony the entire case rested—since there was no physical evidence and the weapon was never found—and were left with too much uncertainty to convict.

Davon Neverdon was not charged under Maryland’s hate crime statute because state prosecutors found insufficient evidence that the crime was based on race.⁷ After the acquittal, the Lee family asked for a federal review to determine whether the crime could be prosecuted under federal civil rights laws. An 18-month investigation ensued, ending in January 1997 with the decision by Department of Justice officials that insufficient evidence existed to meet the high burden of proof required by the federal hate crime law.⁸ With the previous acquittal in state court, the decision not to prosecute at the federal level closed the case.

The Shootings of January 1997

The two weeks following the federal decision in the Lee case saw a spate of shootings in Korean American businesses in Baltimore, with two deaths.⁹ On January 20, two masked men entered a liquor store and fired at a Korean American worker, but the bullet missed and the gunmen fled without taking any money. The following day, liquor store owner Yang Koo Yoon was shot and killed after a brief struggle with robbers. On January 23 another merchant, Won Hee Ma, was shot and wounded in a robbery at her food store. And on January 27 grocer Chi Sup Kim was fatally shot in the back by robbers after he had handed over several hundred dollars in cash.

The question of whether these incidents involved racial targeting or merely reflected the high levels of violent crime in the city was controversial in the weeks that followed. Unquestionably, the shootings frightened many Korean Americans. Some, notably the father of Joel Lee, asserted publicly that the merchants were being targeted as Koreans and that the federal decision in the Lee case had made them vulnerable by sending a signal that crimes against Korean Americans would go unpunished. Some media voices, including an editorial in the *Baltimore Sun*, also suggested that African American perpetrators might be directing violence specifically toward Koreans.¹⁰ But other community leaders, both African American and Korean American, spoke out to say that the crimes should not be blamed on race. Baltimore has 35 armed robberies a day, and the shootings took place in a month that saw an exceptionally high level of homicides throughout the city, with mainly black victims. In a statement at the funeral for grocer Kim, attended by both African Americans and Korean Americans, the Korean Society of Maryland blamed “the common enemy—crime” and asked the media not to turn the tragedies into a racial issue.

⁷ MD. CODE ANN. §§ 10-303, 10-305 (2003).

⁸ 18 U.S.C. § 245 (2004).

⁹ Sources for this section: “Crime Grips Korean Merchants: Slayings, Robberies Unsettle Community,” *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 29, 1997; “Are Korean Americans Crime Targets?” editorial, *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 30, 1997; “Worried Koreans Plan Unity Motorcade,” *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 31, 1997; “The Violence Spree Continues,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, Feb. 1, 1997; “Mourners Note Common Enemy—Crime,” *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 1, 1997; “Shootings: Lee Case a Message of Fear,” *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 2, 1997; “Black-Korean Relations Across the Urban Divide,” *Baltimore Sun* (Howard edition), Feb. 9, 1997.

¹⁰ The January 30 editorial began by acknowledging that with so much crime in Baltimore, “it is hard to say it is targeted according to race,” but added: “There appears to be a difference, though, with robberies of stores operated by Korean Americans. More violence. . . . the unknown African-American suspects seem to be more concerned with inflicting fear, pain and death among the Korean-American community than in the money they steal.”

The shootings brought pressure on the city government to provide increased protection to the merchants. The *Baltimore Sun* editorialized that “local political leaders need to provide personal assurances to the Korean American community that they are as concerned about them as they are about any citizen.” The Korean Society of Maryland presented city officials with a short list of requests, including increased police patrols near Korean American businesses and the hiring of a Korean-speaking police officer. Responding to these concerns, the police department met with the Korean Merchants Association to discuss security procedures, assigned a bilingual officer as a liaison, and stepped up patrols around Korean American stores.

Chapter 4

Korean American Merchants and the Surrounding Communities

Virtually every forum participant who addressed the question of whether Korean American merchants receive equal access to city services from the city placed it in a larger context encompassing the role of Korean American stores in the neighborhoods where they are located and the storeowners' relationships with residents and customers. Based on testimony at the forum and limited additional research, this chapter summarizes the economic and social role of Korean-owned businesses in Baltimore and the perceptions and attitudes influencing relations between the merchants and residents. It concludes with a brief look at some of the efforts to improve relations undertaken by government and private groups.

Korean American Businesses in the Inner City

Characteristics of the City and Its Neighborhoods

Korean American stores in Baltimore are located mainly in parts of the inner city that are predominantly African American and poor. As in other cities, small mom-and-pop stores are found mostly in low-income areas because in more affluent areas larger businesses, including national chains, dominate the retail scene. In Baltimore, these low-income neighborhoods are predominantly African American, although there are a few poor white and Latino residents as well. In addition, gentrification has brought middle-class homeowners into some parts of the inner city, increasing the racial and economic heterogeneity of these areas.

In Baltimore, Korean Americans are the principal merchants doing business in black inner-city neighborhoods. As one panelist noted, “almost all the small businesses presently operated in the African American community . . . are Korean owned and operated.”¹ This has important implications. It means that poor residents and small shopkeepers are locked in a relationship of mutual economic dependence that forces a degree of intimacy seldom present in merchant-customer relations elsewhere. The storeowners cannot prosper in other neighborhoods, and thus depend on inner-city residents for their livelihoods, while the residents depend on the corner stores for daily necessities given the lack of other shopping options near their homes. In this context of forced interdependence, all aspects of merchant-customer interaction—the quality of goods offered, the prices charged and terms of payment, the physical layout of stores, the hiring of workers, the communications between storeowners and customers—take on heightened importance and can become emotionally charged.

Many speakers at the forum referred to poverty, unemployment, crime, and drugs as pervasive realities that make both living and doing business in the inner city a constant struggle. Data show that much of Baltimore is very poor indeed, even compared with other U.S. cities of comparable size.

¹ Rev. Douglas Miles, statement before the Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, community forum, Baltimore, MD, July 23, 1998, transcript, p. 104 (hereafter cited as Forum Transcript).

This reflects, in part, Baltimore's status as an aging industrial city that has lost its manufacturing base and has not yet consolidated a new economy that can produce plentiful and diverse jobs. These troubles are reflected in the city's continuing population exodus and in other indicators such as the housing vacancy rate, the highest among the nation's big cities.²

A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that in 1990, 33 percent of Baltimore children lived in "distressed" high-poverty neighborhoods, almost twice the average (17 percent) for the 50 largest cities in the nation.³ Thirty-two percent of Baltimore children lived in households that received public assistance (the 50-city average was 21 percent); 25 percent of Baltimore families with children had no resident parent employed (50-city average, 17 percent); and 15 percent of Baltimore families with children lived in "extreme poverty" (50-city average, 10 percent). More than half the city's children lived in single-parent families. The study also found very high indicators for poverty-related social problems. The arrest rate for juvenile violent crimes was 1,504 per 100,000 youths aged 10 to 17 in Baltimore, compared with 842 for the 50-city average. Among youths aged 16 to 19, 21 percent were high school dropouts, a higher percentage than in all but two other cities. Baltimore ranks worst among the 50 cities in both its percentage of births to teen mothers (22 percent) and percentage of babies with low birth weight (14.7 percent).

Declining access to public supports (health care, cash assistance) for poor Maryland families may be exacerbating the hardships faced by inner-city Baltimore residents. Maryland lags behind other states in access to both publicly financed health care and cash assistance for working families; in 2000, a parent with two children who earned \$522 a month made too much money to qualify for cash assistance.⁴

Characteristics of Stores and Merchants

After 1965, Koreans became one of the three largest immigrant groups entering the United States.⁵ Many of those who came were middle class, with postsecondary education, some financial assets, and sometimes professional training, but the language barrier and licensing requirements kept most from pursuing professional careers in this country. Early Korean immigrants found work in blue-collar occupations, but by the mid-1970s they began turning to small-business ownership—a livelihood that did not require English fluency, but depended instead on education, access to capital, and hard work. In Los Angeles, New York, Baltimore, Washington, and other large cities, Korean merchants steadily moved into inner-city neighborhoods to buy out the small businesses of shopkeepers, many of them Jewish, Italian, or Greek, who were leaving for the suburbs or retiring.⁶

² "Neighboring Cities on Different Roads: D.C. Succeeding, Baltimore Struggling at Revival, Census Finds," *Washington Post*, May 9, 2002.

³ Data in this paragraph are from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, <www.aecf.org/kidscount> (last accessed June 5, 2002). See the foundation's profiles of Baltimore in "City Kids Count: Data on the Well-Being of Children in Large Cities" and "The Right Start for America's Newborns: A Decade of City and State Trends (1990–1999)." Figures are for 1990, except the figures on teen births and birth weight, which are for 1999. A "distressed" neighborhood is defined as a census tract with a high poverty rate (above 24.7 percent) that also meets certain criteria related to the percentages of female-headed households, unemployed males, and families receiving public assistance.

⁴ Maryland Budget and Tax Policy Institute, "How Well Are We Faring? Prosperity, Poverty, and the Impact of Policy Choices in Maryland," February 2001, <www.marylandpolicy.org/chartpoorwebintro.htm> (last accessed June 5, 2002).

⁵ A number of factors combined to boost Korean emigration to the United States, including reform of U.S. immigration policy in 1965, extensive U.S. involvement in the Korean peninsula during the Cold War, and barriers to higher education for children of the middle class in South Korea.

⁶ Since African Americans have owned and operated businesses in Baltimore since the 1800s, there is a natural question as to why more black entrepreneurs did not take over the properties of the departing white merchants. Some of the barriers to

In Baltimore, Korean Americans own convenience stores, groceries, liquor stores, take-out eateries, dry cleaners, and stores selling clothing, jewelry, and trinkets. Estimates in the press and at the forum of the number of Korean-owned businesses in the city range from 1,000 to 2,000. Many are located on street corners, on the ground floor of residential or retail buildings. Stores offering combinations of goods and services, such as groceries, liquor, and sandwiches, are common. Many sell items by the piece to cater to a clientele without much money—not only liquor singles but also individual diapers and even cigarettes. Many owners do business from behind Plexiglas shields installed to deter crime.

A consistent pattern has been for Korean American storeowners to work very long hours and to depend on their immediate family for additional labor rather than hire paid employees. This has been a key factor enabling the small stores to survive and sometimes thrive, but it has obvious implications for relations with surrounding communities; speakers at the forum suggested that most Korean storeowners do not hire in the community and that this has fostered resentment. Rev. Douglas Miles, an African American pastor, pointed out that “Korean business people tend not to hire African American people to work in neighborhood stores” and that this has contributed to mistrust on both sides.⁷ Certainly, some Korean stores do have African American employees—the forum heard from Irma Norton, a black employee of Chang’s Mart—but it is unclear how frequent this is. Given the small size of the stores and the fact that many have no paid workers at all, it is safe to assume that the stores are not a significant source of employment for the neighborhoods where they are located. Several panelists also mentioned that merchants make in-kind donations, such as Thanksgiving baskets for needy families or refreshments for a community meeting, on request or on their own initiative.⁸

Many of the merchants speak little English, though this is not true of all. Both Korean American and African American panelists pointed to communication problems as a significant factor in merchants’ relationships with their customers (as well as with the authorities, as will be discussed later). Rev. Sidney Daniels, an African American pastor, emphasized this point:

Then the language barrier! My brothers and sisters, there’s a language barrier because Koreans cannot speak English.⁹

He added that the English dialect spoken by some black youths figures into the communication gap as well. Jeanna Cho, daughter of storeowner Chang Joon Cho, also focused on the language barrier as a source of misunderstanding in her parents’ store:

I think first of all that communication is the biggest thing, because Korean people, of course, can’t speak. . . . If I’m in the store, there’s not that many fights because I can understand what the customers are saying. They know what I’m trying to say because we can communicate better, because we have a better understanding of each other.

black business development in the city are explored in U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Greater Baltimore Commitment: A Study of Urban Minority Development*, 1983. These barriers include “racially discriminatory policies in the banking, bonding, insurance, and real estate industries,” as well as “discrimination by, and competition from, white European immigrants” (p. 7). A major factor affecting the overall lack of minority business development, the report notes, is the inability to obtain credit (p. 29).

⁷ Miles statement, Forum Transcript, p. 105. As an update on June 20, 2002, Rev. Miles added the following written comment: “In recent times, relationships between the two communities have improved with joint vigils held to celebrate the lives of both African Americans and Korean Americans, who had been victims of random violence. More needs to be done to foster [trusting] relationships between the communities.”

⁸ Pak statement, Forum Transcript, p. 137; Norton statement, Forum Transcript, p. 63; Cornish statement, Forum Transcript, p. 142.

⁹ Daniels statement, Forum Transcript, p. 112.

But when my parents are in the store, they have a lot of miscommunications, so it leads to an argument and things like that.¹⁰

The children of storeowners are usually bilingual, having been raised in the United States, and sometimes translate for their parents. But owners' children are seldom in the stores, since most of the Korean American families live in the suburbs and school their children there. Young bilingual Korean Americans who could potentially mediate between storeowners and customers, or between storeowners and the authorities, are generally busy with their studies and reluctant to get involved with their parents' problems in the stores.¹¹

Reaching adulthood, children of the merchants tend to pursue more lucrative professions and fields of business rather than take over their parents' corner stores. Thus the merchant community is aging and is not being revitalized with the entry of younger, educated, English-speaking Korean Americans who could represent the merchants more effectively in relations with the larger community. Pyong Kuk Pak, president of the Korean Society of Maryland, highlighted this problem:

The Korean American business community is at a crossroads now. It is in one sense gratifying that many of the one-and-a-half and second-generation young Korean Americans are venturing into other, more prosperous fields in business, but many of us, the immigrant generation persons, are in one sense stopped and we do not have much career options other than just make a living out of the small stores we bought and renovated and established.¹²

Several factors apparently inhibit Korean American merchants from taking more organized actions to address their concerns, including difficulty with English, limited financial resources, and reluctance to become involved in public controversies. According to Ms. Cho, the storeowners are always "complaining," but feel helpless to do anything about their complaints because of their limited English.¹³ In several other cities with large Korean American populations, the merchant community has raised money to hire a bilingual spokesperson, but this has not been done in Baltimore.¹⁴ There are several associations of Korean nationals and business owners in Maryland, but questions were raised about how effective these organizations are beyond their social function. Ms. Cho said that they do very little, but Kap Park, vice president of the Korean American Grocers Association of Maryland, disagreed. He said that the association provides help to members who request it, such as translation or a liaison to city offices, but merchants may not be aware that this help is available and therefore do not always bring their problems to the association. He also suggested that the association could provide more services if it had more resources.¹⁵

Park's comments during the update, representing the views of Korean American storeowners, are summarized in appendix 5. In a series of points regarding intergroup relations and government initiatives, he takes encouragement from the developing friendships between Korean Americans and African Americans in Baltimore's minority communities but discouragement from government and po-

¹⁰ Cho statement, Forum Transcript, p. 13.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 34.

¹² Pak statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 94–95. The "one and a half generation" refers to persons who were born abroad but emigrated to the United States as older children or teenagers; they are typically bilingual and have a foothold in both cultures.

¹³ Cho statement, Forum Transcript, p. 34.

¹⁴ Comments by Mr. Okura of the Maryland Advisory Committee, Forum Transcript, pp. 51–52.

¹⁵ Kap Park statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 85–87.

lice initiatives that seem lacking or short sighted. He urges the creation of a local cabinet-level department to address concerns for all minority groups in the city.

Impact of Social and Economic Changes in the Inner City

The role of the corner stores in Baltimore is being affected not only by demographic shifts in the Korean American community but also by socioeconomic changes in the inner city, although the direction and impacts of these changes are not uniform. One significant development is city-sponsored urban renewal, which has the potential to displace Korean American businesses, as illustrated by the renovation of Lafayette and Belair markets.

The other important shift is gentrification and the widening gap between rich and poor in the inner city. The influx of affluent residents into erstwhile poor neighborhoods can have complex consequences for Korean American stores. On the one hand, an infusion of spending power into a neighborhood could conceivably boost sales for some of the businesses. On the other hand, once a part of the city gains a level of affluence, the environment may become less hospitable to the corner stores.

The potentially negative effect of gentrification on Korean American businesses—and its potential to reshuffle alliances—was illustrated at the forum by the case of Chang’s Mart, the store being pressured by a white-led neighborhood association to move from its long-time location or close down. African American residents have defended Mr. Chang’s right to remain and have denounced the pressure on the store as racist against both Koreans and blacks. Mr. Chang told the forum that well-heeled residents were urging him to move farther from the gentrified Bolton Hill neighborhood, into an adjoining area that is more solidly African American and poor:

Two, three years ago, high-income white neighborhood people call me, so I will see them. They told me, why don’t you move across the street to the Pennsylvania Avenue side.¹⁶

Mr. Chang employs Irma Norton, an African American, as store manager. She interpreted the campaign against the store as both a class and racial issue:

They asked him to stop selling products that the lower-income people could afford. Mr. Chang said, I can’t do that, I want to accommodate all of my customers. After he refused to stop selling the products that they asked him to stop selling, like malt liquor miniatures, whatever, they started the smear campaign. . . . He has all the support of the black community. No one in that community complains about Mr. Chang. That’s another thing [the whites] do not like. They have sent several letters to several council members smearing his name and also involving anyone in the community who supports Mr. Chang. They refer to them as derelicts, panhandlers, prostitutes. . . . They are blaming the prostitution in the area on him and getting other people to support them. They are blaming all the panhandlers on this establishment, any loitering, any crime; the smallest crime is because Mr. Chang’s establishment is there.

Not only are they discriminating against Koreans, they are also discriminating against African Americans, and if we unite, they are really going to come out and get you because they do not like that kind of support. . . . They say it is not a black and white issue, it is not a racial issue. First I even put it off as an economic issue, I said it’s about

¹⁶ Chang statement, Forum Transcript, p. 59.

the lower-income people. I said it myself because I was in denial, but when I really got into this whole situation, this is a racial issue, and they do not want this Korean in this neighborhood.¹⁷

Press accounts make clear that all sides perceive this dispute as about more than just the store. One resident of the Marlborough apartment building told the *Baltimore Sun* that the confrontation “has nothing to do with Mr. Chang and his liquor license. It’s about those white people wanting to come back in and take over this neighborhood again.” In the same article, a member of the Bolton Hill group was quoted as saying that the store draws “a criminal element into Bolton Hill” and that “you have to fight for every block . . . neighbors have to protect the borders.”¹⁸

African American Perceptions of Korean American Merchants

While press accounts frequently highlight the negative dimensions of merchant-resident interaction, African American residents’ perceptions of Korean American storeowners are actually a complex mix of positive and negative elements that vary depending on the time, place, circumstances, and particular actors involved.

As Helpful Service Providers and Caring Neighbors

Some merchants clearly have excellent relations with the surrounding neighborhoods and are appreciated for offering goods and services, and sometimes credit and jobs, in areas otherwise bereft of them. The main example cited at the forum was that of Mr. Chang, as described by his African American employee Ms. Norton:

He’s friendly with everyone in the community, African American and white, and everyone loves him. . . . His establishment is in the Marlborough apartments for senior citizens and handicapped people, who have no complaints. They love Mr. Chang. Mr. Chang is one of the only merchants I know in 1998 that still gives credits to his local community. He knows it’s a low-income area. He tries to help them; he donates to them. He supplies food when they give functions, and this is in the whole community, not just the lower-income community.¹⁹

Ms. Norton and Mr. Chang each described the other as a “friend.” She added:

When I worked with Mr. Chang, we started to understand each other’s culture a lot better. We have made our own stereotypes. We found out that we are both loving and caring people that just want to make it in this world.²⁰

Press accounts confirm Ms. Norton’s positive assessment of Mr. Chang’s relationship with his African American neighbors and customers.²¹ Although Mr. Chang’s circumstances are special, such

¹⁷ Norton statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 61–67.

¹⁸ “Two Cultures Clash Around Corner Store,” *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 1, 1998.

¹⁹ Norton statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 63–64.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.

²¹ An article on the store describes Mr. Chang’s African American customers as “his most avid supporters,” and notes: “When harsh winter weather makes it tough to get to the nearby SuperFresh, many rely on him for provisions. He cashes checks, gives credit and delivers food to sick residents. He has never been robbed.” “Two Cultures Clash Around Corner Store,” *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 1, 1998.

positive perceptions of the merchants do not appear to be unique. For example, the *Baltimore Sun* profiled Soon Jae and Eun Ja Lee, owners of a corner store in West Baltimore since 1978, who are highly regarded in their neighborhood. The merchants employ two neighborhood men, extend credit to selected customers, and donate large amounts of food to needy residents. One resident describes Mr. Lee as having “a caring commitment to people,” saying, “Even though he’s Korean, I don’t look at him as Korean but as just another person who cares about the community.”²²

As Profit-Seeking, Exploitative Outsiders

At the same time, certain negative perceptions of the storeowners were reported to be widespread. Korean Americans are often seen as outsiders (foreigners, suburban residents) who have set up shop in African American communities in order to profit at poor people’s expense, resulting in a flow of money out of the neighborhoods. This view was put forth vehemently during the boycott of Canaan Food, along with additional allegations of poor quality goods and high prices in the corner stores. Although emotions ran particularly high during that period, a number of panelists at the forum mentioned anti-Korean verbal assaults as an ongoing reality.

Alvin Gillard, director of the Baltimore Community Relations Commission, stated that—

the community is asking whether merchants and their families are members of the communities in which they earn a living, or are they interlopers taking from the community and not putting anything back into the community?²³

Mr. Gillard raised concerns that merchants are not reinvesting enough of their profits in the communities where they do business:

You continue to hear the call to have some connection to the community, other than the fact that you’re operating this business. Is there any investment in the schools? Is there any investment in recreation? Is there any investment in public safety, other than what public safety can do for me as a merchant?²⁴

Jackie Cornish, executive director of the Druid Heights Community Development Corporation, has worked to improve relations between Korean Americans and African Americans in the neighborhood.²⁵ Asked what Korean Americans could do to help that effort, she replied:

I would say that we need . . . for the Korean American merchants to consider living more in their communities. There is a lack of that, and of course that creates a perception of, here they come in the community getting the money and going.²⁶

When merchants do not live in the neighborhoods where they do business, she noted, it is all the more important for them to contribute in other ways:

²² “Merchants Build Trust,” *Baltimore Sun*, Sept. 24, 1995.

²³ Gillard statement, Forum Transcript, p. 186.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 227–28.

²⁵ Cornish, responding during the update on June 26, 2002, regarding accuracy in the report wrote, “I agree with all statements.”

²⁶ Cornish statement, Forum Transcript, p. 141.

Korean American merchants [should] get more involved in the community and what's going on in the community, be it living in their communities and helping to build those communities up, or be it participating in community activities, involving themselves more in the community associations, even if they choose not to live in the communities. I think it's very important because it really breaks down that barrier that says they are not here like we are, overnight, 24/7 as the saying goes—they just come in and do this and leave.²⁷

Ms. Cornish detailed ways that the Druid Heights neighborhood group has encouraged the merchants to participate in community affairs, adding, “I think that it is also incumbent upon the community to reach out to the merchants. It's not a one-way street.”²⁸

As a Favored Minority Group

African American perceptions of the merchants are also shaped by the belief, reportedly widespread, that preferential treatment has allowed Koreans to quickly move beyond their newcomer status and establish themselves as merchants in black neighborhoods. Mr. Gillard of the city's Community Relations Commission emphasized this view:

There continue to be questions within the African American community as a whole as to how and why Korean Americans are so prevalent within the African American community, owning and operating businesses in those communities. The explanations offered, particularly coming from those in government at all levels, federal, state and local, have not altered the beliefs of many in the community who believe that Korean immigrants receive unfair government assistance in establishing their lives and livelihoods throughout African American communities.²⁹

When pressed, Mr. Gillard acknowledged that he did not believe the perception of unfair access to startup capital was grounded in fact:

From everything that I have heard, the reality is that that's not the case . . . [but rather that] the Korean immigrants, when they come over, they sort of pool resources, and they borrow from each other . . . to get their businesses off the ground.³⁰

But he stressed: “Whether factually based or not, this belief [that Korean Americans receive unfair assistance] has created a tremendous amount of frustration, resentment, and anger within the African American community toward Korean Americans.”³¹

Jackie Cornish of the Druid Heights Community Development Corporation reported that many people in her neighborhood initially resented the merchants because of misconceptions about the Korean Americans—“where they got their money from, how the government had to support them to bring them into our community to tear us down.”³²

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 141–42.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 142–43.

²⁹ Gillard statement, Forum Transcript, p. 182.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 233.

³¹ Ibid., p. 182.

³² Cornish statement, Forum Transcript, p. 126.

Rev. Douglas Miles, who has also been involved in efforts to build bridges between the two communities, elaborated further on this point of view:³³

Some of the bias has to do with African Americans' history in this country, a history that has allowed every immigrant group to come into our communities, reap the benefit, and then pass us on both the economic scale and social acceptability scale. That bias is further fueled by rumors that Koreans and other Asian people have received preferential treatment from government in starting businesses, treatment that African Americans find it difficult to receive.³⁴

Korean American Perceptions of African American Residents

Just as African Americans have both positive and negative perceptions of Korean merchants, the storeowners' perceptions of their customers and residents of the surrounding neighborhoods depend on many factors.

As Valued Customers, Friends, and Potential Allies

Since the forum was convened to consider the concerns of Korean Americans, there was relatively little discussion of their positive perceptions, but clearly there are positive elements in the mix. Again, Mr. Chang's experience stands out; he obviously values his customers, telling the *Baltimore Sun*, "My customer very good ladies and gentlemen. They are good people."³⁵

Ms. Cornish told the forum that merchants in her neighborhood feel "protected" because community activists have insisted on mutual respect:

In the Druid Heights community, talk to our merchants. They will tell you they feel loved, respected, and protected. We will not tolerate anybody coming from the outside or the inside of our community disrespecting any one of our merchants. On the other hand, we will not tolerate the merchants disrespecting any of the residents of the community.³⁶

In Druid Heights, cooperation on mutually beneficial projects has led to friendships across ethnic lines. Mr. Park of the Korean American Grocers Association, who works closely with the Druid Heights group, told the forum: "Two of my best friend is not Korean American. It's African American who sit right there, Jackie Cornish and Tony [Pressley]. They know how to respect, and they know how to respond."

Another theme that emerged at times was that African Americans and Korean Americans are both minorities in a white-dominated society, and thus should work together. Soshik Seo, president of the Korean Business League, suggested that—

³³ In updating comments written on June 20, 2002, Rev. Miles remained upbeat about improving intergroup relations, yet concerned that more resources were not forthcoming to assist these efforts. He noted, "In recent times, relationships between the two communities have improved with joint vigils held to celebrate the lives of both African Americans and Korean Americans, who have been victims of random violence. More needs to be done to foster relations between the communities."

³⁴ Miles statement, Forum Transcript, p. 105.

³⁵ "Two Cultures Clash Around Corner Store," *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 1, 1998.

³⁶ Cornish statement, Forum Transcript, p. 131.

Korean American business owners as well as African American colleagues and friends, we all are minority members and as such there is a need for us to unite. And if we do unite, I believe that there is a future and prospect from which we can all benefit.³⁷

As Ghetto Dwellers, Drug Dealers, and Thieves

At the same time, panelists indicated that many Korean American storeowners hold negative perceptions of the inner-city neighborhoods where they do business, based in part on their experiences with vandalism, drugs, and crime, and that these perceptions can shade into racist attitudes and stereotyping of African American residents. Ms. Cornish, who is black, noted that when her organization started its efforts,

Korean Americans [in Druid Heights] had big misconceptions about African Americans: we all carry knives, all we want to do is be on welfare . . . rob and kill Koreans.³⁸

Jeanna Cho detailed her parents' troubles in their corner store, referring to customers who come in "cussing and acting all crazy," and to petty vandalism, such as youths opening a fire hydrant and flooding the entrance of the store. But she added:

I do have to say that my parents are very prejudiced, and I think a lot of Korean people are because they are basically living in ghetto, in that bad neighborhood. . . . I was prejudiced myself, but as I learned to understand the different cultures [I am] not really prejudiced like I used to be. But my parents are very prejudiced because they only see the bad black ones or whatever.³⁹

One element of this prejudice, she suggested, is the Korean American stereotype of inner-city residents, black and white, as being people without much education:

We all know that we're having stores in a bad neighborhood, which they are all not educated. Majority of them are not educated, majority of them are on drugs, have 5 million kids. It's not just blacks, it's whites too. It doesn't matter what race you are. If you are not educated, you're going to be like that.⁴⁰

Efforts to Improve Relations

Panelists mentioned a number of efforts to diminish misconceptions and tensions and promote communication between Korean Americans and African Americans, including neighborhood-based programs, work among local churches, and public forums sponsored by the city.

Neighborhood-based Programs

The Druid Heights Community Development Corporation began working in 1992 to address what was then, according to director Jackie Cornish, a "tremendous problem" of poor relations between residents and merchants in the neighborhood. The centerpiece of the program is a free cross-cultural

³⁷ Seo statement, Forum Transcript, p. 99.

³⁸ Cornish statement, Forum Transcript, p. 127.

³⁹ Cho statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 16, 33.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 34–35.

summer camp for 60 African American and 60 Korean American children run by Ms. Cornish and Tony Pressley; merchant Kap Park teaches Korean language at the camp.⁴¹ The goal is to build friendships between the children and teach them to appreciate differences so that they can lead their parents to greater understanding. Along with outings to zoos and amusement parks, the children study Swahili and Korean and learn about both cultures. In 1998 the camp was in its sixth summer, and Ms. Cornish described its impact:

We have found in many years in dealing with this program that our children and our adults come out with a better understanding of each other, and we come to find out that we have more likenesses than we have differences. We are about our children. We are about safety. We are about having a nurturing environment for our children. That's what African Americans are about. Guess what, so is the Korean American. We want the best for our children.⁴²

The summer camp receives support from some of the merchants, as well as from foundations and the state. The Druid Heights group also makes other efforts to involve the merchants in the community, producing a newsletter with some articles written in Korean so they can keep up with community events.

Work Among Churches

A number of local pastors and churches in Baltimore have brought together African American and Korean American congregations for shared worship and social get-togethers. Mr. Pressley described an exchange between the Korean Methodist Church and the Payne Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church in Druid Heights that is an outgrowth of the summer camp program. The two congregations worship together at the Payne Memorial during Black History Month, and the Korean Methodist Church—sharing a dinner of soul food and Korean food after the respective services.⁴³

Broader efforts to have Baltimore churches promote intergroup harmony appear to have had uneven results. In the summer of 1996, 25 African American and Korean American ministers and community leaders from Howard and Baltimore counties traveled to South Korea on a visit organized by the Council of Korean Churches in Howard County. After the trip, pastors organized more joint events among their churches. However, these efforts during the fall of 1996 coincided with the boycott of Cnaan Food and appear to have been eclipsed to some extent by the bitter controversy around that issue.

At the forum, Rev. Douglas Miles, president of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, suggested that many of the churches that participated in the Korea trip were not oriented toward social change, and as a result the discussion stayed mainly at the level of evangelicalism.⁴⁴ According to Rev. Sidney Daniels, former president of the alliance, this same division hindered past efforts by the alliance to work with Korean churches. He called for practical and sustained efforts to tackle social problems in the inner city:

⁴¹ The summertime programs included an annual picnic, called "Unity Day," that celebrated its seventh consecutive year on Aug. 1, 2002. *See* Park Comments on improved intergroup relations in appendix 5.

⁴² Cornish statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 125–26.

⁴³ Pressley statement, Forum Transcript, p. 134.

⁴⁴ Miles statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 116–17. The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance involves affiliates from within Baltimore City and its surrounding vicinity.

Unemployment, we're working on that in the alliance, and we are saying to the Korean community, if you'll work with us, not spasmodically, but on a consistent basis . . . we'll work with you.⁴⁵

City Government Initiatives

The Schموke administration's Community Relations Commission convened a citywide summit on race relations in 1990. In 1998, the commission organized three community forums to bring members of the Korean American and African American communities together to discuss the issues that have kept them apart. The *Baltimore Sun* reported that tensions ran high at the May meeting.⁴⁶ Mr. Gillard also mentioned that a Korean American had been appointed to the board of commissioners of the Community Relations Commission.⁴⁷

In the update, a letter from Mr. Gillard, which appears as appendix 6, answered the Committee's request for information about developments resulting from the Community Relations Commission's 1998 hearings series. He reported that the commission did not set new priorities as a result of the hearings. Although he asserted that the commission continued to work closely with the Korean American community, he did not offer examples to show the nature of that working relationship.

Mr. Park of the Korean American Grocers Association called for a more robust dialogue between Korean Americans and others in Baltimore in which city agencies and the churches would play an active role:

Next 21st century, we should focus on renovating in the city speech power. That cannot be done by one side. We need teamwork, and we ask the same thing of city government and the police department, all the churches all over Baltimore City. There are so many people, so many congregations that are willing to do it, but they are looking for each other. Who's going to do it first? I believe this is about time to do it . . . We should focus on the same goal.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Daniels statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 114–15.

⁴⁶ "Black, Korean Tension Is Focus," *Baltimore Sun*, July 23, 1998.

⁴⁷ In May 2004, there was no longer a Korean American on the board of commissioners.

⁴⁸ Kap Park statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 90–91.

Chapter 5

Provision of City Services to Korean American Merchants

The central issue of interest to the Maryland Advisory Committee was whether Korean American businesses receive equal treatment from the City of Baltimore, especially with respect to the provision of public services. Four main areas were discussed; they reflect the nature of the complaints received by the Committee:

- Law enforcement.
- Fire and ambulance emergency services.
- Regulation.
- Financial assistance to businesses and community groups.

Overall, the forum revealed divergent perceptions on the question of whether Korean American businesses are receiving fair treatment. For example, Keith Kim, a retired chemist, asserted that Korean Americans are not receiving equal treatment and that city officials are unresponsive:

I would like the Korean community to get equal treatment under the law. Equal treatment meaning treated the same in every way, such as funding from the mayor's office on down to city government services, but we are not getting that as I see it. . . . Also when problems arise, when you try to get in touch with higher authority, there is always some way to shunt it back and nothing to be heard from.¹

Mr. Kim recounted his own experiences with unresponsive city offices and pointed to the failure of the mayor to attend the forum as evidence of indifference to Korean American concerns, saying "I am sorry nobody really is here from the mayor's office this morning. . . . This meeting's important enough, they should come over here and observe what we have to say."²

Alvin Gillard, director of the Baltimore Community Relations Commission, who attended the forum as the mayor's representative, offered a contrasting view.³ He stressed the Schموke administration's commitment to being "inclusive and responsive," noting that the administration had encouraged all

¹ Keith Kim, statement before the Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, community forum, Baltimore, MD, July 23, 1998, transcript, pp. 148–49 (hereafter cited as Forum Transcript).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 150–51. One month before the forum, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Eastern Regional Office sent a letter to the office of Mayor Schموke, explaining the purpose of the upcoming forum and inviting the mayor to lead a delegation of city officials to the event. The mayor did not attend, but sent Mr. Gillard, head of the Community Relations Commission.

³ When asked whether his prepared speech had cleared the mayor's office, Mr. Gillard explained that while the mayor had asked him to attend "in his stead," his remarks were his professional view as the director of the Community Relations Commission. The commission is the fair employment practice arm of the city government and the agency charged with improving intergroup relations in the city.

city agencies to produce literature to explain their services to non-English-speaking residents and had assigned liaisons to those communities to facilitate access to city services and City Hall.⁴

Mr. Gillard stated: “I believe Korean American storeowners are being afforded all civil rights protections and have forged a strong relationship with municipal government.” He continued:

I don’t believe there exists any widespread bias against Korean Americans by city government, including police, fire, et cetera. There does exist, however, tension between the two communities, which appears to be primarily rooted within the context of the African American consumer/Korean American entrepreneur relationship.

I have not seen any supportive data, nor heard a preponderance of anecdotal evidence from anyone in the Korean American community that would suggest that Korean American storeowners are not extended the full benefit of city services. As a matter of fact, I am somewhat surprised that Korean Americans perceive that [they] lag in receiving city services and administration of justice in relation to Korean American-owned businesses. I have been at the Community Relations Commission off and on for the past 18 years, and I have met with many Korean Americans, and I have not heard this view repeatedly expressed as to be an issue.⁵

Mr. Gillard questioned whether equal provision of services was an appropriate topic for the forum, contending that a more pertinent issue was the tension between the Korean American and African American communities, and in particular, the question of whether Korean Americans might actually be receiving preferential treatment:

One of the most sensitive issues presently being debated within the African American community is whether Korean American storeowners receive preferential treatment, not less-than-equal treatment. . . . From my perspective, there are issues which beg to be addressed which impact the total community. I simply do not believe, however, the ones you identified are the ones that need to be addressed. I believe factual information on the lingering questions relating to alleged startup assistance provided by government to Korean American immigrants needs to be shared so that that issue can be put to rest. I believe the issue of whether Korean American storeowners have an easier time obtaining insurance, loans, and credit lines versus that of African Americans needs to be addressed, and the issue of why the African American community is not yet moving beyond where it has been in terms of overall economic development needs to be addressed. . . . I see the pertinent issues being relationship-oriented between communities, not the level of services Korean American businesses are receiving from city government.⁶

⁴ Gillard statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 183–84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 181–82, 184–85. A look at the Web site for the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods paints a different picture. The site lists many accomplishments for the Hispanic liaison and none for the Korean liaison. It also lists “a number of important web sites that serve the Hispanic Community” while there are none listed for the Korean community. *See* <<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/moon/hispanic.html>> (last accessed May 26, 2004).

⁶ Gillard statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 185–86.

Law Enforcement

Much of the discussion around city services centered on the police protection provided to Korean American businesses. Three issues were highlighted:

- Whether there is disproportionate, racially motivated crime against Korean Americans.
- Police coverage and response time.
- The quality of services rendered when officers arrive at a Korean American business in response to a call.

Are Korean Storeowners Disproportionately Targeted?

During the spate of shootings in January 1997, some Baltimore residents and media voices expressed fears that Korean storeowners were being targeted because of anti-Korean bias and that the city was failing to provide them adequate police protection. Others, noting the high levels of violence throughout the city, considered that the January incidents were most likely not motivated by racial hatred, but were robberies of the sort frequently targeted against small inner-city stores. It is widely agreed that the location of many of the corner stores in neighborhoods plagued by unemployment and drug abuse creates insecurity for merchants as well as for residents—a fact that does not, in itself, preclude the possibility of racial targeting.⁷

Noting the high crime rate citywide, Colonel Robert Smith of the Baltimore Police Department reported that robberies have occurred in the Korean American community but “not more so than they have occurred in other communities.”⁸ Based on his review of every robbery report filed with the department’s Operations Bureau, he said,

[O]n a daily basis, I do not see robberies in Korean-owned businesses. I see robberies in other businesses, and mostly black and Jewish businesses, and they far outnumber the incidents that occur in the Korean community.⁹

While acknowledging that “Korean business people have suffered terribly from crimes of violence,” Rev. Douglas Miles added that:

Much of this, in my opinion, has less to do with the ethnicity than with the fact that almost all the small businesses presently operated in the African American community, particularly in high-crime areas of the city, are Korean owned and operated. Thus, the crimes tend not to be racially motivated as much as they are crimes of opportunity driven by the drug culture and poverty of the city. The same stores would be targeted no matter who owned them.¹⁰

While saying he knows of a few instances in which Korean American merchants were robbed because of their ethnicity, Rev. Miles emphasized that there is no concerted effort by African Ameri-

⁷ In a background interview, merchant Kwang Lee noted that not only is shoplifting common, but drug dealers even transact business inside his store, something he feels helpless to prevent.

⁸ Smith statement, Forum Transcript, p. 193.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 201–02.

¹⁰ Miles statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 104–05.

cans to drive Korean Americans from the community. He added that in some instances where deaths have occurred, “African Americans have stood with Koreans to protest the senseless violence.”¹¹

Coverage and Response Time

At the time of the January 1997 shootings, Korean American criticisms of police protection included allegations of insufficient coverage of their businesses, and Korean American business leaders called on the police commissioner to take steps to remedy the problem. Responding to these concerns, the Baltimore Police Department directed its officers to pay closer attention to Korean American stores in their patrol areas; the department also assigned a bilingual officer to serve as a liaison with the Korean American community, sent out letters written in Korean telling merchants about police services, and held a crime prevention seminar for Korean American merchants.¹²

Col. Smith stated that the police department responds to calls from Korean American businesses with the “same effort” it puts forth for other calls, adding:

Sometimes we respond, probably, even more faster—well, not faster, but with more effort . . . because we want to continue to bridge the gaps that once were. All our responses to any shooting, any incident within the city, are immediate. Since the shootings [of January 1997], we have ordered patrol officers to make constant visits to the Korean-owned establishments, more so than they were doing before. They have to make four of those visits on their daily activity sheets, and the officers are doing that.¹³

On the other hand, Rev. Miles asserted that the poorer areas of the city typically receive less police coverage than the richer areas, and that this affects Korean American businesses:

In the area of equal protection under the law Korean business people may find themselves the victims of neighborhoods in which they do business, neighborhoods notorious for poor police protection, not only for business people, but for residents as well. Where I live in the 1900 [block] of McKean Avenue in West Baltimore, I know that I don’t nor will I ever receive the response time to my call as do residents of Homeland-Guilford. I know that we do not get the same level of patrol as do the residents of Bolton Hill.¹⁴

Quality of Service

In discussing police protection, Korean Americans speaking at the forum and in background interviews focused principally on the service they receive when police arrive in response to a call. The main concern raised was that officers frequently give short shrift to the merchant’s complaint and instead appear to side with the suspect. Two explanations were offered: that the language barrier impedes communication between the merchants and the police, and that in some instances racial bias affects officer behavior. In response, the police department representative outlined steps the depart-

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 106–07.

¹² “Crime Grips Korean Merchants; Slayings, Robberies Unsettle Community,” *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 29, 1997.

¹³ Smith statement, Forum Transcript, p. 193.

¹⁴ Miles statement, Forum Transcript, p. 107.

ment has taken to facilitate communication in such situations and to increase cultural sensitivity among law enforcement personnel.

In a pre-forum interview, merchant Chang Joon Cho asserted that African American police officers side with African Americans suspected of theft, and he told of his own experience when he caught a youth shoplifting and called police.¹⁵ The same incident was later recounted at the forum by his daughter Jeanna Cho, who said the officer listened only to the suspect and not her father, who speaks limited English, giving her father no chance to tell his side of the story. The daughter, who could have provided translation, was not in the store at the time. The officer wrote in his report that Mr. Cho pointed a gun at the youth, an allegation Ms. Cho disputed; as a result Mr. Cho spent three days in jail and had to hire a lawyer and post \$50,000 bail. The case against the merchant was later dropped when the youth did not show up in court.¹⁶

In attempting to explain these events, Ms. Cho emphasized the language barrier, but also perceived a racial dimension to the encounter between her father, the officer, and the youth:

It's not really the communication that I think was the problem. I think [the officer] was just straight up being racist because [the suspect] was a black boy, young boy standing there with my father, and he was the only police and nobody was around. The witness already had left, so he felt like he could do anything about it, him being police.¹⁷

She suggested that both communication difficulties and racial bias affect the quality of policing provided to Korean American businesses:

When there's problems in the store . . . Korean owners, they call the police, and police come to them and they don't really listen to the owners who actually call the police. They listen to the other people. . . . The majority of the owners . . . can't speak English, and [the police] don't want to be bothered, so they listen to the others—customers or whatever. . . . That's really something that the Baltimore City needs to look at. Because if we call the police, they should be listening to us first.

The justice system, especially the police in Baltimore City, I think is very poor because—I wouldn't just say black police because by all means I'm very diverse and all that—but a majority of the Korean stores are in black neighborhoods, and there are many black police out there.¹⁸

Ms. Cho added that in her experience growing up in the city, police officers do sometimes lie on their reports, causing people to get locked up unfairly, and not only when Korean Americans are involved: “a lot of white police have things against blacks too.”¹⁹

Businessman Kap Park, vice president of the Korean American Grocers Association of Maryland, also stressed the impact of the language barrier in encounters between merchants and police:

¹⁵ “Civil Rights Commission Forum, Background Information.” Internal memorandum, July 23, 1998.

¹⁶ Cho statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 14–15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

One thing I want to suggest to the police department, when they come to the merchants, they should pay little bit extra time, attention when they try to write the report because all things happen because they are rushed. They want to make a report fast and quick and leave. So that if you have language problem, somewhat misunderstanding about this society, your opinion is eliminated. Your side of story is not part of the incident report.²⁰

Col. Robert Smith of the Baltimore Police Department presented the department's response to the concerns raised.²¹ He acknowledged that there had been some problems in serving Korean businesses in the past and attributed this mainly to the language gap:

We have had reports that officers—not just black officers, [but] officers who are responding to calls for service at Korean businesses—where the officer who could not understand the Korean person's language, listened to the person that the Korean called on and only took that information to service the call, and in most cases, let the person go.²²

Col. Smith detailed some of the steps taken by the police department to remedy the communication problem:

We have established a Korean liaison officer, Officer Kim, who is in the audience today. We have provided him with a take-home car. He's on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He responds to all problems within the Korean community, which involves shootings, holdups, or anything dealing with communication problems with the patrol officer. All supervisors and officers have been instructed to call communications whenever there is a problem. We would immediately contact Officer Kim, who responds in from his home or responds while on duty to take care of the language problems.²³

In response to questions, Col. Smith acknowledged that it is up to the patrol officer to call for Officer Kim's assistance if he or she feels it is necessary, and that Officer Kim is not called very often. He also said that Korean merchants sometimes withhold information from police out of fear.

Col. Smith described steps taken to increase cultural sensitivity in the police department and improve the relationship with the Korean American community:

All officers and supervisors—that's from officer all the way up through the police commissioner—have gone through eight hours of training in cultural diversity, so they could be more aware and more sensitive to other community needs. And that's not just the Korean community; that's also the Spanish community and so forth. We have also given several crime prevention seminars and are planning more in the future. We have also distributed a Korean incident reporting guide and safety tips translated in Korean.²⁴

²⁰ Kap Park statement, Forum Transcript, p. 88.

²¹ Col. Smith, chief of the Baltimore Police Department's Field Operations Bureau, was standing in for Police Commissioner Thomas Frazier, who was out of town.

²² Smith statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 219–20.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 193–94.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

In response to an observation from the Advisory Committee that complaints received recently from Korean Americans seemed to offer a contrasting, and much less positive, picture of the relationship with police, Col. Smith acknowledged that a gap might exist between the experiences and perceptions of the various actors. But he stressed his belief that the situation has improved in the last couple of years:

I feel, in my years of service within the agency, the relationship with the Korean community and other non-American communities has improved tremendously. I'm not saying there are not more steps we have to take, and those steps we are willing to take.²⁵

During the update, Robert M. Stanton, colonel/chief of the Baltimore Police Department's Criminal Investigation Division, provided additional information that appears in appendix 7. Col. Stanton supplied statistical data showing a general decline in crime victimization of Asian Americans from 1998 to 2001. (The database does not recognize Asian American subgroups; therefore Korean American-specific statistics are not available.) From January to June 2002, the data show 13 total crimes involving Asian American victims. The number suggests a continuing sharp decline in Asian American victimizations that totaled 833 in 1998, 581 in 1999, 503 in 2000, and 371 in 2001. Although Col. Stanton drew no connection between the dropping rate of Asian American victimization and Asian American participation on the police force, there was only one Asian American officer in 1998 and now there are 22 Asian American officers, 12 of whom are Korean Americans, including two supervisory personnel. In addition, Col. Stanton noted specific activities of the department's officer assigned as Korean-language translator/community liaison. Among the liaison's activities are special efforts targeted to Korean American storeowners, including providing ongoing crime prevention seminars and writing a column about crime safety for a monthly paper distributed by the Korean American Safety Council of Maryland; within the wider Korean American community, the liaison officer works closely with Korean American organizations and provides pertinent public information to the Korean-language press.

In contrast to Col. Smith's generally positive assessment of police department efforts, depicting communication and cultural sensitivity as the core of both the problem and the solution, Mr. Gillard of the Community Relations Commission offered a more pessimistic outlook, citing the unease between the two communities and the "interloper" status of the merchants as an explanation of officer behavior:

I don't want to disagree with the Colonel, but I have some concern that we seem to be making members of the Korean American community the victims at the expense of the African American community, because I simply don't think that's reflective of reality. I think if there are officers who are responding this way, they are not doing it in a vacuum. I don't want to validate any wrong behavior on the part of the officers. But if you are talking about officers who grew up in Baltimore City and who now serve in Baltimore City, you're talking about officers who view the Korean American merchants in these neighborhoods as outsiders, because that's the neighborhood they grew up in. If you are talking about Korean American merchants who only come in to operate businesses and establish no ties to the community other than of an entrepreneur nature, then you are going to have problems . . . So we have problems that are rooted in the nature of the relationship and has very little to do with the types of ser-

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 195–96.

vices that merchants are receiving from city government. That's not the true nature of the problem.²⁶

Asked by the Committee whether he meant to say that officers' siding with black suspects was understandable and therefore condonable, Mr. Gillard clarified his view as follows:

I didn't say it was understandable. I said it should not be surprising. And I think that's a difference. . . . They have rules, standards that they have to adhere to as an officer. And I would in no way suggest that those rules and standards should be dismissed simply because of the relationship between the two communities. What I said was it should not be surprising. Those folks don't grow up in a vacuum. Now, it's up to the department to deal with them if they are exhibiting the biases that they have. But it shouldn't be surprising that they have these biases.²⁷

Ambulance and Fire Emergency Services

The Baltimore Fire Department is responsible for dispatching ambulances as well as extinguishing fires and inspecting buildings for fire code compliance. Fire Chief Herman Williams asserted that equal services are provided to the Korean American community:²⁸

This is the first time that I've had the opportunity to address any problems at all with the Korean community. Certainly, the fire department's dealings with the Korean community as well as the community in general is the same. . . . I can assure that our responses are the same for all people of Baltimore City, regardless of whether they're Korean, black, or whatever.²⁹

The Advisory Committee asked Chief Williams to address concerns around the department's handling of a specific case, the January 1997 shooting of grocer Chi Sup Kim. Mr. Kim died of his wounds, and members of his family alleged that there was inordinate delay both in the arrival of the ambulance and in providing paramedical treatment at the scene; they claimed that instead of paying prompt attention to the injured man, paramedics stayed in their truck, conversing. The family alleged that Mr. Kim's death was due in part to this delay and asked the fire department for an explanation. The victim's brother, Harry Kim, later informed the Advisory Committee that he received a satisfactory but belated explanation from the fire department in July.

At the forum, Chief Williams spoke to concerns about the alleged delays in sending the ambulance, in treating Mr. Kim at the scene, and in responding to the family's request for an explanation. In regard to the question about dispatch, the fire chief acknowledged that "I can't really speak to specifics on how long it took to get the ambulance out there" in the particular case of Chi Sup Kim. He did, however, report that Baltimore generally maintains good response times despite having too few ambulances for its needs:

²⁶ Gillard statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 221–23.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

²⁸ Fire Department Chief William J. Goodwin, Jr., succeeded former Fire Chief Herman Williams, who retired. On July 26, 2002, as part of the update, Fire Chief Goodwin, after reviewing former Fire Chief Williams's forum comments, wrote to the Committee, "I concur with the previous statements, to the best of my knowledge."

²⁹ Williams statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 189–90.

Baltimore City has only 18 ambulances. Last year alone, we responded to 111,000 incidents. . . . So now even with those statistics, we generally respond to an emergency with an ambulance anywhere within one to eight minutes, which is a record for a city the size of Baltimore.³⁰

Because there are so few, the ambulances are nearly always out on the street, responding to calls, rather than sitting at the fire station waiting to be called. In light of this situation, the department has put in place a new system to improve response times further:

In order to ensure that we do have the best response and people are not sitting around waiting and saying that the ambulance is not coming—because it is our policy to send the closest ambulance to a scene of an incident when there is one—we have just installed a new 800 megahertz communication system with a vehicle locator system, whereby we will know at a given moment where every ambulance in the City of Baltimore is at any given time. So that, in the case of an incident, instead of dispatching the nearest ambulance from the nearest firehouse, we can pick up that piece of equipment on the street wherever it is and dispatch it in time.³¹

Chief Williams acknowledged that in the past, language difficulties have sometimes hindered the fire department's capacity to respond to calls from Korean Americans, as no one in the department speaks Korean:

What happened in the past—and I'll admit, we received a call from an incident that a Korean was involved, and we did not know anything at all what they were saying, not one thing. I think my dispatcher mistook what was said on the other end. Instead I think the person was saying, "He's been shot."³²

In such situations, the department traces the phone number from which the call was placed and then dispatches an ambulance to that address. In addition, a new mechanism has been installed to assist in fielding calls to the fire department in languages other than English. The department is now using an 800 number available 24 hours a day to contact an interpreter when needed, in any language needed. If a Korean-language call comes into the department's communications center, the dispatcher can have an interpreter on the line within one minute and patches him or her into the call.³³

Concerning the appearance of delay in treating injury victims such as Mr. Kim, Chief Williams explained that paramedics have to follow protocols that call for consultation with doctors before giving treatment:

Once the paramedic arrives on the scene of an incident, we are responsible by state laws and protocols to perform certain operations on a patient before we remove them from the scene. That person has to be stabilized. Oftentimes, it's been mistaken that because the paramedic is talking on the phone or talking with someone else, that he is wasting time or whatever. But in most incidents, especially the incident that happened, the paramedic is in contact with the hospital, receiving instructions from a doctor as to what he's supposed to do. . . . Lots of times I've heard people call and

³⁰ Ibid., p. 209.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 190–91.

³² Ibid., p. 212.

³³ Ibid., pp. 211–12.

say, “You know, the person was laying there 20 minutes, and these guys were just standing over them.” But . . . the paramedics have to do what we call protocols.³⁴

Pressed to explain the six-month delay in providing the explanation requested by the Kim family, the fire chief stated that it is not the policy of the fire department to deliberately withhold information, and that “if that happened, I can assure you it won’t happen in the future.”³⁵

Regulatory Agencies

Although the interaction between Korean American businesses and city regulatory agencies was not explored in depth, panelists discussed two cases in which they believed city agencies had taken action against a Korean American business because of racially biased pressure on them to do so. These cases offer interesting points of similarity and contrast. In the case of Canaan Food, a panelist sympathetic to the storeowner perceived the health department to have capitulated to pressure from blacks to take action against the store. In the case of Chang’s Mart, the owner and his employee perceived the liquor board, the zoning board, and elected city officials to be yielding to pressure from whites to act against the store and its black customers. No representative of any of these city agencies attended the forum, so no official response was made to these complaints.

The Case of Canaan Food

According to a citizen speaking at the forum, Robert Kaufman, after the first complaint (of outdated meat for sale) was phoned into the C. Miles Smith radio show, the health department visited the store and found no violations. Mr. Kaufman acknowledged that the store, owned by Eun Mu Lee, was selling frozen meats that were past the sell-by date, but he said this is a usual and legal practice for meat discounters.³⁶ Picketing of the store continued, and according to Mr. Kaufman:

Every day they called the health department with a complaint. By law, the health department had to immediately investigate. In each instance they investigated, they found that there is no reality to the complaint. But Mr. Lee, who speaks very broken English, and is always trying to accommodate—they will say, well, can we inspect again, and he will say yeah. By law, he doesn’t have to say that. If he had a lawyer, he would say no. And they would find something else.³⁷

According to Mr. Kaufman, the alleged violations that gained the most media attention were actually misunderstandings that reflected communication problems. Samples of deli meats taken by inspectors were tested and found inedible; Mr. Kaufman said that those samples were ends that are normally cut off and discarded before the meat is sliced for sale. Mr. Lee poured bleach over some deli meat while an inspector was in the store, and it was alleged in the media, including in a *Baltimore Sun* editorial, that Mr. Lee had done so to thwart lab tests. According to Mr. Kaufman, the inspector told Mr. Lee to disinfect a knife with bleach before cutting the meat, and Mr. Lee, with his limited English, thought the inspector was telling him to pour bleach over the meats.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 210–11.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 215.

³⁶ Kaufman statement, Forum Transcript, p. 20.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁸ “Korean-American Group to Meet on Closed Store,” *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 11, 1997.

Mr. Kaufman suggested that the health department took action in response to public pressure rather than on the merits of the case:

Now from what I understand, the health department was very much intimidated by all this, every day being called in. By what I understand in the beginning, they were sympathetic to the store, but the pressure just built up. The reason why: they were getting pressure from one side of the community, but no defense from the other side of the community.³⁹

Finally, the health department held a hearing on the alleged violations, which Mr. Kaufman attended:

It was like a kangaroo court . . . C. Miles had been agitating over the media for weeks and weeks for people to go down there to defend black people that were being poisoned by Koreans. . . . People were yelling out and screaming. Every time Mr. Lee's lawyer was asking a question or trying to speak, some guy would stand up and say lies, lies, lies, and there would be comments and derogatory remarks and the person running the hearing did nothing to stop that from happening.⁴⁰

In the end, the health department permanently revoked the license for Canaan Food, closing the store; another store owned by Mr. Lee closed as well. The Korean American community widely saw the closures as emblematic of anti-Korean bias in the city. Mr. Kaufman saw the episode as illustrating the need for Korean Americans to have their own effective organization to present their positions publicly and intervene on their behalf with city agencies:

I think what needs to be done is the Korean community needs a defense committee . . . It should have been there to advise Mr. Lee of his rights from the very beginning. It should have been there to investigate whether the accusations were true at the very beginning, and by the next day, they should have been countering if the charges were not true. They should have prevented the health department from being so intimidated, and they should have prevented the health department from acting on that intimidation. They could have gotten an injunction against the boycott because the reasons given for it had nothing to do with the reality. . . . The Korean community should be pooling its resources for that sort of thing and to support another Korean store that is unjustly being attacked by sharing the expense of it.⁴¹

The Case of Chang's Mart

Kun Soo Chang, the owner, and his employee Irma Norton described the campaign by the Mount Royal Improvement Association to induce city agencies to take action against the store. In this case, the panelists suggested that the agencies as well as elected city officials were sensitive to pressure from aggressive and politically connected white residents.⁴² The improvement association filed complaints with the liquor and zoning boards, claiming the store violated regulations that limit liquor sales to 25 percent of its capacity, but city inspectors repeatedly found the store in compliance with

³⁹ Kaufman statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 24–25.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 25–26.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 21.

⁴² In an article on the dispute, the *Baltimore Sun* noted that the committee formed by the Mount Royal Improvement Association to fight Chang's store included "several lawyers and others with high-level city contacts." "Two Cultures Clash Around Corner Store," *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 1, 1998.

the law. However, Mr. Chang was cited and fined twice in 1997 for selling liquor to buyers under the legal drinking age of 21. Ms. Norton stated that these citations were the result of a police sting operation, and she suggested undue influence by the Mount Royal Improvement Association on the Baltimore police:

We have found this sting where they have sent minors into liquor store. . . . Mr. Chang on several occasions has been the only store that this sting [targeted], and we have also found that this Mount Royal Improvement Association is very much, very much involved with the Baltimore City Police Department. . . . We discovered this at one of the hearings, and the officer who did the sting, they asked him well, how many stings have you done? He said, well it was just this one. They said, we find that odd that it was just one. They didn't elaborate on it, but they admitted it was just Mr. Chang.⁴³

Asked why he did not file a complaint about the sting, Mr. Chang explained that he thought a complaint would be ignored because city agencies have connections to white residents:

Even a complaint, it's not going to work, it's not going to help to me. The community, when they talk to—complain to city, people, like, complain white people to white people, and they send white policemen to look around my store for a while, and just drive me crazy.⁴⁴

In addition, Ms. Norton suggested that Mr. Chang has been unsuccessful in garnering support from his elected representatives because they side with the more powerful members of the community:

He's called in support of his congressman, his councilman, and because of some of the prestigious people that are in this association, he does not get the support that he deserves. They shake his hand, and they come and they give him some campaign about we are going to support you, Mr. Chang, and we are going to help you, Mr. Chang, but when we go to the hearings, they are all on this association's side.⁴⁵

Financial Assistance to Businesses and Community Organizations

The question of city financial assistance to businesses and community organizations was not explored systematically, but several speakers suggested that the Korean American business community receives less assistance from the city than it deserves, and indeed is subject to pressures that have driven some out of business. At the same time, as previously noted, several panelists reported a widespread belief in the black community that Korean Americans receive more business assistance from the city than African Americans do.

Pyong Kuk Pak, president of the Korean Society of Maryland, said that Korean stores have contributed since the late 1970s to the renovation and revitalization of inner-city Baltimore, but that the city has done little to help them now that economic conditions have become more difficult for small businesses. The economic situation of Korean American businesses has taken a “drastic downturn,” ac-

⁴³ Norton statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 69–70, 73.

⁴⁴ Chang statement, Forum Transcript, p. 76.

⁴⁵ Norton statement, Forum Transcript, p. 64.

ording to Mr. Pak, who predicted that up to 500 businesses may have to close in the next three or four years, adding to the deterioration of the neighborhoods around the stores.⁴⁶ Mr. Pak commented:

I hope it goes without saying that there was huge need for the city government to recognize this dire situation and then render some assistance. If half of the Korean American-owned small businesses close down, then it is obvious there will be a huge economic loss in terms of tax revenue business for the city government and this is going to be just unavoidable fact of life. And we hope that city government would recognize this and somewhat help us so that we can sustain business in the downtown area of the city.⁴⁷

Soshik Seo, president of the Korean American Businessmen's League, has owned a small business in Lafayette Market since 1988. He raised the issue of Korean American merchants being forced out of Lafayette and Belair markets as an example of the economic hardship that many of the merchants have endured. He contended that in spite of their hard work and investment, small-business owners are unfairly pressured, either by the city (as in the case of the two markets) or by residents (as in the case of Mr. Chang's store):

I think it's a prime case of social injustice when . . . owners of a small business invest their hard-earned capital and make a goal out of that, then at certain time, pressures from the city government or neighborhoods [force them] out of existence.⁴⁸

Both Mr. Pak and Mr. Seo said that city assistance to help Korean American businesses survive would also benefit the surrounding neighborhoods. Mr. Pak stated that "we have been doing our utmost to . . . give help to the neighboring black communities," but he also suggested that if the city enables the small stores to prosper, "we are prepared to do far more than what we have been doing and rebuilding and contributing to the neighboring black communities."⁴⁹ Mr. Seo expressed a desire to see the stores create more employment for neighborhood youth and said he hoped they eventually would be bought and run by African American residents (given the fact that younger Korean Americans have shown little interest in taking over their parents' stores).⁵⁰

While Korean Americans at the forum expressed regret that the city was not doing more to help them, and was in some cases bringing pressure to force them out of business, Mr. Gillard of the Community Relations Commission pointed out that many black residents believe Korean American merchants receive more assistance from the city than other would-be entrepreneurs:

I believe factual information on the lingering questions relating to alleged startup assistance provided by government to Korean American immigrants needs to be shared so that that issue can be put to rest. I believe the issue of whether Korean American storeowners have an easier time obtaining insurance, loans, and credit lines versus that of African Americans needs to be addressed, and the issue of why the African

⁴⁶ L. Kim Hale, president, Korean Society of Maryland, succeeded Pyong Kuk Pak and revised Pak's prediction of 500 closings, to an estimated 250 closings. In an independent effort, Hale conducted interviews with Pak and several other leaders finally writing to the Committee on July 29, 2002, that its report is "fair and accurate." Hales' letter appears as appendix 8.

⁴⁷ Pak statement, Forum Transcript, p. 95.

⁴⁸ Seo statement, Forum Transcript, p. 100.

⁴⁹ Pak statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 95-96.

⁵⁰ Seo statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 98-99.

American community is not yet moving beyond where it has been in terms of overall economic development needs to be addressed.⁵¹

An additional issue touched on briefly was whether the city government provides as much assistance to Korean American community organizations as it does to other ethnic organizations. Several speakers commented on the weak role of Korean American organizations in responding to perceived injustices against Korean merchants, while panelists representing the groups said that they could do more if they had more resources. Kap Park, vice president of the Korean American Grocers Association of Maryland, said that the association provides some assistance such as translation and liaison with city offices, but could offer more services if it had the resources:

Since we have so many Korean American merchants in Baltimore City and it's a large population, we deserve some better service from Baltimore City. I heard in Virginia they have fund coming to the Korean Society . . . provided by state or local government for the job training, there is a language class. They have a grant. But if we have some sort of grant to the Korean Society, we can provide same kind of service they do over in Virginia.⁵²

Keith Kim, a retired chemist who advises the Korean Society of Maryland, alleged that Korean American organizations receive less support than others:

All the other communities such as blacks, whites, and Jewish, they have support from the city government in terms of community organizations. They set up building. They have a full-time director paid by city government to operate the facility, but the Korean community doesn't get anything. There is no investment that protects the Korean community to make sure that the true stories are heard. That's my feeling as a person, a Korean American.⁵³

⁵¹ Gillard statement, Forum Transcript, p. 188.

⁵² Kap Park statement, Forum Transcript, p. 87.

⁵³ Kim statement, Forum Transcript, p. 149. Mr. Kim attended the forum and spoke in his individual capacity.

Chapter 6

Korean Americans and the Justice System: The Lee Case

During the 1990s, public debate on whether Korean Americans in Baltimore receive equal treatment from the justice system focused almost entirely on the highly publicized Joel Lee murder case. This was also true of discussions at the forum. Two aspects of this case were addressed: the jury acquittal of Davon Neverdon in Baltimore City Circuit Court in July 1995, and the decision in January 1997 by Department of Justice officials not to prosecute the crime under federal civil rights laws. Kenneth Lee, Joel Lee's father, addressed these two aspects together, seeing an overall failure of the system to punish wrongdoing and an African American bias against Korean Americans. The two Department of Justice officials who spoke drew a clear distinction between the two decisions. They explained the basis for the federal decision in detail, but because they have no authority to investigate or prosecute state law violations, declined to speculate about the reasons for the jury trial outcome.

The Acquittal in State Court

As described in chapter 3 of this report, Joel Lee was killed during a robbery in Northeast Baltimore. Police arrested and charged Davon Neverdon with his murder. Mr. Neverdon was tried in a Baltimore court and the jury found Mr. Neverdon not guilty on all counts. The 12-member jury had 11 African Americans, leading a number of Korean Americans to allege publicly that there was jury nullification, that is, the jurors failed to convict the defendant because of their anti-Korean bias. Kenneth Lee echoed this view at the forum, noting that despite "five witnesses within five feet . . . a jury composed of 11 blacks and one Pakistani" acquitted the defendant.¹

Jurors who spoke to the press after the trial denied that the verdict was influenced by race, citing their doubts about the veracity and credibility of the prosecution witnesses. During a radio talk show that featured a juror from the Neverdon trial, callers were angry that the judgment of the jurors was being questioned and fumed about allegations of racism being leveled at the jurors. Lynne Battaglia, the U.S. attorney for the District of Maryland, was asked at the forum whether the acquittal in the Lee case could be considered an example of jury nullification. She replied:

It's very difficult for us to determine what the jury did in this case because we didn't have an opportunity to speak to the jury. . . . I do not know whether any state prosecutor, if he or she were here, could tell you what the basis of the jury decision was, so I can't speculate with you whether jury nullification was the basis. I think people have speculated on that, but no one knows the reason.²

¹ Kenneth Lee, statement before the Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, community forum, Baltimore, MD, July 23, 1998, transcript, pp. 146–47 (hereafter cited as Forum Transcript).

² Battaglia statement, Forum Transcript, p. 294.

The Federal Decision

State prosecutors had already determined that they lacked sufficient evidence to prosecute the Lee killing under Maryland's hate crime law. To secure justice in his son's killing, Kenneth Lee asked the U.S. Department of Justice to determine if the case could be prosecuted under the federal hate crime statute.³

Three agencies were involved in deciding whether to go forward with such a prosecution: the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland, represented at the forum by Lynne Battaglia, U.S. attorney for the District of Maryland; the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, represented by Thomas Perez, deputy assistant attorney general of the United States for civil rights; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. Perez stated that Attorney General Janet Reno had put "the highest priority on civil rights" and further noted that Maryland has been "one of the most aggressive states" in the investigation and prosecution of all civil rights violations.⁴ Mr. Perez and Ms. Battaglia explained, however, that federal authority to pursue such prosecutions is sharply limited by law. The principal federal hate crime statute uses a two-tiered standard of proof: the government must prove, first, that the crime was motivated by bias against the victim's race, color, national origin, or religion, and second, that the crime was intended to interfere with the victim's right to engage in a federally protected activity.⁵ Those activities as specified in the statute are very limited, and include the rights to pursue employment, to travel in interstate commerce, and to pursue education.⁶ Because of this high burden of proof, federal officials investigate each case brought to them to determine whether credible evidence exists to support a successful prosecution, and not all cases are prosecuted.⁷

The federal investigation of the Lee case, therefore, looked at the sufficiency of evidence in relation to two questions: whether Joel Lee was killed because he was Korean American, and whether he was killed to prevent him from exercising a federally protected right. The FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland interviewed Joel Lee's father and various witnesses, and a grand jury was convened to look into the case. Ms. Battaglia stressed that the investigation, which took over a year, was taken "very seriously" and was led in her office by the supervisor of the Priority Crimes group.⁸

³ 18 U.S.C. § 245 (2004). In the U.S. legal system an acquittal generally stops any further action at the state level, as the state has no right of appeal.

⁴ Perez statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 252–53.

⁵ 18 U.S.C. § 245 (2004).

⁶ Specifically, the hate crime statute makes it:

unlawful to willfully injure, intimidate or interfere with any person, or to attempt to do so, by force or threat of force, because of that other person's race, color, religion or national origin and because of his/her activity as one of the following: A student at or applicant for admission to a public school or public college; A participant in a benefit, service, privilege, program, facility or activity provided or administered by a state or local government; An applicant for private or state employment; a private or state employee; a member or applicant for membership in a labor organization or hiring hall; or an applicant for employment through an employment agency, labor organization or hiring hall; A juror or prospective juror in state court; A traveler or user of a facility of interstate commerce or common carrier; A patron of a public accommodation or place of exhibition or entertainment, including hotels, motels, restaurants, lunchrooms, bars, gas stations, theaters, concert halls, sports arenas or stadiums.

⁷ Battaglia statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 265–66.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

In the end, the three agencies made a joint decision that they lacked enough credible evidence to support a prosecution under the federal hate crime statute, and in the fall of 1996 they met with the Lee family and other members of the Korean American community to explain the decision. According to Ms. Battaglia, evidence was lacking to meet both elements of the dual burden of proof.⁹ While noting that the decision was unanimous, Mr. Perez expressed regret at the outcome:

This case, it goes without saying, is a tragedy, and it is especially frustrating for a prosecutor . . . I've never expected Mr. Lee's family to agree or comprehend, because their son is dead, and as a parent, I know that that's the only thing I will ever be thinking about. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do to change that. Our role, however, as prosecutors is to conduct a thorough analysis of the facts and apply the facts to the law, and in this case, it was our judgment and it was our unanimous judgment. There was not one person involved in this case that expressed any disagreement with that judgment that we did not have the evidence to meet the high burden [of proof] that we carry in this case.¹⁰

Mr. Perez added that there was nothing further that federal officials could do to help the Lee family "because we have to deal with the statutory tools that are given us."¹¹

In an impassioned response, Mr. Lee criticized the legalistic arguments offered for closing the case and letting the crime go unpunished:

Problem is, someone did wrong, someone did wrong at the beginning. Right now it's based on law, nobody responsible. What the heck is this society? Something wrong. State say according to the law this is that way. . . . If I kill person, it's okay because according to law. We have to find who's wrong and why is it wrong. Even [if] I cannot change it, let me know who did wrong. That's what I wanted to know because I want to close my son's case.¹²

Implications of the Lee Case

Most of the forum participants focused on the specifics of the Lee case; only a few addressed the broader question of whether Korean Americans consistently receive equal treatment in the justice system. No evidence was presented at the forum to show any pattern of disparate treatment of Korean Americans in the city courts or at any level of the justice system. Nonetheless, several remarks gave a glimpse of contrasting perceptions on this issue.

Kenneth Lee, in his comments on the acquittal by the mostly African American jury in the Neverdon trial, alleged that juries in Baltimore are deliberately set up to exclude nonblack jurors:

⁹ Ibid., p. 277.

¹⁰ Perez statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 263–64.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 268. In this context, Mr. Perez also mentioned that new legislation pending in Congress would broaden the basis for prosecution of hate crimes. The bill would amend the federal hate crime statute by adding three new protected categories (sexual orientation, gender, and disability), and eliminating the second part of the burden of proof (dealing with the exercise of federally protected rights) in cases involving racial or religious violence. Mr. Perez said that his office was actively supporting the legislation, but even if the bill were to pass, it would be too late to help the Lee family.

¹² Lee statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 299–300.

Whenever you go to the city, if you're not black, if you're white, like a juror, you're out. This is Baltimore City's trial. I don't know. People say it is fair. . . . The problem right now is the jury system.¹³

Expressing frustration, anger, and anguish, Mr. Lee suggested that the unpunished murder of his son is emblematic of a failed justice system in which justice is denied to less powerful members of society:

My son was slain with innocent way, [and] people right now die in innocent way, but there is no justice. . . . We think America has fair justice. We don't have any fair justice here. Who controls the society, they belongs to their justice.¹⁴

On the other hand, two panelists strongly disputed the implication that Baltimore juries regularly allow racial bias to affect their verdicts. Mr. Gillard of the Community Relations Commission asked,

Are black juries allowing black criminals to commit crimes against Korean American merchants and allowing them to go unpunished simply because the merchant is Korean? The answer is no, period.¹⁵

Rev. Douglas Miles of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, while acknowledging that there is "some bias" against Korean Americans in the black community, asserted that most cases involving Korean victims and black jurors and suspects result in convictions:

If you ask me [whether] African Americans, for the most part, can be fair in dispensing justice in cases involving people of other racial and ethnic groups, my answer is yes. History has shown that African Americans tend to be as anti-crime and anti-criminal or more so than people of other ethnic groups. . . . The number of cases involving Korean business people and African American suspects and jurors that result in conviction of African American suspects, vastly outweigh those instances when one would feel that justice was not served.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., pp. 146–47.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 146–48.

¹⁵ Gillard statement, Forum Transcript, p. 185.

¹⁶ Miles statement, Forum Transcript, pp. 107–08.

Chapter 7

Observations

Drawing on the testimony of participants in the July 1998 forum and the update, a brief summary of key observations of the Maryland Advisory Committee is presented below.

Provision of Law Enforcement Services to Korean American Merchants

The most specific complaints presented had to do with the quality of service provided to Korean American merchants when they call the police to their premises. The concerns raised were of two general types. First, there appears to be broad agreement that the language gap frequently affects interactions between Korean-speaking merchants, English-speaking officers, and English-speaking suspects, making it difficult for the merchants to present their version of the incident and have it taken seriously by the officer. The Baltimore Police Department has acknowledged the problem and taken steps to facilitate communication when officers respond to calls from Korean American businesses, and the police department representative believes the situation has improved significantly. After the forum, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13166 in August 2000, which requires that recipients of federal funding, such as state and local police, take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to government services and programs by limited-English-proficient (LEP) individuals. In its guidance aimed at assisting agencies to ensure they comply with the requirements, the Department of Justice specifically addresses functions such as law enforcement and requires that when language interpretation is necessary and reasonable, it should be provided in a timely manner. While there is no definition for timeliness, the guidance is clear that “language assistance must be provided at a time and place that avoids the effective denial of the service, benefit, or right at issue.” Otherwise, meaningful access is denied. The failure to provide language assistance may constitute discrimination in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and its implementing regulations against national origin discrimination. It seems, however, that some Korean Americans still perceive continuing problems in providing language assistance. Thus, the police department should continue strengthening its efforts to ensure that officers have the resources they need to respond timely, appropriately, and fairly to calls from persons who speak limited English.

Second, there are troubling allegations that racial bias on the part of some officers may have affected police handling of certain cases involving Korean American merchants. While the perception of bias appears to be widely shared among the merchants contacted, and was confirmed by Alvin O. Gillard, director of the Baltimore Community Relations Commission, only one such case was presented in detail at the forum; thus it is difficult to know whether the perception of biased behavior is well founded or how frequent such behavior may be. Nonetheless, it appears likely that the persistent tensions between the Korean American and African American communities in Baltimore do to some extent spill over into the law enforcement arena. The police representative noted that the department has provided cultural diversity training to all its personnel; enhanced its outreach for crime prevention to include special emphasis on Korean American storeowners; and tracked significant reductions

in the number of crimes involving Korean American storeowners; these efforts should be continued and strengthened. Nevertheless, it is important for the city to take broader measures to increase dialogue and improve relations between Korean Americans and other communities in Baltimore City (see below).

Provision of Fire/Ambulance Services to Korean American Merchants

No evidence was presented to show that Korean American storeowners consistently receive a lower level of fire or ambulance services than other groups in the inner city. While the fire chief noted that there have been some miscommunications in telephone calls from Korean speakers, particularly when providing medical treatment, the Baltimore Fire Department has taken steps to improve its capacity to handle requests for service that come into the department from Korean citizens. Continued monitoring is needed to ensure that these measures are effective. The department should develop written internal policies as well as provide outreach to the community to promote an understanding of department policies for treating injury victims and handling other emergency situations for its Korean American citizens.

Korean Americans and the Justice System

The Joel Lee case unquestionably had a chilling effect in the Korean American community, and many members of this community continue to believe that the acquittal was a miscarriage of justice. However, no facts were presented at the forum that would shed any additional light on whether jury nullification actually occurred in this case, nor was any evidence presented to show a pattern of disparate or biased treatment of Korean Americans in the Baltimore courts.

While the decision not to prosecute the case as a hate crime deeply disappointed the Lee family and others, the Department of Justice officials at the forum emphasized the seriousness with which the case was investigated. They explained the process leading to their finding that insufficient evidence existed to support a prosecution under the federal hate crime statute, an outcome that reflected the high burden of proof required by federal law. No evidence was presented to suggest that cases involving Korean Americans are handled differently from other potential hate crime cases investigated at the federal level.

Relations with City Regulatory Agencies

As merchants doing business in the city, Korean Americans in Baltimore have much at stake in their relations with city regulatory agencies, such as the health department, the liquor board, the zoning board, and others. In two cases discussed at the forum—the closing of Canaan Food and the attempts to close Chang’s Mart—panelists perceived that city agencies were vulnerable to pressure from more organized, vocal, and politically connected segments of the public, both black and white, to act against the interests of Korean American businesses. Although there was no opportunity to hear from representatives of the agencies mentioned, the variance in opposing perspectives as demonstrated by the Baltimore City Health Department’s vigorously defending the Canaan Food Outlet closing and that of Korean Americans raises concerns that the health department needs to better educate the public and ensure public confidence that regulatory agencies deal evenhandedly with all sectors of the population.

Relations Between Korean American Merchants and Community Members

Relations between Korean American merchants and the largely African American communities they serve are complex. While some merchants enjoy friendly relations with the neighborhoods where their stores are located, tensions and suspicions between the two groups persist and form the prism through which questions regarding equal access to city services are viewed. An easing of these tensions and the promotion of more positive relations would benefit not only the merchants but also all residents of Baltimore City.

A number of positive efforts have been made to promote dialogue and understanding between Korean Americans and African Americans in Baltimore. These include, among others, the successful summer camp run by the Druid Heights Community Development Corporation, various cultural exchange initiatives undertaken by churches, and city-run seminars for discussion of intergroup relations and issues. Although their impact has been uneven, these efforts have undoubtedly been helpful on balance, and they should be continued and supported. In this regard, city agencies, community organizations, religious groups, and educational institutions should play leading roles in developing new ways to bring people together and promote dialogue and cooperative endeavors.¹

Recently, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods added a new position among its liaison officers to focus on the Korean American community. The function of the liaison includes conducting outreach to the Korean business community, working to strengthen the relationship of Korean-owned businesses and the neighborhood where the businesses are located, working with Korean organizations and leadership, and working to increase the number of Koreans that choose to live in Baltimore City. This initiative, which began in early 2002, had a somewhat rocky start—its first incumbent departed after six months and it now has its third liaison after only two years. Moreover, a review of the accomplishments listed by the Office of Neighborhoods on its Web site reveals that although considerable outreach and liaison efforts are made for the Hispanic community, relatively little, if any, are made for the Korean community. The mayor needs to monitor the office to ensure that it fulfills the goals and vital work of Korean American community relations.

City Agencies Can Do More

City government agencies have an obligation to provide services and exercise their regulatory authority without bias. While the Maryland Advisory Committee found no consistent pattern of unfair treatment of Korean Americans with regard to these functions of city government, there are several ways in which the city can and should do more to ensure that Korean American merchants have equal access to city services and are treated fairly by city agencies.

First, the language barrier is key. Strategies to overcome its effects may include, among others, providing access to Korean-language interpreters for service calls, printing and distributing information about services in Korean, and recruiting more Korean-speaking personnel for key city agencies that deal with the public. Agency representatives noted that the city has already taken some of these initiatives; these efforts should be expanded and strengthened. These initiatives not only serve the interest of improving the provision of services for the city's Korean American citizens, but are also consistent with recently enacted federal and state law. In addition to President Clinton's executive order

¹ A new project started since the forum is the African-American/Korean Initiative, launched in February 2000 by Coppin State College, a historically black college in Baltimore. To foster a closer relationship between African Americans and Korean Americans in the Baltimore metropolitan area, the college is offering classes on the language, history, and culture of both groups, and the Coppin State College choir traveled to Korea in 1999 and 2000 to perform gospel music.

requiring access to government programs and services for individuals with limited-English proficiency, Maryland has recognized the need to ensure that there are no barriers to benefits or services for LEP citizens. In 2002, Maryland passed Senate bill 265, a law that requires state departments, agencies, and programs provide equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency. Included in the law is the requirement that agencies provide oral language assistance to any consumer that does not speak English. The law also requires all vital documents be translated into any language spoken by any LEP population that constitutes 3 percent of the overall population served by that agency. In light of the clear recognition—on both the federal and state level—that government services must be accessible to LEP individuals, city agencies should monitor their operations and determine what reasonable steps they need to take to achieve equal access to public services for their Korean American citizens.

Second, cultural diversity and sensitivity training is needed to build the capacity of city personnel to relate effectively to the various ethnic communities they serve. The police department has undertaken this training in the past, and it should be continued and expanded to include relevant personnel in other agencies.

Third, city agencies, both service providing and regulatory, need to reach out to the Korean American and African American communities—indeed to all city residents—to explain their functioning, their decision-making processes, and the decisions they make. Greater openness both in sharing information and in providing opportunities for citizen participation where appropriate can go a long way toward countering perceptions of bias and unequal treatment.

Finally, a reality of urban life is that citizen groups with a higher level of organization and greater communicative capacity are more successful in making their voices heard, directing attention to their problems, and defending their interests against challenges. In practical terms, city agencies will become more responsive as the Korean American community continues to build its organizational structures and increase its participation in the city's social and political life. The city should make sure that resources available to community organizations are adequately publicized, including through the dissemination of information in languages other than English, so that a broad range of groups in the city can take advantage of opportunities to secure resources for capacity building, communication, and community service projects.

Appendix 1

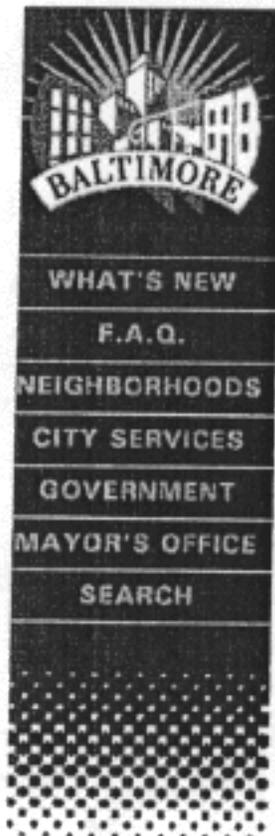
List of Forum Participants

- Lynne A. Battaglia, U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland
- Kun Chang, owner, Chang's Mart
- Jeanna Cho, daughter of merchant Chang Joon Cho
- Jackie Cornish, executive director, Druid Heights Community Development Corporation
- Rev. Sidney Daniels, past president, Baltimore Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance
- Alvin O. Gillard, director, Baltimore Community Relations Commission
- Robert Kaufman
- Keith Kim
- Kenneth Lee, father of Joel Lee
- Roxanne Maqsood
- Robert Marsili
- Rev. Douglas Miles, president, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance
- Irma Norton, employee, Chang's Mart
- Pyong Kuk Pak, president, Korean Society of Maryland
- Julie Park
- Kap Yung Park, vice president, Korean American Grocers Association of Maryland
- Thomas E. Perez, Deputy Assistant Attorney General of the United States for Civil Rights
- Tony Pressley, staff member, Druid Heights Community Development Corporation
- Soshik Seo, president, Korean Business League
- Col. Robert Smith, Baltimore Police Department
- Herman Williams, chief, Baltimore Fire Department

Appendix 2

Profile, Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods - City of Baltimore, ... <http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/moon/index.html>



Neighborhoods

628 City Hall • 100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
(410) 396-4735 • Fax: 410-396-1632

Izzy Patoka
Director



The Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods was established based on a recommendation of the Neighborhood Planning Program Steering Committee, and the Neighborhood Revitalization Transition Team. These committees consisted of a diverse group of community leaders, foundation directors, community development corporation representatives and others that have a passionate interest in improving Baltimore City neighborhoods.



Mission

The mission of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods is to ensure that city government is an effective partner with communities in improving the quality of life in neighborhoods through government and community partnerships. The Office of Neighborhoods will ensure that interdepartmental responses to neighborhood needs and initiatives are timely and well coordinated.

Implementation of the Accepted Recommendations in the Greater Baltimore Committee/Presidents' Roundtable Report

The Neighborhood Revitalization Transition Committee recommended that the Mayor appoint a task force to consider creating a Department of Neighborhoods to replace the ineffective Neighborhood Service Center Model and work with residents in other ways in January 2000. The Greater Baltimore Committee/Presidents' Roundtable report, Managing For Success, suggested changes in how the City supports neighborhoods that are consistent with the Transition Committee report. The formation of a Neighborhood Planning Program Steering Committee (NPPSC) resulted from recommendations of these reports. The NPPSC recommended that the City create an Office of Neighborhoods, which reports directly to the Mayor's Office, to administer some programs and provide neighborhood associations, community organizations and

[Related Press Releases](#)

[Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans \(SNAP\)](#)

[Operation Crime Watch](#)

[Projects](#)
[East Baltimore Development, Inc.](#)
[Baltimore Believe Neighborhood Cabinet](#)
[Open Dialogue with Mayor O'Malley](#)
[School Location and](#)

[Analysis Selection](#)
[KaBoom!](#)
[Maryland You Are Beautiful](#)
[Eye on Baltimore](#)
[Citywide Fall and Spring Clean Ups](#)

Ongoing

[Community Outreach](#)
[Responding to Citizen Complaints](#)
[Neighborhood Liaison Assignments](#)
[Outreach to Ethnic Community](#)

Office of Neighborhoods Staff

Volunteer Central
is a one-stop shop for anyone interested in volunteerism.

[Maryland Cooperative Extension](#)



[Baltimore Community Foundation Capital Match Grants](#)

institutions with a liaison to City government and all of its agencies. Further, the recommendation called for a director, an assistant director and 9 neighborhood liaisons, and several support staff.

ONGOING

Community Outreach

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood's work program includes an aggressive community outreach component which consists of both attending and participating in community meetings and tours of communities, with spirited follow-up to issues. During fiscal year 2002 the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods participated in 843 community meetings and tours.

While actively participating in community meetings throughout the City of Baltimore, the neighborhood liaisons act as representatives of the Mayor and works for and with the community representatives to make sure that the city



is responsive to their needs. Because of the liaisons interaction with the communities and city agencies, many community concerns have been prioritized and handled in a more timely fashion. Many initiatives of the city have also been communicated to the communities through the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. The liaisons help communities become familiar with the city and its processes so that community associations and members are able to work with the city better in handling concerns.

Responding to Citizen Concerns

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods takes citizen concerns with a sense of urgency. These come in through phone calls, emails, mail, walk-ins and City Council requests. Staff attempts to resolve these issues aggressively, providing the party bringing the complaint with the absolute minimal level of "run around". During fiscal year 2002 the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods responded to 4,769 community concerns identified at neighborhood meetings and tours.

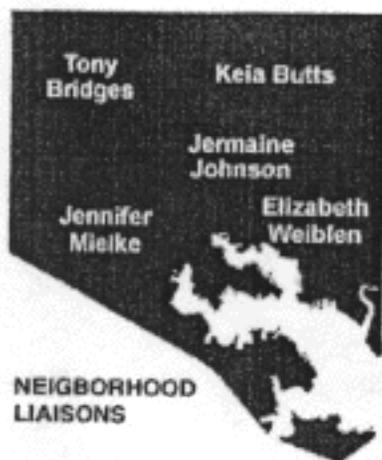
Neighborhood Liaison Assignments

Neighborhood Liaisons are assigned to geographic sectors. The liaisons have established strong relationships with community leaders. This

allows community sentiment to be a strengthened and integral part of consideration when policies are made at the highest levels of city government. In addition to the Neighborhood Liaisons, other staff of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods have an equally important function. Neighborhood Liaison assignments and the functional assignment of other Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods' staff are shown above.



NEIGHBORHOOD LIAISONS



OTHER STAFF

Tony White, Communications Director
Lorena Beltran, Hispanic Liaison's Staff Assistant
Richard Burton, Citywide Community Coordinator
Lindsay Major, GIS support
Sharon McCoughtry, Staff Assistant
Karen Monath, Staff Assistant
Jose Ruiz, Liaison to the Hispanic Community
Kevin Cleary, Operation Crime Watch (OCW) Coordinator
Min Sung Kim, OCW Assistant Coordinator
Eunha Kwon, Korean Liaison

Outreach to Ethnic Community

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods, as part of its work program and as a directive from Mayor O'Malley, has reached out to the ethnic communities of Baltimore City. This is being done to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of these communities and how city services can best address needs that are identified. Recent meetings have been held with the Islamic community, the Jewish community and the Sikh community. The Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods is working with the Community Relations Commission in this effort.





Mayor O'Malley has also appointed a liaison to the hispanic community and to the Korean Community.

Neighborhoods In the News

March 5, 2004 Residents, officials discuss neighborhoods office

March 15, 2004 Hispanic entrepreneurship highlighted

Related Press Releases

April 11 The Broadway Street Fair and Resource EXPO May 15, 2004

March 10 Muslim organizations honor Mayor O'Malley

2003 Press Releases

December 11 Mayor Martin O'Malley's Hispanic Liaison Office and Minority and Women's Business Opportunity Office hosts the "Third Hispanic Business Owners Forum"

September 11 City's TV21 Launches New Neighborhoods Show "Neighborhoods First" highlights neighborhood based organizations

August 19 Mayor O'Malley announces new crime watch strategy

April 4 Super Spring Sweep Thing 4 Attracts Volunteers in Record Numbers

April 1 O'Malley's Hispanic Liaison Named 2003 SBA MD Minority Business Advocate

March 31 Mayor's Hispanic Liasison Office to Sponsor Business Workshop How to Start a Home-Based Business

March 8 Mayor O'Malley Kicks-Off BELIEVE Trashcan Initiative

2002 Press Releases

- November 21** [Director of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods named as Fellow in the Academy for Excellence in Local Governance](#)
- June 12** [Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley and Police Commissioner Edward T. Norris Unveil Baltimore's Latest Crime-Fighting Tool](#)
- March 19** [An Improved Waverly, With The Flip Of A Switch](#)
- November 30** [Mayor O'Malley announces Arts and Entertainment District](#)
- October 25** [Baltimore Office of Promotion and Comcast Continue Grants Program to City Neighborhood Events](#)
- August 14** [Mayor O'Malley Announces Plans: Library Buildings Remain Open to Community](#)
- June 6** [Mayor O'Malley Applauds Community Effort to Strengthen Neighborhood](#)
- May 29** [Mayor O'Malley Unveils Blue Print for Playgrounds](#)
- February 13** [Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods Taps New Director](#)
- November 30** [Mayor O'Malley Introduces New Strategy, Helps Neighborhoods Help Themselves](#)
- October 31** [Mayor O'Malley Brings Christmas Early to Six Baltimore Neighborhoods](#)
- August 10** [Mayor Martin O'Malley to Announce New Initiative to Assist At-Risk Communities](#)

[Municipal Organization Chart](#)
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[Webmaster](#)

Revised: May 05, 2004

Liaison to the Korean Community

The function of the Liaison to the Korean Community is part of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. Recognizing the importance of the Korean community, Mayor O'Malley has upgraded the position from part-time contractual to a full time member of the Mayor's staff. This is the first time in Baltimore's history that the position has gained full-time status.

The immediate components of the work program for the Liaison to the Korean Community will include:

- Outreach to Korean business community
- Creation of a database of Korean business owners
- Working to strengthen the relationship of Korean-owned business and the neighborhood where the businesses are located.
- Translation of the Neighborhood News Flash and Taking Care of Business into Korean and distribution to the Korean community
- Working with organizations and leadership such as such as KAGRO (Korean-American Grocers Association of Maryland) <http://www.kagromd.com/> , and the Korean-American Society.
- Working to increase the number of Koreans that choose to live in Baltimore City.
- Working the City's Commercial Revitalization Division and the Baltimore Main Streets Program

Municipal Organization Chart

Text Version

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Webmaster

Revised: May 05, 2004

Appendix 3

Letters, From Mayor Martin O'Malley and M. J. "Jay" Brodie, President, Baltimore Development Corporation, Re: Redevelopment and Korean American Merchants



MARTIN O'MALLEY
Mayor
250 City Hall
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

June 24, 2002

Mr. Edward Darden
Civil Rights Analyst
US Commission on Civil Rights
624 Ninth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20425

Dear Mr. Darden:

This is to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated June 19, 2002, along with additional correspondence regarding your request for current information on redevelopment effects on the Korean-Americans in Baltimore.

A copy of your correspondence is being forwarded to M. J. Brodie, President of the Baltimore Development Corporation.

Thank you for taking the time to write and bringing your request to my attention.

Sincerely,

Mayor
MO'M/cm
#02-6397



July 16, 2002

Mr. Ki-Taek Chun
Director, Eastern Regional Office
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
624 Ninth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20425

Mr. Edward Darden
Civil Rights Analyst
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
624 Ninth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20425

RE: The U.S. Commission on Human Rights needs current
information on redevelopment effects on Korean Americans

Dear Messrs. Chun and Darden:

Thank you for your letter of June 19, 2002 to Mayor Martin O'Malley, attaching a section of the forthcoming report. We are pleased to send you our information and comments.

The correspondence outlines alleged unfair treatment of Korean merchants. The period for which these events occurred is from 1993 through 1998. The document focuses on two specific events:

1. Redevelopment of Lafayette and Belair markets and the impact on Korean merchants.
2. Support system provided for displaced merchants (relocation assistance, equal access to City services and other aid).

Based on the aforementioned City, State and Federal counterparts worked with the Maryland Advisory Committee to provide the Korean American Community an opportunity to voice their concerns as well as residents to share their perspectives.

Information/Comments from City of Baltimore:

The O'Malley administration has sought to enhance Baltimore City's service delivery system through accountability and performance based management. These efforts are to insure quality assistance and support mechanisms of City services for all. The initiatives include assistance to both residential and the business communities.

In addition to better City services, the Mayor has focused on providing all minorities the opportunity to secure Baltimore City contracts. Aggressive legislation, through an Executive Order, charges each City agency to increase participation goals for City contracts from 20% minority and 3% women to 30/ percents respectively. The Mayor's Office of Minority Business Development, headed by Mr. Owen Tonkins, was created to manage this objective. As well, the Mayor utilizes a managerial control/review process known as "Citi Stat" to monitor agency compliance and accountability.

While focusing on opportunity for all, the Mayor has established the Office of Korean Affairs. Its directives are to work with the leadership within the Korean communities (residential and business) to



assist, provide, and facilitate City services as well as issues specific to the needs of the Korean community. Mr. Joshua Lee has recently been appointed to be the Mayor's liaison to the Korean Community (see attached).

The growth and success of small businesses is essential to the health of neighborhoods and of the entire City. Understanding this importance, the Mayor strengthened the City's support arm for small business. Under the direction and the leadership of the Baltimore Development Corporation, the office of Small Business and Neighborhood Development has been created. Their mission is to:

Reposition business districts to better serve the customer base. Goals include strengthening the capacity of business associations to promote business district interest; reduce vacancies by filling them with businesses that market gaps; coordinating the delivery of City services to targeted districts; to expedite the permit approval process and connect those who have commercial property for sale or lease with interested parties.

The Director of this organization held a meeting with senior leadership within the KAGRO Foundation of Maryland, Inc. The focus of the meeting was to outline available services and discuss community relations with Jin Wook Kang (Senior Vice President), David H. Kim (Vice President), Kwang Hee Choi (President), and Sam Daniels (Inspector, Baltimore City Liquor Board). In addition, many of the Korean merchants participate in merchant associations and "Retail Business Districts" that have a direct voice with City leadership and the Small Business Neighborhood Development TEAM.

The Avenue Market, formally known as the Lafayette Market is under new management. The Baltimore City Public Markets has direct managerial oversight that includes, but is not limited to:

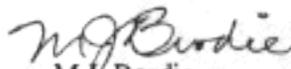
- Administrative support,
- Fiscal management,
- Support merchant needs,
- Reduce vacancy rates, and
- Enhance the shopping experience within their markets.

Currently, it is estimated that 65% of the merchants within the market are Asian-American and 35% are African-American; the market is 65% leased with availability for interested entrepreneurs or existing businesses.

The Belair Market has been closed with anticipation of potential redevelopment of that entire area.

The O'Malley administration continues to take steps to ensure inclusion and opportunity for all. Recognizing that more can be done to support the efforts of Korean and other minority businesses, we are open to your thoughts.

Sincerely,


M.J. Brodie
President

MJB:clf

Liaison to the Korean Community

Joshua Lee is Mayor Martin O'Malley's Liaison to the Korean Community. The function of the Liaison to the Korean Community is part of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. Mayor O'Malley has upgraded the position from a part-time contractual to a full time member of the Mayor's staff.

Mr. Lee was born and raised in Seoul, Korea. He has lived in the United States since 1982 and became a citizen in 1992. Mr. Lee is fluent in both English and Korean. He also has a working knowledge of Chinese and Spanish.

Before coming to work as part of the O'Malley Administration, Mr. Lee was the Director of the Minority People Organization, an outreach group to East Asia. He was also the President of the Little-Light Mission Institute. Mr. Lee has worked as a pastor at the Cornerstone Community Church and has been a volunteer to church activities for many years.

Mr. Lee earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Washington Bible College and also received a Masters of Divinity Degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has a strong computer aptitude, a proficiency that was achieved by taking computer classes at Prince George Community College.

The immediate components of the work program for the Liaison to the Korean Community will include:

- Outreach to Korean business community
- Creation of a database of Korean business owners
- Working to strengthen the relationship of Korean-owned business and the neighborhood where the businesses are located.
- Translation of the *Neighborhood News Flash* and *Taking Care of Business* into Korean and distribution to the Korean community
- Working with organizations such as KAGRO (Korean-American Grocers Association of Maryland), the Korean-American Chamber of Commerce and the Korean Society of Greater Baltimore.
- Working to increase the number of Koreans that choose to live in Baltimore City.
- Working the City's Commercial Revitalization Division and the Baltimore Main Streets Program

마틴 오말리 , Mayor
City Of Baltimore

Appendix 4

Letter, From Peter Beilenson, M.D., M.P.H., Baltimore City Commissioner of Health, Re: Revocation of a Food Service Facility Permit for the Canaan Food Outlet

The correspondence from Peter Beilenson, M.D., M.P.H., Baltimore City commissioner of health, to Edward Darden, included a one-page cover letter and approximately 85 pages of inspectors' reports, and the administrative hearing officer's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. For anyone interested in the letter's attachments, they may be viewed at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Eastern Regional Office upon request up to two years after publication of this report. This appendix presents only Dr. Beilenson's cover letter.

CITY OF BALTIMORE

MARTIN O'MALLEY, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

PETER BEILENSON, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner
210 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

2 August 2002

Edward Darden, Civil Rights Analyst
United States Commission on Civil Rights
624 Ninth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20425

Dear Mr. Darden:

This letter responds to your letter of June 19, 2002 in which you requested that I review for accuracy several pages from a report drafted by the Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights entitled "City Services and the Justice System: Do Korean American Storeowners in Baltimore, Maryland Get Equal Treatment?"

The pages refer to a December 6, 1996 hearing held by the Health Department that resulted in the revocation of a Food Service Facility Permit of Eun Mu Lee, owner of the Canaan Food Outlet, 5270 Park Heights Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland.

Mr. Lee was represented at the hearing by his attorney, Eugene J. Silverman. The record indicates that Health Department inspectors testified that there were numerous violations found over a period of several months. The Administrative Hearing Officer found that continual recurrence of violations of City and State Standards and requirements from September through November of 1996 constituted a danger to the health of Canaan's customers and the general public. Based on the findings and conclusions of the Administrative Hearing Officer, Mr. Lee's permit for Canaan Food Outlet was revoked.

The inspection reports and notice of violations clearly document serious, repeated violations. Attached for your records are copies of the inspection reports as well as the Administrative Hearing Officer's Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations. Mr. Lee's permit was revoked because he failed to meet required safety standards. I do not concur with any statement found in the pending report that alleges that there was any other motive.

Sincerely,

Peter Beilenson, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner of Health

Appendix 5

Interview Summary, Kap Yung Park, Vice President, Korean American Grocers Association of Maryland

Kap Park participated in the update by telephone interview with Edward Darden of the Eastern Regional Office on July 24, 2002. The following is a summary of the points he made during the conversation:

Welcomed improvements:

- Previously negative perceptions of Korean Americans held by some African Americans have been changing and are abating in part due to informal interactions such as the Unity Day picnics to the extent that many persons across the two communities consider their intergroup relations as quite positive, even friendships.
- There continues to be demand for his intensive three-week Korean-language course among African American children attending the Multicultural Summer Fun Camp in Baltimore's inner city.

Continuing problems:

- None of the Baltimore City government's actions has been sufficient to make a meaningful change in the everyday lives of most Korean American storeowners, including the police department's hiring several new officers who speak Korean, and Mayor O'Malley's expansion of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods to include a liaison officer to the Korean American community.
- Korean-language police officers are seldom available during late evening hours when Korean American storeowners are likely to need assistance.
- Police officers arriving on the scene responding to emergency calls must request dispatch of a Korean-language police officers whose arrival seven of 10 times is too late to assist Korean American storeowners with English-language translation.
- Police/Korean community liaison officers cannot facilitate quick resolution of even minor disputes. Instead they defer decisions to superior officers or advise the complaining storeowner to file his or her complaint through the department's civilian complaints unit.
- The Korean-language police officers and the Korean American community liaison officer hardly improve things for the storeowners for two reasons. First, Korean-language assistance arrives too late to help during crucial moments after a crime report, and second, the liaison's lack of decision-making authority diminishes the possibility of resolving minor problems as they occur without resorting to the complaint process that the storeowners find too time consuming.
- The mayor's community liaison officer had taken the position less than a month before, and Mr. Park considered him too new in the post to comment on that government initiative (Joshua Lee, Korean community liaison, Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods, was appointed July 8 and dismissed December 31, 2002).
- The two liaison positions coming from the police department and the mayor's office appear to lack necessary authority to take action on the persistent concerns of Korean American storeowners.

In conclusion, Mr. Park believed that such government actions as the police and mayor's liaison officers were unlikely solutions to longstanding problems and part of election year politics. He favored consolidating the current special initiatives under a cabinet-level office of minority affairs and adding powers under the office that would enable it to serve minority groups generally, including Korean Americans.

Appendix 6

Letter, From Alvin O. Gillard, Director, Baltimore City Community Relations Commission,
Re: Update to 1998 Forum on Korean American Concerns

CITY OF BALTIMORE

MARTIN O'MALLEY, Mayor

(410) 396-3141



COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION

ALVIN O. GILLARD, Director
Suite 515, Equitable Building
10 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Fax No. (410) 244-0176

July 24, 2002

Mr. Edward Darden
Civil Rights Analyst
US Commission on Civil Rights
624 Ninth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20425

Dear Mr. Darden:

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to respond to the report entitled "City Services and the Justice System: Do Korean American Storeowners in Baltimore, Maryland Get Equal Treatment?" I believe the statements attributed to me as recorded are accurate. The Baltimore Community Relations Commission did not set new priorities as a result of the hearings. The Commission continues to work closely with the Korean-American community. The present Mayor has recently appointed a Korean-American liaison to directly interact between the Korean-American community and the Mayor's Office.

It was an honor to have testified before the Maryland Advisory Committee, of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. I trust that the information shared will help to improve intergroup relations in Maryland and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alvin O. Gillard", written over a horizontal line.

Alvin O. Gillard
Director

AOG:mh

Appendix 7

Letter, From Robert M. Stanton, Colonel/Chief, Baltimore Police Department,
Re: Safety Education and Outreach to Korean American Storeowners



MARTIN O'MALLEY
Mayor

BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT

July 19, 2002



EDWARD T. NORRIS
Police Commissioner

Mr. Ki-Tae Chung
Director, Eastern Regional Office

Mr. Edward Darden
Civil Rights Analyst
United States Commission on Civil Rights
624 Ninth Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20425

Dear Mr. Chung and Mr. Darden:

We have received your correspondence regarding your draft report entitled "City Services and the Justice system: Do Korean American Storeowners in Baltimore, Maryland get Equal Treatment?" As a result, we have attached this agency's response.

Should you need any additional information, please contact me or Lieutenant Robert Haukdal, of my staff, at 410 396-2526. Or you may contact our Korean-American liaison, Officer Namhyun Kim, 410 396- 2450.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Stanton
Criminal Investigation Division
Colonel/Chief

RMS/rah

Attachments

**POLICE DEPARTMENT
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND**

Response to:

United States Commission on Civil Rights

Draft Report Regarding Korean-American Storeowners in Baltimore

Question 1. Our database does not recognize "Korean" as a race, however crime data has been collected for Asian victims from 1998 through 2002 and is attached for review.

Question 2. In the late 1980's our department created a Korean liaison post to work as a translator/liaison for its members and the Korean-American community. We have also provided on-going crime prevention seminars and work closely with all Korean-American organizations. Our liaison officer also writes a column about crime safety for a monthly paper distributed by the Korean-American Safety Council of Maryland. The officer also works closely with Korean newspaper reporters to get information to the community in a timely manner.

Question 3. Yes

Question 4. We have 22 Asian officers in the department and 12 are Korean-Americans. Furthermore, two of the Korean-American members are supervisory personnel.

Baltimore Police Department

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, & YTD 2002 Crime by Asian/Korean Victims

Incident Based Reporting*

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002 YTD 1/1...6/22
Murder**	2	6	1	1	1
Rape	3	1	1	0	0
Robbery	97	75	47	42	0
Agg	45	39	40	36	3
Burglary	152	67	62	40	3
Larceny	463	341	277	197	4
Stolen Auto	71	52	75	55	2
Total Violent	147	121	89	79	4
Total Property	686	480	414	292	9
Total	833	581	503	371	13

* From Planning and Research Part One Database Searching Victim Race "O"

**Source Planning And Research Homicide Database Searching Victim Race "O" or "A"

Not for Comparison to UCR Data

Prepared by the Baltimore Police Department
Planning and Research Section
Crime Analysis Unit



Appendix 8

Letter, From L. Kim Hale, President, Korean Society of Maryland,
Re: Views on the Committee's Report



메릴랜드한인회
KOREAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND
27 E. North Avenue #101
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Tel : (410) 625-2442 Fax : (410) 625-4821

7/25/2002

United States Commission on Civil Rights
624 Ninth Street, NW
Washington, D. C. 20425

Attention: Edward Darden, Civil Rights Analyst

Dear Mr. Darden:

In your letter of June 19, 2002, you requested that the Korean Society of Maryland review pages 21-22, 27, and 49-51 of the soon to be released report entitled "City Services and the Justice System: Do Korean Storeowners in Baltimore, Maryland Get Equal Treatment," wherein the Korean Society of Maryland is referenced.

In response to your request, and since I was not the Korean Society of Maryland President at the time of the events contained in the report, I have conducted telephone interviews with Mr. Pyong Kuk Pak and several other past officers of the Korean Society of Maryland. The conclusion that I have drawn from these interviews is that the references and quotations attributed to the Korean Society of Maryland in the draft report pages 21-22, 27, and 49-51 that were attached to your letter are fair and accurate.

Based on our review of the draft pages 21-22, 27, and 49-51, the Korean Society of Maryland has no objection to publication of the references made to the Korean Society of Maryland in the United States Commission on Civil Rights report, "City Services and the Justice System: Do Korean Storeowners in Baltimore, Maryland Get Equal Treatment."

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (410) 242-6838 should you require any additional information.

Yours Truly,

L. Kim Hale
President, Korean Society of Maryland