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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

RESOLVING INTERGROUP CONFLICTS: A FORUM

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Chemical Bank Building  
270 Park Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

November 9, 1993  
10:30 A.M.

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A P P E A R A N C E S:

Setsuko M. Nishi, Ph.D., Chairperson  
New York State Advisory Committee

John Leonard, Vice President  
Chemical Bank/Community Relations

Arthur Gelb, President  
New York Times Co. Foundation

Michael Meyers, Executive Director  
New York Civil Rights Coalition

Arthur Barnes, Co-Chair  
Chemical Bank Racial Harmony Committee

Robert Sherman, Co-Chair  
Chemical Bank Racial Harmony Committee

Grace Yun, Director  
Inter-Relations Collaborative

Hon. Margarita Rosa, Commissioner  
N.Y. State Division of Human Rights

Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Author

Marcia Gillespie, Ms. Magazine Editor

Edna Baskins, President  
Concerned Community Adults

Daok Lee Pak, Linguist

Rev. Glen C. Missick, Co-Chair  
21st Century Coalition

Rabbi Robert N. Levine, Co-Chair  
21st Century Coalition

Mindy Duitz, Director  
Brooklyn Children's Museum

Craig Wilder, Project Co-Director  
Brooklyn Children's Museum



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DR. NISHI: Good morning. My name is Setsuko Nishi, Professor of Sociology at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York and Chairperson of the New York State Advisory Committee, one of 51 such committees serving the United States Commission on Civil Rights, a bipartisan fact-finding agency established in 1957.

With me are committee members, Junius Kellogg, Barbara Onor (phonetic) -- maybe she just stepped out a moment, Joan Johnson, Ron Padilla, Kon Yuwen (phonetic), Tamar Halpern, Lita Taracido, Ellis Arnstein, Cecil Weich. The press release is available from the staff. I believe it's out on the front table. It identifies all committee members and also announces the appointment of six new members.

Among our local area of veterans are Dr. Arnstein, Mr. Ghazi Khankan and attorneys Taricido and Weich who work with the staff, our hosts, and me in preparing this forum. Speaking of staff, we are delighted to have from Washington, Acting Staff Director, Bobby Doctor, Acting General Counsel, Lawrence Glick, he is in the audience somewhere,



1  
2 will hold additional hearings here in New York  
3 City. Their hearings will differ from today's in  
4 three ways. First, the commissioner may subpoena  
5 witnesses and we do not. Second, the commissioners  
6 take sworn testimony while all our panel itself are  
7 invited and kindly volunteered their statements.  
8 Third, and most importantly, we are focusing solely  
9 on the experiences of sets of private individuals  
10 who in teamlike fashion have been working to reduce  
11 tensions. The commissioners will probably have a  
12 far wider focus and may also hear from public  
13 officials responsible for law enforcement and  
14 responsible for other governmental services.

15           In any case, this forum occurs in perhaps  
16 auspicious times. Less than a week ago, a few  
17 subway stops from here, the two top, most political  
18 rivals of this great city ended a bitter contest,  
19 meeting with one another and jointly urging New  
20 Yorkers to come together again. Today we are  
21 fortunate to hear from about 20 panelists who  
22 sometime ago had already begun leading the way in  
23 their communities.

24           As time permits, we hope to hear from  
25 many in the audience too. Now, any panelist or

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2 other guest who has prepared a statement should  
3 submit a copy to staff or to the stenographer. It  
4 will be considered for our published report. On  
5 occasion, such prepared statements are printed in  
6 their entirety. But after lunch, if you would  
7 summarize your statement, respond to what prior  
8 panelists may have said before you, or leave more  
9 time for discussion, that would be helpful.

10

Those accustomed to speaking without a  
11 statement, please help us by keeping your  
12 presentations and comments sharply focused. Keep  
13 in mind that we are extremely interested in  
14 recommendations you may have and in your  
15 identifying those public officials who have  
16 jurisdiction over matters that may still worry  
17 you. But also help us to abide by our legal  
18 obligations by refraining from defaming or  
19 degrading any individual, whether present or not,  
20 in your remarks.

21

I should also repeat that our panelists  
22 are here voluntarily offering comments for the  
23 public record. On the other hand, although the  
24 media was invited, panelists or any other speakers  
25 retained the right not to be photographed while

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2 addressing us today. Should you wish to exercise  
3 that right, please inform staff so that we may  
4 accommodate your request.

5

6 Lastly, let me emphasize that as the eyes  
7 and ears of the Commission in New York State, our  
8 first duty is to listen. Better said, to listen in  
9 an impartial manner. If we fail to understand a  
10 statement, we may ask for clarification. When we  
11 pose questions, please do not feel that you are  
12 under cross-examination. If it later seems that we  
13 continue to misunderstand something you have said,  
14 by the time we review the draft of our report, you  
15 will have a chance to explain further prior to our  
16 completion of the report.

17

18 Now, before the message from Governor  
19 Cuomo is given, we would like to recognize the  
20 contributions of some of those in the private  
21 sector or non-private sector who have supported or  
22 been directly engaged in efforts to reduce racial  
23 and ethnic tensions. As you are named, if you  
24 should have a few words about your organization or  
25 program, just step to the microphone in the middle  
aisle. Actually, there is no middle aisle. I  
think they are talking about the podium or on the



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sides.

First, our host, Vice President Leonard, John Leonard, of Chemical Bank and the Bank's Racial Harmony Committee, Co-chairs, Mr. Barnes and Mr. Sherman.

Mr. Leonard.

MR. LEONARD: Thank you very much, Dr. Nishi, and you said kind things about us and I must say, though, that we are delighted to have you here today, particularly because we started about six months ago, a program of our own which we called "Racial Harmony and Diversity." It's a program of grants and forums and sponsorship of special events.

I know there are probably some people here today who made application to our program and we received 227 applications and those who will be given awards and grants will soon be announced. You may say, "Why the third largest bank in the United States? " Why are we getting involved in this? Well, I am in the Community Development Department and I don't know if any of you know Carol Perry, but she is our boss.

She is the boss much more than anyone

1  
2 named Steinberg, and community development is our  
3 life in the bank. Two of my colleagues here  
4 wandering around I see Greg in the back and Richard  
5 Jackson who we call street bankers. Their life is  
6 in the community and when we see the community  
7 upset and disturbed, and especially as we are  
8 trying to do units of housing and job training and  
9 sell our neighborhood affordable mortgage and so  
10 often to see the community torn apart, it does  
11 affect us greatly and we decided that this critical  
12 issue is something we should address and we'll have  
13 this program going on for at least the next several  
14 years.

15           To help us with that, really to guide us  
16 in it, we selected an outside panel, actually with  
17 14 members and I know some of them are here today  
18 and you also introduced Arthur. But the other  
19 members want to just stand up and let them see who  
20 you are. How many do I have here? Arthur, you  
21 were already announced. Vita Haskic (phonetic) is  
22 Rose Royce's (phonetic) wife.

23           That's all I have to say. I don't want  
24 to take up a lot of your time. I don't see Bob  
25 Sherman, but the other guy that has been a great

1  
2 friend and mentor to me over the years and who also  
3 agreed to co-chair this panel, this select  
4 committee as we call it, to help the Bank focus  
5 it's program is Arthur Barnes and I've asked him,  
6 Dr. Nishi, with your permission, just to say a  
7 word.

8 DR. NISHI: Fine.

9 MR. BARNES: Thanks. I thank you,  
10 members of the Commission. This is a very  
11 auspicious occasion for us on the select committee  
12 on racial harmony at Chemical Bank. John is very  
13 modest. This institution is the only institution  
14 that I know of that would tackle this subject and  
15 it's in keeping their history and tradition of  
16 tackling issues that are very important to our  
17 society, but are problematic.

18 It was just a year and-a-half ago that  
19 they completed a three-year term on the issue of  
20 substance abuse with forums, with grants to  
21 organizations that address that pervasive ill in  
22 our society and now they are tackling racial  
23 harmony, racial violence, ethnically, the divisions  
24 that separate us in this great city. So, I am  
25 very, very pleased to co-chair this effort.

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2           On November 22nd, those awards and grants  
3 will be made. The members of our committee that  
4 you've met, Lita Taricido and Haskill Lazar  
5 (phonetic) did a tremendous amount of work in  
6 selecting the efforts of individual institutions  
7 across the state. This was just not in Greater New  
8 York, but in this room today are many practitioners  
9 in the field that we are about to address.

10           Michael Meyers, Charles Pei Wang,  
11 Vice-Chairman of the United States Commission on  
12 Civil Rights, and Junius Kellogg, of course, have  
13 long been warriors in this fight against bigotry,  
14 prejudice and violence. There are so many of you  
15 in this room. We're not talking to the Enquirer  
16 here. We're talking to people that might be  
17 enlisted in this great fight.

18           After all, this city is great because of  
19 it's diversity, because of the fact that it has 174  
20 languages spoken here. And if we are to progress,  
21 if we are to grow and develop, then we're going to  
22 have to get along. On that note, ladies and  
23 gentlemen, let me turn it back over to the  
24 chairperson. Thank you very much.

25           DR. NISHI: Since Mr. Charles Pei Wang

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2 and I work together so often, I'm so sorry, but I  
3 realize that I have not introduced the Vice  
4 Chairperson of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights  
5 whom we are honored to have with us on the podium  
6 today, Mr. Charles Pei Wang. And at my far left is  
7 Margarita Rosa who is the Commissioner of the New  
8 York State Division of Human Rights.

9           To proceed, then, with the groups and  
10 persons whom we are honoring, we are also honored  
11 to have with us today Mr. Arthur Gill, the former  
12 cultural editor, metropolitan editor and then  
13 managing editor of the New York Times.

14           Among the panelists who share their  
15 experiences today is the director of the Brooklyn  
16 Children's Museum, one of three institutions in  
17 Brooklyn funded by Mr. Gelb's foundation to work  
18 with Crown Heights residents in tracing the roots  
19 of the people who have settled there. Initiated by  
20 the foundation, and supported by other foundations  
21 since then, this anti-bias project is aimed at  
22 building communion among these diverse Crown  
23 Heights residents.

24           The director of the Brooklyn Children's  
25 Museum and two Co-Project Directors will elaborate

1  
2 on their neighborhood involvement later. But as a  
3 member of the City University of New York's  
4 faculty, Mr. Gelb's foundation is also supporting  
5 efforts to foster racial harmony among students of  
6 the campus of City College of New York, farther  
7 uptown.

8 DR. NISHI: Our next speaker is Mr.  
9 Michael Meyers who is the Executive Director of the  
10 New York Civil Rights Coalition.

11 Mr. Meyers.

12 MR. MEYERS: Good morning. Let me say  
13 immediately that I interpreted Dr. Nishi's comment  
14 to refrain from defaming anyone in my remarks  
15 today, even though I learned in law school that the  
16 absolute defense to defamation is truth, so I will  
17 refrain from calling any names. I wish to use my  
18 brief time to say a few words of appreciation to  
19 the New York State Advisory Committee and to the  
20 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, as well as to  
21 Chemical Bank, but not only for their recognition  
22 of the purposeful efforts of the New York Civil  
23 Rights Coalition in seeking integral harmony in the  
24 protection of civil rights, for all.

25 More importantly, I want to acknowledge

1  
2 each of you for your own work with helping New  
3 Yorkers and the people of our nation with their  
4 thinking and re-thinking and for influencing the  
5 climate of public opinion which is so essential to  
6 the engagement and enjoyment of equal rights and to  
7 the survival and the vitality of a free society.

8           Through the years, members of the Civil  
9 Rights Commission have kept pounding away in a  
10 constructive fashion against the myths and the  
11 booby traps of half steps toward equality. In the  
12 all important area of changing public sediment  
13 through the presentation of facts, the study of  
14 problems, and the presentations and recommendations  
15 of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the  
16 State Advisory panels have played a dominant and  
17 treasured role.

18           Chemical Bank has taken the proper  
19 reaction, has taken the courageous action of  
20 calling attention to the finished business of  
21 promoting harmony and investing in people and  
22 institutions who are making a difference.

23           If lack of understanding, snap group  
24 judgments, and plain and ugly prejudice are the  
25 markings of a divided society, then the pursuit of

1  
2 knowledge, truth, quality, justice and fairness,  
3 are the hallmarks of social progress. We seek to  
4 use democratic freedoms to clarify our values and  
5 to engage our people, and particularly our youth,  
6 with the re-examination of what makes us both  
7 unique and dependent upon each other as human  
8 beings.

9           Through public education and our  
10 semester-long course on learned stereotypes taught  
11 by racial teams or volunteers weekly in 45  
12 classrooms at 37 high schools in all five boroughs  
13 and at two junior high schools in Manhattan, we  
14 dare to teach tolerance by critically examining the  
15 crude stereotypes and the myths about race  
16 ethnicity and gender and sexual orientation.

17           Education speaks up for all victims of  
18 discrimination and hate. Subsequently, all of us,  
19 black, white, Latino, Native American, Asian,  
20 disabled, and people of all religions and every  
21 ethnicity have come to understand that the vitality  
22 of our city, state, and nation, depends upon a  
23 pluralistic, egalitarian, and free society where no  
24 person is deprived of the opportunity or the means  
25 of achievement and of greatness.



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We know that positive social change is possible. We see that change in the faces of our students week-to-week. We see it in the faces of professional teachers who themselves while observing our volunteer teachers engaging students in candid discussions themselves, are re-tooled as editors. We see that positive change in classroom after classroom, in school after school, and in communities of various ethnic and racial make-ups.

But while we celebrate our distinctive cultures and unique conclusions to individuals, we need always to be mindful of the common bonds of our humanity. Indeed, we are as Roy Wilkins once said, one in the family of humans. In this connection, there is only one race, the human race, to which we all belong. Needless to say, the responsible voices in our community must be heard and must be multiplied.

It will take at least that much for us to remove all barriers, psychological, social, and legal, for full equality for every person. So, as we fend off senseless hatreds and work at grass-roots at all levels to achieve our noble goal, I greet and I salute our friends on the U.S.



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2 Francisco, and a number of other cities across the  
3 country.

4           The purpose of our research has been to  
5 look into the various sources of conflict and as  
6 well to document the various instances of  
7 inter-group cooperation. One of the very  
8 distinctive aspects which we identified will be  
9 evident in one of the presentations this afternoon.  
10 Ms. Edna Baskins who is President of Concerned  
11 Community Adults and Dr. Dao Lee Pak who now will  
12 represent and present their experience of  
13 cooperative efforts in the Elmhurst area over the  
14 recent year.

15           We have, as a product of our research,  
16 recently released a research report which is called  
17 "Integral Relations," which is now available to  
18 you particularly to community leaders and to  
19 service givers within diverse communities. We are  
20 using the research that we collected as an  
21 information base to develop an education program  
22 and interactive-relations building program  
23 particularly directed towards development of  
24 relations among African Americans, Latinos and  
25 Asians in urban environments.

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Most particularly, diverse, work related settings and community based settings.

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Alternately, we hope to be able to implement the very models and strategies which we identify in the research in urban communities which continue to experience tensions.

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Thank you very much, Dr. Nishi and the State Advisory Committee for the recognition you have given us today.

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DR. NISHI: It is invigorating to hear of these marvelous efforts, the group cooperation and how forward looking and how sustaining and steady has been this involvement that we are deeply grateful to our speakers. We now have a message from Governor Mario Cuomo which will be delivered with her own added remarks from Honorable Margarita Rosa who is the Commissioner of the New York State Division of Civil Rights.

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MS. ROSA: Thank you, Dr. Nishi. These are comments from Governor Cuomo which he asked me to deliver on his behalf.

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I am pleased to extend greetings to all of the participants of the forum, "Resolving Intergroup Conflicts." I regret that I'm unable to

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2 join at this important event.

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4 First let me commend the New York State  
5 Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil  
6 Rights for holding this forum. I also congratulate  
7 John Leonard, Arthur Gelb, Michael Meyers, Arthur  
8 Barnes, Robert Sherman and Grace Yun for the  
9 efforts that they have made in working to promote  
10 intergroup cooperation in New York. These six  
11 individuals are shining examples of the excellent  
12 work being done in New York State to prevent  
13 hostility and conflict in our neighborhoods.

14

15 Convening this conference to honor those  
16 who are doing this good work and to learn from them  
17 comes in at a specially significant time in our  
18 history. Elections with highly charged racial  
19 overtones, a recent neo-nazi rally in Auburn, New  
20 York, charges of police recklessness against  
21 minorities, a new outbreak of skinhead violence,  
22 frighten many and trouble everyone.

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24 Difficulties between groups in our  
25 complex society are not new. For more than 200  
years, we've brought together different colors,  
creeds and nationalities under one flag. Although  
under one flag, while this assembled diversity has

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2 produced the most successful experience in  
3 democracy in world history, we by no means have  
4 achieved perfect harmony.

5           There have been moments of starting  
6 failure in that experience. We began our life as a  
7 new experiment in a democracy that would be a  
8 unique bastion of freedom, and yet slavery was  
9 allowed to exist for almost a hundred years. Waves  
10 of immigration were met with bias and xenophobia.  
11 And in perhaps one of our ugliest moments this  
12 century during World War II, Japanese-Americans  
13 were interned out of a paranoid fear that they  
14 would forget their loyalty to their new homes.

15           So there have been occasions and periods  
16 when our differences of race, religion, and  
17 ethnicity have produced ugly alienation instead of  
18 harmony. And today we are challenged by an  
19 additional difference: the difference between the  
20 people who have and the people who have not. The  
21 fear of falling from one group into another makes  
22 it more likely for one to resent his neighbor,  
23 especially if his skin is a different color, if he  
24 speaks a different language or if he worships a  
25 different God.



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2 the conditions that encourage work, investment and  
3 entrepreneurship.

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5 The key is to make long-term investments  
6 in future feature. The many people at this  
7 conference believe in this. We will succeed by  
8 working together all of us Jews and Gentiles... men  
9 and women, whites, blacks, Hispanics and Asians...  
10 You and I.

11

12 Striving, achieving, understanding that  
13 as great as we are, we have not even begun to  
14 approach our full potential. Realizing that only  
15 together -- sharing one another's pain -- working  
16 for one another's benefit, learning to love and  
17 live together -- can the American dream be fully  
18 realized.

19

20 Thank you.

21

22 At the risk of having my own comments  
23 compared to the Governor's, I did write some  
24 thoughts down that I want to share with you. To  
25 begin with, I'd like to share the appreciation for  
this forum to recognize the efforts of individuals  
and of groups who are working together to resolve  
and prevent intergroup conflict because to those of  
us who work in the area of human civil rights



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2 enforcement which I've done for most of my  
3 professional life, occasions such as these do take  
4 on a special significance.

5           That's because our work is constantly  
6 bringing us face-to-face with the barriers to equal  
7 opportunity that have been contrived over time to  
8 maintain the status quo and to avoid diversifying  
9 the places where people live and where they work  
10 and play. Those barriers often give rise to  
11 intergroup tensions and conflicts which can and, as  
12 we know, sometimes do erupt in violent  
13 confrontations.

14           So when we take the time and the trouble  
15 to recognize the positive community building  
16 efforts that are taking place around us, I think we  
17 take a step toward the ideal that civil rights  
18 enforcement has sought to achieve. We take a step  
19 toward creating a social climate in which all of us  
20 irrespective of our gender or our race, religion,  
21 color, age, national origin, or sexual orientation,  
22 can fulfill our potential as members of a human  
23 family working together for the common good.

24           Of course, essential to the fulfillment  
25 of that ideal, is insuring that we all have the

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2 opportunity, unobstructed by artificial and  
3 unlawful barriers, to live and work and play where  
4 we wish and where our capacity and our ability to  
5 perform allows us. Ultimately, I believe it will  
6 be the removal of those barriers that will permit  
7 people to work together across racial, ethnic,  
8 religious and socioeconomic lines to build  
9 communities in which diversity is a source of  
10 strength rather than of catalyst or strife.

11 We know that people find the challenges  
12 of dealing with diversity daunting and it can be  
13 formidable. It was interesting to hear and to know  
14 of Michael Meyers' organization's efforts in  
15 schools to assist people in setting aside  
16 stereotypes because time has taught us that using  
17 stereotypes is very convenient and it's also a way  
18 of sort of simplifying things that are complex.

19 It can be a very easy cop-out that lets  
20 us assume that we know characteristics of groups,  
21 that we lump a bunch of people together under those  
22 characteristics, congratulate ourselves for knowing  
23 something about the individual members of the group  
24 and move on from there without doing all of the  
25 groundwork that needs to be done.

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Over the years, my experiences taught me that when it comes to respecting and appreciating diversity there is no substitute for human contact and I expect that the efforts you'll hear about later will support that proposition. In the absence of contact, the temptation is to fill the void of our knowledge with ignorance and with speculation and with stereotypes.

For some, that which is different and unfamiliar is avoided at all costs or viewed with suspicion and sometimes feared. These are the kinds of emotions that have been causing violence when neighborhoods begin to be segregated or to harassment in the workplace when the workplace begins to become more diverse. If it's allowed to go unchecked, suspicion and fear can breed hatred and can sometimes find expression in violence.

We've seen what bias motivated violence has done in our cities and in our rural areas. We've seen it on the streets and I think most of us here and elsewhere have concluded that it's in our collective interest to find ways to foster understanding and unity and harmony and that, I guess, that's why we're here today, the Division of

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2 Human Rights.

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I want to tell you a little bit about the work that we've been doing in this area. We've dedicated significant resources to dealing with cultural awareness both inside and outside our individual workplace. As you know, the workplace is a microcosm of the larger community and subsequently it's influenced by whatever is taking place out there so that intergroup rivalries and competition can find their way into the workplace and they pose a challenge to workers and managers alike.

Assuring that respect for diversity in the workplace doesn't become a casualty of external forces requires conviction and concern by everybody in charge. So we have conducted cultural awareness training for our workforce and we've conducted programs recognizing the contributions of diverse groups that comprise the workforce. We've been doing that sometime now since I became Commissioner in 1990.

Since 1988, the Division through its Crisis Prevention Unit, has conducted cultural awareness training and training in mediation and

1  
2 conflict resolution in schools and in individual  
3 communities throughout the state. Its helped train  
4 police recruits and veteran officers in  
5 approximately 60 police departments statewide, most  
6 of them outside of New York City.

7           Through a group of volunteers that do  
8 improvisational theater, The Human Rights Players,  
9 we have enhanced our outreach and our education  
10 functions. The Players perform in churches and in  
11 schools and in workplaces throughout New York  
12 State. Last summer as part of the Governor's  
13 decade of the child initiative, the Division of  
14 Human Rights in collaboration with the State  
15 Division for Youth, solicited city schools and in  
16 efforts to recognize programs aimed at promoting  
17 respect and appreciation for diversity in those  
18 schools, the Commission's submissions were  
19 impressive.

20           The most outstanding programs received  
21 awards and special recognition from Governor and  
22 Mrs. Cuomo. The success of that initiative served  
23 as a model for a conference being co-sponsored by  
24 the New York State Division of Human Rights, the  
25 Martin Luther King Commission and Institute, and

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several other state agencies.

At the Great Center of the City University of New York, a conference like this one will focus on successful models for resolving intergroup conflict. It will showcase programs from throughout New York State which were selected from among a number of entrants for models of promoting positive intergroup relations. The similarities between the focus of this event and our conference in December are striking. The commonality in the themes suggest more than just great minds think alike or that there's cross-pollination within the civil rights community.

It suggests that more and more of us are recognizing the need to focus on and to learn from what's working rather than becoming consumed and depressed with our failure and the solutions that have alluded us.

In conclusion, intergroup rivalries and competitions, as we know, pose a challenge and they are going to go on for a long time. Our slinging resources don't help matters, but to quote history and a great American leader whom we often hear

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2 quoted, Martin Luther King, Jr., he told us that we  
3 must somehow learn to live together as brothers and  
4 sisters or we're all going to perish together as  
5 fools.

6           Those words are as true now as they were  
7 when they were first uttered. Those of us who are  
8 policy makers must also be mindful of another group  
9 of Dr. King's words that true peace is not only the  
10 absence of tension but the presence of justice.

11           Please accept my sincere wishes for a  
12 successful event today and my invitation to join us  
13 on December 7th at the City University Great Center  
14 where we will gather once again to recognize  
15 another group of New Yorkers who are striving to  
16 heal and to nurture the family of New York.

17           Thank you very much.

18           DR. NISHI: Thank you very much. We also  
19 wish to ask you to convey our best to the  
20 Governor. How we have missed his actual presence  
21 but how much we appreciate his words indeed. We  
22 are going to have a little recess here during which  
23 time you can have lunch and have an opportunity to  
24 talk further with our panelists and our honorees  
25 and to exchange with each other the concerns that

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you have in which you are engaging so that this process of communication of our shared concerns in intergroup cooperation can go forward.

We have this opportunity now for a somewhat more leisurely opportunity to informally greet each other. I'd like to ask that we reconvene here very promptly, a little before one. We have a very tight and heavy schedule in the afternoon. We want to have as much opportunity for us to be able to greet each other. What we will do, then, is perhaps reconvene somewhat earlier, if we could do so, at 12:30.

I believe our lunch is ready, Mr. Leonard.

MR. LEONARD: Yes, we are a little ahead of schedule and the luncheon is not quite out yet. They are putting it out now. There will be lunch, light lunch, sandwiches and soda and then, as you know, for those that are in for the long haul, we will have a little wine and cheese at five o'clock. There will be a further session. If you'll just be patient, they are setting up lunch now.

DR. NISHI: That's quite all right.



1  
2 This, I believe, is an important opportunity for us  
3 to meet each other informally and to exchange our  
4 concerns and our experiences. I hope very much  
5 that we can use this opportunity to do so. There  
6 will be -- there is a lounge out there as well as  
7 the opportunity here, and if you would like to  
8 speak with any of us who serve on this Commission,  
9 we would be very happy to do so.

10 (A LUNCHEON RECESS WAS TAKEN.)

11 DR. NISHI: May I ask that the group  
12 reconvene and for those who are out perhaps they  
13 could be encouraged to come in now.

14 DR. NISHI: My name is Setsuko Nishi. I  
15 am Chair of the New York State Advisory Committee  
16 to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. For those  
17 of you who are here, who have joined us this  
18 afternoon, we are about to begin this portion of  
19 our program in which we are going to hear from  
20 three panels. There will be six presenters on the  
21 panel and the members of the Advisory Committee are  
22 present in order to ask questions to further  
23 clarify what the procedure will be that we will ask  
24 each of our six panelists.

25 You don't actually count six panelists

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2 because since we are starting, we have changed our  
3 schedule so that we are starting a bit earlier. Two  
4 of our presenters have not arrived as yet but I'm  
5 sure they will be here before they are scheduled on  
6 the program. Following their presentations, we  
7 would encourage that the panelists may wish to  
8 comment on each other's activities and we would  
9 hope very much that we would have in addition, the  
10 opportunity to hear from Mr. Fathy Hegazy who will  
11 be speaking on behalf of a team of persons and will  
12 be speaking on behalf of an organization called  
13 "The Islam World Peace Association."

14 We hope during the presentations that  
15 we'll have the opportunity for interaction with the  
16 audience. We would encourage you to use the  
17 microphones in the side aisles in raising your  
18 questions. With those preliminary remarks, I would  
19 like to ask author, Letty Cottin Pogrebin -- or  
20 would you prefer that Marcia Gillespie go first?  
21 Which is your preference?

22 MS. POGREBIN: We've agreed that I'll  
23 start. I'm starting because we've divided our  
24 roles. I will do a historical overview of our  
25 African American/Jewish American Women's Dialogue

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2 Group and Marcia who was a more recent member, will  
3 sort of bring things up to date.

4

5 Our group is a very, very tiny model of  
6 what we believe can be happening all over this  
7 country if one recognizes that change is made in  
8 small increments and very much on a personal  
9 level. Our group began because Harriett Michelle  
10 (phonetic), who was then President of the New York  
11 Urban League and myself were part of a larger  
12 Black-Jewish coalition made up of men and women,  
13 about 120 of them, of whom about 60 used to turn up  
14 for meetings, and we were becoming a little  
15 impatient with the progress of that group.

16

17 That group had formed in 1984 in response  
18 to Jesse Jackson's "Hymie Town" remark which had  
19 been a tinderbox in the Jewish community and an ad  
20 run in the New York Times that said, "Justice  
21 Against Jackson" which was a tinderbox in the black  
22 community.

23

24 So people such as Haskell Lazar, who was  
25 here this morning, and Bill Tatem and Rabbis and  
26 Ministers from both communities obviously had  
27 joined together a group of business, arts,  
28 educators, bankers, professionals and so on to talk

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2 about the issues that were becoming so volatile in  
3 our city.

4

5 As I say, Harriett and I were part of  
6 that group from the very beginning. But after  
7 several months, we realized that there were  
8 distinct limitations, first of all to what could be  
9 accomplished with some men in the room. And I have  
10 to say that I'm as fond of men as the next person,  
11 married to one, and the mother of one. But men are  
12 not comfortable with intimacy especially in a  
13 dialog situation. There is an awful lot of  
14 posturing, an awful lot of negotiating masculinity,  
15 carrying on about how good they are and how able  
16 they are and how accomplished they are and how  
17 wonderful they are.

18

19 So even the men are nodding in this  
20 room. So what happened is that Harriett and I were  
21 sort of rolling our eyes to each other across the  
22 room whenever either a black male or a Jewish male  
23 would do that number and after one of the meetings,  
24 we came up to each other and we said what we really  
25 need is a healthy dose of feminist dialog, the  
consciousness raising model of the 70's which had  
been predicated on the notion that the personality

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2 is political. That you first establish a  
3 relationship.

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5 You deal with the things you have in  
6 common first and you speak very, very personally,  
7 so we did that. And we did it in a very conscious  
8 way as an elitist group, not a grass-roots group  
9 because we really felt that if we were successful  
10 we could model intergroup relations because we were  
11 choosing people with a lot of visibility in each  
12 community.

13

14 So Harriett, as I said, had a position  
15 with media access and did a lot of speaking. I'm a  
16 writer and I was at the time an editor of Ms.  
17 Magazine and I had similar access to the press.  
18 Harriett thought about Bernice Powell of the  
19 coalition press, who was then the Vice Chancellor  
20 of the City University system, I brought in  
21 Jacqueline Levine who was then President of  
22 N.A.C.R.A.C. (phonetic), the International Jewish  
23 Community Relations Counsel and Marlon Braveman who  
24 was Education and Women's Issue Chair of the  
25 American Jewish committee.

26

27 Now we had three Jewish women, three  
28 African women and we were afraid that we would tear

1  
2 each other's hair out. Everything was extremely  
3 controversial in 1984, everything. So we decided  
4 we need a mediator. We had a friend in common  
5 named Donna Shilala (phonetic) who was then the  
6 president of Hunter College and who understood what  
7 we were about. We asked her to participate as our  
8 kind of neutral to keep us from coming to blows.  
9 And also because, as we said to her, she was  
10 neither Black nor Jewish but could pass for  
11 either.

12 We had certain rules of engagement and  
13 that is that we would never slam out of the room no  
14 matter what was said. We had to acknowledge that  
15 we were going to hear a lot of painful things from  
16 each other because the ground floors required  
17 absolute honesty. It was our feeling that unless  
18 we could come to this safe space and say what we  
19 really felt about the other groups about the  
20 perceptions and the treatment of ourselves, we  
21 would get nowhere.

22 We decided that our communication styles,  
23 whatever they were, were going to be acceptable to  
24 each other. If one person happened to get angry  
25 and loud and someone else in the group was a more

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2 placid type, they were just going to have to  
3 tolerate each others' communication style.

4

5 We started with what we have in common  
6 and because we were a group of admitted and proud  
7 feminists, we were able to say we had in common a  
8 lot of the issues of basic feminism, one-on-one.  
9 We understood our experiences with sexual  
10 discrimination, apart from our experiences with  
11 anti-semitism or racism that bound us.

12

13 We had all experienced sexual  
14 harassment. Those of us who had children had  
15 experienced the turmoil of raising a girl to feel  
16 proud and dignified and a boy to be a non-sexist  
17 male. We had in common, certain of us, hair  
18 problems, oddly enough. There are Jewish women who  
19 have quote, "bad hair", and African American, who  
20 have quote, "bad hair" and I remember a session  
21 where there was a lot of exchanging of how each  
22 group had dealt with that.

23

24 There was a problem in terms of the  
25 common issues of our relations to our men. For  
26 example, each group felt an extremely highly  
27 developed sense of identity, group identity and  
28 group loyalty and at the same time, was comfortable

1  
2 critiquing the sexism within their own  
3 communities. So that I, for example, as a Jew,  
4 have been battering down the walls of synagogues  
5 and Jewish communal organizations to look for equal  
6 representation and respect for women, to give women  
7 greater roles in Jewish practices and in ritual and  
8 so on.

9           The African women had very, very similar  
10 experiences both in their religious and in black  
11 communal organizations as well. Looking for honor,  
12 dignity, representation, quality, and so on. We  
13 got into -- I'm just going to run through a sample  
14 subject. We talked about growing up female as a  
15 Jew and as a Black in this country. How we deal  
16 with the sexism in our own communities.

17           We got onto the issue of South Africa and  
18 Israel, for all it was worth. In terms of Israel's  
19 relationship, military supply relationship, with  
20 South Africa and yet the Jewish community in this  
21 country was really so anti-apartheid and could  
22 always be counted upon to march against the white  
23 supremacist regime.

24           So there was that balance. We talked  
25 about Israel, Zion racism was a resolution that had



1  
2 passed in the U.N. and that a lot of the Jewish  
3 women felt that the Black community had not risen  
4 up against it and had not understood that the law  
5 of return which allows every Jew to enter Israel  
6 was based on historical experience and was not a  
7 racist policy any more than affirmative action  
8 which is based on historical experience.

9           We talked about news efforts,  
10 Bensonhurst, the -- you'll remember the killing of  
11 Yusef Hawkins. The African women wanted the Jewish  
12 women to speak out. The Jewish women had  
13 experienced in our own communities a great sigh of  
14 relief that at least it wasn't us that did it.  
15 There is this consciousness that we want to protect  
16 our group from defamation and don't want to be  
17 associated with negative events.

18           The Eleanor Bumper's case, the Bishop  
19 Tutu statement about the Holocaust, "Why don't Jews  
20 forgive?" This was a very painful exchange. We  
21 had to explain to your African American sisters why  
22 the whole notion, the Christian notion of  
23 forgiveness does not apply when it comes to Jewish  
24 perceptions and experiences of the Holocaust. That  
25 one-third of all of our families had been murdered

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2 and we talked about the Holocaust in our group.

3

4           When Mandela came to New York, there was  
5 a lot of tension because some Jewish groups had  
6 objected to what he had to say about the  
7 Palestinians. We were trying to identify those  
8 Jewish groups in the city who are strongly  
9 pro-Mandela and had come out to raise money for the  
10 African National Congress and also to support  
11 Mandela's visit.

12

13           As recently as last summer, we had a  
14 session when Henry Louis Gates was given the whole  
15 editorial page of the New York Times to talk about  
16 his theory of why it was that there had been such  
17 an increase in rage and enmity from certain parts  
18 of the spectrum of the Black American community  
19 towards Jews in particular and we had a big go  
20 round on that one because the black women in the  
21 group kept saying don't you understand even the  
22 fact that the New York Times, when they are ready  
23 to give a page to a Black writer, they give it to  
24 him to write about Jews.

25

26           Don't you understand how we feel about  
27 that? There's so much more to be said than just  
28 the African American community's relationship to

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2 Jewish Americans. And so we can hardly even engage  
3 the issue because we are so angry at those kinds of  
4 media choices. So it's constantly an experience of  
5 enlarging the awareness factor, and even if we  
6 cannot end up agreeing with each other, we  
7 understand each other.

8           For me, that's been one of the several  
9 epiphanies that I want to talk to you about in  
10 closing, is that I have to sit there sometimes and  
11 listen to things that make my blood boil, that I  
12 disagree with and that I sometimes feel offended  
13 and insulted by. But if I don't have a place where  
14 I can react honestly, where I can hear it, take it  
15 in, at least understand how in the world you get  
16 there, how do you get there? How do you get to the  
17 point where you can tell me that you won't disavow  
18 Farrakhan?

19           We did six or eight sessions on Farrakhan  
20 because we Jews cannot understand why it's hard to  
21 get up and say we reject a hate message. We don't  
22 want leaders who express any of these kinds of  
23 negates about another religion and our sisters in  
24 the group said to us, it's not that simple and why  
25 do you Jews only want to hear from us when we are

1  
2 asked to repudiate our own? Where are you when it  
3 comes to supporting us, and why don't you  
4 understand that for us, Farrakhan is only 10  
5 percent?

6 I mean, with anti-semitism, 90 percent is  
7 self help, 90 percent is like getting out there,  
8 get educated, get a job, dress right, learn to wake  
9 up to an alarm clock in the morning, follow your  
10 responsibilities. We're not going to agree with  
11 Black male leaders who have those kind of things to  
12 say. For me, it's real hard to swallow but at last  
13 I understand. I hope I have an opportunity to  
14 answer other specifics.

15 I want to give my partner, Marcia  
16 Gillespie, some time to bring you all up to date.

17 MS. GILLESPIE: I would have to start by  
18 apologizing. Unfortunately, I'm going to have to  
19 talk and run. I have a plane to catch and I hope  
20 you will forgive me. As Letty indicated, I am one  
21 of the new girls on the block. I joined the group  
22 after the group had been long established when  
23 several of the black members had left and we were  
24 replacing people. And I think I've probably been  
25 somewhat of a provocateur for the group because as

1  
2 often happens, everybody was real comfortable with  
3 each other and it was like I remember saying that  
4 the first couple of times I went, well, this is  
5 awfully nice. You know what I mean?

6           Everybody was just being so nice. And I  
7 kept saying, look, I didn't come here to be nice  
8 and I didn't come here to be best friends. It  
9 happens that Letty and I are friends and Harriett  
10 and I are friends. But there was more to it than  
11 that and I think that one of the things that we  
12 need to be clear about is that any time we have  
13 groups like these over a period of time, sometimes  
14 we're so comfortable just being with each other  
15 that we can get sidetracked.

16           It's probably a great thing that from  
17 time to time people change, people move, new people  
18 come in and then they say lets get busy again,  
19 sisters. For me, getting busy also came with the  
20 time of Crown Heights in which we literally -- I  
21 mean, it was a really heated, heated evening in  
22 which people were really expressing what they felt  
23 both in terms of a personal basis what they felt  
24 was the community's response.

25           I am a believer. I love the session that

1  
2 we've had that have been really people energized  
3 around the subject because I know that's when we're  
4 perhaps speaking the most honestly. At the same  
5 time, I mean, one of the other things I personally  
6 have come to value about the group which Letty has  
7 talked about but I think can't be addressed enough  
8 and that is the -- I want to say creating a place  
9 and a space where we can speak without editing our  
10 words or our emotions and where something else  
11 happens as a result.

12           Where there is this absolute truth that  
13 you are really being heard because it's not about  
14 somebody who is so busy trying to formulate their  
15 rebuttal that they don't hear what you're saying in  
16 the first place, that we're really talking to and  
17 with each other and not at each other. The thing I  
18 think is real important and I guess this is a  
19 dynamic thing -- well, I don't know -- no, I don't  
20 think guys do this, but maybe you do and that is  
21 that we've also had those moments in which we come  
22 together and talk.

23           I'm thinking about the summer, for  
24 example, because Letty is working on a book. Can I  
25 talk about your book?

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MS. POGREBIN: Yes.

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MS. GILLESPIE: Letty is working on a book. It's a diary of aging and so we spend a lot of time just talking about aging. I won't go into all of it but it was one of those very much to the bone sharings of women. Why is that important? I think because when we do do those moments, it makes the other times when there are these issues that speak to culture and speak to issues of race and when we're struggling about anti-semitism, does it exist in the African American community and what is our responsibility? It makes those other times more possible in a very real way.

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Now, the other sort of things that we do is that we spend some time -- in fact, I'm looking forward to our coming meetings because we've put it very much on our agenda. The summer when we had our summer break meeting which was a lovely day out on Fire Island with Letty and that is about, okay, lets get more of an activity agenda. Lets really kind of be clear about the fact that we're also coming together so that we can take stuff back out of the room and how are we going to do that better as individuals and then also how we as a group can

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2 move to speak and address issues.

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4 Now, in part 2, that warms the cackles of  
5 my feminist heart because as we talked about the  
6 Henry Louis Gates thing, the other part of it seems  
7 to me whenever the big issue is whether it's going  
8 to be race or anti-semitism or Black/Jewish  
9 relations, it's always men talking. You know what  
10 I mean? It's always men talking and I feel that  
11 it's extraordinarily important that this group also  
12 be in there saying, but hold it. There are some  
13 other opinions in the room.

14

15 So that we can begin to engage perhaps on  
16 a whole other level of discussion which is by using  
17 the experiences that we have gained in this group  
18 to lower the volume and really get to -- I want to  
19 call it some of the points that need to be raised.  
20 Now, last, I think, but not least, one of the  
21 things that I found really intriguing is we had  
22 been in search of new members because for one  
23 reason or another we lost one of the black members  
24 of the group who moved to Colorado and got a great  
25 job, but we were really sorry to see Arlene Dodson  
(phonetic) leave.

26

27 So we began to think about who would step



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2 in because I think it is real clear that for groups  
3 like this to function well, you have to give real  
4 thought to who is going to get selected. I'm clear  
5 that they probably walk the floor on it. Did they  
6 really want me to join, which is fair. Because  
7 what you need to know is that the people that  
8 you're going to be bringing, whether you decide  
9 that you want the group to expand or whether you're  
10 in a position that you have to replace people, is  
11 that there is a clarity about intent and that the  
12 basic rules that were established to govern the  
13 group are going to be honored by the new people who  
14 join. Because otherwise you could have a group  
15 that disintegrates. Do you know what I mean?

16           It goes in a whole other direction. If  
17 that isn't your intent, you can have real  
18 problems. The other thing, I think, that has been  
19 really interesting I want to talk for a moment on  
20 me in a very personal way, if I may, and that is I  
21 never considered myself anti-Semitic and I still  
22 don't. But I also realized in the course of  
23 discussions that we were having, as an African  
24 American woman, that I had not necessarily -- not  
25 always been on point when I heard statements coming

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2 from my sisters and brothers that were real  
3 problematic that really spoke of anti-semitism that  
4 needed to be addressed and I had to question my  
5 points of silence.

6           What the group has also helped me do is  
7 to be much more about living the song I sing about  
8 in a way in which I engage in conversations whether  
9 it's with members of my family or African American  
10 people. I don't even know when things come up and  
11 hit my ear wrong. The other part is I've also made  
12 a point to be much more forthright in any  
13 conversations I have with my Jewish brothers and  
14 sisters. You know what I mean?

15           When statements get made that I say no, I  
16 really don't think so because what the group has  
17 also engaged me to have is another kind of body of  
18 knowledge because in conversation when we met, the  
19 group met, I heard Marilyn Braverman say "S" or I  
20 heard Letty say "Y."

21           So therefore, I have information, more  
22 information to bring to the table and bring to the  
23 discussion which I think is extraordinarily  
24 important for me personally. What else? I think  
25 the hardest part for us as a group is finding times

1  
2 to meet. It seems to me that we spend weeks often  
3 trying to get one meeting every two months because  
4 everybody's traveling and busy and one of the  
5 things that the group promised itself was that it  
6 would never meet if all participants couldn't be in  
7 the room which can become extraordinarily difficult  
8 and extremely problematic. But it's worth it  
9 because you need to all be present to make the  
10 discussion whole and round.

11           And again, I guess I want to  
12 re-emphasize, in closing, the concept of round.  
13 There is no head, there is no foot, there's nobody  
14 in charge. There is a group that comes together.  
15 We come to each others' homes. We move it around  
16 the circle. Maybe Letty might be the one who picks  
17 up the phone to say is this date good with you. We  
18 bring food. We do things that women would do when  
19 we come together as part of, I call it, the ritual  
20 of this group. And I would certainly suggest --  
21 would hope to see more groups like this form.

22           Not just Black/Jewish groups, but groups  
23 that can begin the dialogs that we have been  
24 missing in this society where people talk in sound  
25 bites and in cliches most of the time so that we

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2 really can begin to bridge barriers.

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So thank you. I know that Letty is going to answer all your questions far better than I.

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DR. NISHI: Thank you, Ms. Gillespie, and I'm sorry that you have to leave us. I know you have other important missions but thank you very much.

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We will have an opportunity to ask questions. The next pair on the panel are involved in a group called, "Concerned Community Adults." The President is Edna Baskins who is with us and Dr. Daok Lee Pak.

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MS. BASKINS: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm very glad to be here. I feel this is quite an honor to share with you what Dr. Pak and I did in terms of the situation with the C-town store in the Lefrak area. Mrs. Pak and I both sit on C.B. 4, that's our planning board, and we came to know each other when the incident arose.

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It was brought to the planning board and of course many of the members felt this was not the place for it. As the founder of a youth advocacy group in the area, I felt that we had an obligation to the youth in our community to stand up and take

1  
2 a position. So the first thing I did was I asked  
3 Dr. Pak to join me in putting together an  
4 information meeting because so often in our  
5 communities the problem is misinformation, rumor.  
6 And that's what had happened in our community.

7 We had our information meeting. At that  
8 time, we decided that a task force was necessary  
9 because not only was the young man in question in  
10 error but the store owner as well. And we felt  
11 that the task force with the seminars would aid our  
12 merchants and satisfy our community in that we had  
13 done something positive to effect change for our  
14 young people.

15 I thought we were very successful in  
16 doing that because we prevented negativism from  
17 spreading in our community and growing and we  
18 showed young people that we can make a difference.  
19 Even though they make mistakes, it's up to us as  
20 adults to work with them and having Ms. Pak on my  
21 side was a real star because, of course, she's a  
22 linguistic person. She speaks several languages.  
23 She had the ability to communicate with people that  
24 we couldn't.

25 And with our two heads together, I think

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we did a real good job. Don't you?

MS. PAK: Thank you. I prepared something in a written format in order to make no mistakes in English, so you have to alarm me.

Ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests. It's my honor to respond to your inquiry regarding the Lefrak City C-town case of 1991. This case was unique because of prior community relationship help to save this from reaching a possible explosive outcome.

I became a member on the Community Board 4 in January, 1986. I served on the Board until 1990 and I resigned because of a poor heart and personal reasons. As a member of Community Board 4, I had had the opportunity to interact with many local residents and the leaders of various ethnic groups.

During the time I attended the meeting, I befriended with a warm person whom I drove home on occasion. This person seemed just as concerned if not more so than I with the well being of our community. This gentle wonderful person is Edna Baskins. Edna Baskins and I came up with having a meeting between the local Korean merchants and the

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community.

Hence, the Korean Merchant Association sponsored a dinner in August, 1986 at our local Korean restaurant. Members of the Community Board 4, 110 Police Precinct, Lefrak City Tenant Association, Local N.A.A.C.P. and clergy and local Korean merchants, they were all invited. This event gave the residents of our communities chance to air their feelings in a friendly atmosphere to many of them who are for the first time experiencing cooking Korean, barbecue at the table, and hot, spicy Korean cuisine.

This event was such a big success and from that year on, the Korean Merchants Association sponsors it as an annual community event. Especially, true though, of the cleaning task forces from Edna Baskins' program during the summer vacation time, their eyes were shown and their big smiles on their faces brightened our event.

On February 4, 1991, I was called by several community activists. There were some incident happen at the C-town supermarket. They ask me to attend the closed meeting for fact-finding with handful of people and my role is

1  
2 merely to help language problems between Mr. King,  
3 C-town manager, and the owner of C-town, and the  
4 community leaders, they would like to inquire about  
5 it. However, when I walked into the location which  
6 was Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant at the corner  
7 of 57th -- I mean on 99th Street, there were some  
8 stern, no smiling faces waiting for us.

9           After the brief introduction to the  
10 incident by Al Blake who was a community liaison  
11 and Assemblyman Jeffrey Aubury, Mr. Kim was asked  
12 to explain his version of the story. I had to  
13 stand by Mr. Kim at the center of the room. I was  
14 permitted to make a short comment before we got  
15 into the story. If I memorize, it says as I was  
16 certain to discover what had happened, it was very  
17 unfortunate incident. I am very, very sorry to  
18 young Bobby Yates (phonetic).

19           However, we all know that this was  
20 neither premeditated nor racially motivated  
21 incident. It was simply a conflict between  
22 misbehaved young child and the store manager which  
23 could happen to anyone, any society, even among any  
24 neighbors in the same ethnic groups. You are  
25 community leaders who cares about this neighborhood



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2 and lets find out the real fact and lets not be  
3 misled or exaggerated by the few ill feeling  
4 agitators, thank you.

5

6 Mr. Kim began his explanation to the  
7 incident with my consecutive interpretation. Mr.  
8 Kim's explanation over the instant differed greatly  
9 from the community perception. Many people in the  
10 audience express the concern that this incident  
11 might have been blown out of proportion. At this  
12 time, Assemblywoman Helen Marshall Carter called  
13 for Bobby Yates' mother to come forward and to tell  
14 her side of the story. A gentleman from the  
15 audience stood up and announced that he was the  
16 Yates' attorney and she could not comment as a  
17 result over the pending litigation.

18

19 Many assembled groups was displeased with  
20 the fact that attorney was brought into the closed  
21 community meeting. Assemblywoman Helen Marshall  
22 Carter asked Mrs. Yates to explain her side of the  
23 story if she wanted the community support. Then  
24 Reverend Dawkin Dautry (phonetic) stepped in and  
25 say that Mrs. Yates and her family has been members  
of his congregation for some time. Reverend Dautry  
continued that he believed in Mrs. Yates story more

1  
2 than Mr. Kim's. The Reverend then charged that I  
3 was making the story for Mr. Kim and they could not  
4 trust my interpretation.

5 I protested that and explained I am a  
6 certified U.S. Court Interpreter. I also explained  
7 that Mr. Kim had shown good faith to the community  
8 by appearing at this meeting without an attorney.  
9 After all, he was facing a third degree assault  
10 charge. In spite of a Reverend Dautry's statement,  
11 the community decided not to support Mrs. Yates due  
12 to her lack of cooperation. Furthermore, they  
13 spoke with the and said that we don't want an  
14 outsider to come into this community to do any  
15 protest or be an agitator. New York City had not  
16 quite recovered from the 1990 incident at the  
17 Church Avenue, Brooklyn.

18 People were tired or sick and tired of  
19 these unproductive racial disputes. Which side was  
20 right or wrong became irrelevant. No one gained  
21 anything from these ugly displays. I like to  
22 believe that Lefrak City incident was handled  
23 better than the Brooklyn incident because we had  
24 framework of dialog. Many community leaders were  
25 reasonable and fine people with whom I associated

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2 with for the past several years. My major concern  
3 was that language and cultural differences would  
4 create an insurmountable barrier.

5

6 What we learned from this incident is  
7 that prior planning and discussion can be used to  
8 moderate situations. Reaching the solution of this  
9 will facilitate this type of understanding. I hope  
10 this will provide some insight into the events  
11 surrounding the incident.

11

12 Thank you.

12

13 DR. NISHI: I want to introduce, now, the  
14 Reverend Glen Missick and Rabbi Robert N. Levine  
15 who are Co-Chairs of the 21st Century Coalition.  
16 The floor is yours. Our procedure, since you were  
17 not here when I explained, is that we're going to  
18 have the presentations and then you may ask  
19 questions of our fellow panelists. I would like to  
20 invite the members of the Advisory Committee if  
21 they have any questions for clarification and then  
22 we would like to open up the discussion to the  
23 floor.

23

24

25

26 RABBI LEVINE: We had a brief caucus,  
27 about ten seconds and decided who was going first  
28 and about what we would cover. Before I describe



1  
2 and members of the coalition as well, that it is  
3 our sacred obligation -- I will use the word  
4 "sacred." It is our sacred obligation to create  
5 an environment in our city in which there is  
6 opportunity for educational advancement, job  
7 growth, and dignity. Because if there's one thing  
8 that we have learned from each of our histories is  
9 that really only in a society where those  
10 opportunities are available to everyone will they  
11 ultimately be available to anyone.

12           And I think we understand this from our  
13 own particular historic perspectives. We do not  
14 come to the table trying to compare our histories  
15 of persecution. I think that it is quite easy for  
16 Afro-Americans and Jews and probably any other  
17 minority group to get together and compare  
18 victimizations and to try to compete for who has  
19 gotten a more raw deal.

20           The fact is you can't win that kind of  
21 analysis. And so I think it is somewhat spurious  
22 to come to a table and to say from my perspective  
23 as a White Male Jew, I understand, my people were  
24 in Egypt, my people went through the Holocaust,  
25 therefore, we understand. That's insulting and

1  
2 it's unfair and it's unfair I think for someone in  
3 the Afro-American community to claim likewise.  
4 What it does, I think, is to give us a certain  
5 feeling that there is something that is shared in  
6 our histories and our backgrounds that lead us to a  
7 common agenda, to a common vision of what society  
8 ought to be like.

9           And again, from the mutual interest point  
10 of view, that if we cannot create this for one  
11 group and to provide very precise opportunities and  
12 have the expectation that we are there for someone  
13 else, we can't have the expectation that they will  
14 be there for us. I think we bring that to the  
15 table. The other, I think, very special quality  
16 about the 21st Century Coalition is that we have  
17 two very distinct goals. One is to serve the  
18 educational needs and disadvantages of children in  
19 Central Harlem, and two is to create a climate for  
20 dialog between our communities.

21           It's important that they appear in our  
22 mission statement in this order because unlike many  
23 groups that meet together, go off on retreats for  
24 long periods of time, really get to know each other  
25 and then a year or two later decide to do something

1  
2 about the problems which drew them together in the  
3 first place, we sat down at the table and decided  
4 what could we do and from the projects that we work  
5 on, we try tried to build relationships.

6           This, in my judgment, is a very Jewish  
7 approach. When the people of Israel received --  
8 were about to receive the Tora (phonetic), the  
9 people's answer is not we will do it before we even  
10 fully understand its content. There will come the  
11 understanding and will come the bonding. I can't  
12 pretend that bonding has fully occurred. Glenn and  
13 I are close friends. I think we trust each other.  
14 I think we implicitly know we would be there for  
15 each other.

16           But, you know, the group gets together  
17 and each of us is working on projects and we come  
18 together on a monthly basis. We have had retreats,  
19 we have had socials and I know we plan meetings.  
20 My partner here is always saying, we also have to  
21 have social time to really be with each other. But  
22 the thrust is some of the problems and the problems  
23 have been impressive.

24           I'm just going to throw a couple on the  
25 table characteristic for a Rabbi. Some of the

1  
2 things that we have accomplished to date already  
3 have been impressive. We were told, for instance,  
4 that the nursery and kindergarten programs in  
5 District 5 were all thwarted by the fact that much  
6 of what was done at school could not be replicated  
7 or helped at home and an ingenious program called  
8 the Wings Pre-School program, it's a computerized  
9 method of learning, could easily be translated at  
10 home.

11 We could put a Wings unit into every  
12 school for the price of \$2,000 per set and we  
13 thought this was a marvelous way of bringing into  
14 the district a real impact. And I must point out  
15 that the coalition is made up not only of religious  
16 and social service types, but also corporations and  
17 individuals, all of whom are dedicated to the  
18 partnership. So it's important that we not only  
19 talk and do but at times also raise money. And so  
20 we were able to accomplish that.

21 The second project -- and there are some  
22 on the table, I'm only going to mention a few, the  
23 second project was to bring together a group of  
24 kids who are in the district and a very special  
25 Jewish summer camp for high school camping into a



1  
2 program we called Yushamakod (phonetic), Swahili  
3 for together and Yaha (phonetic) Hebrew for  
4 together. And for two weeks in this camp program,  
5 for two years, in fact, these kids live together,  
6 study together, argued together, put on plays  
7 together, and it was a phenomenal experience. And  
8 for that too, we had to raise \$30,000 per year to  
9 allow that program to happen.

10 We have taken kids and given them  
11 specific internships in law firms around the city.  
12 We're working on something that is very exciting  
13 now. Some of you may have heard of a program  
14 called "Facing History." Facing History which  
15 comes to us from Boston, the Boston area, is a case  
16 history approach of putting kids into situations of  
17 bigotry and persecution. The original case study  
18 was of instances within the Holocaust and we're  
19 bringing a Facing History into the New York area  
20 and specifically into the district to a phenomenal  
21 school called the Fredrick Douglas Academy. And if  
22 you have not been to the Fredrick Douglas Academy,  
23 you owe yourself a visit.

24 If you have not met one of the dynamic  
25 educators, Dr. Lorraine Monroe, you owe it to your

1  
2 yourself. She has, together with others, been able  
3 to accomplish a learning environment in Central  
4 Harlem that is among the most exciting I have ever  
5 seen. Facing History is now -- we're now bringing  
6 it into that school. And, of course, the teacher  
7 who came and said look, you know, it's important  
8 for us to engage this material. It's also  
9 important if we're facing history for Afro-American  
10 kids to look at case studies of their own  
11 persecution.

12           And I chimed in, as I said just a moment  
13 ago, I don't want this to be a contest of  
14 persecutions where people are constantly backed  
15 against the wall as to which persecution was more  
16 severe. But rather to be able to use each as a way  
17 to build bridges of understanding and ways in which  
18 we can see the other in situations as they unfold  
19 today. I was very moved. I came in late to the  
20 presentation where she talked about the ability to  
21 think of the times that you haven't responded  
22 appropriately to somebody else's pain and to  
23 somebody else's slight. I would dare say that  
24 that's a challenge to all of us. What we plan to  
25 do, and this is exciting, is to bring together

1  
2 groups that are using Facing History from different  
3 locations and cultural context into an inter-city  
4 conference that we will sponsor because one thing  
5 that we are moving towards in our coalition is not  
6 to be a bunch of adults coming into the district to  
7 plan for kids, but to work together with our kids  
8 in building intergroup harmony.

9           So, I guess my message is whenever you  
10 build a coalition, there has to be something in it  
11 for everyone there or it will not last. And I  
12 would suggest that instead of trying to build  
13 implicit truth which may never come, instead of  
14 trying to know each other well enough to begin to  
15 proceed, our approach has been to proceed while we  
16 are building the coalition and to have programs  
17 that are varied enough to assure everyone who sits  
18 in that coalition is given explicit  
19 responsibility.

20           No one can sit around our table if they  
21 are unwilling to share the burdens of fund-raising,  
22 of work, and effort. And though we have a long way  
23 to go, I think our success has been exciting.

24           DR. NISHI: Reverend Glenn Missick.

25           REVEREND MISSICK: I want to say that

1  
2 first of all, you remember those people who taught  
3 you in school and just the other day, I brought up  
4 a name to my wife and the name was Professor  
5 Nishi. She was one of my professors at Brooklyn  
6 College and I never knew what happened to her.  
7 It's been many years ago. So to walk in here and  
8 see her here, it's an honor. Thank you.

9           One of the people who really need to  
10 receive credit for the 21st Century Coalition is a  
11 lady by the name of Linda Terry. Linda is the  
12 catalyst behind this organization and she's the one  
13 who works so very hard. Sometimes we let her do  
14 all the work and take the credit. But, we want to  
15 pay homage to her. One of the projects also, in  
16 addition to what Rabbi Levine talked about that  
17 we're working on, is a tennis -- it's called a  
18 Fitzpatrick Tennis Tournament.

19           It is an organization run by a gentleman  
20 named Mr. Peters that operates in Harlem whereby  
21 young people are taught tennis all year-round. And  
22 in addition to the tennis, there are tutorial  
23 classes for them and so we are going to pick up on  
24 that and try to find some funding for that program  
25 as we do with many other programs.

1  
2 I want to move on to another coalition of  
3 which Rabbi Levine and I are very active in and  
4 that is the coalition of the New York City-Wide  
5 African American Clergy Counsel and the Board --  
6 New York Board of Rabbis. We came together -- the  
7 New York City -- the New York City African  
8 American, NYAC for short, came together out of the  
9 -- a need to see that an African American Mayor  
10 was elected in the City of New York.

11 I grew up in Brooklyn. In fact, I grew  
12 up in Crown Heights and I understand New York  
13 politics. We are an ethnic town. And when David  
14 Dinkins, back in 1988, said that he wanted to run  
15 for mayor, we got together as clergy behind him, as  
16 African American clergy, and we worked hard in a  
17 lot of ways.

18 I guess we can take a lot of credit for  
19 getting him elected. Unfortunately, we did not get  
20 him re-elected, but life goes on. We came together  
21 particularly with the Board of Rabbis out of the  
22 Crown Heights situation. A lot of things were  
23 happening after Crown Heights. And so we got  
24 together as the New York African American clergy  
25 counsel and we went to the Board of Rabbis and we

1  
2 asked for dialog and it was mutual.

3 I am one of the chairpersons. In fact, I  
4 am the Chairperson, city-wide, now, at this point,  
5 but we do have four different chairpersons, a  
6 chairperson in each borough. Since Staten Island  
7 is leaving us, we're going to say goodbye. And I'm  
8 the chairperson in Manhattan and we began to dialog  
9 with the Board of Rabbis. It was painful at first  
10 because the issues came up that this sister was  
11 talking about earlier.

12 The first thing that came up was  
13 Farrakhan and Jesse morning and Al Sharpton. What  
14 are you all going to do about them? We said  
15 nothing. We don't run them. They have their right  
16 to say what they want to say. And for about two  
17 years, we talked, we presented position papers and  
18 I believe that they will be publishing those papers  
19 in the near future. People like Bishop Norman  
20 Quick and Reverend Robert Foley from the Bronx who  
21 is the chairperson in the Bronx, many of us  
22 presented papers.

23 We had workshops and brotherhood  
24 synagogues with Rabbi Block. We had many people  
25 who came in and voiced their opinions. We said

1  
2 that we would speak frankly with each other. That  
3 we would come as humans who have been through  
4 similar struggles yet different and that we would  
5 speak frankly. As I said, that went on for a long  
6 time.

7           Out of that, let me tell you some of the  
8 results of that long struggle. We began to have  
9 conferences on racism and workshops on racism and  
10 anti-semitism. We started a Pre-Thanksgiving  
11 dinner at the Board of Rabbis which was a really  
12 good time for us to come together because we said  
13 that we would not just talk on an intellectual  
14 level, on an academic level, but we wanted to be  
15 models or role models to develop relationships with  
16 each other. And so out of that, we set up  
17 relationships between synagogues and churches and  
18 that's when I met Rabbi Levine.

19           Rodolph Shalom (phonetic) and Church of  
20 the Master in Harlem where I am the pastor, we  
21 developed a relationship. And so we went over to  
22 his Saita (phonetic) meal. Then after the Rodney  
23 King situation, we had a big rally at Rodolph  
24 Shalom where we bought the Mayor and Melba Moore  
25 and many other people came and it was a beautiful

1  
2 worship service whereby our ministers preached,  
3 Rabbis preached, African American ministers  
4 preached and it was really a coming together of the  
5 communities being one.

6           And even with our differences and saying  
7 that we want to work together, that this city is  
8 too small, we cannot continue in the way that we've  
9 been continuing. One of the great successes of  
10 that dialog in developing that relationship was the  
11 bringing in of the Reverend Jesse Jackson. Now, I  
12 must say to you because I was one of the people too  
13 and I brought up the whole issue of forgiveness, it  
14 is not only out of Christian context but I believe  
15 it is out of the Judea/Christian context. Every  
16 time the issue would come up about Farrakhan and  
17 Jesse Jackson with the Hymie town situation, I  
18 would say what about forgiveness, what about  
19 forgiveness.

20           In fact, last week we met with the Board  
21 of Rabbis and the issue came up again about  
22 Farrakhan and why didn't you all say something  
23 about him coming two weeks ago, that he wanted to  
24 come. And again, I said, don't you expect people  
25 to change. Don't you believe that people can





1  
2 over the world. And I'm sure some of you read  
3 about it. But we feel responsible for that reunion  
4 or for that healing situation there with such a  
5 powerful leader not only in the black community.

6           We have our own differences with Jesse  
7 Jackson and with Farrakhan and with Al Sharpton and  
8 with everybody else. But we felt that it is --  
9 that this is a time of healing and we need to come  
10 together. I often say that if we were to have an  
11 evasion tomorrow from Mars, you would find how  
12 quick we become brothers and sisters, whether we're  
13 Jewish, Japanese, Koreans, African Americans,  
14 whatever we are. We will all come together and  
15 hold hands and sing how we shall overcome. But we  
16 don't need to wait for that.

17           Unfortunately, as human beings we react.  
18 And let me, in closing, just give you one incident  
19 in which that happened in a personal way. My  
20 church, Church of the Master, many of you might  
21 have heard about, is a Presbyterian church. But  
22 over the years it has been a very prominent African  
23 American church. Many programs came out of this  
24 church: The Dance Theatre of Harlem was started  
25 there, the Morningside Community Center, Crossroads

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2 Africa was started by the first pastor, Dr. James  
3 H. Robinson, from Crossroads Africa, the Kennedy's  
4 got -- President Kennedy got the idea for the  
5 Peace Corp and on and on, many programs.

6 But somewhere things -- the church began  
7 to go down and eventually when I got there, it was  
8 basically a senior citizen church with the old  
9 church building closed up and we are still  
10 worshipping in the community center. This Sunday,  
11 we have to vote on whether we want to move back  
12 into the old church building. I have been in a  
13 prophetic way challenging our church -- and not  
14 white people, these are black people, African  
15 American people -- to say that we have a great  
16 past, but we cannot continue to say we used to.

17 We need to say what are we doing now and  
18 many of our members had moved out of the Harlem  
19 community out into Westchester and the Long Island  
20 area. So my job, as I saw it, was to challenge  
21 them. And I have been preaching hard for a long  
22 time and it is very frustrating to be a preacher  
23 because you say every Sunday, we need to do this  
24 and that and the People come back and say, Oh, they  
25 say the same old thing.

1  
2 In September, I had a phone call one  
3 night and it was a little child, a little 5-year  
4 old child, and she said Reverend Missick, I need  
5 you to come over and to pray for me because my  
6 cousin was just shot. I went over and I discovered  
7 that a little boy who grew up in our Sunday school,  
8 Shopan (phonetic) Morris, many of you have heard  
9 about, just two months ago, he was in a park at a  
10 rap concert, the Jackie Robinson Park on 145th  
11 Street, and a fight broke out between five kids and  
12 they were fighting with bottles first and then they  
13 began to pull out their guns. These are kids.

14 And it was this 13-year old kid, an honor  
15 student, a member of the little league who had just  
16 signed a contract to do a Levi's jeans commercial  
17 who had somehow disappeared from our church two  
18 years ago. In the eulogy I said I felt guilty. I  
19 said the church ought to feel guilty. I said white  
20 people ought to feel guilty and black people ought  
21 to feel guilty. This little 13-year old boy  
22 running, trying to get out of the way, got hit in  
23 the back of the head by the bullet and three hours  
24 later he died.

25 That was a rude awakening for me and for

1  
2 my church and we have initiated -- we have started  
3 Friday night service, we're calling, "pizza night"  
4 right now. You have to feed them, you have to feed  
5 them. And the kids -- the first night we had over  
6 250 kids to show up. I mean gang members, you name  
7 them. Guys walking in with the shoulder move like  
8 you can't touch me, but humble.

9           And I brought in Reverend Lucas, Reverend  
10 Anthony Lucas, who is Congressman Floyd Flake's  
11 assistant who is an expert in dealing with youth.  
12 And when he asked them to stand up for prayer at  
13 the end of service, over 75 of them stood up. They  
14 were saying here we are, what are you going to do  
15 with us. I say that to say, let me bring it home.  
16 In the funeral, there were several whites at the  
17 funeral and I was very frank in my eulogy.

18           I received a letter from a Jewish  
19 gentleman and he was very diplomatic and he said  
20 that was such a moving sermon and you hit the right  
21 things etc., etc. And at the end of his letter he  
22 said that my daughter went to school with Shopan  
23 and he said I like what you said but you need to  
24 realize that when you are saying things, for  
25 example, you said that whites ought to feel guilty,

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2 that there were white people in the audience and  
3 etc., etc.

4

5 I sat down immediately and wrote him a  
6 very nice long diplomatic letter. There was anger,  
7 yet I saw the positive side of his letter and I  
8 wrote a very positive, yet to the point, letter. I  
9 said, one of the things -- and I passed in white  
10 churches, I said one of the things I always say to  
11 them is that I will not hold back my prophetic role  
12 as a preacher.

13

14 I will say what I feel and what I feel  
15 the Lord is saying to my heart. I said now what I  
16 expected to hear from you -- because I also said  
17 that blacks were guilty, whites were guilty,  
18 everybody is guilty. All the violence around and  
19 the guns out here and everyday now you're hearing  
20 our kids killing each other. We all ought to be  
21 guilty but I said we need to do something about it  
22 not just feel the guilt, and I challenged him.

23

24 I said what I wanted to hear from you is  
25 that you would do something. You would say,  
26 Reverend Missick, I want to contribute something.  
27 Two days after that letter got out, my secretary  
28 said that he called back. And to make a long story

1  
2 short, this gentleman happens to be -- I can't  
3 pronounce his name. I think Bouvrof (phonetic)  
4 something like that, he happens to be the director  
5 of The Guiding Light soap opera and he called back  
6 and said right now I'm producing a play.

7 I think it's "Two Roads to Freedom" and  
8 it has to do with the life story of Frederick  
9 Douglas. I would like to bring that play up to  
10 your Friday night program, free of charge and we  
11 booked him and this Friday night he is coming with  
12 the play and we're going to put it on. Those are  
13 the kinds of things that are happening when we  
14 begin to wrestle with each other and when we begin  
15 to speak frankly with each other.

16 Those are the kinds of healing forces  
17 that come out and begin to heal the racial and  
18 ethnic strife in our community. Let me close by  
19 saying this: Someone said that the worst -- the  
20 only thing worse than murder is for someone being  
21 in the desert and for that person to discover water  
22 and to hold it and not tell anybody else. We can  
23 change this city.

24 It is only as we come together as human  
25 beings that we recognize our differences but

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realizing that we can overcome our differences.

God bless you.

DR. NISHI: We have another pair of panelists, Aiyong Choi and Mr. David Addams. I should say with regard to Mr. Hegazy with the Islam Group Peace Association that it was our intention to have a team of Muslims, Christians, and Jews. However, we were not able to engage the other members of such a team and Mr. Hegazy is here and we would be very pleased to hear briefly from you.

MR. HEGAZY: Peace among everyone of you. Just thank you for giving me the chance to talk. I am here to present my experience, whatever happen, working for almost 15 years. Because of what I saw against Muslim and against Islam, someone have to do something as a Muslim. And I start to be open to other friends, Jewish and Christian, and we start to have our job. One of them called taking the next step, and it was based on the issue of Palestine or Israel. Then after a while, we start to talk about meeting other people like International Conference for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim dialog.

But all this encouraged me and encourage



1  
2 a lot of Muslim to be one of the groups because we  
3 feel as a Muslim coming from abroad, as immigrant,  
4 that the west atmosphere that we have it here which  
5 almost is Christian or Jew or other things which  
6 are not Muslim, are against us. And we start to  
7 suffer, our families start to suffer. All these  
8 things, including members of the family.

9           Especially women when they go out wearing  
10 covering on their head and all this. What we are  
11 trying to say to our brother and sister in the  
12 community, we are trying to give them some kind of  
13 knowledge and understanding about Islam. Islam is  
14 universal. When a Muslim reach the point to  
15 understand his teaching and the Koran which was  
16 revealed to the prophet Mohammed about 1,400 years  
17 ago.

18           It is how to evaluate yourself to be a  
19 good human being. Many of you and many of the  
20 people that I met they don't understand Islam at  
21 all. They take it like something new, something  
22 come against their face. The Muslim, in general,  
23 and special Arabs are the descent of Abraham from  
24 the first son Ishmael (phonetic). The second son  
25 which is Isaac, these people are brothers, meaning

1

2 we are cousin.

3

4 How many people speak about that? Let  
5 alone, it was Jacob who was called Israel. We have  
6 to get out what is common between us and this is  
7 one of the reason that I suggest that everyone who  
8 think that he is a leader in his group and  
9 especially the religious leader as Rabbi, priest,  
10 and man, they should, if really they are sincere,  
11 to have this good acceptance in co-existence  
12 peacefully on this land called America.

13

14 To open their door at least a few hours a  
15 week and just call other people to come to them.  
16 Give them a basic understanding of their own  
17 faith. Let them talk together, have a question and  
18 answer. How we can reach our mind which the mind  
19 is the most powerful thing that God give to us? If  
20 you don't use your mind, we will lose our mind.  
21 How many people are just walking the street? How  
22 many people are hating each other? But why? For  
23 ignorance.

24

25 Some people because he is white, you  
think that he is better than a black man or a black  
person and the same thing exists when people are  
talking about Farrakhan. Yes, Farrakhan is a

1

2 Muslim. A Muslim is the one who accepts the  
3 wonders of God. But is the teaching of Farrakhan  
4 the full Islamic? No. And I am not saying this by  
5 myself. But if you talk with a lot of religions,  
6 he take part of it and he leave part of it. Islam  
7 is universal.

8 Islam, it is the continuance of God's way  
9 of life, and you have to exist on this earth in a  
10 peaceful way with yourself, with your neighbor,  
11 your brother and sister. Yes, we have some  
12 difference. If we have the courage, only if you  
13 have the courage, we can sit down and talk. If we  
14 have hypocrisy, we never solve our problems.  
15 Hypocrisy will not lead us to have peace between  
16 each other but strength and courage. As we see a  
17 lot of leaders, they have the courage enough.

18 Let me mention Sadat in our recent life,  
19 what he did and so on and so on. Why we have to  
20 continue our life hating each other? This should  
21 stop and the only way to stop it is by educating  
22 ourself not in political way, because everyone of  
23 us have his root inside, whether he want or not,  
24 because he is created by someone. Whatever he call  
25 him. I know him, Allah, in French, he is created.

1

2 He never create himself and inside of him he have  
3 this kind of power. He say, I am the right man.

4 I am the right faith. No. The right  
5 faith is to live in peace and accept other people  
6 living with you in peace and dignity and have  
7 justice between them and no one is better than the  
8 other. No white is better than the black, no black  
9 is better than a white, no Arab is better than  
10 another Arab. Everyone is equal. Everyone is  
11 created by someone which call Creator.

12 People have the right to select the  
13 name. But as a Muslim and as the Koran teach us,  
14 the name is Allah which means the one and only  
15 Creator of the world.

16 Thank you so much and I appreciate your  
17 time.

18 DR. NISHI: Now, we have another pair and  
19 I think what I'm going to do is just move down here  
20 so that we can have Ms. Aiyoun Choi and Mr. David  
21 Addams of the Black-Korean Mediation Project. I'm  
22 sorry but we want to be sure to leave time for some  
23 questions and interaction with the audience and the  
24 panelists.

25 MS. CHOI: Good afternoon everyone. My

1

2 name is Aiyoung Choi and I am Co-Chair of a project  
3 that we're here to talk about and to my right is my  
4 Co-Chair for the project, David Addams. I want to  
5 just go into the introduction of the project and  
6 then David will pick up and we're planing to share  
7 the five or ten minutes that we have.

8 DR. NISHI: I'm sorry that our time is  
9 getting briefer. I'm sorry.

10 MS. CHOI: Okay. Our effort is called  
11 the Black Korean Mediation Project and it  
12 essentially came about as a result of a group of  
13 private citizens who became very worried and  
14 concerned about relations in New York City after  
15 the Los Angeles riots last spring. In the spring  
16 of '92, that is.

17 So over a period of several months, we  
18 tried to come up with something that could be done  
19 among members within the various ethnic communities  
20 and the City here that would provide an opportunity  
21 for us to work together, get to know each other,  
22 and to somehow help prevent tensions from rising  
23 and help solve problems within the community that  
24 would be within our ability to do so.

25 The result is the Black-Korean Mediation

1  
2 Project. The basic concept is that there are 22  
3 people who have become trained as New York State  
4 Certified Community Mediators. These 22 people  
5 consist of 11 Koreans and 11 Black mediators. With  
6 the training that they have received, they will be  
7 working in five different community mediation  
8 centers that are located throughout the city.

9           That includes Staten Island, Brooklyn,  
10 Queens, the Bronx, and Manhattan, and they will be  
11 working as volunteers, going through initially a  
12 3-month training program which is a -- we call it  
13 an apprenticeship and at the end of that term they  
14 will be skillful enough to mediate the kinds of  
15 problems that are referred to the community  
16 mediation centers.

17           Our goal is to create an opportunity for  
18 members of the two communities to get to know each  
19 other and we thought that by working together, that  
20 would be one of the best ways to do so. We have  
21 just completed the training program and the  
22 assignments to the community centers are beginning  
23 this week. And so, the news is going to be going  
24 out that there are trained mediators working as  
25 teams, one Black and one Korean mediator who will

1  
2 not only be there to resolve any inter-ethnic types  
3 of disputes that may arise, but they will be  
4 working as volunteers for any other kinds of  
5 problems that will be brought to the centers.

6           These people are all volunteers. They  
7 all have full-time jobs with the exception of two  
8 people, I think, who are graduate students and they  
9 come from all walks of life. We have a nurse, we  
10 have someone in banking, a lawyer, I think three  
11 community people who work in community-based  
12 organizations, a couple of people who work in  
13 government agencies, etc.

14           Thank you.

15           MR. ADDAMS: At the beginning of Ms.  
16 Choi's remarks, she introduced herself and myself  
17 and it's one of the signs that she has been trained  
18 in co-mediation. If you find someone doing that,  
19 you'll know that they've been trained in  
20 co-mediation and what that means is that we've  
21 trained 11 teams of people who have really begun to  
22 think and work together as a team.

23           They don't think just about themselves.  
24 The process of co-mediation is one where you begin  
25 modeling the kind of relationship for people that

1  
2 you think is one that is best for them. You see a  
3 Black and a Korean working together, resolving  
4 conflicts, resolving their own conflicts in very  
5 positive and constructive ways. Mediators, like  
6 every other human being, have their own ideas about  
7 how to do things.

8           But the process of learning mediation  
9 allows people to know that there are ways to work  
10 those differences out. That there is middle  
11 ground, there is common ground and can take those  
12 lessons to people in conflict. Under the  
13 circumstances, really the goal of this project is  
14 to have not only the bridge that has been created  
15 between these two communities of people learning  
16 how to work together, learning about each other's  
17 culture, but then being able to take that into the  
18 community so the people can see how to do it and  
19 what actually works.

20           One of the things that happened during  
21 the training that I think is very symptomatic of  
22 what's possible is during one of the training role  
23 plays, Ms. Choi, in fact, and another mediation  
24 student who is Black were mediating a dispute and  
25 they were speaking to the Korean disputant and they



1

2 were asking her a question and the Korean disputant  
3 kept saying, I don't know, I don't know.

4

Ms. Choi knew, because she's Korean, that  
5 this really meant no. The Black mediator really  
6 had no idea that this woman had made up her mind.  
7 It sounded to her like the woman didn't know. But  
8 the relationship of the co-mediators allowed them  
9 to then talk and for Ms. Choi to then educate the  
10 other woman as to what was actually going on so  
11 that they could then have that basis of  
12 understanding in terms of then how to relate to the  
13 parties and then how to move forward from there and  
14 that's really the kind of modeling that we really  
15 want to do.

16

This is just the beginning. We started  
17 with the relationship between the Black and Korean  
18 communities but we really have already begun  
19 talking about ways in which to build those same  
20 bridges between a variety of communities so that  
21 ultimately all communities know how to work  
22 together and have people who actively are committed  
23 to building bridges between those two communities.

24

Thank you.

25

DR. NISHI: I think what we would like to

1  
2 do right about now is to have the panelists, if you  
3 have questions of each other, and then I would like  
4 to ask members of our Advisory Committee, if they  
5 have any questions, for further clarification or  
6 for sequences or next steps or obstacles to be  
7 identified and then we would like to open up to the  
8 audience.

9 Are there members of the panel who would  
10 like to ask questions of each other?

11 Ms. Baskins.

12 MS. BASKINS: I would like to know about  
13 your group. Are you working with young people?  
14 Are you teaching young people to be conflict  
15 resolution people? To me, that's real important.  
16 It's nice that you're doing it for adults, but are  
17 you doing it for high school students?

18 MR. ADDAMS: The project has not gotten  
19 to that level yet but the organizations involved in  
20 the project have different activities going on  
21 teaching youth conflict resolution skills.

22 DR. NISHI: Any other questions here of  
23 the co-panelists of each other?

24 RABBI LEVINE: Let me ask a general  
25 question really to anyone on the panel. I think

1  
2 each us is engaged in a specific problem and a  
3 particular venure. Looking at it in a broader  
4 perspective, do we see these mediation efforts,  
5 coalitions, etc.? Are these a reaction to what we  
6 see as a fraying of intergroup relationships?

7 In other words, we're trying to hold on  
8 to something that we see is disappearing in our  
9 community or is this -- can this be viewed  
10 positively as an example of racial harmony and  
11 intergroup harmony that is happening to the City?  
12 I want people to respond to that.

13 DR. NISHI: Ms. Pogrebin.

14 MS. POGREBIN: I'm sure you know, Rabbi,  
15 that in the Jewish community there is a very  
16 powerful mythology that Blacks and Jews have a long  
17 history of cooperation and coalition. That there  
18 is a real resistance to recognizing that even in  
19 the so called good old days, African Americans did  
20 not necessarily feel comfortable about the  
21 association that we as Jews considered a friendship  
22 and an equal basis.

23 In fact, we have learned that African  
24 Americans considered our interests, help,  
25 patronizing, unequal, and that there has been a

1  
2 great hunger for more symmetry and more equality.  
3 So I think the first thing that has to happen in  
4 the Jewish community, again speaking of what is a  
5 direct result of our kind of dialog, is that we as  
6 leaders in our respective communities, go back and  
7 educate those communities as to the feelings on the  
8 other side.

9           We are the bridging -- we are the  
10 cutting edge. We are the bridges. So I very often  
11 -- because I speak constantly in the Jewish world,  
12 I am trying to translate Black attitude to Jews who  
13 are still living in the good old days of the  
14 so-called Civil Rights Movement. And these folks  
15 generally say to me, why aren't they grateful. We  
16 were the ones who went to the Mississippi Summer.  
17 We are the ones who sent our young people for the  
18 voter registration. We are the ones who walked  
19 arm-in-arm with Martin Luther King in the great  
20 Washington March. Why have they forsaken us?

21           To translate the reality as perceived by  
22 African Americans, is, I think, to do a service  
23 that is a by-product of dialog. So that what I  
24 really want to say about all of us is I hear  
25 different functions going on here. The function of

1  
2 a very small and extremely hard working painful  
3 dialog group is to decode behavior in a safe space  
4 so that you can go back and translate and be a  
5 bridge.

6           The function of other kinds of groups is  
7 to do the actual work at the grass-roots, is to go  
8 immediately into activism. Not everyone has that  
9 purpose or that function. A small group is not  
10 necessarily capable of going in there and doing the  
11 kinds of fund raising and the kinds of education  
12 work that some of you have talked about and yet I  
13 would like to recommend that a whole series of  
14 options be offered to communities so that people  
15 can plug into that particular expression of  
16 inter-group harmony that best suits them and not  
17 to, in any way, rank them to create new hierarchies  
18 of what works best.

19           What you should be doing is asking the  
20 question of how much of it is positive and how much  
21 of it is reaction to negative.

22           DR. NISHI: Reverend Missick.

23           REVEREND MISSICK: I support that and  
24 there is an excellent article today in the Daily  
25 News, Raspberry (phonetic), I think. It's an

1  
2 editorial. I don't know how many of you read  
3 this. I think you need to read it. I can't  
4 recollect all he said. But those of us as leaders  
5 need to be careful that we don't continue to use  
6 the downtrodden position of our people.

7           And he talked about feminism with women  
8 and Blacks with other Blacks, etc., etc., and began  
9 to use that and say, look at us. We're in poverty,  
10 etc., and we begin to elevate ourselves. I think  
11 that these kinds of experiences that we're hearing  
12 about today are very helpful. But that which is  
13 really even more helpful, and I'd like to use the  
14 United Negro College Fund motto, not a handout but  
15 a hand.

16           And part of the example that I gave about  
17 my church, and that was very personal, was that we  
18 now as African Americans -- and I'm talking to  
19 African Americans -- we need to now start to help  
20 ourselves. There are things that we can do for  
21 ourselves that we don't need others to do for us.  
22 There's a certain amount of dignity in working,  
23 helping ourselves. At the same time, let me say  
24 this to those of you who are White, that you need  
25 to also be careful and to realize that you too are

1  
2 privileged and that's what my closing remarks were  
3 all about.

4           That if you have found water in the  
5 desert, then it is your obligation as our Muslim  
6 brother said, as a child of God or of Allah, to  
7 help the other brother who has not found that  
8 water. You get what I'm talking about? We need to  
9 do that and I hope that this is what this is all  
10 about. It is not about elevating ourselves, I'm  
11 here and I'm going to keep you down, as Raspberry  
12 talked about, but that I want to get you up to  
13 where I am so that we can live together.

14           DR. NISHI: Ms. Choi.

15           MS. CHOI: I really like the remarks of  
16 both of those speakers as to whether our particular  
17 project might be a reaction to a negative or  
18 something that's positive. It is both. We have to  
19 admit that perhaps had it not been for the Los  
20 Angeles riots, we may not have come so quickly  
21 together. Although, as you all know, things in New  
22 York City -- there were several incidents  
23 involving Korean and Black merchants, Korean  
24 merchants and Black customers. So it was also kind  
25 of a natural concern between those two communities

1  
2 to want to come together.

3           So it was a reaction to certain incidents  
4 that had occurred which we wanted to make sure that  
5 we could do our best to prevent from happening.  
6 However, the mediators that we have put together  
7 that will be working in the communities, will by  
8 and large be hearing the everyday kinds of  
9 conflicts that occur between people, between  
10 parties, that are anything from landlord/tenant to  
11 neighbors, colleagues in an office. These are  
12 individual and inter-personal disputes that fray  
13 the quality of everyday life for everybody, and in  
14 that sense, the contributions that we're hoping to  
15 make to the larger communities.

16           We are obviously an inter-cultural group  
17 but we -- most of our volunteer hours, I would  
18 guess -- correct me if I'm wrong, David -- will be  
19 spent on trying to heal the tensions among regular  
20 people, normal everyday people, engaged in their  
21 day-to-day conflict.

22           DR. NISHI: Thank you.

23           Are there any other panelists? I'd like  
24 to invite members of the Advisory Committee to  
25 question any of our panelists. Mr. Ghazi Khankan,



1  
2 did you wish to speak?

3 MR. KHANKAN: Yes.

4 DR. NISHI: Mr. Ghazi Khankan is a member  
5 of the New York State Advisory Committee which we  
6 did not have and opportunity to introduce earlier.

7 MR. KHANKAN: If we're going to put a  
8 nutshell on what the commission is doing, is really  
9 saying that we indeed came to these shores on  
10 different ships, but now we are all in the same  
11 boat. We either rode together safely or rode  
12 separately and sink separately.

13 As a Muslim, also, I have been taught  
14 that God speaking to us said that all human beings  
15 -- he did not say all Arabs or all you Africans or  
16 Americans, he said all human beings, have been  
17 created from a pair, a male and a female, and made  
18 you into nations and tribes so that you may come to  
19 know and work with each other.

20 Indeed the most honored in the sight of  
21 God is the person. Not the woman, not the man, but  
22 the person who is most righteous. One comment  
23 which I would like to bring to our panelists is the  
24 fact that there were some terms used which attract  
25 my attention. Let's see how we can resolve them.

1  
2 Margaret Rosa, the commissioner, said Jews and  
3 Gentiles. What happens to the White Gentiles?  
4 What is a Gentile?

5 Why Jew and Gentile. Why not people of  
6 religion? I'd like you to think about that.

7 Number 2, the term anti-semitism. There are more  
8 Arab Semites (phonetic) in the world than there are  
9 Jews. Therefore, the term "anti-semitism" really  
10 means anti-Jewish and that should be made clarified  
11 instead of just saying anti-Semitic.

12 And the brother mentioned Judeo Christian  
13 heritage. I think America has grown now. Its  
14 horizon has widened. There are now about 9 million  
15 Muslim Americans and therefore this heritage is  
16 really Judeo/Christian/Islamic heritage and this  
17 way we become inclusive.

18 REVEREND MISSICK: I accept that  
19 correction.

20 MS. POGREBIN: May I say one thing about  
21 that?

22 DR. NISHI: Yes.

23 MS. POGREBIN: In another part of my  
24 life, I've worked for many years on a Jewish  
25 Palestinian dialog and a lot of consciousness

1  
2 raising happens in that group because you can't  
3 make any assumptions about Jews and Christians  
4 because the Palestinians are both Christian and  
5 Muslim.

6           So if you want to have your horizons  
7 widened, you get into a group where you're meeting  
8 with ethnic, political, and international issues  
9 all at the same time.

10           DR. NISHI: I think it would be excellent  
11 now, members of our panel, but as well as members  
12 of the audience, to suggest names of other groups  
13 who have been engaged in such bridging-kind of  
14 activities. Are there any other members of our  
15 Advisory Committee who have a question?

16           Ms. Halpern.

17           MS. HALPERN: First of all, one group I'd  
18 like to mention is the National Conference of  
19 Christians and Jews which has just changed its  
20 name. I think they are now the N.C.C.J. because it  
21 was too limiting and restricting in the old name  
22 and they have been doing a lot of things that are  
23 similar.

24           DR. NISHI: I'll just summarize what you  
25 said. That the National Conference of Christians

1  
2 and Jews has recently changed its name to N.C.C.J.  
3 to be more inclusive of our right of increasing  
4 diversity. I think vocabulary is something that we  
5 can all use to learn to increase our inclusiveness  
6 as well as our sensitivity.

7           One of the privileges of being Chair is  
8 that I can invite myself to ask a question and I  
9 would like to ask this: What do you consider to be  
10 the major obstacles to your proceeding toward your  
11 extremely meritorious goals?

12           MR. ADDAMS: Just to respond, I would say  
13 it's really the sheer effort of getting people to  
14 take the time to make the commitment. We live in a  
15 very busy city. Everybody has a million and one  
16 things on their agenda and people often forget how  
17 important it is to make sure that the relationships  
18 between the individuals and the groups that share  
19 this really large community -- this large city,  
20 are important.

21           And so it's often very difficult to get  
22 people to take the time to focus on the issues  
23 before there is a problem as opposed to after a  
24 problem has arisen.

25           REVEREND MISSICK: Along those same

1  
2 lines, the example I gave of the kid getting  
3 killed, Shopan Morris, it was something that  
4 slapped me and it hit me hard. But what we are  
5 doing is we are reacting. Unfortunately that is  
6 the way we operate. Crown Heights is a reaction.  
7 This is why we all came together.

8           We need to recognize the problem and see  
9 it way up front and begin to do more analysis but  
10 not paralysis of analysis. We need to begin to do  
11 more of that up front. We need to use more  
12 prevention and cure.

13           DR. NISHI: Good proactive.

14           REVEREND MISSICK: Proactive, right.

15           DR. NISHI: What I'd like to do now is to  
16 invite members of our audience to briefly comment  
17 or question, and please use the microphones at the  
18 side aisle.

19           VOICE: My name is Hasan Ali (phonetic),  
20 from the community. I have a correction about the  
21 Muslim people. In the world, there are the media  
22 who blame the whole Muslim. In Texas, Koresh in  
23 Texas or the other guy, he killed like 18 people  
24 but they never say the Christian doing those things  
25 or the other people. The people born in London,

1  
2 they never said doing. But who? The Muslim  
3 people.

4           If one Muslim doing one bad things, they  
5 blaming the Muslims. But my point is this: The  
6 individual has to bring to justice. How come they  
7 blame the whole Muslim community? And the other  
8 thing is that one of my community people, he went  
9 to Florida and he going to the Immigration  
10 Department and they say, you Muhammad or you are  
11 the suspect and you doing those things and they  
12 treat him too bad.

13           Like the Chairman of the Commission on  
14 Civil Rights, for meeting next time, please bring  
15 more like the Muslim who like the Rabbi or the  
16 Minister, we call the Imam (phonetic), to bring  
17 more Imam. Then we can hear something from the  
18 Muslim people in the New York City Mayor Office.  
19 More than 800,000 Muslim people in the New York  
20 City and in the United States. We have about 8 or  
21 9 million in the world, 4 billion Muslims in the  
22 more than 56 Muslim country alone.

23           DR. NISHI: Thank you very much.

24           Any other comments? Yes, please.

25           VOICE: My name is Christina Tustin

1  
2 (phonetic). I'm a volunteer of the Increase the  
3 Peace Volunteer Corps. and I'm excited to see the  
4 true diversity represented by the panelists and  
5 what all of you talked about is working with our  
6 own communities first. And I think that that is  
7 such an important point. I'm kind of curious.  
8 What are some of your coping skills, to use  
9 textbook terms, at dealing with the resistance from  
10 your own community about confronting some of these  
11 issues?

12 DR. NISHI: Lets have just one response  
13 here. Yes, Rabbi.

14 RABBI LEVINE: As both Letty and Glen  
15 said so well, each of our communities is very slow  
16 to let go of our own sense of persecution, our own  
17 stereotypes about the other. It strikes me that  
18 every Yom Kippur, every synagogue reads the same  
19 prophetic text from Isaiah which forces us to  
20 interpret the fast that we take on in Yom Kippur in  
21 a very ethical way.

22 It is to say the fast has to lead us to  
23 unlocking our hearts, to housing the homeless and  
24 feeding the hungry. And the last verse of that  
25 command is not to hide ourselves from our own flesh

1  
2 and blood, not from our own people, not from our  
3 own particular group, but for our own flesh and  
4 blood which I think is a way of saying that we have  
5 to go beyond our own historic hurts, our desire to  
6 retreat unto ourselves.

7           And in our case, there were 6 million  
8 Jews who died there. How can anything compare to  
9 that? And to open our hearts and open our eyes and  
10 to see the other human being and not to put that  
11 aside, but simply to say that, yes, that's our  
12 pain. What's your pain? And to really -- and to  
13 ask that question in a way which is not defensive  
14 and which is not competitive. To say there's  
15 plenty of hurt to go around, but I need to know  
16 you.

17           DR. NISHI: Thank you.

18           Yes.

19           VOICE: I am Dr. Vat Morsanis (phonetic),  
20 President of the India Peace Organization and also  
21 a member of the U.M.P.A.C. which is United Muslim  
22 Political Action Committee. I would like to  
23 address my questions or issues to Rabbi Levine,  
24 Reverend Missick. The issues that we've already  
25 mentioned are inclusiveness. I think also



1  
2 politically we're now talking of globalization and  
3 enlargement, global enlargement and I think that  
4 our brothers have already mentioned that.

5 MR. KHANKAN: The issue of inclusiveness  
6 of the Islamic faith and U.M.P.A.C., United Muslim  
7 Political Action Committee, is a group of  
8 Afro-American Muslims who are very, very active  
9 during the recent Mayoral elections. However,  
10 while all the Reverends were speaking at a recent  
11 press conference for Mayor Dinkins, the U.M.P.A.C.,  
12 which I am on, was not given a voice and I notice  
13 this.

14 The Reverends and the Rabbis have been  
15 given a voice. But it's about time I think that  
16 the Islamic community is included in the American  
17 political process, number one, if global peace is  
18 to occur. And my second problem goes to Ms.  
19 Pogrebin which is that you mentioned Mandela and  
20 his pro-Palestine position. I think that it is  
21 important that the relations under the current  
22 P.L.O. should also be inclusive of the Palestinian  
23 viewpoint. And if that is not included, why not?

24 DR. NISHI: I'm going to have to say --

25 REVEREND MISSICK: She answered her

1  
2 question.

3 DR. NISHI: I think the questions were  
4 rhetorical, if I am correct.

5 VOICE: They were, actually.

6 MS. POGREBIN: I don't consider the last  
7 one rhetorical at all because the reaction of Jews  
8 to Mandela's visit in June of 1991, I believe it  
9 was very different from the reaction of most  
10 American Jews today. It took a very long time for  
11 the American Jewish community to understand the  
12 changes in the P.L.O. There was some educating  
13 necessary there and there also was some educating,  
14 I might add, on the part of Mandela that admitted  
15 that he was aware of the degree of sensitivity  
16 involved.

17 He studied during those 27 years in  
18 prison but he wasn't in touch with real human  
19 reactions of the politics of the moment.

20 VOICE: My name is Rhonda Taylor. I am  
21 from the New York City Commission on Human Rights  
22 and I accompanied my boss, Raymond Wayne  
23 (phonetic). I had no intention of getting up to  
24 the mike and speaking because that is not me and I  
25 am a young adult but there was something said that

1  
2 I really had to get clarified. I think this group  
3 getting together is an excellent job.

4 Reverend, Rabbi, I commend you and I want  
5 more information on your organization. But getting  
6 back to my question. I believe your name is  
7 Letty. There was a statement you made, a statement  
8 about Jesse Jackson. The reason why the Jewish  
9 community cannot forgive him is because forgiveness  
10 is not a part of your belief. My thing is this:  
11 Because I'm young, okay, and I deal with the  
12 conflicts everyday, if we cannot forgive each  
13 other, then all of us coming together today makes  
14 absolutely no sense.

15 The basis for us coming together is not  
16 only to get an understanding but to be able to  
17 forgive. If we can't forgive, what sense does it  
18 make? There must be some understanding and I just  
19 wanted you to explain it to me because when I tell  
20 you I am in conflict sitting there and I'm like no,  
21 no.

22 MS. POGREBIN: The problem with having to  
23 summarize nine years of dialog in five minutes is  
24 that you do shorthand. Judeaism has a very strong  
25 ethical forgiveness and we deal with it, as the

1  
2 Rabbi will explain, in many contexts, certainly on  
3 Yom Kippur in a very, very focused way.

4           What we were being asked to do in terms  
5 of the Holocaust is you never can reach a point of  
6 utter forgiveness of the Holocaust or in our  
7 opinion, it will happen again. Our word is never  
8 again. Although it's been appropriated, I think it  
9 is felt in every heart of every Jew and it's what  
10 fuels us in terms of, for instance, response to the  
11 Bosnia crisis because we see too much of what we  
12 recognize.

13           I would like to submit to you that there  
14 is a piece of us that will never forgive the Nazis.  
15 A piece of us that will never forgive people who  
16 beheaded babies in Bosnia, a piece of us that  
17 simply can't reach the point where we say, forgive,  
18 forget, and start again. We're ready to move on  
19 but we won't achieve something that I consider a  
20 former forgiveness that is tenable for me as a Jew.

21           DR. NISHI: I'm sorry to say that we're  
22 going to have to --

23           VOICE: I was asking about Jesse  
24 Jackson. I'm here defending him. He hasn't  
25 beheaded anyone.

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RABBI LEVINE: This is a very complex theology. In one sentence, I've never done this before. No clergy can speak on this. There is a distinction, I think, in our faith of forgiveness. There is a cardinal effect virtue in the Christian community and a sincere act of religious faith. So it is in Judaism. Judaism, though says the following:

If there has been a hurt done person-to-person, before forgiveness can be given, the person has to do acts of repentance, has to come forth and say I am sincerely sorry. They can't just say it, they have to mean it and back it up with concrete actions. Reverend Missick is quite right. There have been -- particularly in the case of Reverend Jackson, there has been a transformation and a sincerity that the Jewish community has been slow to recognize.

And his appearance at the New York Board of Rabbis was symbolic, I think, of that harmony which I think is a model of what I think all of us need to do.

DR. NISHI: This was a very complicated sentence. I regret to say that we will have only

1  
2 one comment and question from the audience and I  
3 would like to make an announcement following that.

4 VOICE: My name is Wesley Gray and I'm  
5 from the leadership of Richard E. Green. My  
6 question is -- and may I also add my function as  
7 the program manager of the association. And my  
8 question is for the panel at large, is that indeed  
9 our children who are challenged to do the right  
10 thing, if you will, just relating to my job working  
11 with merchants who happen to be Koreans, Muslim,  
12 Christians, and Jews, I find that those that own  
13 grocery stores, if you will, sell drug  
14 paraphernalia.

15 They sell things that my brother Richard  
16 calls liquid crack, the 40's and so forth, the  
17 beer. The children are not supposed to be able to  
18 purchase it. They purchase blunts, they get high,  
19 come back to the merchants and rob them or hurt  
20 them or whatever. So there seems to be a certain  
21 amount of hypocrisy. I have a problem with walking  
22 down the street and I find that there are some  
23 so-called health stores owned by stores who sell  
24 drugs outrightly that the police know about.

25 The mayor-elect Guiliani, has an

1  
2 initiative he is going to initiate. The police  
3 will be given the right to make drug sweeps and  
4 arrest pushers. My point is that we have those of  
5 us who are so called leaders in the religious  
6 community and the educational community and the  
7 community at large who seem to turn their backs on  
8 this. We have a collective denial syndrome in that  
9 we say that it's okay to drink, to consume certain  
10 legal drugs, if you will, and that it is not okay  
11 to consume the others.

12 So I just want to just share this with  
13 you. I think something has to be addressed.

14 REVEREND MISSICK: What's the question?

15 DR. NISHI: It's a comment.

16 VOICE: It is a comment. I'll just leave  
17 it at that.

18 DR. NISHI: Thank you very much.

19 There are several announcements I would  
20 like to make before we ask the second panel to come  
21 to the platform. At five o'clock, we're going to  
22 have a performance by Dr. Laz & the CURE, a  
23 fascinating group, and there will be also wine and  
24 cheese. I want to remind you of that. I also want  
25 to introduce Mr. Robert Sherman. Is he present?

1

2 There he is.

3

4 Mr. Robert Sherman who was not able to be  
5 present earlier, who has, together with Mr. Arthur  
6 Barnes, co-chaired the Chemical Bank's group on  
7 harmony which has hosted us and has been doing fine  
8 work. So we're very happy to greet you. So that  
9 we will now move on to our second panel and we  
10 thank you all. If you have any documents, our  
11 staff will be very pleased to have that to  
12 incorporate it into our report.

13

14 I'd like to reconvene our forum and  
15 introduce the members of the second panel who will  
16 describe to us their activities in working in the  
17 Arts and with children and other significant  
18 groupings within our society. Let's see, the first  
19 presentations will be from the Brooklyn Children's  
20 Museum. The director is Mindy Duitz with Craig  
21 Wilder and Jill Vexler who are with her today.

22

23 MS. DUITZ: Is everybody awake? I feel  
24 like we should jump up and down for a while. My  
25 name is Mindy Duitz. I'm the Director of the  
Brooklyn Children's Museum and I'm here actually  
representing three institutions and other  
colleagues for a collaboration known as the Crown



1  
2 Heights History Project, formerly known as Bridging  
3 Eastern Parkway. Are one of you going to address  
4 the title change? I could.

5 Part of what we're about, the three  
6 collaborating institutions involved here, are the  
7 Brooklyn Historical Society which is located in  
8 Downtown Brooklyn, The Weeksville Society, Brooklyn  
9 Heights, and the Brooklyn Children's Museum. We're  
10 the heart of Crown Heights. We are, by the way,  
11 the world's oldest children's museum.

12 We have been in Crown Heights for 95  
13 years, on the same corner of St. Marks. It's very  
14 important to us. And a new project, fairly new, is  
15 a forum for the preservation of Weeksville and  
16 Bedford Stuyvesant, also in Crown Heights. I think  
17 what's important about this is that it's unique to  
18 have museums represented at such a forum.

19 You're probably wondering what do museums  
20 do that have any relationship to these kinds of  
21 problems and I think it's extremely important to  
22 recognize the value and the important role cultural  
23 institutions play in helping to address issues of  
24 cultural concerns, past the infra-structure of our  
25 educational system, as well as being entertaining.

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I think it's very important for you to hear about this project not just because of it but to think about museums in general and other cultural institutions and how they can help us look at ourselves and look at other people. Since the summer of 1991, in Crown Heights, I have been asked by every one of my colleagues and people outside my field, "What about Crown Heights? "

I have been asked and what are you doing about Crown Heights. And I've had a lot of time to think about the answer to that question. And I could say that the Crown Heights History Project is a response to Crown Heights. However, I'd like to back up and say that we have always been working on these issues. We couldn't just wake up the day after a crisis in our community and be able to respond in any intelligent way. Maybe because back to the question of reaction or proaction.

The mission of these three institutions has always been to help people understand themselves, others, and the world around them and we do that through exhibition and programs. It is really the heart of what we are about to be committed to, to having programs and activities

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2 that are socially responsive. That we are not just  
3 academics in maybe a remote, removed situation.

4

5 That we are part of the community in our  
6 institutions and I think that often a crisis  
7 mentality is quick, solve this problem. These are  
8 not quick solutions. These are activities getting  
9 kids to understand what's happening, who the other  
10 person in the neighborhood is. It's an ongoing  
11 process. At the Children's Museum we always look  
12 at the issue of conflict resolution. Crown Heights  
13 is a neighborhood that has in many ways a sense of  
isolation.

14

15 We have children who visit the museum  
16 that have never left the neighborhood, and we're  
17 actually providing information to children. But  
18 the most important thing they do is information and  
19 exposure and a chance to find themselves as well as  
20 other people. And I want to give you an example of  
21 a story about the kind of isolation from each other  
22 that children had in the neighborhood right after  
the summer crisis in July.

23

24 In fall, it's the season of many of the  
25 Jewish holidays and one of our young African  
American girls came to the museum and was very

1  
2 distraught and she said to me and a few other  
3 people, the families on Eastern Parkway where the  
4 Labuvitch (phonetic) community is living are  
5 boarding up their houses. They are so afraid that  
6 they cannot come out of their houses and they are  
7 boarding it up. It was the festival of Sukot  
8 (phonetic) and they were building festival  
9 shelters.

10           This little girl who knew nothing about  
11 this other culture misinterpreted the structure as  
12 a barricade. We were able to explain what was  
13 really going on. That's one example and I can  
14 probably tell you many from each group who visit us  
15 that enables the museum to help people understand  
16 what's going on. The Crown Heights incident taught  
17 us that we needed to be more specific with many  
18 programs all our institutions are working on.

19           We entered into this collaboration that  
20 we are talking about today. By the way, these are  
21 our two project directors, Jill and Craig, working  
22 for all three institutions directing this project  
23 and they can talk for hours about how hard it is  
24 working for institution, but they are still here  
25 and we are still talking to each other.

1  
2           Actually, when Mr. Gelb was here this  
3 morning, he asked me to explain to you in a way  
4 that at the beginning of the project, David Khan  
5 (phonetic) and Joan Maine (phonetic) are the  
6 directors of the Weeksville project and I for years  
7 have been talking about doing a great project about  
8 the history of Crown Heights. So we had already  
9 had this dialog for actually several years when  
10 David Khan found himself in Arthur Gelb's office  
11 asking for funds for another project.

12           It was right after the never mind that,  
13 what about Crown Heights. And David was able to  
14 say, well, I have these two colleagues and these  
15 two other institutions. We have long been  
16 interested and we would be willing to think about  
17 something relevant to what we do that could help.  
18 Artie Gelb found a committee of leaders of  
19 different foundations and city organizations to  
20 look at this issue of conflict particularly in  
21 Crown Heights and it is through their interest and  
22 our response that our project was funded.

23           They actually assembled a group of  
24 prestigious funders to work on this initiative. It  
25 was unusual in looking around the city to find a

1  
2 cultural initiative rather than a social one.  
3 Through research, exhibition, and public programs  
4 and a collaborative process, we are hoping to  
5 present what we are calling, "The Story of Crown  
6 Heights."

7           Many people say to me, what is going on  
8 there. We want to say what is really going on.  
9 This is a project about perception and  
10 misconceptions. A subject that's come up here  
11 before, extensive amounts of research that Craig  
12 and Jill will describe to you in more detail  
13 because they are actually doing the work.

14           This is a difficult subject, getting  
15 people to talk about themselves, how they feel  
16 about themselves. And it's also been a difficult  
17 subject for us as a group. I think all of us would  
18 agree on this project that the very nature of the  
19 subject has made collaboration more difficult.  
20 Each of us has had a lot of sensitivity about our  
21 group or our institution and are we being  
22 represented properly and do we truly understand the  
23 problems. I just wanted to bring that up.

24           This has been really hard work  
25 organizationally and I think personally for each of

1  
2 us. We're also very realistic. We don't believe  
3 that we are going to solve the world's problems  
4 with this project. We do see ourselves as one  
5 piece of many activities in Crown Heights and  
6 throughout the City and I think it's important to  
7 be realistic or you'll be disappointed in the  
8 outcome.

9           This project is really an example of a  
10 new role that museums can play. Museums are really  
11 gathering places. They are places where people can  
12 see themselves, as I said before. And I also  
13 firmly believe this museum changes people's lives.  
14 Hopefully, many of you have been in museums.

15           There's something you remember, something  
16 you saw, something you experienced that just lives  
17 with you forever because it was so real and so  
18 important. And I think museums like ours  
19 particularly provide people with those personal  
20 experiences. I just want to close by saying that  
21 I've been the director of the Children's Museum in  
22 Brooklyn for ten years and working in Crown Heights  
23 for those ten years has been the single most  
24 profound experience of my professional life.

25           I am a woman, I am white, I am Jewish and

1  
2 I thought I understood all that. And after ten  
3 years, I only know how much I don't understand and  
4 what I had to look into myself. I've had to look  
5 into my institution. We have done bias training.  
6 We have struggled really hard. I think we're  
7 really good at what we do and I think we are just  
8 beginning and its been actually very painful and  
9 very wonderful.

10 The most important thing that I've  
11 learned is never to make assumptions about anyone  
12 else's assumptions. And after that, I'd like to  
13 turn this over to Jill Vexler to pick up where  
14 Mindy left off about the title change.

15 MS. VEXLER: When Craig and I were first  
16 introduced to this project as Bridging Eastern  
17 Parkway, I had no particular reaction to it. But  
18 the moment I began -- and I am a jumping into our  
19 process of gathering information from different  
20 communities and I've worked principally among the  
21 Labuvitch/Hasidic (phonetic) community of Crown  
22 Heights -- my immediate response from many of the  
23 people I met was, bridge what? Why bridge? Bridge  
24 where? Eastern Parkway? What's a bridge over  
25 Eastern Parkway? I don't get it.



1  
2           And, in fact, they don't get it. This  
3 was a title which sounded like we're going to teach  
4 people how to behave or where and why people should  
5 meet one another. And as a result, I came back to  
6 a meeting. Craig had had some similar experiences  
7 among African Americans, Caribbeans about this  
8 title. It didn't put a nice flavor in people's  
9 mouths as an introduction to what we really wanted  
10 to achieve.

11           And as a result, we began to re-think the  
12 title. And we came up with a nice neutral term  
13 like the Crown Heights History Project which is  
14 really much more accurate anyway and different  
15 institutions will have individual titles. What's  
16 important about it and what is absolutely a first  
17 in my museum career is that the museum really  
18 listened to the community. And I think that's  
19 where both Craig and I will begin our discussions  
20 today and this really is a community driven  
21 project.

22           And so by listening to people, we  
23 realized that our best foot was not being put  
24 forward and we would not be able to gain the  
25 confidence and credibility with the people to whom

1  
2 we needed to speak, but most of all to whom we  
3 needed to listen. And I think that this is  
4 symbolic of many other things that we've done.

5           And so to pick up where Mindy left off  
6 about the role of the museum in the community,  
7 while it seems too obvious that museums reflect  
8 people, it's usually historical or archaeological.  
9 So one of my first roles, and Craig's too was, to  
10 talk very correctly to the fact that all of these  
11 institutions care about the people who live today  
12 right now, in this large neighborhood made up of  
13 many different cultural communities in this  
14 neighborhood of Crown Heights.

15           And that was one of our very first tasks  
16 of communicating. All of this fell gathering  
17 information through oral histories and as a  
18 cultural anthropologist, it became something of one  
19 of those dreams that multiply effects from one  
20 person to another to another.

21           And as I went through the community of  
22 the Labuvitch/Hasidic residence of Crown Heights,  
23 the motive was not only learning about their  
24 experiences and what Craig and I have called their  
25 journeys to live there, but to gain the trust of

1  
2 the people so that they would know that their  
3 lives, their experiences, and in many cases, the  
4 objects which represent those experiences, would be  
5 respected, absolutely profoundly respected within  
6 these three institutions and by us as in a sense  
7 kind of ghostwriters or voices dedicated to the  
8 accuracy and authenticity of their presentation.

9           And I can only say that as a cultural  
10 anthropologist, it's enormously humbling and in a  
11 sense similar to Mindy's experience to realize that  
12 you walk into someone's home, doors of which were  
13 opened incredibly generously and frequently to me,  
14 to learn about people's lives, to join in their  
15 family celebrations and their family sadnesses, to  
16 hear of their experiences and to realize that I  
17 really knew nothing about the cultures, the  
18 experiences and very little about the belief system  
19 of Hasidic Jews and that all is to be learned just  
20 for the asking and just for the listening.

21           The Museum, through these  
22 transformational processes of museum design,  
23 technique, interactive methodologies and a more  
24 narrative visual style at the Brooklyn Historical  
25 Society and at Weeksville, the really talented

1  
2 staffs of these museums are being given crash  
3 courses in what Craig and I are learning about  
4 demography, religion, and sociology and really  
5 transforming them into a setting in which people  
6 can learn about each other.

7           And as Mindy said, we're not going to  
8 give instant solutions to things, but will create,  
9 I believe, a setting in which questions which might  
10 not be voiced out on the street can be voiced and  
11 eventually answered through these different  
12 exhibitions, education programs, and public  
13 programs which will be happening throughout the  
14 year or as exhibitions are installed.

15           And with that, I'd like to turn to Craig  
16 who will talk about how we got going in the  
17 communities.

18           DR. NISHI: Craig Wilder.

19           MR. WILDER: Actually, they just said all  
20 the good stuff so I got to talk about something  
21 quite boring, the research methodology. It is  
22 important. One of the things that brought me onto  
23 the project was that by trade, I'm a college  
24 professor and a historian and the project offered  
25 us a chance to all of a sudden make history

1  
2 applicable to us, to actually do something rather  
3 than to just let it live and die inside the  
4 classroom.

5           And so one of the things that I think  
6 we've learned is that what we do professionally  
7 actually has some life outside of our institutions  
8 and can be something quite real. And what makes it  
9 real is the people who pass through the museum who  
10 are often forgotten when making institutional  
11 decisions.

12           Their lives are socially important.  
13 Their memories have value and this is the message  
14 that we brought to the community and we were forced  
15 to bring it. Don't allow me to sound smart. We  
16 didn't bring it from the beginning. We went out  
17 with the concept that we could actually help people  
18 with all this information we had in our heads. I  
19 certainly believe that no one can tell me anything  
20 else about Central Brooklyn that I haven't already  
21 known.

22           And as we entered into the community and  
23 talked to people, we learned that the way they  
24 described themselves is quite different from the  
25 way they've been described. The concerns that they

1  
2 have aren't always taken verbatim and presented in  
3 the media. And so the museum, all of a sudden,  
4 turned into a place where the people had a chance  
5 to talk to each other and to us.

6           And that's been a valuable experience for  
7 all of us that forced us to abandon the arrogant  
8 belief that we could actually help Crown Heights,  
9 but open ourselves to the revelation that Crown  
10 Heights can help us and help the universities and  
11 also institutions that we share.

12           One of the things that I've been  
13 particularly interested in and one of the things  
14 that we have to therefore do is to treat each  
15 community and each person that we meet with respect  
16 and to promise that the project was going to treat  
17 them with respect, treat their cultures with  
18 respect, treat the things they have presented to us  
19 with respect, and that's a difficult message to get  
20 across.

21           I shouldn't make it sound easy because  
22 people's experiences belie the message that we will  
23 treat their cultures with respect. The popular  
24 image of a community where something goes wrong or  
25 where a problem occurs is that the people must have

1  
2 done it. That they are somehow responsible for it.

3 And so if you look at media portraits of  
4 Crown Heights, the real image you get is the  
5 presence of Black people with French accents or  
6 English accents or Hasidic Jews. It allows the  
7 rest of us to believe that it can't happen anywhere  
8 else. It's however not true and it's an outrageous  
9 assumption that we jump to in our own defense.

10 And so one of the things that we have  
11 attempted to do in Crown Heights is to celebrate  
12 the diversity that exists there rather than to  
13 curse it and to accuse it of causing riots or  
14 causing problems or causing tension.

15 And therefore, I think it's one of the  
16 goals of the project to avoid that type of racial  
17 reductionism or religious reductionism where we  
18 assume that there's something wrong with the  
19 community because there's been a problem there, but  
20 to rather ask people what it is that they are  
21 concerned about, how they view their neighbors.  
22 How they view themselves and where those things  
23 cross or conflict, to talk about the areas of  
24 conflict to talk about where things aren't  
25 happening nicely.

1  
2           And I think Mindy said it best that the  
3 issues that are there are real. We can't pretend  
4 that they are going to go away just by having an  
5 exhibit on them. They are much more substantive  
6 than that. So one of the things that I think the  
7 museum or one of the roles that the museum takes on  
8 is something more than just being a place where  
9 artifacts are tied to walls very nicely with  
10 stories next to them, but rather a place of living  
11 and breathing where real human beings come in and  
12 talk about themselves.

13           Things that can be divisive to the  
14 research process in the Crown Heights History  
15 Project is extremely important, not because it lets  
16 us simply gather information but also because it  
17 allows the community to control the project, to  
18 decide how we get there and what it looks like when  
19 all that's done, when that road is traveled.

20           I assume that in April when these  
21 exhibits open, the interesting thing about them  
22 will be that most of the decisions that have been  
23 made are not really ours because we've been forced  
24 to make certain decisions by what people have told  
25 us. It's difficult, as Jill said, to sit in



1  
2 someone's house and to share their holidays with  
3 them and to share their sadnesses with them and to  
4 still assume that you can determine or judge their  
5 lives very easily. That these people are this way  
6 and these people remain that way and that people  
7 with French accents somehow are extraordinary  
8 peck.

9           They become three dimensional and that's  
10 what they should have been all the time in  
11 museums. Hopefully they will be and hopefully  
12 we'll have some impact on that.

13           DR. NISHI: I'm sure that many of us have  
14 questions and comments that we would like to make  
15 but let us hear from our two other panelists. One  
16 is the Executive Director of El Puente, Louis  
17 Garden-Acosta and Rabbi David Niederman of the  
18 United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg, the  
19 Executive Director of it.

20           RABBI NIEDERMAN: At first, I have to  
21 say, Craig said before he would be boring. Most  
22 probably, my speech will be even worse. One of the  
23 problems is because -- let me say, for a second,  
24 who I am, whom I represent. I am the executive  
25 director of the United Jewish Organization of



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2 before, proactive or reacting. I think what you  
3 see in Williamsburg is proactive. Not to say that  
4 tensions didn't break out but thank God there  
5 hasn't been tension of that sort. God forbid.  
6 People being killed or riots and that type of  
7 activity in Williamsburg.

8

9 But nevertheless, this is something that  
10 can happen everyday and it's very important that  
11 you have division and I should say more than  
12 division is the courage to recognize the problems  
13 and deal with it. I'll make it brief. In another  
14 five minutes I am done. You have the Jewish  
15 community which many people don't understand.

16

17 And I'll give you an example but please  
18 don't misunderstand. There is a big Jewish  
19 community in New York. I would expect that people  
20 should be familiar with the religious traditions of  
21 the Jewish community, yet I was embarrassed and  
22 felt bad coming into this room. A very nice lady  
23 wanted to shake my hands and I had to say I'm  
24 sorry. In the Jewish religions, Orthodox Jewish  
25 religion, you cannot shake hands but that does not  
diminish recognizing her hospitality and your  
graciousness.

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But what does that do when you live with the next-door neighbor who's not Jewish, not Hasidic, might be African American or Latino, which is the make of Williamsburg. You live there and there's no social activities between your kids and their kids. The first thing one would say, oh, most probably, he doesn't care about me.

But if you come into Williamsburg and see a school system that we have, 10,000 children, actual 10,000 children, and the children, our own children, are segregated in school and you have boys and girls separate. So then you see that you say, oh, I'm sorry, so it's not something of disrespect. It's not something that you don't like me. But simply this is the tradition and culture that there's a separation of sexes and therefore the social activities that might exist in other communities, does not exist.

I can go on and on with examples that people did not understand. And therefore, that possibly have been the roots and the seeds possibly of tensions and hysteria by some. There is one other big problem and that's the main problem. The Jewish community is a very large growing

1  
2 community. And as I say, while the Jewish  
3 community settled in the beginning of the 1800s,  
4 -- I'm sorry, 1900's. So after the war, people  
5 started to race from the ashes and started again  
6 life anew.

7           You had very few people coming but big  
8 families. It is very common to see families in  
9 Williamsburg with eight and ten children. What  
10 does that mean? That means if you have eight  
11 children or ten children, then you have to have  
12 housing and you have to have big housing. And now  
13 another big problem.

14           Because of the religious cultural  
15 demands, you must live near a synagogue too. You  
16 must live near a place that you can send your kids  
17 to school. You must live near a kosher shop. You  
18 can't move to another neighborhood because you  
19 don't have the religious infrastructure. So again,  
20 puts more pressure on housing. The Latino  
21 community is also growing.

22           We share many religious values. Family  
23 values is a very important thing in the Latino  
24 community. They want to stay with their parents  
25 and they want to live in the same community that

1  
2 they were raised. And here you have a very small  
3 piece of housing. And of course, there might be  
4 some land available but both communities are very  
5 poor. People might think differently.

6           What I would venture to ask anybody over  
7 here what it costs to raise a family of two or  
8 three. So what would you say it would cost to  
9 raise a family of twelve persons coupled with the  
10 fact that you have to have your own education? You  
11 can't go to a public school because they don't  
12 teach you the Jewish religion. You have to have  
13 your own synagogue too. Your kosher prices are  
14 much more expensive than non-kosher items.

15           First of all, demand. There's less  
16 demand. There's no competition. A&P is not doing  
17 kosher stuff. So it's not Waldbaum's. So you have  
18 to pay more. I can go on but I said I will be  
19 brief. So you can imagine what it means to be poor  
20 in this community. And therefore, yes, there is  
21 land that you can build, but who has the money to  
22 build?

23           We have only one bread winner, where  
24 other places you might have more because we have to  
25 take care of the children. So those are demands

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2 and demands and demands and pressures which we  
3 appreciate, but it's precious. Nobody can take  
4 that away what is put on the community and that is  
5 on the limited housing.

6           There's one other issue and I'll finish  
7 with that one and that is security. Fortunately,  
8 thank God that I should say there is religion and  
9 it's not only in the Hasidic community. I'm sure  
10 in other religious communities it's the same.  
11 Religion brings along with it discipline.

12           I remember hosting a group from Sweden  
13 into Williamsburg and they came into one big public  
14 school building which houses now two and-a-half  
15 thousand kids and they saw no metal detectors.  
16 They saw no graffiti. They couldn't believe it.  
17 What's going on over here? Do people -- is this  
18 occupied? I said it's not occupied. It's  
19 over-occupied.

20           You have two and-a-half thousand kids in  
21 this building. I hope the fire department is not  
22 here listening. So there is discipline. There is  
23 such a thing as most probably in other communities,  
24 respect your elders. And therefore, crime or  
25 domestic violence is non-existent. What does that

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2 bring with that?

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The police would say, Oh, you're statistics show that you have very low crime rate and therefore there is little police protection you need. But what about the burglaries or muggings that is happening? Oh, but that is not life threatening and we have to address first the life threatening issues.

One other example where we are being penalized is that we have developed in Williamsburg, possibly people saw it in the audience, Hazalah (phonetic), a volunteer ambulance. And I hosted the Commissioner of Immigration two years ago in the community and I -- and he saw an ambulance going through, passing by. He said, "What is this? You have your own ambulance system?" I said yes.

Unfortunately with limited resources that the City has, the response time might be 13, 14 minutes. By that time most of the people who need them don't need them anymore just to take them to the morgue. So we had our own -- we started our own ambulance, volunteer ambulance.

And the response time he didn't believe



1  
2 it but it came into the dispatching room and the  
3 response time all over the New York Metropolitan  
4 area is two and-a-half minutes that they respond to  
5 a call. Why? Because the volunteers live all  
6 over. Should it had be at place of work or at  
7 residences and therefore there is a response  
8 immediately there.

9           What does that mean to police  
10 statistics? When E.M.S. is dispatched, there's  
11 automatically a police car with that. Here there  
12 is no dispatch of E.M.S. so there is no police and  
13 that lowers, of course, the statistics and  
14 therefore that penalizes us when it comes to police  
15 security.

16           But when there is special things needed  
17 and the police respond to the need and people think  
18 oh, there is a perception. This is called  
19 preferential treatment. And unfortunately, as I  
20 say, the City did not respond to housing crisis.  
21 The answer is there's no money. For us they said,  
22 we can't do anything because the Latino community  
23 will be upset. And don't kid yourself, they said  
24 the same thing to the Latino community. We cannot  
25 give to you because the Hasidics will be upset.

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So people in the community said I don't understand what's going on over here. We pay -- we are taxpayers. We are not draining the public system when it comes to schools and we all know what the price for a school child is and of course you can figure in the asbestos removal as well.

There are numerous services that every citizen have that we don't participate. Not because the City doesn't want to give it, but the fact is that we are taxpayers and therefore the City should understand that they have to give us housing. And why aren't we getting the housing? Oh, they told us because we can't give it to you because the Latinos are blocking that and the same thing went vice versa.

Should I say there's never incidents? Yes, there is. We all have bad apples. The same thing that I am telling is in our community. Unfortunately, when you open the newspapers everyday and/or you watch TV -- which we don't have in our community -- but if you watch TV, what makes news, crime. Who do you see? People of different ethnic groups.

Am I right to say that that ethnic group

1  
2 is violent? The answer is no. There are very  
3 wonderful people whom as a community leader I've  
4 learned to trust and work with them very closely,  
5 wonderful people. There are different  
6 circumstances that some of these kids unfortunately  
7 end up in the criminal justice system. The same  
8 thing is if something happens in the Hasidic  
9 community.

10 We also have our bad apples and I say  
11 it's very wrong to open the newspaper and say bias  
12 incident, the Hasidic person. When sometimes what  
13 happened is beat up a Black or a Latino. This is,  
14 in my eyes, racism. A crime was committed. Has to  
15 be dealt with the same if it be Hasidic, Latino or  
16 African American or Asian.

17 But don't say Hasidic, say a person. The  
18 same as you wouldn't say -- but unfortunately, and  
19 I'm coming to a conclusion right now.

20 Unfortunately, the newspapers don't sell if you  
21 don't -- don't say it because tomorrow I will be  
22 attacked, but yellow journalism that is called.  
23 You have to create an incident in order to sell  
24 papers.

25 Whoever outsmarts you, that sells more.

1  
2 So I look at this piece of paper, and it's  
3 wonderful and gratifying to see that the President  
4 of New York Times Company was here this morning.  
5 And I have a very good suggestion to him. There is  
6 a slogan that says news that's fit to print. Let  
7 them find some news that fit the print to highlight  
8 those ventures that work for unity.

9           Let public officials be courageous and  
10 come out and recognize those people who do things  
11 which can destroy them but feel we have a future.  
12 We have a city. It's our children live over here.  
13 My neighbor's children live over here. We all are  
14 here to live together. Recognize those by having  
15 special column in the New York Times everyday. I  
16 have to say, to my left, I have a great leader in  
17 the Hispanic community.

18           But when is this type of unity  
19 recognized? Very seldom. And the same is  
20 happening here is happening in each and every  
21 community. Nice things happen in each community  
22 everyday. Why shouldn't there be a column in the  
23 New York Times everyday to report on that? Why  
24 shouldn't we have public officials not only  
25 responding to crisis but proactive?

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Thank you.

DR. NISHI: Now your partner here. He's the Executive Director of El Puente, Louis Garden-Acosta.

MR. GARDEN-ACOSTA: I'm very pleased to speak on behalf of El Puente's bridge building efforts for peace and justice and the leadership center for human rights and community development has grown in Williamsburg. Now we're helping to build bridges in the communities of Bushwick, Crown Heights and soon Soundview in the Bronx, as well as in Chelsea in Massachusetts as part of a national effort to develop holistic empowerment centers for young people, their parents, and community.

Of course, the founding center is in Williamsburg and it was born out of a very violent situation in 1981 where the community of the south side -- and maybe we should talk about what Williamsburg looks like. Williamsburg is predominantly Latino. It is the largest community with the largest concentration of Latinos in Brooklyn, the borough with the most Latinos in the City of New York.

But it is really a tale of two dominant

1  
2 communities, Latino and the Hasidic community. But  
3 really we can say about five cities because it is a  
4 tale of the Latino community; it is a tale of the  
5 Hasidics, the next largest group; it's a tale of  
6 the Polish community on the north side; the Italian  
7 American community, the other part of Williamsburg,  
8 as well as the African American community who are  
9 mostly residing in housing projects.

10           The south side of Williamsburg is wedged  
11 between the north side which is the Polish  
12 community and the Hasidic side. We often refer to  
13 it on the other side of, ironically, Division  
14 Avenue in Williamsburg. It is a community of about  
15 50,000 people. There are many Latinos in  
16 Williamsburg but this is a small town.

17           The south side borders the East River,  
18 Union Avenue, Division Avenue, moving into the  
19 Broadway L and Metropolitan Avenue that kind of  
20 separates the south side from the north side. If  
21 you ask a Latino where he or she comes from, he or  
22 she will first say the south side of Williamsburg.

23           As a maximum community of 50,000, you  
24 never know what the number is because half the  
25 community is Dominican and many of our Dominican

1  
2 members are not documented and the U.S. census  
3 count is severely misrepresented. But let us say  
4 the number is possibly 50,000 people.

5           In that community, we lost one adolescent  
6 every single week to violence in 1981. We lost 48  
7 young people that year. And, you know, I don't  
8 have to tell anybody here who is from New York,  
9 that's a good Sunday baseball game in Yankee  
10 Stadium and it's like at the 7th inning someone  
11 coming in with an Oozy (phonetic) and rowing down a  
12 row of people and everybody would get up except for  
13 one child.

14           So we were fed up in 1981 and decided  
15 that we had to move as a collective and build  
16 bridges for our young people and our parents and  
17 begin to build bridges in Williamsburg to make it  
18 safe for everyone. Now, there's some real  
19 problems. This man next to me is a very modest,  
20 very humble, very holy man. He reaches out in ways  
21 that we have not seen in the Latino community for a  
22 long, long time and he wants to explain what the  
23 real deal is from his perspective.

24           And he's going to try to make it happen  
25 with all of his might and direction and move

1  
2 sometimes even his own critics in his community to  
3 do the right thing. And I have nothing but praise  
4 for him and I'd like to say that publicly, a man of  
5 enormous courage. The Latino perspective on the  
6 issues is that this is a community that is  
7 predominantly Latino and has been so for a very  
8 long time. And yet, we do not seem to be able to  
9 have equal access and democratic control of our  
10 institutions.

11           There are three areas the Latino  
12 community is particularly concerned with. Housing  
13 which Rabbi Niederman pointed out, the issue of  
14 education, our public schools, and the criminal  
15 justice system, particularly, the 90th precinct. I  
16 think you may have heard a lot in the news about  
17 the criminal justice system and an officer of the  
18 90th precinct, Hector Harisa (phonetic) and it was  
19 disclosed to all the City's media and all of us  
20 that he had been commanded by his superiors to  
21 discriminate against the Latino community and to  
22 always prefer the Hasidic community.

23           He made that statement. He made it over  
24 and over again. He's still at the 90th precinct.  
25 They said all sectors in the community are



1  
2 absolutely behind this officer and respect his  
3 courage to come out and say what everyone else had  
4 been saying for such a long time.

5           In the education area, we have the second  
6 largest Latino school district in the City of New  
7 York, 25 schools, some 19,000 students, 73 percent  
8 of which are students of color predominantly, but  
9 including African American and Asians. And yet it  
10 is the most colonized school district in the City  
11 of New York.

12           It doesn't have a Superintendent who is  
13 Latino. It doesn't have an Assistant  
14 Superintendent who is Latino, it doesn't -- it has  
15 the worst affirmative action record in the City of  
16 New York. How does this happen? Because the  
17 School Board of nine members is controlled by  
18 people who do not represent, in any way or form,  
19 the 73 percent of that school population.

20           We have three members of the Hasidic  
21 community who do not have a child in the public  
22 school system. As Rabbi Niederman pointed out,  
23 they cannot. And three members from the Greenpoint  
24 community who, at best, represent seven percent of  
25 the school population. And when we look at a lot

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2 of decisions that are made on that school board, it  
3 winds up being 6 to 3, 5 to 4., but always the  
4 majority.

5           And who is speaking for our young  
6 people? Who is speaking for the Latino, the  
7 African American, primarily African American and  
8 some Asian young people on this school board?  
9 Basically three people, at best. Now that is a  
10 major tension in our community. But really the war  
11 was had by the tension it created around housing.

12           About 30 years ago, what we refer to here  
13 as the Hasidic side of Williamsburg is not clearly  
14 the case because Latinos live there and the African  
15 Americans live there but the predominant group on  
16 that side of Division Avenue is Hasidics. In all  
17 of the studies, one could say that on any given  
18 block is about 50 percent Hasidic at most, and 50  
19 percent other, mostly Latino.

20           In some cases it was 70 percent, 30  
21 percent. Seventy percent Latino and 30 percent  
22 Hasidic. And there's always controversy about what  
23 period of time, what area of the community. But  
24 let us say it was a 50/50 kind of thing. When the  
25 housing development came into being, there were

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2 five major housing developments that radically  
3 changed to a situation where 60, 70 percent of the  
4 tenants became Hasidic and only 30 to 40 percent at  
5 best was Latino or other than Hasidic.

6           That history of what is seen as unequal  
7 access to housing is the major tension that exists  
8 in our community. And as Rabbi David Niederman  
9 pointed out, I'm going to support what he said. I  
10 don't think it was an issue of the Hasidic  
11 community or with the Latino community, I think it  
12 was an issue of certain politicians who wanted to  
13 retain power in the City of New York, no matter  
14 what the change in demographics, and use the very  
15 real need the Hasidic community has for housing and  
16 moved that tension in that manner to reinforce  
17 their own political base, discriminating against  
18 the majority, the Latino community.

19           I think they would have done that if it  
20 wasn't the Hasidic community, if it was another  
21 group that had to observe life in a certain way  
22 that had very limited contact with the rest of the  
23 community so that they could in a sense insure  
24 their political vote. It doesn't necessarily have  
25 to be the Hasidic community but I do believe and I

1  
2 think a record will bear out that politicians  
3 wanting to retain those districts, wanting to be  
4 able to continue to represent that community  
5 regardless of the majority Latino presence then  
6 developing, created a situation that would insure  
7 their political power, so they thought at the  
8 time.

9           And in so many ways there are people who  
10 have their own particular interests to keep us  
11 apart. I think one of the greatest defenders of  
12 that are those companies and corporations that  
13 think that because we are always at each other's  
14 throats over the housing issue or the criminal  
15 justice issue, education issue, that we won't  
16 notice all of the toxic wastes that are dumped in  
17 our community.

18           The Williamsburg community is the most  
19 toxic neighborhood in New York City. It houses the  
20 City's only nuclear waste and chemical waste  
21 storage plant, supposedly temporary storage plant,  
22 radioactive. It has like 43 transfer stations for  
23 sanitation. It's a crisscross of highways and  
24 bridges really connecting Manhattan with Queens and  
25 everybody else. Our community is used as a

1  
2 thoroughfare. It is perhaps the highest -- we've  
3 found the highest incidence of -- or the highest  
4 amount of lead in the grounds. Some 42,500 parts  
5 of lead in our ground.

6 Now the C.D.C. points out that anywhere  
7 from 500 to a thousand points per million of lead  
8 is a crisis. We have enormous levels of lead in  
9 our ground. We could use those levels to argue for  
10 a grant to excavate parts of Williamsburg and get  
11 the lead out.

12 And on top of all this, we have a -- we  
13 can look forward to a 50-story incinerator being  
14 built, something like for us would be the Empire  
15 State Building in our community. The tallest  
16 building, a monument to garbage dumped on our  
17 community because certain politicians believe that  
18 this would never be possible because we are at each  
19 other's throats for the resources in housing, on  
20 issues of education, and criminal justice, because  
21 we would never talk to each other.

22 Because somehow we could not come up with  
23 some principles of unity they can move us in any  
24 way, shape, or form. Well, I think our presence  
25 here is saying something quite different. We have

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2 found common ground in literally the ground itself,  
3 in our environment. And I think our presence here,  
4 the United Jewish Organization and El Puente is a  
5 beginning. It's the beginning of practice around  
6 the kind of issues that the environment does not  
7 prefer one over the other.

8

Thank you.

9

DR. NISHI: In the interest of time, I'm  
10 going to ask that if there are any questions, that  
11 they be given individually. They will be in the  
12 audience. Maybe we'll take two questions and then  
13 the rest we will reserve for others.

14

Ms. Taracido.

15

MS. TARACIDO: I'm assuming that Rabbi  
16 Niederman and Mr. Acosta are now working together  
17 on this unifying issue. But are you working on  
18 these other issues where you know you're being  
19 played up against each other?

20

RABBI NIEDERMAN: Yes, we are,  
21 absolutely.

22

DR. NISHI: Another question?

23

What I will then do is to thank you very  
24 much for your very insightful presentations. I  
25 think we've learned enormously from your

1  
2 presentation. I thank you. They will be here to  
3 answer questions and further discussions after the  
4 presentation of the next panel. I remind you again  
5 that we are going to have a treat in that Dr. Laz &  
6 the CURE will be making a presentation.

7           May I ask the members of the third panel  
8 to come to the table. I'm happy to welcome the  
9 third panel of participants. We have worked  
10 primarily with youth interests and youth  
11 audiences. As we all are profoundly aware, our  
12 youth are our greatest treasures and we are  
13 extremely interested in knowing how you have been  
14 working together for our future.

15           Our first presenter is Dr. David --  
16 excuse me, is David Lazerson who is the director,  
17 David Lazerson and the Reverend Paul Chandler with  
18 T.J. Moses and Yudi Simon of Dr. Laz & the CURE.

19           REVEREND CHANDLER: Would you like to go  
20 first?

21           MR. LAZERSON: Thank you very much. We  
22 began Project CURE a little over maybe a week or so  
23 after the conflict in Crown Heights in the summer  
24 of '91. And although we had no formal name at that  
25 point and time, no formal logo, and in fact we

1  
2 really had no formal agenda, at that time, there  
3 was very much like the last speaker said, a lot of  
4 common ground. And I think many people were  
5 surprised that we were able to find common ground  
6 as quickly and as easily as we did.

7 I think that in a comment similar to the  
8 previous speaker, there are certain people,  
9 elements, forces, whatever you want to refer to  
10 them as, that tend to manipulate things in the  
11 media to keep us apart. And I think those forces  
12 really come to play out in the Crown Heights  
13 community where you have Blacks and Jews.

14 And unfortunately, many people buy into  
15 that manipulation that I feel is being perpetrated  
16 on us and on our community. We realize right from  
17 the start in terms of my contacts with Richard  
18 Green and with Reverend Chandler that we truly did  
19 have far more and do have far more that unites us  
20 than divides us.

21 It's the little things that divide us and  
22 yet those little things somehow become big issues  
23 out in the media world. We initially decided that  
24 we wanted to bring our youth together and just see  
25 what happens and kind of function as guides, if



1  
2 anything, to this process instead of calling the  
3 shots and for me it is a remarkable, inspiring  
4 experience to be involved with.

5 Paul sometimes refers to me as his  
6 Rabbi. I refer to him as my Reverend and we learn  
7 a lot from each other and from the two gentlemen  
8 sitting next to me. I found that the youth  
9 themselves wanted desperately to communicate with  
10 each other and there just had not been that  
11 opportunity beforehand. And so we found that  
12 really the solutions to many of these problems were  
13 not as difficult as many people thought.

14 We came together and what happened was  
15 that communicating with each other, just that  
16 practical experience of face-to-face dialog with  
17 each other, led to overcoming stereotypes that we  
18 had about each other. Our Jewish Hasidic young men  
19 of Crown Heights met African American and Caribbean  
20 men who studied more than they did in their  
21 particular fields of interest.

22 The Black teenagers met Jewish teenagers  
23 who came from broken homes, who lived in rent  
24 subsidized housing, whose parents got food stamps.  
25 So the stereotypes started to fall by the wayside

1  
2 one by one. And what started off as one or two  
3 dialogs, and I think many people thought well  
4 things will just kind of go back to a status quo  
5 and we'll just sort of try to keep a lid on  
6 things. We'll bring in more police and more police  
7 if we need to and what really began was a very  
8 exciting grass-roots effort by many, many people in  
9 the community.

10           And pretty soon that once every three,  
11 four week dialog developed into three, four  
12 programs a month. Two are at the point now where  
13 we sometimes do 15 to 20 programs a month and I  
14 think that that is really a tribute not so much to  
15 the community leaders, but a tribute to the youth  
16 themselves because my own experience has been that  
17 they and we all are sick of the rhetoric, sick of  
18 the hatred, sick of the violence and sick of the  
19 myths that were being perpetrated against us and  
20 against our community.

21           And I'll close my remarks to give  
22 everyone else a chance. I would like to point out  
23 one thing that I think is not just a fascinating  
24 encounter but to me was the back road of Project  
25 CURE. When Mayor Dinkins came to meet with the

1

2 Rabbi, he said, "Let us bring peace to both  
3 communities." And that was truly something I think  
4 that was felt by many, many people.

5 In fact, I know I felt that way and I  
6 know Richard Green felt that way and many of us  
7 felt that way. And yet the Rabbi said something  
8 which I considered to be the Rabbi dropping the  
9 bomb. The Rabbi said to the Mayor, without  
10 blinking an eye, he said Mr. Mayor, we are not two  
11 communities. We are one community, under one  
12 administration, under one God.

13 And you could see all of the people who  
14 were in the hallway standing. It was like in the  
15 cartoon where everybody's eyeballs starting  
16 spinning and boom they stop and one is an  
17 exclamation mark and one is a question mark. And  
18 people were like, did he really say that? Did he  
19 really mean that?

20 And I have Hasidic friends who said, what  
21 the Rabbi really meant to say is something else. I  
22 said the Rabbi said what he meant to say and he  
23 meant what he said that we are indeed under one  
24 administration, under one God. And that, I guess,  
25 has been our motto, something that we've try tried

1  
2 to put into practice.

3           It's the little things, the insignificant  
4 things that not just divide us but in my opinion  
5 makes Crown Heights an exciting place to live but  
6 makes the planet Earth an exciting place to live  
7 on.

8           MR. MOSES: My name is T.J. Moses from  
9 Crown Heights and I've been with the organization  
10 for about a year and-a-half -- almost a year  
11 and-a-half. And the way I got involved with it is  
12 through Richard Green and the Crown Heights Youth  
13 Collective. I was one of Richard Green's employees  
14 back in the summer of '92 and we working on art  
15 murals.

16           I met up with Yudi Simon and he was  
17 talking about how he was with this rap group. So I  
18 looked at him and I was like, yeah right,  
19 whatever. Any way, you know, because, he was like  
20 on the dance, and that really mind boggled me. I  
21 was like, right. So he was like, you know, we go  
22 around and we been here and we've been there and  
23 we've worked with people.

24           I was like, all right. So he was like  
25 come dance and said do you want to try it out. So

1  
2 I was like yeah, what the heck. I don't have  
3 nothing to lose, so I gave him my number. I never  
4 thought he would call me back and he was like Laz  
5 wants to meet you. I was like this kid is really  
6 serious. So I was like, all right, cool. So we  
7 met up on -- the first time I met Laz was on the  
8 anniversary of Gavin Cato's (phonetic) death of  
9 '91.

10 We did a art mural with the face about  
11 three to four times. We did a lot of other  
12 positive things. And I met up with Laz. He said,  
13 okay, the show is going to start in about five  
14 minutes, let's see what you can do. So I'm like,  
15 uh-oh. All these cameras looking in my face and  
16 I'm like, now you need to run over the first move  
17 for about 15 times with me because I was never  
18 really in the public eye and I didn't really want  
19 to be on TV.

20 So he was like don't worry about it, it's  
21 fun. It's this and that and what not. So I did my  
22 little routine, whatever I had to do, all I knew at  
23 that point and Laz, without giving me a second  
24 chance, he just said, "You're hired. I'll give you  
25 a call in two days." I've been with them ever

1  
2 since.

3           We just came back from Houston, Texas two  
4 days ago. We did a couple of shows out there. You  
5 know, it was my first. What is it called? Shabiz  
6 (phonetic) -- I don't know. You know, that was my  
7 first one and it was a learning experience. I  
8 spent a couple of hours of the day out in Houston  
9 and it was fun. And what our organization -- what  
10 my job -- my title now is to get not only the young  
11 people but the older people as well to see that  
12 racism is not good, you know.

13           And we shouldn't, just because of the  
14 color of a person's skin or the way they act or how  
15 they dress, we shouldn't judge them by the way they  
16 look or their appearance. We should judge them by  
17 how they are on the inside. You know what I'm  
18 saying. If you are a good person on the inside, I  
19 wouldn't care how you dressed or how you look.  
20 It's just your personality that counts.

21           But people fail to understand that. I  
22 asked this lady in the jewelry store to show me  
23 some earrings. Without a blink of an eye she said  
24 it cost a lot of money and that's what I consider  
25 racism. She shouldn't have did all of that. She

1  
2 could have just said something else because as  
3 myself, I took it seriously.

4           She could have been joking or whatever,  
5 but I took it into heart because I felt like oh,  
6 he's an inner-city teenager. He can't afford  
7 them. That's what I thought. So we was walking  
8 out and I told Laz what I thought about it. He  
9 said don't worry about it. Our job is to try to  
10 stop nonsense like that because it's not really --  
11 it's not only in New York, it's all over the  
12 country.

13           It's all over the country. You know what  
14 I'm saying. And I used to be a bad boy before I  
15 joined with them. I used to be a knuckle head, you  
16 know. I didn't want to listen to my mother. I  
17 didn't want to listen to my preacher. I didn't  
18 want to listen to nobody. I thought I knew it all  
19 and I used to run around with my so-called friends  
20 causing trouble until I got in trouble and I don't  
21 cause trouble no more.

22           I'm on the other side of the boat now. I  
23 experienced the bad side. Now I want to know what  
24 the good side is like. It's like people come up  
25 and ask us, the whole group, we are walking down

1

2 Kingston Avenue. They say, Hi, T.J. When is your  
3 next show? When is your next speaking appearance?  
4 And like that. And if I go by Kingston Avenue by  
5 myself, you know, with my friends or whatever, they  
6 come up to me.

7

8 Hi, T.J., you know. Hi, T.J. My  
9 friends, American friends, be like they know you  
10 very well. Yeah, you know, it's not a matter of  
11 the way you look or whatever like that. It's your  
12 personality. It's your personality. You have a  
13 good personality. You're a good person and people  
14 will like you for who you are not who you want them  
15 to think you are.

15

So I'm just going to close on that.

16

17 MR. SIMON: I guess that means me. My  
18 name is Yudi Simon. I'm a youth leader for Project  
19 CURE and I live in Crown Heights. I don't like  
20 public speaking. I'm a dancer. But, seriously,  
21 how I got involved in Project CURE, I was raised  
22 not to be racial by my parents. My father used to  
23 bring different people from different ethnic  
24 backgrounds over to the house for supper and things  
25 like that.

25

To me it was no different. But after the



1

2 riots in Crown Heights, I sort of had a different  
3 outlook because I saw a lot happening and a lot of  
4 it hit home and I was very, very disturbed. A  
5 friend of mine was walking home one night and he  
6 sees me. He goes -- it's like a week after the  
7 riot, and he goes, Yudi, you have to check it out.

8

I was just at this meeting, African  
9 Americans, Hasidic kids, we were sitting there  
10 talking. It was great. I'm like, that's nice.  
11 How do I get involved with that? He gave me Dr.  
12 Laz's number and I finally got in touch with him.  
13 And it was -- I don't know. It was a while later.

14

I was in school in Connecticut and my  
15 schedule didn't really go with the CURE schedule.  
16 And I come home once every third week. I finally  
17 got to go to a ball game and I was kind of nervous,  
18 you know. At that time, I was carrying a weapon  
19 wherever I went and I was debating on bringing one  
20 with me, I figured, if the Black kids saw me.

21

So I took an orange juice to cool me  
22 down. It was kind of interesting. I went to Dr.  
23 Laz's house. We all went together to this Jewish  
24 school where it happen to be that week. And Dr.  
25 Laz is like, all right, were here. Just be cool

1  
2 and just see what it's like. Tell me if you like  
3 it afterwards.

4 I was kind of nervous. We got out of the  
5 car and went down to the basketball court. First  
6 Laz, he had another musician there and he took out  
7 a drum and they played some music and everybody was  
8 really into it and I was kind of shocked that  
9 everybody could be involved together with the same  
10 thing. They say music is a universal language and  
11 I kind of saw it then. And then we circled up, we  
12 said a prayer.

13 They had Jewish kids, African American  
14 kids, basically all the way around and there was a  
15 lot of media there which got me really nervous.  
16 What I saw on the news during the riots was very  
17 depressing and what I heard. And it just wasn't  
18 what I wanted to hear. So then afterwards, we got  
19 to play some ball and it was very interesting how  
20 most people play ball.

21 You bump into somebody. Before you even  
22 turned around, the person said excuse me. I'm  
23 sorry. Everybody was so friendly. You had this  
24 feeling like this is the way life should be.  
25 Afterwards, Dr. Laz and Richard Green had

1  
2 interviews. They kicked all the kids out of the  
3 room.

4           We sat in the hallway and we're sitting  
5 there talking and that sort of broke the ice for  
6 me. I was raised not to be this way. How can I  
7 even consider it? Since then, I've really been  
8 involved. I've seen a lot of people at first  
9 really anti what we were doing, basically out of  
10 not knowing what to expect.

11           So they always expected the worst.  
12 That's sort of, I guess, where stereotypes come  
13 from. Where people have to fill a hole with some  
14 sort of questioning about somebody else. But  
15 instead of going over and asking the person what it  
16 is about; what is that hat on your head? Why do  
17 you wear your hair like that with the dreds?

18           Instead of that, they just assume or they  
19 hear it from somebody else which had a bad  
20 experience. And right then and there, there's a  
21 stereotype made up and it sort of fills the hole.  
22 It polishes nice. It looks very nice, but it's  
23 superficial. And now, thank God, a lot of our  
24 critics have actually become spectators.

25           They just watch now and they don't say

1  
2 anything and a lot of our spectators who just watch  
3 us from a distance, thank God, are being  
4 supporters. People are seeing what we are trying  
5 to do, what we're achieving. And there's a lot to  
6 be done and I want to thank everybody.

7 I'm going to end on this. I want to  
8 thank everybody for striving for racial harmony. I  
9 see you as a co-worker not as a rival.

10 Thank you.

11 REVEREND CHANDLER: My name is Reverend  
12 Paul Chandler. I am the co-director and co-founder  
13 of Project CURE. I would just like to say, these  
14 guys are really great and I think they deserve  
15 another hand from everyone. And you know, as Yudi  
16 said, you are all a part of the effort to combat  
17 racism.

18 As I sat and listened to them and I see  
19 how they've grown over the years as Laz has grown  
20 also because generally he would talk for an hour  
21 and being a Baptist Minister, you have to give  
22 center stage to a Rabbi. You learn that they can  
23 really talk and he really has grown because this is  
24 the shortest amount of time that he's spoken in a  
25 long time.

1  
2           But we have a task ahead of us. Some  
3 people thought it was resolved when we had that  
4 huge March on Washington when they only estimated  
5 they would only have 50,000 people and it turned  
6 out it was over a quarter of a million people and  
7 the March on Washington of Dr. Martin Luther King  
8 which is over 25 years ago.

9           And we still see the same enemy cropping  
10 up each day. We see it in Philadelphia, we see it  
11 in -- we just returned from Houston. We see it in  
12 Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1979 where the Ku  
13 Klux Klan killed five young people in cold blood.  
14 We see it where they killed Dr. Martin Luther King  
15 in cold blood.

16           And racism, it's a disease but it's also  
17 something that's part of the American system to  
18 divide and conquer. This morning we spoke up in  
19 New Rochelle and they were having a similar problem  
20 in New Rochelle where they had an attack on four  
21 Hasidic kids. We were going up there -- we were  
22 getting briefed and we were told that these four  
23 Hasidic kids, they were jumped on by all these  
24 Afro-American kids and they beat them up and took  
25 their basketball.

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And then when we got up in New Rochelle and we got into talk and dialog with the community and with the kids in the school and the teachers and principal and the guidance counselors, we found out that they weren't African Americans kids that were involved in this attack. But if you read the articles in the newspapers when this attack went down, the information that you received was Afro-American kids.

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What does this do? Well, it stirs up a lot of blood and a lot of anger and a lot of hate for African Americans. The kids themselves began to say it wasn't African Americans basically that did this, and that the kids that many stood around that were cheering them on were Asian, they were Hispanic, they were African Americans and they were white kids that were there.

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It was really to my amazement as well as Dr. Laz's amazement that we had been given the wrong information by the people who are supposed to be insiders. Now I could accept the information coming from the newspapers. But when you get the information from the insiders, then we get the information from the real insiders who are the

1  
2 children and the children are very innocent because  
3 they came out with the truth and the truth was that  
4 this thing happened and it was blown out of  
5 proportion to the point that it became a real  
6 racial thing and it boiled down to African  
7 Americans against Jewish kids and that wasn't  
8 really the case.

9 I'm not condoning the incident. The  
10 incident was wrong. But it just shows you how  
11 things are stereotyped and how things are blown out  
12 of proportion, particularly by a media who uses  
13 events or situations to sell newspapers and to sell  
14 stories. In Crown Heights, we lost two potential  
15 nations in Yankel (phonetic) Rosenbaum and in Gavin  
16 Cato.

17 We don't want to lose any more potential  
18 nations and we don't want to lose anymore potential  
19 young men or women. But our community, like all  
20 the communities that we travel, are important, and  
21 we've been to several communities in the past two  
22 years outside of Crown Heights, as they said we  
23 just returned from Houston. We're getting ready to  
24 go up to Buffalo.

25 We are going to Columbia, South Carolina

1  
2 in about two months. The problem is all over and  
3 it says that if we don't begin to tackle it here in  
4 our households -- in other words, parents,  
5 fathers, you have to minister to your children.  
6 First of all, you have to minister to them and let  
7 them begin to understand that you take a lead  
8 position and if you believe that racism is bad,  
9 then you have to begin to tear it down and then we  
10 have to begin to stop with some negative labels  
11 that are also carried down to our children and they  
12 carry it outside.

13           So we say that the fight begins with you  
14 and that's why we call the group Dr. Laz & the  
15 CURE. He's not a real doctor but we do have the  
16 cure. But we say that the cure comes with you  
17 communicating in your home by telling the truth and  
18 by telling the truth you have to know who you are,  
19 meaning that I couldn't deal with them unless I  
20 know who I am.

21           And one thing we have to do is teach our  
22 children and our families who they are. In the  
23 schools, our children have to really learn the true  
24 history of who they are and not no jive history  
25 that they begin to tell them, that Dick and Jane



1  
2 stuff. We have to really begin to get to the core  
3 of things so that the children can begin to be  
4 proud of who they are.

5           So therefore, when they stand with a Yudi  
6 Simon, they don't hold their heads down and they  
7 hold their heads high and they have something to be  
8 proud of. What we are teaching now is we are  
9 teaching our children how to hold their heads down  
10 and that's why they go around in despair. That's  
11 why they go around not knowing who they are,  
12 wearing two earrings, wearing their hats backwards,  
13 wearing their pants down here, wearing jackets that  
14 say, guess, guess who I am, or something that says  
15 used or damaged. They are being damaged everyday.

16           They are being used everyday. We have to  
17 turn that around and that's why we say we have to  
18 communicate the truth. Then after we communicate  
19 the truth, we have to get to an understanding. And  
20 the understanding is that you begin to understand  
21 who I am and I begin to understand who you are and  
22 as a result of that we gain respect for each  
23 other.

24           We stand on basic principles and we have  
25 units. The things that we can unite on. So we

1  
2 build units around those things then that gives us  
3 the respect. He respects me, I respect him. We  
4 all respect each other and that comes with  
5 education. What I did real quick is I showed you  
6 what the CURE means.

7           But the thing that we are trying to get  
8 people to do is not to give up who you are but know  
9 who you are and begin to communicate that and to  
10 get a better understanding. And through those  
11 dialogs that we create, we've been able to do a  
12 number of things. I see a basketball player, one  
13 of the greatest basketball players in Brooklyn, Mr.  
14 Niles (phonetic). Mr. Niles and his family have a  
15 history of playing basketball.

16           One of his brothers was just inducted  
17 into the Brooklyn, U.S.A. They gave him an award  
18 and stuff. He knows the history of basketball but  
19 this year we were able to do something. We were  
20 able to take Hasidic kids and African American kids  
21 and play during a Knicks and 76ers game during half  
22 time.

23           Now, I think that was the first time that  
24 Madison Square Garden had ten yamicas (phonetic)  
25 running up and down the court. It was really

1  
2 something. And young brothers with dreds running  
3 up and down the court with 19,000 people cheering  
4 them on. This was for racial harmony night. This  
5 really boosted these young men that they went home  
6 proud not just that night but it was a reward for  
7 the work that they had been doing.

8 A reward for the African American kids  
9 for what they've been doing. That yes, they can  
10 play basketball. It also gives our youngsters when  
11 we go to universities and we speak and talk of  
12 other youngsters, a sense to understand that  
13 African Americans study.

14 I remember the first meeting. The Jewish  
15 kids, they said the African kids said we have to  
16 leave. We have to go home because we have to  
17 study. They said, "You guys study?" I said we  
18 study for 13, 14 hours. They were like, "Wow." It  
19 was like, you know, it was a mind blowing thing.  
20 But because of the stereotype you see, all they  
21 were thinking of before is that African American  
22 kids only play basketball and that meaning alone,  
23 just that dialog, history began to knock that down  
24 and they got into questions about why you wear hats  
25 and black pants and black shoes?

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Why do you wear these uniforms? Then they looked down. I said, why don't you all look at your feet. All African American kids had on sneakers. Why do you wear sneakers? Then they began to talk about simple things about why you wear shoes and why you wear sneakers. Why you wear dreds and why you where a yamica? The next time you see them, they are eating pizza together.

Now you see them, they are playing basketball together. Before they were like two ships passing in the night and not connecting and if they were -- they were colliding. Now they pass, they talk. They don't go to the other side of the street. So it does make a difference. They do want the same things that we want. They want better homes. They want better housing. They want better education and they want to live in peace and harmony.

God bless you.

DR. NISHI: Our next speaker is Caroline Louissaint who is the Coordination Counselor of the Youth Action Program.

MS. LOUISSAINT: We were supposed to have two young people, actually, with us and they

1  
2 couldn't make it because they found jobs and they  
3 were working and it's better for them to work. But  
4 basically, the youth program is a community based  
5 organization in East Harlem that has been in  
6 existence for about 15 years now and it started  
7 with most notably one of our programs, Youth Build,  
8 which is a program that educates young people who  
9 have dropped out of high school.

10           It helps them get their GED and they  
11 rehabilitate housing in East Harlem. So we just  
12 completed our fifth building in East Harlem and  
13 these are buildings with low income and also  
14 homeless young people. And from that, other  
15 programs stemmed for people who are younger such as  
16 The Young Scientist Club that increases math and  
17 science skills and the Leadership Institute of  
18 Learning which is a program geared mainly for young  
19 people in school who are concerned about what is  
20 going on in the community and want to do work  
21 within the community and want to stay in school.

22           Basically, the reason why we're here  
23 today is our young people. They have been working  
24 within their community and they've been wanting to  
25 reach out to our communities and we've been

1  
2 training them on conflict resolution because there  
3 is a lot of violence in the communities. One of  
4 their goals was to go out and to visit other  
5 communities, see what's going on out there, get out  
6 of East Harlem.

7           We were approached by a group in the  
8 Bronx Riverdale Neighborhood House to do a training  
9 program for their young people on leadership  
10 development and how to set up an advisory counsel  
11 within their organization. And we took seven of  
12 our young people, ages 15 to 17.

13           And we took 30 young people to Riverdale  
14 to a workshop and basically there was a little  
15 anxiety from our young people going to Riverdale  
16 because they've heard stories of this affluent  
17 community and here they are from the inner-city and  
18 they weren't sure how they were going to respond to  
19 this group and they thought everyone from Riverdale  
20 was of European descent.

21           They saw African Americans and Latinos  
22 when they got there, hanging out, so they were  
23 surprised. When we got to the camp, there was a  
24 situation that occurred with the staff of the  
25 Riverdale Neighborhood House and the camp that we

1  
2 were staying in. One of the site attendants came  
3 over to one of the counselors and started telling  
4 them that the last time they were there they left  
5 the place in a mess and they were arguing about the  
6 place being left a mess.

7           And the fact that Riverdale Neighborhood  
8 House reserved a few cabins for our training and  
9 someone temporarily took that cabin and rented that  
10 cabin to a family. Their dispute was that they  
11 wanted us to move and there were a few racial slurs  
12 actually given from some of the site attendants to  
13 the counselors.

14           The site attendants were white, the  
15 counselors were black. The young people are  
16 hearing this and nothing was said. We went about  
17 our business but we refused to move. The family  
18 that was supposed to rent the cabin drove up to the  
19 site saw all of us there, stopped and drove out  
20 again.

21           A few minutes later, the site manager  
22 comes up to us, to the counselors, and says that  
23 the family came and a group of young people  
24 surrounded their car and intimidated them. So we  
25 were like all of our young people are here. We

1  
2 didn't understand. We never went up to the car.  
3 We found out that it was our young people walking  
4 back from the basketball court.

5           They were walking by and the family  
6 stepped aside and that was the intimidation they  
7 talked about. So the young people are hearing this  
8 argument between the counselor and the site manager  
9 and the site manager happens to be black also. And  
10 the young people start to say that that's why they  
11 did not like white people, some of them were  
12 Latinos.

13           There were some who were biracial also.  
14 Their comments were that's why I hate the white  
15 side of me because white people are ignorant and  
16 particularly since it was of a mixed group. A lot  
17 of these young people grew up together and they  
18 went to school together and suddenly now they are  
19 disconnected and people are feeling bad and they  
20 are seeing their counselor being hurt.

21           Our young people who did the entire  
22 workshop tried to bring out through different  
23 exercises the feelings that they were having at the  
24 moment and also the feelings that they experienced  
25 within their own neighborhoods because a lot of



1  
2 them grew up together and they date each other and  
3 they've had experiences with the cops coming up to  
4 them and saying particularly to the white young  
5 woman when they were walking along, are these guys  
6 harassing you.

7           One young woman was saying she was very  
8 tired of those things happening. So once we  
9 finished with this workshop, the people started --  
10 everybody started feeling better about themselves  
11 and the young people after that forgot about the  
12 situation, partied, and had a good time. But after  
13 this, our young people felt very adamant about  
14 going there and continuing their training with them  
15 and continuing to go there and do workshops but  
16 they go there almost every other Friday now and  
17 hangout and go to the recreation area.

18           But the interesting thing is when our  
19 young people go there from East Harlem to  
20 Riverdale, it's a nice ride and we have to take a  
21 cab, sometimes two cabs to Riverdale and sometimes  
22 I can go with them, sometimes I can't. And  
23 sometimes when I do go with them, and we have to  
24 take two different cabs and I'm in one cab with one  
25 group and the guys decide to take another cab, they

1

2 can't get into a cab. They are left standing there  
3 maybe 9:30 or ten o'clock at night.

4

5 Sometimes they are there a half hour  
6 waiting for them until they can get in a cab. They  
7 keep fighting the obstacles. They don't want to be  
8 treated this way and they don't want to treat  
9 anyone else that way. Young people when they go  
10 out to different neighborhoods, when they meet  
11 other people, suddenly the stereotypes that they  
12 felt disintegrated about, they feel a strong bond  
13 with the same group that they had problems with  
14 before and that group also has a stronger bond with  
15 our group, the same group we have problems with  
16 before in terms of when they go out to other  
17 neighborhoods.

17

18 So it's important, I think, as an  
19 organization or as people working with young  
20 people, that we allow them and that we help them  
21 and facilitate them and give them the skills to  
22 combat racism, to combat discrimination so that for  
23 them -- so they can use their experiences and  
24 their knowledge and also they won't want to  
25 discriminate.

25

It's not like they want to discriminate.

1  
2 They pick up what they hear. Like what was  
3 happening at the site, at the camp. They were  
4 picking up what was going on between adults.  
5 Suddenly they were involved and they were  
6 affected.

7 DR. NISHI: Our next panelist is Wesley  
8 A. Gray, II, who is with the Crown Heights Youth  
9 Collective.

10 MR. GRAY: Yes, I worked with Richard  
11 Green with the Crown Heights Youth Collective. I  
12 have been with him for about a year and I would  
13 like to share something personal in terms of how I  
14 got involved with the Crown Heights Youth  
15 Collective.

16 I used to be a musician. I play a few  
17 instruments. Primarily, I'm a percussionist and I  
18 was also, at one time, Chairman of the Duke  
19 Ellington Association of Jazz Educators which is  
20 part of an international organization. And their  
21 purpose was to reintroduce jazz back into the  
22 African American community, primarily using the  
23 church, the African American church as a vehicle to  
24 do it.

25 And it was felt that indeed that by

1  
2 sharing the fact that jazz played a very important  
3 part in the liberation and the salvation of the  
4 African American community from the time of  
5 slavery, that indeed this could be used as a  
6 vehicle today to create a bridge between the adult,  
7 the parent, and the children of the community.

8           There has been a few papers written on  
9 the fact, indeed there seems to be somewhat a  
10 love/hate relationship between the African American  
11 community with jazz. Indeed, Brother T.J. and  
12 Brother Yudi, they represent the tradition of  
13 African -- or should I say American music such as  
14 jazz which is also classical music, if we must be  
15 very technical, which is one of the only original  
16 art forms produced in America that we think of  
17 Dizzy Gillespie and Vinny Goodman and Lionel  
18 Hampton and what have you, of musicians of  
19 different ethnicities playing a very joyous music.

20           Martin Luther King made a speech in  
21 Berlin in 1964 about jazz and he related to the  
22 fact that it was the slave who played music for the  
23 slave master. At that time, it might have been  
24 spirituals or gospels and at one time it was jazz  
25 -- indeed what was classified as jazz.

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2 He or she was allowed to leave the  
3 plantation and travel and he or she came back to  
4 the plantation and gave a report, if you will, what  
5 was happening around the world. If not indeed  
6 around the country. So the music always played a  
7 very important part within the tradition of the  
8 African American experience and indeed of the  
9 American experience. And it seems as if by some  
10 mechanism, politically or otherwise, jazz has not  
11 been highlighted within the culture of the African  
12 experience or the African American experience and  
13 indeed the American experience.

14 I find that right now we have a  
15 phenomenon to go back to Crown Heights. I'm happy  
16 to be the manager of the Ebbetts Field Merchants  
17 Association and within that environment I interact  
18 with Koreans, Jewish, Haitian, Jamaican, African  
19 American merchants and this is just one interesting  
20 thing that happened this past summer.

21 We happened to have had a concert, a  
22 unity concert which was highlighted with artists  
23 and folk guitarists by the name of Richie Havens  
24 and -- I forget the renowned folk singer from  
25 Israel that was featured. But at any rate, the two

1

2. of them gave a very good performance.

3

4 It was very well attended by Hasidic  
5 Jews, Caribbean and African Americans and I took  
6 pictures of the event and it was very heartwarming  
7 and encouraging to see Jews and Africans holding  
8 hands and dancing and singing together and  
9 celebrating this music that was being performed.

9

10 There was another interesting thing that  
11 happened. There was a Korean gentleman who happens  
12 to be one of my clients and he happens to be a  
13 videographer and I found out from Richard Green  
14 that whenever he can, he uses the opportunity to  
15 enhance his skills in using the video camera. He  
16 was very excited with taking pictures of this  
17 event.

17

18 Not only because of the fact that he is  
19 into the art of taking pictures, but he's also a  
20 lover of jazz and other music. And I was very  
21 encouraged and surprised to find that out. And  
22 when I told him that I was a musician, he was  
23 encouraged to have me make up copies of tapes and  
24 various collectors items.

24

25 The point I'm making is that whereas we  
all know, music seems to be a very universal

1  
2 language that we all can identify with. And there  
3 is also a tool which is being used by the powers  
4 that be to control a community and I'm just  
5 encouraged to find that we have amongst us two  
6 youth who are a living example of the fact that  
7 indeed there is a way of using music as a tool for  
8 unification and to exhibit love amongst one  
9 another.

10 I am involved with the Crown Heights  
11 Youth Collective in a number of ways in that I wear  
12 a hat as a facilitator for the Department of  
13 Business Services to facilitate merchants with  
14 getting the loans and grants for the renovation of  
15 their store fronts as well as security alarm  
16 systems and so forth.

17 I'm also involved with a project that is  
18 being headed by a young African American who  
19 happens to be about 19 years of age and is an  
20 aspiring entrepreneur. He is able to acquire  
21 computers donated by American Express and I think  
22 Chemical Bank to create a computer workshop.

23 So we have people such as he who are very  
24 much involved with the community and excited and  
25 inspired to get into businesses of their own. He

1  
2 was just recently responsible for having an  
3 ambulance donated to us by a local auto company and  
4 this ambulance should be in service within another  
5 two weeks and it's in memory of Gavin Cato.

6           And we have two of his brothers who work  
7 with us and they are learning carpentry skills. So  
8 we are very much involved with the issues in Crown  
9 Heights and the fact that this young brother was  
10 eliminated from the earth in a very unfortunate  
11 circumstance. However, we don't linger on that  
12 negative experience.

13           We try to build upon positivity and this  
14 is one of the examples in which we choose to do  
15 that. And we have been fortunate to be able to do  
16 that. We also have a master carpenter who teaches  
17 youth who were arrested or from the prison system  
18 and they are released on the early release program  
19 and he teaches them carpentry.

20           And one of the things I became excited  
21 about with my being a percussionist is I found that  
22 he makes drums and he makes African drums. I  
23 shared a story, in fact, that about 13 years ago,  
24 my son who happened to attend what we call a  
25 shoelace school, a school in which they had a



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fundraiser.

Ossie Davis was interviewed as a keynote speaker and he made a statement which was very distinct and that was a statement about the drum. He said one of the things we all have in common is the drum. As a matter of fact, last week in the New York Times, there was an article.

It was about a half page devoted to the fact that there are many organizations, there are many groups going Upstate with tom-toms (phonetic) and using this as a therapeutic device to resolve conflicts that they have with their parents, primarily, their father, if you will.

There are various other organizations that are using the drums as a means of spiritual elevation and Ossie made a statement to the fact that he felt that all African American communities should pick up the drum. There should be a drum that's beat when someone is born, when someone mourns, and whatever happens in between.

Just like the Catholic Church has the bells or the chimes everyday at six o'clock, indeed what would happen if we beat the drum everyday? And as a result of that, we were inspired as a

1

2 youth collective to have a drum core.

3

4 By the way, we do have an elementary  
5 school from kindergarten up to eighth grade and at  
6 least two or three times a week, we have a drum  
7 beating session because we have some children who  
8 come to this school who are somewhat challenged  
9 emotionally, spiritually, physically, and they have  
10 this nervous energy.

11

12 A lot of this has to do with their diet,  
13 if you will, eating a lot of sugar or what have you  
14 or just the emotional things they are going through  
15 at home. After they beat the drum for about a half  
16 hour, they really kind of cooled out. They kind of  
17 relaxed. I'm sure anyone that beats a drum for a  
18 half hour will get relaxed.

19

20 I also have a drum that I beat and that's  
21 with my feet. I happen to be a marathon runner, so  
22 I run an average of nine miles a morning before I  
23 come to work and dolphins in my brain kick out and  
24 I come very chilled to work and I'm able to take  
25 the pressures, if you will. Indeed music does the  
same thing. If you play an instrument, if you hum,  
you find yourself being more relaxed.

26

We all just try to realize the fact that

1  
2 music, it is no accident. It is no accident that  
3 we are the last to speak on this panel and music  
4 happens to be a topic that we are discussing and I  
5 think that we all seem to deny we have a syndrome  
6 of collective denial about the importance of music  
7 and I think we all have to realize we have  
8 something in common.

9           We all have a heart and I dare say that  
10 indeed perhaps even at this moment most of us have  
11 a rhythm among us. Our hearts are beating too.  
12 That's the thing that we have in common and it's  
13 circulating the blood through our systems. It's a  
14 lot of energy that's happening in here. Regardless  
15 of the religious persuasion that we have within our  
16 lives, we should always include the beating of the  
17 drum and may we beat the drum for peace and unity  
18 amongst us.

19           Thank you.

20           DR. NISHI: I think we have had some  
21 wonderful analogous presentations and wonderful  
22 metaphors here for us. Now we have questions. Mr.  
23 Seso (phonetic).

24           MR. SESO: This is for Ms. Louissaint. I  
25 was honored to ask you regarding this question of

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2 the staff aides or whatever they were called, the  
3 site aides, what did you do about them?

4

MS. LOUISSAINT: Well, they complained to  
5 the site manager about what was said but the site  
6 manager also seemed to have his own problems and  
7 said something in reference to, "Well, why do you  
8 think the family left?" And so we wanted to know  
9 what his perception was of why the family left.  
10 And he said, "Well, a spade is a spade."

11

So at that point we realized we're not  
12 going to get anywhere with him. So it was not much  
13 that was done.

14

DR. NISHI: Are there comments of  
15 panelists to each other with regard to their  
16 presentations? I think there was a remarkable  
17 cohesiveness in the presentation. Any questions  
18 here?

19

MS. POGREBIN: This is a question for the  
20 people representing The CURE. You spoke about  
21 Hasidic youngsters and African American youngsters  
22 and youth and kids. Basically you're talking about  
23 boys, irrespective of the Hilodic (phonetic) or  
24 Jewish religious requirements for separation of the  
25 sexes.

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But I'm also very aware that girls often get the short end of the stick. When people are allergic to sexism, they often commit sexism in the act of curing it. I would like to know if there are any programs for girls in your programs.

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12

MR. LAZERSON: Thank you for the question. It's a question that is actually asked of us quite often. We do have several of our programs with Project CURE that is open to anyone, male or female. We just recently had a joint Succa (phonetic) party that was for both men and women.

13

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15

The sports activities are done separately and that's in terms of respect to the Hasidic community.

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21

REVEREND CHANDLER: We did a mural. We did several murals, actually, in our communities and we did a mural which was a big one right on Flatbush and Empire Boulevard right alongside of the Botanical Gardens which was done by African American women and Hasidic women.

22

23

24

25

In our group, we have six men but as he said, the drum is very important. Our drummer is a female drummer which is an African American drummer but female. But we understand, you know, that as

1  
2 you said, the question of impression and we go  
3 around speaking and are quick to say we took the  
4 youngsters, maybe 300 youngsters, around New York  
5 on Allied Airlines.

6           It was the University of the Sivotic  
7 (phonetic) Ethiopian Jews. And on that flight,  
8 that's when we were able to do a real good  
9 program. We had Asian girls, we had African  
10 American girls, we had Hasidic girls, we had  
11 conservative Jewish girls.

12           We've gone to camps, we've gone to Jewish  
13 camps. We've involved the young ladies in the  
14 activities in our program. We don't discriminate.  
15 We try to keep within the religious boundaries that  
16 we can, but we also stretch a bit too. But we try  
17 not to offend anyone and particularly we understand  
18 that there are certain religious restrictions but  
19 we also are cognizant of women oppression and we  
20 are really clear about that and we want to impress  
21 that as well as ending racism.

22           VOICE: My name is Alec Jones and I was  
23 invited here by I.P.V.C., Increase the Peace  
24 Volunteer. I am happy to see such a gathering here  
25 in the City of New York which in 1912 was

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designated a city of the consonant of God of the new evil of mankind.

I would just like to share a quote and a few principles which I'm certain you will find relevant to your energies and efforts here today. But first I'd like to ask the gathering here have you ever heard the name "Bihalar (phonetic)?" Bihalar was known to be a man from Persia who passed away in 1892 and is buried.

People recognized Bihalar's teaching and faith. Many of you may not be aware of the core principles of a Bihalar faith. But I must tell you that these core principles are synonymous to the topics discussed here today and I would like to read a quote, a very brief quote, from Bihalar rather from Shogan Sundy (phonetic), the great grandson of Bihalar and he passed away in 1957.

This was written before. Unification of the whole of mankind is a hallmark of the stage which in this society and is now approaching. Unity of family, of city, and a nation have been attempted and fully established. All unity is the goal toward which he is striving and the principles which Bihalar suffered 40 years under the Turkish

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government.

Religion must be the cause of unity.  
Religion must be in accord with science and reason,  
investigation of truth and quality between men and  
women. Abolition of all forms of prejudice,  
universal peace, universal education, a universal  
auxiliary language.

Spiritual solution of economic problem  
and international tribunal. Somewhere in the  
middle of the 1980s, the Universal House of Justice  
which is the top administrative body of the Bihalar  
faith sent out a letter to all the leaders of the  
world, the leaders of government. And all of these  
letters were delivered by the House of Justice  
addressing the issues of racism. The problems in  
the world, highlighting its cause and giving the  
solutions to the problems.

Unfortunately, the world is still in  
travail because those who are in control apparently  
have not headed these words. The Universal House  
of Justice wrote the great piece towards which  
people of goodwill throughout the centuries have  
implanted in their hearts which countless  
generations have expressed their vision.



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And for which from age to age, the scriptures of mankind have constantly held the promise and are at long last within the reach of nations, where peace is possible. I thank you for your efforts and I can sit here today and enjoy this and there's a lot of hope but I'm hoping in the future that when you elect your panel, you will consider getting in touch with a Bihalar faith.

They have a very big office in the United Nations that deals with world peace and the issues of racism. Racism is a disease. It's a bailing evil. And as a disease, it has a pathology which we won't get into now and we are aware it corrupts its perpetrators and it denies progress to its victims.

DR. NISHI: I'd like to ask our panelists -- and we've not had the time to on prior panels-- this question. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will be coming here in a few months and will be examining the situation of conflicts and particularly as it pertains to Crown Heights.

I think you have made wonderful progress and have a basis of a great deal of encouraging expectations. I wonder what sort of suggestions

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2 you may have to that. Those hearings might be most  
3 productive for the people of those communities.

4

MR. GRAY: My response would be that we  
5 have to not be reluctant. We have to review the  
6 powers that be, that are the major influences upon  
7 your communities. I made a statement earlier this  
8 afternoon and it was a comment more so than a  
9 question, with the panelists who were up here  
10 preceding me with regard to those of us who take  
11 the responsibility of what we consume as adults and  
12 what our children consume in terms of food,  
13 primarily, intoxicants.

14

All things are not healthy for us. I  
15 happen to be a vegetarian and I'll be 50 years of  
16 age next month and I have men in my peer group, as  
17 well as women, but primarily men, who say you're  
18 running marathons? You're going to run your 11th  
19 marathon? Where do you get your protein from?

20

I said, well, I eat vegetables and fruits  
21 and nuts, legumes and what have you and tofu which  
22 has protein. And I have a friend of mine who  
23 happens to be a member of the Krishner Society and  
24 that's how I became a vegetarian.

25

But I found out that it takes maybe an

1  
2 acre of land to feed a cow. And that amount of  
3 wheat to produce beef and that same acre of land  
4 can produce a certain amount of meat and other  
5 products which can feed a hundred people per  
6 month. So where is the logic?

7 I would say to them that indeed we have  
8 people in Crown Heights and other communities which  
9 have taken these issues at hand in terms of what we  
10 are being fed. But our grocery stores are selling  
11 beef that has been inspected by inspectors and the  
12 issue that was addressed by the New York Times a  
13 couple of years ago with regard to meat inspectors,  
14 that indeed we should have at least 1 per 25 or 50  
15 houses that store the beef.

16 Now, there are one per hundred or  
17 two-hundred. They are selling beef and chicken to  
18 us. Which do not -- are not healthy for us. So  
19 we have Jewish members of the community; we have  
20 Muslim members of the community; African American  
21 Americans and whites who are addressing health  
22 issues and saying that indeed, we did not --  
23 cannot be healthy spiritually unless we are healthy  
24 physically.

25 REVEREND CHANDLER: I would first say

1  
2 that our community is one of the largest in the  
3 City of New York. It has not only Hasidics, we  
4 have a large African American/Caribbean  
5 population. We have a large Asian population. We  
6 have many other groups in our community that make  
7 up our community.

8           And I think what you need to do is be  
9 careful of what you take in terms of your car. If  
10 you use low octane gas, you're not going to get the  
11 best performance. I think the information you take  
12 in has to be selective. In other words, you have  
13 to go deep down into the community and really seek  
14 out the problems. Go to the people in the  
15 communities.

16           I think many times we tend to go to  
17 people in the media who are elected officials, but  
18 go into the community and find out. The first  
19 thing people will tell you is that jobs are scarce  
20 and they will go on. They are faced with trauma  
21 everyday and it's not trauma as a result of the  
22 Hasidic community, but it's trauma as a result of  
23 racism, trauma as a result of drugs, trauma as a  
24 result of poor health care, trauma as a result of  
25 miseducation, trauma as a result of fear because of

1

2 guns that are sold, and you can go on.

3

4 So we live in a state of trauma and I  
5 think when you begin to get information, if you get  
6 the right information, then your machine can  
7 operate right and go forth and move and do  
8 something. But if you go get the wrong information  
9 then you will be operating on low octane and you  
10 won't get to the point that you want to go.

11

12 DR. NISHI: What you're suggesting here  
13 then is that the commission must inquire into the  
14 underlying characteristics?

15

16 REVEREND CHANDLER: We used to sing a  
17 song, sing deep. We always go to the surface. You  
18 go deeper.

19

20 DR. NISHI: I understand, to be sure that  
21 the underlying sources of need are reached.

22

23 REVEREND CHANDLER: A lot of it you know  
24 already. If you really want to get a real clear  
25 picture then yeah, you go deeper. But we know the  
26 problems that are facing this country.

27

28 DR. NISHI: To indicate how those  
29 underlying conditions contributed to the conflict  
30 and make it very difficult to solve.

31

32 REVEREND CHANDLER: The reason why young

1  
2 kids were yelling get the Jew during the Crown  
3 Heights incident, it wasn't that they hate Jewish  
4 people but as we begin to talk, it was like that  
5 was the most visible thing to do. Twenty years ago  
6 when rebellions took place, it was get the guys who  
7 owned the stores, you know, this is the closest  
8 attack. So --

9 DR. NISHI: We got your message, thank  
10 you.

11 MR. LAZERSON: I have very practical  
12 suggestions. I have a very practical suggestion  
13 that is there are some good programs out there that  
14 we have been able to contact and network with  
15 perhaps that have really proven themselves, but are  
16 unfortunately just struggling like crazy to keep  
17 their heads above the water, and I don't mean to  
18 single anyone out in particular, including Project  
19 CURE.

20 But it is a constant struggle to get  
21 funding. So my practical suggestion would be that  
22 they are indeed committed to improving things and  
23 working on these issues, well, from the programs  
24 that are out there doing something about it.

25 DR. NISHI: I think we should give some

1

2 opportunity here for other panelists.

3

4 VOICE: I agree with Reverend Chandler  
5 the member of the panel who said that the resources  
6 have to be increased and that the people of our  
7 programs out in the communities such as CURE such  
8 as Youth Action Program, such as Crown Heights  
9 Youth Collective, to name a few.

10

11 But I'm with the New York City Community  
12 Development Agency which funds about 300 such  
13 community based organizations and there are some in  
14 each community who are working very hard for racial  
15 harmony and doing those things.

16

17 MR. KELLOGG: I think that the resources  
18 should be made available for these programs to  
19 increase what they are doing.

20

21 DR. NISHI: The last speaker was Mr.  
22 Junius Kellogg who is a member of the State  
23 Advisory Committee.

24

25 REVEREND CHANDLER: You know, we applied  
for a grant with Chemical Bank and we were denied  
the grant but that didn't stop us. We have several  
projects that we do that -- I'm going to be  
honest. We have a project like Vita (phonetic), we  
have Jackie Robinson Center, we have 13 young

1  
2 A.D.A.'s that we use to do our conflict resolution  
3 who work and interact with our young people on a  
4 daily basis to build youth leaders to deal with  
5 racial issues, to deal with issues of police  
6 brutality, to deal with issues of peer leadership,  
7 etc.

8           Now, we use these young A.D.A.'s so that  
9 the youngsters learn from them -- are going to  
10 learn from them now and not later on downtown.  
11 These projects aren't really -- funding isn't  
12 there. We struggle.

13           DR. NISHI: That's an important part of  
14 the message. There was someone in the audience who  
15 was waiting to speak. We are going to have a treat  
16 later. Dr. Laz & the CURE are going to present an  
17 example of their performance and they are going to  
18 be getting ready for it.

19           It will be where the wine and cheese  
20 reception will be so that we will certainly excuse  
21 the members of the panel who will now be getting  
22 ready for that. And if there are any other  
23 comments here, we'd be very glad to receive them  
24 and we can receive it informally.

25           I want to thank all of the participants



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on the various panels. I want to thank the members of the New York State Advisory Committee, the members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, both the staff as well as the members of the Commission itself.

And most particularly, we'd like to thank Chemical Bank who has so very graciously hosted us. Mr. Tino Calabria who staffs our New York State Advisory Committee in the eastern region. We thank you all and we hope to have the opportunity to continue some of our conversations over wine and cheese in the reception area.

Thank you very much.

(TIME NOTED: 5:05 P.M.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK  
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

I, ROBIN EDMONDSON, RPR, a Shorthand  
Reporter and Notary Public within and for the State  
of New York, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing record of proceedings  
is a full and correct transcript of the  
stenographic notes taken by me therein.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set  
my hand this *30<sup>th</sup>* day of *November*, 1993.

*Robin Edmondson RPR*  
ROBIN EDMONDSON, RPR