

Race Relations in St. Petersburg, Florida

**Florida Advisory Committee to the
United States Commission on Civil Rights**

**Transcript of a Community Forum
Volume 1, December 3, 1996**

The United States Commission on Civil Rights

The United States Commission on Civil Rights, first created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, and reestablished by the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983, is an independent, bipartisan agency of the Federal Government. By the terms of the 1983 act, as amended by the Civil Rights Commission Amendments Act of 1994, the Commission is charged with the following duties pertaining to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the laws based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice: investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study and collection of information relating to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the law; appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections; and preparation and issuance of public service announcements and advertising campaigns to discourage discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

The State Advisory Committees

An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and section 3(d) of the Civil Rights Commission Amendments Act of 1994. The Advisory Committees are made up of responsible persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission on matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commission to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Advisory Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission upon matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Advisory Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference that the Commission may hold within the State.

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**FLORIDA ADVISORY COMMITTEE
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

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Ms. Linda Garcia
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Mr. Ernest McDuffie III
Jacksonville

Mr. Kee Juen Eng
Davie

Ms. Ida R. Reynolds
Gainesville

Mr. Napoleon Ford
Orlando

**Proceedings
Evening Session, December 3, 1996**

Dr. Berry. Let me, first of all, for myself welcome those who are here to participate in this forum, and let me also say I am Mary Frances Berry. I am the Chairperson of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, and I came down from Washington for this State Advisory Committee hearing.

I do not attend all State Advisory Committee hearings. That is the responsibility of the State Advisory Committee, but I have taken it upon myself since I have been Chair to attend Advisory Committee hearings when crisis condition exist in places around the country. I did that this past summer when I attended a number of State Advisory Committee forums in the States where church burnings had taken place, and we did a report on that. I attended every one of those Advisory Committee forums, and we're following up on that.

I came here to St. Petersburg in October, after the police shooting occurred, along with a colleague of mine from the national Commission, Commissioner Carl Anderson, and we came at that time because we thought that the crisis was so severe and within our jurisdiction of dealing with issues of discrimination in the country and being a safety valve for tensions, and a project that we have on racial tensions in America's communities, that we had to be here.

At that time I said that the Commission would have a State Advisory Committee hearing. The mayor, Mayor Fischer, asked the State Advisory Committee to hold a forum here, as it had done twice in the past, and so I agreed at that time that I would come, and other members of the Commission may be here as the time goes on, but I will be here for the entire time that these proceedings are at hand.

Chairperson Solomon Agin is in charge here. He's the Chairperson of the Florida Advisory Committee, and they invited me, and I'm happy to be here.

The State Advisory Committees, for those of you who don't know, they are the grassroots eyes and ears of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and they've always been important to the Commission, and the Florida Advisory Committee, which we call the SAC, State Advisory Committee, has fulfilled this role very well. The report on racial and ethnic tensions in Florida and other reports that they have done, looking at police-community relations in the cities of Tampa and Miami—all of these have been very valuable to us.

Unfortunately, problems between the police and the community and underlying racial tensions remain in this St. Petersburg community, as well other places across the country. Today we are

facing the challenge of addressing the underlying racial tensions and the police and community issues following the shooting deaths in October, and the further unrest that followed after the grand jury panel decided not to indict the officer, which heightened already tense relations in the city.

We know from our work on racial and ethnic tensions around the country that riots, rebellion can break out over incidents with the police where there is mistrust. Much work has been done since the shooting and since the grand jury report to try to heal this community by various people in the community.

Work has been done also from the national level. I had conversations with people at the White House before I came down here today about the President's statement today, and the interagency task force, which has been put together to try to work in partnership with the people in this community, and these are very positive steps.

What we want to do here is to hear from the community and from local law enforcement officials, national officials, people who are government officials who are involved in the various task forces that are planning to work on economic development and other issues in this community, so that we can figure out how we can be helpful, what should be done, and get on with the process of healing in St. Petersburg. It is my hope that what happens here will set an example for the rest of the country because the rest of the country sorely needs an example of how you deal with a crisis, how you solve the problems, how if you want to be a world class city, which the mayor, the last time I was here, said, "This city wants to be a world class city." If this city wants to be a world class city, then it has to deal with these problems in a positive way, not keep them swept under the rug until some incendiary events happens and there is an outbreak.

So that's what we're here for. And I think that we should also keep in mind that the Federal assistance package or the money that's been announced, and the partnership that's been announced, aren't going to solve the problems. Hopefully, it can be helpful with the underlying issues, but somebody has got to deal with the police and community issues here, and someone has to deal with the attitudes and the behavior of people in the community and work together in a multiracial way. If that happens, then we can hope for a day that in St. Petersburg and around the State and around the Nation we will have helped to heal the racial divide that besets us.

I want to thank the members of the Advisory Committee and our Regional Director, Bobby

Doctor, who has done yeoman work and his staff are here and will continue to do yeoman work. Once this State Advisory Committee has concluded its work here, we expect to release a transcript of the proceedings, and Rabbi Agin will have something to say about preliminary evaluation of what happened here, and I will too, but we expect that the Commission, that the Florida State Advisory Committee will continue to monitor the situation here and continue to follow what goes on here.

I told people when I went to see about the church burnings, and they said, "Oh, we see you, and you won't be back again." I said, "No, I'll be back time, time and time again until I see that everything is being done that can be done to solve the problem."

So let me turn over the proceedings to Chairperson Agin. Thank you very much for having me to be with you today.

Rabbi Agin. Commissioner Berry, thank you very much. First let me introduce the members of the Committee. We'll start. Will you please introduce yourselves?

Dr. Clarkson. I'm Ken Clarkson from Miami, Florida.

Mr. Brake. My name is Robert Brake. I am from Coral Gables, Florida.

Ms. Littler. June Littler, Gainesville.

Mr. McDuffie. Ernest McDuffie, general contractor from Jacksonville.

Mr. Doctor. Bobby Doctor, Regional Director, Commission on Civil Rights, Southern Region.

Rabbi Agin. Sol Agin, Chairperson, Fort Myers, Florida.

Mr. Ingram. Bob Ingram, Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Brown. Brad Brown from Miami, Florida, immediate past Chair, and I chaired the previous meeting that we held here and which we could remind you that we concluded at that time that it was evident that police actions can be the spark that sets off a confrontation and that despite some efforts to address these programs, they are still of paramount concern. That's what we said in 1993. Unfortunately, it was rather prophetic.

Mr. Eng. Kee Eng, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Mr. Ford. I'm Nap Ford from Orlando, Florida. I'm on the Orlando City Council and I represent Orlando on this State Advisory Committee.

Ms. Garcia. Linda Garcia. I'm Vice Chair on the State Advisory Committee from Temple Terrace, Florida.

Rabbi Agin. Welcome. Before we begin I'd like to share with you something that I would like you to hold onto. It's called "To Hold Fast":

"Hold fast to dreams for, if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly.

"Hold fast to dreams for when dreams go, life is a barren field, frozen with snow."

You have dreams for this community and we certainly have dreams for this community, and we cannot let them go, because if they go, if we do not have dreams, if we do not have commitment, we don't have faith, we're going to have a barren field, and that's not what you want.

It's not just the dollars that we're going to pour into the community. That just becomes a Band-Aid. We don't want that. You don't want that. We want to determine what is wrong, what are the underlying currents, how can we help you to meet those problems. Not just on a one-shot basis, but as, the Commissioner said, on a continuous basis. We will be back here. We will be on the backs of the city again and again and again, making sure that what we have found and the directions that we offer, that the city will adhere to.

Most important is your input. We need your feelings. I don't want you to think. I want you to give me your feelings of what you feel is wrong or what is not happening in this great community.

Mr. Doctor. Mr. Chairman, I would like to just add a footnote. I think it's important to do that. Obviously, we have a list of scheduled participants, and many of you, I'm sure, have in your possession now a copy of the agenda, but it should also be noted that at the end of the scheduled participants section, we will have what is called an open session to hear from the public.

Those of you who are interested in sharing with us some of your thoughts about civil rights matters in this community may feel free to register on these yellow cards here, and provide those yellow cards to Bob Knight, to the right here, and we will make arrangements to have you become a part of the open session at the end of scheduled session.

Rabbi Agin. We're going to start in the reverse order because some people have not arrived as of yet. So we're going to start from the bottom part of the first half, where it says 8:10 p.m. James Muhammad, Minister, Nation of Islam, Tampa-St. Pete.

Mr. Doctor. Mr. Muhammad, do you have a problem coming at this point in the program?

Minister Muhammad. No, not necessarily.

Mr. Doctor. Okay. Very good. Thank you so much.

Statement of James Muhammad, Minister, Nation of Islam, Tampa-St. Petersburg

Minister Muhammad. First of all let me start off in the name of Allah Beneficent the Merciful. I bear witness that there is no God but He, and I bear witness that regardless to the land, language, or label, there is but one God.

I greet all of you in the greeting words of peace—we say it in the Arabic language, *As-Salaam Alaikum*—the distinguished Commission, panel before me, to the gathering of the concerned community members of St. Pete, and the Bay area.

Let me first say that I am very happy and honored that I might have an opportunity to address this Commission as well as members of the community for some of the insights of the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan.

To the United States Commission on Civil Rights, I'd like to go to some denotative meaning as to what you represent. According to Webster, the word "civil" means of a citizen or citizens, of a community of citizens, their government, or their interrelations. A citizen, according to Webster, is a native or an inhabitant, especially a free man or a burgess of a town or a city. A native inhabitant or denizen of any place. A member of a state or a nation, especially one with the republican form of government.

Now, all of these meanings allude to or presuppose the presence of humanity, and Commission, concerned members of the community, therein lies the problem that besets us all.

We were taken from our native lands, a people brutally kidnapped and brought against our wills to the shores of North America. Then in a hidden period of 64 years of history our humanity was brutally removed from us. And the idea of black inhumanity was hardened into attitudes and then codified into law, and although we were so-called emancipated, there was never any real reparative work on the part of the Government of the United States and all of those concerns responsible for our enslavement to reconstruct the dismantled and destroyed humanity, and so we are looked upon by others as less than human beings.

Now, the fact that in the history of America whenever there has been a killing by an officer of a law agency of a black suspect, there has never been any judgment rendered that convicted that police officer for the crime of murder, or even the crime of assault.

Why is that? Right in Tampa we have examples that are demonstrative of this fact, with our brother, James Edwards, that was killed by a police officer, justifiable homicide.

Recently, Leon Williams, killed by a white police officer, justifiable homicide. In Pittsburgh recently, our brother Johnny Gammage [phonetic], killed by a police officer, justifiable homicide. And then right here in St. Pete, our beloved brother TyRon Lewis, killed by a white police officer, justifiable homicide.

I would ask the intelligensia that is assembled here, and the average layman, are we crazy? Or is there some kind of pattern here?

In Manning, South Carolina, a little boy was tied to a tree by a white couple. They received out of a potential 10 years of imprisonment, 2 years. What does that say? That is saying that our humanity has never been recognized. That is saying that even though we were so-called emancipated, there has never really been any work

done to free us or to repair and reconstruct the destroyed humanity. Therefore, the violation of our civil rights is inherent in the disregard and disrespect and outright negation of our humanity.

And until those who are responsible for these crimes look upon the black community as human beings, this will continue to occur. When will you wake up that we can come to some amenable and peaceful and harmonious and nonviolent solution? Why are your ears closed until your property is threatened, your interests are threatened, or damaged to the tune of a million or billion plus dollars have occurred? Why won't you open your eyes to the legitimate verbal cry for us to be free, equal, and justified in society?

So any solution proposed and/or acted upon must go to the root of the problem, and what is that? Economics, deprivation, disparity? Yes, that's part of the problem. But that's not the root of the problem. I suggest to you that the root of the problem lies in the historic misrepresentation of black people, history, and our contribution to the onward march of civilization.

In every city in the South, virtually, there is something, a law or legislation on the books that say it is mandatory in the schools of America to have a black history program, a black history course.

I'm not talking about post slavery. I'm not talking about Negro history, because every accomplishment that the Negro made with the name of the slavemaster, the slavemaster got credit for it. I am talking about a pre-trans-Atlantic African history that illuminates the wonderful contribution to civilization that black people have contributed to this world. Until history is rewritten, and the educational process is modernized and made relevant to young black men and women, then white folk will always have a devalued opinion of black humanity, and we ourselves will have a devalued opinion of ourselves, because we just don't suffer from white supremacy, we suffer from black inferiority. Both are sicknesses that need to be cured.

The second part of my comments, I wish to address to the media. Now, my dear media, I have a great deal of respect for the media. We are taught by the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan to have respect for the force of state, but you know that you have painted a picture and portrayal of young black people that makes it easy to justify their destruction. You know that through Hollywood, through the newspapers, through the electronic reporting of news, you have devalued them in the eyes of society, so when a move is made on a young black man or woman's life—"Oh, they just killed another savage. They just killed another criminal—one less criminal that we have to worry about."

But I want to bring to your attention that the criminal behavior that you see young black people engage in today is not innate. It is learned by being brought to a country that is led by and governed by criminals, for the British did not take their intelligensia, the aristocracy of Britain as they go discover the undiscovered country. They opened up the jails of Britain. They opened up the dungeons of Great Britain and let out criminals like Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, hypocrites that say all men are created equal, and are endowed with inalienable rights, yet George had slaves, and if you ask any of these black folks that are named Washington, where did they get that name from? And if ask any of them that are named Jackson, where did they get that name from, since Jackson and Washington were not found in Africa?

And so what you must do is you must accept your guilt and culpability for what you see happening, and you have got to take some real concrete remedial measure, not throwing dollars at it, although we need the dollars and we won't refuse them.

But when those dollars come, they cannot be administered by those who are responsible for the crime. They've got to be put into the hands, not necessarily of the victims, because the victims are too damaged, but they've got to be put in the hands of members of the victims who have become wise in the delineation of the problem, so that we can administer the funds to where we must need them.

Third, my last comment—I don't know how much time I have. According to the newspaper—

Rabbi Agin. You have 2 minutes.

Minister Muhammad. Two minutes? All right, then. My last comment will be to the black leadership. Now, we have a responsibility in this. The reason why we are so disrespected and our children, our youth, our people of Florida, is because we are viewed as fragmented and divided and hateful of one another, and until black leadership instills the love of unity in the hearts of our people, then we will always be decimated and desecrated with crime, murder, and drug addiction and drug trafficking.

The religious leaders, when are we going to unite and set aside our religious, philosophical, or theological differences? We do not have the luxury to argue about who's man is right, whether it was Moses, Muhammad, or Jesus, when our people, our children are dying and we have not left any legacy for them except slavery, suffering, and death.

Everytime something like this happens, we gather in a church and we assemble, and we talk about how sad the occasion is and what we must learn from it. How many caskets that hold our future must we walk around before you understand that you should set aside your religious differences? There is no confusion in God. He's not the

author of confusion. You are confused by thinking that because you have a different faith expression, that all other faith expressions have to be wrong.

You say, Reverend, "blessed be the tie that binds," and you say that that means the tie that we have with Christ Jesus, and I agree with that, but if I can offer another explanation of that title or of that psalm or of that statement, the tie that binds is the common strain of truth that runs throughout every faith expression and if we have truth, we kiss one another.

I am a Muslim but I also consider myself a Christian. Why? Are you confused, Mr. Muhammad? No, I'm not confused, because I know that a Muslim is one who submits their will to do the will of God, and I know that a Christian is one who is crystallized into a oneness with God by following the example of Christ. And what was his example?

You find it in the often repeated prayer, "Our Father"—he didn't say my Father and not yours—"Who art in heaven." He said, "Hallowed be Thy name"—not my name—"Hallowed be Thy name."

Then he said, "Thy kingdom come," and then he said, "Thy will be done." Are you listening? So if the Christian is saying, not my will, Father, by your will be done, and the Muslim, I am saying I submit my will to do the will of the Father, God. Then what right do we have to be arguing with one another?

And I say to religious leaders or civic and social leaders that if you have influence over the people, and you are an apostle of the vision and not only are you an enemy of your people, but you are a traitor, because the people that oppress us, oppress us and rule us on the virtue of divide and conquer. And as long as we are a divided people on religious lines or social lines or economic lines or political lines, whatever lines, then we are subject to be conquered and we are conquered people.

Let us take advantage of this new coalition—I'm going to close right now—let us take advantage of this newly formed black coalition, and with this newly formed black coalition, let us unite as one voice that we can speak to the need of our people. Never let us be divided again. Never let us be hateful of one another again. And since the media refuses to tell the story properly, then we should support all black newspapers.

Thank you and may God bless us all with the light of understanding that we might come to some solution, peaceful or otherwise. Thank you.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, Mr. Muhammad. Mr. Muhammad, can you make yourself available for some questions?

Minister Muhammad. Yes.

Dr. Brown. Mr. Muhammad, I was intrigued by your discussion of the importance of studying the history and particularly ancient history in Africa, in the pre-North American experience. And in all of the various newspaper reports and the

solution and things, I've not read anything of people actually dealing with specifics in that area with the local school systems and all. Is any of that happening? Bring in, for example, people like Dr. Asa Hiliard out of Georgia State to talk about this type of curriculum in the schools? Has that been put forth and what has been the response of the school system here to it?

Minister Muhammad. I don't know exactly what's been put forth to the school board, but I can see and do know the response. The response has been either lukewarm or not at all. Am I right? Not at all.

It's on the books, from what I understand, that it is law, that the schools, the educational programs must include a comprehensive black or African history course.

Rabbi Agin. This is legislation—

Minister Muhammad. Right, it's legislation, but it's not happening. And the problem is it's not happening because a lie will be exposed, and the liars will be exposed, and that's what they're afraid of. See, you weren't found swinging in a tree with a bone in your nose, singing hooga, booga. You were found, brothers and sisters, building civilizations. That's why they came and got you to build theirs.

And so what I'm saying is that this has to be changed. This has to be corrected. That's to the root of the problem.

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Muhammad?

Minister Muhammad. Yes.

Rabbi Agin. The Department of Education in the State of Florida has certain guidelines.

Minister Muhammad. Yes.

Rabbi Agin. And if you find that your local school board is not living up to those guidelines, you have every right to insist upon that and to take it up with the Commission of Education.

Minister Muhammad. Let me ask this question to the members of the community. Have you insisted upon anything like this? What response have you gotten? So I think the community answers that question.

See, the hypocrisy of it all must be brought to the floor and done away with. It's the hypocrisy, and when, too, it is admitted that it is a hypocritical show of inclusion or a hypocritical show of the desire for integration. You know that's not real. Tell the people what the reality of the problem is, and then take steps to correct it, but as long as we are in denial, and this is 1996—we've had these meetings before. These commissions have been impaneled before. The Kerner Commission, one that I cite, that was a commission as a result of the rebellion that occurred at the death or assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Their findings were that America is heading toward two Americas, one white and doing all right, and one black and not doing well at all. They said we can mainstream black America into

mainstream American, into mainstream America, but it will take unprecedented financing. It will take unprecedented social involvement on the part of its citizens and its government. Those were the findings; however, Johnson said, "No matter what it takes, I will do it." Then he used the money to go prosecute an illegal war in Vietnam.

Mr. McDuffie. I have a question.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, Mr. Muhammad.

Minister Muhammad. But I want you to understand, because they said if it doesn't happen in the next 10 years, it will be impossible. So we—

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Muhammad—

Minister Muhammad. —where it is impossible—

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Muhammad, please.

Minister Muhammad. I'm sorry.

Rabbi Agin. We have to get on with our other speakers.

Minister Muhammad. That's my passion, I'm sorry.

Rabbi Agin. I appreciate your passion. You did have a question, didn't you?

Mr. McDuffie. Yes, don't worry about it.

Rabbi Agin. You've got a question? Ask your question.

Mr. McDuffie. I met you in Jacksonville, and we talked about the economics, and my saying is when all this Federal money comes to this city, what are they doing with it to bring black businesses into the economic part—

Minister Muhammad. See, that is a good question. See, you can't talk necessarily about giving money until you talk about educating the people how to handle it, because you know a fool and his money are soon parted. Now, we get \$450 billion out of the American economy. What do we have to show for it? So it's apparent we don't necessarily need more dollars. We need more sense.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, Minister.

Minister Muhammad. Thank you very much.

Rabbi Agin. James Simmons. Mr. Simmons, you will be allowed to speak for 10 minutes, and then we will have 5 minutes for some questions. Okay, sir.

Mr. Simmons. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good evening.

Rabbi Agin. Good evening.

Statement of James Simmons, President and Chief Executive Officer, Pinellas County Urban League

Mr. Simmons. I am James Simmons. I am the president and chief executive officer of the Pinellas County Urban League.

I wanted to rise this evening to add my voice to those that you have heard on numerous occasions, not only at this forum, the other one that you

convened and others that we've had around this city.

You see, I in my job of being the Urban League president for the past 20 years, and prior to that serving as a department head for the city of Tampa, I have always worked within a system. I believe that we can make a difference if we collectively and constructively put our heads together to make that difference. Since the disturbance that we had in our community, in our program, I've had the opportunity to talk to many, many people, the Urban League, the NAACP, and other organizations, the CLC and others, I'm sure.

I get many calls about the situation that we're experiencing here in St. Petersburg as it relates to racial tension and as it relates to police brutality, if that's the accurate term, as they apply to African Americans and certainly the untimely and unjustified death of TyRon Lewis.

However, I am optimistic because to the person, not just African American people, but to the person in corporate America that I come in contact with, they want to help in this particular problem. Unfortunately, they are at a loss as to just how they can get involved. Let me give you one small example.

We had a call at the Urban League office just yesterday, one white family wants to make Christmas a true Christmas for one disadvantaged family of African American descent. We matched them up; this Christmas will be a very bright and a very merry Christmas for that one family. That's only one person trying to help. I'm not saying this is the solution to any of our problems here in the city of St. Petersburg.

What I would like to do is call on our elected officials, certainly including the mayor, to rally the business community and those philanthropic people around the problem that African Americans are experiencing in this city of St. Petersburg on the south side of St. Petersburg. There are an awful lot of things that need to be done. Madam Chairwoman, on your last visit here you observed that there's nothing for young people to do, and that was just on a cursory ride through. I ride through this community often and I—

Dr. Berry. I didn't ride through. I was walking.

Mr. Simmons. You were walking. Well, I have that same observance that there's nothing to do. There's not a bowling alley. There's not a theater. There's nothing to do but hang out on these corners under the big trees as we call them, and things of that sort.

It is unfortunate. It's not by accident that the black community is in a state of disrepair that we find it to be, when the rest of the city—including these codes that are being enforced.

You rode into this city. Most of you came through on 275. It's a very beautiful scenic route coming into our fair city, but then 1 mile south of

the dome, where the major part of where the city ends and the south side begins, it gets very dilapidated.

Now, that's not an oversight. That's a lack of appropriating funds to address a problem.

If you go through the south side of St. Petersburg, you will find many very well-kept homes. People who own those homes, they keep them up. So I'm submitting to you that the problem with a lot of run-down dilapidated housing is absentee landlords. Why does not the city and the mayor call on their code enforcement department to make sure that those places are brought up to meet code or paint? Beautify the south side as the rest of the city is beautified.

There are problems with our police department we all know, and I want to hasten to add that I am not one who believes that every police officer is bad. As a matter of fact, I happen to feel that the majority of the police officers are very good people, very good officers. I work well with them and many of you enjoy what we call a Crime Prevention Run and Festival in the park, and many officers are out there donating their time on a Saturday to make this happen and kids run up to those officers, get them to sign their tee-shirts and get their autograph. That's related and that's the way it should be.

We hope that we can keep this going. But there's got to be a way to weed out the bad officers. I've heard the police administration make the statement that, "We know we have bad police officers. We know who they are, but we can't get rid of them." We have to find a way to get rid of them or bite that bullet and fire them every 20 minutes, if it takes that, and fight the union the next 20 minutes, trying to keep them off of the force.

Those are the problems that we're experiencing here in the city of St. Petersburg.

We were upset with our State attorney's ruling on the TyRon Lewis ruling, where the police officer was acquitted. I called then and as I call now, for calm and caution and patience. I want this committee to finish their work and I want the U.S. Department of Justice to complete their work, and I've been in sessions with Clarence Wilson. He's a personal friend of mine. I was there at that meeting along with some of the city administrators.

I happen to feel that the two commissions are still working on this particular problem. They will see that justice is done in the TyRon Lewis situation, and I hope that it will carry on the spillover to ensure that justice is afforded to all African Americans.

In closing, let me just simply say that we have an institute, the Criminal Justice Institute, right here in the city of St. Petersburg that has an addendum curriculum that Chief Mack Vines—used to be the police chief here in this community and all of us probably know him—and we did not

run him out of town. He's still highly respected as a law enforcement officer and left here to be a police officer in Charlotte. With the additional training at that institute, will address all of the concerns in policing that we raise our voices in protest against at this point and at this time. I have a copy of it. I'll be happy to share it with you, and I appreciate your time.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, Mr. Simmons.

Mr. Simmons. This is an addendum, along with the regular training that police officers are receiving. Chief Mack Vines would like to institute—

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Simmons, I want you to know that I did not take the path of beauty, as most people would indicate, but I did go through the south side myself and I agree—

Mr. Simmons. We're happy you did that.

Rabbi Agin. I'm glad I did that. It left a lot to be desired of what to do, but I took that path.

Mr. Simmons. We certainly agree. There's a lot to be desired, and I would not like for any of my colleagues in this audience to think that \$20 million coming into the south side of St. Petersburg is going to make any kind of appreciable difference in the south side of St. Petersburg.

At best, that money can only be used or looked at as seed money to attract other monies, that it was an enterprise zone that we can find a way to make it feasible for a large company to come into this community and bring in many resources, \$20 and \$40 million for one building to put it there and employ 200 or 300 people. Then that's money well spent. If you can get some of those going in your community, you'll have an opportunity to make some meaningful and lasting differences within a community, but \$20 million is not going to get it done. It's not going to get it done at all.

Rabbi Agin. Commissioner.

Dr. Berry. I've got a number of questions for you, because I think the advantage of this forum for me is I was here before but at a church forum where people just got up and spoke. I'm not interested in people just making speeches. I'm interested in getting some information, so I'm going to be asking people questions to make a record here.

First of all, has anyone to your knowledge complained to the mayor—and I'm going to ask the government officials the same question—about the code enforcement problem, for example, and what is the answer from the housing department? And if people in the audience have things, they might say they can wait till the forum or something, or tell somebody else, but I have to listen to—I'm questioning you.

Mr. Simmons. Yes. I have not gotten a definitive answer as to why the codes are not being vigorously enforced, and I say that with the knowledge that I have five housing programs that

operate throughout this county, and many of our efforts are spent on the south side of St. Petersburg. Unfortunately, it's not rehab. They are energy efficiency type programs, weatherization, making a home more comfortable to reside in, and cheaper to reside in. And then the Day of Caring, where we go out and paint or do something of that sort, but why the city is not enforcing the codes vigorously, it escapes me.

I've heard some answers to the effect, "Well, they can't afford to fix it up. Where are they going if we vigorously enforce these laws" and things of that sort, or the landlord who owns the property or refuses to fix it up, saying that, "I'll tear it down before I will put that kind of money into it."

Dr. Berry. Do you consider that a valid answer?

Mr. Simmons. No, I do not consider it a—

Dr. Berry. What if the person who owns the property says, "If I've got to fix it up, I can't afford to maintain it, and so therefore, people won't have that available as housing"? You don't buy that argument?

Mr. Simmons. I don't buy that argument. No, I do not buy that argument.

Dr. Berry. The other thing is on the initiatives that have been taken since TyRon was killed, and the initiatives that you know of that have taken place since then. There's the public statements that have been made by officials, the task force from the Federal Government that's been working here, and the announcement of the \$20 million in the initiative, and anything else that has happened here, that either the police chief has done or the mayor or anybody else. What do you think is the most positive thing that has happened, to solve the problems that exist in the community as far as you understand those problems?

Mr. Simmons. Well, probably the rhetoric has been good to this point. The rhetoric has been good. The mayor has taken some very forthright steps as relates to appointing commissions to start really taking a look at the problem. Around the monies that have been earmarked, hopefully—apparently we heard the President this morning say that it had been earmarked and would be forthcoming—iff the community at large is able to sit around the table and have some meaningful input and be heard as to how they can utilize those funds for some hopefully constructive and lasting improvements to our community, then I think that we can begin, just begin to make a difference in St. Petersburg.

Dr. Berry. Are you assured by everything that has happened that police officers in St. Petersburg would no longer find themselves standing in front of an automobile, whether it's stolen or not, so that they would put themselves in the way of endangerment, as I think it was put by the chief, that this is what he said this officer did, put himself in a

place he shouldn't have been in or something? Are you satisfied that steps have been taken to make sure that this never happens again?

Mr. Simmons. I don't know whether the steps have been taken or not. I do feel that any police officer at all with any, with an ounce of intelligence would not want to do that again, because I mean it was ridiculous to make the statement initially or to take the action, position yourself in front of a vehicle with someone sitting in it you think or consider to be a felon, and to position yourself there in the first place, that was the ultimate act of stupidity in my opinion, and I think that slow learners in the police department would not want to be considered as that stupid in the future, so I do think that they've learned how to approach a vehicle with a suspected felon inside.

Dr. Berry. And the last thing is on the private sector. I am happy that you emphasize the point that \$20 million for these various initiatives—some of which are for specific items, not just \$20 million in a pot somewhere that somebody—

Mr. Simmons. That's correct.

Dr. Berry. —is going to get. But, again, will not solve the problem and you talked about the importance of the private sector. What steps have been taken to date to get private businesses and philanthropy on a large scale to either start businesses in the black community or training programs or hiring people or whatever, to your knowledge?

Mr. Simmons. I know of discussion that has been ongoing for some time, probably for the last year, with a major grocery chain headquartered in the State of Florida, trying to get them to come into the target area. Now, that has not been released publicly. I do know that that discussion is ongoing, an example. Walgreens said they're going to stay the course. Seed money that we're talking about bringing in here, with the little that's left that could be used to get a Badcocks back in place. People that could walk down the street to their jobs no longer have those jobs available to them, but I am hoping that with the proper individuals—the mayor should lead the charge—get the major players, the heavy hitters in the corporate world around here around the table to do some major things as it relate to bringing in some businesses and industries within the south side of St. Petersburg that will create jobs.

All my life I have been a philosopher. My philosophy is if you give a person a meaningful job worth protecting, they won't be out on the street at night hanging out. They'll go to bed and get up in the morning and go to protect their job.

See, that's my grounding.

Dr. Berry. Thank you.

Mr. Ford. I don't have a question. I just want to make one comment about the job displacement that you mentioned, because Urban League in

Orlando and all over the country are interested in that, and what the groups in America have to do, blacks, whites, Asians, Hispanics, whatever, is to understand really what's happening and stop letting politicians play the group card.

The jobs that are leaving the American job market are not going from blacks—or from whites to blacks. They are going to slave labor markets in the Caribbean basin and in Asia and other places, and while we fight among ourselves, these corporations are able to get away with that by using clever terms like downsizing and what have you, but they simply are moving the jobs out and what are people going to do to live? But if we don't wake up and really understand that this is more about people of goodwill as opposed to people of ill will, than it is about blacks, whites, brown or yellow, then they'll continue to get away with that.

As Jesse Helms was about to lose an election to Harvey Gantt, he sponsored an ad on TV with a white hand crushing a job application and the voice said, "Too bad you didn't get that job; you needed it to feed your family, but they had to give it to a minority to satisfy some quota." Well, that's Reagan and Bush speak, and until we understand those kinds of things, we're going to be on the treadmill, like we are now.

And I have one more comment I have to make unless you put tape over my mouth. It's about the history that the brother mentioned, and that is one of the roots, the real crux of the problem, and that is because there have been a lot of lives tolled, and it is ludicrous and it is a joke with the greatest magnitude to set aside 1 month of the year and say we will celebrate what black folks have contributed to this country, Black History Month in February.

The way to handle that, if people really meant to do it right, would be to put what the blacks have contributed and the subject areas in which they contributed, so that James Baldwin and Langston Hughes and Hansberry and Alice Walker and those would be in American literature. And the black man who invented the first convertible car, and Gary Morgan, who invented the forerunner to the stop light, would be in transportation-related studies, and Drew would be in biology, a book for the plasma—he just would be there for biology. But until America is willing to confront that, we will continue to be spinning our wheels and we will be in denial until somebody gets killed, and then we'll convene a meeting and we'll talk about it.

Mr. Ingram. Bobby Ingram. Jim, let me ask a question. I notice that on tomorrow's agenda where we're supposed to have the elected officials and others—my error, I just noticed at 5 o'clock we do have a representative from the Chamber of Commerce, but let me press that a little further. Is there a consortium between the Urban League and the chamber and others to talk about what the problems are in St. Petersburg? Is the Urban

League leading that charge in any way? What is happening?

Mr. Simmons. The Urban League is in contact with the chamber. A friend of mine, an African American, Rick Davis, is the first chairman of the chamber, just completed his term. I serve as a member of the chamber. We are trying to get more African Americans involved in the chamber and their small businesses, but we constantly remind the Chamber leadership that you have to offer them something to make the chamber attractive to small business people. You know, big business or larger size businesses, they understand the chamber and it's worth something to them, but if a person has got a barber shop or a restaurant, they usually have to be at their place of business, not sitting around the chamber, and the chamber is not doing very much to market the businesses on the south side of St. Petersburg, for the activities that we have right at our door.

The south side of St. Petersburg is treated as a no-man zone or war zone as it relates to tourists and people coming to attend those events. That's why this community is so upset at the present time.

There is a real belief going around that the city is attempting to remove all housing projects. One is already gone—around that dome, that stadium—for the protection of the people coming to the dome for their enjoyment, and they get the parking so their automobiles will not be vandalized, because there are none of the kids living there. You get enough buffer zone with parking lots, then you got this particular problem solved.

And we've got to do something to show African American businesses that you are a part of what we are all about. We want to include you in and we're going to help market your business so your cash flow will increase, and—

Mr. Ford. I'm not really sure if I was referencing African American businesses' involvement in the chamber as much as I was the chamber's involvement within the African American community. I guess I'm asking you as the CEO of the Urban League because from my knowledge of the Urban League, that that's one of the areas where a lot of emphasis is being placed.

I mean, is the Urban League spearheading and leading the drive and, if so, is the chamber just turning deaf ears towards making and supporting the Urban League in those drives, or do you just find it not worthy of being on the agenda to try and get the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce involved in the rebuilding or the continuing establishment of the African American community?

Mr. Simmons. Well, all of us that you've heard and seen on your visits here have different styles. I have one of my own. I don't always be the one out front or the loudest one in the room. But I sit around that chamber meeting and I think those

who know me realize that I'm not bashful, I will speak my mind, and I said that on numerous occasions that we need more involvement from the chamber.

As a matter of fact, they even had one person on the staff that had the responsibility for reaching out into the black community, did not do a credible job in my opinion, but he went through that particular motion of trying to get something going and something done, but as relates to the relationship between the chamber and the African American community, it's very limited right now.

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Simmons, we have to move on. Just one statement, one clarification. Did you say that with regard to the youth of the community there is zero in the south side of the community for young people to participate in? As it relates, movies—

Mr. Simmons. As it relates to youth, a young adult, there's virtually nothing to do. If you don't go to a recreation center or basketball—that's about the extent of it.

Rabbi Agin. Okay.

Dr. Brown. Just one quick question. Mr. Simmons, has the national Urban League, national headquarters, experienced any additional interest in assisting you in dealing with the situation here in St. Petersburg, and I'm thinking more specifically perhaps their ability to deal with corporate offices at the national level of corporate headquarters for bringing in greater involvement in this area?

Mr. Simmons. Well, that's a very interesting question. As a matter of fact, Hugh Price and I spoke from the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., week before last about the issue here in St. Petersburg. As a matter of fact, Hugh Price wanted to come in here to do that press conference, and I did not deem it wise. I did not want to give an appearance that Mr. Price was using TyRon Lewis' situation to launch or advance the Urban League.

However, we just released *The State of Black America* and we are considering bringing Hugh in right now because I've had calls from a couple of business people that think that *The State of Black America* that has just been released by the National Urban League is right on target as it pertains to the situation here in St. Petersburg at this point, at this time. And we are in discussion right now and we may have Mr. Price in here meeting with corporate leaders and his national or advantage point talking about Fortune 500 companies about a stronger commitment in communities like St. Petersburg, where we have the problems that we're experiencing right now.

Dr. Brown. Thank you, sir.

Rabbi Agin. All right. Reverend Joseph Lowery. Try to limit yourself to 10 minutes.

Dr. Berry. And I want to say how grateful I am to see my distinguished colleague in the struggle,

the Reverend Joseph Lowery, the president of the national Southern Christian Leadership Conference. You deserve to have that kind of an introduction. Reverend Lowery.

Mr. Doctor. I echo all of that.

Statement of Joseph Lowery, President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Rev. Lowery. I'm honored to enjoy the privilege of speaking before this body and citizens of this community. I'm not a visitor. I live here. Wherever my people live, that's where I live. I'm not visiting St. Petersburg. I'm in and out of here so much, I do everything but pay taxes, and I want to continue that relationship as it is.

First of all, I apologize for not being here at the time I committed myself to. We landed on time, came hundreds of miles faster than the speed of sound, and once we got to the gate, they couldn't get the jet in 10 feet from its post to the door, to remind me of how this nation can walk on the moon, the scientists and explorers, and can't walk in St. Petersburg as sisters and brothers.

So I come with that message. A reporter from a national television network asked me a few days ago, "What advice would you give a young black man who has been stopped by a white police officer? What should he do?" And my immediate, almost impulsive response was, "Pray and follow the instructions of the officer to the letter, make no sudden moves, keep your hands up or at least in sight at all times, speak calmly, continue in the spirit of cooperation, and pray some more."

I wish I could say to you I uttered these remarks with tongue in cheek, but I uttered them with all the sincerity and urgency at my command. As a pastor I've stood with mothers time and time again and prayed and breathing a sigh of relief once their sons arrived home safely from traffic-laden highways and freeways.

Lest we be misunderstood, we are not police bashing and we're not soft on crime. Make no mistake about it. African Americans, perhaps more than any other group, covet good law enforcement, effective and fast law enforcement. After all, we're the chief victims of crime, and so want capable, well-trained, sensitive, and fair-minded police officers.

To give you an example, the Governor of my State, Georgia, my other home, passed a law of two strikes, you're out. Three strikes weren't enough for him. He wanted two strikes and you're out.

We opposed that because we know what that means as well as you know what that means. But black folks in Georgia voted for it because they're fed up with crime. They want good law enforcement. They want effective law enforcement officials, so that nobody try to construe what we say here as police bashing or being soft on crime.

In 1991 SCLC had a series of public hearings in several cities on the issue of police brutality. St. Petersburg is one of them. We cried in the wilderness at that time, at St. Petersburg—police departments, alienated from much of the community, that the whole community was sitting on a tinder box.

We found four common threads that ran through every urban community where we held hearings, including St. Petersburg.

One, there's widespread and escalating distrust of police officers in the black community, especially white police officers.

Two, that African Americans are both saddened and angered by this growing mistrust, for they know that mistrust between the people and the police serves nobody's best interest, and that the well-being of the entire community is in peril—there's a thread running that the white community looks the other way when white police officers are guilty of excessive use of force, including deadly force, and that once a black victim is slain, he is then trashed by media and other means in order to justify the action of the officer.

Four, no matter whether it's New York, Los Angeles, Miami, or St. Petersburg, urban disturbances and rebellions are usually the direct result of police action against minorities.

The Kerner Commission concluded that the abrasive relationship between the police and minority communities has been a major and explosive source of tension and disorder. Today this nation faces an explosive crisis in race relations. All the progress we've experienced during the last half-century is endangered by spreading polarization and deteriorating relationships between racial groups and the disparities between the have's and have not's.

At the center of this peril are two factors. One, economic uncertainties that are spawning fear and frustration among whites, who are not accustomed to economic uncertainty. Black folks were born in economic uncertainty. You know, nurtured on economic uncertainty, so we can handle it. Black man cries, "Damn, broke again!" And "It's all right, baby, turn out the lights, let's to sleep, we'll start over in the morning."

But white folks can't deal with that. They jump out a window at that kind of thing, and they're frustrated now, and that is spawning fear, frustration, and hostility white against black, because they're not used to it.

The second thing at the core of this polarization and alienation is that aspect of American life that has been least impacted by social change. It's called a criminal justice system. Every level of the criminal justice system reeks with tremors and echoes of a past, characterized by the *Dred Scott* Supreme Court decision of 1857, which declared in

essence that black folks had no rights which white folks were bound to respect.

The police-community relationship is where the rubber of that system hits the road of human experience. We must move with urgency. We have sown the wind of abuse and neglect. We're witnessing the tip of the fury of the whirlwind. We must find answers to the following questions.

Are there techniques of testing and training that can equip police officers to arrest unarmed suspects without shooting them?

Are white police officers taking out their fears and frustrations on black males?

Are blacks being blamed for economic uncertainties and fears experienced by white officers?

Are political demagogues convincing white folks that affirmative action, welfare reform, gays, welfare programs, and all these things are responsible for economic uncertainties, when the truth of the matter is we are exporting jobs over yonder, while expanding poverty right here?

Those are the issues we need to address, and that's what they need to understand.

Do white police officers feel that disrespect and brutalization of black males reflect the attitudes of the larger community?

Is this feeling affirmed in juries continuing to exonerate officers who shoot and kill unarmed blacks, irrespective of the evidentiary circumstances?

These and other questions must be strenuously addressed if we are to restore law, order, sanity, fairness, and dignity to police-community relations and confidence and respect for our system of criminal justice.

I applaud the action of Henry Cisneros in initiating the \$20 million effort to address the economic imbalance in this community. Poverty and deprivation breed frustration and desperation. Hopelessness is a twin brother to helplessness. When people feel helpless to lift themselves from pits of despair, they either implode or explode. Implode is a new word in my vocabulary. I haven't used it too long. I haven't used it at all—so I can get used to it. Implode, you know, how they blast those buildings. They implode it.

People who lose sight of hope and help implode. Some of them become cynics and withdraw. Others explode. Explosion is extremely likely from those whose resentments against injustice and oppression reach a boiling point.

Martin Luther King, Jr., my predecessor in this office, said violence is very often the voice of the unheard. A sensitive and just society would not drive its citizenry into a valley of despondency where it "couldn't hear nobody pray."

We reject violence, and we make that clear, by anybody. It creates more problems than it resolves. But until we address violence in the suites with the

same intensity we address violence in the streets. I'm afraid we're going to put up with both.

We extend our appreciation to this Commission on Civil Rights and its distinguished members for its concern and sensitivity. We urge the Commission to call upon the Department of Justice, Congress, and the White House to address this national crisis with all the resources at their disposal.

In conclusion, we call upon the civic, religious, and business leaders of St. Petersburg. We've been in touch with some of the corporate leaders of this community. In fact, we just completed a covenant a year or two ago with one of the major corporations of this community. We've been in touch with the religious leadership. It's time for the business and religious leadership to exercise bold and responsive and courageous leadership. In early days, in the sixties, positive development occurred in communities when the business community decided that it wasn't good business for turmoil and injustice to prevail. It was the business community that provided the leadership in Birmingham and in Nashville, when they recognized that business as usual was a totally inadequate response to unusual circumstances.

We suggest specifically the following as essential ingredients of effective policies and programs. One, we must convince this community—this community must convince itself—that police-community relations is not just a police problem. It's not just a black problem. It's a total community problem.

The economic imbalance in the community must be addressed. Job training, job housing, health care, education, entrepreneurship must be top priority and must find a new adventure in coalition from the public and private sectors.

We all recognize the job of a police officer is difficult, demanding, and dangerous. The entire community must resolve to make the position as attractive and rewarding as possible in order to enhance the possibility of recruiting competent, intelligent, and sensitive persons. The compensation ought to certainly be in reasonable proportion to our demand for competence, intelligence, and sensitivity. Take some of the money that we pay these high-powered athletes who perform at the dome and use it to pay important people like police officers, so we can attract those who act with rationality and common sense in relating to people in our community.

Four, break the code of silence of police officers by making officers who witness brutal acts committed by fellow officers culpable if they do not try to prevent these acts or fail to report them to their superiors.

Five, minorities and women must occupy prominent positions and exercise supervisory roles throughout the police force. The police force ought

to look like the community, at every level of management and responsibility.

Six, maintain professional and regular evaluation of performance which target experiences of police officers with members of other races. In addition, we need to address the current lack of nationwide data on the scope and nature of police brutality.

We need to make Federal, State, and county funding dependent on the compilation and submission of statistical data on complaints of police brutality. I have from the Justice Department information that since January of 1995 there have been 201 complaints of deaths at the hands of police, but they claim they couldn't give me the racial breakdown. I don't believe that, but that's what they said.

But we ought to make it plain. How can we—it sounds as silly as some of the Supreme Court rulings, that you can't use race as a factor in dealing with racial discrimination.

Number seven, community policing. A proven factor in improving police-community relations should include police officers participating in the life of the community as residents, not as some outside force of occupation.

Number eight, officer training, including community education, must assist police officers in seeing themselves as public servants, and that fighting crime, while essential, is not their only function.

Police officers, firefighters, health professionals, councilmen, teachers, preachers, all public servants. We must help the community see police officers as important members of the community, and they ought to be compensated, I repeat, accordingly.

Police officers could very well be made part of a special team to address certain community projects. They ought to be teamed up with health providers, social workers, firefighters, councilmen, to address certain needs in the community, to be part of the molding and melting of that community into a cohesive family.

Ninth, there must be a level of accountability that is uncompromising and demanding. A civilian review board without teeth, without staff, without subpoena power, is a toothless tiger who can't even chew oatmeal, let alone animals in the jungle. A civilian review board representing a cross section of the citizenship has proved effective when it has a staff, subpoena power, and the backing of elected officials in the community.

Finally, support the enactment of Federal legislation, such as has been offered by Congressman Conyers and Congresswoman Waters, to make police officers financially liable if their illegal actions result in costly lawsuits to their departments or cities. Extend the Federal Government's authority to sue for illegal police practices. Give

private parties standing to sue and provide criminal sanctions for the specific problem of police brutality.

I'll take my seat as I say, Rodney King, savagely beaten by LA police officers is a simple man who raised a profound question. "Can't we all get along?" I believe we can. It would take degrees of intentionality and intensity that none of us has yet embraced, beginning with the premise that it's our community, not yours or mine, not us and them, ours. And since neither of us is going anywhere, we need to learn how to get along.

I heard some fool on the radio before I left Atlanta this morning suggesting that black folk go back to Africa. Black folks aren't going back to Africa any more than white folks are going back to Europe. All of us will stay right here. It's the best thing any of us ever had and the best thing any of us will have.

And since we're going to be here, as I tell my wife, we might as well learn to get along. She's not going anywhere and I'm not going anywhere. We have too much invested in each other.

Black folks and white folks in St. Petersburg have too much invested in each other. None of them, neither, one is going anywhere. We need to learn to get along. It makes sense to try.

Martin Luther King said there is no path to fulfillment for whites that doesn't intersect black paths, and there are no paths to fulfillment for blacks that don't intersect white paths.

We ought to try to get along. We are tied together, and we're not alone—I'm a preacher, you know that, and I do have to preach just a little bit—when we try to get along, we are not alone. The Creator who made us is not an absentee landlord; he gets involved in our business.

Christmas is a clear indication and clear example that God gets in our business. He sent his son to get in our business. The Texaco crisis is God's veto of Proposition 209, which is not only unconstitutional, but unconscionable. God gets in our business.

If the citizens of St. Petersburg come together, they won't be alone. God can get in their business. As we approach Christmas, remember that God gave. Let us give intentionally and intensely that justice may roll down, and peace can rise up.

The Nation has recently heard and seen the sound and sight of lawlessness from St. Petersburg. It saw lawlessness from cops on the beat. It saw lawlessness from people they beat.

It's time now for the Nation to hear another sound from St. Petersburg, the sound of joining hands, the sound of joining hearts, the sound of joining financial resources, the sound of joining every ounce of human effort to let justice roll down like waters, so peace can break out.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Doctor. Doctor, you have a plane to catch, I understand.

Rev. Lowery. I'll take the wings of the morning if necessary. I'll stay here as long as I can be of help.

Rabbi Agin. Linda.

Ms. Garcia. Thank you for your comments. You identified 10 recommendations. Do you see any of that happening in St. Petersburg?

Rev. Lowery. I've got a notion that there are some people in St. Petersburg who want to make this happen. I met with some members of the council following the funeral of TyRon, and I got the feeling that they want to make some things happen.

We need leadership in every instance in these days of desegregation. Those communities that had bold, courageous leadership, it was in education, it was the superintendent. In a municipal situation, it was the mayor. In some instances, in most instances, it was the business community. If leadership is provided, there are those who will follow.

I think the challenge in St. Petersburg right now is to encourage those who would; one of problems is that a lot of white folk want to do the right thing—it's a serious mistake for black folks to think that all white folk want to do wrong; it's just not true—the problem is, they're chicken. Each one is afraid that other white folks will ostracize and criticize them if they stand up and do what's right. The truth of the matter is most white folks are waiting on somebody to lead the way toward the light, so they can come out of the darkness of their hatred and their racism and their bias.

You need leadership. This mayor—the mayor, he's not here?

Rabbi Agin. He'll be here tomorrow.

Rev. Lowery. Whoever is here for the mayor—

Rabbi Agin. He'll be here tomorrow.

Rev. Lowery. Well, he'll get the word no matter whether he's here or not. Somebody will give him the word. Mr. Mayor, rise up and give the leadership. This town needs your leadership. Mr. Chamber of Commerce, rise up and give the leadership. Religious leadership, rise up. If ever you're going to preach the word, it certainly ought to be now.

Leadership. Yes, I see some signs and I'm a creature of hope—black folks are always hoping, you know, it's said, "Lift every voice"—"when hope unborn had died"—we had hope. But we must keep the flame of hope burning. Yes, I see some signs and I'm very hopeful.

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Ford.

Mr. Ford. Yes. There is no earthly way anybody can expand on what Dr. Lowery said, so I just want to piggyback on something he said and put it in the vernacular that I hope everybody can understand. He said that we have to get rid of the

"yours-mine," and that brings to mind a saying that the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is that enough good people do nothing.

Our problem is not that we have so many bad people running around doing evil things. We have too many good people sitting around do nothing.

Now, what he's talking about—what he's talking about, and this has got to be one on one—he's talking about risk taking, and if you are not of a mindset to reach out, and that's what this community needs, that's what America needs, to reach out across the lines of group belonging, to do what's right and what's fair and what's good, then you might as well continue to be quiet and people have to oblige when the violence starts, because if you—and there's two sides to every coin.

He said that some whites want to do right, but there's a lot of blacks want to initiate that, and they're afraid of being called names. That's what I'm trying to tell you. If you reach out across your group line, you're going to be called names.

I've been on the Orlando City Council for 16 years. I have been called everything from a militant "nigger" to an Uncle Tom. But none of it applies to me because I define who I am. I define who I am. And so I have to live so I can look this mug in the mirror when I shave, and I know that I have not mistreated anybody because of the group to which they belong.

As a public official I have to be about creating a level playing field, whether there are folk who like that or not, and that's what we need in America. The tone comes from the top. If the tone is not right, then we have to set the tone. We have to set the tone. We have to send a message to the demagogues that it will no longer work anymore.

Rabbi Agin. Do you have a question, Mr. Eng?

Mr. Eng. If I might just have a brief remark, very quickly. First I'd like to say, Reverend Lowery, it's a privilege for me to sit here and listen to your words.

Many of the things that you've pointed out today—I'd like to ask a question. You talk about the disparity and the economic uncertainty, the rising stress levels brought about by the economic malaise that we're undergoing in this country to an extent—I also have seen that, but I look at it, and I don't mean to make this a one issue statement for me, but it also affects the Asian community. And what we have is a situation where we have people driving wedges between natural alliances where people should be working together, but there are wedges being driven. There are groups being torn apart that should be working together, and I just want to make sure that what you're saying applies to all people, regardless of color, so that no one, none of us, be they African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, are left behind, and that it's a matter of inclusion and not exclusion.

Rev. Lowery. That's right. I believe in the oneness of the human family. And I believe in working for that day when black would not be asked to get back; brown can stick around, yellow will be mellow, when the red man can get ahead, and white will be all right. Oneness of the human family, and in the nonwhite community, we have to understand that the tricks that were tried through slavery are still utilized, and divide and conquer is still an effective means of a minority having its way, and I just think that we all have to wise up and not let ourselves be manipulated by those who seek to feather their own nest at the expense of the majority. I think we have to come together and I hope we do that.

When we tear away this veneer of complexion, you know, we all look just alike, equally and equitably ugly, and that's a symbol of the oneness of the human family. So we can't let this veneer of complexion keep us from reaching out.

Rabbi Agin. Bob, you have a quick question?

Mr. Ingram. I don't know about quick, but can you give us some recommendation as to what you think can be done to help get the corporate community to understand the necessity of their coming to the table to help make a difference in this community.

Rev. Lowery. The alliance for leadership here, black coalition, of which SCLC are members, have made some recommendations about what they call, Agenda on Economic Inclusion, and—

Rabbi Agin. Bobby, is that written somewhere?

Rev. Lowery. Yes, it is. It's a proposal that's written—we'll make copies available. Dr. Berry, be sure and make copies available for everybody. That's available and again—

Mr. Ingram. But talk to us a little bit about it, Doctor, so the people—

Rev. Lowery. The key is in the business community, and it's very interesting, in the late eighties and early nineties I was invited twice to South Africa to speak to South African white business leaders on the role that the white business community played in the South during desegregation.

As I mentioned earlier, in Birmingham, in Nashville, I have to confess, it was not the church. It should have been the church. It was the church that challenged Martin and to whom he addressed a letter from the Birmingham jail, because they were failing their responsibility.

It was finally the business community that decided that it's just not good for business to have this turmoil and injustice in the community, and they came together and they called Bull Connor and others into accountability, and things began to happen.

The business community here can make a difference, because until there's justice, there ain't

going to be no peace, ain't no need whistling in the dark. You know, Vaseline will not cure this cancer. It's going to have to take some surgical strikes and other kind of things to do it, and the business community holds the key, and that's why I've been meeting with—at lunch last week with a man, heads a major corporation in the State, trying to get him to assemble a group of other corporate leaders in this State to address the problem in St. Petersburg.

St. Petersburg is not isolated. St. Petersburg has a lot of company. It's just that God chose St. Petersburg as He sent that message of lawlessness, to send a message now of healing, and I think the business community and religious community are the key that can unlock a great future for St. Petersburg.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much, Dr. Lowery.

Next, Reverend Henry Lyons. Is Reverend Lyons here? I thought I saw him. No, he's not here.

Mr. Roy Kaplan. Mr. Roy Kaplan here? Okay, Mr. Kaplan. Executive director of National Conference, Tampa-St. Pete Branch.

Statement of Roy Kaplan, Executive Director, The National Conference, Tampa-St. Petersburg

Mr. Kaplan. Good evening. It's a pleasure to be here. It's an honor to be able to address this committee.

For those of you who don't know, the National Conference was founded as the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1927. Our mission is to fight bias, bigotry, and racism, and we do it through educational programs, conflict resolution, and advocacy.

We have 62 chapters around the country, and I'm the director of the Tampa-Bay chapter. I have Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties. I also do work in surrounding counties, Hernando, Pasco, where I'm asked to appear and do work in the schools, which is one of our major areas of interest.

And I'll try and rectify some misstatements that were made a little earlier as I go through this. I'll be happy to answer your questions about the school programs and what we're doing in the schools.

We try to bring people together, to get people to engage in honest conversation and dialogue. The National Conference this past June announced the coalition of the national Urban League, LaRaza, National Council of Churches, the ADL, to join in a coalition for new voices in the 21st century, to fight bias, bigotry and racism.

They formed Bigotry Watch to monitor the election campaigns, to make sure that the rhetoric wasn't slipping into the gutter. They also are raising funds to restore burned churches, and they're going to have a national symposium on the causes of racism and prejudice sometime in the near future in Washington, D.C.

You have to forgive me. I was a professor for 20 years. I'm a sociologist, and I don't want to be forgiven for being a sociologist, but I sometimes lapse into some theoretical speculations about our situation that we're in here today, and why we're here. And I've been in this position for 8 years now. This is my eighth year as the director of the Tampa Bay chapter, and I have to really be honest with you, I constantly think about whether or not the situation that we're in here in the Tampa Bay area is different from anyplace else in the United States. And living most of my life up north and being educated in New England, but having lived in other parts of the country, my answer is that I don't think that the kinds of problems that affect our community are any different anywhere else in the United States.

As a matter of fact, what happened in St. Pete, I believe, could happen at any moment in any city in the United States. The difference that I do see in the Tampa Bay area is the racism and the anti-Semitism is more overt. It's unabashed. We have, for example, for a number of years been exposed to a barrage of hate literature. I have samples here in my briefcase. I carry it around. It's been confiscated from areas schools. It's been delivered in people's mailboxes. People send it to me complaining, "How did I get this? What can we do about it?"

We've got groups like the National Alliance, which is a white supremacist organization out of Hillsboro, West Virginia, active in this area. This Saturday they are bringing in a revisionist, a Holocaust revisionist, who is going to make a day-long presentation that the Holocaust never occurred, in Tampa. They've posted signs on universities in this community, inviting students to come and they'll give them a discount. A couple of years ago they got beeper numbers of students and beeped area students, and when they phoned back to respond, they got racist, anti-Semitic messages.

So they're active and they're recruiting students and people in our community. We've got the National Socialists, the neo-Nazi party here, the White Aryan Resistance, white supremacists, Confederate Hammerskins, who have their headquarters in Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County. The National Association of White People, the Church of Alamo, the anti-Catholic group, the Ku Klux Klan holds periodic demonstrations in our communities and surrounding areas. And the rhetoric has been adopted by some of the youth.

The Skinheads and their allies are found in area middle and high schools. They receive literature and support from national organizations that have targeted our youth in this area. And they get local support from an outfit called the Church of the Avenger in Tampa, which has nothing to do with Christianity. It's an identity church movement or white supremacy organization.

The Tampa Bay area has experienced many hate crimes and for a while this area led the State. The number of hate crimes have gone down, but this past year, 1995, Hillsborough County, had 17 reported hate crimes and Pinellas County had 20. And this is no doubt a result of some of the incendiary talk radio shows and racist and anti-Semitic cable programs on public access TV that air weekly in our region. One of them, "Race and Reason," has been in prime time on cable public access, cable TV for 8 years. They produce the shows in this area and they're distributed throughout North America.

So the cumulative effect of these activities, together with long-standing exclusionary policies—the schools here were only integrated in 1970—these have created many challenges for our government and our community leaders. So to answer my rhetorical question that I constantly think about: "Is racism any different here or anti-Semitism or hate or prejudice any greater here?"—it's not any greater here, but it's a little more blatant.

And it's a very real problem that we have to confront. I don't know if any of you saw the letters to the editor this past Saturday in the *St. Petersburg Times*, some of the most racist, hate-filled letters, and many of them were written by people who don't reside in St. Petersburg. They came from New Port Richey, from Sarasota, from Clearwater, from Tampa, and it's always us-them.

The basic problem that we have in our society and in our community, and it's coming out now, is that we live in very different worlds, and we do not communicate with one another. As a matter of fact, we don't believe one another. Two years ago the National Conference commissioned a national survey by the Lou Harris Organization called "Taking America's Pulse."

A representative sample of over 3,000 people were asked about their race relations attitudes and values. What they found is that the white population, over 80 percent of the white population in this country, said that they felt people of color were being treated fairly and equitably in our society.

And 80 percent of the people of color in that survey said just the opposite, and we see this time and again. Whether or not you believe O. J. Simpson is guilty is a function of your racial and ethnic background. That was true before the case was ever tried and it's still true today.

People do not believe other people's experiences, and we can only solve our problems by getting down, sitting down with one another, and entering into true, honest, open dialogue about issues and experiences that concern us as human beings.

We cannot overcome this problem of racism and prejudice until people are willing to take risks and sit down and share who they are, what has happened to them, and listen and believe one

another. And this is what the National Conference is doing in coalition with the Urban League and the NAACP, Congregations United for Community Action here. And that's an indigenous interfaith organization here in St. Petersburg, and over in Tampa we have similar groups like Hope and other organizations, and we're trying to do this.

Three years ago when there was a serious racial problem here in this community—it's never gone away—but when it almost boiled over because of a former police chief, the city council formed a coalition, and I did some training with people and we had some meetings and the Chamber of Commerce here in St. Petersburg helped to organize, along with the National Conference, some day and a half retreats with members of the white community and the African American community, Latino community. We did four or five of these things and they were discontinued, because when the heat cooled down, we couldn't get anybody to go away for these retreats, even though it didn't cost them anything. See, you have to have a crisis to get people to go into action, and now we are starting to engage in more action.

I have to tell you that it's rather sad that people lapse into complacency. You have to continuously combat prejudice. It's not something that you can give an inoculation, throw \$20 million or \$50 million, or \$100 million at it, and it will go away. You can't engage in one dialogue for 1 day or 1½ days for a week and have it go away. You have to stay at it, and people in our society are rather complacent, look at the group of people here—very few members of the white community are here, you know.

If you read the letters, I don't know if they represent the vast majority of white folks in our community, but if you read the letters, you would obviously get the opinion that the white community does not believe the experiences of people of color in our community.

And we can't get a lot of those folks to come into these dialogues that we've been holding. We get the same 50 or 100 people, but we're working at it, and I want to tell you that I'm optimistic because there's a lot going on.

Every school in this county has a multicultural committee composed of students, faculty, the principal and parents. Some are more active than others, but this is the seventh year that these committees have been functioning, and I have to tell you that they're doing some wonderful things.

The day after the first disturbance in St. Petersburg, there was a youth conference that had 110 students, students from every high school in this county. Now, the National Conference has a contract with the Pinellas School Board and we had planned this months before.

It was ironic and, you know, rather timely that this happened the day after the first disturbance.

We had people who live in the area of the disturbance, and they stood up and we had a dialogue, and they explained how they felt and what their feelings were and how they felt this problem, you know, got out of hand, that they didn't feel that the people who were in the streets represented the mass majority of people in the community.

They thought that they were frustrated by not being heard. People want a voice in our community. We can empower them. They decided from that day that they would hold a youth rally, and 150 young people held a youth rally 2 or 3 days later in Campbell Park.

We had another one of these youth conferences just about a week ago and next week six of the area high schools in this region, in this particular area, are having week-long celebrations of peace and tolerance, and they're going to have a second youth rally for peace at the Williams Park on December 14, and everybody is invited to go to this. And the Urban League and NAACP and 14 other community organizations helped to organize this. We are working together. It's a pity that we have to wait for a crisis to try and move people but that's unfortunately the reality.

Last year I did 25 day-long youth conferences in area schools in middle schools and high schools to try to get young people to learn to live together in peace and harmony. It is gratifying to see that some of these schools are holding their own conferences. I can come and just be backup, sit in the back of the room and let them take over and do these things.

There are a number of schools that are engaging in these things now. We do these Camp Anytowns, week-long, multicultural, multiracial camps for 50 students and 25 volunteers in the summer. We've had 12 camps so far. Six hundred students have gone through this. They're in major colleges and universities around the country. They're making change on their college campuses, and they're coming back to live and work in their community. They're going to make a difference, and that's the reality.

I'm going to wrap up by telling you about some things that are going on in a positive way, because I think that—and I'd like to invite you to come to some of these things.

I know most of you don't live in this area, but you should know that—and incidentally you should know that Rudy Bradley, who is a State assemblyman from our area, coauthored the legislation that mandates the teaching of African American history and the Holocaust in the school systems in Florida, and that African American history and the Holocaust is being infused in the schools now.

It is not totally infused. It is not at a state of development that we want, but it is being taught. The curriculum for African American history was developed by an African American teacher at

Dunedin High School. His name is Randy Lightfoot. It is so well done that it has been adopted as a model for the entire State of Florida. Now, it's just in the early stages of being started—but it is a positive development. All right? You have to know that. You have to know that some good things are going on.

This Saturday, the Kettering Foundation is sending two trainers to our area free of charge. They are going to be training people who want to volunteer to learn how to conduct dialogue on race relations. I'll give you this document. It's free. They're going to do it for Saturday and Sunday at the Boys and Girls Club here on 22nd Street South.

On Sunday there's an interfaith dialogue that's cosponsored by Congregations United for Community Action and the National Conference, and that's at Lake View Presbyterian Church and that's from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

On Tuesday, the 10th, at the Sanderlin Center here in St. Petersburg, there's a study circle dialogue. Everybody in the community is invited to come to form dialogue groups on race relations. That's going to be from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

On the 14th of January, Enoch Davis Center at St. Pete has another one of these study circle dialogues. We did one—all these community organizations got together and sponsored one, and 100 people came. They spun off seven dialogue groups that are meeting on a regular basis now.

It's a slow process but it's a challenge and we can overcome it if we work together and try and form an understanding, appreciation, and listen to one another and believe people's experiences and not talk past each other, but respect one another as human beings and try to come together and form a united community. I believe it's possible. I have a commitment to make this thing happen, and there are other people in this room that I work with on a daily basis that believe it as well.

I'd like to thank you for your time and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you.

Ms. Garcia. I'd like to ask you what can be done to sustain these wonderful programs once the crisis subsides?

Mr. Kaplan. That's the challenge, and what we have to do is entice enough new people into the process so that they find this an opportunity of relief, because a great many people, especially in the white community, never had a chance to interact with people of color on an intimate personal basis, or listen to their stories and they have their own fears and anxieties and myths and stereotypes that they find a relief in being able to figure out that they're not alone in these things.

Both sides have stereotypes built up, and once they engage in this dialogue, they find a bit of relief. They find it fascinating and they find it very satisfying.

If we could only get people to take that step to sit down and engage in the process, they usually come back because you see, they find it almost a freeing kind of situation, because now they realize that they don't have to fear other people who are different from them, and that they can really have an opportunity to make new friends and contacts, to value the differences that are out there.

So what I'm saying is it's a fascinating activity. If we could only get people to engage in it, they'll realize this, and then they come back and want more.

Dr. Brown. I was very intrigued by your list of the white supremacist hate groups and their frequency of literature here, and it also seemed to link in my mind with the finding not too long ago of racist cartoons in the department's rooms, and do you have any indication of links within the department to these hate groups, much as we saw earlier say in North Carolina, links between people in the military, and these kind of hate groups?

Mr. Kaplan. No, I don't. I've worked with a specialist in the FDLE, and we've never discussed that particular aspect of this, but the literature unfortunately is out there. It's available. I haven't seen those cartoons. I've heard, you know, I've heard about that, but I also want to reiterate what Mr. Simmons from the Urban League said, that the vast majority of people on the police department are very qualified, capable people.

I personally think that Chief Stephens is an outstanding human being, and I happen to know him. He's gone through some of our training. I think that the man is extremely well-intentioned. He's in a very difficult situation.

My feeling is that I don't have any information about what you're talking about. I can only tell you that there are forces at work in our community that would try to subvert our system. However, I don't believe that those are the necessary forces that have created the situation.

This situation is more widespread and more subtle than that hate literature is out there. I can't control that. But I can only tell you that the prejudice that exists is not necessarily the result of that hate literature. The prejudice is there because of the myths and stereotypes that have been built up from false information and lack of interaction.

Dr. Brown. One more question.

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Eng had his hand up first.

Mr. Eng. Mr. Kaplan, you've given us a very impressive list of privately sponsored activities that the National Conference and other groups in the Pinellas County area have been involved in. I was just curious—and forgive me, because I'm not from the area and I may not know it as well—have there been attempts to forge public-private partnerships where you have a governmental body that might be interested in community relations

work with private groups to foster better relations in the community?

Mr. Kaplan. Well, that goes on. For example, GTE has helped us sponsor some of these overnight retreats where we take people away from different backgrounds and try to get them to interact.

We do get support, and other organizations get support, you know, not as much as we need.

Mr. Eng. But from a governmental—

Mr. Kaplan. Oh, with the government?

Mr. Eng. A board or something along those lines.

Mr. Kaplan. Yes. We have a lot of help, for example, in Tampa, for example, from the county commission, to help foster these Study Circle dialogues on race relations. We have about 50 of these groups going on a regular basis in Tampa.

Incidentally, you opened up the door and I have to tell you something here very quickly. We applied, the National Conference, and actually I helped write the proposal that went to the U.S. Department of Education this summer to try and get a grant, one of 10 that would be awarded around the country to combat hate crimes in school systems and the community, and we applied for a grant that would have provided an opportunity to develop a traveling bus that had an antiprejudice exhibit that could tour every school in this county, and we made, I think, a very cogent case for that exhibit. And we were denied. You know, we were denied that grant. There's a real need for more help at the Federal level.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much, Mr. Kaplan. We have to move on. Our next person, Sister Kinara. Just for the record, would you pronounce your name and where you're from?

Statement of Kinara Zima, President, People's Democratic Uhuru Movement, St. Petersburg

Ms. Zima. Kinara Zima from St. Petersburg.

Rabbi Agin. Spell the last name.

Ms. Zima. Z-i-m-a. First name is spelled K-i-n-a-r-a.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. I apologize for the pronunciation.

Ms. Zima. Okay. Thank you. I am Kinara Zima. I'm the president of the National People's Democratic Uhuru Movement, the local branch here in St. Petersburg.

I would like to speak to the attacks on the African community. The first thing I would like to say is that public officials, city officials, and police especially have been using the color of law to legally arrest, frame, jail, beat, and murder African people, and it has a long history here in the city.

But the Uhuru Movement in particular in this city have been denied a constitutional right, guaranteed, with arrest for passing out leaflets before October 24—members of our movement have

been continuously harassed, and I wanted to say that first.

The next thing I would like to say is that African people do not have access to the parks here in St. Petersburg. We pay taxes, but we cannot assemble, use the parks, and as we had a forum months ago, we invited the police department and the mayor and also officials on the city council to come to a forum we had for the African community and the place was packed, our center, which is on 18th Avenue, was packed with African people wanting to know why we were denied access to the park.

We didn't get really a good answer from the police department or any of the city officials, but we did say that we are citizens and that our rights were being violated.

On October 24 there was a murder committed; TyRon Lewis was murdered by two officers, Knight and Miner, and the attack that came after that have continued up until even today, attacks—the first attack we saw happen, as Bernie McCabe blamed the Uhuru Movement for the just rebellion that happened after the murder.

The African community did not want to step over another dead body or have business as usual, so there was response to this murder, and people acted in a way in which got the attention, worldwide attention, and we as the Uhuru Movement we represent the poor, African working class, as we have for 30 years. Since the black revolution of the sixties was defeated, with the Black Panther Party, etc., many of our leaders were assassinated and many still are in prisons today.

The Uhuru Movement stands and represents the African working class here in the city and all across the country, and even across the world.

Every night since October 24, the police have been in Bethel Heights, Jordan Park, and other surrounding areas just like armed thugs. That's the word that I have to use, because of the calls that we've been getting from people seeking assistance from our center.

The Uhuru Movement was blamed by Bernie McCabe as the inciters of the so-called riot or rebellion. We saw that as an attack, because at our center we have volunteers from the community who make our programs and campaigns work. The whole movement was founded in 1991, the National People's Democratic Uhuru Movement, to protect and defend the democratic rights of the black community. And since October 24 we have had no rights in the African community. There has been martial law and we are here tonight to speak to some of those things.

Rabbi Agin. Ms. Zima, can I ask you one question, please?

Ms. Zima. Sure.

Rabbi Agin. You mentioned the name of Bernie McCabe. Can you tell me who that is, please?

Ms. Zima. Bernie McCabe, he's a State attorney who was there to investigate the murder of TyRon Lewis. However—

Rabbi Agin. I apologize.

Ms. Zima. Yes, in the *St. Petersburg Times*, he said that he would indict members of the Uhuru Movement for the rebellion that happened.

I mentioned since October 24 the attack on the Uhuru Movement. I mentioned also Bethel Heights and Jordan, where on October 25 the police went to Bethel Heights and Jordan Park saying, "Last night was a black night; tonight is a white night."

There were children from 9 to 14 and even older, who were beat down. I mean, jailed and treated in the most inhumane way. People were not allowed to come out of their homes, go to work or otherwise. People were threatened and, you know, things like this happened, so the Uhuru Movement held, as we do every week, meetings to allow the African community to voice their opinions on some of the things that had happened.

We had a march to the funeral. We also had a trial for the African community to state if the police officers were guilty of murder, and we come out with a verdict that they were guilty of murder, and that the City of St. Petersburg was also guilty of the policy of shoot to kill, and that the so-called "keeping niggers in check" way that the police act in our community is totally in violation of our constitutional rights.

On November 13 the verdict came out, and a member of the Uhuru Movement was arrested. Twenty-seven members of the green team came to the building and purposely tried to invoke provocation, and another member of the Uhuru Movement was arrested. I, myself, and the chairman and founder of the Uhuru Movement was sprayed with pepper spray, and 100 or so people came out of their homes.

We have meetings every Wednesday evening and that happened to be a Wednesday, where we were going to have a forum, and that night as people were coming to the meeting, police started barricading the streets, blocking all intersections to the building, denying people access to the building, saying that they would be arrested if they came to our meeting. They also pepper sprayed people and shot tear gas—all the tear gas they had in the city of St. Petersburg went toward our building. People who were in the room were children, men, and women who were terrified.

As the meeting started, the police officers who were in force with M-16s, riot gear, started on the outside shooting tear gas. They had on the loud speaker, "We declare this an unlawful assembly and if you don't get out of the building in 5 minutes, we will gas the building." Within 30

seconds they started gassing the building. There was total chaos in the building.

Some people who were in our meeting are in this room. Total chaos, stampede. A sister who is no longer here was trampled. People with their children throwing up, etc.

They intended to kill us that night, and if it wasn't for the courageous brothers and sisters who stood up after the murder of TyRon Lewis, I wouldn't be here today, and many people in this room would not be here, because they intended to kill us on that night of November 13.

All the tear gas, I mentioned, which they said—and all the newspapers and radios was used on our building that night. Our constitutional rights were violated. Our freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and the mayor and chief of police stated earlier that day that they did not want members of the Uhuru Movement on the streets, precisely because the verdict was coming out and that they didn't want us to say something they didn't like.

Police tried to burn down our building, shooting tear gas into a tree. When members of the community were put out beside, they were shot at with the tear gas, and the tree was set on fire three times. The tree was next to our van, and the van next to our building.

There was later an incident where someone came and said that there would be a sweep at our building at 6 o'clock. So from that night, October 24, until even today, the whole black community has been under martial law.

On November 20 and even before that, we've been getting hate calls. One hate call in particular, I answered the phone at our [inaudible]. They called us "niggers, kangaroos," etc. When I star 69'd the call, the person answered, "Pinellas County Sheriff's Department."

I said, "Excuse me, I just got a crank call from this call," and he said, "No, it didn't come from this number; we're surveillancing you. The number must have rolled over." I star 69'd four times, and all of which was answered by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department.

On—I don't know what date this happened, but WFLA 970 had a radio station. Not only did they call for the burning, looting of our building, but also attacks on our members, and also had a program mocking the cartoon of TyRon Lewis, asking people to send in cartoons, who can write the best cartoon, they would have a prize.

The *St. Petersburg Times*, which prides itself on being even-handed, nonviolent, and objective, has so much misinformation and lies about the African community, about TyRon Lewis, about the whole incidents, that you know were put forth, and even put out this memo, which states that Curtsinger, and I have it here—it says "Post on all bulletin boards in all departments." It states that Curtsinger and our dear chairman, Amadi Chatella

[phonetic], are on the same level, and we know that the chairman, Amadi Chatella, has love for African people, and which is why, you know, he speaks for African people all around the world.

Not only that, but the *St. Petersburg Times* attacked black ministers for speaking on behalf and supporting the demand to the African community, and even having the Uhuru Movement in its coalition. So we wanted to speak to that and the memo that they put out and expose that newspaper for what they really and truly are.

The mayor—you can clap for that. I also wanted to speak to the mayor. The mayor has created a task force, which is in contention with the coalition, which represents the interest of the African community. This task force, which I want to say was created to contend with our coalition—our coalition represents clergy, business people, a community activist, and it represents all parts of the African community, and that is the voice of the African community. We say that this task force is the mayor's way of not dealing with the African community, and we're putting it on the table right now.

I also want to say that the coalition that has been formed I hold in my highest esteem. I'm very proud of its existence.

We are talking about reconciliation right now, and the real reconciliation can come forth from amnesty for all arrested on those 2 nights. We want Miner and Knight to be arrested and convicted for the murder of TyRon Lewis, reparations for his family.

We also are calling for all nationalities to join with the Uhuru Movement, which is open to our nationalities who unite with stopping this war on the African community and for people to take part in the coalition.

The thing is, I talked to my daughter today, and she stated—she's only 4 years old, and she said, she said, "My eyes are burning, just as the tear gas burned my eyes." I said, "Well, who put out the tear gas?" She said, "The police did." I said, "Why did they do that?" She says, "Because they don't want us to be in the movement, they don't want us to be free, they don't want us to be black." And she's only 4 years old, but she has seen people getting beaten, she has seen the terror. She has seen cars pass with M-16s and the car door open.

The sheriff's department and all of the agencies have been in our community nonstop, and they are using Florida Power trucks to pass through our community. The coalition, who has come to our aid and also has said that they stand with the Uhuru Movement, know that the Uhuru Movement has been under attack, and we demand that this attack stop. See them standing up.

Go ahead.

Mr. McDuffie. Needless to say, I'm horrified at what you have said. Your entire remarks shock the

system. You have to be inhuman not to be shocked by what you have just stated.

The martial law, the attacks, the white knight, the black knight, I find this very offensive, along with the tear gas, the pepper spray. The whole gamut just turns my insides upside down.

Just a moment, please. Thank you. What I would love for you to do, and I don't know if it's possible because time is not on your side—we have a meeting tomorrow, and I would like personally to address those issues that you have stated tonight to the representative, to the law enforcement, to the mayor, etc.

I would like to hear what they have to say in response to that, and the only way that we can be effective, or I feel that I personally can be effective, is if you would kindly type that material for me? Could you do that?

Ms. Zima. Yes, I can.

Mr. McDuffie. What you have stated. If you can do that and get that to me tomorrow before we start grilling the other people, I would be deeply appreciative to you.

Ms. Zima. Just 3 days ago two members of our movement was arrested for passing out leaflets. So I'm saying that every day we get calls, and I appreciate you looking into it, but a lot of these orders are from the mayor—

Mr. McDuffie. That's what we need to find out, and there is—pardon me, sir? No comments from the audience, please.

Unidentified Speaker [from audience].
[Inaudible.]

Mr. McDuffie. You want to know who is going to deliver what, sir?

Unidentified Speaker. —she'll be able to deliver what you want—that's all I want to say.

Mr. McDuffie. That will be her responsibility to get that document to me. Okay?

Ms. Zima. I'll get it to you.

Mr. McDuffie. I want a typewritten—

Ms. Zima. Yes.

Mr. McDuffie. And I want to make sure you give it to me—if it's early in the morning before I get here, you can bring it to the St. Petersburg Hilton and tell them to leave it in my box, and I will pick it up in the morning, but I need that verbatim, what you have said this evening.

Ms. Zima. Sure.

Mr. McDuffie. And we'll tackle that. I find it offensive that you are having trouble with the media, the radio station. This is not the first time, I want you to know, the first time that this has been called to my attention. The last time that I was in this community, it was brought to my attention and I begged the people to write to the FCC, because I felt they were in violation, and I don't know whether that was done. But if it's the same radio station, that clearly, in my belief, clearly falls in their pocket, that they have to deal with that

kind of media. That's disgusting. That's nonacceptable to me.

Mr. Ford. Mr. Chairman?

Rabbi Agin. Yes.

Mr. Ford. I've got a question. When I arrived this afternoon and checked into the hotel, I saw on the news that the police union had voted to ask the chief to step down. Do you have any evaluation of that? Do you know anything about that, and what is your—you don't know that?

Ms. Zima. I hadn't heard that.

Mr. Ford. And the evaluation of the chief, I assume, is different from what Mr. Kaplan said by your group?

Ms. Zima. It's different—

Mr. Ford. Chief Stephens, is that evaluation different what Mr. Kaplan said? He says he knows him to be a fine human and decent human being. In his capacity as police chief, you disagree with that?

Ms. Zima. I disagree with that, and I believe that he's responsible for most of the attacks that are happening.

Mr. Ford. Well, then the last thing I'd like to say is that it would be my fervent hope that this body would ask the United States Justice Department to probe this, and that you and your group need to sit down and talk among yourselves if you have someone who is willing to testify as a sworn witness to the things that you have talked about, and in doing that you need to understand all of the ramifications that go with that, but you need to sit down among yourselves and if there is a Justice Department probe, find out who is willing and able to testify to some of these things that you talked about.

Ms. Zima. We can definitely say that the coalition definitely will be willing to do that, and whatever ramifications come, our lives are in danger every day. We know that, and we—

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Brake?

Mr. Brake. Ms. Zima, I'm a lawyer. I've been a lawyer for 45 years. Many of the things you've said are violations of State civil rights laws and Federal civil rights laws. In my experience as a lawyer, I have donated *pro bono* services to such organizations as the NAACP Defense Fund and the ACLU, to take on cases like that for citizens against the government and against the individuals. My question to you is has your organization contacted any of these legal assistance organizations to file suit?

Ms. Zima. Yes, we have. After October 24 when Bethel Heights and Jordan Park was under attack, the NAACP—who was it that came—Center for Constitutional Rights came down and we were asking him could he assist some of the people—this was before the attack on the building and the gassing—could he assist the people in the community, and basically he said no, the only thing that

they were interested in was seeing that justice was done. The

Unidentified Speaker [from audience]. Center for—

Ms. Zima. They are the Center for Constitutional Rights, yes, but I'm saying that I don't believe that they have said that they would assist us at this time.

I would like to put out to the community that there were over 100 people, probably 200, including people on the outside. We do have a class action suit that we are filing. We can use any assistance from lawyers who would like to be on the team.

Everyone inside the room, everyone who was shot at—some people were shot in the head with the canisters. We know them. They came forth. People who were beaten—we're asking them to come forth.

We have a form that they can fill out to be a part of this suit, but we also need an injunction filed to stop—it's sort of a restraining order, stop the harassment, stop the brutality in our community, and stop the martial law in our community, which we see is happening every day, and nothing is done about it.

Mr. Ingram. Mr. Chairman, we have the State president of the NAACP here, and I would like to have him answer for us, if he as president could ask the national NAACP Legal Defense Fund to take this matter on as a community interest. Leon, is that possible?

Rabbi Agin. Just a moment.

Mr. Ingram. I'm just asking him a question, Mr. Chairman.

Rabbi Agin. Let's back up a minute. We have to finish with Ms. Zima, and then we can bring him on, and then we can ask him that question.

Mr. Ingram. So you want me to hold the question until—

Rabbi Agin. Until we bring him on.

Mr. Ingram. Then can I address Ms. Zima?

Rabbi Agin. If you're going to be kind.

Mr. Ingram. I'll always be kind to a lady, and I found her to be just that in her comments.

I had to opportunity to take a tour of the area today, and I saw where the center is located, and I may be incorrect, but it appeared that there was a police substation set up in front of the building. That's down the street from it—but you made mention of the fact that you're not permitted to meet in public parks.

Ms. Zima. The African community cannot gather at public parks.

Mr. Ingram. Is that just for your organization?

Ms. Zima. No, for the African community in general. Black people, period, period. That's it.

Mr. Ingram. I am just shocked. I am shocked.

Ms. Zima. I just wanted to mention one more thing. I know that we're almost—I just wanted to mention one more thing. The Uhuru Movement is

located 2½ blocks from where TyRon Lewis was murdered.

And we are in the community every day, asking people to come volunteer, you know, make the programs happen, etc. And because we were there, we were blamed for all of the chaos, but it is the police who murdered TyRon, and I do not want us to get off of that, who murdered him, and who got off for it.

There was a cartoon that was drawn up, and it was raised that the person who drew the cartoon may be fired, but the person who murdered TyRon, not only did he get money from the union, not only did this white radio station raise money, and all the other police departments in surrounding county and the white community raise over \$10,000—I'm not even sure how much by now—for him, we see him and Sandra Knight as, you know, being justified in murdering another African person, and we demand that they be arrested and convicted, and that reparations be paid to the family, and that all of the people be given amnesty from the 2 nights.

So those are our demands. Those are the community's demands, and I wanted to emphasize those, because I don't want those to get lost, and I ask this Commission to discuss those things.

Rabbi Agin. I have to have a copy of that—the article from the Associated Press regarding the racial cartoon. I have to have that. Chairperson.

Dr. Berry. Yes, I have some questions for you. The police here in St. Petersburg, and we will ask them more questions tomorrow, told the press about the events with Uhuru that they seemed to be upset, they were trying to contain the group to avoid violence in the aftermath of the acquittal or the failure to indict the police officer.

If they were—this is in the press accounts that they were trying to avert violence, that's why they made a preemptive strike, trying to avert violence.

They also in the media accounts, the mayor, the police chief and so on, called attention to, in diverting Mr. McCabe, the prosecutor, called attention to Uhuru asking—holding a tribunal and calling for the execution of the mayor, and they also cited on the night that the violence occurred, they said that your organization had been collecting bricks and rocks and trashcans, bins, and 6 tons of rocks and bottles.

Assuming for the sake of argument that these are in fact the reasons they had for doing what they did, do you as an organization accept those as reasons? I mean, that if you call for the execution of the mayor and if you indeed make clear that you are upset in organizing and using what they call hot rhetoric, and if indeed the police believe that you are collecting rocks and whatever in a bin, do you accept that as a basis for a preemptive strike by them against your organization?

Ms. Zima. No, I don't, and I would just like to say, the first arrest happened at 12:00 in the afternoon, and throughout the day we saw these events happen, and the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department crank called us, so I don't believe that anything they say can be justified as to attack a center where hundreds or more people with children, women and men are in there, and to violate all of our rights. I don't see that.

And if we had called—our trial happened. It did, and I'm the president of the local branch. It happened. We had a jury. We had witnesses who were there when TyRon Lewis was murdered. They put out that they didn't believe and they didn't see either officer's lives being in danger, that it was a blatant murder, and that when the judges deliberated, came back, they said that the State—that they—after they deliberated they came back with a verdict and said that they were murdered and the State's electric chair. We don't call that trial a mock trial. We call that the People's Court, and we don't have State power right now.

However, we offered the State to electrocute them, if they have the power to do it. We offered them the opportunity to do that, but we say as a community, we have no voice. This was our court. And I stand strong, and I stand strong and firm that that court was not a mock trial, that the people were there and they stood up, and that 49 witnesses came to the hearing, but it was 14 white people and 1 scared Negro, which let the officer out—you know what I'm saying, they let them off and that—

Dr. Berry. In other words, Ms. Zima, you believe that you have a right as an organization to express your belief that these people should be executed if that's how you feel?

Ms. Zima. Yes, and we also know that we did not call for the executions the way the press has said, and we have said how they misrepresented us and lies came out. They weren't allowed in our trial and they were hot. They were mad that they weren't allowed, so of course after the trial they asked and they made up stuff. They misinterpreted purposely what we intended, but we did say yes, they were guilty of murder and genocide and that it is a genocidal policy, shoot to kill, and that he wasn't the first person that was murdered at that corner, that same corner another brother was murdered and shot down, and we know who that is.

So the thing is, you know, we're coming here tonight asking that you will take all of what I said into consideration, that the coalition be viewed as the voice of the African community, and not the mayor's task force, which is in direct contention with that, and that the attacks stop, that our lives are in danger.

If you go to these projects, people will tell you right now—yesterday the police were here. They come every night at 8 o'clock, 8:30. People—police

officers who they name—it isn't even their jurisdiction, but they're there to—I mean, in the most vicious way they claim their turf and act as armed thugs, so I'm a spokesperson for the African working class, which the coalition is for the African community, and we stand firm and demand to be heard.

Rabbi Agin. At this end, Mr. McDuffie, I don't think that she should have to type the information. She's made a tape and for her to come down tomorrow to face those people, I don't think that would be comfortable.

Mr. McDuffie. I am not asking her to come down personally. Okay? I am asking her to please deliver those to me so that I can personally question the authorities about these statements. Whatever it is, I can have it.

Unidentified Speaker [from audience]. What about being banned from city parks?

Mr. McDuffie. That's all going to be in her statement, sir. Let's move on. Ms. Zima, what I'd like you to do, if you can, if you can get the information to me, that would be wonderful. If you cannot, then I'll go from my notes and from my memory. Trust me.

Ms. Zima. Well, the coalition will have it for you.

Mr. McDuffie. Well, I don't want to put any stress—

Ms. Zima. We'll get it together and we will get back to you for tomorrow.

Mr. McDuffie. That will be wonderful. I appreciate that.

Dr. Brown. Okay. It's been my understanding that the Department of Justice has been doing some investigation in these areas, and I'm wondering have you had particularly relative to the incidents in Bethel Heights and Jordan Park that you're talked about, have you been contacted by anybody in the Department of Justice and do you have any comments on any of the Department of the Justice investigations on these issues?

Ms. Zima. No, I haven't had any contact with them. We haven't had a call from them, but I do know that there's—the police department, the mayor, and the chief of police are using the color of law to selectively arrest—

Dr. Brown. I understand what you said but—

Ms. Zima. But—

Dr. Brown. But you have not had any investigation—

Ms. Zima. We have not.

Dr. Brown. And one thing, you mentioned the green team. Tell me what you meant by the green team.

Ms. Zima. Well, the green team is a special agency in the black community primarily to terrorize the African community. They carry special weapons. They're a special weapons team. This city claims that they have been banned but—

they're a SWAT team, but they still wear the green tee-shirts. They still act in the same way, and they are in the community, and we saw 27 of them at 12 p.m. on November 13 for a traffic violation. I didn't mention that, but members of the Uhuru were arrested for traffic violations and that they even said to the people arrested, "We have orders to sweep Uhuru members off of the street."

Any more questions?

Mr. Ford. Did they get any weapons from any of the people they arrested of any kind?

Unidentified Speaker [from audience]. No, no.

Ms. Zima. I do want to say that time and time again we get donations from the community, businesses. We are a volunteer organization. We fund raise to get our monies. We have [inaudible]—a lot of our funds, and we sell a lot of cookies, have been spent on getting people out of jail and they're trying to exhaust our resources, and we understand that, so I would like to ask, you know, people to—who have been violated to let's get this class action suit and be reparated, as we are just due, you know, we deserve.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. We have one more person before we allow ourselves a few minutes for a break, and that is Mr. Leon Russell, who is the State chairman of the NAACP.

Statement of Leon Russell, Florida State President, NAACP

Mr. Russell. Good evening. I did prepare a written statement that I will pass to you. I'm not going to use that statement, however. Let me first of all introduce myself.

I am Leon W. Russell. I am president of the Florida State Conference of Branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. I am here at the request of Garnell Jenkins, president of the St. Petersburg's branch, to make this presentation to you this evening.

Let me begin by making a clarification. There are two organizations. There is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and there is the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. The LDF is separate and apart, has its own board, its own operation. It is the legal defense fund that Thurgood Marshall founded and nurtured for many years. It is not a part of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, although it sprang out of the national association, and they make determination about what they will handle and what they won't handle in their own governing body.

Now, let me also make a commitment on behalf of the national association, and that is that we will, if people bring to us actual cases where there has been police brutality, where they can identify it, we will seek to assist them in obtaining legal counsel. I can tell you that the national association has two

permanent staff attorneys at this point, and so we would be seeking assistance from other institutions and organizations, but we will pledge to do that.

Let me also adopt and endorse the statement of Reverend Lowery and the 10 points that he made.

It's very clear that what this whole thing is about here in St. Petersburg is the issue of justice, the perception of justice, and whether or not the concept of justice extends to people who are part of the African American community. That's clearly the issue. I'm not sure whether this body really can do anything about it, because this body was here 4 years ago, and you heard and you documented much of the same information. You heard the same stories. You heard at that time that there is a chasm between this community and the law enforcement department that is responsible for protecting it. You've heard that very clearly 4 years ago, and you are hearing it very clearly this evening.

And so it may not be you that has to make the change here. There has to be a recognition in the City of St. Petersburg, first of all, that there is a problem, that there is a problem between the community and its police department, and that there is, in fact, a problem with the police department and itself. That must be understood, and that has to be dealt with here by officials, administrators within this city.

The other thing that has to be recognized, it seems to me, and it seems to my organization, is that the geographical place called south St. Petersburg has to once and for all be considered an integral part of this city, and not some foreign nation, not some separate entity. That above all else.

The other thing that has to be recognized, whether people like it or not, is that black folk, African folk, African American folk, have the right and will to determine who their leaders are. Once and for all the leadership of this community, and that's governmental, corporate, clerical, whatever it is, need to accept the leadership that the black community puts before them to deal with them.

This has been a symptom of the problem of this community since October 24 and well before that. So there needs to be a recognition that we will sit down and we will be inclusive of all segments of our community, and those that we deal with, those that we negotiate with, those that we have to sit down and come to grips with must recognize that we have that right and that we will exercise that right to say who our leaders are. I can't emphasize that point enough. It has to be done. It has to be done, because what has happened since October 24 is that we have let the fact that it is a perception that black folk cannot get justice in this community, that's the central focus, but that's been dismissed, and we have allowed folks to say, "Well, it's their fault," or, "It's their fault, and it's most,

black community, your fault because you ought to keep those other people quiet."

. So it's time for a recognition that you have to deal with all of us. I think Reverend Lowery said it very eloquently, this is where we find ourselves. This is where we intend to be. We are not going anywhere else. We intentionally put ourselves here, and we must be accepted as an integral part of this community, which means that our aspirations have to be taken into account.

We have to start with an educational system that recognizes our needs and develops programs for us, not levels and tracks to deny us. We have to go further and have a community that creates employment opportunities and training programs that allow us to take advantage of those opportunities within our community. That has to come from within, and it has to be fostered by the business community in St. Petersburg, has to be fostered by the financial community, has to be fostered by the governmental community, and it has to be embraced by the general community.

This is where we are. This chasm has to be filled in. We have to build a bridge. I mean, that's an overused term this year, but it's very important. There are the programs. The National Conference very strenuously puts on its program. There are other programs in the community that talk dialogue and talking about the problems of race in this community, but once and for all there must be a recognition by the leadership of this community that if all of us aren't allowed to enjoy the opportunities that the society offers, then chaos will reign.

So I guess, to shorten this whole thing, what I'm really saying is we as leaders in the black community and leaders in the civic and business community and the church community must all come together, not this Commission, which by and large comes from someplace else, but it's up to us, who are here and who will be here, to sit down together and work out the problems, recognizing, recognizing that at root is the issue of justice, and whether or not the black community can get the justice that the rest of the community enjoys.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you. Will you take a couple of questions?

Mr. Russell. Sure.

Ms. Reynolds. Mr. Russell, with that in mind, stating that we've been here, we're doing this again, it's pretty much a repeat, and what you told us before has now fulfilled itself and we're here, then what would you, as a member of this community, what would you say to this committee would be a first step for this committee to get where you just described?

Mr. Russell. The first issue that has to be recognized is that there is a problem between the police department and the community. There is a perception that the police department does not serve the African American community, and that in

fact it is an army of—in a state of siege of the community. That has to be dealt with, that perception or that reality has to be dealt with. People in this administration need to deal with that.

Ms. Reynolds. For the record, I would like to state that I'm Ida Reynolds from Alachua County, Gainesville, Florida. Thank you.

Mr. Ingram. Mr. Russell, I guess my question is about the police, and what the community here really can do, because the current police chief was hired after the other police chief was hired, and that police chief was fired. The community mobilized. There were racially insensitive remarks and all sorts of things that happened.

And the current police chief is recognized by police experts nationally as being one of the progressive police chiefs in the country. I mean, that's just fact, and he's had things like cultural diversity training here in the department, black officers, according to the numbers they put out, 16 percent—I think the black population, according to the numbers they put out, is supposed to be 19 percent.

All of this, but still—community policing, which I've heard positive things about in this community and negative things. But still we had this incident and still we had a police officer who put himself in what the chief called a disadvantageous position or something like that, he put it, which is why he suspended him with pay. And I understand that the training of the police officers is such that they're not supposed to get in front of cars. At least that's what we were told.

All of this happened in St. Petersburg and you have the complaints from the community about the police, on the one hand, not enough policing in the black community and, on the other hand, insensitive policing in the black community, with this new chief, and with the community having mobilized to get this done.

What is the message to the community? Mobilize and get another chief? What is the problem? What is it—is it more than chief deep or what is going on here?

Mr. Russell. Let's understand that the chief is an administrator and, yes, 4 years ago you did change the chief, but you didn't clean out the department. And so if there were people in the department 4 years ago that caused problems in the community, many of those people are still on the force, still causing problems. So the issue is—maybe somebody else said it a little better—maybe there needs to be some review, and you need to go through one by one, just like a barrel of apples. If you don't want the whole barrel to rot, you'll remove the rotten ones.

That's part of it. Yes, leadership is important, but there has to be an acceptance of a mission within the department by all the members of that

department, and that mission has to include the African American community. Protection has to extend to that community and, yes, understand that our community, just like everybody else, wants to be protected, but they want honest, fair, and decent protection.

Dr. Berry. Then my only other question is this one. It's one that the media keeps asking me, so I'm asking you, because I'm not sure of the answer. Why is it that when a State Advisory Committee like this one holds a forum or hearing on issues related to a major crisis in this community, the racial divide in St. Petersburg and all the issues, and holds it in the City Hall building, that you would have an audience which is composed of a sprinkling of white people, if I may call it a sprinkling, and mostly African Americans. It's not being held in the African American community. It's not in south St. Petersburg. Should we infer anything at all from this phenomenon or—

Mr. Russell. I think it is interesting. I think on the one hand it says that perhaps the greater community feels that this is not their problem, but I would take you back to one of the first, if not the first, community forums, that was held after the October 24 situation, there were many more white participants at the church that night, when the issue was I guess more prominent and more current—yes, exactly. There were more participants. So maybe the issue is they don't see the connection. They don't see the connection to this situation and, therefore, they're not here.

Dr. Berry. You mean they don't see the connection—

Mr. Russell. To their lives.

Dr. Berry. To their lives? Okay, all right. Thank you.

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Brown?

Dr. Brown. Yes, Mr. Russell, I was very disturbed that Ms. Zima had not had any indication of any Department of Justice investigation, and my understanding that the NAACP, beginning right with President Mfume and down through, including your office, has been communicating and urging a Justice Department investigation. What kind of commitments, if any, have we gotten from the Justice Department?

Mr. Russell. On October 26 President Mfume drafted and transmitted a letter to Janet Reno, calling for an investigation of the incident, the initial incident, and asked that she move to have the FBI and her department review the situation. Following that, about a week later, I, along with Nelson Rivers, our regional director in the Southeast Region, met with a number of other people from the community.

The United States Attorney for the Middle District of Florida, Charles Wilson, we met with the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Deval Patrick, in Charles Wilson's office, and we

reiterated the call for an independent investigation. We asked that that investigation be carried on on the ground here in St. Petersburg by the FBI and that they not rely solely upon evidence and information gathered by the local law enforcement community, but they do a complete and thorough investigation, and we were assured that that would in fact occur, that they would in fact come in and look at the situation.

Now, the question, have they been on the ground? I have no information that they have. What their process is, I also don't know, but we were given a commitment, and I'm sure you will ask them tomorrow when they come before you what they are doing, and you should ask them that. But the requests have very, very specifically been made.

Rabbi Agin. Yes, ma'am, you want to say something?

Unidentified Speaker [from audience]. Yes, please. You have approximately three people who would like to speak, so if you would be so kind as to honor us and continue with the hearing, so that we too could get out early, so we have at least three people—that's all that's here to speak. I know it's on the list and—

Mr. Doctor. We have many more than three. We have three scheduled maybe, but we have a lot of unscheduled participants.

Rabbi Agin. We have others in addition to that.

Dr. Berry. We have a whole bunch.

Mr. Ford. I would be interested in the demographics of this so-called green team. Are there any black officers on that team?

Mr. Russell. I'm not familiar with the green team. Let me clarify something. I don't live in St. Petersburg.

Mr. Ford. I know that.

Mr. Russell. So I just wanted to make that clear.

Mr. Ford. Does anybody have any knowledge on the green team, the demographics? Any black officers on that?

[Comments from audience.]

Rabbi Agin. I understand, sir, but we—in order for us to be effective, you need to identify yourself. Are you going to speak tonight? Fine, thank you. Is there one more, because we need to take a break. Do you want to say something?

Mr. Ingram. What role does the NAACP play in trying to bring this matter to a head, both locally and statewide?

Mr. Russell. The State and regional offices have proposed a plan to the local branch to create within the branch office, which is located very close, again, to the center of the activity that occurred here. We're recommending a series of steps in terms of economic and community development, in terms of education, to deal with

some of the issues. We will also review some of the legal questions that have been raised here and ask our legal counsel how we can address those issues as they develop. The local branch has been a part of many of the meetings that have gone on. They have taken part and participated in those.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, Mr. Russell.

Mr. Russell. Thank you.

Rabbi Agin. We would like to take, with your grace, we would like to take a 15-minute, no more than 15-minute—

Dr. Berry. And we mean 15 minutes, not 20 minutes, not 30 minutes.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you.

[Break.]

Dr. Berry. Let me first, as the Chairperson of the SAC calls you back to order, just say that I am just very pleased that my colleague from the national U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Commissioner Yvonne Lee from San Francisco, California, has come all the way here to indicate her interest and concern. Commissioner Lee, right now on the end. I'm sure you'll be hearing from her as the meeting goes on. Would you care to say anything right now?

Ms. Lee. No, just listen.

Dr. Berry. All right. Thank you for coming. Yes, Chairperson.

Rabbi Agin. I wish to thank all you brave souls for staying on, and we will continue. Reverend Wayne Thompson, First Baptist Institutional Church.

Now, we're going to have to stick strenuously with the time constraints of 10 minutes, and then we'll allow 5 minutes for questions, so when it's at 10 minutes, I will interrupt you. Please, sir.

Statement of Wayne Thompson, First Baptist Institutional Church, St. Petersburg

Rev. Thompson. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try and stay within the time frame. Let me just say thank you for this opportunity to have a chance to say a few things to you about where I think we are, as a pastor and as a lifelong citizen of this divided community.

I've been saying for a long time that I think the basic problem that we have here is the fact that many of the officers and the leaders of this community think that there are two St. Petersburgs, one St. Petersburg for some people and then south St. Petersburg for black people. But it's really just one city, and we need to begin to look at it as if it were one city, and we would be able to address problems together rather than separately.

Many issues have evolved out of this recent killing of a young black man, and just seeing that we probably need to rename 18th Avenue and 16th Street, you know, as the corner where young black men die, because it is history repeating itself. This is not the first time that an officer has used bad

judgment or questionable judgment. It's not the first time that an African American male has died needlessly. It is not the first time that officers have been cleared of any wrongdoing.

I might add that a part of the problem stems largely within the police department and how they are left to police themselves. It is difficult for me to understand and for others in the community to understand how it is that they can investigate themselves and then be objective with the outcome, and then their constituents who work alongside them in the State's attorney's office, and all of these other persons, we asked the mayor that we might need to have an outside investigation, and to that end you all are here.

I think in large part that when I say a "police" problem, it is not necessarily a "chief" problem, but it's a problem within the police department, itself, within that cadre of folk. When you look at the fact that many of them are career persons, the fact that the road between the chief and between his underlings is the concept or the philosophy of how police work is supposed to be done, I think that police officers, many of them want to do policing in the traditional way, the traditional way where you just go in and do what you want to do, as long as it's in the black neighborhood.

There's a difference set of policing standards for the north side and a separate set of police standards for the south side. Somebody mentioned the green team a little while ago. The green team never went to the north side. The green team, they never go over there. The green team only went to the black side and they didn't have to have no search warrant. All they did is show up, go in and kick out the doors, kick in the windows, turn up the furniture, do anything looking for anybody, and tear it all up and never pay for it.

This community has suffered that kind of ugly policing for far too long, and by the time the last police chief went out, the new police chief came in—I think that the rub is still within the fact of the concept of how we're going to do it. The paradigm is new. I sat on the committee to interview all the police chiefs that were going to come in and when we started interviewing them, this man had been through this similar kind of stuff in another part of the country, had a good track record, but he had a good track record because the folk who supported him also worked along with him, and that's not happening here at St. Petersburg.

I really think that my basic concern about all that's happening is not so much people who are over 40, like me, but for the youth of this city. What kind of message are we sending to the youth who are to live in this community when we've gone on to the great beyond? What are we leaving there? What kind of legacy are we leaving them in terms of what they're going to be able to build upon as

citizens of this community? Are we saying to them that justice is kind of elusive? It is something that we dream about but yet that we cannot have?

I've had several parents who have called me and who have had their youngsters implicated in some of the incidents with trumped up information, and when the officers can't come up with real information, they're transferring them from one facility to another facility, using scare tactics, mothers who are scared to death that their sons are not going to get out of the lock-down situation because of the fact they live in the neighborhood.

I think when you look at this, and I've tried to talk to them, I know that I don't have enough clout within the police department to get the police—because they're friends. I don't want them doing these kinds of things.

It's an issue of respect. You cannot police people if you don't respect them, if you don't look at them as human beings, if you don't look at another neighborhood because if they're from your neighborhood, as being a neighborhood where real people live, citizens live.

I have here how the personnel standards here—it's a code of ethics for law enforcement officers. It says his fundamental duty is to serve mankind, save lives and property, protect the innocent against the—they arrest one of us, we're just guilty as soon as we get picked up. It doesn't matter how it is and it doesn't matter what you look like.

I didn't have this on today, but I knew I was coming downtown, so I needed to put on a suit where I would look right for this part of the city, because one night I was going home where I live—I live up north and I went in a 7-Eleven. I didn't have on a suit and everything like that, and a police officer followed me all the way to my house.

I wrote his number down and I called the police chief up and told him, don't follow me no more, I was going home, you see what I'm saying, but because I was in the wrong part of the neighborhood and the wrong color, at a late hour in the night, I was a possible suspect, and life ought not be lived where a black man, a young black man is a suspect all the time.

We look at the annihilation of the young brothers and we know what this is all about.

When you look at this concept, and I'm so glad you all came to listen to all this stuff, I want you to question the city, the city people, you know, the people sitting in the chairs where you all are. They don't just represent the district of the city where they are. That's part of their job.

But the other part of their job, holistically, is to make sure the total city is cared for. When they paved all the streets in St. Petersburg, the last streets to get paved was in our community. When they put lights up in the community, the last—some still don't have lights, but where the most

lights are still at, we got them late, we got them last.

When you look at the fact that I think there has to be some intentionality on the part of this governing board, this governing board of this city ought to control the police. The Police Benevolent Association ought not control the police, just because they can take a poll of the officers and decide if they don't like something going on at City Hall, this governing board or the city government are the ones who ultimately is responsible for what goes on in this city, and I think that intentionality has to be a part of the plan, because you just can't hold town meetings up in north St. Pete, you've got to hold town meetings down in south St. Pete. You've got to hold town meetings where African Americans can come and deal with the situation. I'm not saying that it's all like that, but 90 percent of it is like that.

When you have religious—we had a Thanksgiving service, and I worked hard trying to make sure that all the people come together, and we have a Thanksgiving service in this city, Thanksgiving Eve, and when we go in the white community, that service 1,200, 1,400, 1,500 people. We had it at my church one year. We had it at another church another year, and then the whites won't come down in there, because where it is, if you go down there, "Black people are going to bother you." We don't bother nobody. We might look—we go into church to pray to the Lord. We're not going—you know, and they talk about well, their car might get stolen.

Well, your car can get stolen in the mall. The mall ain't in our community. Your car can get stolen at the movies. There ain't no movies left in the black community. Your car can get stolen at the doctor's office. There ain't no doctors' offices in the black community. Your car can get stolen at the grocery store. There ain't no grocery store in the black community. Your car can get stolen at the bank. There ain't no banks in the black community, ain't no ATM in the black community, and they're scared to come on our side of town.

Now, what I'm looking at, I grew up here. I been through all of the stuff that's going on. I tried to work with the city, work with the community and all that, and the systemic racism that is entrenched in this system can never be changed unless those who are in governing positions are going to be held accountable and responsible for bringing about that kind of change.

And I want you to talk to them real good tomorrow. Please, when they come, don't let them snow you that they're doing a good job. No, don't do that. Don't let them tell you that they're doing—I'm just about through.

Don't let them tell you that they have the best interest of the total community at heart. Don't fall for that, because I'm letting you know that that's not the case. That's not the case, that the delivery

of services from the city is not equal when it comes from down here, out there.

If you don't have political clout, it took us a long time to get some black people on this body that you're sitting in their chairs, and everything like that. It took a long time. Until that took place, we had no voice, and now we've got a little voice like that, and still we look at them trying to redraw lines every now and then, to make sure that we don't get to elect nobody.

What I'm saying also is that the part of this thing is that everybody's saying, "How did this happen? How did it happen in St. Petersburg?" Well, it happened because we did not pay clear attention to the signs. See, it's educational, it's economic, it's ecological. All of those parameters are a part of this paradigm that has continued the situation that is already created.

It's educational, because when you look at the governing system, you don't have any African American leadership on that body that serves our children. So our children are being suspended from schools disproportionately to our representation in the population.

When you look at the fact that there are no African American males who are—for some leadership principalships and—nothing wrong with all the black ladies, nothing wrong with that, but you need some thugs in there who can thump ahead every now and then and kind of straighten out that situation. But the while male who is up there, and they're scared of a brother who would talk good. See, if I was to go work in the system, they wouldn't hire me, because I don't talk right for them, and so when you get that kind of situation, it's economic. It's economic.

When you look at the delivery of services and you look at the fact that the city is not committed. Notice that word I use, committed. The city has to be committed to make certain that what happens in the other parts of the city takes place in the African American community.

African American people are the largest consumers in the history of the United States or the world. We buy everything. We buy the best of stuff. The poorest people—my mom was poor, but I didn't know I was poor, because she waited until they marked the stuff down, the best stuff, and when she put it on layaway, she bought a half a size larger, because she knew by the time she got it off layaway, that my feet would be done grewed. Is that fair? It's economics.

So when you look at the situation that the city has responsibility to make certain that they put black businesses—black businesses have to prospect in the black community. It's a dog-gone shame. You can't use the ATM, all our money in the bank. But we can't get no ATM at a bank where we bank at in our part of town.

The old people can't buy—if Winn-Dixie hadn't of put the grocery store across the street from the senior citizen home, that's the closest senior citizen facility to a grocery store in this city for black people.

Other black people, they don't have no ride, no children to come take them to the grocery store, they have to catch a cab, you know, to go to the grocery store. You have to buy groceries, then take a cab, \$7 to go home from the grocery.

This governing body has the responsibility to make certain that there is equal distribution of services across the board.

Now, our children are dying. No movies in there. Our children got to go to the mall to go to the movies. Then when too many of our children get in the movie, then they start arresting our children, because they say they're out there stealing.

All they want to do is go to see "The Nutty Professor." That's all they want to see, whatever the case is. They go the skating rink, the skating rink in Pinellas Park. See what I'm saying? If they're going to go to the mall, my children have to catch the bus, go to the mall; there used to be some movie theaters right across the street from where my church is. The building is there, but the movies are gone. See, anytime more than 20 black people gather, everybody gets scared.

Down there by the park, right in our community, right across from my mama's house, used to be on Sunday, I used to go sit down there with them, because I know all of them, and we weren't smoking no dope. I wasn't smoking no dope. I was just out there. It's good to be outdoors sometimes. You can't stay in the house all the time.

But you go to Crescent Lake over here on 22nd Avenue, just a few blocks from over here, and it's white people walking all around, jogging. That's why they're healthy, you know—you let 50 or 75 of us gather around by the park, telling them I'll be jogging, and they're going to come out there starting arresting them.

The Child's Park out there, there's no basketball goals out there or anything like. They started breaking up Child's Park. Where is it that we going to provide for our children to go in this town without being a threat to white people's order? That's all I'm asking us.

And what I'm saying—I'm almost done. I'm almost done. I rode a long time, Mr. Agin, to get here. Okay, listen to this.

Rabbi Agin. I am, sir.

Rev. Thompson. Listen to this. When you don't provide for these young people, you're not providing for them educationally. All the after-school programs, they have to have a special bus. All our children are bused out of town. So that means we've got to get up twice as early. If your parents can't take you to school, you can't be in there. So our children are excluded. The best bands

in this town used to be the black bands. We brought all the dance, all the movement. We used to win all the trophies. I didn't be in the band, but all my friends was. But we won all the trophies, you know what I'm saying. But now you look in these bands, you might see two children. You look in the choir. We can sing. There might be five black children.

You look on the football team—well, we're going to play ball. I mean, you're all going to let us play ball. They're going to play ball because they want to win.

You see, the cheerleading squad is all white. The lady told my youngest daughter, told her said, "Well, you got too much mouth to be on—" I thought you're supposed to have a big mouth to be a cheerleader.

Systemic racism has entrenched this entire community, and until the grown folks start dialoguing with each other and start looking at the real problems of what we are leaving for our children, we are going to still have these problems.

Your coming here, as fine of a job as this is, we appreciate you coming here, but if you go back and write a cute report, and if you massage their egomaniacal attitudes, and platitudes about the wonderful job they're doing—this is an All American city. It really is. It is, but it hasn't yet arrived, and you've got to help us sell that story. It's time to print that story, as other citizens are here telling that story, when you look at the economics of it, that we're the last hired, the first hired. When you lay off us, we're the first one laid off, and we're the ones that keep the balance in the labor system.

Now, I thank you for my extra time.

Rabbi Agin. I want you to know that I've been to other communities and many of your remarks are not just alluded to St. Petersburg alone, but there's a thread that runs through many other communities.

Rev. Thompson. Yes.

Rabbi Agin. And we're not sitting back and not doing nothing about them. Just as an example, I was at a hearing at the university in Gainesville, and an African American student said to me, "As long as I carried my college books, I was allowed to go anyplace. When I didn't carry the college books, they wouldn't let me go into the mall. The police would always check me. But I had those books, 'Oh, well, he's going to college, he's okay.' But if I didn't carry the books, I'm in hot water."

So there are these problems and we're trying our best to tackle them, and people like Mary Berry work very, very hard to see that these things are erased or we're trying to erase them. We appreciate your remarks and we'll do everything that we can. Truthfully speaking, we will do everything we can to help alleviate those problems.

Rev. Thompson. Thank you.

Dr. Berry. Don't go away.

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Ingram.

Mr. Ingram. Reverend, as I listen at your comments, I listen at Sister Zima's comments, it really makes me wonder if we are not locked in a time warp here in St. Petersburg. You know, it sounds like 1960 to me. It sounds like *deja vu* all over again. But let me make a couple of suggestions, and I don't know if I'm in order or out of order, what difference does it make for me?

I think it's going to be a sad day tomorrow if when the city officials come to make their presentation, the only African Americans they see present are those sitting here on the podium. I think that there ought to be a sincere effort on behalf of the leadership of this community to be present tomorrow so that you can hear what they tell us, because they are not here to hear what you are telling us.

Mr. Doctor. Some of them are.

Mr. Ingram. So you at least need—see, I've been corrected already. Some of them are, but my point is that it's important that taxation without representation stop and if you don't show an interest, then certainly no interest will be shown.

And I think it's incumbent upon clergy to, wherever the ball has been fumbled, for you to pick up the ball and run to the goal line with it. I think that clergy has to give the leadership that is going to make the difference in making this community a great community or good community, and Reverend Thompson, I look to you. I look to you to help to give the leadership to making this community the community that it has the potential to be.

Rev. Thompson. We've been doing that. I want to say that, that we work hard. There's a lot of preachers who overwork, who are on so many boards, on so many stuff, until it's just crazy.

Now, the only thing is, when does this governing board begin to listen? And that's where our task is. This has been good for this community, because for the first time in a long time, people from all across the community is coming together and talking to each other, not talking at each other, they're talking to each other.

The only thing being left out is our young people. When you look at the fact that the city has got to realize that you can't talk to one group of black people—you talk to all of them. You see, and the stuff they're doing to the Uhuru people is really crazy, because the Uhuru people are citizens of this community. They are real citizens of this community, and they're not doing nothing to tear the community down. They want to build it up, help build it up, but this group doesn't want to talk with everybody in the community. They want to just talk to people they like to talk to, and people who want to talk back to them.

But I used to get a lot of whippings because I used to always talk back, and I can't quit now, so that's why I'm here.

Rabbi Agin. I can just have one more because we need to move on. Please forgive me. One last question because we need to move on.

Ms. Reynolds. Reverend Thompson, early in your report you talked about the investigations done by, I suppose, the internal affairs department of the police, and that somehow that mechanism is not working. Are you suggesting that perhaps they should have also a parallel citizen review board?

Rev. Thompson. Yes. See, listen, Ms. Reynolds, they have that, but the citizens review board does not have the kind of clout that the other people have. They are given reports. They are given copies of the police reports and everything like that, but whatever the citizens find, they always tell the citizen group that you don't have enough technical knowledge to understand all of the problems surrounding this infraction against justice.

Now, whenever you talk to people like that, down, people like that, that ain't right, and it doesn't mean that their concern about justice—you mean to tell me that every time there's a complaint filed against the police, that the IA unit always finds in behalf of the police?

I used to try to convince my parents that I never didn't do nothing wrong. Now, if they had listened to me, argued for mercy in my case, I might not be here today. My mom used to look at me and she'd say, "I know you're lying." See what I'm saying?

We look at the police and we know that not all the police—because there's some bad police in there. And they work in there, they're going to retire and everything like that. Anytime the union got enough strength to tell on the whole department what it needs to do, something's wrong. Something's wrong.

Rabbi Agin. All right. Thank you very much, Pastor.

Is Mr. Sevell Brown here? He will be followed by Theresa Lassiter. We must stick to the 10 minutes. I know my word means nothing, but I need to stick to the 10 minutes.

Statement of Sevell Brown, Chairman, Coalition of African American Leadership

Mr. Brown. Thank you. Madam Chairperson, Chairperson for the Florida Advisory Committee, Mr. Doctor and the panel that you brought with you, I want to thank you for the opportunity to address you this day.

And I address you not as so much as president of an independent autonomous entity called SCLC, St. Petersburg chapter, but as chairman of the Coalition of African American Leadership. Dr. Lowery has basically spoken for the SCLC.

You have before you some documents that account for what we believe is the catalyst for why we're going through what we're going through, and that is a chronology of the legacy of Chief Ernest Curtsinger and what he left in the police department here in St. Petersburg that accounts for the fractional schism that you're seeing going on.

Let me begin by saying in 1992 SCLC requested Mr. Doctor to come to St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide a definitive assessment of how deep an abiding racial insensitivity and poor organization was in City Hall and with inside the police department. Four years later you're back, because of the legacy left by the former chief of police that has not been successfully addressed by those in power.

It was then, as president of SCLC, we placed a call for a coalition building in this community to stop the clock of civil rights for being turned back 30 years in our city. The Coalition of African American Leadership successfully sponsored five town meetings that gave impetus to an unprecedented 73.3 percent of the turnout of blacks in this city, accounted for a 1,400 vote differential to put Mayor Fischer in office and keep Curtsinger out.

On November the 2nd, 4 years later, Dr. Lowery, you preached a funeral and—TyRon Lewis, and 2 days later on November the 4th, a Monday, for the second time in 4 years, SCLC put out the call to convene a coalition of African American leadership, and that leadership assembled.

We started off by including all factions of this community, mainstream organizations, nontraditional organizations, and those organizations that don't coin the language that council might like to hear so well from certain groups of people. So we started there to make sure we started out right. And in doing so we presented—at that press conference on November the 4th to set the tone for the collected focus of the African American community of St. Petersburg, we presented the mayor with an agenda on economic inclusion, going to the root of the problem in this city.

You have that document before you. The coalition proposed that the mayor respond within 7 days with a preliminary meeting with the principal power brokers in the city and county that have the largest budgets in the city and county to meet with the Coalition of African American leadership. One month later we're still waiting on that meeting, December 4.

That meeting incorporates the chairman of the school board, the chairman of the convention and visitors bureau, the chairman of the city council, the chairman of the county commission, the president of the chamber and their respective administrators, so that they can come sit with us across that table on one side and look us in the face on the other, and then let's go at it and deal with

the heart of the intricacies that make up the fact which capsules the problem that we have to address.

The general economic inclusion, which you have, assures that we will not return to business as usual in the aftermath of TyRon's shooting. What is it that the coalition does not want to return to in terms of business as usual? That's the question.

Somebody said we're locked in a time zone somewhere. In this city, antiquated antebellum plantation politics almost becomes the rule of thumb. Double standards when blacks come to City Hall. Some patriarchal politicians sometimes have said, "You can't come down here to support a Martin Luther King Boulevard, because 31—of the organizations of blacks that have come down, don't support the other 30, so therefore, go back home and continue to get together and come down and all vote 31 in unanimity." But before we came before the floor, he had 33 white folk in here, all of them representing a different point of view, none of them agreed on anything, yet everybody's argument had merit, and they passed on everything they wanted.

Double standards of treatment. We don't want to go back to that. We want earnestly to be heard, representing the diverse groups that are represented under the coalition.

We don't want to go back to a council that greets us in the name of the past.

I welcome you to St. Petersburg, this generation and that generation, on behalf of the whole of the newlywed and the nearly dead city, USA. What place does that have for a black youth? I don't know.

Don't welcome us before this body after you have sent Disney World packing—when they wanted to move to St. Petersburg and set up shop in Florida, you sent them to Orlando.

When Bush Gardens came to St. Pete to set up shop, you sent them to Tampa. You sent the Buccaneers also.

Retrogression for whites as well as blacks. We don't want to return to business as usual.

The generation that is represented by the senior patriarchal politician of city council of 20 years and five terms, J. W. Cate, represents the age that hangs onto the legacies of old.

My generation and your generation of Wayne Thompson, and others before you here today, we represent a generation that wants to break that shackle and want to advance forward with your help in the positive strong recommendations that you can provide for direction for this council.

Let me say this in terms of the essence, as we said it to Secretary Cisneros, to convey to the President. It is important that everyone here today understand beyond any controversy that at the heart of what we are proposing or have proposed to the White House, and we propose to you today, the

very caring attitude about the future of this community.

The Coalition of African American Leadership is focused on an agenda that deals in economic inclusion with every plan for restoration and development in the African American community. To this end we are addressing the following critical areas of concern in terms of correcting. We've heard all the calling for restraint. We want to hear some call for solution.

Let's get to the table, all five principal power groups, and let's deal with the call for solution and you can help them there more than we can help them here.

There's a need—the coalition to this end, we're addressing these critical areas. We would like to see a process take place in St. Petersburg similar to the redevelopment efforts that took in the aftermath of the Los Angeles riots. We asked for 500 jobs in the agenda on economic inclusion. It is imperative that our young people become stakeholders in our community and productive taxpaying citizens. It may be appropriate to take the Youth Build model and expand it to the entire community beyond public housing as well as rebuilding the riot-torn area.

There is a need to create a partnership to redevelop the riot-torn area. What are now deteriorating structures can be transformed into community-based industries with self-sufficiency and self-employment. This type of small business or community-based industry should be service and manufacturing oriented with a skill training component. Such industries, for example, should provide young black males and black fathers with the opportunity to develop new job skills. In other words, these deteriorating structures now can be turned into wealth and service-providing institutions.

Calling for solutions. Whenever a business is relocated or expanding in St. Petersburg, they should as a part of their corporate responsibility be encouraged to place part of their operation or plant in our community. We must make it economically feasible to locate all or part of their businesses in south St. Petersburg, if you want to refer to it as south St. Petersburg. This may involve tax credits and possibly subsidized skill training—St. Petersburg should be designated as a Federal enterprise community, and if possible an empowerment zone. This may be a way of packaging a number of items we are presenting here today and presenting the President through Cisneros.

Another approach which complements but does not reinvent the wheel, according to the Coalition of African American Leadership, is to take the normal development of local projects, such as downtown revitalization or other commercial developments, as a chance to link employment opportunities, contractual opportunities in this

development for blacks. The main role for government here is to provide incentives for these types of linkages, wherein the Federal Government is furnishing part of the incentive for inclusion.

This process should also take place in all capital improvement plans of the city, county, and the school board. Again, this type of component is vital when it comes to the economic inclusion of African Americans.

The Coalition of African American Leadership understands that the Governor has declared Pinellas County as an official disaster area, which makes it eligible for SBA loans. We believe that in order for this community to redevelop the commercial district in south St. Petersburg, such as 22nd Street, 18th Avenue, and the Mercy Hospital area, there should be a marriage between what the Governor is proposing to do and what HUD agrees to do in St. Petersburg, and the black businesses of this community.

While there is a need for greater housing development in this community, it seems that the banks have a very narrow view of their role under the Community Reinvestment Act regulations. We believe that the banks need to expand their vision beyond housing and further the redevelopment efforts of the African American community. In order to do so, the banks along with State and Federal resources should establish a loan pool, wherein each banking institution is a member of that pool, share equal risk for providing venture capital and low-interest loans to members of the black community interested in starting or expanding their business.

Finally, Madam Chairperson, you should know that the Coalition of African American Leadership steadfastly stands in opposition to any plans for the demolition of the neighborhood lives and legacy of Jordan Park, it being the only surviving black [inaudible] in this city.

Additionally, the Coalition of African American Leadership takes the position that any decision or plans made for assistance of St. Petersburg should include the input of the coalition, as well as the chairman for the coalition to exercise some oversight of the process.

Cisneros, when we made this presentation to him Saturday before last for 2 hours in that room, closed to the press—the press is hearing it for the first time. The public of St. Petersburg is hearing it for the first time. The Secretary listened. They listened for the first time in this city, with the coming for the second time in this city, with your first coming. We appreciated the fact that you listened, listened so well that you decided to come back and do a more intrinsic, comprehensive study of what's going on here. And the Secretary following you and the strong advice coming from your Commission also came in, and he listened. He listened like others here locally never listened.

And when he listened, he came out of that meeting whereas he had refused \$20 million to the mayor before in this administration, in our presentation even though the city was not set up in terms of infrastructure to receive an empowerment zone, we just wanted in our presentation to show him a way to carve a path, an avenue, so we can show the Secretary how the President can do that empowerment zone, even though you don't call it an empowerment zone, you have simulated it to the extent that it has everything but the name of empowerment zone, and that is what this presentation that he just heard did.

Unidentified Speaker [from audience]. Yes, it did.

Mr. Brown. He didn't have to follow with this task force back to Washington, D.C., and regroup and try to ascertain and evaluate and get the analysis going—as to what it would take to do for us what we need in terms of economics because we prepared ourselves here in this city before listening to make sure nobody had to leave nowhere, just come out of that room, and we gave you the plan. And when they came out of that room, they decided that night that the work was done for them.

So I ask you today, please continue to listen, please help those who still are not listening to come to the table and do the one thing that has not been done yet, and that is to bring those five principal power brokers with the five largest budgets in this city and sit down with this Coalition for African American Leadership so we can scrutinize that budget and streamline it and see where we can have inclusion for blacks. Without those we're holding onto the legacies of old, patriarchal politicians who want to call some of us to the side and derail that process.

We've experienced, Mr. Chairperson, the derailment of processes time and time and time again in the city, when we sat down and dealt with all the legal consultants in the world that Curtsinger had no legal standing to file suit against this city on the city manager form of government, because he was arbitrarily hired and can be arbitrarily fired, yet while we're sitting over with patriarchal politicians with militants and civic organizations at a church somewhere negotiating in good faith, they're over here proposing a \$750,000 buyout, so we can just go file suit against the city. And it insulted whites and blacks, and even the Police Benevolent Association got mad, because Curtsinger wiped everybody out.

Antiquated antebellum plantation politics is choking us to death. And the practitioners thereof, we're tired of looking at them. We're tired of seeing them recirculated; when they leave the council, they show up on the housing table—show up on the St. Pete Housing Authority chair—when will the term end? When will the legacies of old die?

If they keep recirculating politicians of the same old mindset that's been doing the same old thing for 30 years—I don't have children, but God forbid if I had one, I'm going to walk up and come through the city council and see the likes of the same old sunflower.

Your role, if you please, give us air to breathe. Give us a buffer zone from the relics of that which we know historically exists behind the curtain. In the palm tree shade of politics and for—

Rabbi Agin. Okay.

Mr. Brown. To live with us, if you would—I'm ready for whatever you have to ask me.

Dr. Berry. First of all, just for the record, tell me, just name the five powerbrokers.

Mr. Brown. The chairman of the school board, Andrea Thacker, and her superintendent, Dr. Howard Hinesley.

Dr. Berry. Howard who?

Mr. Brown. The chairman of the county commission, Sally Parks, and her administrator, Fred McCay. Wayne could spell it, I couldn't. Chamber of commerce, Russ Sloan, president of the chamber of commerce, Russ Sloan.

Dr. Berry. Okay.

Mr. Brown. The chairman of the city council, Dr. Edward Cole.

Dr. Berry. We know that.

Mr. Brown. And the chairman of the convention and visitors bureau, whose name escapes me at this point—Carol—Kenna Eagen.

Dr. Berry. Okay.

Mr. Brown. And whoever her chair may be, but those are the five principal powerbrokers that have the largest five budgets in this county, that have never been tracked for economic inclusion for blacks.

Dr. Berry. Let me ask you this then. You didn't mention the mayor. Was there some reason why you didn't?

Mr. Brown. For why I didn't mention the mayor? No, the mayor was supposed to call the meeting. So, you know, my—I was—

Dr. Berry. You were assuming?

Mr. Brown. I was assuming—I was assuming.

Dr. Berry. So you want the mayor to convene these folks?

Mr. Brown. Yes, we want the chief executive officer and the reason we want the chief executive officer to do this is because it is the referendum of 1993 that gave us a strong mayor form of government that blacks voted for, so we can stop having a weak mayor and have a strong mayor that could do the things that we're calling for.

Dr. Berry. When is the next mayor—

Mr. Brown. March.

Dr. Berry. March 1997?

Mr. Brown. The general is in March and the primary is in February.

Dr. Berry. Okay. Now, the other question I wanted to ask you is on the Federal task force—I mean, the Federal interagency task force, the \$22 million or \$20 million, the only recommendation I made after I left here the last time was that if any Federal money came here—first, I wasn't sure that any ought to come until we finished our investigation. Secondly, if any came, there had to be a community-based advisory board to decide what happened with the money.

Mr. Brown. Right.

Dr. Berry. Oversee it, and I understand that that was made part of the process. But what I'm asking you is, What is the relationship between the proposed advisory board to deal with the Federal money and the city-community-Federal partnership, and the group that the mayor is convening tomorrow night?

Mr. Brown. None. That particular task force I sincerely believe, and it's the consensus of the coalition, that it is in no way connected to the work of that advisory board, and that it was perceived in part—I'm being modest but to great extent, a great extent—we've had about 23 race relations symposiums and God knows we're not going to speak against them. We need to be talking with each other, but what the coalition had envisioned was us getting beyond the call for calm and dealing with race-related concerns, one to another, and it's all right. We can hug each other and feel fine, and then when you wake up in the morning, economic inclusion still is the order of the day.

And as long as we don't want to exhaust ourselves in the scenario of just talking ourselves till we're tired, and having forum after forum after forum without consummating something definitive where we can actually show the community, hey, here's a tangible result that impacts your life in a positive way financially, and so we don't see a connection between the task force.

What it does is, it is a recognizable step on the part of the mayor to demonstrate that he's listening to your U.S. Commission on Civil Rights because he listened to what was told him last time and he was listening to the admonishments that were being given and so for the first time in the history of this city you have groups like Uhuru, you have groups like Minister—you have groups that were never represented before sitting at the table, and that is a direct result because he listened to what was said to him in the counsel that was provided by you and Mr. Doctor on your last visit, and I think he's been listening, Mr. Doctor, ever since—in terms of that, but the community—this is what the community perceives.

When the community saw him make the move—that move has never been made before—that deals with putting to the side the politics of exclusion and moving across that bridge encompassing and bringing in the politics of inclusion,

they've done a little better about their task force in terms of maybe now with Hinesley and some of these other people that need to be in the symposium, maybe we can work something on that side or that front.

But then the other front, the western front—is that the front on D-day—whatever front that was on D-day, when we're dealing with the economic impact, that front is inextricably tied to the work of that oversight advisory board to make sure that we track that money and make sure that that money goes the way it should be going and trickles down to the level that it should trickle.

And so to that end, the President has structured that advisory board with the admonitions of the secretary that the chair of the coalition serve as a cochair of the advisory board, and that the mayor appoints his own chair, and we don't want to get to a meeting where the six people from the chamber side and the mayor side are looking at the five from the coalition side saying that we're going to elect one chair.

That is not what we basically lobbied for, and I think the Secretary knew that, and so he designed it the way he did so we were satisfied with the way he designed it, if it's carried out that way, and we know we're on our way and that advisory oversight board is like a release valve to the community, when it was designed and the mayor accepted it, and everybody embraced it, and the President ordained it, and you—what you recommended, the community is looking at its leader.

Said to themselves—we're making progress. It was like a relief valve. And so, therefore, be calm. Maintain the course, because the victory is just about to be delivered, and we can't wait another 30 years for this one, so we might as well make sure we do it right this time.

Rabbi Agin. Okay. Let's move on.

Mr. Ford. Mr. Brown, I'm still interested in the, if you know this, the nature of this diversity training on the police department. From what I've heard, I kind of have my notion, but I want to hear it from somebody who knows.

How much do you know about it? How in depth is it, and who conducts the classes?

Mr. Brown. Let me give it to you this way. Those of you who are familiar with Dr. Bernard Lafayette, president of American Baptist College, Nashville, Tennessee, Dr. Lafayette, who Martin Luther King appointed to train the staff during the heyday of the Civil Rights Movement, when we—when Dr. Lowrey came before the city council, May 9, 1991, admonishing this city council for cultural sensitivity training for the police department in its entirety, the chief of police boycotted the meeting and the training, and they pursued a course where they wanted to devise their own training program and reinvent a wheel, when you had experts in the field—those consultants were experts in that field

who had 16 years, 20 years of experience. They opted, rather than have the likes of Dr. Bernard Lafayette with Charles from the King Institute and Ernest and others come in, they opted to go ahead and pursue a designing of their own program, which basically they were saying that "We don't want nonpolice types to be training police officers." So essentially we had that group that was—with the chief at the time that was bucking the training, no matter who came and gave it, so what we really want to see, we don't want to see the City of St. Petersburg in the business of becoming expert consultants for the rest of the Nation. We want them to find out in the rest of the Nation who are the experts to come here and do the training.

Mr. Ford. So it's kind of superficial. A couple other questions. How many people are on this city council in St. Petersburg now?

Mr. Brown. Nine.

Mr. Ford. How many of them are black?

Mr. Brown. You haven't seen it.

Mr. Ford. Are your elections at large or same district?

Mr. Brown. That is the problem. Our elections are at large—they're districtwide in the primary, and so therefore, if I'm looking to get elected, God knows Wayne is looking to get elected, he better make it in the primary, because when it comes to the general, everybody in the rest of St. Petersburg can vote for whoever is running against him that's white, and so we have—and it was on my sheet of paper. I just didn't pick it up, but we have requested of the Justice Department through Don and others back as far as 3 years: "Will you please move aggressively and file suit in behalf of the black citizens of this city?" So that we can have single-member districts from the school board, where we have none, on the county commission where we have none, on the city council, where we can be nullified at large, so basically, systemic institutionalized exclusion.

Mr. Ford. That's what at-large elections are designed to do. One last comment. Be vigilant in dealing with your enterprise zones and understand what can happen. Basically what it means is a McDonald's going into a black area and establishing an outlet and paying people \$4 or \$5 for flipping hamburgers, and the money goes out of the neighborhood on a one-way trip every night.

I have a problem with the CEOs of large corporations talking to me about full employment only for black folk. The greatest example of full employment alone will not do it, that's what I'm saying. The greatest example of full employment I know is slavery. During slavery every Negro old enough to walk had a job.

What you need is ownership, ownership, and that's not anti anybody else, but every group in this country controls the businesses in its own communities, but black folk, and as long as the money

goes out on a one-way trip every night, we're going to be in this kind of difficulty.

Everything in this country turns on the dollar. We have a cute little saying that money is not everything. That may be true, but it's way the hell in front of whatever is in second place, I can assure you that.

Rabbi Agin. One more comment. Brad, yes, thank you.

Dr. Brown. On your request to the mayor to meet with the five CEOs, you had no response at all from him?

Mr. Brown. On the seventh day we did have him call personally and want to meet with the chair of the coalition, but that was not the call in the document, in the proposal.

What we want you to understand is that the coalition wants to sit at the table with the mayor surrounded by those other four power players, and until we can get that meeting, basically it would serve no useful purpose for us to have a feel-out session prematurely before the preliminary meeting.

And so what we want, what we said to the mayor in our response to his letter, was that the entire coalition wants to meet with you, not alone, but with those other principal brokers in those respective areas, and so we are of the feeling, like Dr. Lowery said, we have hope that because the mayor is in a listening mode now, more than ever before, especially from you, and this panel, that that is something that is going to come to fruition.

Dr. Brown. But he hasn't responded since then? I'm actually asking obviously because I want to find out tomorrow—I wanted to know what's really happening.

Mr. Brown. Right. They have the letters from us in their files where I responded and we wanted to meet with—the entire coalition wanted to meet with the mayor and then with those people, and the mayor sent back and said, "Well, I'm willing to meet with the entire coalition now, not just you the chairperson," but we were still at an impasse, because we asked the question, "Mayor, will those other four entities be at the table with you?" So that did not happen as of yet, and we've got caught up in all these crises every 4 hours during the course of every day, and so I'm sure that during the course of a crisis and the pressing meetings that are having to be held, that at some point that we're going to realize that need.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. We're going to continue. I just want to make sure the following people are still here. Theresa Lassiter, is she here? Okay. Is Mary Calloway here? Okay. Alma Fraser? All right. Marva Dennard still here? Okay. Sheila Turner? And Debbie Lee? Is Debbie Lee still here? No. Okay. So our next speaker is Teresa Lassiter, followed by Marva Dennard and Sheila Turner. And following that we will allow, as I had stated

before, some people to give their feelings. Ms. Lassiter is community activist, St. Petersburg; correct, ma'am?

Statement of Theresa Lassiter, St. Petersburg

Ms. Lassiter. Yes. Also I'm a single mother. I'm a native of St. Petersburg, and I'm a voice for the younger generation in the age group that I'm in.

I thank you for the letter, the invitation to speak. In the letter it said for me to come and talk for 10 minutes about the causes, the effects, and the solution of the disturbance where the young brother was killed.

Okay. Also it said to talk about the economical development.

Number one, the day that the incident happened I did not look at it on the news only. I was there. I did not participate in the throwing of the bricks and the bottles, but instead I chose to ride around until about 1:30, and I prayed and I watched the different buildings burn.

I followed the policemen and watched them. Number one, there was rioting, what we call five deep, okay? That's where you have two—well, I'm speaking from what I saw, okay? Thank you. All right.

Where I was riding, it was like two in the front and three in the back, and the ones that was sitting in the back, they had their back doors open. And then they had the guns laying all across their laps, okay?

I rode up on 34th Street and 26th Avenue. That's what they call Lakeview Shopping Plaza. There I saw a sheriff's car that had been overturned. I pulled up to the station there to get me a soda and some cigarettes, and there was the sheriffs standing out there by the cars, and they're yelling and saying, "Get the H in the car." There was some young brothers dressed with nice clothes on, just in their car, just coming to get gas, or whatever they wanted, but they had to leave. And the way that they talked to them, they ask for stuff like that.

Now, after the first disturbance that night, okay, we started coming to the meetings and forums and we wanted people to hear us. Well, I really personally feel no one began to listen to us until you all came and then when Secretary Cisneros came, then they really began to pay attention.

I would suggest to you that you would ask the mayor or whoever to supply you with videos for October the 24th of city council, ask them to supply you with the videos of November the 13th.

See, I'm not the kind of person want to talk what I hear other people say. I talk what I see and what I know. I have been staying up to 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning watching the reruns. I find it sort of curious though that they've taken off the ones where they're talking about the disturbances.

In these tapes you'll see that the councilmen are unorganized.

Number two, they're arguing about why should they come to the forum. In fact, the night when they had the big thing, it was Councilman Larry Williams that said, "Hey, we've got a problem here. Don't tell me about your schedule, you can't be here, you can't be here. We need to get together and solve some of this stuff" Okay. They fight like little kids, all right.

Number two, Mr. Mayor, I love everybody, the mayor and the police chief is a joke. To me a man is a man, one that stands firm in what is right and what he believes in. Don't come and when we're on the council thing, you say one thing, but then when you show up, it's a different thing, okay? This man is just as unstable—the Bible says the devil's mind is unstable. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. That's the mayor, okay.

Number two, I have a problem—they are getting paid to serve us, okay? I came down here and I went in their little office out there and I asked them for a charter, because see, I'm not a person that's illiterate, and I don't like people trying to handle me like that, and after the meetings when I talked to some of them, they tried to handle me like "Well, you can tell her anything and she's going to believe it." I don't think so, okay?

I've got their charter. I read all of their information. What they do is they're here to serve us, but then I notice a big difference, when they're passing an ordinance with TyRon Square Mall, which they've been planning for the last week, I'm really sick of, which they are changing—okay? It don't take 5 minutes.

Then I hear Councilman Cole say, "Tell your chef I'm sorry I missed his lunch." Politics, okay. It's like who they know, who is in with them, and they even show it on TV, you understand?

Then number two, I have a question. Curtsinger was fired. But when Curtsinger came he brought a man. The man that took over—it was Goliath Davis [phonetic] that was over all of the police officers, okay. This was a black policeman. They moved him from where he started out in the street and everything, they moved him over from that to taking care of the clerical people. Okay.

Then Curtsinger brought—get to take care of the police? Okay. Something wrong with this picture, because then this is when you started having all the problems.

Well, I suggest that you all recommend that you ask Stephens to undo the damage that Curtsinger did. Give us back the light to be over all of the policemen, and there was not any problems.

Let's go to economics, okay. Personally, me myself, I have a high school diploma. I have computer skills. I've worked for Pinellas County Government, I've worked for the State of Florida. Okay. Temporary jobs, always temporary. I was

blessed with one regular job, but then I got sick and I fell out at my copy machine up in the county, and because my anniversary date was a week off, they had to put me on two-thirds disability.

So since then I've done anything as a mother that I could do honest and work. I come out here and fill out enough applications, like I told them, to wallpaper this whole room. Okay. But yet and still they overlook us. But what I see happen is they tell you, okay, this job you get, it's going to take you 6 months to master it. Every job I've gotten, I've mastered it in 2 weeks or either the first day. Okay.

So why is it that instead of you all putting up more job applications and positions for us, what they started doing is downsizing. The county and the State. See, they don't put a lot of applications up now, because what they do, they go to Olsteen's and all these other temporary agencies, and pull people in to come work for the city, not using common sense, because see, if you're paying somebody for the city \$7 or \$8 to work, but then you know Olsteen is getting its money too, why not give that job to somebody that needs it, that has a family, that can be working for the city and can grow and mature? They don't do it. Okay. They don't do it. All right.

Then I have a problem with the council members. I'm sorry, I've just got to be honest. As they speak from the heart, this is from the heart. Yes, we have two black councilmen on our board, but I'm sorry, they're the poorest excuse for councilmen I've ever seen.

One of them tried me real hard today. I was here with Dr. Davis. I was leaving. I was asking a question because I was trying to find Mr. Brown. And he came up and the negative remarks that he made about the person was just ridiculous.

And not only did he do this—he does this all the time, okay? They want to put down everything, but what they want to do is protect themselves. Most of them sitting up there have been in businesses, had this job. They got more money than they'll ever spend, but they don't want to move over and let new blood come in, new ideas, fresh ideas. They want to keep that old dead stuff. Okay. No offense.

Reverend Cate is in my prayers, okay. He has been through here. Oh, the mayor needs help to consult. They believe in him. They need him to pray. I don't know there's—but now where do they have it? At St. Pete Housing. Okay.

You done tore down Laurel Park. You done demolished all our churches. You done took away enough of this town. Then they wanted to try and say they're going to take down Jordan Park. Enough is enough. You understand? They have no feeling and then what really get it, they're saying, "Oh, well, we have a chance now to set a precedent, the whole Nation, the whole State, everybody is watching us."

What happened 3 years ago? What happened 4 years ago? I mean, it's just going over and over. I'm sorry. Well, shut me up—I'm going on.

Rabbi Agin. Just are there any questions that you want to ask? Okay. Thank you very much, Ms. Lassiter. Thank you. Our next speaker is Marva Dennard.

Ms. Dennard. Thank you.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, ma'am.

Statement of Marva Dennard, St. Petersburg

Ms. Dennard. Thank you all for coming and inviting me to speak. I'm Marva Dennard, and I was born right here in St. Petersburg, educated right here in the city, know about the fine bands that someone spoke of—Reverend Thompson spoke of that we had some of the best marching bands in the city.

We traveled all over, because we were good. That's when we were segregated.

I come to talk with you tonight about several things. I would like for you to know a little bit about our history.

When I was born, we had at least 150 black businesses in St. Petersburg. We had our own grocery stores. We had everything that we needed. We had our own bakery. We had what we needed in our community. Well, through progress they got rid of Methodist Town, and progress was to—we don't have our hotels anymore, we don't have any of those things anymore. They are gone. But they were going to make it better for us.

You have to excuse me. I was in the gassing that happened at the Uhuru House. And then after they took Methodist Town, they decided to do the gas plant area. They told us when they were going to do the gas plant area, they said, "We're going to build you up some nice homes, we're going to take care of you all, and we're going to really build up your community here." The dome is where the gas plant area was.

Then they came back later and said, "Well, we're going to take Laurel Park, and build you up some nice condos, some nice apartments. We're going to—we're trying to upgrade you all."

Well, they took Laurel Park. That's the parking lot for the dome now.

Thirdly they said, "Well, we're going to take Jordan Park now because of the housing director, Irions, says because if they keep their apartment clean, he's going to give them a house," and that's the board that the Reverend J.W. Cate [chair, St. Petersburg Housing Authority] sits on.

We stood firm, the African American community. We formed the coalition and we let them know that Jordan Park was not going anywhere if we had to lay down in front of the bulldozers, it was not going.

That is the last area that we have in St. Petersburg that is ours, the very last one. Our

sweet [phonetic] councilman, Ernest Fillyau, made the statement, "Well, we got Fanny Ponder's house, we've got Old Mercy Hospital." I don't know why he would say those things, because no one can live in Old Mercy Hospital. No one can live in Fanny Ponder's house.

So I don't know, you know, what his reasoning was. But let me suggest this to you. Jordan Park is where I grew up. Mercy Hospital—let me tell you what happened with me. I was going to fly out the window, you know, when Wonder Woman came, and she could fly. Well, I put a sheet around my neck and I was going to fly out the second story window of Jordan Park.

Well, I didn't make it, so I had to go to Mercy Hospital. That was the only black hospital that we had. And I can remember being there thinking I don't ever want to go home, because my mama's going to kill me, but that was what we had.

Another important thing we would like for you to understand, that we like to be in groups. We like to sit and talk. You'll find that a lot of our men sit under the trees and play dominos and play cards and drink their drinks. You'll find young men standing on the street corner, but when you find them standing there, the police say they are causing trouble. Any time five black people get together, they have to have a police officer—three police officers, okay.

Why? I don't know. Let me say this to you. I said that I was born here. I left here in 1969, going to Florida A&M. I was working at that time at Pinellas Juvenile Hall, and I went to Florida A&M and I got a bachelor's and got the master's from Florida State.

Three years later I came home. I had both degrees in 3 years. I came home, and they said I was overqualified, that I couldn't work at the Juvenile Hall anymore, but they told me before I went that I didn't have enough education to talk to the youth that were there.

So then Dr. Paul Moore at that time was dean of education at Florida A&M, and he brought me back—he took me back or called me back to Tallahassee where I coordinated five universities with the University of Gainesville.

After that tenure, and I worked on my Ph.D. I came home again and they said, "You're overqualified." I left and went to Los Angeles, and 14, 15 years later I'm back in St. Petersburg. I've been here now 4 years, and they say that there's no job here for me. I've been looking for a job for all of this time, and they say they're looking for qualified blacks. I don't know what I am, but they say they're looking for qualified blacks.

There's a problem in the city of St. Petersburg. There's a serious problem in the city of St. Petersburg. When you can stand on 18th Avenue and watch five police cars go past you with three in the back, two in the front, and the doors are open,

during the day, what are you saying to our young people?

You are telling them, "I dare you." You can't tell our children that anymore. That day is gone. I was in the Uhuru House. We went there for a meeting. We were having—let me tell you what happened prior to that.

The media had come to us and said, "Okay, the verdict is in; we're calling for you to call for calm in the community."

We met, we met with the chairman of the Uhuru House, we all met at the church, Pleasant Grove. We met with the media.

At that time we said to them, we would like to call calm with the police. We left that meeting. Before Omari [phonetic], the chairman, could get out of his van, he was surrounded by police.

They were taking tags off the cars. On television, they pepper sprayed him on television, and so the ones of us from the coalition immediately got up and rushed to his defense, because we had just finished our meeting.

Dr. Davis is sitting here. We all ran over and that's when it was just—it came then on the news that the Uhuru House was being targeted because they thought it was a breeding ground for problems.

How can they ask us to call for calm and then they come along and attack us after we give them our word? And they say that we have a problem. No. The City of St. Petersburg has a problem.

Someone was talking before—I want you to know that when you got across the railroad track, the lights do dim on the south side of St. Petersburg. It has not stopped from when I was a little girl to now. On the north side they have 1,000 watt bulbs. On our side they've got a 30 watt, and that's what goes on.

The media said, "Is that really true?" Yes, it is. They went to see that it was true.

I would like to say a couple of things to you about the chamber, who really hold their meetings at Waters. That's in our community. What is it, 9th Street and 22nd Avenue? Since they would like to relate to us and know some things about us—I think it would be a good idea for them to go there and have dinner.

You may suggest to them. And also did you know that they're sitting home watching us on TV? Did you know that the mayor and the city council people are watching us on TV?

They're watching us on TV. They hear everything that we're saying. They're watching. She's here—Leslie or Ms. Curran, came to the meeting late—hello—came late and he just came in, but the sad part of it is did you ever think there was something wrong that they have all of us here today, and they're going to all be here tomorrow?

Anybody see that? Nobody saw anything wrong with why did they call a meeting for the African

American people on tonight, and then on tomorrow for the white fathers?

Mr. Brake. That was not lost on us, or at least on me.

Ms. Dennard. I'm glad you all can see what's going on. The reason they're calling for the chief's job is because he suspended Knight for 30 days—was it 30 days? 60 days. So now, that's why they want to get rid of him.

Yes. But you need to understand that we need your support. You need to understand that we need you to do a job, really see what is going on in this city, to bring some resolution to the plight that we have here in St. Petersburg.

We need your support. Thank you.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much.

Mr. Brake. Ms. Dennard, I'm very familiar with that family name, among many of standing families in St. Petersburg. Is there someone in your family—were you kin to an Oscar Dennard?

Ms. Dennard. Yes.

Mr. Brake. That was your brother.

Ms. Dennard. Yes, and I have a sister sitting over on the far—

Mr. Brake. I just want to say, I go back to the time that you were talking about the great bands and all in the sixties. I was teaching and coaching at Jones High School, but it should also be said that contrary to popular belief, there were very strong academic programs in those schools, as well as the extracurricular programs, and you obviously are a good example of that.

Ms. Dennard. Yes.

Dr. Berry. May I ask just one question? I hate to do this in the interest of time—

Rabbi Agin. You may ask a question.

Dr. Berry. Ms. Dennard, based on what you just said, would it be improper for one to conclude that you think things have gotten worse since the days of segregation in St. Petersburg?

Ms. Dennard. Oh—worse? There is no adjective that can describe what has happened to our young people in this city. No words can describe—let me just say this, and my time is up—we have nothing in our community. Please hear me well over this. We have nothing. We don't have a grocery store. We have nothing in our community. And you know what? We have none—we have no business, no grocery stores that are run by blacks. They are run by other people coming into our neighborhoods, selling us our food, and charging us twice what it cost.

Dr. Berry. Let me just put the question this way. Is what you're saying that African Americans are still segregated, but with fewer institutions, whether it's schools, stores or whatever businesses, still segregated—

Ms. Dennard. It's still segregated, we're still segregated—

Dr. Berry. —but without the kind of community resources that existed? Is that basically what you're saying?

Ms. Dennard. I'm saying exactly that to you. I'm saying exactly that to you. We're still segregated. They take our children an hour to 2 hours to get to school and get back home. They cannot go to basketball games. They can't go to dances. They can't go to anything, because they bus them so far away from home and we don't have the resources to get our children back and forth. So what are these kids going to do?

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. I know we have some dignitaries here from other cities in Florida. I'm not going to mention who they are. And I hope they take the message home about having—about your lack of groceries stores and movies, etc., in your community. It's a very sensitive issue for me. I've complained about that to other cities in the State of Florida, because I find that deplorable that that does not exist. Thank you very much.

Ms. Dennard. Well, let me say to you this. We are not going to allow them to come into our community like they used to. They will be 50-50 partnerships bringing any big businesses or anything else into our community.

Rabbi Agin. Whatever it may be. It has to—something has to change, and I agree with you wholeheartedly. Thank you very much, ma'am. I appreciated your comments. Sheila Turner. Sheila Turner is an attorney at law here in St. Petersburg.

Statement of Sheila Turner, St. Petersburg

Ms. Turner. Good evening. It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for the opportunity to address this group this afternoon.

I want to say one thing and just to kind of address something that is not well known in St. Petersburg. I finished law school in 1993. I opened my practice in 1995.

I recall being offered a job at thirty something thousand dollars, after I had been a law clerk, then on law review, and did all of the quote, unquote, things that are necessary, in order to quote, get the job done and to get actually paid.

I remember saying I'll sell peanuts on a corner first, or I'll open the door and starve, because absolutely not, no one will underpay me. I already know my value, and I will not be undersold.

Now, I explain that because in our city there are in excess of 45 black attorneys. I have listed them. I categorized what they do. But most of them are not available to this community. Although we opened with scarce resources, many people have—I have people come and criticize because we couldn't take their case. No money? We couldn't take their case.

We have to be here next year is our goal. So when I come before you tonight, I've come with a heart that's greatly concerned and in many ways exhausted and exacerbated as to what has been done, and what kind of efforts actually result in some kind of tangible, concrete change.

I was born in La Belle, Florida. I was raised here in St. Petersburg since I was 3 years old. We'd go back home and crop tobacco and things like that, but more predominantly I've been here most of my life.

I'm a woman of passion, so because I know that it took a lot of energy for my parents to actually get me back on the right path when I went astray, we started working with teens and with youth in our community. My husband and I became a part of the foster care system and we were privileged to have impact on 17 lives. We've been adopting people ever since, and I don't mean just—we just adopt folks.

I have the firm belief that I must duplicate myself at least three to five times if I expect somebody to be in my place when I'm no longer able to stand in it. I make that statement, because in our city right now I don't see a duplication going on. While in our African American community, we can talk about what white Americans or non-African Americans do, I have this thing to say, that every man be fully persuaded in his own heart, what his job is to do. Do you know no man can stop me if I will just do what I need to do?

I can train somebody. I've got five I trained now. I can help somebody get into law—I can help somebody go to school and it didn't cost me a dime.

I can show people how to bypass some of this stuff in St. Petersburg and actually get you a loan from elsewhere to open your grocery store. See, there are people in our community who have retired as school teachers. They're looking for some way, some outlet to make a difference, but there's not really anybody coming together saying, "Listen, well, you mentor, you tutor, you do this, you do that." There's just not a presence.

I'm saying that because I really don't believe anybody else governs my life. Now, if you fail to serve me in the way that you should serve me, I throw you out. I sue you, I picket you, I boycott you. In our city in particular, when the groups and everything come together, particularly related to African American issues, there are lots of divisive measures that just kind of show up.

I'm saying that because we are diverse people within a diverse people. And we are very different and expect to be accepted with our differences. We don't have to blend and become one brown people, in order for us to have a whole face.

I wept when my grandmother was being turned down for social security because she stayed with a relative of hers in Ocala for 4 extra months. I remember being really distraught when a white

male, who was a good friend of mine at the Regional Planning Council—I found out he was making five to ten thousand more than me, and I came in before him and I reviewed his plan, and he didn't have a master's.

I grieved a lot when I hit law school and I found out that most of the people who came in with me were more concerned about money than they were about serving anybody. And then within the last 2 or 3 months I started re-looking at my decision to impress Stetson University College of Law, to continue to recruit 13 and 15 kids per semester, which is more than they ever did in the history of the school, because all of a sudden those kids are graduating and they're passing the bar, and there's nowhere to go. These law firms don't in any way absorb them, and they don't care to. So if they don't hit government, they don't hit.

In our particular region I got an opportunity—I rejoiced when one of my foster sons became a captain in the U.S. Army.

I'm a woman of passions just like you are. There are things I hate. As I'm standing here, we were coming out of church service when a young woman who was in the Uhuru House that night came running up the incline, and she said to me, she says, "You just won't believe," she said, "they attacked us, they just—" I said, "They can't do that," and I thought for a minute, oh, yes, they can.

They can do anything you let them do. And so as we're sitting here and we're beginning to talk and we're just kind of debating those things that we already know are. As I look at each one of you, I just want to kind of drive it home, they can do anything they want to do, unless we as a people do something.

While you all are sitting here, I know one thing, you go back home. I live here. You went home 4 years ago. I hear you went home 10 years ago. I wasn't part of that.

Most of my life has been spent in school and coming home and going to work. Most of these organizations that are sitting here, I've never even had the privilege to join or show up and see what they're even all about, because I was told that, "If you just get this education, girl, if you get it in your hands, it will be all right."

And I tried my best to go to Atlanta, California, New York, or D.C., somewhere where somebody who looked like me actually could move. I've watched my friends all pack up and they're on this side of Atlanta, that side or whatever. And they're somewhere else, because here folks that look like me, there's not a lot of room to move.

Now, if you don't say the right things and you don't agree, you don't make the committee. Now, you do understand that's every committee, that's whether you're talking about a task force or review board or school board. I mean, you don't make the committee.

So if you disagree and actually bring to light those things which are of distraught nature in our community, great concerns—we have segregated classrooms and kids, although they have math acceleration, cannot get into math programs unless they have made the magnet program, even though they are blowing math right out of the water, they can't get out of it—not in our country, not in 7th grade. You've got to hit a magnet. Well, of course, magnet is predominantly white, and so our kids just kind of get dumped somewhere.

We understand it's a public-private system. After this woman ran up to me in the incline and she began to say those things, I hopped in my car and I thought I'd head that direction. She said there were people who couldn't get their cars out. They were surrounded. And I said, "That means the whole neighborhood's under siege."

And I saw the kids running up and down the road, and they began to plummet rocks here and there, you know, sounds like you want to stick your head out the window and go, "This is a black face in this car. You all, please don't hit my car."

I just began to scream and I began to scream uncontrollably. And I said, "But you don't understand—" My daughter said, "Mama, just calm down, it's all right."

I said, "But you don't understand, they'll go to jail, they'll beat the hell out of these kids. Do you have a clue?" And she says, "I know, I understand." I said, "No, you don't understand." When the kids come in and they are charged with a criminal offense, and although they were already handcuffed and they're in the back of a police cruiser, they're still sprayed with pepper spray. When somebody's on the ground and a police officer rams his hand up a male's butt that's already hog tied, and then they take him onto the jail and say, "Well, we're sorry; we really had to do you like that."

And then I have to look at the young man and say to him, "Sir, let's beat these criminal charges first," because I understand the marriage between our State attorney and our police officers, and I don't mix it. "We've got to beat these charges before we start having people fight like tooth and nail against you, just because you have to nerve the say the police did something wrong."

Charges they probably should have dropped, they won't. But I understand one thing. Beatings, guns drawn, riding five deep—all that's threats, arrests; it induces fear and it paralyzes. It immobilizes and it's a mental thing.

There's one way to keep a man inside a fence even if there's no electricity there. You keep acting like it's there. Every time I see a citizen, I said, "Get you, file a complaint. Did you get an officer's name? It's not 'them'. Which officer was that? Get him a good record going."

Somebody please tell somebody that officer so and so has perjured himself on the stand and bring

the evidence. Somebody please go ahead and file a report. I don't care if you keep saying they're investigating and they're not doing anything. Eventually—see, sometimes we just want things to fall on our case, but see, the life is not fair, it's just.

As we begin to move, there are things that I may be able to do today that will not affect me, but they may affect three people down, or one generation later, when somebody actually gets ready to file charges against that particular officer, he's got a history.

Nobody did anything about his history, but it's there. And so today, as I come, understanding the tactics of fear is to make sure I don't move. And to make sure I become disillusioned. I don't have a vision of any kind.

God was bold enough to say come let us reason together. I say this, come let us reason together.

We understand that as African Americans, as well as those citizens that are engulfed in poverty in the City of St. Petersburg have been bludgeoned into numbness.

Is that a clock that you're talking about? Thank you. So today I say this. We have public servants and we have those people who we say serve us. It's about time that they actually do that.

The different statements related to the municipality and where this money and expenditure goes. I'd like to see the number of arrests for those particular 2 nights in October, and I'm not just looking at the first night, but the second night because, see, we were under siegeship for a while.

They continued to ride that street deep like that. They continued to beat folks and just stop folks for what guns people had. Oh, that's just the way it went, and you understand that. It wasn't just one night. Somebody needs to be pulling the records related to every arrest.

You know, a lot of those people are arrested because they live right there around the corner. I've got one kid, he was passing by a gas can. He didn't have the nerve to pick it up. He's in jail. He's been there for 30-some, 40 days.

I'm going to go ahead and close. The question when somebody does something wrong is never, Did you do it wrong? It's not just that. We all do something wrong. All of us make mistakes. There are things I wish I could just take back and change in my life.

The question is whether or not I have become mature or am I still an adolescent denying, and in our city we have immature people running our government. They don't take responsibility for anything.

If you need to see something, get glasses. If you say you can't hear or you don't understand, it's time for a hearing aid. In many ways you are those glasses and in many ways you are that hearing aid. Amplification of the problem and the concerns is

what needs to happen. Perhaps then the deaf can hear and the blind can actually see.

Thank you.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you.

Dr. Berry. Thank you, Ms. Turner. All right. I appreciate your remarks, but I did have one question. I didn't know who to ask this, so I'll ask you if you know.

In all the materials that I've read and what I heard when I was down here the last time, no one has ever told me what happened to the other person who was in the car. Does anybody know? Do you know? I'm only asking you because you're up there and you're a lawyer. I figure you might follow what goes on.

Ms. Turner. I'm a lawyer, but I'm inundated to be perfectly honest with you, but I just heard Mr. Narr [phonetic] say they kept him in jail until after a decision was rendered.

That wasn't until after the decision was rendered; correct? On the date that the decision was given from the grand jury, he was released that afternoon, and if he was the one that they said they got all of their information—he was in the car, he knew what was going on. You know and I know that in Los Angeles when those things happened, they drugged those people until they got the information they wanted. Here's a 14-, 15-, 16-year-old child, and you lock him up all that time, he's going to say what you tell him to say.

Dr. Berry. We'll ask the police about it. I just wanted to know whether the community had any take on it, if they had heard anything.

I'm not finished yet. I had another question.

Rabbi Agin. I'm sorry.

Dr. Berry. The other question I wanted to ask you is, in general, following what goes on in the justice system here, have you seen any improvements that have been made in the weeks since the first disturbance in the police and the way they behave, or is there anything that you can point to that shows progress that's being made?

Ms. Turner. There's absolutely nothing I can point to that shows progress. Instead, we have police officers that are bolder than ever. We have police officers who actually move as though that was something to be proud of, and I'm just being candid with you related to people who I'm seeing, in effecting arrests and things like that.

I'm not seeing any curtailment or change. See, we keep going after—we go after the head because we say the head, if the head is sick, the whole body is sick. We know that.

But see, there are some things—everybody knows in Washington the folk who really run things are not the ones that are there for 4 years. In our planning department in the city there are people who have been there for 20 to 25 years going in these places. In our police department, that union, there are people with complaints all over the

place, the union moves them and they send them back to our community full of rage and anger, because they moved them for a cause or some complaint. They are not gone.

Dr. Berry. All right. That's all I wanted to know. Thank you very much.

Rabbi Agin. All right.

Minister Muhammad. One quick statement in regards to the question that you posed to this barrister here. You said did you see any change. The thing that must be realized by this Commission is that there must be an incentive to change, and the police department and the city administration has not provided an incentive for the police to change their brutal handling of black people.

They must be made examples of and we hope that this Commission will add that in your findings.

Rabbi Agin. As I indicated, we're going to take some of those cards, probably—let's see what happens. Now remember, please, you are limited to 3 minutes.

All right. Ms. Waller? Is she here? W-a-l-l-e-r?

Statement of Rika Waller

Ms. Waller. Hi. My name is Rika Waller. I'm a single parent of four children. I have two teen-aged sons, two younger daughters. I am a student at the St. Petersburg Junior College, and will be graduating the 14th of this month, heading to a prelaw program.

I am totally, absolutely, completely thrown with all of this. I have no sense of who, no sense of anything.

The young lady the attorney spoke of was me. I could not believe what had happened. I could not believe that our constitutional rights had been infringed upon so openly and no one, absolutely no one, cared. I could not believe that I was here and my sons and I thought that we were going to die. We actually thought we were going to die.

I could not believe the constant nightmares I had, my 14-year-old had. I could not believe the media not telling what happened, because nobody cared. I am attempting to get a law degree as a result of the need of poor people, black people, and children.

I am not doing this to get rich. I am not doing this to make money. I probably will need a second job.

What I saw that night told me that everything about the sixties were 1996. It told me that the fear that I had about my son going to the store was a genuine fear, to the point of paranoia.

My son, who is 16, has a 3.70 GPA and plays five instruments. It doesn't mean anything. It means nothing. I am so upset because nobody cares. I don't expect anything to happen. I really don't. I've lost everything, I mean, everything that

I thought could possibly be possible for myself or my children. It's gone. It's gone.

1996, I feel like I'm in the same time frame of the lynchings because that's what happened to us. It wasn't a rope, but let me tell you something. I'm not asthmatic. I've never been in a position where I could not breathe, and I literally could not breathe, and it was a conscious thing.

I thought about every second that I could not breathe. Not only did they tear gas the inside of that house, they tear gassed the outside. That's where I was. And when I ducked behind a car with my eldest son, they shot it behind the car.

And when I ran on the side of the car, they shot it on the side of the car. When I ran in the front of the car, they shot it on the front of the car, and I'll tell you, every minute of that time I did not have a tap of oxygen.

And all I could think about is not being able to breathe, just not being able to breathe, saying, "This is it, I'm going to die. It's over, it's over. How could this happen?"

How can people sit here and tell me that they didn't know it? I have a problem—I'm sorry, I have a problem with it.

How can you not know it? I asked myself, I said okay, Rika, is it something that God just gave you that apparently all of these things seem to be visible to you and nobody else? I mean, what is it?

And I think a lot of it has to do with the fight that my father fought, so I'm a fighter, but I'm telling you, it needs to stop. It needs to stop. Somebody needs to put a stop on all of this foolishness.

You can't say you're blind to it, that you didn't know it happened. It happened. It's happening. My son shouldn't have to be a victim. I am not raising my African children to be target practice for the St. Petersburg Police Department, and I will die for them. I will die for them.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you.

Ms. Waller. It's not just the police. It's the school, it's the whole system. There's some good people on the police force, but what good is those good people when the whole system is no good?

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much, ma'am. Vearl Scott, S-c-o-t-t? Vearl Scott?

Statement of Vearl Scott

Mr. Scott. Good afternoon. What I would like to talk about, I would like to talk about something that is just as detrimental to the black community as anything else.

I want to talk about the St. Petersburg Code Department. I want to talk about Mayor Fischer.

When I came down here to his office about 6 months ago, I went in there and I talked to Mrs. Crump. She is his secretary. She told me I couldn't see him. I said, "Well, I've been a citizen of this city for about 40 years. I've paid my taxes. I own about

three or four pieces of property. I'm the greatest bail bond in Jacksonville." Sheila is my niece.

I go down to the office, I go to Jacksonville, I sit down, I listen to everybody complain. I'm very versed in the whole situation. But whenever I came down there to the code department one day, and there was a lady, this lady here is penalized. She is blind. And those people up there were treating her like she was dirt. "Don't you have a brother that can paint your house? Don't you have somebody that can do this?" They already had a \$17,000 mortgage on the house.

In other words, it's not only what they're talking about. I'm talking about what I know, and because I was so—and I come down there and I tell it like it is, I tell those people what they is and who they are and what they're doing to our black community, and then my son, he was involved, and I came down here to speak for him.

So what I have here is almost unbelievable. My son had a Cadillac car parked in his yard. They will get you if you take the tag off your car, fearing somebody will steal it. They fined him about \$150 a day until it ran up to \$1,600, and believe me, I have a cashier's check ready here, that I would turn it over to any—the members, \$1,800 to get the lien off of my son's house.

And not only him, 5 or 6 months—I don't know why you stopped, by the City of St. Petersburg and the code department was riding shotgun. What I mean by shotgun, if a man had a car in his yard—I want to tell you a story. I'm not going to take but a few minutes, I want you to hear this.

A lady came to me and she said, "Mr. Scott, I've been to jail." It was Reverend Butler's daughter. I know lots of these—so I say, "Mary, what happened?" She said, "Well, I had an old Ford in my yard and I was trying to wait until I could save up enough money to get my Ford fixed."

She said, "You know, I got 11 kids and I told them that." She was standing in front of that car, a St. Petersburg female policeman came behind her, and put the choke hold on her, and her daughter ran out there and said, "Don't do my mother like that," they get her and hold her, and then when they got three of them in the car, their son too, they went to Campbell Park. "I'm going to see what we're going to do with them." That's what they say, "What are we going to do with them?"

They didn't know what to charge them with, because the lady didn't want the wrecker coming to pull her car before she was trying to save up enough money to get a transmission put in her car. And the City of St. Petersburg, you're not allowed to have your car on the property where you pay taxes.

And when I came out of the United States Marine Corps, when I came here, I thought I was coming to a city where I could raise a family and live in peace.

Let me tell you one thing. I was just at the tip end of getting it done, coming—because I feel like sometime we have to give something for things to get right. I hate to say this, but I hope that the mayor of this town and all the people around here—ran into the city code department—and that's the truth, so help me God. If you want a picture of this cashier's check, if you want a picture of the documents, I got a picture of the old lady. I reported it to the *St. Petersburg Times*—\$1,300 lien, finally she lost her house. She's staying with her mother right now.

And I'm still mad about it. That's all I got to say.

Rabbi Agin. Wendy Snyder here?

Mr. Scott. I would like to have [inaudible]. I want you to recommend that I get my money back, because I was justified to do what I just told you about. And the only thing that saved me, I've got a loving wife, and my mother taught me better. Plus I'm a member of the church and I believe in prayer.

Rabbi Agin. Wendy Snyder is not here. Roger Clendening. Roger Clendening here? Three minutes, please.

Statement of Roger Clendening

Mr. Clendening. Thank you for allowing us to speak before you. The reason we're all here is because TyRon Lewis was killed. That's the only reason you're here. I'm probably one of the few people that you've heard from who had an opportunity to work directly with him and Eugene Young, the person who was in the car with him.

When you have your hearings tomorrow, please be certain to call Bill Gandy, my boss. I work for the department of justice and if they come get me tomorrow, fine, I won't work. But you need to call those people. You need to call other State officials, and you need to talk with police and the State attorney's office.

You really need to talk with those people. You also need to talk with the city council members, who approached myself and a number of other African Americans in this community to form what they describe as a Youth Advisory Committee to the city council, presumably to deal with issues such as policy brutality and the harassment of young people and the development of young people in this city.

Three years ago the city council had that committee up and running. The largely white, male-dominated city council found that there were mostly young, middle class, the upper middle class, white youngsters who were participating in that Youth Advisory Committee, and ultimately it died out.

But when one of the council persons came to us and asked us to revitalize it so that we could really serve as advocates for young people, we did that over a period of almost 2 years, 19 months.

What you need to understand is the level of irresponsibility and the level of unaccountability on the part of not only city government officials, but also the business community and the news media.

This city council was introduced to the Youth Advisory Committee. We had people from State government, from city government, from local businesses participating in our committee, for 18 months, and only on two occasions did the councilman who asked us to put that committee together show up for a meeting.

Never did we see any of the other council people, even though we were introduced publicly in city council meetings. It's critical to understand the kind of disrespect and the kind of denial that these people exhibit, and it doesn't just deal with city council people.

You have to look at the media, and I may get in trouble again for this too, because I used to work for them, but a lot of us are not going to back up anymore. I've been here 23 years and for the first time in 23 years the African American community, almost to a man, woman, and child are united, that they're not going to stand for this anymore.

They are ready to die and to do whatever is appropriate to stop the racism and oppressive, class-oriented conditions as well, and that's another thing that some of you may want to consider. Go back to those books you may have studied in college and look at capitalism. And nobody wants to hear that philosophically, because they say, "Oh, that's something too intellectual to deal with," but when you think about it fundamentally, look at the oppressive conditions in every inner city in the United States of America, and particularly in places like St. Petersburg, where you're doing your work.

There are design [phonetic] situations where you have to have a segment of the population, corralled, walled in mentally, physically, and otherwise, and you have an oppressive police force that's paid and instructed by business and industry to keep the snow birds safe. I mean, that's the multibillion dollar industry that they have going for them.

A lot of us benefit from it. Some of us work in it, but the point is, if that gets out of hand, there's no dollars and that's what it's about, and when you make your recommendations, think about power relationships, because the African American community in this city is determined to have some self-determination, not just with the \$20 million that may be coming in here, but money that they have access to also.

We urge you to try to do some of this. Thank you very much, sir.

Rabbi Agin. Najah Tamargo?

Ms. Murray. If it's okay, I'd like to say what she has to say.

Rabbi Agin. You can do that. Can I have your name, please?

Statement of Mary Ann Murray

Ms. Murray. Mary Ann Murray. Good evening and thank you people for coming to listen to all of us here. My name is Mary Ann Murray, and I represent the white community but also the black community too, because I appreciate the fact that the black community has stood up and taken a stand on what's been happening in St. Petersburg, along with the whole United States.

I think there's an epidemic of police brutality in the whole entire United States, not only here but in Washington, and New York and Los Angeles and Chicago and Miami. I've been in touch with a lot of people.

And one of the reasons, although it's been something that's been a pet peeve of mine for a long time, but my son was beaten up by the St. Petersburg Police Department. It was the green team, the green team that doesn't exist any longer.

But it was the green team, and—but of course—nobody admits that the green team exists, so the police department said it no longer exists. The city council doesn't even know that it exists, but it does exist.

And the green team definitely harasses people. My sons were working on a job—he was a totally innocent bystander, and he was watching a police chase going by—or actually he heard a police chase going by, where the police officers were shooting their guns at a moving vehicle, which is another violation against the policy of the police department, and in a residential neighborhood.

So their lives were put in jeopardy. They were hiding behind a car, and then this other unmarked car comes out, their guns drawn, and my sons ran. They were scared. They were scared for their lives.

Four officers kicked and beat on him, and never identified himself. And when we talk—when you talked about the Citizens Review Committee that this city does have—yes, we do have a Citizens Review Committee, but they're only given the information that the internal affairs department provides them, and what they provide is what they choose to provide.

They were never provided the 911 tape that my other son was calling for help for his little brother, and they were never provided with that. They didn't feel it was relevant in the case. They didn't feel as if the pictures that were taken of my son were good enough to be put in the case. They didn't feel that the videotape was good to be put into the case, and my son's medical records were biased, because they were of his own personal doctors.

So they didn't put those into the case to present to the Citizens Review Committee. And the Citizens Review Committee, their hands are tied. They don't realize that those things are happening.

A lot of times people aren't even aware that these committees are going on, and when my son was beaten, the surgeon at the hospital said that I had to understand, his officers were in a frenzied state. Now, I've heard that sharks get frenzied. Wild animals get frenzied. I thought the police department were supposed to be professional people and they were supposed to be above and beyond that, or is that the way they are trained? And is that the part of the training of the green team?

Rabbi Agin. It's time.

Ms. Murray. I'm sorry it's time, but thank you for listening to me and I hope that you understand that this goes on not only in the black community but with the white community also in this city.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. Penny Hess, is Penny Hess here? Okay. N-n-a-m-d-u? Is there a Kamber present, K-a-m-b-e-r? Alvelita Donaldson? Did I say that correctly, ma'am?

Statement of Alvelita Donaldson

Ms. Donaldson. Alvelita.

Rabbi Agin. I apologize.

Ms. Donaldson. Good evening. Thank you for convening this hearing. This is the third time that I've been privileged to speak before this body, and I'm still left in the same place where I started in terms that the progress that the City of St. Petersburg has made during the times that—since the times that the Commission has been coming here.

It finally hit the fan. I'm here basically—I don't want to hold up any time, for my organization, the National People's Democratic Uhuru Movement, that demands that we have. We have been brutalized, our rights have been violated in the worst kind of way. I was one of the people who was tear gassed at the Uhuru House November 13, along with many other men and women and babies, who screamed and crawled and cried, and who were forced away from their homes for days on end, following the tear gassing at the Uhuru House.

It was my son, Keith Stewart, along with two other young men, Vincent Williams and Keith Allen, who is here today, who was kidnapped from right near the Uhuru House by the St. Petersburg Police Department. And when I tried to find my child, the liar who calls himself the police chief told me he didn't know where my son was, and for 3 hours my son was kept concealed from me. I ran to the Pinellas County Jail trying to attempting to find him, but I couldn't find him.

The chief looked at me straight in my face and told me he didn't know where my child was. Finally I located him. When my child and I attempted to come back to the Uhuru House to find out if our relatives, our friends, people from our community, our comrades, where they were, we couldn't find anybody, and we found—with cops laying on their

bellies, crunched against their cars, guns drawn, 16th Street and 18th Avenue. The streets were all blockaded. We had to go back roads in order to get to my home to make phone calls to find out where our relatives were.

What our demands are this, we want those people who were arrested on the night of the rebellion, those people who we call our heroes and heroines, who were soldiers of the night that night, we would ask that all those people, young folks, be given amnesty, and I say this in the most sincere way.

You want to know what the solution is? I'm telling you this is the solution as far as many, many people in our community are concerned. We have to find a way to find amnesty for all of our people.

We've been trying exhaustively, inexhaustively to—to try and find out—all of those people who were arrested—the police department said they would try and get me a list of all those persons arrested. They haven't done that.

I've found out other methods of doing that. We want to see that Bernie McCabe, the State attorney, he needs to be brought up on charges. He's made very prejudicial statements in terms of speech that he does not like coming from our movement.

We believe that the family of TyRon Lewis—we demand that that family be paid reparations. No amount of money can give us back our child, our child of this community. But that is one of the demands that we make.

And then our last demand is that the police draw themselves back. We want an injunction filed. We want them pulled back immediately so that we can go about our business, which is guaranteed by the Constitution, and that the freedom to assemble—the freedom of free speech, to be able to pass out our literature, to be able to share our view, and to invite others to come into our movement, without being terrorized by the St. Petersburg Police Department.

So I don't have very much else to say. My position is the same as it's been each time I've come here, so if you look at your records you can check that.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. We appreciate your comments. Norris Brothers. Yes, sir.

Statement of Norris Brothers

Mr. Brothers. My name is Norris Brothers. I'm a communication specialist here in Florida.

I'm here to enlighten you about the good old boy complex here in the city. I recently or during last year took an exam to be certified here in the City of St. Petersburg. The test was here in the city.

The folks giving the exam informed us that Pinellas County could not—those that took the

exam that were residents in Pinellas County could not have the results of their tests for 30 to 45 days. But other folks who were from around the State were permitted to receive their exam scores within 24 hours for a \$15 fee.

This city has no blacks on the county commission board, a board which regulates licensing here in the city. For some reason, St. Petersburg had more licenses, more taxes, not only for businessmen but for property owners as well.

And it's a serious problem. There needs to be something done to employ more blacks in the city here. A way of doing that is to not have so much in terms of blockages, whereas people can't obtain licenses. A painter, a basic carpenter, a cement person, things that perhaps does not require a great deal of mathematics or reading skills, but could possibly employ a great deal of people by not—those who have those skills are not permitted to obtain these licenses, because they have to obtain also as much as \$300,000 worth of insurance, bonding perhaps.

There was a situation here where they were building a stadium. Initially, they were talking about blacks having contracts in terms of the concession stands in the stadium. Now that we have a stadium built, there's nothing said about blacks having concessions in the stadium.

There are no blacks in the tax assessment office. As may have been mentioned, there are a number of problems with tax assessment. It seems that there's a conscientious effort made to keep blacks out of certain areas of government. As a result, taxation, minimizing blacks in certain areas.

Thank you.

Mr. McDuffie. May I ask him, what type of certification were you trying to obtain?

Mr. Brothers. I am certified but under communications. I'm a telephone contractor.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, sir. A-b-i-o-n-a—would you pronounce your last name for me, please?

Statement of Abiona Adadevoh

Mr. Adadevoh. Good night. Thank you for being here and I'll only be a couple of minutes. My name is Abiona Adadevoh. I used to chair the Committee for Criminal Justice for the NAACP in the State of Florida, and the last time I saw brother Bobby Doctor was 20 years ago in Pensacola. I wasn't familiar with Florida at the time—all I knew, I was driving 10 hours and I was still inside of Florida.

I'd like to thank the St. Petersburg community for blowing down the walls of Jericho. We would like to send our sympathy to the grieving family who lost a youth, and we also would like for you to take back with you how serious the times are and that what happened here in St. Petersburg should serve as a wake-up call for the rest of America.

We came to say that the empowerment zone is really the disempowerment zone, that the enterprise zone is just as dangerous as it is in Haiti, where people are working for 7 cents a garment for Walt Disney Company. We say that these two so-called economic empowerment funds are really being financed by the Federal Government as black removal, but it's called urban development. We call it black removal.

The main problem is the great divide. If you take the black community, you can draw a line right down the middle of it representing the highway, and draw another line down to represent the railroad tracks.

Then redefine the entire black community as the inner city, meaning we only need police, police dogs, gas, guns, police cars, and now all of a sudden our community—extension of its natural boundaries, which would be downtown, the waterfront, the historical district—suddenly this area is gray. We need definition of the parameters or the border or the boundary to let us know where white power began and black power ends, because we want it to be known that we're not coming here to beg for job training, since slavery already trained us to do everything we need to know how to do. We just didn't get paid then and we're not getting paid now.

We're not coming as beggars sitting down at our own table. If we can recall history, the empowerment zone money and the Federal assistance fund money came on the backs of the black community, the women and the children. It was at our expense, and there is no one who did not benefit, be you white, black, blue, green, handicapped, gay, women, you all benefited as you road into the future on our back.

And here we are sitting on the other side of the tracks. So what we need is this. We need our sovereign rights and autonomy over any money that comes to the community and passes straight through, across the border, and goes to develop downtown, historic area, waterfront. That belongs to the black community. It's the natural extension of ourselves. When was downtown not a natural extension of the black community?

So what we want is an accountability report from the City of St. Petersburg, from President Clinton. We don't need another program shoved down our throat that everybody benefits from but us.

On the other side of the great racial divide we have nothing, vacant lots, warehouses, you name it. So we'll take that and we'll develop it ourselves. What we need is for you all to stop stealing our money, stop loaning section 8 money out to multimillion, zillionaire corporations, and private investors. Give us our money, give us an account of what you did with our money, since 1976, and we'll take it and do whatever we feel is necessary. We do not need any more corporate America coming into

our half of the railroad tracks and giving us a McDonald's uniform.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. Dr. Clarence Davis.

Statement of Clarence Davis

Dr. Davis. Thank you, sir. Thank you, ma'am. I'm Dr. Clarence Davis. I'm a pastor of 25 years. I can guarantee you, I can't even cough in 3 minutes.

Rabbi Agin. You're going to have to do that.

Dr. Davis. I've waited 55 years to stand before you.

I want to tell you just a little bit. I have an A.A. degree, B.A. degree of criminology, a master's degree in human relations, master's of religious education, doctorate of religious education, and a Ph.D. in counseling psychology.

With all of that I can't find a job at St. Petersburg. Tell me one white man in St. Petersburg that has anything near that qualification without a job. I taught the police department at the academy in Oklahoma City for 16 years. I taught and developed a Department of Defense race relations program.

On the night of November 13 I had been summoned to the Uhuru House for the purpose of meeting with the ministers to see if we could not ensure that we would not have another riot in the city. I braved to be there early. The only reason I was the only minister there is that I was early. Had I been late, like most of the people, it would have already been closed down and I would not have gotten into the meeting, and maybe and almost wish I had not gotten in.

I got into the meeting and actually my wife drove me out, and I told her to leave. She was planning to come to that meeting, but there were already 35 police cars. You can multiply that times four to know how many policemen were down there.

They had already quartered off the area. I got out of the car and went over—I wish I could draw a picture for you, because you wouldn't believe this. After 7 years in Southeast Asia I never saw anything like this—actually I wish we had had this in Southeast Asia. We'd have won the war.

But I went over to talk with one of the policeman and I said to him, "What are you trying to prove?" And he hollered back at me, he yelled at me, he said, "What do you want us to do?" I said, "Well, first of all, I'm talking to you very calmly. I suggest you get out of here."

And, of course, I had a few words given to me. I went over to the Uhuru House because there were many, many, many young people standing on the outside, and I knew that would certainly be trouble. So I asked those young people to go in the inside. They did not want to go in the inside. I said, "But your power is on the inside. Out here you're going to get injured. Come on the inside."

I didn't know why they didn't want to go in the inside. But finally I got them on the inside. At about 15 minutes of 7 the young people that I had talked into coming in the inside of the building, began to yell, "They're going to gas us, they're going to gas us."

And I stood, you know, as one of the older people there, and I said "No, please be quiet, sit down. No one is going to do anything like that." And when I said that, I began to cough, because they had already started firing into the building.

There were young children. There were babies in the arms of their mothers that dashed to the back door, of which we could not get out.

I tried to be the gentleman that I am to ensure that all of the people did get out of the building. When I attempted to do that, I was overcome by the gas. I fell to the floor. It's a very good thing I did. There was a little oxygen there.

I finally got out of the building, but on my way out Mrs. Dennard handed me a cell phone and said, "Please call somebody, tell them we're in trouble." I started out of that door with that cell phone and the spirit of God spoke to me and said, put the phone in your pocket.

Thank God for his spirit. I put the phone in my back pocket and walked out of the door and raised my hands like this [indicating]. I walked over and there were nine policemen with their guns in my face. I said, "I'm Pastor Clarence Davis, the pastor of Jesus' Baptist Church." They said, "I don't give a damn who you are, get your ass out of here."

I said, "Excuse me, you're speaking to a man of God, and I will not allow you to talk to me that way." So then I was told to get out of there.

They said, "Go over towards those policemen." I said, "I refuse to turn my back on you, I'm sure you will shoot me."

So I backed away from them, still with my hands raised. About that time at least 30 or 40 rounds were fired across my head. As any good American, I fell to the ground. I found a cameraman there and a news reporter from Channel 28.

The woman was shaking and crying, and I said, "Where's your vehicle?" They said, "We're kneeling next to it." I said, "Let's get in the vehicle." We got in the vehicle and finally got out of there.

The one thing that flashed back across my mind was that with all of the firing, the police never fired back. The reason they didn't is because they were doing the firing. The police that were—just a minute—I've experienced this and I want you to try and understand it—let me just give you a bottom line. The bottom line is our community is under siege. We've done everything that we know to do at this point to try and have some amenable ending to a very difficult situation.

Let me give you the last point. On the day after that the mayor called us to his office. We went to his office. Only about four of us showed up. And he

talked and talked and everybody talked and talked, and finally I looked out of the window. I said, "Mr. Mayor, it's getting dark. Let me offer you a suggestion. Remove the police from the community and allow us to go in. It can never be any worse than it was last night. If I'm totally wrong, it will never be any worse than it was."

Well, after some discussion, he made the decision to pull the police out. We went down. There was no disturbances.

And let me tell you what did happen. And this is what is so difficult. The police, two cars at a time, four policemen in each car, and each door opened. As they would pass by, there were three of us standing to ensure that none of the young people congregated on the street. The young people were very, very obedient as we asked them to leave, any of them that came up.

But the police came by, slowed their cars down when they got to us, and got their doors like this [indicating], tried to get us to react to them so that they could then arrest us. They didn't know that we were preachers.

All I'm trying to say to you is this. I understand you're not miracle workers. But someone needs to understand that the silent crime, which is what a riot is, and it was not a disruption. It was a riot. The silent crime, that riot, will be heard again if we don't do something about it.

We have a lot of law-abiding citizens and I certainly categorize myself in that area, but unless something happens traumatically and dramatically in this city, we will see a repeat over and over again.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, sir. Next Daniel Quinn.

Statement of Daniel Quinn

Mr. Quinn. My name is Daniel Quinn. And as far as who I am and what I am—I mean, this is me. I'm for real. I'm not going to define myself and I don't define who I am. I don't, in commercial expletives, I don't let my destiny be defined by a nation of shopkeepers.

As far as I'm concerned, I'm a child of God, a Roman Catholic. I'm the living presence of Christ in the world. I'm a member of his mystical body. All of us are children of God.

So I don't define who I am in terms of commerce. I see that, and I've been around. I ride a bicycle in St. Pete. I'm a dumpster diver, so to speak, but I'm also—I've worked in whatever.

Any case, one of the main problems I see, I see that the media, the news media, the multimedia has become a rival political power to democracy. They control the consensus. They can mobilize sympathies whenever they want to. They can marginalize whoever they want to. They have abandoned the societal role to empower the people,

to give them a political line of self-defense. They entertain the people now.

We can't be part of the public debate anymore, since they repealed the fairness doctrine under the Reagan administration. The mass media has subverted the Constitution of the United States of America, and it's the cause of most of our societal problems. They have built a sacred canopy around the first rights amendments. They have never spoken of the freedom of speech and mentioned at the same time the preamble, which is the soul of the constitution.

Every elected official, including the military personnel in this country, have one thing in common. They vowed to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America.

I don't believe that anyone is doing that. Freedom of speech ends where the public good is endangered. Tomorrow, President Clinton is calling us. In President Clinton's State of the Union Address in 1995, he said for people in the entertainment industry in this country, we applaud your creativity and your worldwide success, and we support your freedom of expression. But you do have a responsibility to assess the impact of your work and to understand the damage that comes from the incessant, repetitive, mindless, and irresponsible conduct that permeates our media all of the time.

That's what our President who is going to call tomorrow morning says. The *St. Petersburg Times* has been an agent for marketing violence as one market and apples and oranges, by portraying weapons as a fashion accessory and glamorizing weapons.

Rabbi Agin. It's time.

Mr. Quinn. There was time for other people also. I'm going to speak my mind here. This is not an enclave of totalitarianism. Another thing, the media says that they want to declare a war on poverty, that—because I'm talking against the media. That's why they're doing it, against the *St. Petersburg Times*, against Barnett Bank, and against corporate America, because I'm not speaking the party line.

Rabbi Agin. There's—

Mr. Quinn. There's no hopeless people in the world. The world is everybody's home. They may be shelterless, but to say somebody is homeless is to take away their implicit rights, their natural rights, their defined rights and their political rights. Nobody is homeless in this society.

Moscow just rounded up all the homeless in their society. They can do that here to you. The poor and the minorities have become a victim of class aggression. Since there isn't the Soviet Union there anymore, the enemy has to be domestic, and the poor and the minorities have become a victim, an object of class aggression and the media continues to advance this.

How many rest rooms are there at the Ice Palace? Thirty-seven rest rooms. There should be rest rooms strategically located in every part of this city and drinking fountains. That's a basic necessity. And if I'm out on the street and I don't have a place to go, I should be able to lay down and fall asleep, if I'm tired. I've been tired. I've done that. And they don't let you do it. You're walking around at 3 o'clock in the morning, no place to go.

They don't take you in these shelters. That's bull shit. They don't let you lie down. I should be able to lay down if I don't buy into the economic system.

They call people deadbeat fathers. Well, we have deadbeat multimedia merchants in this country who have eroded the family unit by trivializing marital infidelity, by glorifying recreational sex. Let them get off some of those billions of dollars and give it for child support that they make.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you. Robert Pitts. Don Ross.

Statement of Don Ross

Mr. Ross. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

Rabbi Agin. Please try to stay within the 3 minutes.

Mr. Ross. I'll try but it's really—

Rabbi Agin. I understand. We have a witching hour.

Mr. Ross. I shall do my best. Do I get the 10 seconds I just lost?

Rabbi Agin. Yes, sir.

Mr. Ross. Ladies and gentlemen, governments are not going to solve racism. Racism has been with us for thousands of years. Governments cannot solve racism. It is people who will solve this issue.

We the people of St. Petersburg will certainly solve it one day, but we need your assistance. What type of assistance do we need from you? We need your assistance in helping us be able to complete a task that has been before us for as many years as we've had these very same problems.

And that is to restructure, reorganize our government into an agency of service. What happened, how did we come to this way? Back during the late sixties when we had the sanitation riots and what have you, somebody decided they were going to redo our city charter.

They redid the city charter and they delivered us in 1975 a small document that took away our rights. In that document we had no right to initiative, referendum, recall, anything. You see, it wasn't until 1989 after the citizens of this city worked very hard and fought very hard, were we able to get a small part of that initiative and referendum section of the charter changed to get a small amount of our rights back, to have our self-determination, and that small part gave us the

ability to vote for a strong mayor form of government a few years later.

We have much to do, but we have run into obstacles that you heard about tonight. They call it the good old boy system. They call it the white power structure. They call it all this other stuff.

What it is is basically an ideology that still exists from the 1960s, the ideology that gave us that screwed up charter that we've all been struggling under and struggling with since 1975.

That ideology allows for people to not have responsibility, to not answer to anyone for the things that they do, whether it be in government or whether it be on the streets at night, when they're dissatisfied with the decision made by another government agency.

The responsibility is not there, because the ideology that exists in our government—and this something that you all can help us change—you're not going to change racism. But you certainly can help us change these kind of ideologies that bring us better government, a government that we can have a voice in.

Do you know that one of the most divisive issues in this city happens to deal with the economic stuff, but the economics of our community is our taxes. The very, very essence of the word community is "sharing" but somewhere along the line in the middle of the 1980s somebody went down here and they said, "Well, we don't want to share with the rest of the community anymore, so we're going to create these things we call tax increment financing districts, and our contribution to the community is not going to be same as it used to be. We're going to shortchange our neighbors, our friends, in other parts of the city, and we're going to give this money just for ourselves." Those things exist today, ladies and gentlemen, tax increment financing is the curse of this city, because it's nothing more than the extension of the ideology that we've all had to live with and suffer under all these years.

I suggest to you that that is where you need to focus your attentions tomorrow. You tell these people to change their ideology of government where it becomes a government of service, where the government agencies are serving the people and not the people serving the government.

You heard about code enforcement tonight. Code enforcement is like so many of our other government services. They've been turned into a revenue source to support fat bureaucrats who come down here from other parts of the country, don't know nothing about us, and collect salaries of \$60,000, \$80,000, and \$100,000 a year off the backs of people who work and make \$5 and \$6 an hour. That's ridiculous, folks. It really is.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, sir. Craig Warren, Sr. Steve Kersker.

Statement of Steve Kersker

Mr. Kersker. I wanted to speak a little bit about how the city does use ordinances and code enforcement to discriminate against people with handicaps. My name is Steven Kersker. I do have a handicap. I'm mentally ill and physically disabled.

I also represent a coalition of people that were fighting the city over a proposed ban against homeless people being fed outdoors. Luckily for us we did have a riot, because of that we're able to get media attention for the proposed ban.

The city is still going forward with it. It's been delayed indefinitely, but what they tried to do is they tried to come up with an ordinance making it illegal to feed people outside, unless you have toilets, hand washing facilities, all sorts of stuff.

And luckily we've got Adam Smith over there, a reporter, who helped report this. Also the *Tampa Tribune* picked it up—so people with disabilities, I'm not sure what our rights are under civil rights or whatever commission, but I think you should know that homeless people, many of which are African Americans or black, come to our feedings and other type of things that we put on for them, and the city is trying to redline homeless people from downtown St. Petersburg.

I think that's one of my friends right here I was talking about—about how there's no facilities for people like this, and the city wants us to—they want them gone.

What also happens is with zoning code enforcements, we have a drop-in center for people with psychiatric disabilities and homeless people on 15th Street, and what the city is trying to do with that is zone it out of existence, meaning make it such a hassle for us to stay open that we'll leave.

And usually people get money from the city that have drop-in centers and things. We don't get any funding from the city, so they have no power over us. And so we're willing to fight them over it, and that was the packet that I gave you all earlier.

I know that you all probably aren't going to be able to take that issue up, but we will find somebody to file an ADA suit against the city, because you're not allowed to use zoning codes to harass people with disabilities or, I think, other groups like that too.

And so again, this is how the city goes about doing this. It was like the person talking about cars, things like that. The city can go in—and the other person that was here from the Urban League talked about how the city selectively enforces code enforcement, meaning that if you've got money and you've got an apartment building, they won't enforce the code.

If your place doesn't look nice, you have a neighborhood association that acts almost like a fascist organization in this city, because we're finding with the neighborhood associations—for the homeless and for our drop-in center, the mayor set

up these neighborhood associations, and what you have is relatively little people that have power, and what they're able to do is they're able to go, "Well, we'll get a code enforcement person to come in" and indict you almost is what they do, and get you out of there, or we'll come up with an ordinance.

And so the city is controlled now by neighborhood associations that a lot of times don't represent the citizens of the city, and this is something you all need to be aware of too. And I think my time is up.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you so much, sir.

Dr. Brown. Let me make one quick comment to you. In Dade County, in the City of Miami, the Civil Liberties Union brought suit against the city to prevent the city from doing many of the things that you're talking about happening to you, and I would urge you to contact the ACLU and also to have them contact the Miami Civil Liberties Union branch, and ask about that suit, because it may be helpful, and we did a major breakthrough in Miami.

Mr. Kersker. Thank you very much for that, and that's what I meant by if you go around long enough, pass out enough things, somebody will help you.

Mr. Ford. Let me just say one thing. I had a personal experience with what you're talking about, about this city's attitude toward the disabled. I don't feel that I'm disabled, but I'm a double amputee as a result of a complication with diabetes. And when I pulled into the parking lot, I found it very interesting that all the permitted spaces—I guess those are department heads and bureau chiefs, very close to the building, very close to all the doors—around on the side, the security guard directed me. And all of the spaces that are close to any doors are permitted, permit only by staff there on the side of the wall. And the farthest parking spaces they have are for the ones with the blue plastic, which is where I had to park and walk around, but I just do what I have to do to survive. I'm a survivor, but it's interesting that those spaces would be there. That says something about—

Mr. Kersker. I want to thank you for saying that you don't consider yourself as disabled. I don't consider myself that way anymore either, but I'm glad that you said that.

Mr. Ford. Well, I think handicap is is handicap think—I ain't handicapped. I just ain't got no legs.

Rabbi Agin. Charlie Boatwright. Is Charlie Boatwright here? Karen O'N-e-a-l?

Statement of Karen O'Neal

Ms. O'Neal. I don't know what time it is, but is that 3 o'clock in the morning? Good evening. Good morning. My name is Karen O'Neal. I live in the Harbordale area of St. Petersburg, which is near the Bartlett Park area.

I'm here to present another side, okay? I am not an African. I am African American. I was not born in Africa. I was born in America.

Before I am an African American, I am a Christian, and I give all glory to God, his Son, Jesus Christ, God, the Son, the Alpha and the Omega.

I want to tell you that some of the things that were said tonight are true, and some of the things that are said tonight grieve me very much, okay? But I want you to know that we all understand that racism and prejudice have been here, as the gentleman said, for thousands of years, and that is not to ignore it. We must work at it, but I'm here to present another side.

As a citizen who lives in the inner city, I'm here to present a side of a single woman who is in a community where she has raised her children, that was a nice community. I'm here to present a side that the community has changed. I'm here to present a side that the police did not change the community. The people changed the community.

I'm here to tell you that I love my people. I have spent many hours in prayer and in tears to God about my people. I'm here to present to you another side that in my community we are not sieged by the police; we are helped by the police. We are not sieged by the police. We are sieged by the drug dealers. We are sieged by crime. Okay?

You want me to tell you the truth. The truth shall set us free. I take what the honorable attorney Sheila Turner says, that no matter what if I put in my—a man is what a man thinks. If I put in my heart, I can do it, no one can stand in my way.

I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me. So, therefore, there is no power in white power. There is no power in black power. There is no power in police power. The power is through the world of God and what I think of myself. Therefore, if I think that I can do it, even if I fail many times, if I get up, I can do it. I'm saying this to say this: we must retrain the young black minds in the black community. The responsibility starts at home, at home, okay?

And when the young kids feel they can't do it, it is because of the home. I work with the young children in the inner city. We have an inner city ministry. I have gone to many black people. I have gone to some of the people, the leaders who were here tonight, and asked them to minister or come talk, and help encourage the drug dealers, to get them to stop selling drugs in their own community to their own people.

Nobody has the time. Now I see that tonight everybody is here and you have the time. Where were you before? We've ministered to many children whose mothers and fathers and even grandmothers are on drugs.

I have gone into the churches. I have gone everywhere and asked you to help me. I even incidentally went into the Uhuru House. Brother, I did not meet with—understand, I am not lying to you when I am saying to you, put me in a predicament where I can be labeled an upper—I can be stated that I am against my own people. I am for my people and I tell you that if you want to fight racism, we must train our children up in the way that they shall go and when they get older, they will not get tired from it. You understand?

I'm here to tell you that the Bible says that the man is a leader, the man is the priest, and the man is the head over the household. I am here to tell you that as a black woman, a black Christian woman, the black male must take his responsibility in the household, raise these children up.

I will not stand here and say anything against TyRon Lewis. It is tragic what happened to that young black male, but I will tell you this, when I was a young woman, young teenager, in Chicago, Illinois, in the ghetto, quote, ghetto, not the inner city, my parents had eight children and they told us never to congregate because of the racist society that we realized we were in.

They told us when we went in a store, you go in the store, state definitely what you want, and you come back out with it and you buy it. My parents trained us to live in that type of society and what I am saying to you is that because we live in a prejudiced society, we should train our children that when the police ask us to do something, do it, and when they're wrong, we shall go to court or we shall go to their supervisor. Training starts at home with—all right. Thank you. Training start—

Dr. Berry. Ms. O'Neal, your time is up.

Ms. O'Neal. Thank you very much.

Rabbi Agin. Lillie Lee, please. Is she here?

Statement of Lillie Lee

Ms. Lillie Lee. Good evening or good morning. My name is Lillie Lee and I'm a concerned mother and citizen.

I have several—I have 3 minutes—I do want to bring to focus—I have a son who is 19 years old who 3 years ago got in trouble with the police, and it seems to me a systematic situation where they are discouraging our young people to not go to school. He happened to be on the dean's list when he got discouraged, and he went through several programs through the court system, and he was forced to plead guilty to things that he hadn't done, and now he did commit a crime this summer, in that—well, I understand that it was a thing where the police department, some of the ones in the police department had a vendetta against me, and I knew nothing about it.

But they went after my children to punish me for certain things, and Kevin just happened to be in it, and there's no extreme that they'll go to. Now, I

heard you ask earlier this evening, last evening, that have you had any information about those cartoons?

Now, I have never have had a warrant presented to me. They'll come in my house. They'll destroy everything, literally tore up everything, tore up stove, refrigerator, cabinets—that kind of thing and I had got in trouble trying to repair, and I never complained.

I had complained, but it did no good. But anyway I have here when one of the policeman—when my son graduated from the Navy academy, and we—my grandchildren came with me—this is a part of the—from that policeman's artwork. Two plain pages here, and he had written in there defamation about Jesus Christ—they didn't know—all that kind of thing—one thing that I remember was where it said, it says, a fool in his heart will say—but he didn't put all of it. He put there is no God, and—if you—said Jesus was a vagabond and wino—all that kind of thing, and you hang out with a low class people, you know, everything to put Jesus or Christ down.

And he wrote over in this area here on the page, the same thing that's in the paper—coming up—to hell, over here, to hell, you know, all this drawing, and here you had hell, but I didn't erase. I took—and this is something maybe we all can learn from—when you take the hell that we're in and get a message—hello, God loves you, love him back.

Now, the lady gave me these two—in Orlando for my two grandchildren, and I had it in my cabinet there, and I wasn't about to give her nothing like that, that kind of garbage about God and Christ, but this in our—gave it to her as we had planned—this—but you can see where all this—things, and I turn—make her know that all hope is not lost.

And I had the Friday after that 13th night, my son and his family—

Rabbi Agin. We have to—

Ms. Lillie Lee. —Burger King, and—okay.

Rabbi Agin. Please. Thank you, ma'am. We appreciate your time.

Ms. Lillie Lee. But they did pull guns and put guns in my grandbaby's head and I think something needs to be done, and I want to see the lawyer and Mr. Doctor, please before you go, because it's very urgent.

Rabbi Agin. Charles Marcus. Charles Marcus is not here. Okay. J. M. Lew.

Statement of J.M. Lew

Mr. Lew. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you in the democracy that we have, which is not a perfect situation here. This is the right of all citizens, regardless of your religion, or your creator, or your color, and that's fantastic.

One of the things that I would like to mention is what brought me to come to this meeting was

reading in the *Tampa Tribune* tonight at dinner. about how the—I'm not a supporter of the Uhuru group. I'm not a member; however, I read that two members of that group were arrested yesterday for failure to identify themselves.

Evidently they were stuffing leaflets into mailboxes within a one-block radius of their Uhuru House, and which evidently I've been told is not legal to put something into a mailbox. However, the only person that can deal with that is a postal inspector. And they refused to produce identification and they were arrested.

Now, I think every person in this room, especially a member of a religious or whatever type of minority, should be outraged and frightened, because if that is the case, then we are living in a fascist society, where we must produce identification. And I think that's a very, very frightening fact.

Now, having said that, I'd like to also give you a few comments on the original riot that was here, and I think anybody that does not use the term riot is not being truthful, because there were innocent people smashed and bloodied and attacked that evening.

I heard about it, since I saw a lot of the police congregating, at the dome. And I saw people innocently attacked that were white, that were black, that were mixed race, Puerto Rican, whatever, so I would submit to you that mob violence has no rationality to it, and that we were under siege from mob violence for at least a period of 4 days on two different occasions.

And I also saw innocent shopkeepers looted for no other reason than there was no police around, and I saw people attacked and I saw buildings burned, and I'd like to know how much of the money that is coming, if any, is going to come to help these perfectly innocent people that had nothing to do with the police violence in any way, shape, or form.

I work downtown. I've also seen many and heard from many different businesses that everybody's business suffers. And I can assure you that there's very few people on the street, in their businesses around here, that are getting rich. You know, the problems that affect this community are not broken down into black and white.

They affect everybody. The system can run over anybody, regardless of race or color, and I'd like to say also that I have saw at least 10 friends that I know in the African American community—my parents always brought me up to respect all people until they act otherwise, and I think that's a creed to live by.

Many people in this area—I mean, let's be honest, this is not South Africa. We all mix freely. It's after midnight here. When we leave, nobody is going to have a hard time getting home, and I can tell you this—no, no—I know many people—I have

been in the black community and I've also been stopped by police. I have many black friends. I've been pulled over strictly for being white in an automobile in the black community; however, I didn't do anything wrong and I cooperated with the police and I was let go.

Like I said, this is not a perfect society in which we live in, but people are not going to be harassed on the way home here. Let's be real.

Anyway, thank you very much.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, appreciate it.

Mr. Lew. Does anybody have any questions?

Rabbi Agin. No. Thank you very much, sir. Next name is Sheridan Murphy.

Statement of Sheridan Murphy

Mr. Murphy. My name is Sheridan Murphy. I'm [inaudible] and the executive director for the American Indian Movement of Florida. I'm going to try and pack what I can in here into that little clicking clock over here.

I moved to Florida roughly about 1980 and I've lived here on and off since then, from the State of South Dakota, which the U.S. Civil Rights Commission had several meetings in Rapid City, South Dakota, and I'll return to that thought later.

But when I moved to Florida it was with the thought that well, I'm moving to a State that's enlightened. But I've learned that's not true. I'm living in a State that says that we should make English the official language of the State, yet that's a foreign language.

I live in a State that has decided that we're going to outlaw immigration, yet except for point 3 percent of the population everybody here is an illegal alien, unless they got a green card from an indigenous nation that was here before Christopher Columbus washed up.

I've heard some people talk about the Constitution. I'm a member of the American Indian Movement, as I stated. We were listed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation—I mean Investigation—as the most dangerous organization in the United States from 1972 till probably the present date. I don't know where we're at on the top 20 ranking there.

All we've ever asked for is that the treaties be upheld, and if I remember correctly from my civics lessons, treaties are supposed to be upheld as part of the U.S. Constitution.

To be real quick here, since the clock is ticking, we know Bernie McCabe. In the State of Florida after 1987 it became illegal to dig up Indian burial sites. Since that law passed, not a single person has ever been prosecuted. Our organization has gotten frustrated to the point where we got somebody videotaped and four eyewitnesses, and Mr. Bernie McCabe, who decided to raid the Uhuru House, said that wasn't enough evidence. Yes.

Besides the fact that that's frustrating, it's also unbelievable.

And the second thing I want to bring up is going back to the Rapid City, South Dakota. In 1977 this body, although I don't know if it was this specific body, but the U.S. Civil Rights Commission met there and Norman Zagrosi [phonetic], who is the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation out there, was asked to explain their attacks on the American Indian Movement. He explained it this way. He said that the police forces in the United States have to act as a colonial police force on people that are colonized.

That kind of mentality led to the massacre of Lakota people at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890. That kind of mentality led to the seizure of Wounded Knee in 1973, and that kind of mentality led to the attack on the Uhuru House just a few weeks ago. That kind of mentality is what you have to address. That kind of mentality is what you have to get rid of.

I also think that people in government, I've noticed since being an activist, forget that they're public servants, and I've watched the idiots on this city council argue with themselves and call each other names, but not try to address the problems that are here. And I think it's very important that the point be made that the city council and any other governmental official in Pinellas County, that I only saw two city council members in this meeting room.

That's all I have to say.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, sir. Kelly Brandon. Shakura Jamila, J-a-m-i-l-a. Adrien Helm.

Statement of Adrien Helm

Ms. Helm. I was afraid he'd get out of here before I gave him a card from an ACLU lawyer.

My name is Adrien Helm and I'm delighted to just take a minute, and I promise it will only be a minute, I won't keep you.

I live in an integrated neighborhood in south St. Petersburg, and I love my neighbors. What you heard about tonight is what I would describe as an evil cycle. I am an attorney. I'm married to a civil rights lawyer, who works for the U.S. Department of Labor and commutes to Washington.

Right now I'm teaching school because I got to an age when I realized that what I really wanted to do was go back to teaching, and that that is where I could be saving lives.

I see the product of what I think is an evil cycle every day in my classroom. We have housing patterns in this county. This county that stretches from Pinellas Point to Tarpon Springs, where as you've heard, there are not single-member districts. People have to run citywide for representation, where a city—a county councilman—a county commissioner, excuse me, and a school board member has to run in a district larger than a

congressional district. It's nuts and it's the reason that people are feeling empowered.

But anyway, in this housing, in this county, this huge county, as far as I know there is not a single agency that is enforcing fair housing laws. The result of that is that there are concentrations of African Americans and black folks in small pockets throughout the county, but mostly St. Petersburg and mostly in south St. Petersburg, what that means is—and until we break that choke of housing patterns, it means that we have this crazy desegregation order, which has fallen on the black community and on little black children who are every morning out there waiting for buses before the sun comes up, so that they have to ride for hours. You've heard it—to schools where they are not welcome, where their parents can't get to after school, and where they come into a system tired and are ready for failure, and we fail them. We fail them.

And what that failure means is that they don't have a chance to do the things economically that we all know will produce equality. They can't succeed economically and so they can't be housed properly or fed or clothed and whatever, and the cycle goes on and on.

So I realize that it's a very tough problem. It's a problem that I and my husband and lots of people in this room and lots of people in this community and certainly in the country have been dealing with for a long, long time, but you can help us with the fair housing thing.

That's something that you can help us with. We need an enforcement agency in this county to work on breaking this housing pattern, because other things will flow from that. Thank you.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. Janie Rhoton.

Statement of Janie Rhoton

Ms. Rhoton. Thank you all for listening. I know everyone is very tired. I graduated from San Francisco State University and so I appreciate Lee out here.

I bought a house, a condo in St. Pete, and it's an all-white community. I didn't know I was in a black community outside my door, but I am, and I was quite upset with TyRon Lewis' death. I realize that God is in each of us. No one should be killed, black or white, and we should unite as black and whites and try to help one another.

And so I wanted to be part of the resolution and not revolution, because if we're not wise, we could have a revolution in America. I've heard the blacks talk about it. They think that whites owe them, and they forget that the whites fought for their freedom. The whites actually fought for their freedom.

Anyways, I wanted to be part of the solution in working with the community, and because I live in

the community I thought the symbolism of me as a white person wanting to help the black community, and there are many problems, and I don't know how to solve them, but I do have some suggestions, and that is to educate the family to be a family, to end repetition of the black men going to jail.

They should have a good life, and I believe that the whites should help them to have a good life, because if we unite, we will have a better America, and if we divide, it's going to be hell for all of us.

It was in the paper that they needed 50 for the task force. I called. The 27th it was in the paper. It was a holiday Thursday. I called on Monday and they said it was filled. Anyways, I was hoping to be part of that task force and I hope that you all have an opportunity here to make a statement to the whole world, with St. Pete, because what we do here could start a seed to be done across America, and I hope that we heal as Americans, and I hope that we unite the blacks and whites and make this nation a better nation, not just St. Pete, but America as a whole, make it better.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. Thank you. Grady Terrell. Robert Creal.

Statement of Robert Creal

Mr. Creal. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. I think when you were here before, I appeared before you with a problem and I still have that same problem.

I have a whole lot to say. I don't know if I can say it all at one time, because it's been like a lifetime with me—but one thing I would like to say is that the people who are charged with enforcement of the law should know the law, and they should be the first ones to obey the law.

When the law enforcers fail to recognize or not acknowledge the laws that they are to enforce, how can you expect laymen to follow the laws and obey the laws, when the authorities come in—but when you challenge it successfully, then they become guidelines.

And I think that the problem not only exists here in St. Petersburg, but it starts in Washington. President Clinton has said that in America a citizen doesn't have to resort to violence to solve their problem, that there are courses that you can take, but the people who are supposed to be the listeners will refuse to hear you.

They just don't hear your problems, and I think that's been a lot of what's been said, and George Bush spoke from Russia. He said in America a man profits from the fruits of his labor. I have been in the funeral business for about 54 years. I've operated my own funeral business, and I was audited in 1981 and the audit left at about 18 months. The CID was called in on me. I was audited by a trainee auditor, who by his own knowledge or own admitting, that he knew nothing of funeral home operation until he got this

assignment and read up on funeral homes, and the only expense he found was caskets.

. And I don't think you have to be a rocket scientist to know that when he demanded that I provide proof of purchase of a casket for everybody that I handled, that was a no-no, because some bodies come in already in a casket, some shipped out, get their casket at their destination, and some are cremated with a rental casket or without a casket, so he set the tone for the audit, by demanding proof of purchase of the casket. He say I—being a high school graduate, I couldn't be in the position that I was in, so I think I was guided by statistical limitation, and this is one thing that needs to be dealt with.

I may be rambling a little bit because I didn't have a prepared speech, but I answered an editorial in the *Washington Post* which said, pity the IRS, as they're being badgered by the society and that they're only carrying out the laws of Congress.

But I have evidence that they're not carrying out the laws of Congress, that they can bypass and surpass the laws of Congress, and I answered this letter saying that the IRS may not be the greatest threat to freedom in American, but it could very well be the accounting profession, because CPA's and accountants are considered to be authorities, and they can submit a report, they'll tell you you can't do this, you can't do that, and make out a report for you, and you get in trouble and walk away and say that I worked with what was presented to me.

And I feel that I'm a victim of the system and at first I was a victim of an egotistic trainee auditor who wanted to build a reputation on me, and then after the CID investigation, I inadvertently—I was advised to get a tax attorney and I hired an attorney from a law firm here in the city that I thought surely would be able to help me, but the lawyer actually sold me into slavery.

The power structure I think used me or used the Internal Revenue as a tool to destroy a political opponent.

Rabbi Agin. I have to cut you off, sir, I'm sorry.

Mr. Creal. And—

Rabbi Agin. Thank you.

Mr. Creal. But I do wish that you would take back to Washington—right now my position is that we got a law in Florida that deals with double taxation and unfair trade restraints. Federal Trade Commission said the solution—if Internal Revenue handles cash advances and refunds and funeral home operation inconsistent with their guidelines, then it must be solved by Internal Revenue or by Congress.

Rabbi Agin. Your comments are being recorded. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Creal. I've written President Clinton and Janet Reno and Margaret Richardson and right now I stand before you as a prisoner of the system.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you, sir. Morris, last name is Morris, M. Morris.

Statement of Marcello Morris

Mr. Morris. My name is Marcello Morris. I've lived in St. Petersburg for 14 years, and I came in from the State of South Carolina. I worked at Benedict College, Columbia, South Carolina, graduated, got a degree in political science.

But I do building work, contractor, I do air conditioning work, working on other people's license, but run my own business. And the way I ended up in that area is because when I first came to this community, you know, I looked at things in this community, you know, like Third Avenue South over here, they got a big fish house where they process fish and stuff like that. Black people live all around that place, a lot of black employees.

About a year and a half ago, 2 years ago, it turned to all Mexican employees. You know, you got 22nd Avenue over here, 22nd Street over there that's got all these little Photo—and the different businesses over there. It's all Asians working there. That's all right in the middle of the black community.

But when blacks get into these positions and work at these different companies, they try to get in and simulate and work at these companies, but don't want to work with the dangerous chemicals and don't want to work for minimum wage all their life. They can't make no way—but me myself, I try to assimilate a little, you know. I went in the air conditioning because the white guys tell me there's no blacks in air conditioning.

I never had my hand on a hammer until I came to Florida. And so I went in to Mr. Ryan, got into the air conditioning, went to work for some company. I was working for this company called Montgomery Heating and Air Conditioning. I was working at Santose Cathedral. I was a heating and air conditioning—best man. As a matter of fact, they were just about to have me 2 days off, because I worked so good, and I only been there like 2 or 3 months.

But I came home from work one day to Montgomery to turn the truck in, and people say, "Well, Marcel, we lay you off." I say, "Well, how could you lay your million dollar man off?" You know, basically I'm the only one with the company—so I said okay, that just happened—happened to me about 20 times anyway, so you know, nothing's stopping me from doing what I got to do anyway.

So I got home. A company I used to work to before, United Heating and Air Conditioning, Jerry Harley, the owner, called me up and said, "Marcel, did anything happen to you today?" I said, "No,

nothing happened to me, Jerry, nothing that don't happen all the time."

Jerry said, "Well, did anything happen to you?" I said, "Well, they laid me off from my job." Jerry said, "Well, I know why they laid you off on your job." I said, "Well, Jerry, you don't know why they laid me off on my job." Jerry said, "Yes, they laid you off from your job because they said somebody broke in Reverend Ryan's house and stole \$20,000 worth of gold jewelry and chains or whatever," you know.

And I know 3 weeks earlier me and two white guys worked Reverend Ryan's house. All right.

I'm trying to figure out, you know, I'm struggling, you know, trying to get back and forth to—you know, and I couldn't understand it. So I called—came down—was messed up about it.

Another person—this is what he told me—he said, "Come to my office," Jerry—come to my office because—just let me finish just a little more—Jerry said, "Come to my office because this detective with the St. Petersburg Police Department really wants you." Now, I don't even have a police record. Still don't have one.

He said, "He really wants you." He said, "This detective told me that if I could prove to him that I stole anything—you, from Jerry Hardy," that he would lock me up. You know, he would—charges. This detective went on to say from pawn receipts that I used to pawn stuff to try to pay bills, that I stole Jet Skis that I had title for, that I stole tools and everything—"Mr. Hardy, this man even stole your Jet Skis," because there ain't no blacks going on Jet Skis, you know, and I—because I'm a—I'm real good about getting things done.

I got three sons and a wife and I own my own house. You know, and this man went along telling Jerry Hardy—Jerry says come to my office tomorrow—I went to Jerry's office. Me and my wife went there. Jerry Hardy said, "Well, Marcel, I know you didn't do anything and I'm not going to tell this man you stole something from me."

So I left there. I went back to Montgomery Heating and Air, talked to Brad West—ain't no police officers even been here talking about you. I say—and then they say, "We only let you go because you was the last mechanic hired." I said, "No, my supervisor, was the last mechanic hired." And—went on—so it just messed with me, but I said I got to take care of my three sons, so I go take care of my three sons.

A couple of months passed. I went to human relations. "You're too late to file anything." You know, okay. I called Mr. Tucker, detective, Internal Affairs. They don't want me to file nothing formal—"Let me come upstairs." They wanted me to talk on the phone down at the lobby.

I said, "Let me come upstairs and just put down something formal of what I'm saying to you." "We

can't do—I don't even think it's necessary for you to come up here."

I went to Debra Ryan [phonetic]—one time, "I'll get"—two times, "I'll get back with you." Three times, "I'll get back with you." I went to big lawyers in this town, couple of them gave me job referrals.

You know, and this just went on and on. I lost a job, you know, and all I was—all of them straight up. I said I don't want to sue nobody, because I don't want nobody saying you all given me nothing. Everything I get, I got on my own, by myself. So it comes to say you're giving me something, well, I got the right to do what I got to do.

Nobody don't even want to apologize to me. Use my livelihood for my three kids—I had to pull my three kids out of the public school last year and put them in the private schools, paying \$5,000, \$6,000. I don't even know where the money came from every month. Then I got to put them back in south side over here—two and three blacks in each class, but then again your kids don't know how to do—what's the thing—they give the kids—walking around with a big schedule all the time? Each one of the kids have a big schedule like that.

Rabbi Agin. It's time.

Mr. Morris. But my kids—I say well, teach my kids how to work—

Rabbi Agin. Time, time, sorry about that.

Mr. Morris. But I want you all to just know that and that's one of the things that's been happening in this town forever. You know, when I first came here with a degree in political science and applied to work at the City Hall—in the mail room 2 years—

Rabbi Agin. Sir, please.

Mr. Morris. I came and applied for a job working in the mail room there in 1982, and I—you got a job—don't forget about my cousin—I say, I'll call you.

Rabbi Agin. We're running out of time because we have to leave the building. Vanessa, you're next on the list, Vanessa Williams.

Statement of Vanessa Williams

Ms. Williams. My name is Vanessa Williams and I would like to make a comment about Officer Knight, just from some personal experience.

My little girl was molested by my husband and Officer Persher [phonetic] came out and he didn't want to do the paperwork on the call, so a week later I called this officer out, Officer Knight came out, and he was interested in who was the police that came out and didn't file the report.

And so I told him I'm not interested in getting somebody—so he called to the headquarters and found out who this person was that didn't call chief of police, and he told me that this officer is a bad cop, he's going to get somebody killed on the force, and he got people in high places, they been trying to get rid of him—just bad-mouthing another cop.

And the police department finally got rid of this black cop and he turned around and killed this boy in cold blood, and all he got was 30 days suspension, and this black cop was fired because he made a wrong judgment call.

My son was arrested 2 days after the riots, just because he had a can—because he told me that the people in the alley was burning out the post office, and so that evidence was left—and the neighbor called the cop, they was concerned about the can.

They took him to jail. The cops took him to jail, without no questions, took the other kid. One was let go because he copped to a plea. Come to find out, police falsified the report, the testimony of the witness, and Sheila Turner is my lawyer. I had to hire her because the State attorney was talking—and he really didn't care.

And another thing, on the 4th of July me and my daughter was chased by these white guys, called "niggers" and everything else, going 80 miles from Gandy Boulevard all the way to the south side of St. Pete by McDonald's, chased—two witness called—Fourth Street and all and 38th Avenue and 4th Street and all, no cops came out.

But the police department covered all of this up because they took a board and hit my car and we was trying to drive into McDonald's for safety, so I called the cops. He came out. He didn't care, because he said one of the numbers was missing in the tag.

That night somebody I know to the police department worked there, communications, and so they gave me the tag number and everything. So the next day I called the police and gave them this information. I said, "Look in the computer, because this is on file."

So a week later I saw him. He say, "I looked in the computers and I don't find no witness car." So I called his superior officers. His superior officer more concerned about who leaked the information instead of me and my daughter's concerned safety, or somebody else's safety that could have got killed, me being chased down the street 80 miles an hour.

And the communication—she called, said, "I'm sorry, but this hate crime been going on where a bunch of white kids been chasing black people and calling them names and everything," and so they knew where the kids stayed, and a police officer went out and talked to the kids, they said they're sorry that it happened, they don't want to press charges against them, and it's been 5 months and no police report or anything.

It's just being covered up.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much, ma'am.

Ms. Williams. Something needs to be done about St. Petersburg Police Department, because they're doing a lot of injustice. Not all cops are bad, but the majority are.

Rabbi Agin. Greg Lyons.

Statement of Greg Lyons

Mr. Lyons. I'd like to just give 30 seconds of this videotape to put you in my shoes when the black man goes to a hotel to rent a room. This is about old Jim Crow laws are still being enforced here. I think we need to talk about this old Jim Crow laws that Charles Houston fought so hard for before King came along. His name is not really mentioned in some of these books, but I take my hat off to Charlie Houston.

But I want to—want to talk—hotel, I just want to talk a few words. I went back there a year later. This is how I was greeted. [Tape played.] A 911 call from the police station. St. Pete police station—hotel—

Rabbi Agin. Can you talk us through it? [Tape playing.]

Mr. Lyons. Bottom line, I was asked to leave the hotel. He only saw me for a second on a videotape because all the hotels got cameras, and he walked up to me, six officers, security guards, and asked me to leave. And I told him, "Why do I have to leave?" And they said, "You just got to leave."

He was going to throw me out. I said, "Listen, before you all put your hand on me and put me on the front steps, please call the police department because, you know, I want this verified. I'm not doing anything. I'm here to rent a room."

They followed me around the hotel, through the gift shops and everything. Then I said listen—Mrs. Wallace got in my face. He was touching my nose. You want to hit me, you want to hit me, Mr. Lyons? I said, "No, Mrs. Wallace, I would never hit a lady."

They were trying to get me into this confrontation, which I had no means of being—the bottom line is that the police—I said, "Mrs. Wallace, if I rent a room, would you please leave me alone?" I rented room from—the Stouffer's in Crystal City back in the early seventies watching—and the basketball players. I come down to St. Petersburg and two of my white friends was allowed to rent that room, but I was denied to rent that room.

And the law says also about that trespassing warning. The police had no business interfering in that, once they knew that I was at the front desk trying to book a room, they still gave me a trespass warning, and the Federal law says that basically the city cannot back up a discriminatory practice. This is what the city is doing.

The human relations department said it's okay. They said you can kick Mr. Lyons out of that hotel any time—that's perfectly okay. That's not okay. It's not okay, because basically what—if the Commission takes the side of the discriminatory of any person acting under code of law is criminal, which denies rights created or protected by Federal constitutional rights, it's apparent that race discrimination has taken place in the city, and the

States cannot foster cooperation—this is what the city is doing. They're fostering this at the hotel.

. This is the next Texaco about ready to happen here, and I have affidavits. I know we don't have time to go through the affidavit. Just a few more minutes—the State cannot foster cooperation to convince the rights of citizens. The State cannot be considered to be acting in a neutral or indifferent manner, based on discriminatory grounds.

When the hotel had given me the trespass notice, I explained I was here on business, and to rent a room. If my white friends who was fired from this resort came here and rented a room without any restriction being applied to them, I should have that same equal right as enjoyed by white citizens.

Dr. Berry. I think, Mr. Lyons, I think I understand it and could you try to get a copy of the tape and leave it with us tomorrow sometime, so we can listen?

Mr. Lyons. I'd be happy to.

Dr. Berry. I think we understand the issue and then if we can get somebody—

Mr. Lyons. The bottom line—

Dr. Berry. —get in touch with you, because you in fact have something that you're complaining about and we can't hear that tape here, so why don't you get us another copy of it, and I understand you and I think that's all we can hear from you tonight though.

Mr. Lyons. But I want to make one more issue—one more issue is the fact that they told the human relations board at no time did they deny me an opportunity to book a hotel room. The human relations board—

Dr. Berry. I understand. All right.

Mr. Lyons. I can give you a copy right here tonight.

Dr. Berry. You do that. Leave it here with the staff. Thank you very much.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. Last name is Riley. Three minutes, please, sir. I'm going to cut off at 3 minutes. I must do that. You have to, sir, I'm sorry. Try.

Statement of Neville Riley

Mr. Riley. It's a pretty long story.

Rabbi Agin. We've got to be back in here tomorrow.

Mr. Riley. First of all, thank you for hearing me. My name is Neville Riley, and my issue here is discrimination and other offenses of my constitutional rights that's been violated.

See, here is paperwork that I have sent to Washington, D.C., to the President of the United States, President Mr. Bill Clinton, and to the Department of Justice and to the House of Representatives, the Supreme Court, Congress and all of the divisions of the government of the United States of America, and I've sent these paperwork—

these correspondence too, even to the Commission on Civil Rights in Washington, D.C.

This lady here is from the Commission on Civil Rights, okay. My issue is that I was a soldier in the United States Army back in 1988, is when I joined up. I dropped out of college and joined up. That was in September in '88.

I went through all of my basic training, my special training, and there were some circumstances that I encountered during that time. Let me try to explain it as briefly as I can. See, in basic training you don't have us alcohol, right? In special training they allow you to have certain privileges, but very limited. And then I had a quarantine, while I was in special training, which quarantine, you know what that's all about.

All right. Then I came out of such special training and basic training and I returned to my home unit in the National Guard. They were supposed to train me to be a respiratory—but they did not, okay. So they decided that since they could have been sued, at that time that they would give me an option to go in the Army. I agreed and went along with them, okay.

I went in the Army. Now, when I got in the Army—go to a doctor's right. These doctors had to—

Rabbi Agin. Mr. Riley, pardon me, sir. But when one was asked to speak, it was to speak to an issue that we are dealing with this evening.

Mr. Riley. I'm dealing with that—

Rabbi Agin. It's not relevant to this particular issue.

Mr. Riley. I was aware of the fact that you were going to come on me like this, because I see—you limit my time, right, but what I'm saying, the issue here is justice, is all we're talking about.

Rabbi Agin. It's justice—

Mr. Riley. It's the people of the government not doing their jobs, not representing the rights of the people. Okay.

Rabbi Agin. Is that what you're saying about the—

Mr. Riley. Yes, I'm saying about the United States Army, yes. I'm saying that while I was a soldier fighting for American's cause, freedom and justice for all, okay, that the Army discriminated against me and kicked me out of the Army saying I was—

Rabbi Agin. So you're saying the same thing exists here in the City of St. Petersburg? Is that right, sir?

Mr. Riley. I'm just saying that the issue that you're dealing with, the issue on justice, see, I'm not just dealing with St. Petersburg, I'm dealing with the government.

Rabbi Agin. I know. We're dealing with St. Petersburg and that's the essence, and that's important.

Mr. Riley. As far as St. Petersburg is concerned, I have been dealing with the Congress here in St. Petersburg—

Rabbi Agin. What I would suggest to you, sir, is for you—for you to be effective is that you—is that you write down your complaint and you give it to this young lady. She will take it and she will deal with it. That is her job.

Mr. Riley. That's her job?

Rabbi Agin. That's her job, so please give that to her tomorrow. Okay, sir? I appreciate that. She'll be here tomorrow.

Mr. Riley. Tomorrow?

Rabbi Agin. She'll be here tomorrow and you tell her --

Mr. Riley. I can give her copies of it now. I have—

Rabbi Agin. She'll be glad to take that from you. Thank you very much. Is Tom Ross here? All right, Mr. Ross, please. Does it relate to this issue, sir?

Statement of Tom Ross

Mr. Ross. Yes, it does. Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words.

Rabbi Agin. As long as it relates to the city of St. Petersburg, that's fine.

Mr. Ross. What I think led up to a lot of the problems that we're experiencing is abusive actions or abrasive actions rather from the police department, and a picture may be worth a thousand words. What we have here is a picture that appeared in the newspaper of the mystical "green team." That's what they look like with their ski masks. This occurred about a week or two before the shooting incident to cause the rioting situations.

A citizen group that volunteers for the city a couple years ago had asked the police department to discontinue to use ski masks, and they indicated that they would do so. About a year ago they began using them again. This is abrasive type action that I think is inappropriate. Face value, you go, well, they're trying to protect the officer's identity. Well, understand as you read the article, they indicated several officers were wearing the masks searching that house. So I would suggest to you that this is the kind of thing that brings things to a head, and they were asked to discontinue that.

In addition to the green team there is another thing that you may ask about called the GIT team, the Gang Intelligence Unit. They were taking staged photographs, mug shots of children on the streets, and identifying them in their gang records. The police department apparently has a couple rules against that, but the unit is doing it anyhow. I find that offensive.

Another thing that we hear about all the time is community policing. You need to understand they're doing a couple policies. They have another

policy that they brag about called displacement. The police chief and his higher ranking officers have publicly stated in regards to the drug issue, you have a problem, you want us to fix it, you don't really care how we do it, so we're going to move it from St. Petersburg. If we move it to Tampa or to Gulfport, we've solved your problem. It doesn't matter how we do it. You need to understand that this is the Tampa Bay region, and I do care how they solve that problem, because I shop and eat in Tampa, Gulfport, and all over the place. So the police department does have a couple agendas. One

of them is called the displacement policy and I think that's added to the abrasiveness that you've seen the community talking about.

I'm done in less than 3 minutes.

Rabbi Agin. Thank you very much. If there's anybody else that's left that wishes to speak, tomorrow—because of the lateness of the hour, we will be here tomorrow. Please make your presentation tomorrow. Thank you very much.

[The proceedings recessed at 1:00 a.m., December 4, 1996.]

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