Burning of African American Churches in Mississippi and Perceptions of Race Relations

Mississippi Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights

Transcript of a Community Forum
Held July 10–11, 1996, Cleveland, Mississippi

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.

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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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Dr. Jerry W. Ward, Jr., *Chairperson*
Ridgeland

Mr. Robert H. Canizaro
Jackson

Mr. Willie H. Foster
Hattiesburg

Senator Alice V. Harden
Jackson

Mrs. Suzanne G. Keys
Jackson

Ms. Lisa Binder Milner
Jackson

Mr. Leslie Grant Range
Jackson

Mr. Benjamin Wade Allen III
Jackson

Ms. Barbara Longest
Holly Springs

Mr. James M. Lott
Greenwood

Mr. Tommy A. Morris
Tougaloo

Ms. Thelma A. Rush
Vicksburg

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The community forum of the Mississippi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights convened at 6:00 p.m., July 10, 1996, with Mississippi Advisory Committee Chairperson Jerry W. Ward, Jr., presiding. Other members of the Advisory Committee present were Willie H. Foster, Suzanne Griggins Keys, James H. Lott, and Leslie Grant Range. Also attending the meeting was Commission Chairperson Mary Frances Berry and Commission Central Regional Office Director Melvin L. Jenkins.

Proceedings

Dr. Ward. The meeting of the Mississippi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights shall come to order.

For the benefit of those in our audience, I shall introduce myself and my colleagues. My name is Jerry Ward, and I'm the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee.

Members of the Committee, starting on my left, are Willie Foster, James Lott, and to my immediate right, Leslie Range. A few other members are to show up shortly.

We're very pleased to have with us tonight Melvin Jenkins, who is Director of the Central Regional Office of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. And we expect that, perhaps, the Chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Mary Frances Berry, may be able to be here if she's not waylaid from Memphis.

Also present is Ms. Carol Lee Hurley, who works in the Washington office.

Finally, I'd like to introduce other members of the regional staff who are with us, Mr. Ascension Hernandez, civil rights analyst, with that office, and at the door, JoAnn Daniels, who is staff secretary.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency, first established by Congress in 1957 and reestablished in 1983. It is directed to:

One, investigate complaints alleging that citizens are being deprived of their right to vote by reason of their race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices;

Two, study and collect information relating to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;

Three, appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;

Four, to serve as a national clearinghouse for information in respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, sex, religion, age, disability, or national origin;

Five, to submit reports, findings and recommendations to the President and Congress;

And finally, issue public service announcements to discourage discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws.

The Commission has 51 Advisory Committees —one for each State and the District of Columbia. Each is composed of citizens familiar with local and State civil rights issues.

The members serve without compensation and assist the Commission with its factfinding, investigating, and information dissemination functions.

The Mississippi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is here to conduct a community forum on race relations in the city of Cleveland, Mississippi, in the aftermath of recent fires at black churches.

We also want to focus on Federal and local law enforcement efforts to solve these fires, or if not solve them, to began to discover why we have this rash of fires throughout the South and nationally, and particularly in our State. Hopefully this forum will give individuals an opportunity to discuss some of their concerns and ideas about the reason these fires occurred and also provide an avenue to search for solutions.

Our goal is to fulfill the guidelines that have

been set by the Commission in terms of the Mississippi Advisory Committee being the eyes and ears of the community.

Information that relates to the topic of the meeting will be especially helpful to this Committee. The proceedings of this meeting, which are being recorded by a public stenographer, will be sent to the Commission for its consideration.

Information provided may also be used by the Advisory Committee to plan future activities.

Now, I want, at the very outset of this meeting, to establish the ground rules, which are very important for this kind of forum to have credibility. So I will remind you that these are the ground rules: This is a public meeting; it's open to the media and to the general public. But we have a full schedule of persons who will be providing information within the limited time that we have available.

The time allotted for each presentation must be strictly adhered to. This will include a presentation by each participant, followed by questions from the Committee members. To accommodate persons who have not been invited but want to make statements, we have scheduled an open session this afternoon from approximately 9:15 p.m. until 9:45 p.m., and on Thursday, from 11:30 until noon.

So anyone who is not scheduled to speak, but who would like to make a statement during either of these periods should contact JoAnn Daniels, who is at the rear doorway for scheduling. Written statements may be submitted to Committee members or to the staff members here today, or they may be mailed to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 400 State Avenue, Suite 908, Kansas City, Kansas 66101.

The record of this meeting will close on August 12, 1996. So that means that any material relating to the meeting has to be into the regional office, I would think, at least by the 1st of August.

Though some of the statements that are made tonight may be controversial, we want to ensure that all invited participants do not defame or degrade any person or organization. In order to ensure that all aspects of the issues are represented, knowledgeable persons with a wide variety of experience and viewpoints have been invited to share information with us.

Any person or organization that feels defamed or degraded by statements made in these proceedings should contact our staff during the meeting so that we can provide a chance for public response. And I will be very alert to any inflammatory claims that are made.

If that does not suit the person who wishes to make a complaint, we will accept a written statement, for inclusion in the proceedings. I urge all persons making presentations to be very judicious and very cautious in their statements, that is in terms of abusing someone else's rights.

The Advisory Committee appreciates the willingness of all participants to share their views and experiences with the Committee. And now I will ask Mr. Melvin Jenkins to share some opening remarks with you.

Mr. Jenkins. Thank you, Jerry.

To the members of the Mississippi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, to those assembled this evening, it's a pleasure to be in Cleveland, but it's unfortunate that we come under the circumstances to take a look at race relations in the aftermath of church burnings.

This is the third in a series of meetings that we have conducted in the last few days. We started in Boligee, Alabama last week, yesterday we were in Baton Rouge, in Baker, Louisiana, we'll conclude this portion from our regional office here in Cleveland.

We have been asked what will come after we leave the certain jurisdictions that we have been in. One of the things that we hope to do is to provide a transcript of these proceedings to the general public within 30 days. That will be accompanied by an executive summary of the testimony that we receive.

At a later date we will provide from the Advisory Committee a full report on the proceedings taking place this evening and tomorrow. Hopefully that we hear from you in terms of recommendations to better race relations in areas not only in Cleveland, but throughout the State of Mississippi.

Several months ago the Advisory Committee conducted a major factfinding study on police-community relations in Jackson. That report will be issued by the 1st of October.

When we take a look at race relations in terms of the races getting together, accomplishing, establishing goals, we look not only at Mississippi but the Nation. Where do we go from here in terms of race relations?

We are very hopeful that the Advisory Committee will take the lead in providing a general direction so that we can begin to plot better race relations not only in Cleveland, but throughout the State.

With a report coming from the Advisory Committee within the next 30 days, and moving onto a fuller report, we will be able to provide some recommendations. Hopefully you will be able to express those recommendations. Then we can take those and provide those to the general public. That's what we intend to do with the proceedings from this forum.

And as we move through the other forums that are held by another regional office of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, we have forums there, one in Memphis that's being conducted as we speak.

Next week there will be a forum in Columbia, South Carolina, and a final forum will conclude in Charlotte, North Carolina. The information will be provide to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Hopefully the information that's gathered from these forums will be transmitted to the Congress and to the President for consideration.

Basically, we want to look at race relations in the aftermath of the church burnings. Where do we go? That's the charge that we have, that's the charge that we want to receive from you this evening.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. We're about 5 minutes behind, and I do like to be on schedule, so I will ask if Alderman Norman Burke is here from the city of Cleveland?

Alderman Burke is not here. The Honorable Shirley Edwards, who is the mayor of Ruleville.

If either of these people would come later, I'll try to include them in the program since they were scheduled.

Mr. James Cavanaugh? Please, would you come forward? Mr. Cavanaugh, would you prefer to stand or sit?

Mr. Cavanaugh. I'd just like to stand if I could. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Okay. I'd like to thank you for agreeing to appear for this forum. I should tell the audience that Mr. Cavanaugh is the special agent in charge for the U.S. Department of Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. So, Mr. Cavanaugh, would you please give us the information involving the kind of investigation that your agency is undertaking.

Statement of James Cavanaugh, Special Agent In Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, U.S. Department of the Treasury, Birmingham, Alabama

Mr. Cavanaugh. Thank you, Doctor and panel. I had met Mr. Jenkins before in Alabama last week when we had a hearing in Boligee.

We've been plagued in the Birmingham division of the ATF, which is Alabama and Mississippi, with a lot of church fires, as you know. And it is somewhat of an unusual event, despite what you may hear from some corners that this is not anything new.

I strongly disagree with that, and I've carried a badge in the southeast since 1974, and I think it's a very unusual event that we're having with this upswing in black church fires, especially what I recognize as somewhat of a clustering effect certainly in the Birmingham division, which is Alabama and Mississippi.

Certainly, it's unfortunate to say that churches burn in America at a certain level. I'm sorry we have to say that, but it's just a fact. Churches fall victim to crime, vandalism, burglary, hate crimes, desecrations. In a nation of 300 million people, there's always going to be a level of crime directed at churches. They're part of the community, a lot of times they're vacant. And so that's nothing new.

But I don't think we should let that dilute the fact that we have a problem. And certainly we consider in ATF, and my colleagues that you'll talk to later in FBI, State highway patrol, the fire marshals, that any church fire, mosque, synagogue, black or white congregation, any church fire is a problem and should be investigated thoroughly, and hopefully with the help of Federal authorities.

And particular to the Mississippi problem, we've

had somewhat of an unusual situation in Mississippi where we have this one cluster event in Kossuth in northern Mississippi, the northeast corner of Mississippi, two black churches completely destroyed within 17 minutes of each other on a Monday night a few weeks ago.

And also an unusual event at a white Church of Christ also nearby, where we found evidence of what appeared to be an incendiary device and some marks on the back door that appeared to be forced entry. That church was not destroyed and that was a white congregation.

Around the State we had a fire, and I can talk briefly about each of these. We had a fire at a church in Meridian, Mississippi, on Easter Sunday. We had a fire in Yazoo County, Mississippi, where a church was destroyed. We had a fire in Ruleville, Mississippi, very close to our meeting tonight that destroyed a couple of pews and was a burglary, a forced entry attempt and then the fire.

We have had lightning strike two churches in Mississippi in the last week. On the night of July the 3rd, just before the 4th holiday, we had an alert to a fire in Benndale, Mississippi, near Gulfport. All of the agents, ATF, FBI, the State troopers, we all went in force and spent the whole night of the July 4th holiday investigating this fire, and determined the next morning that it was an accidental electrical fire caused by lightning. And, of course, lightning had moved across and was striking all over that area. And we were able to determine that.

We also had another lightning fire just this week at another church in the northern part of the State. We have some of those in Alabama, and those are not unusual events because of the weather here. We have a lot of structures, dwelling houses that are also struck by lightning and electrical problems. So we should expect in the normal course of business we're going to have some of those. But the arsons, of course, are our real interest.

Let me tell you briefly about Meridian, Mississippi. We determined that fire—it happened Easter Sunday, it happened at a very unusual time, it happened at 11:30 a.m., 11:25 I think the alarm went—that's a very unusual time, Easter Sunday for an arson. The congregation was having services, they had already had morning Easter services and they were going to have a later service.

We sent a lot of people down there to investigate that fire, and with the State fire marshal, were able to determine that it was an accidental—a sad event, but an accidental event caused by a carelessly tossed cigarette. And we determined that through a variety of things.

And I've seen some publications that now say that it was arson, and the authorities didn't—tried to make it a cigarette. That's not the case. We investigated that completely and thoroughly.

And the physical evidence at the scene, the eyewitness testimony, the way the fire behaved and the patterns of behavior of the fire, the test burns we did on the termite infested wood we found there with cigarettes to make it burn all fit exactly into what would cause this fire.

And, of course, the very unusual event of someone burning a church in the front of the church between two church services on Easter Sunday would be unusual. So we are satisfied from our investigation that that was an accidental event.

Still I would point out, very unfortunate for the congregation, and I have heard—and this is not my area, but I mention it to the Commission because I think it's important, that some of the churches that have suffered an accidental loss cannot get funds to rebuild. And that's out of ATF's area.

But I would say this, that I have seen these congregations and the pastors, and they're no less devastated by the loss of their church. And also, in the first few days, they have a feeling it might be a hate crime or an attack on the congregation. They exhibit and see all of the same feelings that the crime victim does. And then they get no funding to rebuild it. So I don't know who is in charge of that or how that could be looked at, but I think it's something that should be considered, because those congregations are suffering also.

In Ruleville—we have an unusual situation up here in Ruleville. The church—and I'll tell you about the racial hatred part of it first—100 yards from the church on a bridge there's a lot of graffiti. And there is some graffiti painted there that says KKK rules, and there's a swastika painted there.

Our investigations determined that that's probably been there a long time, and the bridge is covered with graffiti, saturated with graffiti. In

fact, I may have a photograph of—you can see some of it in this picture, and I'll—you can see that graffiti on the bridge. That's only 100 yards from the church.

So that's one major lead category that we always work, and of course we have the FBI with us, and that is the category of racial hatred and white hate. Whether that's organized hate from a Klan, Skinhead, or Aryan Nation type group or isolated bigots that might be involved.

But we've discovered in our investigation in Ruleville that there've been 28 church burglaries as of January '96 in the following counties: Washington, Sunflower, Oliver, Leflore, and Carroll, 28 church burglaries in this area just since January the 1st.

We have had to work, in addition to an arson fire, an extensive burglary investigation here in this area. And that's what we've been doing with the State troopers and the FBI. We have two agents that have been assigned here full-time out of the Miami division. We brought them in to support us, and they're here, and they've been doing that all along.

Just to give you a quick idea, before any questions about this activity here, and I won't go through the defendant's names, but a white male from Greenwood was arrested and convicted for the burglary of four churches—two white churches and two black churches.

A white male from Greenwood was arrested and convicted for the burglary of two churches, one black and one white. Another white male Greenwood juvenile has a case pending for three church burglaries, two black and one white.

Another case, a black male, Greenwood, was arrested. He has a case pending in burglary of a black church. We have another black male from Greenwood arrested case pending, burglary of a black church. We have a black male from Indianola case pending burglary of four black churches. We have another black male, Indianola, with a case pending, burglary of a black church.

We have another black male, Indianola, who is a suspect in the burglary of black churches. We have another black male from Indianola, warrant issued for arrest, burglary of a white church. Then we have a black male from Ruleville arrested for a church burglary.

So we have white suspects who break into churches of white and black congregations, black suspects. The point in these particular cases, I would emphasize, is that the motive is burglary and theft. Now, that doesn't take away from other possible motives.

But I just want you to understand that that is a major effort we have to look at, because the night of the Ruleville church fire, there was a fire at another church—I'm sorry, a burglary at another church just down the road and items were stolen there the same night. So we've had to have an intense investigation along those lines.

In Yazoo County, just briefly, we responded to a fire there months ago, and with the State fire marshal, obtained a confession from a suspect who lit that church on fire. He had also lit some other nearby vacant structures, and it appears the motive was he was a fire setter or serial fire setter. He's been charged by the State fire marshal with arson.

Just in closing, and before I take your questions, I'd just like to tell you that the response from the Mississippi authorities to this has been just exceptional. I don't believe it could be better. I was the Deputy Chief of the explosives division, the arson explosives division in Washington, D.C. before this assignment, and I oversaw all arson explosive cases for ATF on a national basis. And I've been to bomb and arsons all over the country. I've worked in many States, and Mississippi has been excellent.

When we went to Kossuth, they sent 15 troopers up there in the middle of the night. They sent a mobile command center. They sent six or eight fire marshals. The response has been truly unbelievable. And it's been like that throughout. I mean, they're the most cooperative people to work with in Mississippi, and they share their information, they want to work, and so I don't think that that's a problem. I don't know that it's come up, but I just want you to know that.

I think the citizens in Kossuth told us a lot—that they didn't want the State to be stereotyped, and they felt a lot of times that Mississippi gets stereotyped from during the civil rights era.

But that's all I had to say initially. If you have a question, I'd—

Mr. Lott. Mr. Cavanaugh, you mentioned that there were mixed reports out as far as whether or not there was actually an uprise in church fires. Obviously you can't pick up a newspaper today without reading an article about a church fire or someone's investigation, the AP has done an investigation, *USA Today* has done investigations. Everybody is coming out with something.

And the last information that I read, I think it was from AP, said that there had been more fires at white churches than black churches. Is that the same as what your numbers show?

Mr. Cavanaugh. Well, what we've done, the problem is that everybody has different numbers, the Government, and of course we all have different numbers in the Government, and then all of the different news organizations have different numbers.

So what we agreed on a few weeks ago at FBI Headquarters, when all of the ATF and FBI agents in charge and the Cabinet officials met, was that we'd conduct a national survey led by the FBI to establish what these numbers are once and for all, without having so many different reports. And that's just being finalized, I believe.

But the FBI was leading that effort, ATF was supplying information, fire marshals, all of the States. You see a lot of numbers out there. But I would only say this. We have, as of last week, we had 37 black churches burned in the southeast in the last couple of years, 18 months, couple of years that the ATF is investigating, 37. And we think that number is high.

Now, I haven't evaluated every single statistical, but I have not seen clusters of white churches burning. And I think what I'm saying is, for example, in Alabama, we don't have a fire at a black church in Mobile, and one in Huntsville, and one in Montgomery, we've got four in one county and the next county. And so that's—

Mr. Lott. I'm sorry. Let me give you an idea of where I'm headed here so you'll know what I'm getting at. My concern would be that, of course, this Commission looks at issues both on race and religion, and my question would be, is this a resurgence of racism, or is this an attack on christianity, or an attack on religion?

You see an uprise—I believe it was in West Memphis, Arkansas, this satanic ritual, these young boys were killed. There was something on TV a few nights ago. Has anything in that arena been looked at by your agency or any of the other lead Government agencies?

Mr. Cavanaugh. In other words, we look at a cult or satanism as a motive or—

Mr. Lott. Exactly.

Mr. Cavanaugh. Yes, sir, we do. We do. And we also look at people who might be mentally defective who have in their mind declared war on God, for example. We had a case in Florida in 1992 we called the Florida church fires, where a person went around burning churches of any denomination up and down throughout the State, burned a church in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

And we were able to solve that case and apprehend that fellow who was basically kind of a vagrant, homeless guy who would travel to these churches. Of course, the church members were the only people that would help him, but in his mind he had somehow declared war on churches or God. He was burning churches for some motive as you've described.

And that's certainly an open lead. But what we've seen in a lot of cases so far is a variety of motives, hate, arson to cover burglary, revenge, financial, a hero concept, volunteer fire fighters, satanism—

Mr. Lott. Copycat?

Mr. Cavanaugh. Copycat. The only thing I'd say about a copycat, and it's a good point, but if I see someone burn black churches, and then I go burn black churches, for example, I must be somewhere bigoted to do that because there's got to be some hate in my heart to do that.

And I don't think it's just—there's a part of it that may be the thrill to be involved in this somewhat of a national news event. But you know, when we see like this Kossuth situation with two black churches destroyed.

Mr. Lott. Let me ask you, is there any relationship, is there, for instance, the black churches that have burned, are any of them urban, are they all rural? Is there any relationship in there as far as the proximity of them, no one nearby, easy access? What have you seen?

Mr. Cavanaugh. Yes. We've had some fires in

other States, and I can't elaborate on those cases because I don't supervise them, but there was a fire at an inner-city church in Knoxville, Tennessee, that was an inner city. There was a fire in Charlotte, North Carolina, that was basically in an urban area.

But most of the fires we're dealing with here in Alabama, Mississippi, and in some of the other States are very rural. In fact, the next structure you can't sometimes even see. There's no neighbor.

And sometimes the reason why the church also is a victim of vandalism, burglary, and other crimes, and it's also why it's so difficult for us to sometimes solve these crimes, because we get there and we have a slab of concrete, and ashes, and no eyewitnesses. And so it becomes very difficult.

In the Mississippi cases, we've recently hypnotized witnesses, which is a technique we frequently use in difficult cases. But we hypnotize witnesses to see if they can recall something they might have seen on the night of the fire in question. And you can understand how difficult some of these cases are.

Mr. Range. Mr. Cavanaugh, you indicate—I want to ask a question about the role of the media in all of this. You raised a point that you have determined and established that the fire in Meridian was an arson, yet it's being reported as—

Mr. Cavanaugh. No. It's accidental.

Mr. Range. Well, I'm sorry. You determined it was accidental, and you said it was being reported as an arson. Now, what is the role of the media in that? I mean, at what point does the media play a role in this?

Mr. Cavanaugh. The media reported it correctly in the Meridian case. It's some other private groups that continue maybe to suspect that it's still an arson or believe it's an arson. It's not the media.

I've had a lot of contact with the media, of course, since this began. And I think it's their job and obligation to report the news, and they have done that. A lot of reports have asked me, personally, and did Kossuth—out of a genuine concern, I think, that they had for the community, do you think that the news is driving this as a copycat?

In America we're not going to stop the news. None of us would want to. And the only suggestion I had for a lot of the reporters was that report it but also report all of the people we've arrested. We have arrested a lot of people. And a lot of the reporters said, "I didn't know," or "I've got to get that together."

I'm not saying that's all from what I suggested, but certainly I hope some of it was, and a lot of the reporters have picked up, and you've seen a lot of stories in the print media and the video media lately of who's been arrested for these crimes.

And I think if they'll report there's a fire, and then report the ones we solve, they'll show that there's somewhat of a high risk here. For example, we have—this report is about 10 days old, but we had 37 active investigations in the Southeast at that time, and we had arrested 11 persons in 37 cases. You know, that includes all law enforcement, ATF, everybody.

So the perception that you can do this with impunity and get away with it is not the case. Arson is a difficult crime to solve, but we're also arresting a lot of people for these cases. And I think as the months and weeks go by, you will see that a percentage of these cases will be solved.

Sixteen percent is the number we frequently hear on cleared arson cases, the ideal percentage. I think you'll see that we'll do at least that or better, I hope we will. And I've noticed in the media, to answer your question, Mr. Range, that reporters have been—I've seen a lot of articles about look at all of these people that have been arrested. And I hope that that will dampen some of the copycat phenomenon.

Dr. Ward. Mr. Cavanaugh, one quick question. In the investigations, is there any way to determine whether an arson is the result of someone just setting a fire who has no professional experience, and someone who really knows what she or he is doing?

Mr. Cavanaugh. Yes, Doctor, there is.

Dr. Ward. And in the 37 investigations, have you detected any pattern in terms of whether the arson was amateur or professional?

Mr. Cavanaugh. Without getting in too much directly into the evidence, which I would not be allowed to do, I'd have to tell you that it varies somewhat in the different scenes. For example, in Kossuth, we determined that both fires at the black

churches were forced entry, and both used a flammable liquid, and both happened within 17 minutes of each other.

And so the modus operandi of the perpetrators in Kossuth was very similar. And on the face of it we would say they appear to be related.

In central west Alabama where we had four fires, the similarity has been the lack of it, because we found no gas cans, molotov cocktails, no flammable liquids, no evidence we can pick up. In fact, we found an absence of evidence. But that's in that small cluster.

And if you go around different areas, you know, they don't always all match up. You've got to understand there's always some methods of arson that may be similar. When you talk about a professional torch, we've worked on those people and we've worked on them extensively. Professional traveling torches and organized crime, the type of torches are our bread and butter. We keep up with those people.

But a lot of times you'll see a very determined effort to commit an arson by a professional torch or someone involved in a financial motive. They want that building to go down, and it's going down tonight. And it might be just full of a flammable liquid.

As opposed to, for example, a fire in Yazoo County where an arrest was made, which we talked about, and the—

(Whereupon Dr. Berry arrives.)

Mr. Cavanaugh. Where the arrest was made in Yazoo County, the fire was basically set probably by a match or some small lighter or something.

The fire in Ruleville, and I have a picture here, was started just in a hymn book probably laying on a pew. So you're welcome to look at these pictures. But in other words, the person who did the Ruleville fire, person or persons who did the Ruleville fire just took available materials and lit them on a pew. So, you know, did not go, and your question, Dr. Ward, with cans of flammable liquids and a determined effort to take down that structure. So, yes, sometimes we can tell.

Dr. Ward. Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Foster. One question regarding the setting of fires in churches regarding the method. If an amateur's way of setting a fire, like you said for instance in Ruleville, was just setting the hymn book on fire, and with churches being in rural areas, would that be a situation where it would not be detected as a torch, as such, with evidence like a substance that you can trace?

Mr. Cavanaugh. It could be. It makes it much more difficult, Mr. Foster, for example, if a fire was started that way. And this fire in Ruleville, this was kind of an unusual situation. The fire started in probably a prayer book on the pew, and you see the destroyed pews. That church was not destroyed. In fact, there's a picture there, the church still stands.

Probably suffocated inside the structure. The fire probably burned up the available oxygen, the structure was shut, and it kind of just burned itself out because fire has to have oxygen to burn.

So unfortunately in rural churches, small structure, they're older, many of them have termite damage, a match and nobody sees it, it's at night, nobody will notice the smoke, and that thing will get away, and we're dealing with a volunteer fire department that may not be able to get there as quick. So that's a problem.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much.

Dr. Berry. I don't want Mr. Cavanaugh to leave. I want to ask him a couple of questions, even though I just got here. Mr. Cavanaugh, it's good to see you again.

Mr. Cavanaugh. Hello, Doctor, good to see you. I don't travel quite as much as you do.

Dr. Berry. I was late because I was in Tennessee today. Even though I didn't hear your testimony, am I to understand that the status of the investigations in terms of not having found any culprits in these fires, that's the same as it was when I left this afternoon, or you found somebody since this afternoon?

Mr. Cavanaugh. Well, no, we haven't found anybody this afternoon, but I would say that in the Mississippi fires, Kossuth, and Ruleville, Greenville, we have some strong leads. And I feel stronger, and you, Dr. Berry, who were in Alabama, and Mr. Jenkins can put that in perspective on some of the frustration we talked about last week with our somewhat lack of real viable leads.

It's a better situation over here, and that's just the way things work out sometimes. I think we

have some strong leads, and hopefully we're going to break some of these cases now. You know, Alabama, Greene County is a particular tougher situation for us, but—

Dr. Berry. And in order to be consistent with the questions that were asked at the other forum, and I don't know if anybody asked you this and if they did, just tell me. Is there any evidence in any of these fires that the members of the church set the fires themselves? Because there have been allegations in the press and elsewhere that these church fires were all set by people who belong to the church, and they were just doing it either for fraud, or for some excitement, or because they were mad at somebody in the church, or—

Mr. Cavanaugh. I understand your question. I'm trying to be as frank as I can without getting into evidence.

Dr. Berry. I understand. I understand.

Mr. Cavanaugh. We didn't find a clear financial motive on the face of it in Kossuth, Mississippi. We quickly established in those two churches that the insurance was not adequate to rebuild. One church has no insurance, the other church was grossly underinsured, could not be rebuilt for the damage. It does not appear in those cases that there's a financial motive. We haven't discovered any inter seen squabbles or reasons that the congregation would do that in Kossuth, Mississippi.

In Yazoo we made an arrest, so—with the State fire marshal. We know who did that case. In Ruleville, I briefed Dr. Ward about the graffiti on the bridge and the burglary situation, so we don't have any appearance there on the face of it.

Dr. Berry. That's right. That's all I'm asking.

Mr. Cavanaugh. I've always reserved the right that some new information would come in and we may have to go to court with that, but I don't have that right now. And we have a fire near Hatley, Mississippi, which we had a series of grass fires, and then the front door of the church was burned, so it appears that someone was possibly setting fires and also set the church on fire.

So with the reservation, you have to understand that if other information came to light—I don't have any specific information that would indicate that any congregation currently in Mississippi has been charged or is about to be charged with a church fire, no.

Dr. Berry. And have you at the ATF taken as seriously fires at white churches as you have fires at black churches?

Mr. Cavanaugh. Yes, Doctor. Yes. We are serious about any fire at a church, mosque, or synagogue, and will respond appropriately. And we have responded to recent fires at white churches. Of course, all of the attention to these cases has heightened the awareness of fires at houses of worship in general. But, of course, we're always glad to catch an arsonist no matter what they burn.

Dr. Berry. And the last question is: Do you have any evidence that any of the white churches where burnings have taken place, that they were done by somebody black for racial reasons?

Mr. Cavanaugh. No, we have none of that. Now, we do have some cases around in the division where white subjects have burned black churches or black subjects have burned white churches for burglary or criminal reasons.

We have the one case in Taylor, Alabama, with the volunteer fireman that we referred to the FBI and the U.S. attorney to investigate further on civil rights violations. But we don't have any white subjects that I'm aware of that burn—I'm sorry, black subjects that have burned a white congregational church for a racial motive. I don't know of any.

Dr. Berry. Okay. I thought it was important to ask those questions. Thank you.

Mr. Cavanaugh. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. And now we will adjust our schedule, because I would like for Dr. Mary Frances Berry, who is the Chairperson of the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights, to make some statements from the perspective of the Commission.

Dr. Berry. Well, I just wanted to thank the State Advisory Committee. Thank you, Chairperson Ward, and thank you other members of the SAC for, in fact, having this forum and taking up this issue. And I've been visiting the other States that have been hardest hit by these fires.

I was just in Tennessee and I apologize for being late. And I was supposed to be at the NAACP in Charlotte today and this evening, but I declined to go there because I have a responsibility to go around to see what's going on here with these

fires.

And I will be next week in South Carolina and North Carolina where our State Advisory Committees are having forums on this issue.

The Mississippi SAC is to be commended, State Advisory Committee, because you've done a lot of very good work that people in this State ought to be very much aware of. You've given us expert testimony on problems experienced by—civil rights problems in this State, everything.

And the SAC's work goes all the way back to the sixties, with the preparations for the Voting Rights Act in Mississippi at that time. And we will be holding hearings here in Mississippi on racial and ethnic tensions as the rural part of our multi-year study in September. We'll be back here for hearings. And we very much appreciate the cooperation of the SAC in that regard also.

Let me just say that we're here and we're having these forums for two reasons. One reason is to monitor law enforcement efforts, and to make sure that the Federal, State, and local law enforcement people are pursuing the culprits aggressively, that they're working together in coordinating their efforts because the Commission has a responsibility under our law to monitor the enforcement of civil rights, and to also make sure that they are proceeding sensitively when they deal with citizens, when they are questioning people, when they're investigating these fires, so that they don't end up victimizing the victims.

And the second reason why, from my perspective, we are having these, is so that we can sort of take the racial temperature of particular communities, the temperature of the absence or presence of bigotry in particular communities.

The Commission started 5 years ago having hearings on racial and ethnic tensions because we were aware from hate crime statistics, from polling data, from the racial alerts, or hate crimes alerts that are put out by the Community Relations Service and the Justice Department that there was a rising tide of racial tension in America.

And in trying to seek the causes, we've been holding hearings in communities. So if the racial motivation was a reason in these church fires—and the Justice Department tells me that about 70 percent of the church fires, black churches, they're sure that there's some racial, or they believe strongly that there's some racial motivation.

I was in Louisiana last night. Melvin and I were down there where the four black churches were burned in an area. And there are white churches right next to, in the same area that were not burned.

But in any case, to the extent that race is an issue here, we would not be surprised, based on the evidence that we got from the racial tensions project to date, and the evidence that led us to do the racial tensions project in the first place.

So I want to thank you again for having these forums, and I will listen very attentively to the testimony presented this evening. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. We will return to the original form of the schedule because I've been told that Alderman Burke is here. Alderman Burke, would you please come forward. Because it has to be recorded for the record, I appreciate your coming.

Statement of Norman Burke, Alderman, City of Cleveland, Mississippi

Mr. Burke. I've enjoyed the proceedings so far, and they're very informative. I'm Norman Burke, alderman here in Cleveland, Mississippi, and on behalf of Mayor Martin King and the board of the aldermen, I would like to welcome this Commission to Cleveland, Mississippi.

It is a pleasure and an honor to have you here. If I can be of any assistance to you while you're in Cleveland, please feel free to call. I'm sorry that I was late, and I don't want to interrupt the proceedings any further. So thank you very much and you're welcome.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Is the Honorable Shirley Edwards, the mayor of Ruleville here? Okay. Thank you.

I would like for Mr. James Friar from the FBI to come forward, please.

Statement of James Friar, Special Agent In Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Jackson, Mississippi

Mr. Friar. Good evening.

Dr. Ward. Welcome, Mr. Friar.

Mr. Friar. Thank you. My name is Jim Friar, and I'm the FBI agent in charge for the FBI in the State of Mississippi. And after listening to my colleague and Mr. Cavanaugh, I don't think there's a thing I can add to the description of the fires in the State. He's done a masterful job of advising just what fires we have had, and what is being done as far as the investigations thereof.

So let me give you an overview of what we're doing in this State relative to Civil Rights and to the fires involving religious institutions.

No State in the United States is more cognizant of violations of civil rights than Mississippi. In fact, the FBI division was formed in 1964 as a result of this activity. And I think everybody in this room knows that.

At one point in time this division of the FBI in Mississippi had in the neighborhood of 300 agents working various kinds of hate-related crimes to include fires, bombings, and various other violations of civil rights.

And we have an aggressive program that I'm proud of that has constantly looked at all violations of the civil rights statutes that include not only those that are defined by the constitutional civil rights, but also violations under the color of law, and discrimination in housing.

And over the past years there have been additional statutes that have been passed that address crimes against religious institutions. One of them is title 18, section 247, that enables us to work any kind of crime that is directed against a religious institution, provided that there is an element of interstate commerce that is involved.

Either the individual that does it travels interstate, or the materials used to harm the church are somehow acquired through an interstate nexus. And the other caveat of that piece of legislation is that there be a minimum monetary damage of $10,000.

Well, that's not good enough. And in 1994, I believe it was, the FACE Act was passed, which is the Freedom of Access to Clinical Institutions, which includes religious institutions also, and eliminates the requirement for an interstate nexus and eliminates the requirement for a $10,000 threshold.

The drawback to the FACE Act legislation is that the first offense is only that of a misdemeanor offense. And so legislation has to be found to address the fact that stiffer penalties have to be levied in order to be effective as a deterrent for crimes against religious institutions.

As Mr. Cavanaugh pointed out, we have collectively done a number of things at both the Federal and State levels to address church fires, especially here in Mississippi.

One is there's been a national task force established, which I'm quite sure you've been briefed about before. But for those of the audience who haven't, it's headed by the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights from the Department of Justice, Deval Patrick, and his counterpart, James Johnson from the Department of the Treasury, with executive management representatives from the FBI, U.S. Marshals Service and ATF.

And their mission is to collate data, to establish enough priority to divert the resources into the areas where the need most definitely exists, to identify the number of churches that have burned, and ensure that they have been addressed and will be addressed, and to serve as a coordinating body for churches that may be burned in the future.

Within our State, we have an arrangement that I think works very well. And it is an arrangement that's drawn both from the Federal, State, and local levels. Both of our judicial districts—we have two in Mississippi, a northern one centered in Oxford, a southern one centered in Jackson—both of the U.S. attorneys are committed to aggressive prosecution in these instances in which the Federal Government can prosecute.

They have been joined by the attorney general for the State of Mississippi in this regard, and we've had no fire that I'm aware of in which the county district attorneys have also indicated a complete willingness and dedication towards prosecuting those responsible.

In each and every fire, we respond in mass with ATF agents, FBI agents, State highway patrol, the county in which the jurisdiction lies, and the State fire marshal. We have worked every case aggressively, and to be quite honest, we were somewhat proud of ourself up until June 17 in that the fires that had occurred in Mississippi had not been of the magnitude nor devastation as those that had

been found to be caused in other States as our neighbors.

As Mr. Cavanaugh said, the ones in Kossuth were complete devastations of those churches, complete devastation of those congregations, and ones that definitely need resolution. And I can state, unequivocally, as he did, that we have good leads, we're aggressively pursuing them, and we're optimistic that we will be successful.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Do any of the members have questions?

Mr. Lott. Mr. Friar, did I understand you right, did you say that about Federal law a first offense on burning a church is a misdemeanor?

Mr. Friar. Under the Freedom of Access to a Clinical Institution Statute. And the only reason we would use that as opposed to the other statute that specifically identifies a crime against a church is that by using that, you don't have to have an interstate nexus, and you don't have to have $10,000 minimal damage.

What is being looked at now is legislation that will provide stiffer penalties for a first time offense under that statute. Under the other statute, there are serious penalties, it is a felony.

Mr. Lott. In other words, under that statute, you would just seek that avenue if there was no other opportunity being made for you to get into the investigation?

Mr. Friar. Many of the fires we have don't have $10,000 worth of damage, you see. Unless you do, then you don't qualify for prosecution under those statutes.

Mr. Lott. How long has the FBI been tracking fires in religious institutions in the State?

Mr. Friar. Well, that's a difficult question to answer. We've been working them for a number of years. In fact, the only Federal prosecutions of church fires in Mississippi have been done through FBI investigations that were done back in 1993. We had two churches burned to the ground by hate crime individuals in both Pike and Amite Counties. And those individuals are all incarcerated presently.

What we have done as a result of these task forces and the national focus, is collate the numbers of fires that have occurred in Mississippi since 1990. And that's not an easy thing to do for several reasons.

First of all, there's no central body that can identify how many churches have burnt in every county throughout the State, because in certain jurisdictions, the State fire marshal does not receive a report.

For example, in the city of Jackson, the State fire marshal would not be the investigating institution as far as the arson crime, but rather the Jackson Fire Department. And there's no requirement that the Jackson Fire Department tell the State fire marshal about the results of their investigation.

So we've had to go not only to the State, but also to the different fire departments around the State in order to collate this information. And we've gone back to 1990 and compiled statistics since that time.

Mr. Lott. You had mentioned that, I guess, a civil rights division was formed in the FBI back in the sixties as a result of activities in Mississippi. Of course, that has been the—

Mr. Friar. No. Actually the FBI division was formed, and amongst its responsibilities was civil rights, of which that was quite a workload here for this division.

Mr. Lott. Right. And, of course, a lot of the alarm that is being expressed today is a concern for a return to some of the type of activities that happened back then. And that's why I was wondering if that was a division that was so busy here it seems that's something they would have been tracking forward, to make sure there was not a resurgence of this type of activity. Because we're getting such a confusing amount of information from different sources. There's this many reported by this agency, this many by this one.

You mentioned Pike and Amite Counties, those were confirmed hate crimes. Were those by individuals, or by groups?

Mr. Friar. They were by individuals.

Mr. Lott. Individuals?

Mr. Friar. Uh-huh.

Mr. Lott. But they didn't have any—

Mr. Friar. Individuals that operated together. I would not call them a group, other than a loose knit bunch of kids.

Mr. Lott. It's a shame to say, but these are criminals, and what they're doing is a crime. And,

of course, we're looking for motives to make sure there's nothing else that's a driving force behind this. But have there been any organized group activities that you have—of course you can't say what you've had leads on, but that you have suspicions of?

In other words, Ms. Berry mentioned a moment ago, I think she said the Department of Justice said that 70 percent of the fires were racially motivated.

Dr. Berry. They said that they had reason to believe that 70 percent of them may be racially motivated, not that they had evidence to prove it.

Mr. Friar. Well, those are difficult questions to answer, because racial tensions vary by individual, by community, and by a number of different reasons.

Organized groups, the Klan immediately springs to mind. There have been a number of attempts to hold Klan rallies in Mississippi in the last several years that have been unsuccessful.

In fact, one that I'm aware that was an attempt in Corinth, which is the same county in which these churches have burned, in which individuals came into the State, I believe from Arkansas, in an attempt to hold a Klan rally and couldn't find any takers.

That has happened more than once. And Klan rallies have not been successful, to my knowledge, in recent years. And I don't know how far back it was when they last were. But I don't think there's any cavern that would openly operate in this State today. I'm convinced of it.

Now secretly, I can't say. As far as hate crime, though, we have it. And I think the churches that were burnt in Kossuth are the definite result of being victimized through that process.

And let me make one observation for whatever it's worth. Whether it was done, whether those churches were burned as a result of copycat actions of what the individuals that did it had read about elsewhere, the end result is the same, it's total devastation of congregations that did not deserve it, and it's a heinous crime; and it's not diminished any bit whatsoever because they got the idea elsewhere.

Mr. Foster. You mentioned the fires in Pike and Amite Counties. And you described the individuals as organized kids, disorganized kids. How do you define kids? Were they of a certain age?

Mr. Friar. They were under 21. What I'm talking about is a person under 21 has no purposeful means of existence, they don't go to work, they drink, they talk racial trash talk, and can easily be motivated to go out and do something stupid that may have seemed like a good idea at the time.

Did they mean to do it? I don't know. They had to pay pretty substantial restitution for their actions monetarily and incarceration. And that's what I'm talking about when I say kids.

Mr. Foster. Were they charged as adults, or were they charged as juveniles?

Mr. Friar. Yes, they were.

Dr. Ward. I just have a question. I think one of the frustrations is for the public, and probably for your agency, is that causes cannot be discovered. But I want to ask, is a procedure in investigating fires, church fires, arsons, to investigate this as a kind of peculiar phenomenon, or to investigate it in the context of other activities, some of which are taking place by way of internet?

And I have specifically in mind the list serves for a number of organizations that seem to have hate as a central topic. And I'm asking that kind of question because, if I may make it simple: Is the FBI actively pursuing the discovery of a pattern?

Mr. Friar. Well, I would say we are with ATF and with the Departments of Justice and Treasury. But I also have to caution that we are investigating each incident as a crime. And you have to solve the crime before you can make any linkage to something else.

And that means logical interviews have to be conducted, evidence has to be collected, analyzed, collated, and then I think it takes an independent body, which is the function of the national task force, which I described earlier, to look at the big picture, if you will.

I'm limited in the sense that I have to confine my activities to Mississippi. And I don't really know what Jim Cavanaugh knows in Alabama, or what my counterparts know in Louisiana and Arkansas. So I can't make that linkage. But they have that mission, and we have a national hate crimes coordinator who's been designated to take a look at this activity and make assessments along the lines of what you question.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Dr. Berry.

Dr. Berry. Let me ask you several questions, please. And I may ask you one that should have been Mr. Cavanaugh's. And if so, you just tell me if I've got you answering his question.

Mr. Friar. I can call him back up.

Dr. Berry. First of all, do you think you have sufficient staff resources to engage seriously in investigating these crimes?

Mr. Friar. Well, I do at present. And I say at present because we have an entire field division in Mississippi of the FBI. ATF has another situation. But at present, I have the resources to investigate what we have.

Now, if this worsens, then that may become another story, because I would have to divert what I've got committed to work additional investigations and you thin the ranks. But presently I'm adequately staffed to do this.

Dr. Berry. And how much coordination is there between you and your agents and the State police or State officials who are supposed to be—I mean, after all, it is, when a crime occurs, isn't it a State responsibility, first of all, to be concerned about fires, and assaults, and all manner of crimes in their jurisdiction?

Mr. Friar. It certainly is. And, of course, we have the Commissioner of Public Safety who is also going to testify. But I can state that from the outset on the church fires, we have a joint response. The leads are assigned by teams. Those teams consist of both Federal, State, and local, and we're not duplicating anybody's work.

Dr. Berry. The other question, and I wanted to follow up a little bit on the question you asked about monitoring or about being proactive. I don't know whose job it is, but have hate crimes, even before the use of these church arsons became an issue, have hate crimes increased, decreased, stayed about the same in your jurisdiction as far as you know, over the last say 5 or 6 years? Any kind of hate crime, whether it's graffiti on a building or whatever.

Mr. Friar. Well, actually I think they've decreased considerably in the sense that—let's leave church burnings alone, but talk about discrimination in housing, which I can certainly consider a hate crime. I think there was a point in time in Mississippi where discrimination in housing was somewhat prevalent. I don't think it is today, at least not openly. We have far fewer complaints now than we did 10 years ago in that regard.

As far as police brutality, that too has declined. In other words, unprofessional acts under the color of law is what I'm talking about here. There's been a considerable increase in the quality of hiring of police throughout the State.

The training is considerably better now than it was as little as a decade ago. And officers are better equipped to deal with different kinds of situations that confront them daily in their line of work than they were. So I don't know if that answers your question.

Dr. Berry. Well, only partly. In addition to that—that helps—how about such things as graffiti, and paintings on buildings, or churches, or schools, or whatever, with racial, religious, discriminatory content, graffiti of that kind, incidents of that kind, or assaults where it's reported to the Justice Department as a hate crime because there seems to be racial or religious animus and so on? In your jurisdiction, what about the crimes like that before the church burnings? Had there been any?

Mr. Friar. Well, we have a heck of a lot less graffiti than Washington, D.C., I know that. We don't have a large amount of it that I see.

The other thing I guess we could talk about would be cross burnings, which—

Dr. Berry. Right. What about those?

Mr. Friar. Which have always triggered immediate investigation by the FBI, I might add. And over the past 2 years, we've only had two cross burnings that I'm aware of. And both of those were by high school kids who got drunk and regretted it seriously the next day.

Dr. Berry. So here in Mississippi, you really haven't had any, as far as you know, from your vantage point, any signs of increased racial tensions over the last—as existed by—see, if you read the Community Relations Service Racial Alerts out of the Justice Department, and you follow them over a long period, you see increasing numbers of alerts, generally. But I'm asking you specifically about Mississippi.

If you look at the hate crimes that were reported to the Justice Department, the numbers that they

got, however uneven they are, and whatever complaints there about how they're allocated. They get the numbers from the local police, I guess.

Mr. Friar. Yes.

Dr. Berry. You see the numbers nationally have increased over the last 5 or 6 years of the reporting period. But what you're telling me—and then if we even go back to issues that I know we discussed in Mississippi, things like the people who died in the jails in Mississippi, which the Commission was very much involved in, allegations that there were Klan members and police departments in Mississippi that the Commission was very much involved in. Some of the State Advisory Committee members, if you've been on a while, you know that some of these issues were discussed by us, and investigations were made.

But I get the impression from you that you think that—I'm just drawing this inference that things were pretty calm, and that all of this talk about racial tensions on the rise doesn't fit what you see happening in the jurisdiction. Would I be correct to say that?

Mr. Friar. Well, let me say this: Race is a central issue in Mississippi all the time. And I know of no business, whether it be an institution of learning, whether it be a police department, a fire department, or whatever where racial relationships aren't discussed and focused on probably more so than they should. In fact, there's almost an overwhelming focus that you just can't get away from here.

Is it on the rise? I don't think it's on the rise at all. In fact, I think it's getting better. I think we're in far better shape than a lot of other States where it has definitely worsened.

And I'll tell you another thing that we do in this State. We meet as much as possible, the FBI does, the county sheriffs do, the highway patrol does. We meet as much as possible with the leaders of the NAACP and the black community to identify what they think we're doing wrong. And it's not always a hospitable meeting, but I think it's healthy to have discourse, and we do that.

Dr. Berry. Okay. I don't have any further questions. But did anybody—for the agent—did anybody ask Mr. Cavanaugh about the good ole boys roundup, and whether he had any agents to—

Mr. Friar. No, they didn't ask him that. Do you want him to come back up here?

Dr. Berry. Yeah, he needs to be asked that, if you don't mind, because we've got problems in every State. People have been asking about the good ole boys. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cavanaugh. I notice Jim was quick to answer that for me. Doctor, we don't have any agents assigned to the church fires that were aware of, acknowledge of, or witnessed any racial event at that picnic in Tennessee.

Dr. Berry. And you have not had any? You said you don't now, but you haven't had any?

Mr. Cavanaugh. We have not had anybody that witnessed anything, that's aware of anything, or had knowledge of anything there.

Dr. Berry. And while you're up here, do you have sufficient resources to do the job you've been asked to do on these fires?

Mr. Cavanaugh. Doctor, I don't have sufficient resources in the Birmingham division to be able to complete the mission that I've been assigned here. I have frequently asked Washington for more agents, and we are seriously understaffed. We have a tremendous problem in other areas.

Besides church fires and bombings, we have a tremendous gun traffic problem where Mississippi and Alabama supply crime goods to major urban centers in the north. We supply out of northern Alabama—I know this is a little off topic, but it's a problem for me.

Dr. Berry. It's all right.

Mr. Cavanaugh. We supply crime guns from northern Alabama to Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York. Mississippi, we supply a lot of crime guns to Chicago, Milwaukee, Kansas City. And we even had a recent case out of Jackson where we supplied a lot of handguns used in crimes in Boston.

So a lot of the guns that show up in crime in the streets of those cities come out of this division. And so I have to have agents assigned to working those cases, and I don't have sufficient resources. I've asked Washington for more help.

Currently in the Ruleville fire, I've had to ask Washington for help. I have two agents that have been assigned here for a month from Miami. In Corinth I have three Los Angeles division agents

and a Philadelphia division agent. And I've personally had agents from all over the United States in the Birmingham division helping on these fires because we're so short.

Dr. Berry. All right. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. I'd like to ask Mr. Ingram to come forward, please.

Thank you very much for coming, Commissioner Ingram. I have been reminded by one of the Committee members that I have been much remiss in not following two matters of formality which I will do.

For the record, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Jim Ingram, Commissioner, Mississippi Department of Public Safety

Mr. Ingram. Yes. Jim Ingram, Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, P.O. Box 958, Jackson, Mississippi, 39205.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Do you have an opening statement that you would like to make?

Mr. Ingram. Only the fact that—Dr. Berry, it's good to see you again.

Dr. Berry. Thank you.

Mr. Ingram. And to express my appreciation to the distinguished Committee for allowing us to come. And that's my opening statement, but I would like to make some remarks. I do not have a prepared statement.

Dr. Ward. Please proceed.

Mr. Ingram. First, as you've heard from my distinguished colleagues, Jim Cavanaugh and Jim Friar, they are two of the better things that's happened in Mississippi in a long time. And as Jim Friar mentioned, we meet often. In fact, Jim Friar and I have lunch once a week to talk about our problems here in Mississippi.

And I would like to say that, to follow up on what Jim Friar had mentioned, we do not have a Klan problem in Mississippi, we do not have a militia problem in Mississippi. As Jim Friar also mentioned, we were doing quite well until June 17, when the churches were burned in Alcorn County.

I was the State's representative to the White House meeting on June 19. And I was very pleased to represent this State, to discuss our church burnings, what we had been doing, and what we intend to do in the future.

And I want to say to the Commissioner, I was very impressed from the standpoint that we have been prepared, we were ready and able to answer all questions, and at the same time, after listening to some of the other Governors and some of the other representatives, I found out that our task force was working much better than most of the other Southern States. I think probably because we've had the experience. I think probably because we have had a history of having to investigate hate crimes, civil rights violations, fire bombings, killings. And I think we've had that history from that standpoint.

And I told Attorney General Janet Reno and Deval Patrick, the Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Division, I said, "I'm coming away from this meeting feeling very good, because what we're doing in Mississippi, we're a few years ahead of some of the other States."

And so from that standpoint, I would like to mention from the White House conference, and the President made it very clear after listening during the 2½ hour session, that there has been no evidence of a conspiracy in church burnings. Yes, there is evidence of racial motivation, and some hate crimes.

As Mr. Friar pointed out, the Pike County burnings alone, those were hate crimes. And those individuals were sentenced 37 months to jail. But we, in the Department of Public Safety, we have eight divisions. We have the crime lab, and going on, but the largest segment, of course, is the Mississippi Highway Patrol, State police.

We have the complete and full resources made available to the FBI and to the ATF, and to the fire marshal's office. And we are ready at all hours, at all times to work any type of hate crime, church burnings, etcetera.

In fact, the way it has been set up, we've had over 75 investigators just in Alcorn County alone. We would have an FBI agent teamed with a State police officer. ATF, Jim Cavanaugh made it very clear, he's understaffed. They're gone all the time.

And we are working together. And I'll tell you what, we are sending a message. We're going to solve the crimes at Alcorn County. We're going to solve those crimes. We cannot discuss it here to-

night, but I think the public will be very pleased when they find out that, yes, we put a lot of effort, a lot of polygraphs, hypnosis, all of the sophisticated investigation that we can do, and we will send a message to others that, no, this will not be tolerated in this State.

Now, any questions that I might respond to, I'd be very pleased to. Yes, sir?

Mr. Foster. Yes. Regarding—we're going to go back to the Pike and Amite County case. Those persons are sentenced to a certain number of months in jail. Do you feel that the sentences they got were lenient?

Mr. Ingram. I never discuss, Mr. Foster, what the judge's—

Mr. Foster. The reason I'm asking that is leading to another question.

Mr. Ingram. Okay. You go right ahead.

Mr. Foster. Regarding the severity of cases once you get a person tried for the case, if the signal is sent by the State that you will only get 36 months for burning a church, then you would probably have more fires reoccur. But if the sentence is more severe, do you feel that it would deter a lot of that?

Mr. Ingram. I'm going to comment in this way: Phil Bryant, a State representative, is present here tonight. He is also a fire investigator. He is introducing legislation this year that will stiffen church burning crimes. And that, again, will send a message. I agree with you, it should be stiffer.

But along the same as Mr. Cavanaugh mentioned, usually we have other type crimes committed by these same individuals.

Mr. Foster. Okay. The other question I had regarding this is whether or not it was the State that tried these people, or was it the Federal Government?

Mr. Ingram. No. It was concluded that it would be best to have the Federal Government under the Hate Crimes Act.

Mr. Foster. But wouldn't it be a crime under the State statute also?

Mr. Ingram. Yes, it is. But at the same time, just like in the days—in the sixties I was here. I had the civil rights desk for the FBI in the 1960s here. And I've been in law enforcement for 43 years.

During those days, even under State law, it was best to proceed under the Federal law because you would stand a better chance for a conviction, such as the Philadelphia case, such as the Damer fire bombing and death. It was best at that time to proceed through the Federal court systems.

Times have changed, but you will hear from Federal prosecutors later this evening who can address that very question, Mr. Foster, on the sentencing by the court. Our job is to collect the evidence, find the individuals who committed this crime. Let the prosecutors prosecute and let the judge sentence.

Mr. Range. Commissioner Ingram, I have two questions for you. First, thanks for coming out tonight and being with us. You made a reference to the fact that you were at the FBI, at the civil rights desk in the 1960s, and you were in charge of investigating a large number of fires, church fires back then.

Mr. Ingram. Yes, sir.

Mr. Range. And my question to you is, is there a difference between—do you detect a difference between what happened in the 1960s, and what we see happening now?

Mr. Ingram. Mr. Range, there is no comparison. There was no comparison during the fifties, sixties, and seventies than what we have today. We had the hate crimes from the standpoint where you did have the Klan involved, you had sheriffs involved, you had deputy sheriffs involved. We do not have that today. We do not—it's not even close. We're dealing with a different segment of people.

Still, there's hate involved, we know that, but at the same time in Yazoo County, the young man who has been arrested and charged cannot see white or black. He has a problem, and at the same time he's a pyromaniac. He's burned several places. So hate is not an issue there. We have not been able to find that.

In some of these other cases we will not end up with hate, we'll end up with some young men, and women by the way, that this is not a hate thing to them. They want to do something like graffiti. Some people get caught up in graffiti, and that's all they want to do is deface and mark something. You have people who destroy graves in the cemetery. But it's one or two times and it's over.

We do not have that pattern of conspiracy, Mr. Range. We're dealing with a different segment, but it's a serious one. And that was the point of the White House conference that we all agreed we have a serious situation that we must attack, and that's why the task forces are in place.

And that's why I'm so proud of Mississippi. I was embarrassed, and I'm going to say it openly, with some of the people who brought six to eight staff members and openly stated, trying to say we're not getting the help that we need. They didn't know what they were talking about.

They should have planned long before they got there, Dr. Berry. Mississippi is—we have a plan in place, and it's working, and we'll see the results.

Mr. Range. My other question, Commissioner, is I had a conversation with you recently about your trip to the White House, and you said that Secretary Cisneros had mentioned the idea of patrolling some of the churches. And there was an article in the paper yesterday that indicates that some of the rural churches are beginning to patrol their own grounds. What do you think about the idea of patrols as a—either by law enforcement or by churches as a means of preventing these kind of crimes?

Mr. Ingram. Mr. Range, we are very pleased to see the church congregations get involved, very much. As you know, in Mississippi we have rural churches that do not always meet just on Sundays. They may meet every other Sunday. And they're at the end of a rural road where they're hard to find. The two churches in Alcon County are very hard to find.

And we encourage the congregations to set up committees. But at the same time, we also encourage those committees to set up a liaison with law enforcement, that when they do take down that pickup truck driving down that country road at night, they take the license number, they take as much information that they can and then give it to law enforcement.

And I think it's one that needs attention. Law enforcement is doing their job. Law enforcement did not at all times do their job in Mississippi in the sixties. They are now, I can tell you, with experience.

Ms. Keys. Mr. Ingram, you said you have a plan and the plan is working. And I'm sorry for coming in late, I drove up from south of Jackson. What's the plan for dealing especially with the hate crimes as opposed to others? What significance—

Mr. Ingram. And you're talking in terms of arsons itself?

Ms. Keys. Either arsons or dealing with the hate crimes that you, yourself say that—

Mr. Ingram. It all starts with someone making that phone call, either to the ATF, the FBI, or the Mississippi Highway Patrol. And then stating we have a fire that is occurring in such and such a church in such and such a county, etcetera.

We've had three this week. We had a church burning in Itawamba County Sunday. We had a church burning in Lucedale last week, and they were all accidental. But we immediately responded, the ATF, the State fire marshal's office, the FBI, the Mississippi Highway Patrol, and the sheriff, or if it's within the city, that particular police department.

Then we collectively start dividing up the leads, whether you start interviewing everyone in a radius of 2 or 3 miles, ATF has the scene. ATF is in charge of the scene because they are professionals. They can tell you in a short time what accelerants were used on this church, or any type of a—whether it's a business or anything else.

So the plan is in place. The FBI then starts the list. We will start talking to these people. We have certain suspects. Where were they at 9:00 p.m.? they have to account for their whereabouts.

The highway patrol sets up roadblocks; we do investigations along with them. Our crime lab—we've got a tremendous crime lab in the State of Mississippi. We assist also, fingerprints and everything else.

So the plan is there and it's working.

Ms. Keys. Just one followup question. You said there're no militias or things like that in Mississippi. Is there any organized activity that you know about, or the Commissioner, or the department of public safety, organized hate group activity in Mississippi, either that you're monitoring or that you're aware of?

Mr. Ingram. This is something that we discuss weekly with our staff. We have no known organized plan, hate group, or militia that is active

within this State.

Now, I felt good to make that statement on June 16. And as my two colleagues have mentioned earlier, we were both shocked with Alcorn with three churches. We were shocked and hurt.

As a law enforcement officer of 43 years, I, myself, was hurt. I was ready to go to the White House and say, "Look at us in Mississippi, we've been there. We know what we're doing, we know where we're going, and we know how to get there and come back."

But we were hurt over those fires. It's a challenge to us to solve it, and we will.

Dr. Ward. Mr. Ingram, if we have no problems with Klan or militia, we do have a problem with the media. In Richton, there is a certain individual who's activities are from some perspectives a little suspect, especially with visits to Neo-Nazis and other kinds of things that this person has said. So if we don't have this problem here, the media has lied about this person's activities. That's what I'm trying to say.

Mr. Ingram. Yes.

Dr. Ward. The person was invited to make a statement before this body. Not tonight, but earlier, chose not to do so.

Mr. Ingram. Oh, I'm happy that he didn't.

Dr. Ward. But I—this is one person, and I don't want to call the person's name because he's not the issue. But we have to be a little cautious about saying what we don't have in this State. Because at some unannounced time, such people are going to pop up.

Mr. Ingram. Let me tell you this. I will not back down from my statements, Dr. Ward. This man is an embarrassment to this State. This man travels from—he goes to L.A., we get phone calls from the L.A., Los Angeles Police Department, the New York Police Department. Who is this guy? He shows, or one or two Skinheads. Each city has them. But he is one that no one is going to follow.

Dr. Ward. I hope.

Mr. Ingram. Oh, I do too. Don't worry, if he does commit a crime and is found guilty, he knows, as an attorney, we're going to send him to Parchment as fast as we can get him. That's our State penitentiary. Thank you.

Mr. Lott. I've gotten a little tired of reading the papers, but somewhere I thought that there was an article that said that—I don't know if it was your office in conjunction with George Dale—and the insurance commissioner's office was having some type forum or class for rural churches on fire prevention. Am I remembering this right?

Mr. Ingram. Yes, you are.

Mr. Lott. Could you enlighten some on that?

Mr. Ingram. Mr. Lott, in other words, George Dale has made an announcement that they would hold seminars at their training, Fire Marshal's Training Academy for anyone who would like to attend. They could give ideas, tips, training sessions, and it's open, and it's a good segment.

Mr. Lott. You mentioned that, of course, you go back a long time with the FBI here in Mississippi. What is the spirit of cooperation between the State and the Federal Government as you see it?

Mr. Ingram. Oh, I tell you, I was the agent in charge of the FBI office in New York, the agent in the charge of the FBI in Chicago, I worked in Washington, D.C., for many years. It's better in Mississippi than any place I've ever seen. It just works.

There's no one after any publicity, anything else, all we want to do is solve these crimes. We're very proud of our cooperation. And the sheriffs, we have no complaint on the 82 sheriffs. They're ready to work with us.

Mr. Lott. Another question. Do you feel that—of course there have been church fires reported all over, there have been some in Oregon, Washington State, up in the Carolinas, probably all over. Do you feel that the south has been unfairly singled out and this conspiracy thrown out or what do you feel about that?

Mr. Ingram. Mr. Lott, I do not—I have never felt that we were singled out. If we have a crime, then law enforcement is called upon to find those individuals that committed that crime. We're not being singled out. If a crime is being committed, then we have to stand ready to solve that crime, and we have no problem with that.

Mr. Lott. Thank you.

Dr. Berry. Mr. Ingram, I'm a little bit confused. You said that you were absolutely committed to solving these crimes in Alcorn County, that's the June 17—

Mr. Ingram. That's right.

Dr. Berry. We were referring to those. And the FBI and the ATF agents talked about—Mr. Cavanaugh and Mr. Friar about solving these particular crimes. Did I miss—what happened to the other fires, have they all been solved?

Mr. Ingram. No, they have not. The March burning here in Ruleville has not been solved. The one in Yazoo City has been solved. The one in Meridian, yes. And so then we have one in Amory.

But that does not mean that we do not have the full court press on those. What we have, we're trying to send a signal from Alcorn, since there were three, and as Mr. Cavanaugh mentioned, 17 minutes apart. We've got over a $20,000 reward mentioned. Money talks. Someone—well, I'm not going to get into any other details because that's Mr. Cavanaugh and Mr. Friar, but we know a lot more on these than what we can relate here publicly tonight on the others.

Dr. Berry. Okay. But you were just emphasizing those because you see that as the latest ones and symbolic because—

Mr. Ingram. That's right, three in one night. In other words, a signal had been sent to us. So we in law enforcement want to send that same signal back.

Dr. Berry. I see. Okay. I understand.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much Commissioner Ingram.

Mr. Ingram. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Dr. Ward. Is Dr. Allen Dennis here? Dr. Dennis, would you please come forward.

Dr. Dennis, welcome. For the record, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Allen Dennis, Chair, Department of History, Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi

Dr. Dennis. My name is Allen Dennis, 1712 Terrace Road, Cleveland.

Dr. Ward. And ZIP Code?

Dr. Dennis. 38732.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much. Do you have an opening statement that you would like to make?

Dr. Dennis. Well, first of all, Dr. Ward, I will say "hello" to you. I don't know if you recall or not, but you and I served on the Mississippi Humanities Council back in the 1970s. I don't know if there are any other college faculty members here besides you and me tonight. But as a fellow college faculty member, "good evening." I was once an English major. I went astray somewhere and fell in the history department, but I'm glad to see you.

When Mr. Hernandez came by the office last week, he asked me if I would speak to the group about—and gave me 10 minutes to talk about the history of the Delta and the history of race relations in the Delta in 10 minutes. I feel like I'm on the last day of spring semester trying to cover from 1940 to 1996 in one day.

And those of us who have been in the college faculty business for a long time know that. In fact, I have such a small amount of time that I would simply recommend to all of you what I think is the best book on the history of the Delta, and also the history of race relations in the Delta, and that's Jim Cobb's recent book called *The Most Southern Place on Earth.*

Dr. Cobb is a fellow Tennessean, or at least is in Tennessee now at the University of Tennessee and, in fact, spent some time here at Delta State in our archives doing research on this book. And I think anybody who's read it and who's spent any amount of time in the Delta understands that Dr. Cobb did a wonderful job.

I don't quite know where to begin. David Cohn, many years ago, said that the Mississippi Delta stretched from the Peabody Hotel Lobby to Catfish Row in Vicksburg, and that's a kind of generic statement, to be sure. If I were in Mississippi history class, I guess I would say it stretched from the Tennessee border to Vicksburg, and from the Loess Bluffs over here at Grenada and Greenwood to the Mississippi, bordered on the north by Tennessee, on the south by Vicksburg, on the west by the Mississippi River, and on the east by the Yazoo River, the Tallahatchie, the Yalobusha, and the Coldwater, taking up about 7,100 square miles of what one writer once described as the richest land this side of the Nile Valley.

And in the period after the Civil War is when the Delta first began to be settled, because this part of the State was basically inaccessible for a great many years. You look at pre-Civil War maps of

Mississippi, and look at what we now call the Delta, and it simply calls it the swamp, because of the fact there were no levees, and the river came all the way to the bluffs over here. And the first parts of the Delta to be settled were the points along the river because they came down from the north and settled along the river, and this part of the State was really impenetrable because of the water.

But as time developed, and the levee system became not only—there was at first a private levee system, and then it became an adjunct to the government, the Delta was dried, the Delta was cleared, the Delta was planted, and we began to have a situation in the Delta that was the classic landed aristocracy or the classic plantation aristocracy, a land that developed with a relatively few fairly wealthy whites and a great many poor blacks.

And it continued that way for a long time with the rise of no substantive middle class in the Delta, I would say. No substantive industrial middle class, because there was little if any industry in the Delta.

After World War II is when the rise of the middle class began, I believe, in the Delta, as far as a discernible body of people that were not tied to the land. In recent years we have seen, particularly in Cleveland, I'll speak to that in just a second, we have seen the rise of a fairly substantial black middle class in the Delta, which 40 or 50 years ago was practically nonexistent except for a few people here and there.

So I feel almost as though I should say nothing about the history of the Delta, the history of race relations of the Delta because one would not know exactly where to start. If I may, I think that what I'd really like to say and talk to you about is my personal experience, both from where I'm from and where I've been for the last 31 years.

I am from a little town in East Tennessee, in the mountains of East Tennessee, between Knoxville and Chattanooga, where I lived for the first 22 years of my life and went to school. It's a town, a county that's about 8 percent black, about 92 percent white.

And then in 1965, after I graduated from college, I came to Mississippi State to graduate school, spent 3 years over there, and was that the lowest form of human life—the ABD—hadn't finished my dissertation, and I came over here trying to stay close to Starkville so I could finish my degree, and now this summer I'm completing 28 years on the faculty at Delta State.

So I've come from the mountains of East Tennessee, where there were almost no blacks to an area in which there are a great many blacks, about 65 to 69 percent in this county, and therefore I've seen a lot of changes, a lot of situations that perhaps some people who have either stayed in one place all of their lives have not seen, but someone such as I who's been in both places, or in two different places like this can easily see.

When I came to Delta State in 1968, I had just turned 25 years old, and Delta State's enrollment was about 2,200. The irony of it is, as I look back on it now, and I think this is true of anybody of my generation and my age, I'm 53, anybody who's been reared in the South and is my age—I went to a school system in East Tennessee that was segregated.

I graduated from high school in 1961, and in 1962, the formally all black elementary school and all black high school in my county were simply abolished and absorbed without Court order into the school system.

And then I came to—I went to college there in my hometown, and went to graduate school at Mississippi State. I find that, and I tell classes this all the time, the first black student I was ever in a classroom with I taught here at Delta State in the fall of 1968. Because my system was segregated, my college that I went to had a few blacks, but I had none in any classes I went to. Mississippi State in the mid-sixties was beginning to have a few black students, but there were none in any classes I went to.

And so I recall that very clearly in 1968. And my basic impression or knowledge of race relations in the Delta is largely confined to what I've seen here at Delta State, and largely confined to what I've seen here in Cleveland. And I suppose that's what you would wish me to speak about or at least react to is my impression of that.

And if I may say this in a more personal way, I've sort of worn two hats in some respects.

Sometimes they seem contradictory. On the one hand I've been a college professor now for over 28 years.

And on the other hand, I've been a preacher. I may be the only Church of Christ preacher in the State of Mississippi that ever preached full-time for a Baptist church, which if you know anything about either one, you might know how interesting that is. But I did, I have.

And consequently, I would, without trying to be generic or overly simplifying, I would simply say I've seen a great deal of progress in race relations in the last 28 years, but it's not nearly what it ought to be.

And I feel as though, and I'll tie this statement to my comment about the church situation—and my wife and I talk about this a lot. It's my feeling that if there's any social organization that ought to have a life changing agenda, and ought to be what one might call a radical organization that's out to change people's lives, it ought to be the church.

And if there's any organization that ought to treat all people equally, it ought to be the church. And yet in the South and elsewhere, what we often find is that the church is the most conservative of social organizations, and often the most segregated. And I suspect that if that were different, if minds could be changed in that way, then legislation would far more easily follow and be more productive.

I feel inadequate to address the entire history of Delta race relations in a small amount of time, but I'd be happy to try to respond to any questions you might have.

Mr. Range. Ruleville is not too far from here, and we heard that the fire there was started with burning a hymnal on a pew.

Dr. Dennis. I thought it was a Bible, but perhaps it was a hymnal.

Mr. Range. A Bible or hymnal on a pew. Kossuth is some distance away. It's not the Delta, but what is your reaction as a Delta resident for some period of time to the fact that Mississippi, this area, this neighborhood is once again seeing some of these national crimes?

Dr. Dennis. I don't like it at all. I think we should have learned better that for anyone to attack anyone's place of worship is just beyond description as to how awful I think that is. While the church is not the building, the church is the body of people who meet there, the building itself becomes sacred and holy to the ones who go there to worship.

And if there's any place that ought to be sacred and not profaned in any way, it ought to be that. And I don't like it at all. I can't say it any harder than that.

Mr. Range. What do you think about the reaction to the fires where different congregations have come together, money has been raised—

Dr. Dennis. I think that's wonderful.

Mr. Range. —what do you think that says about the climate that we're in?

Dr. Dennis. I think to the extent that happens, it ought to happen more, and I think that we're seeing a spirit of teamwork right there and fellowship is the word I would use in the church terminology that I think is a cure to a lot of bad things.

Mr. Range. It's too bad it takes that kind of crisis to—

Dr. Dennis. You are right. You are right.

Dr. Ward. Dr. Dennis, Mr. Cavanaugh mentioned that in addition to the fires, there have been, in several neighboring counties—and I don't recall his mentioning this, however, he might have—that there have been robberies in churches or break-ins. Has that been a problem in the Cleveland area, and if so, how has it been addressed?

Dr. Dennis. No, sir. I don't recall hearing of that, except in this most recent incident. I've been here 28 years, and I've read our newspapers carefully for 28 years and tried to follow the best I can, and I don't recall that before, which is not to say it hasn't happened, but I don't recall it.

Ms. Keys. You say we need to be, we're not where we need to be. Where do we need to be and what's stopping us?

Dr. Dennis. Well, I would just repeat what I said a minute ago, and that is—and forgive me if I seem to emphasize the church situation too much, but if the church is supposed to be the inculcator of oral behavior and appropriate attitudes, I guess to whatever extent there's a failing in that regard, it should be laid at the feet of the church. It's been my experience as a student of history that whenever the church has failed in that sort of mission,

it's always turned to Government to correct it, with not particularly profitable ends.

We see now in our own time the rise of certain church groups that seem to want to take over certain parts of politics and have, perhaps, certain parties take up their agenda and things of that nature. And it just disturbs me as a historian to see that mix go on.

I still would say that the chief cornerstone of a—if not a cure to this problem, at least a solution for this problem is the church. And the proper inculcation of proper attitudes to other races, things of that nature.

Mr. Lott. Dr. Dennis, I guess, I don't know, I may be the only one from the Delta up here, I'm from Greenwood, and that's where most of the acts of burglary that we're talking about actually centered over in Greenwood. And as familiar as anyone can be reading the paper, it was a bunch of kids, a bunch of kids.

And it seems that, as you said, the church is—these churches that have burned, they're just the building, they're not the congregation. But the church that I go to was founded in 1846, and I've been going there—I'm 34—'ve been going there for 32 years.

And for a lot of these people, that was the same situation, it was their life church, that's where they've always gone, and that's one thing that's pretty indicative of the Delta is people don't change a whole bunch. They kind of stick in the same patterns.

But, of course, I'm kind of looking at things a little differently, because to me everybody has their own view on this, you can read them every day. But I see it as a fall down in moral character, perhaps a moving away by a younger generation to things that other people hold sacred, beliefs that were taught by their elders, maybe as a result of TV violence, not a good upbringing, not a two-parent home. You know, numerous reasons here.

But do you feel that there's an attack on religion in the United States, particularly in the South?

Dr. Dennis. Mr. Lott, that's a good question. And you mentioned about is there a discrepancy between the views, say of my generation, and the views of the modern generation. I think any of us who are parents can speak to that. Any of us who have teenagers would say, "What in the world is wrong with you?" and things like that.

Again, I must couch what I say to you in a way that makes sense to me. Is there an attack on religion? It depends on what one means by religion, because each person has his own version of religion, each person has his own concept of what the church is.

Sometimes I think that churches, rather than being seekers for truth, are protectors of orthodoxy, whatever that particular group's version of orthodoxy is, happens to be what they talk about, what they protect. And the disturbing thing to me about the church in general, if that's what you mean by religion, is that it's too often a social club with uninvolved people doing uninvolved things on Sunday morning once a week.

And when it comes to commitment and dedication to what I presume that to stand for, it's lacking. It's a pro firma sort of thing as opposed to something that people think about and do on a regular basis.

I feel like I should sing 16 verses of "Just As I Am" the way I'm talking up here.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much, Dr. Dennis.

Dr. Dennis. Thank you. Good to see you again.

Dr. Ward. Is Mr. Wayne Nicholas here?

Mr. Nicholas, thank you very much for coming. Would you please state your name and mailing address for the record?

Statement of Wayne Nicholas, Managing Editor, *The Bolivar Commercial*, Cleveland, Mississippi

Mr. Nicholas. My name is Wayne Nicholas. I'm the managing editor of the *Bolivar Commercial* here in Cleveland, which is the local newspaper.

Dr. Ward. And the address for the record.

Mr. Nicholas. P.O. Box 1050, Cleveland, 38732.

Dr. Ward. Do you have an opening statement that you'd like to make?

Mr. Nicholas. Yes, sir. When asked to speak about the coverage of church fires in the *Bolivar Commercial*, my first thought was that we don't do it any differently than we would do any other story. We simply try to tell what's happened the best way we can, and if possible, why it happened.

When arsonists set Union Grove Missionary

Baptist Church on fire in the predawn hours on Friday, September 7, 1990, the newspaper initially ran a photograph of the fire, and later that day we interviewed members of the church for a story which we ran on September 10.

The story told of problems the church had had with vandals prior to the church fire. Paraphrasing, Dolly Miller, church mother at Union Grove, we noted that she said vandals once wrote KKK inside the church about 1½ years prior to that fire. Mischief makers took down the pictures inside the building and painted them red.

Back in the 1960s somebody broke in and put red paint all over the word of God, the Bible, Mrs. Miller recalled. They went to that church and did a lot of dirt. Mrs. Miller commented, "I don't like to accuse anybody of anything, but the devil stays busy."

The story also quoted S.B. Price, then the church pastor as saying caps had been screwed off the gas pipelines leading to the church. The story told readers where they could contribute money to help the church rebuild, and I was told the other night by a Mrs. Nita Lee, who is a member of that church, that several whites contributed to the rebuilding of the church. And yes, that probably helped race relations more than any of the sick vandals or racists could ever harm it.

Just as a newspaper does not hesitate to point out when such incidents are the products of vandalism or bigotry, it also points out when other reasons are believed to be behind the church fires.

When the True Light Missionary Baptist Church burned in 1995, the *Bolivar Commercial* stated, first of all, in the first story we talked about member's beliefs that it may have been arson.

In the second story we did the following day, we quoted the State fire marshal, Charles Neal of Clarksdale, as saying that he didn't think the cause was arson. "I didn't find anything out of line," he commented. Neal added that he found a wire with internal shorts and concluded from that that the fire may have started from that.

On June 20, 1996, the third month anniversary of an attempted arson fire at New Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Ruleville, we ran a story talking about the fact the case was still unsolved.

We recounted last Monday, July 8, about a Massachusetts middle school which collected $1,400 to help the church. We quoted Charles Jones, a deacon at the church as saying it shows how the country can pull together. People who didn't know anything about Mississippi are helping us.

The picture accompanying this story showed a white Massachusetts school teacher handing Jones, a black, a check. Jones was standing between her and a white chamber of commerce secretary.

From Jones' remark about the people pulling together, and from the picture I would conclude that race relations probably benefited in the aftermath of that church's fire.

Jones also told our correspondent, Debbie Ingram Long, that he thought the fire was a work of vandals, and that racism did not appear to be a contributing factor. Jones said that there were no racial slurs actually written on the church property.

Even so, Jones said that vandalism was so frequent that the church is moving, relocating into Ruleville.

I just got a call tonight before I came here, and somebody wanted to know all of the churches in the area that had been vandalized or set on fire because—it was the Catholic church here, which I believe is predominantly white, because they wanted to make contributions to those churches.

Thanks to our columnist and the Associated Press, we've also tried to put the recent rash of church burnings into perspective, both historically and in terms of what is now happening.

On Tuesday, July 2, for example, we carried a column by veteran Mississippi columnist, Bill Minor, that recounted the difference between the attitude of Mississippians toward the burning of black churches in the 1960s and now.

Minor noted, for example, Mississippi was the church burning capital of America back then, although few nationally seemed to pay much attention. Certainly nothing like the celebrity interest now being generated elsewhere in rebuilding the burned out places of worship, and then replacing them with bigger and more elaborate structures.

The box score of burned black churches southwide stood at 32 last week. This was a couple of weeks ago. In Mississippi alone, 42 churches were

burned in 1964 to 1965, most of them in the horrendous summer of 1964. The columns pointed out that in the climate of the 1960s, virtually no one no one, was arrested for those fires.

Associated Press [AP] stories carried in the *Bolivar Commercial* have also added to the perspective. A recent AP story, for example, pointed out what we've already discussed tonight, that in the last 18 months there have been 75 fires at white churches and 73 at black churches. It added that the tally for the past 6 years offers a wider margin, 248 arsons at white churches compared to 161 at black churches.

It noted that Mississippi averages about two black fires at its churches a year. At the time the ones in Kossuth burned, the State total for the year was four, according to the article.

It noted that since 1990, 23 people have been sent to Federal and State prison as a result of the arsons. And though it said many of the unsolved cases are believed to be works of juveniles or burglars, it also noted some of the fires are clearly the product of racism.

We have tried to remain objective in our coverage of the church fires. I think to do less would be a disservice to our readers. We try our best to tell it like it is. If it's racism, we try to show that. If it's something else, we try to show that.

In recent years in the editorial page we've campaigned for stricter laws covering hate crimes. In recent days we've espoused two or three ideas about the church burning. And I hope that it might possibly serve as a deterrent.

First, we have contended that the best way to give a church a boost is persecute it. Burn their church, and a congregation usually builds a bigger, better one back. Burn any church and you find people of both races will come to its aid. You can burn a church building down in this country, but in this day and time when it happens, all you really accomplish is to light a fire under the congregation. Congregations raise churches out of the ashes, and usually do better after that than they did before.

Second, our editorial page has contended that the price of hatred is going up. It discussed a newer and stronger Federal law recently that doubled the penalty for burning a church in which someone is harmed. The penalty went from 10 to 20 years in prison.

In other words, we've tried to show that burning churches for whatever reasons doesn't pay—in this life or the next. An editorial cartoon by *Bolivar Commercial* staff member, Ricky Noble, for example, showed a picture of the devil in hell surrounded by fire, and the caption was, if you like fire, you'll love it here. I think that's a good point, and a good point to be made here, which is, as one preacher told me, the buckle of the Bible Belt.

An editorial in the *Bolivar Commercial* Tuesday, July 9 also made another point we consider important. The editorial began by describing the conversation of two white people, one a young clerk, and the other an older customer as they stood in a Cleveland store last Saturday discussing these church fires. They seemed to be on the right track, the editorial commented, adding:

Said the customer to the clerk: "It's not black churches they're burning. It's not white churches they're burning. What they're burning is God's church."

"Yeah, that's exactly the way I feel about it," the clerk said. I think that conversation shows that Mississippi, though it may still experience racial hatred, has come a long way since the 1960s. And I believe the conversation in the editorial focused attention where it should be, and that is that though fires at some churches are motivated by racism, racial hatred is not always the spark that burns our churches down.

It is our observation and belief that the civil right that is being most often violated is the one contained in the first amendment. It has nothing to do with white against black or black against white. It's the part of the first amendment that gives us permission in this country to freely practice our faith.

The editorial Tuesday ended with a call for blacks and whites to come together. And it said, and I quote: "And then seizing on the unity that's been forged in this present crisis, we should roll up our sleeves and work side by side to put an end to the arsons, and to raise up the victimized churches out of the ashes of our times." The result might be surprising. Least we forget the Psalmists wrote that "When the Brethren dwell together in unity, God

commands the blessing."

Dr. Berry. I have a number of questions, if you don't mind. Thank you very much for your testimony. Could you tell me how much racial segregation exists in Cleveland, and in the areas in which these churches have been burned? Are the schools segregated, or the—

Mr. Nicholas. In the one, Union Grove Baptist Church, the one that burned to the ground in the predawn hours of 1990, down the—not too far away from there was a church that had in its bulletin, and it may still have, it is a white church, that we believe that it's God's will that the races be separated.

My wife asked—at that time I wasn't married. When she showed me that bulletin, she said "Is this Christian?" I said, "No." And eventually she joined another church.

Dr. Berry. Well, I only ask you a question because I thought, and I may be totally wrong about this, and my information may be incorrect, but I thought that most of the black children in this area go to predominantly black schools, and many of the white children go to predominantly white schools, and that schools are segregated, not the de jure, but de facto, and that there is a great racial divide, not only in church on Sunday, but in other areas in this State and in this particular—in the Delta here. And I just wondered whether my information was incorrect or not.

I have another question directly about the churches, but I wanted to know whether that information was—

Mr. Nicholas. Well, I think that's somewhat correct. I think in the churches, I go to a lot of them, I was a cripple 20 years ago and somebody prayed for me, and you can see that I'm walking now. So I go to a lot of them. And I'd go into black churches and have been welcome there, and I've seen blacks come to our churches. We have a black member in the Lutheran church that I go to now.

I've seen, though, that whether it's peer pressure or what it is, that very often a black will start coming to a white church, be received there—a little church down the street, Word of Faith, that no longer exists, but I was going to that church and we had black members, but eventually for whatever reason, they take off, they quit coming. And yet they're greeted as brothers and sisters.

I have seen, when I came here—I came here from North Carolina where I saw the Klan in North Carolina burn crosses. I haven't seen that here.

When I first came here, for example, and I would go into a black section to take a picture, a feature picture, I was greeted with lots of suspicion. What are you taking a picture for? I was taking a picture of a kid. What are you taking a picture for? Well, I thought it was a good picture. So I think there is racial prejudice here. Unfortunately I think it's a double-edged sword.

Dr. Berry. Well, I just wanted to know how much segregation there was.

Mr. Nicholas. Well, Cleveland High School is integrated. Eastside is all-black. Eastside High School here in Cleveland is all-black. Bell Elementary is mainly black, which is part of the Cleveland School District. The magnet school here in the Cleveland School District, which is all of the best students, is I understand 50/50, 50 percent white and 50 percent black. I think it was set up that way intentionally, you know, they received Federal grants and they certainly had to be fair.

Ms. Keys. Do you have academies up here too?

Mr. Nicholas. We do have two. In Sunflower County, we have Sunflower Academy, which is all-white—North Sunflower County—is all-white. And we have Bayou Academy, and that's all-white too, or pretty much.

Dr. Berry. Well, I was only asking the question because I've been to other States for these forums. I've been to Alabama, Louisiana, and so on, and I come here and the demographic information that I have briefed myself on before I came here, and the information about the racial profile and race relations here as in the place I went to in Alabama and the place I went to in Louisiana indicated a high degree of segregation, indicated not much real communication between the races, and generally problems in race relations in the area.

I'm not trying to say any particular place is worse than any other, that's not my point. My point is that these were the indicators. And so the church burnings, what I have seen in some places, a great outpouring of sentiment to help rebuild

churches. Although I must say in one of the communities we visited, the local whites weren't helping, it was whites from somewhere else who came in to help the local people. It wasn't the local white people.

And then in another place the local whites were helping. But no real concern about dealing with the racial problems. I mean, everybody wanted to do something about the churches. It was great solidarity, but whenever you mention the race problems, or segregation or something, nobody wanted to discuss it. And, in fact, in one place I was I had people denying that there was segregation until I had to go out and visit the white academy to show them that I saw it and put my finger on it, and then come back, and they said, oh, yes, that exists.

So I'm just saying, do you understand why people may be willing to deal with the church burnings, and helping to rebuild the churches, and we can have great solidarity there, but that when it comes to really putting your finger on it and trying to deal with race relations generally, people are a little more sensitive about that? And any effort I try to make to try to say, "Okay, let's broaden the discussion here," I get a lot of resistance. I'm just trying to get some help from you to explain it to me.

Mr. Nicholas. Okay. I'm trying to think what I've encountered here. A little of it will be on church because I'm very aware of that aspect. But when Union Grove burned to the ground, the first contribution that came in to rebuild that church was from a white person, and it was for $800.

They built the church on property that was donated by a white person. It's an all-black church. I've gotten very few calls at the office that were racist. I got one, for example, one in 11 years I've been there. The guy says, "There're two black men walking down the street, and they have fishing poles. Why don't you run out and take a picture of them?" only they used some other words and hung up the phone.

Now, in Mt. Vernon, New York, when I was editor there of the Mt. Vernon *Daily Argus* in 1973, I was called before the—I was running pictures of black children in the newspaper—I was called before the Italian American Civic League and the first question they asked me is "Tell me the truth, why do you hate Italian Americans." And we were also picketed for running pictures of black children.

And, to me, a photograph, if it's a good photograph, it's not determined by race, creed, or color. I have not seen—I read a lot about Mississippi before I came here. I have not seen the hard hostility that I imagined.

Now, we have the history of Mississippi in Ruleville, where that church was burned, Fannie Lou Hammer came from there. I remember reading a story in a book, "This Little Light of Mine," that talked about black families who tried to register to vote, about their houses being shot and being greeted at the hospital by the mayor saying, "Well, you deserve it, you can't use the hospital." They had wounded children.

I read a story about one prominent American politician whose father, who—one of his relatives was killed, and they got together in a lynch mob of about 1,000 people around the turn of the century. They caught the black man who was suspected of the murder, and they caught his wife. They gouged their eyes out, then tied them to the stake and they burned them.

That's not the Mississippi that I live in today. In Drew, Mississippi, 15 miles from here, a black man, sharecropper took all of the guff he could from the guy who owned the land, and he finally shot him. He was tracked down in a swamp and killed, and his ears were cut off, something I also saw American soldiers do in Vietnam, and they were put in formaldehyde and kept in a drug store in Drew for 3 or 4 months on exhibit.

I haven't seen that since I've been here. And I pray, I really pray that that kind of hatred is something that belongs to the history books, and not to the Mississippi of today. I was really heartened when I walked into Chris' Hallmark the other day and heard that conversation between two white people. And they said, "This is not an attack on black churches or white churches, this is an attack on God's church."

And I think that's something that's going on in the 20th century. If you look at the statistics worldwide of the church, you have more people who have been martyred for being Christians in the last century—this present century—than in all of

the 19 centuries that came before.

You have right now in the Sudan—they've reinstituted crucifixion for Christians. They've reinstituted slavery for Christians. Russia used to use chemicals—the Soviet Union used to use mind changing chemicals to get people to deny their God.

In Romania, thousands and thousands of Christians died digging a canal across the country that never quite got to the sea, but it was just a, basically a slave labor project, and their crime was being Christian. A lot of Christians would spend 14, 15 years in prison just for their faith. A lot of Christians were led before the firing squad during the days of the Soviet empire.

I think that that's going on today. I think what you're seeing in America is a manifestation of it.

Dr. Berry. Can I just ask a question? Up in this area, who runs this area? Where I come from, you can talk about progress, but one whole area where there's very little progress is on the economic front. And you can say there's been progress in race relations, but when it comes to who owns the industry, who owns the means of production, it's still in the hands of the families, the gentry that had it for years, and that seems to still be impenetrable and it's still creating a terrific gulf. Is that the way it is up here still? Who runs things? Who owns things?

Mr. Nicholas. As mentioned earlier tonight, there's been a rise in the black middle class, so the economic conditions are improving in some areas. Bolivar County is among the 75 poorest counties in the Nation. Our infant mortality rate, for example, is higher than it is in Cuba and several other third world countries.

There're still shanties. You don't have to go too far to find shanties without paint, people living in poverty. You know, that's hard to imagine. The companies, the political boards here are either mixed, some of them are all-black, and the companies are companies like—well, they're not owned here, they're national companies like Baxter. They're owned by—who owns Baxter? I don't know.

You know the Tyson Chicken Plant? There are companies that cross over.

Dr. Berry. Do you think that affects the progress of race relations?

Mr. Nicholas. Now, somebody might be able to answer that question better than me. Economics has never been my strong point.

Mr. Range. I wanted to ask one question. Chairperson Berry raised a question about segregation in the schools, and I'm wondering, are there other instances of things happening in this community, perhaps other types of fires, or other unsolved murders that may indicate what race relations are like in this community?

Mr. Nicholas. Okay. I've seen—in the last week I've been to three major fires that completely destroyed houses. You've got a lot of old houses that burn very quickly when they catch on fire. They're gone by the time the volunteer fire department gets there.

Mr. Range. Who lived in the houses?

Mr. Nicholas. The fire in Benoit was a white couple. The fire outside of Cleveland, when the house was totally engulfed in flames, there wasn't anybody home, and the fire department was not able to tell us who lived there the next day. The fire in Shelby was black, and it burned the house—all three of these fires did major damage, burning the houses to the ground, basically.

The people in the fire in Shelby had lived in the house since 1972. At the time the fire started, the father of the house was out plowing cotton in a field about 3 miles away, and the mother was being a sitter with an elderly resident. And they had a couple of people at home. The fire started in the storage area.

Mr. Range. Are you aware of any unsolved murders of African Americans in the general area?

Mr. Nicholas. There are, but I can't give you specifics on it, yes. And I would suspect on whites too. That would be a great question to ask Sheriff H.M. "Mack" Grimmett, or the police chief. If I remembered, I would certainly not hesitate to tell you. But there are unsolved cases here. I am aware of that. And no great number of them, I don't believe, but some significant ones and some brutal murders.

There was one case that was controversial a couple of years ago, and Congressman Thompson brought it up when a black man who was high on cocaine broke into a house. He charged three

sheriff's deputies, and they shot him to death. He was unarmed.

The State highway patrol investigated it, and there were no charges brought against those officers.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much, Mr. Nicholas, for your comments, which we found very helpful.

The forum, I will remind everyone, is primarily on the matter of church burnings. And I am one of those impatient people. I really want to hear from people who have been directly affected. So I'm very glad that we're getting down to actually the churches.

Now, is Reverend B.J. Goffs here? Reverend Goffs is not here. Is Mr. Willie Kennan here, from St. John Missionary Baptist? No? Okay. Reverend Dexter Brown, New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church? Mr. Charles Jones? Okay. Is Mr. Charles Buckner here? Well, as Dr. Berry says, is there anyone from a church who has been affected? No?

All right. I will then ask if Professor Brian Levin is here.

Professor Levin, thank you very much for coming. For the record, would you state your name and mailing address, please?

Statement of Brian Levin, Associate Professor, Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Pomona, New Jersey

Mr. Levin. Professor Brian Levin, Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Jim Leeds, L-e-e-d-s, Leeds Road, Pamona, New Jersey, 08240.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Do you have an opening statement that you'd like to make?

Mr. Levin. Yes, I do. And I'm going to deviate just slightly from the prepared text, which you all will receive a copy.

First, Chairperson Berry, members of the Advisory Board, I want to thank you for the privilege of addressing you here tonight. My name is Brian Levin. As I said, I am an associate professor of criminal justice at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, where I also serve as director of a new center devoted to the study of hate crime and extremism.

Until last month, I served as associate director for legal affairs at the Southern Poverty Law Center's Klan Watch Project in Montgomery, Alabama. Last year crime watch counted 270 active hate groups throughout the United States, and numerous hate motivated murders, assaults, arsons, and bombings.

We have obviously been paying close attention to the disturbing increase in church fires at black churches throughout the Southeastern United States, over 60 at this point. A complete numerical breakdown I will provide the Commission at a later point.

Obviously we are extremely disturbed at these horrendous acts of terrorism that are striking our churches. It's reminiscent of some of the just horrible things that have occurred during the civil rights movement, and they certainly have no place in a pluralistic, democratic society.

Today, according to FBI statistics, African Americans remain the most frequent target for hate crime. Based on current data, I estimate that a hate crime occurs once every 15 to 30 minutes in the United States.

For a nation founded on the protection of religious liberty, the wanton destruction of these churches represents a direct assault not only on innocent parishioners, but in the very core values that define our national community and hold us together as people: equality, tolerance, and the rule of law.

My statement tonight will address two primary areas. First, I will analyze the type of individuals most likely to commit church arsons in this region. Next, I will assess the response of Federal, State, and local enforcement authorities in the region to all suspected hate crimes, rather than church arsons alone.

The response to the current rash of church fires by authorities in the region far exceeds the overall response to hate crimes in general. For that reason I will concentrate on the broader issue of an overall response to hate crime.

The first thing I want to say with regard to offenders is what I try to do is piece together what we know about hate crime offenders, and what we know about arson offenders, and what we know about the type of incidents that occurred in this particular region, and come up with a sketch, if you will.

Of course, it's only a composite sketch, and it's

only based on research data on one hand and available evidence on the other. So I caution you, with all of the disclaimers that are responsible, an academic would know that he or she is far more likely to regret making hardened conclusions than reasonable hypotheses.

My first statement is that prejudice often plays a substantial role, but we must be careful because offender type varies significantly. The perpetrators of the various church arsons throughout the Southeastern United States are likely to represent a diverse group of offenders and not a single organized hate conspiracy.

Most will be prejudiced thrill seekers. A smaller number will be hardened bigots/hate group members, or prejudiced individuals out to settle a score, while a sizeable remainder will consist of a miscellaneous assortment representative of traditional arsonists. These include social misfits, firebugs, the mentally unstable, and individuals with a more specific rationale for selecting their target, such as personal revenge or covering up a burglary or other crime.

My research indicates that hate crime offenses typically do not involve hate groups or committed hate mongers. Hate offenses do, however, have a disproportionate representation of perpetrators age 21 and under.

And if I may just show the Committee a chart, and I would just like to correct a couple of things in the chart. First of all, it's under the age of—21 or under. And the 26 percent represents all crimes, not hate crimes. That is an error.

But the bottom line that you can see here is about 50 percent of hate offenders are 21 or under, compared to about 26 percent for all types of crime. So generally, as I said, about 50 percent of hate offenders—and by the way, about 34 percent of arsonists are 21 or under.

Ninety-five percent of hate crime offenders are not hardened individuals or members of organized hate groups. The church arsonists will likely fit this overall pattern with a couple of notable exceptions. These arsons will involve slightly fewer very young offenders and more hardened hate mongers than hate crimes generally.

So what I'm saying is we're likely to see, and indeed from the arrestees anyway, it seems that we're likely to see more than the 5 percent that we usually do of the hardened hate offenders/hate group members, and we'll see slightly less of the very young.

A substantial number, perhaps 33 to 45 percent of offenders are likely to be young people age 21 or under. Because young people are more likely to commit hate crimes for pure validation because many are students at the same schools, it is likely that they will disproportionately be represented among the arrestees because of the relative ease of apprehending them as opposed to other types of offenders.

And, in fact, about 50 percent of the current arrestees charged in the recent arsons are young people.

The fact that most of these fires occur late at night in remote locations does not eliminate very young offenders. And I'm talking about juveniles, age 16 or under, from involving in these attacks, but it certainly makes their involvement less likely, even though many at this age will experiment with fire.

They still need to obtain fire accelerants and transportation to the remote church locations. A significant, but not insurmountable barrier for a young would-be arsonist.

Note that one of the youngest suspects currently charged is a 13-year-old female whose arson was, incidentally, at a metropolitan Charlotte church in North Carolina.

The other arrestees, though, generally are male, and it's likely that this pattern holds true for those still at large.

Youth 21 and under generally commit hate crimes because of pure validation, a need for excitement, self-identity issues, personal and sexual insecurity, and negative stereotyping. Many reflexively embrace these negative stereotypes. And these negative stereotypes label who is a legitimate target for aggression.

While the prejudice harbored by most of these offenders is both less structured and less well entrenched than the prejudice of extremist bigots, their attacks can be just as damaging and far more prevalent.

Furthermore, these church arsons allow less committed offenders an outlet for both their ag-

gression and their thrill seeking in a way that limits their risk of one, a direct violent confrontation; two, injury; and three, immediate apprehension.

A number of these young offenders, however, are hardened bigots who more rigorously define themselves by their racial in-group. They are committed to a detailed ideology that defines their target group as a bona fide enemy, rather than merely social outcasts with an array of negative characteristics, as is the case with the thrill seeking offender.

These offenders tend to premeditate more and consider their attacks as a necessary strike against an enemy group, and not just a social activity, which some of the thrill seeking offenders do.

For other young offenders, the excitement of setting a fire or committing a potentially well-publicized crime will be their primary motivation with racial animus playing a more diluted role. These individuals may be predisposed to commit another type of arson or other antisocial act if these church arsons were not publicized.

They enhance their sense of self-importance by being involved in something big and notable. These offenders have as much or more in common with mainstream social malcontent vandals and arsonists than they do with hard core bigots.

For these offenders the act itself, rather than the selection of the particular victim group will be the main attraction to the commission of the crime. Indeed, the secluded locations of these churches, the lack of full-time inhabitants, and the wood frame structures of some of these churches make them an attractive target for arsonists who might not harbor the more pronounced bigoted views.

The breakdown for adult offenders is similar. Most will be prejudiced thrill seekers. A smaller number will be hardened bigots and hate group members, and the rest, again, a miscellaneous assortment, including social misfits, firebugs, such as the Alabama fireman, and individuals with a more specific rationale for selecting their target, revenge, etcetera.

The majority of arsons are going to be committed by thrill-seeking males in their teens or twenties. Some of the offenders will be older. And these older offenders will probably harbor more significantly entrenched prejudice views than their younger counterparts.

Adult offenders commonly commit hate crimes to scapegoat economic or familial frustration, to protect "their families or communities from minorities," or to retaliate for some perceived transgression. And when I say transgression, I mean a transgression in their perverted zeitgeist of some norm that they adhere to by a minority member. So they're reacting to a perceived transgression in their list of norm by a minority member.

As I said, only about 5 percent of hate crimes generally are committed by hardened bigots or members of organized hate groups. It is likely that these individuals will be better represented in these particular church fires, and I think that's due to several factors.

First, hate groups tend to have an—unfortunately this is an itty bitty map here, but the best I can do on short notice.

Hate groups have a higher representation in the South than they do in other areas. Social surveys indicate that there is a slightly higher percentage of—

Dr. Ward. Mr. Levin, if you would pass that around so that the members can see it.

Mr. Levin. Certainly.

Social surveys indicate that there is a slightly higher percentage of people in the South who adhere to more hard core views. Hate groups are more prevalent in rural areas.

Also, these types of hate group members or hardened bigots look carefully at symbolism in their target selection. And indeed, historically, churches were selected by the Klan and other hate groups during the sixties, for instance, 92 churches were attacked in the period of 1963 to 1966.

Lastly, the ideology of these individuals encourages random acts against minority groups. They have a term for it, it's called leaderless resistance.

While hardened bigots and hate group members may be involved in pockets of attacks, the available research and evidence do not support a centrally orchestrated effort by a single hate group. If more hate groups are involved, it is far more likely that these hate group members conduct their attacks within the general region in which they live, than part of a regional conspiracy throughout

the whole southeast.

Again, traditional arsonists also will probably show up with some of these offenders. And again, I went over who these arsonist types are, people who commit these crimes for arousal, others are sociopaths, others suffer a mental disorder that provides a mistake in rationalization for the attacks, and still others get this excitement from it.

Now, being a traditional arsonist doesn't preclude being a prejudice bigot. Indeed, I remember reading in *USA Today* a couple of weeks ago the statement of one of the prejudice attackers who also happened to say when he was little he liked to light up his GI Joe on fire, and he almost lit up his shed.

So we very well—and again, let me just say we have a far more significant—I don't even call myself an expert on arson, only on the hate group side of the fence, and I would encourage you to question Mr. Cavanaugh about the specific arson profiles.

But nevertheless, being a traditional arsonist doesn't preclude one from being a bigot either, and there will be a certain amount of hybrid in that.

I do believe that most of the offenders will be thrill seekers, the majority of whom are directly acting on prejudice. And again, there will be others who will be acting on other prejudice reasons. And I think what it will look like, it will look something like this: We'll have two boxes that kind of overlap each other.

The first box will consist of people who harbor prejudice attitudes, these negative stereotypes that I said. And these negative stereotypes are significant, because they label who the appropriate target of this aggression is. And will go from on kind of the upper right side of the box, the Klan member, the Skinhead type, whatever you want to call it, the hard core person who might be acting alone or with a few friends kind of thing. And the prejudicial attitudes go down where they're not as well entrenched, but still a significant motivation for the attack.

Indeed, they won't define themselves in terms of strictly racial views like the extremist bigot will, like the Skinhead will as far as the white warrior, for instance, but they still will have this animus or these negative stereotypes so it will go down like this.

Then there's this other box which can also overlap, which is that miscellaneous box of arsonists. And again, there will very well be some overlap, that hybrid of the two.

In short, all too many of these offenders will harbor and express widening varying degrees of prejudice with most being average, unaffiliated, blue collar white males in their middle teens and their twenties who have not achieved much socially, educationally, or economically.

Sadly, a reign of terror that the Klan could only dream of is now being perpetrated independently by a generally prejudiced, but otherwise average array of generally young citizens.

Next, I'd like to go into a different topic, which is the response by the Federal and State governments.

Dr. Ward. May I ask that you shorten that because we've had law enforcement officers here who gave us their response, and I'm having a little time problem, so I need this to be very concise, please.

Mr. Levin. Sure. To put it in a nutshell, the Federal response has been an assiduous one, and—however, there are some notable problems. Number one, the laws have to be overhauled, particularly we have this new antiarson statute at 18 USC section 245.

Additionally, CRS, Community Relations Service, must be brought up to its previous funding and personnel level.

Additionally, Federal law enforcement and Federal prosecutors must be given the resources and tools that they need. The Civil Rights Unit of the FBI is the smallest division of the FBI. The criminal section of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice has only about two dozen lawyers that are commanded to address thousands of civil rights violations. So that's the Federal side in a nutshell.

On the State's side, let me just say the response with regard to hate crimes generally in this particular region, excluding Florida, Texas, and Virginia, is the worst in the Nation. Five of the Southern States do not have hate crime laws at all. Those others that do hardly ever, if at all, enforce hate crime laws specifically.

Also, the region, with the exception of those three States, are not complying with the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, and that is a barometer of the overall response.

And just to sum up what I think needs to be done with the State and local response in the region—and again this is abbreviated—we need training, specific protocol, specific policies, better interagency coordination, better community outreach, specific hate crime procedures, data collection, and the designation of an appropriate official in each agency who is directly responsible for hate crime response.

So the measures that are being implemented to address the recent rash of church burnings are encouraging, but need to be expanded to include all hate crimes.

And to give you an example, for instance, in some years the city of Boston will count more hate crimes than Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina combined.

Thank you very much for the privilege of addressing you. And if you have any questions, I'd be more than happy to answer them.

Dr. Ward. Let's make it short, ma'am.

Dr. Berry. I'm going to, but this was very important testimony that Mr. Levin gave.

On the map you showed us, you have Klan activity in Mississippi, organizations, and Neo-Nazi activity in Mississippi. We've heard testimony that there is no Klan activity in Mississippi, and there is no organized hate group activity. Where did you get that information that you have on that chart?

Mr. Levin. That information comes from the Klan Watch database, my former colleagues.

Dr. Berry. Okay. Because I think the Committee needs to know more about this, because there's an obvious inconsistency here. If somebody—

Dr. Ward. Well, the inconsistency in Mississippi, and I'm going to speak for Mississippi, is that in this State we have something called opinions. And the opinions that come from people in institutionalized enforcement differ from the opinions of people who suffer day to day on the street.

So when he suggested there are indeed active organizations in this State, he is giving us, from an academic perspective, the sentiment that is held by people on the street, but not by law enforcement.

Dr. Berry. Right. And this was based on some kind of data. That was my point.

And the second thing I wanted to ask you is does Mississippi report hate crimes and hate crimes statistics, sir?

Mr. Levin. Yes, but the reporting has been negligible. Yes, they technically have reported a very small number of hate crimes, either in the single digits or very low double digits.

Dr. Berry. Thank you.

Mr. Levin. Thank you very much.

Dr. Ward. All right. Thank you very much.

Now—

Ms. Keys. Excuse me. Can I just ask, if you have an entire paper that you didn't get to present, could that be added to the record, because I would like to read the rest of—

Dr. Ward. I would like to have it in the record. You did say you would leave the information?

Mr. Levin. Yes. And if I could beg your indulgence, I would appreciate having the entire written testimony added to the record of this hearing. Thank you very much.

Dr. Ward. That's approved.

Okay. Reverend Dexter Brown and Mr. Charles Jones are here? Would both of you please come forward?

Reverend Brown, thank you very much for being here. And for the record, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Dexter D. Brown, Pastor, New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Ruleville, Mississippi

Rev. Brown. My name is Reverend Dexter Dewayne Brown. My mailing address is Post Office 261, Marigold, Mississippi.

Dr. Ward. ZIP code?

Rev. Brown. ZIP code is 38759.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much. Do you have an opening remark, Reverend Brown, that you'd like to make?

Rev. Brown. Yes, sir. I had made a presentation, a small 10 minute presentation. It may be shorter.

First of all, I would like to recognize the Advisory Committee, as well as the Chairperson, Dr. Ward, for having me here to speak on this occasion.

I would like to just mention that in giving the status of racial relations as far as the Bolivar County and Sunflower County area is concerned, I cannot speak entirely for the State of Mississippi, but I do know about these two regions or these two areas because I work and I live within these areas.

That the status, from a historical point of view, is that we have always read within the paper, and history books document to us, that churches, black churches, the African American race as a whole, has been psychologically and physically intimidated not only by the Caucasian race but by other races as well.

And in coming to you tonight, I would just like to bring that out into the open, from that historical point of view, is that this type of thing has always taken place.

But after the civil rights movement, from my reading and from my studying—I'm not that old, but I have read and I have studied that from that point of view, those things had taken place since time began here in America, since the establishment of this country.

But after the civil rights movement there was somewhat of a die down. And we just experienced within the last couple of years a resurfacing of that same hostility or that same hatred.

Now, our church was burned on the 20th of March of this year. And looking at that record, we have no sufficient evidence of saying whether or not there was—any Caucasians were involved in that particular incident. But we can say that from past vandalism, that we do know that there were other Caucasians who were intricately involved in the burning of our facility in the mid-1960s.

The building that we're presently in is one that was rebuilt from a burning that happened within 1966. And so we do not really have sufficient evidence of saying that there were any Caucasians involved in that because there was not a thorough investigation done upon that matter.

Even upon this one, upon the incident that took place upon the 20th of March, we do not have sufficient evidence of saying that there were any Caucasians involved in that either because there was such a poor investigation done by our sheriff department and by our police department on that matter. So we cannot say.

But the vandalism part, the break-ins that we've had, and the experience over the years—we can say that there is proof that there were Caucasians involved in those incidents.

But this particular church burning we cannot say because there was not a thorough investigation done.

Now, from a future point of view, if I may move from past to present, to future, our goal is, or our endeavor is, not only as a pastor but as a church as a whole—we would like to see more protective measures taking place for our churches within that region because this type of thing has been going on continuously.

And it has forced us to make decisions and make moves that we ordinarily wouldn't have made if this type of thing hadn't taken place. And so really, in speaking not only for myself but for the members of the New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Ruleville, frankly we're very tired of having these type of—this treatment put on us.

Church break-ins, that's not necessary, it's not called for. The first amendment to the Constitution guarantees us the right of freedom of religion, to peacefully assemble. And I do not see this as being carried out. The police are there to serve and to protect, but in this particular incident, it's been 3 months since that incident took place before we finally got notification or any notoriety whatsoever concerning the burning of our facility.

And I think, my friends, that that is a very poor presentation of serving and protection. And so, just speaking in general, we would like to see more protective measures taking place concerning this issue.

Those are my opening remarks. If there are any questions from your panel—

Dr. Ward. I just want some clarification. When you said that you had received no notification for 3 months, do you mean from the local law enforcement, that's either the sheriff or the local police, you got no written assessment of what had happened?

Rev. Brown. No, sir. As a matter of fact, it seemed as if that whole issue was brushed off. Once it had taken place, really, the fire department wasn't even notified or called upon to come to the

incident to investigate. There were a few pictures taken, maybe a brief report written, but that was all.

There are many people who live within the community of Ruleville who didn't even know about the church burning. Some—if it wasn't for the papers or the press there would still be some today who would not even have known about the incident.

All I am saying is this, is that the investigation—there should have been a more thorough investigation, it should have been more publicized than it was. It was very brushed off. It was a hush, hush issue after they had taken place.

Mr. Range. Did the State authorities and the Federal authorities participate in the investigation?

Rev. Brown. No, sir. It was only after the FBI, and the arson, tobacco and the ATF agents came, one from San Antonio, Texas, another from Detroit, Michigan, came to investigate the matter that the police department and the press became intricately involved in the issue that had taken place with our church. And that was about 2½ months after the incident had taken place.

That is what disappointed us most about the issue, sir. It's not as if we are complaining, but we think that there should have been—or more attention should have been given to the matter, because to us a church burning is very important.

Mr. Range. So the initial investigation was done by the Ruleville Police Department—

Rev. Brown. Ruleville Police Department, sir.

Mr. Range. —and Sunflower County Sheriff's Department?

Rev. Brown. Right.

Ms. Keys. Reverend Brown, you said it was a poor investigation, though, that was done. What did you mean by that?

Rev. Brown. Well, we would say that I, myself, and several of the members of the church—let me just use for example—the FBI agent came and spoke with me personally, even the ATF agents came and spoke with me and the congregation, some of the members of the church personally, asked us questions. They showed a very deep concern concerning the issue. We did not receive that from Ruleville police nor from the Sunflower County Sheriff's Department.

They expressed some interest, but we think that more attention should have been given to the matter, because that's a building as well as—we were without a facility for about 2 months, moving from different buildings in order to congregate and have our church meetings for about 2 months.

And the attention that was given to the matter was very little. It felt to us as if it was pretty much brushed off. Even the local churches within the community did not give us much attention as far as this thing was concerned.

Ms. Keys. Did they collect any evidence, or—

Rev. Brown. Yes, some evidence was collected, some pictures were taken. But as far as coming and questioning the members, and doing anything thorough, and really trying to get the issue out in the open, we did not have that.

Ms. Keys. You've mentioned there were prior acts of vandalism at your church.

Rev. Brown. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Keys. And has that been within the recent few years?

Rev. Brown. Within the recent few years. Well, one particular incident that has always taken place—there were always groups of Caucasians who assemble themselves upon the bridge, which is about a quarter of a mile from where our church is located. Sometimes even during the week while we were meeting, four or five Caucasians will assemble up on the bridge and fight, and have other riotous activities going on, drinking.

And one particular incident that takes place very frequently at the church is that we have an outside light that burns during the night at the church. This light is often shot out. The church even has been broken into within the last few years, where it does happen repeatedly, even before I became pastor of that church.

And I didn't really get the history of that until this particular incident had taken place. But the light being shot out was a constant phenomenon, once a month. The electrical company was continuously coming out to replace that light. And that activity goes on even today.

Ms. Keys. Are there other black churches in the area that experience similar problems, or have they targeted you for a particular reason?

Rev. Brown. No, ma'am, not to my knowledge.

There are other churches within the same locale that our church is. Some are even further or deeper within the country region that our church is located in. But our church has seemed to have been the one that was picked on, and it has been picked on continuously throughout the years.

Ms. Keys. Is there any particular reason why? Are you active in any activities in the community, or politics, or anything like that?

Rev. Brown. Not to my knowledge. There was no word of any hostility particular to our particular congregation as a whole. It just seems that this particular church or building has always been the figure of vandalism, the one that was picked out to be picked on.

Dr. Ward. Reverend Brown, approximately what is the distance between the bridge and where the church structure was?

Rev. Brown. It's about a quarter of a mile. It's very visible from where our church is located.

Dr. Berry. And I hate to sound like a lawyer, but would you look at this and tell me if this is a picture of the bridge?

Rev. Brown. Yes, sir, it is.

Dr. Berry. And is this graffiti typical?

Rev. Brown. Yes, it is.

Dr. Ward. Thank you.

Dr. Berry. What's it got on there? What's on there. Could you describe—

Dr. Ward. I don't read vulgarity into the record, but there is a vulgarity which is over KKK swastika about someone named Homer, either the classical Greek poet or a local, I don't know which.

Rev. Brown. I do not believe it was in reference to the Greek poet.

Mr. Hernandez. Dr. Ward, just to answer one of the questions that was referred to by Ms. Keys, there were some other churches in and around Ruleville that had been burned down. And I think, as I mentioned previously—but the True Light Missionary Baptist on Dockery on one side of the highway. And then on the other side there was the St. John's Missionary Baptist that was burned down, or it was vandalized and eventually it burned down. But those are other indications.

Dr. Berry. And Reverend Brown said that your church was burned down during the civil rights movement too, the same—this new church?

Rev. Brown. Right. Yes.

Dr. Berry. Could you tell me, I mean how would you describe the state of race relations in the community?

Rev. Brown. Within the community, the state of race relations within the city of Ruleville itself, since I've only been pastoring there for about a year-and-a-half, to my understanding, somewhat—let's just say the African American community deals with the Caucasian community, to be honest with you, basically as it did on a business level. We pretty much keep to ourselves. There has never—we haven't really seen any open acts of hostility or any open acts of violence.

These incidents that are taking place as far as vandalism is concerned, to my understanding they only take place at night. The traffic level within that particular area that our church is located is very minimal. So there's always opportune times where a person could come in and ravage the church. And it's possible that no one would see him, or her, or the individuals that did it.

But not to my knowledge, I haven't seen any open acts of hostility. Everything has been pretty much blase about it.

Dr. Berry. Is there a lot of social interaction between the races, either at school or—that's what I mean by social. I don't mean a party.

Rev. Brown. Yes. We deal with each other when we have to, I'll say that. You don't see a lot of—just to use for an example, there is one young man who is a member of my congregation who is a Caucasian. He gets a lot of backlash from those of his own race because he attends church with us. We treat him as if he's one of us.

But most of the hostility that he gets, he receives from the Caucasian community because he associates himself with us, but just basically on a business level. If it wasn't probably for that—we have some friends. There's that coming in—we're close to answering the question.

Mr. Lott. Reverend Brown, just a question. I don't know if you know the answer or not, but do you know if the State fire marshal's office was notified of the fire?

Rev. Brown. No, sir, I do not have knowledge of whether or not the State fire marshal—

Mr. Lott. Did you all immediately find the fire,

or was it a few days later when you noticed? Your church didn't burn completely down?

Rev. Brown. It didn't burn to the ground. As a matter of fact it was the next morning when one of the deacons of our church, Brother Charles Buckner, discovered that the church had been burned. He's also the church janitor. He went there to do some minor repairs that particular morning, and he noticed that one of the windows had been broken out.

The incident had taken place right after we had had Bible study that particular Wednesday evening. So evidently someone had been watching and knew that we had—that the services that we had that night were over with.

And I think, I and some of the other members—we stayed around the church until about 9:00 p.m. that particular evening. So whatever took place, took place after 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 the next morning.

The church didn't burn I guess because the church is very insulated with brick, and there probably wasn't much air to sustain the fire. And so it burned as much as it could, and after maybe the oxygen level had depleted, the fire did also.

Mr. Lott. Were local schools out on spring holidays at that time?

Rev. Brown. During that particular time, no, sir, they were not out.

Mr. Lott. On a Wednesday night, that would be a pretty peculiar time to have one.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much, Reverend Brown.

And I would like to ask Mr. Charles Jones to come forward.

Mr. Jones, for the record would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Charles L. Jones, Deacon, New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Ruleville, Mississippi

Mr. Jones. My name is Charles L. Jones. I live at 1004 South Street in Cleveland, Mississippi.

Dr. Ward. ZIP code?

Mr. Jones. 38732.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Mr. Jones, do you have an opening statement that you wish to make?

Mr. Jones. No, sir, I don't have an opening statement.

Dr. Ward. Okay. Well, then we would like to hear from you any particulars you—about the fire at New Mt. Zion, and also about your perception of race relations before and after this church burning in Ruleville.

Mr. Jones. Like Reverend Brown has stated, we have had several times that our church has been vandalized. And we have also—that also has been from the Caucasian community.

One which—we had gotten restitution from one of the Caucasians in the past say last year or 2 years ago, I can't remember, somewhere in that area where he came in and broke out all our windows, and he went back and reported to his family that he did it. They called the sheriff's department at that time and let us know that he had done this at this time.

So I don't know what you're looking for.

Dr. Ward. We're not quite sure what we're looking for, because we're looking for what we will find. I think, I want you to feel very relaxed and very free to just tell us how you feel about this. That's going to help us a great deal.

Mr. Jones. Well, of course we feel saddened. I don't think we have a big racial problem in the South because I enjoy Mississippi and I wouldn't want to live anyplace else, so I'm not going to say that we have a—I worked 15 years with whites, Clavin Country Club. I'm in sales at the Kosmin. I have no problem with whites, blacks, any—Jews. I have no problem in that area. So I'm not going to pick on anybody.

As I said to the newspaper, I'm not going to blame anybody because we don't know. All we did is—I just feel, like I told them, is that the good Lord took a bad situation and made a good one out of it because we are going to move to town. We have bought a building. My brother-in-law and myself have purchased a building that we're going to sign back over to the church when we get our tax number. That's why we hadn't done that.

So we are in that process of moving and renovating that building. I'm not pointing fingers at anybody, because I enjoy Mississippi, I enjoy Ruleville. That's my home; that's where I was born. And that's where I've lived most of my life. And most of my friends, a lot of my friends are whites.

But you're going to have these hate crimes in any community. And I don't think we are any different. That church, where it sits, the weekend crowd, the dope pushers, the whiskey drinkers, that bridge was kind of like a center spot for them, a night spot, so to speak, where the youngsters go and sit. They had fights up there, they had cuts up there, and they had a lot of things that happened up on that area.

And our concern was is that the sheriff department who patrols that area—not the city—but the sheriff department that patrols that area did not give us protection in that area. There were times when they—like they didn't know about the fire. The church is burning, and nobody knew in a mile, a half a mile down is where the other fire was in a trailer house.

During that night, there was a trailer fire. And also, there was a white church that was burglarized that same night. So it was like we all were picked on that night. But if I'm not giving you what you want, I'm sorry, but that's about the way I feel about the matter.

We are moving ahead. We've had some donations. The one we got the other day was from Pies, I believe it's Pies Middle School in Massachusetts. The eighth grade class had gotten together, and they sent $1,400 to us. I don't know what else to say. We've gotten some more donations in the mail from across the country from people that have participated in the growth of this church and to help us to grow in our new building and to get in it earlier.

We are looking to get in this building within a year, but if things continue to progress, then we're going to be in it in 6 to 8 months. We've got the building, but we've got to renovate it because it was what they call the Ward Building, which was a tool and dye shop in Ruleville. And it's set on good acreage. So, we've got plenty of room and everything.

But we just want to go on with our life. It's kind of like we're the center of things, and we want to put the Lord at the center of things. This is not about us, it's about him. And the way we see it is that he'll make this situation for us good, and we don't have any grudges, and we're not mad with nobody.

We just thank the good Lord that it didn't burn down, that we had some insurance that, along with what money that we had saved to get the building back in order. Thank you.

Mr. Foster. I have a question. You say you were born and raised in Ruleville?

Mr. Jones. Yes, sir.

Mr. Foster. I assume you went to school in Ruleville also?

Mr. Jones. Yes, sir.

Mr. Foster. Regarding segregation, were the school districts segregated—

Mr. Jones. Yes, sir.

Mr. Foster. —when you were going to school?

Mr. Jones. Yes, sir.

Mr. Foster. Are they segregated now?

Mr. Jones. I—well, some so. There are areas—not in Ruleville, you know, but there are areas that you have 90 percent black and—or 75 percent white schools that are still in the area.

Mr. Foster. In terms of living arrangements, is there a white side of town and a black side of town?

Mr. Jones. Yes. But you do have—Ruleville is probably more mixed than any of the—it's kind of hard to say that because they kind of spread it out. But there is—you can say that, I guess you can say white side and—but there are some blacks that live in the same area that some of the whites live in.

Mr. Foster. I guess I'll leave that alone. But I was trying to get some idea in terms of race relations in Ruleville, whether it was an estranged, do you have an estranged relationship with whites and vice versa, do whites have an estranged relationship with blacks.

Mr. Jones. I don't think so. I think we're pretty close in Ruleville. You know, Mr. Donoghue there, he comes to our church and he comes to a lot of our functions. And he participates in a lot of things we have there as a road supervisor, is that right?

Unidentified Speaker. Supervisor—

Mr. Jones. All right. I don't know much about Sunflower County, that area. But I think we are pretty close related whites and blacks in that town. I've lived there all my life and I don't see that—I don't see prejudice. I don't know what you're looking for, because—

Mr. Foster. No, I'm not looking for anything,

I'm just asking the question.

Mr. Jones. I enjoy that town. The reason I'm not there, because I work here and my wife works here, she's in the school system, and my kids go to—well, my kids are in college now, but we are—I don't see any. And I'm sorry, I just—

Unidentified Speaker. Deacon Jones, you mentioned that the sheriff's department—it had been reported to them, and they just couldn't give you any more protection. Had you all talked to the sheriff's department, and asked them prior to this incident to keep a watch on the church, or—

Mr. Jones. Yes, we did that in the past. I didn't personally. I talked to one of the officers there, and asked them if they would look after it. I have called before over there. It's like, well, there aren't that many of us, and we can't be here because we're on this side of town, we're on that side, we can't be there and we can't guard it.

Unidentified Speaker. Do they have a dedicated officer in Ruleville?

Mr. Jones. I don't know.

Unidentified Speaker. Do you have any idea how many patrolmen or how many deputies they have out on any given night?

Mr. Jones. I sure don't.

Unidentified Speaker. I think the sheriff is going to be here tomorrow.

Mr. Jones. He can deal with that area. But I don't think there're many—

Unidentified Speaker. You think they're probably understaffed?

Mr. Jones. —you know, there're probably two in the whole county up in our area.

Unidentified Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Jones. Thank you all.

Dr. Ward. Okay. Our final two participants will be from the U.S. attorney's office, northern district, and from the southern region. And I would ask Mr. Alfred Moreton please to come forward.

Thank you for coming. And for the record, would you please give us your name and mailing address.

Statement of Alfred Moreton, U.S. Attorney, Northern District of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi

Mr. Moreton. My name is Alfred Moreton. My mailing address is Post Office Drawer 886, Oxford, Mississippi, 38655.

I want to thank the members of the Commission and the Chairwoman for the invitation to be here. I accepted that invitation and agreed to use some of the Commission's valuable time on a tight schedule without knowing that also appearing before you would be Mr. Cavanaugh of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Bureau, Mr. Jim Friar, the special agent in charge for the FBI in Jackson, and Commissioner Jim Ingram from the Department of Public Safety of the Mississippi Highway Patrol.

I accepted in the hope and expectation I could make some contribution to the Commission's efforts at factfinding regarding these church burnings. But having been preceded by the three most knowledgeable men in the State of Mississippi, I suppose, on those investigations, men that are living with them day-to-day and supervising those investigations, I feel there's little that I can add to what those gentlemen have already told you in the way of facts. The only thing I can do is confirm and corroborate some of the things that they have told you.

I, like Commissioner Ingram, who was on the FBI civil rights desk in Mississippi during the 1960s, was also in the U.S. attorney's office in Oxford during that same period of time. And I certainly agree wholeheartedly, for the benefit of the much younger ladies and gentlemen on this Commission, with Commissioner Ingram's observation that this is not the 1960s. There's no comparison between what we're seeing now in the church burnings in Mississippi and what it was like in the 1960s in Mississippi.

The atmosphere is totally different. The response of the community is totally different. The response and the attitude of law enforcement is totally different. And the significance of the problem is much more minimal in contrast to the problem that was faced then.

I am not prepared at this point myself to attribute these church fires that we've had in Mississippi to a deterioration in race relations in Mississippi.

I'm accustomed to talking to juries about the size of this Commission, and one of the things I frequently say in talking to juries who decide cases is to keep an open mind, listen to all of the evidence, don't jump to conclusions, don't rush to judgment, wait until you've heard all of the facts before you make a decision.

In the cases in this district, in my district, which is the northern district of Mississippi, 37, the northern 37 counties of Mississippi are included. We've had five church burnings over a period going back—well, there's one that goes back until 1992, I believe.

But in any event, we've had five unsolved church fires. Until we solve those cases, until we identify the culprits, we won't know why they did it. And until we know why they did it, we won't be able to make a judgment as to what motivated the persons that burned those buildings.

If we jump to the conclusion that it's all racially motivated, that there is some racial animus that's stimulating these church burnings at this time, then we're diverting attention and resources to the real possible causes for these, and thereby delaying the solution of these fires.

Furthermore, in my judgment, to overdramatize these fires as the consequence of racial animosity, racial hatred, until we know the facts is to play into the hands of the racists themselves.

To attribute every fire to a possible racial motive is simply to magnify the numbers of the presumed racially motivated arsonist among us.

And in addition, it creates and encourages a climate of fear and suspicion. And tends to divide the community, casting suspicion on one neighbor by another, where there's been amicable relations up until this time that have been painfully built up over a period of years through good will of the community.

We want to solve these cases, and we want to bring to justice those responsible, but we want to bring them to justice without doing any damage, and accomplishing only our purpose of punishing the guilty for setting these fires for whatever reason.

To the extent they're racially motivated, then they'll be prosecuted on that basis. To the extent that they're not racially motivated, they'll be prosecuted on the evidence that exists of the motivation, if relevant. But in the meantime—well, let me use an example.

Do you recall following the Oklahoma bombing? Everyone jumped to the conclusion that that bombing was the work of Middle Eastern foreign terrorists. And the national news media was speculating about Middle Eastern terrorists, other foreign terrorists.

And the community at large and the law enforcement community was beginning to look in that direction until the investigation turned, because of police work, in a different direction. That case hasn't been conclusively solved yet as it is in this country by a jury trial, but certainly there's no suspicion at this time that it's the work or was the work of Middle Eastern terrorists.

I think we ought to take a lesson from that and keep an open mind, and look at these cases individually, and hold in abeyance our judgment of the cause and of the solution until we know the facts of why they happened.

Other than that caution, that counsel of caution I suppose in making judgments, I don't know that I can add, as I say, anything to the store of knowledge of that the Commission has accumulated from hearing people more knowledgeable of the specific facts of these cases than myself.

But to the extent that I can answer any questions that would be helpful to the Commission, I'm certainly here to do so.

Mr. Range. I just wanted to say that I appreciate your advice and counsel. Would you tell us—did you say there were five cases in your district, the northern district? What are those?

Mr. Moreton. Well, I'm counting the case here in Ruleville that is still unsolved. There was one in Hatley, over in Monroe County, that is unsolved. And there's one in Como that is unsolved. And then there are the two in Kossuth. Those are the five I have reference to.

Mr. Range. So Hatley and Como, were they black churches, as well?

Mr. Moreton. Yes, sir.

Mr. Range. And we heard about the coordination and cooperation of the State and the Federal people working together in Kossuth. It sounded like it didn't quite happen that way in Ruleville.

What was the response in the other two communities, do you know?

Mr. Moreton. The Federal response in Ruleville?

Mr. Range. The Federal and State participation.

Mr. Moreton. Well, I know the ATF—

Mr. Range. Well, I guess in Ruleville, the FBI and the ATF came in sometime after the fire is what Reverend Brown indicated. And I was asking, what happened in Hatley and Como?

Mr. Moreton. There have been Federal investigations in both of those cases.

Mr. Range. Were they—

Mr. Moreton. Were they solved? They have not been—

Mr. Range. No. Were those investigations at the same time and the same day as the fire, or were they—

Mr. Moreton. The one in Hatley, I'm almost positive it was. See, actually the—my office is not directly involved in the investigation until the investigation has progressed to some extent where there's reason to consult with the prosecution about possible charges and the development of the investigation.

The one in Como I'm just not sure about. I don't know whether Mr. Cavanaugh is still here and able to answer those questions. He knows the details of all of these cases that the ATF has been involved in.

But let me make this observation, that the ATF does not, much less the FBI, does not investigate every suspicious fire. I mean, the Federal agencies are not only agencies of limited resources, they are agencies of limited jurisdiction, as well.

Now, they frequently, if called on by State authorities for assistance, expertise—say the AFT has an arson investigation, they quite freely give that assistance to the State authorities. But it wouldn't be customary for the ATF to open a case for full investigation on the basis of any fire just because they have jurisdiction of some arsons.

Just like the FBI wouldn't open an investigation. It may depend on certain—the intent, or the apparent intent, whether or not there's interstate commerce, and various other factors that would determine whether or not the Federal agency had jurisdiction at all, although they still cooperate with the State in conducting the State investigation.

And we would cooperate with the State authorities as well. When I say "we," I mean the United States attorney's office.

Of course, as you understand, now there's been, because of the number of these fires that have occurred throughout the United States, not only in Mississippi, the heads of the various Federal agencies, from the Washington level on down, have created a task force to respond to these.

So if a church burns now—as Commissioner Ingram indicated, there were three accidental church fires within the past week or two, and they were all immediately investigated as potential arsons. It was determined that they were accidental fires and they were not arsons, but that's the consequence of having created this task force to deal with this problem.

But what I'm saying is, I don't think we can assume that all of these fires are connected. I don't think we can assume that there's a conspiracy, or that there's any one motivation for any of them. I think we have to wait, and that's the training that you get as a prosecutor.

You have to look at each case individually and see what the facts of that case are. And that's what we intend to do in our office, and pursue them wherever the facts lead.

Ms. Keys. Do you have independent investigators in your office?

Mr. Moreton. No, we do not. No, ma'am. The U.S. attorney's office depends on the various Federal investigative agencies for investigative work, whether it's the FBI, ATF, Secret Service, IRS. Each one has a special expertise in the area that they're responsible for, and we rely on their investigative expertise.

Ms. Keys. Just a followup, I know in the southern district there was recently a prosecution and conviction for a hate crime, a cross burning or something that was—

Mr. Moreton. Well, we've prosecuted—

Ms. Keys. That was my question. How many do you—have you prosecuted some hate crimes up here in the northern district?

Mr. Moreton. We've prosecuted—periodically you'll have a cross burning, and we've prosecuted those routinely. For the most part, the civil rights

violations that we've seen in recent years have been mainly police brutality type cases, maybe something at the State penitentiary, allegations against guards abusing prisoners, police officers arresting or abusing arrestees.

Ms. Keys. How do you deal with the hate crime again? Is that investigated by someone else and brought to you all? Or you all don't do any kind of independent investigation or have any—

Mr. Moreton. Well, the FBI would investigate that.

Dr. Berry. The reason why I so much wanted to hear your testimony is that in my conversation with the Justice Department on Saturday I was told that the U.S. attorneys have all been asked to have a task force, and the task force will consist of BATF and FBI, and the marshals, and that each U.S. attorney has been charged with coordinating these activities, keeping these groups in touch, and would be fully informed about the progress of these investigations.

And so I was told that, which is why you were invited here to testify. And since I assumed that you and the other U.S. attorney would have this information available to you.

The other reason why I wanted to hear from you is to find out whether, consistent with the definition of hate crime that was used in the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, have you prosecuted any hate crimes, and how many? Are they up, down, or have there been any in your time as being U.S. attorney here?

Mr. Moreton. Well, I suppose, offhand, the only thing I recall that you could characterize as a hate crime would be these cross burnings that we have prosecuted. And you know, they haven't—the cross burnings themselves haven't resulted in any injury or damage to properties, just a cross burning for intimidation purpose or what have you. And those have been prosecuted.

I wouldn't say they're up or down, it's just occasionally you have one, and when we do we prosecute it. I think it's been maybe a couple of years, maybe 3 years since the last one we prosecuted, the last cross burning case we prosecuted.

Dr. Berry. Well, with the kind of graffiti that was on the picture that was taken at the bridge where this particular church was burned, you must—is that in your district?

Mr. Moreton. Which one is that, ma'am?

Dr. Berry. Are you familiar with this picture of the graffiti on the bridge? Do you want to see it? Do you know about the Ruleville church?

Mr. Moreton. I'm familiar with the Ruleville church fire, the one that was started by, ignited in a Bible on the pew?

Dr. Berry. Yes. And I just wondered if you knew about the graffiti that was on the bridge up above the church. Are you familiar with—

Mr. Moreton. The bridge above the church?

Dr. Ward. Reverend Brown suggested to us that the bridge was about a quarter of a mile from the church.

Mr. Moreton. Well, I heard his testimony.

Dr. Ward. It was a gathering place for people. And there was some very interesting graffiti—

Mr. Moreton. I guess I'm not familiar with that.

Dr. Ward. You need to take a look at this, I think, is what Dr. Berry was saying. And this one is clearer because it's larger. That might in some way be related to something.

Mr. Moreton. I have not seen those before.

Dr. Berry. Let me ask you this: Do you have a task force, and how long has it been in place, consisting of BATF, and FBI, and the marshals, directed by you or coordinated by you in your district?

Mr. Moreton. I can't remember exactly. I suppose it was sometime in June. We all met with representatives of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department and Enforcement, and the Treasury Department in Washington back in—I suppose it was early June, maybe the last part of May. As I think about it, I believe it was the last part of May.

And following that, we created these task forces. It's more or less a national task force. Our task force here in the northern district consists of myself, the U.S. marshal, who's located in Oxford; Jim Friar, the special agent in charge for the FBI in Jackson; Jim Cavanaugh, the ATF special agent in charge in Birmingham; a Civil Rights Division attorney out of Washington, who met with us at Kossuth last week, to meet again with the investigators; the on-the-ground investigators; and the ministers at the churches involved.

Dr. Berry. How often does the task force meet?

Mr. Moreton. Whenever necessary. But as it has happened, it's met about once a week or every 10 days.

Keep in mind, this task force is over there investigating two church burnings in Kossuth, and the task force itself consists of the agents who are involved in the investigation, which at one time was up to something like 50 or 60 agents, consisting not only of Federal agents, but highway patrol investigators, sheriff's officers, State fire marshal, drug, State drug enforcement agents, whatever manpower was needed to cover the investigation.

Dr. Berry. On this issue of hate crimes, there were some media accounts maybe 2, 3 years ago about a young African American student at the University in Oxford, whose room was burned, if I recall the press accounts. And there was some graffiti on the walls in his room with pejoratives with the N word, go home.

Was there any, at that time was there any Federal involvement in that, or was this just a State matter? I'm just trying to figure out—

Mr. Moreton. I don't recall any Federal involvement. I don't even recall the incident offhand. How long ago was it?

Dr. Berry. It must have been 2 years ago. You're from Oxford, right?

Mr. Moreton. Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Berry. And were you there during the Meredith episode?

Mr. Moreton. Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Berry. I remember your name from the history. I'm a historian, among other things.

Mr. Moreton. Right. When James Meredith integrated the university?

Dr. Berry. Yes. I remember that, yes. So you know the university. So you know which university I'm talking about?

Mr. Moreton. Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Berry. But you don't recall this particular—

Mr. Moreton. I don't recall that particular incident you referred—

Dr. Berry. I just wondered if there was any Federal involvement in this as—

Mr. Moreton. I do recall the James Meredith incident very well.

Dr. Berry. The last question I have is, when you were describing how the prosecutor must reserve judgment, and I certainly agree with that, and that's how prosecutors have to go about their business, don't you think that if one presumes that there's some danger also in avoiding any hypothesis, that there may be racial motivation in a church fire, just as there may have been danger in avoiding a hypothesis, given the history and the circumstances in the social context that people from certain countries might engage in bombing?

You referred to the Oklahoma City, and the Commission at the time lamented the assumption that particular people had done it. But can't you go too far in the other direction too, when even though you know the social context, even though you know the circumstances, if you were an investigator, simply ignoring the possibility that it could be racially motivated?

Mr. Moreton. Well, I'm not exactly saying that. What I'm saying is keep open all possibilities. Don't focus on one as the overriding hypothesis. Take whatever facts you've got at the time.

In the Kossuth situation, that appeared to be a fairly tenable hypothesis because of the fact that the two churches burned, the fires were reported within 17 minutes of each other, they were both black churches, they were both in isolated areas, which of course the next church is vulnerable ideal targets to anyone that's bent on doing mischief, or flouting authority, or asserting his own bravado to the community, or intimidating the community.

Since those two fires occurred that close together in time, and both of those churches were black, occurring in the same environment of other churches being burned, that, of course, was a hypothesis entertained and still entertained in connection with the investigation of those two churches.

You've got to realize that when we have an arson, we don't really have much to go on in the way of evidence. They don't leave fingerprints, they burn them up. And these churches, because they are so isolated, and invite whatever mischief-makers may be drawn to that sort of activity, there are very few witnesses around that are noticing, and most people are not noticing what goes on around a church.

Most people assume that that's a sacred safe place and that you don't have to keep your eye on

it like you might have to keep your eye on your car or something. And so you don't have the level of observation, or even the level of activity that you might have in a bank robbery or something.

So it makes it difficult to solve these cases. And it may take some time. And, as I think was indicated by Commissioner Ingram, awards have been offered, intensive interviews have been conducted, and those are common methods of solving difficult cases, and you just have to be patient and wait until they pay off, and don't exclude any possibility until you do know what the facts are.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much.

Mr. Moreton. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. Sorry I couldn't be of more help to you in trying to reach your conclusions.

Dr. Ward. Our final participant will be Mr. Brad Pigott.

Statement of Brad Pigott, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Mississippi, Jackson, Mississippi

Mr. Pigott. I'm Brad Pigott, U.S. attorney in the southern Federal district in Mississippi.

Dr. Ward. Right. And would you give us your mailing address for the record, please?

Mr. Pigott. It's 188 East Capital Street, Suite 500 in Jackson, 39207.

The hour is late, but I, too, appreciate this chance to brief you all to the extent that the law and our process allows on the status of the task force efforts within our southern district to do the same kinds of vigilance that we all want in these matters.

The background within our district of task force and otherwise—we prosecuted in our district three young white punks, for lack of a better word, they're convicted as punks, so we can call them punks now, for burning down two churches on the same night in 1993 in our district.

They're in Federal prison now, as are two, again, young Caucasian males who were convicted over the past year in our district of a hate crime unrelated to churches, but of which an interracial couple in an otherwise predominantly white neighborhood had their home fire bombed for what we proved were race-related reasons.

We too—I too, along with Mr. Moreton, participated in early June in the National Task Force effort and coordination meeting in Washington.

We, too, had been doing many things that we had not until June called a task force. As of June we were told to call up a task force, so we called up a task force and have had coordinated efforts of the State fire marshal, of the State attorney general's office, as well as the Federal agencies involved, including the U.S. marshal.

I've taken it on myself personally to, just as a double check for a number of things, to communicate myself with pastors of affected churches when the investigation kind of matures and is kind of not just to pay our respects symbolically, but as a kind of a doublecheck on seeing if they as a victim believe in their own minds that they've been treated with the respect of victims, and to see if they perceive intuitively that there was a level of vigilance in the investigation that they would have wanted to see.

If you have received anything by way of suggestions from the earlier testimony you've taken elsewhere in the South about how offices like ours can coordinate these, let me know, let us know. None of these arsonists speak for me or for anyone else, anyone that I know, and perhaps it is a—life is full of irony, maybe it's kind of—has jogged a great number of people out of a certain false complacency about race relations.

And if we act with a kind of biracial unity on the matter with vigilance, that's the only way to communicate, they don't speak for us. But I believe that we're engaged in doing that.

Any other questions about what we're doing, about what we can do in our district?

Mr. Range. Do you have any active cases in your district now? Which ones?

Mr. Pigott. There are a couple of active investigations.

Mr. Range. Which churches?

Mr. Pigott. In Yazoo County and in Lauderdale County.

Dr. Ward. That's Satosha?

Mr. Pigott. Correct. That's Satosha. And the little Lauderdale community in Lauderdale County.

Dr. Berry. St. Paul's Primitive and El Bethel—

Mr. Pigott. That's it.

The most convincing compilation I've seen—

you've already discovered, I'm sure, better than I would have, that the numbers game is very difficult. There are a lot of comparisons of apples to oranges when you begin to compile how many of something of this nature.

The best compilation I've seen is, on just numbers, done by the FBI, not only from their own records, but from all records available for fires reported to the State fire marshal since and including 1990, and then the ATF's records too.

And in our Federal district, since and including 1990, there have been fires of one kind or another, whether or not intentional, that affected eight predominantly African American congregations, four predominantly Caucasian congregations, two fires that affected churches that on the public record are said to be biracial in composition, and one of a very small damage to a congregation that's an unknown racial identity.

The eight with respect to African American congregations includes the two that were the subject of the convictions that we got, and the two that were, that are the subject of the investigations now.

The others are older, and some of those, frankly, involve very small damages. And I say, that eight includes fires to such churches from all kinds of sources over that 5½ year period.

Dr. Berry. How long was it between the time the fires took place and the convictions in the cases that you got convictions on? I'm just trying to see how long it took to find these people.

Mr. Pigott. Well, these people—their conduct was rather manifest, and for precisely the reason that Mr. Moreton said. There were two fires, black congregations, burned on the same night in the same—within adjoining counties. Not coincidentally on the anniversary of the death of Dr. King.

So, everyone in the community could sense that this is up, and the FBI was called immediately. So I guess we'd have to characterize that as an unusual situation, a blatant situation. The fire—we all know that would have been April of that year. There was an immediate FBI investigation—frankly, an immediate confession by one of the young people, and prompt Federal charges were filed.

As always in these matters, the Civil Rights Division litigators in Washington choose to work with us and to have a, frankly a final say in the—and we choose to work with them to bring their resources to bear on these. They handled that along with our lawyers.

Dr. Berry. The other question is about insurance. Have there been any allegations that black churches have been discriminated against, and having insurance companies refuse to give them insurance after they've been burned, or refusing to pay off the insurance? Have you had any of that in your district or in Mississippi that you're aware of, any complaints of that kind?

Mr. Pigott. No complaints of that kind. That would be something that could well be actionable by us. I'm not aware of any systematic complaints of that kind.

I want to understand the nature of the—

Dr. Berry. The complaint is that—

Mr. Pigott. Is it fire specific?

Dr. Berry. The church fire specific—that the insurance company either refused to pay, or the insurance company paid, but canceled the insurance, and that it did it for black churches, but did not do it in the case of white churches that were similarly situated.

Mr. Pigott. I'm unaware of any—I've heard general, at the most retail level, talk of such amount of—I would very much appreciate getting any data or evidence that the Commission has about something like that.

I do know that of the two churches that are the subject of the current investigations in our district, one had insurance, one didn't. The one that had insurance had damage of approximately $2,000, and that's been fully paid by the insurance.

I've been talking on and off with the pastor of that church, and I'll check with him to see if the insurance has been canceled. But if you do have any specific information of that kind, please let me know, because that's something we can check out. That's not an unverifiable matter, because we know which ones have been the subject of fires.

Dr. Berry. All right. Good. Thank you.

Mr. Pigott. Anything further that you need from me?

Ms. Keys. You made the comment that this has jogged a lot of people out of complacent thoughts

that they might have had about the status of race relations. I'm not sure what you meant by that.

Mr. Pigott. Well, I mean a complacent notion that it's, that we've crossed the bridge, or it's all over, or there are no subtle or otherwise conventional problems of racial attitudes.

Ms. Keys. Do you think that the racial attitudes that might spawn some of this activity are aberrations, or are they—

Mr. Pigott. Well, now, if we're talking about the kinds of attitudes that spawn this specific activity—I, as a citizen, I'd say it's aberrational in every respect. You begin to detect a pattern where we do see racist motives here. Young. Apparently from the anecdotes we do have, kind of a racist twist to vandalism, the same kind of aberrational need for that kind of thing in the way that the professor, I think—I heard him talk about it a little bit.

But, no, I didn't mean to—I mean, so to answer your question, I think it's aberrational in every way, yeah.

Anything else?

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much. And I'd like to thank all of the participants for being so generous as to give us their time and insights about this troubling problem.

I'd like to thank Dr. Mary Frances Berry for coming to be a part of this hearing with us in Mississippi.

And the community forum on church burnings will be recessed until 9:00 tomorrow morning. Thank you.

Open Session

Dr. Ward. For the record, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Jacqueline Morris, Cleveland, Mississippi

Ms. Morris. My name is Jacqueline Morris. My street address is 1110 Morgan Street, Cleveland, Mississippi, 38732.

Dr. Ward. Thank you.

Ms. Morris. When I first read about these hearings in the paper I was determined to go, as I had spoken to Mr. Range about, because I was quite curious to see the type of menagerie of witnesses you would have here. I understand the witnesses and I suppose I understand the other witnesses.

But I'll admit, I'm not very old. I'm only 30 years old, and a lot of people have seen a lot more than I have, but I have had the privilege of going to a high school on both sides of the track. I have worked in a lot of different places around here, and I get a chance to see a lot of different people in this area.

When you asked Dr. Dennis to come up here and give a brief history, he mentioned a book, *The Most Southern Place*. I'm very familiar with the book. I picked it up because of a quote that was on the cover. And it says that the Delta is the most unchanged place since the Civil War. Very true statement.

You keep asking about the church burnings. I'll admit I don't have any personal, anything personal, to add to that part, but you asked about a couple of, if there had been any other types of aggressions, overt aggressions from the racists in this area.

Not too long ago we had a sheriff's race, the incumbent, Matt Griffin, against the, I believe it's assistant police chief Floyd Pope, ended up with a cross burnt in his yard right before the elections.

We had some people who decided they wished to build on the other side of the track, which is the west side of Cleveland, the other side of the track. Their house was burned three times? Three times. They decided finally not to move in. Twice while they were building, and once after they had moved in.

There have been instances—you had asked specifically, Chairman Berry, about the school system, whether or not it was segregated. They had given you numbers. Bolivar County is, I believe he quoted 65 percent black. The high school is completely black. The two high school graduating classes combined, I may have my numbers correct because we're—incorrect because I'm going off the top of my head, but I would say out of the entire years—as a matter of fact, I state that the three high schools combined, Bayou Academy, which is private, all-white, Cleveland High School, which is predominantly white, and Eastside High School. I don't think they've had a combined class of 320,

but yet we have three high schools. I can't say anything about Bayou, but we have two public high schools.

There is so much. Paradoxically, I hate to say this, but part of—when you start talking about race relations, especially in Bolivar County, it's very defined. The east side is black, the west side is what, and never the two shall meet. Recently we have had, I can think of one person, a black person who has built and lives on the west side of Cleveland, but he's also a judge. That's different.

You were asking socially. I work night shift. I worked night shift for a very long time. And I had two ladies that came in and they worked at one of the factories, and they are friends, one was white and the other was black. Well, I also have a friend, and she and I are really good friends, and we hang out and we do things together. And it is quite obvious the atmosphere that we get from people, the reactions.

And I thought it was just me being paranoid because I am black and that's the way we see things. We always see things black and white more so than white people do because they don't have to deal with it the way we do. And I asked them if they had the same problems when they went places and did things, and she says they have problems right there in the plant, and everybody has known both of them for years, but they have problems with their friendship because they do things outside of the plant. It's okay to talk and be friends where you work, but you're supposed to leave it there. And that's not really accepted around here.

Also, there was an editorial, I believe it was the earlier part of this year, by, I forget the gentleman's first name but his last name is Timms. Isn't he on the board of supervisors?

Unidentified Speaker. Jim Timms is his name—

Ms. Morris. You're referring to the same letter I am about the courthouse. The latest little incident that I can recall that's very indicative to Bolivar County is there was a letter. We recently—well, not recently. She's serving her second term, Rose is?

Unidentified Speaker. I don't—what term—

Ms. Morris. Well, we have a black circuit clerk. And it was recently put in the editorial by Mr. Timms on the board of—school board?

Unidentified Speaker. I don't know what you're asking.

Ms. Morris. Okay. He's on the school board. Anyway, I hope I'm not saying this incorrectly. He referred to the number of blacks that are now working in the courthouse, which is—when Rose got in office, she did hire blacks in her office, and she does have, I believe, one or two whites working in her office, plus she has a satellite office in Rosedale. Whereas before she started working at the courthouse, there were only, I believe, two blacks working in the courthouse prior to that. And her husband quite eloquently replied to that—I wish she was here because I don't really remember, I only got that part from hearsay, I didn't read that part in the paper.

Insofar as when I first read about these public hearings, I thought it was really ironic that some of the people who really need to be here, people who are employed at Tyson Foods and Delta Pride Catfish, which they've been pretty national lately because I'm part of the labor union movement because I worked at Kroger for a while, and we are union.

Delta Pride, and this is really a catch-22 situation because everybody wants to make this out to be black and white and it's not. There're a lot of shades of gray. A lot of the reason why we don't have a lot of "race problems" is because everybody knows their place and a lot of people don't bother to cross the line.

I have a friend who owns a restaurant here in town, a very nice restaurant, K.C.'s, it's up on the highway. And he pulled me aside one day and he asked me, "Why don't blacks patronize me?" And I said, "because you told them not to come here." And he says, "No, I didn't. I would never say that." He's Asian and he knows he's a minority in this country and he says that he would never sit there and say that.

He had a grand opening, he sent out invitations, there were very few blacks that were invited, and the blacks who were invited were the acceptable blacks, they either had money, they had position, or they had an education. So anyone else is going to say, "Well, we weren't invited, so that sent a message that you don't want us there and we're not coming there. We're not going to make

waves." It's not that important to us."

Most of the things that go on in the Delta are accepted and already known. That's just the way things are, and everybody leaves them at the status quo. There's a work force alliance in the counties that is trying to work together and improve education and economics in this area. Bolivar County is one of the most least active counties in this work force alliance.

This work force alliance works. It's worked in Louisiana and it's worked in other parts—I'm not sure about other parts of the State, but I know it's worked in Louisiana, because I've talked to some of the people who were part of it.

Are there any questions?

Dr. Ward. I want to respond to something that you raised that's very important and very pointed. You said people from Tyson and Delta Pride are not here. And you see, this is one of the frustrations of the Committee. That is basically an issue of exploitation of workers, of inattention to OSHA standards. And if we want expert witnesses, we ought to call Ron Meyers, talk about the kinds of problems, health problems these people bring to him from working in those factories.

So that's a very important issue, and it certainly establishes something about the climate of the Delta region. And I'm very glad that you have spoken about all of these things because, while we're keeping a very open mind about church burnings, we need to be keeping an open mind about the context of the cities in which these things take place. And you have provided part of that for us.

What I am going to ask you very directly, and disgrace myself is, was this a good site for this meeting?

Ms. Morris. No.

Dr. Ward. What would you have suggested?

Ms. Morris. I honestly can't tell you what I would have suggested, because I've been trying to get people to come out for the longest. I do know this is not a good site because basically the people that you needed to come here to give you a good barometer of what's going on, they're not coming over here.

Dr. Ward. Do they feel that this is a space for—

Ms. Morris. It's off limits.

Dr. Ward. It's off limits to them?

Ms. Morris. Yes.

Dr. Ward. Because they don't have college degrees?

Ms. Morris. No. It's not necessarily college degrees. It's not that, it's—Delta State is not a good atmosphere, period. I went to school over here. I had been to three previous universities before I got here. And whenever I need a course, or need information, or need anything, believe it or not, I go to Old Miss Campus for everything I need. I never come to Delta State with a couple of exceptions.

Ms. Keys. May I just ask, on the situation with the cross burnings, I think Mr. Morton said there hadn't been one in 3 years. I guess he didn't keep up with that. But—and the people who had their house burned, do you know whether or not there was any involvement or investigation by anyone to determine whether—

Ms. Morris. I honestly do not know. I did not know the people personally, and I don't know.

Unidentified Speaker. That was not a problem—

Ms. Morris. Okay, it was not. Okay, well, see, it was an epitaph, is that what it was, it was an epitaph? Was it an epitaph?

Unidentified Speaker. They placed—

Ms. Morris. Oh, okay. What they're correcting me on, it was not cross burnings. It was a T frame with the T-shirt of the incumbent on it, which was Matt Griffin. Okay. I'm sorry about that.

Dr. Ward. I've been told by counsel that for the transcript, since those remarks from you were picked up, you will need to identify yourself, please.

Ms. Beck. My name is Margery, and that's M-a-r-g-e-r-y, the last name is Beck, B-e-c-k. Do you want the address?

Dr. Ward. Yes, please.

Ms. Beck. It's 401 South 3rd Avenue, Cleveland, Mississippi 38732.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much.

Ms. Morris. The only thing I wanted to say is this was only announced in the *Bolivar Commercial.* Most blacks do not take that paper, and they were not aware of this forum here.

Dr. Ward. I'll also ask you to do the same

thing, identify yourself because this is going to be a part of the record.

Ms. Morris. My name is Shirley Morris, and I'm in property management in Cleveland, Mississippi. My address is P.O. Box 782, Cleveland, Mississippi, 38732. This is my daughter.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much. Now, the meeting will be recessed again.

Dr. Berry. May I just make one comment before you do that—

Dr. Ward. Yes, Dr. Berry.

Dr. Berry. —because I will not be here tomorrow because I have to go on. But I think it was a very important statement that was made by the witness in the open forum, and your question, Chairperson. We have learned a great deal from this.

So far the most successful forum we have had was the one in Alabama in Boligee, which we had out in the community, in the black public high school that had no airconditioning. We almost suffocated. But people came, and people from the community came, from the black community. All kinds of ordinary people came. And there are logistical reasons and there are practical reasons why we have the forums where we have them, and so I'm not criticizing anybody.

But I'm just saying that this is a lesson for us to learn, that if you want to do these things, depending on who you want to attract, sometimes you have to do them in places—I have wanted to do them all in tents out at the site where the churches were burned, but I was told that was totally impractical, especially since some of them are way out in the rural areas.

But the one in Boligee was the most successful one that we had, and the one in Louisiana, almost that successful, but much less so. But the ones in either hotels, fancy hotels, or in places in—places around these in good neighborhoods have not really been as effective. And so I think that's a lesson we can all learn.

But I have learned a great deal this evening, and I very much appreciate the work that the SAC is doing. And maybe by tomorrow more people will get the word, and now they know it's here, and they'll come anyway. I certainly hope so.

Dr. Ward. Right. And just for—there is a time tomorrow for open—if some people who have not had a chance to speak want to talk tomorrow from, I think it's 10:30 or 11:00 to 12:00, or something like that, there is time for that. So if you know some people who want to make statements, please tell them, that when they come, to sign the list and ask JoAnn Daniels to be put on the program. Okay? I thank you very much.

I thank Dr. Berry for her comments. And now there will be no more.

(Proceedings concluded at 10:30 p.m.)

The forum of the Mississippi Advisory Committee resumed on July 11, 1996, at 9:00 a.m., with Mississippi Advisory Committee Chairperson Jerry Ward, Jr., presiding. Other members of the Advisory Committee present were Willie Foster, James Lott, Leslie Grant Range, and Suzanne Keys. Also present were Central Regional Office Director Melvin L. Jenkins and civil rights analyst Ascension Hernandez.

Proceedings

Dr. Ward. The meeting of the Mississippi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will come to order. For the benefit of those in our audience, I shall introduce myself and my colleagues. My name is Jerry Ward and I am chairperson of the Mississippi Advisory Committee. Members of the committee are—coming now to his seat, Willie Foster. Next to him, James Lott. To my immediate right, Leslie Range and Suzanne Keys.

We are pleased to have with us also Mr. Melvin Jenkins who is the director for the Central Regional Office in Kansas City. And Ascension Hernandez, a civil rights analyst, to my right. And JoAnn Daniels who is manning the table in the back.

The Commission on Civil Rights is an independent bipartisan agency that was first established by Congress in 1957 and reestablished in 1983. And it has certain very specific tasks to perform. One is to investigate complaints alleging that citizens are being deprived of their right to vote by reason of their race, color, religion, sex, age, disability or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices.

Second, to collect and study information relating to discrimination or equal protection under the laws. Third, to appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws.

Fourth, to serve as a national clearinghouse for information in respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws. Fifth, to submit reports, findings and recommendations to the President and the Congress. And finally, to issue public service announcements to discourage discrimination and denial of equal protection.

The Commission has 51 advisory committees—one for each State and the District of Columbia. And each is composed of citizens who are familiar with local and State civil rights issues. The members, of course, serve without compensation, and assist the Commission with its factfinding, investigating and information dissemination functions.

We are here today to conduct a community forum on race relations in the town of Cleveland in the aftermath of recent fires of black churches. We also want to focus on Federal and local law enforcement efforts to find the causes of these fires.

Hopefully, this forum will give individuals an opportunity to discuss some of their concerns and ideas about the reasons these fires occurred, and we should also provide an avenue to search for some solutions to this phenomenal problem.

Our goal is to fulfill the guidelines that have been set by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in terms of what the Mississippi Advisory Committee is, and that is the eyes and ears of the Commission and of the community.

Information about church burnings will be especially helpful to us, and the proceedings are being recorded by a public stenographer. These will be sent to the Commission for its consideration. It will also help us with planning our future activities.

It is very important that at the very beginning of this, I remind everyone who is here of the ground rules for a community forum. This is a public meeting. This is open to the media and to the general public. And we have a rather full schedule for this morning of people who will be providing information to us.

The time allotted for each presentation must be strictly adhered to. And this will include a presentation by each participant followed by questions from committee members. And to accommodate persons who were not formally invited but who do wish to make statements, we have scheduled an open session from approximately 11:30 until noon. We may be able to start that early. I hope we can.

So anyone who wishes to make a statement dur-

ing the open session should contact Ms. JoAnn Daniels at the table in the back for scheduling. There is an alternative procedure. Written statements may be submitted to Committee members, or the staff here or by mail to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. And you can get the address from Ms. Daniels. The record of this particular meeting will close on August 12, 1996.

Although some of the statements that are being made here might be controversial, we want to ensure that all participants avoid defaming or degrading any person or organization. In order to ensure that all aspects of the issues are represented, knowledgeable persons with a wide variety of experience and viewpoints have been invited to share information with us.

If anyone feels that a person or organization has been defamed or degraded by statements that are made in these proceedings, that person should contact our staff during the meeting so we can provide a chance for public response.

The Mississippi Committee certainly appreciates the willingness of all participants who share their views and experiences. I will now ask Mr. Jenkins to share some opening remarks with us.

Mr. Jenkins. Thank you, Chair Ward. First of all, good morning to those who assemble for this important community forum. The last couple of weeks, the Regional Office of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights out of Kansas City has held community forums in Boligee, Alabama; Baker, Louisiana; and now in Cleveland, Mississippi.

We are trying to gather as much information as possible concerning race relations in the aftermath of church burnings. What will we do with the information that is collected from the series of factfinding meetings or community forums that is being held by the civil rights committees?

The idea is to pull together the information, to analyze it somewhat concerning the status of race relations in the various locales that we have visited. So often, when there is an episode of racial tension, church burnings, cross burnings, the question is what is the cause? And where do we go from here?

With the information that we gather from the citizens, and hopefully with your suggestions, we can develop a plan of action to relay any concerns about race relations, not only in Cleveland but in this area of Mississippi. What we want to do is to listen, to take your concerns, translate that into a written report that will be shared with the Advisory Committee, the general public, members of Congress, and the President, concerning the state of race relations.

Hopefully we can move to the avenue that if needed, we can develop a human relations commission where persons can come together to discuss their concerns about this important topic. From that, we may be able to develop a statewide human relations commission, not only to discuss concerns but also, as we have gathered in past community forums, persons do not know where to go to complain concerning discrimination.

In the State of Mississippi, there is no State human relations commission that has been established to take complaints of discrimination. Of course, there are Federal agencies, normally out of Atlanta, that will take your complaint. There may be a 1–800 number. But it is important to have State and local agencies that can respond to your concerns, not only about discrimination, but about race relations in general.

Why do we have the series of cross burnings or the cluster burnings as was referred to last evening? What do we do? First, an honest and open dialog about race relations is very important.

Hopefully at this meeting will be the genesis for such a discussion that we can move on to solutions. So that now we can look in a year or two back at this time to say we have made progress. Although the State has made progress in terms of race relations, much needs to be done there and this is why we are here in Cleveland and holding a series a forums around the State.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I turn it back over to you. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Is Mr. Charles Buckner here?

Mr. Buckner. Yes.

Dr. Ward. Yes. Would you come to the podium, please? Oh, did Mrs. Buckner want to come? Yes, please, both of you can come at the same time. Okay, Mr. Buckner, would you state for the record your name and mailing address please?

Mr. Buckner. My name is Charles Buckner. I

live at 620 Pine Street, Ruleville, Mississippi.

Dr. Ward. Okay. Do you have an opening statement or any comments that you would like to make?

Statement of Charles Buckner, Deacon Overseer, New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Ruleville, Mississippi

Mr. Buckner. Well, I'm a deacon overseer. I take care of the church where my membership is. That is New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Ruleville, pastored by the Reverend Dexter D. Bryan. And I am the one that discovered the fire at our church back in March of this year.

And it's—we've had problems in the past at our church but it's been nothing like this before. We've had vandals, people shooting and different stuff like that. But it hasn't been anything serious as this fire was. And the dollar amount—it's just been little petty stuff. We've had fans stolen and different items from the church, but this fire—it really took a toll on the church and its congregation.

And like I said I am the one that found it—discovered the fire. At that particular week, I was on vacation from my job. And I was doing some maintenance work on the church. And I had worked at the church all that Tuesday—well, that Wednesday. It was the Wednesday of March 20. All that day I had worked down at the church.

And I was—well, I was so tired after I worked there all day I wasn't able to attend bible class that night. But the next morning, I went there and to cross—to go around and find that fire. That building like that—it was something to see. I mean, you walk in and you used to see a nice building. And then you walk in and see this place that's in ruins—just smoke and everything's melted.

And pews are burnt. And I think the most shocking thing of all was when I walked to the front there and saw the bible laying there on the front pew that was charred and burnt. And it seemed as though the fire started with the bible. And that was a real hurting feeling, to see that someone had taken the bible and started the fire in the house of the Lord. It really took a toll on me.

But since, we've came together and we're back in our building now by the help of the good Lord and neighbors. We pulled together and we got back in our church within a month which was I would say miraculous because it took a lot of work and everybody pulled together and worked. And it just was an effort on the whole congregation to get back.

You can go to someone else's house and they make you feel welcome, but it's not the same as your house. You do things in your house that you wouldn't do in anybody else's house. And it was nice, like I said, of a neighboring church to let us use their sanctuary for our services and what have you. But it was a special feeling to me that particular Sunday morning when I opened the door and walked back into our sanctuary. It just was a special feeling that went over my body to walk back in there and to see how we had—did our church, redid our church. And it was a special feeling for me. I think everybody had a special feeling that particular day.

And getting to the—we've had problems like I said before. I don't know who did it. Probably never know who did it. But it's—I don't know. They could have been black. They could have been white. They could have been Hispanic. You never know until someone comes up and catches them or we get some kind of lead or something. You'll never know. Only God knows.

But I think it's a real low down sick person to really go in and to burn a church. Out of all the places in the world to burn, a church is a house of worship. I can't see anyone doing it unless they are sick. And I'm talking about sick in the head.

I'm not going to say it's racial because, to me, I don't feel that it's racial because we've got—we are 2½ miles east of Ruleville. And just before you get to the church there's a bridge. And we have all types that congregate right there on that bridge. They drink. They shoot. They play music. We are in service sometime and they are down there shooting and drinking and having a party right on that bridge.

But we don't let that bother us. We are Christian people so we go and do what we have to do. And then we have to pass them. It doesn't look good. I'm the bus driver. I pick up my kids. I call them my kids because when they get on that bus, they are mine. They are my responsibility. And we've

got a lot of young kids in our church. We're a predominantly young church.

And the kids look up to me, my fellow deacon Brother Jones. They look up to the pastor. They look up to my wife. She's the "Y" president—youth director. And I think we're all doing a good job. And if we keep up the work that we're doing, I hope and I pray that these kids will grow up and look at me as being one of their role models and want to be like me. And I just—I think—

Statement of Jacqueline Buckner, President and Director of the Choir, New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Ruleville, Mississippi

Mrs. Buckner. First of all, I would like to say good morning. And to the Chair, to the advisory and the Advisory Committee, my name is Jacqueline Buckner. I also reside at 620 Pine Street in Ruleville. And as my husband stated, I am the president and director of the choir there at New Mt. Zion. And I am also the youth coordinator and director there.

And just a few personal views, which is always an emotional time for us. But as my husband stated, my feeling is that I don't think this thing was racial. And I can't speak for it throughout the Nation. But I just feel also, like him, that it is somebody sick who's living in a sick world, because we have a good relationship in Ruleville. And when I say it that way, I mean black and white. I don't feel that there's this side of town who is still living in the Jim Crow times. Black and whites that still has that little crook in the middle.

But in my heart, I don't see black and white. And I've been brought up that way. My mother's always taught us to believe that everybody is somebody. And then I believe that I'm somebody. I want my children to believe that they're somebody. And we try to teach our children at our church to always believe that everybody has a good spot. That you never look down to anyone because of what they're wearing or the side of the tracks that they come from.

But concerning the burning of our church, yes. It was a scar. And it scarred the entire congregation, but we kept going on, you know. We held out heads up. We kept going to church. We kept having services. And we had several calls from community people. And we have two who are sitting in the audience—Mr. McCreary who is the president of the bank at Ruleville—Planters Bank, and Mr. Donohoe who is also the supervisor of accounting. And Charles and I both worked there for the board of supervisors in Sunflower County.

And these are the type of people who come to us and say, "Hey, it's going to be all right. If we can help in any kind of way, let us know." And these are the people who you have to lean on when things get rough like this. I really personally don't feel that that burning was racial. I just feel that somebody picked that place being isolated out there outside of town, picked that place to do their job—their devil work that day.

We have received many vandals but we keep building, keep asking God for the strength and we keep going on. But I don't want this thing to get tied up. And I don't want the people in the Nation to think that this is white. The whites did this or the blacks—who knows? I mean we have had several people to come into our church. Churches down here in Inverness on the other end of the county had a young man to go in a vandal. He was black in a black church.

So that's why I can't see that this is a racial thing because I feel that Mississippi and as well as the State should have made a State forward. I don't want us to move back and just continue to think that everything that happened was because of race. Or it was somebody white that went—I'm sure. You don't know that. You weren't there.

And like my husband said if he had been there, he doesn't know what he would have done because he has such a strong love for that church. And we all love that little church that sits by the riverside. But we don't want this thing to be blown out of proportion and say, "Well, I just know it's somebody white doing it and nobody black." You just—you don't know.

And I just pray as my husband said that whoever it is that they be brought to justice. And one day they're going to get caught. If they're not here in Mississippi, Alabama, Atlanta—wherever it is. They'll be caught and they'll be brought to justice because this is God's house. And if you burn a

bible and burn a church, what would you do to somebody else? You'd burn somebody's home and they're living in it. People do it all the time for stupid reasons.

But Satan abides in a lot of people's lives. But I say to them that they need to get to know Jesus. And if they get to know Jesus, then I know that everything will be all right. That Satan has them in trouble. He has many ways of getting into people's lives, but a church—I hope whoever it is that they burn—excuse my expression—that they burn in hell. And I know God knows all things and he sees all things. And we thank you.

Mr. Range. We would like to thank you, Mrs. Buckner. Mr. and Mrs. Buckner, on behalf of the community, I would like to thank you for your comments. I know that it had to be a terrible time for you but you seemed to have rebounded very well. And you have the spirit of understanding.

There is one question that I would like to ask you. And that is do you think that there is more that any of the law enforcement officials could have done and should have done in terms of investigating the fire?

Mr. Buckner. This fire, like I said, wasn't reported. I mean it was reported—by the time the fire department, the police department—they really didn't know anything about it. Like I said, I'm the one who discovered the fire, that there had been a fire. And I called the sheriff's department and he came right out. I mean, he came right out and he took pictures of whatever. But I know by us being a small town, we don't have the convenience of big town investigators and stuff like this.

But I guess I don't know if there was anything else they could have done far as—when you have a fire, it really destroys a lot of evidence I would say. I don't know if they could have done anything more. I'm not in law enforcement. But like I said I called and they came out. And that's about it.

Ms. Keys. May I just ask—what kind of assistance was offered to you and by whom? You mentioned some people but—they give money or they don't give money or what did people do to help? And how has that affected, if at all, race relations in the area?

Mrs. Buckner. Well, Mr. Donohoe—he's always in our congregations at church. And he's always offering contributions, not only to our church but churches in Sunflower County—all over. And he did give us money and Mr. McCreary, he's also—we went to him in accordance with this. Of course, we was trying to get a move anyway. And we went to him and we were able to borrow money from the bank to help renovate a new building that we intended to move in within a year. And he was real nice about it because he knows Charles and me. We're aware of it, of course, and we're real good friends. And I thank God for having friends like them.

And he didn't change a word about it. "Okay, this is what you all want, we have no problem with it." We really appreciate that because he could have hassled us and said, "What you have is what you got," and all this, but he did not. He knew the situation we were in and at the time, we were always looking to move into the town because of vandalism. But they were there financially, yes.

Ms. Keys. Did any other groups come to help with the reconstruction at all or did you all pretty much do it yourselves?

Mr. Buckner. Well, we had people hired. I had a fellow employee who used to work for me and I knew that he knew how to paint, so we hired him to do the painting. And my brother-in-law hired a guy from over here in Bolivar County to redo the carpet. And we had another guy to refurbish the pews—clean them and what have you.

It just was an effort on—it really—all the work that was done was paid. It pays. But it just was several people that had different jobs. My brother-in-law and myself put the finishing touches on. And a few of the other members came in and hung the blinds or whatever. But like I said we—it just was an effort on the whole part of the church.

Mr. Jenkins. Just a few questions on race relations in Ruleville. Let me preface it by saying I grew up in a small town—smaller than Ruleville—in North Carolina. And I have a feel for race relations back in the sixties and seventies when I grew up there.

But in terms of 1996, if there are problems between the races in Ruleville, where do you turn? Are there times that you have groups coming together to say we have a situation that we need to deal with collectively? Or what do you do?

You indicated that, sure there is an understanding that there is Jim Crowism—that segment there. And you have some on the other side. But how do you come together to say we may have a problem in terms of race relations? What do we do? What recommendations do you have to this committee? Or if you were in total power in Ruleville, what would you do in terms of race relations or change things for the better? Either of you.

Mr. Buckner. Well, first thing, you can't always —back door talking I would call it. You need to sit down as a committee and talk things out—black, white, whatever color. You can't do anything about telling so and so this, and then he takes it somewhere.

You need to get black and white together and talk about it. You can't solve a problem by not talking about it. You really got to sit down and talk about it, talk it out. And reach some kind of conclusion. I just feel that people need to talk more.

Mr. Jenkins. Mm-hmm. Do you have the mechanism presently in Ruleville to do that?

Mr. Buckner. Well, I would say so. The town is—well, right now I live in a split neighborhood. It's about half and half. I mean we have a black family here, a white family here, a black family there. It's all together. And my neighbors are—I got white neighbors and I got black neighbors.

I can't speak for other neighborhoods, but my neighborhood is real nice. And we have good relations between our neighbors. We look out for one another. If one of us is going out of town or something like that, we'll tell each other and we just look out for one another. And like I say it's black and white.

Mr. Jenkins. Now those folks on the other side of the track, how do you bring them together to understand better race relations? How would you bring them together?

Mr. Buckner. Well, it's going back to like I said. They need to sit down and talk about it. You can't do anything unless you talk about it. You've got to pull some kind of meeting together and talk about it.

Mr. Jenkins. But you think perhaps if there were a mechanism in let's say the county with what we used to call it in the 1960s—a biracial committee or a committee on race relations to sit down to map out a plan of action. Would that be helpful for a city and for the county?

Mr. Buckner. I think so.

Mr. Jenkins. Okay.

Mrs. Buckner. Within our town—county and town because Sunflower County is just—it's huge—67 miles long. And we know; we work there. And he drives it every day. And I do feel that we need a biracial committee. And the city of Ruleville itself meet—if it's nothing but twice a month where we all meet, come together, lay our views out and just get together. And then the county as a whole, you know.

There are meetings within the county of this type. And they're just open to the public. Of course, a few blacks might show up, more whites, and sometimes, a few whites or something. But I agree. We need that mechanism. In Ruleville alone—We need something.

Mr. Jenkins. Finally, if this Advisory Committee could offer any assistance by let's say coming to Ruleville or back to some of the Sunflower County to sit down with elected officials and community leaders, do you think the general population there would be receptive to that idea—to have a committee? And these persons are really from Mississippi. To have persons from Mississippi to do that? Do you think it would be receptive?

Mrs. Buckner. Yes.

Mr. Jenkins. Okay.

Mrs. Buckner. Definitely.

Mr. Jenkins. Thank you.

Mr. Range. Thank you all. Thank you both. Is Michael Williams here? If not, I will ask Mr. Edgar Donohoe to please come forward.

Statement of Edgar Donohoe, President, Board of Supervisors, Sunflower County, Indianola, Mississippi

Mr. Donohoe. Dr. Ward and the panel, I want to tell you I appreciate the opportunity to be here, but I feel real inadequate. Charles and Jackie both work for me. And to get up behind them—they're both kind of naive when it comes to bragging about themselves but there are two of the best things that have happened to Ruleville in a long time.

Ms. Keys. Excuse me, Mr. Donohoe, we have to do this procedure thing.

Mr. Donohoe. Okay. I'm Edgar Donohoe.

Ms. Keys. Could you state your name and your address?

Mr. Donohoe. I'm sorry. Okay. Edgar Donohoe, president of the board of supervisors of Sunflower County. Ruleville is in my district.

Ms. Keys. And your mailing address?

Mr. Donohoe. My address is Indianola, Box 430, Route 2.

Ms. Keys. And your zip?

Mr. Donohoe. I don't even know my zip.

Ms. Keys. Okay.

Mr. Donohoe. Jackie keeps up with that.

Ms. Keys. I take it you have a statement or you would like to make a statement?

Mr. Donohoe. Yes, ma'am, I would. I've been a supervisor in District 4, which includes Ruleville, for close to 14 years. Just been reelected to a new term with a 64.7 percent black voting age district. It includes the towns of Ruleville and Sunflower and Doddsville.

I feel that my mission there is to work with people. Charles is the road foreman. We have a road manager countywide. Charles is the road foreman there who just spoke to you. He does an excellent job. The bridge that he speaks about is in his district and he's in charge of the maintenance on it. He's painted over the stuff that you've seen in the pictures. Time and time again, it's been put back.

This is not by the—what we consider the people of Ruleville or Sunflower County. This is a group of people who have views for whatever reason that are not in accordance with the people who live in the area. I was told this morning that one person who's been spotted there a lot is a person from Cleveland, Mississippi.

This is something that any area has, whether it be a hide-a-way hangout or beer parties or whatnot. As I think you were told last night, this church has been broken into many times. My church has been broken into many times. I live at a rural church halfway between Ruleville and Indianola that's a nice plant. One of the nicest rural churches in Mississippi. Finances are no problem. But that church, in the last 5 years, has been broken into four times. One person used the bathroom in the choir room, and used the American and the Christian flag for—that person was pawning. He was caught later in the commission of another crime and found some of the goods.

The purpose of most of the vandalism in our churches in rural Sunflower County is by dopeheads and alcoholics that are seeking ways to get something to pawn to buy the stuff that they feel they need.

I think today—knowing Sunflower County—what would probably help with their commission on drugs, alcohol and economics—when you ride down the street at any time and you could pick up 30 to 40 young men in any given day to go work for an hour or 2 hours because there's no way for them to make a living—gentlemen, that's wrong.

We had two thriving industries in Ruleville that were in the garment industry. Today, most of the goods that those people made are being shipped in from Mexico. Some of the stuff that they're selling is coming from Mexico to Ruleville and being resold.

Now if Washington wants to help us, give us jobs, and we'll take care of the rest of it. People like Mr. and Mrs. Buckner, or Paul and myself—we have good people on both sides of the track as he spoke today. And by the way, I heard last night that Ruleville was a segregated town—I don't know of a neighborhood in Ruleville that's not integrated except we have one low-income apartment that is about half a black and white complex. We have one on the other side of town that is all-black. I don't know of any whites in there. But as far as the housing, I think Charles and Jackie were the first blacks on their street. The people next door immediately—were white—made them feel at home.

And this is the kind of leader that we need in the Delta. Yes, we need help. But you help us with the economic end of it and we'll take care of the rest. We appreciate advice. We appreciate wisdom.

Jackie is, as I told you, a graduate of Delta State University here in business administration. She's gone back and done some graduate work on her own time. She is presently the coordinator for the safety program for all of Sunflower County of every department.

Charles is in charge of the biggest district in Sunflower County as far as road maintenance is concerned. The crew works for him. They don't come to me because—they're going to go to the road manager. He is completely in charge of hiring and firing of that group. He's in charge of the buying.

Jackie's—assistant purchasing agent is just one of her many duties. And we have people like this all over. We have contractors. Our welfare department burned in Ruleville. When I went there, there was no welfare department. Through grants, I got a new one built. It was 11 years and it burned. There was no arson suspected because there was no entry made. It was something in how—the contractor that has got the job to rebuild that building is from Ruleville, Mississippi. He's a black individual and he's doing a good job.

We have people who have some of the greatest gifts that God ever gave black and white right there in Ruleville. Sure, I'm not going to sit here today and tell you there's not racism in Ruleville. I wouldn't tell you there's not racism on your panel. I think that the best example that I ever heard of that—my son who is a graduate of Yale was at New Orleans getting his doctorate in bible theology. He was associate pastor in one of the larger black churches in New Orleans in charge of youth ministry.

The first time I attended that church, Dr. Gilmore got up and spoke and he welcomed. He said it's so good when the occasion presents itself that we can worship together. He said, "I'm here today, congregation, to tell you that racism is on both sides." He said that when he first came here from Chicago, he said, "I had been here about a year—I got sick. I went to the hospital. My congregation didn't know what was wrong with me. My doctor didn't know what was wrong with me. He ran all kind of tests. He couldn't find anything." He said, "I'm here to tell you today it was prejudice." He said, "I found out my daughter was dating a white man." And said, "I told her to stop. I thought it had stopped. I found out 3 months later it was still going on. My wife knew about it." And he said, "I was prejudiced."

He said, "I liked to died. I lost weight." But said, "One day I came in and there was a white man in my drive sitting in an old car. And I said, 'Oh, not another salesman. I can't cope with that today.'" And he said the man got out and tried to introduce himself and, "I told him I didn't have time to talk. And he told me he was a minister of certain, certain church. And he said, 'I'm here today to tell you that you're fixing to lose your daughter and I'm fixing to lose my son. They're fixing to run away together. And he said that's the first time that I had stopped to analyze the situation. But said I was prejudiced.'"

And so you'll find prejudice anywhere. But I'm here today to tell you that it's not organized prejudice in Ruleville, Mississippi. Sure, I'm sure there's some people that feel in their heart one way or for both races. But we have good people. We have people that are ready to work together.

The chamber of commerce is integrated. The rotary club has issued many invitations to black people to join. We've had people join and drop out. But this is what we've got to work toward. And we're all ready to do that. And we appreciate any help we can get. Thank you. Any questions anybody wants to ask me?

Mr. Jenkins. I have a couple of questions along the lines that I asked the prior speakers. You indicated sure, we have racism on both side of the tracks, even in Sunflower County and in Ruleville. But as the president of the board of supervisors, how can you bring the persons together to listen to their concerns about race relations? Now you, in turn, as the chief elected official of that county take those concerns, translate that into a statement or action. Is there anything being done among those lines?

Mr. Donohoe. Yes, sir, there are. I think—we have two bankers in Ruleville, Paul at Planters Bank and the Bank of Ruleville, that both of these presidents of these two banks are open-minded. They probably control as much of the economics. I think that they have done a lot of work. We've had meetings.

We recently had a break-in of one restaurant in Ruleville. It was a white restaurant. That bank—excuse me, restaurant, was broken in about three or four times. And everybody got to thinking well, this is a racial thing. And we had a meeting at the Bank of Ruleville. And everybody came in. And

you had people there that started saying well, this, that, and the other.

And the president stood up and he said, "Look, we're here for one thing today, to find out the solution to this and the reason." He said you're bringing the police. The place is surrounded. They can't put a man there 24 hours a day. But they have investigated every lead they have. And said that we've got to give them a chance. We think they're working hard. Most of the community was blaming the police.

Three days later an 11-year-old boy was caught breaking in the Parks place right down the street and told all about the break-ins. He was doing this after midnight at night. This was not a community problem. This was a family problem. Yes, that family needed help from the community and needed some advice and needed some training.

We have a social program there that works with them. We've got one family there today whose children have probably caused more vandalism and this type break-ins than anybody. The lady has 14 children at home. She doesn't have a job. She's living off welfare. After the third child, this is practically mild.

But we have a lady from Sunflower County progress—a lady, Ruby Hooper White, who has taken this thing under her wing and is working with her. She's in touch with Ms. Thompson's office who is a representative here today. They are trying to get a double-wide trailer in. The city has donated a spot of land. And she's trying to be encouraged to enter the GED program, which Sunflower County progress has there. We have the center and we have the social worker's work office there now. And they're working with her in trying to do things like this.

And I think that when you take a family that has caused this much problem—you turn that family around with the right people working with them. And you let the community see the results of that 3 years down the road, you're going to have a different attitude.

Mr. Jenkins. But you have the same attitude with that family and viewing Sunflower County as one family to have persons providing guidance, advice, and working with the total citizens of that county? Maybe, perhaps, we have a problem in terms of race relations. We really don't know until we analyze it.

Mr. Donohoe. Yes.

Mr. Jenkins. Let's do something about it as a total family for Sunflower County.

Mr. Donohoe. Don't get me wrong. I live about halfway between Indianola and Ruleville. But in Sunflower County, you've got a north Sunflower County and a south Sunflower County. If you bring some people from the Indianola end and try to start solving the problems of Ruleville, Mississippi, you've got problems—black and white.

Indianola, Mississippi, has the biracial committee. It's done great things. We haven't named it as such but we're trying to use our chamber of commerce and our rotary club and our churches working together in Ruleville to solve this. I feel like, somehow, I'm a sounding board because I'm not ashamed to speak what I believe anywhere. And I love all people. I've never seen a child that could look up with you with bright eyes and you could say well, that child is black or that child is white and think a certain feeling. The person that does that is sick in his head. The person that burns these churches is even more sick.

And I think that we've got to start. I think that there are moves being made, but I think that it's going to be more successful if it's worked out and these people come together on a local level. I think when you bring outside advisers in you build walls.

Mr. Jenkins. One of the things to keep in mind as you move towards racial progress—so often we utilize the existing institutions like the chambers or the rotary club. But you have to understand some folks have a distrust of those because of the history connected with those. That is why in terms of bringing folks together to look at a neutral type of organization or a neutral site to begin a new relation—that is something that I have experienced in several cities in the past. And that is something that I will simply pass on to you as the county supervisor.

Mr. Donohoe. Okay. I don't think that this board has heard this unless you heard it on paper. You haven't heard it in these hearings. The mayor of Ruleville is black. You have two black aldermen and three white aldermen. The city is about 65

percent voting-age black. I don't think that there're 10—if anybody could find 10 people that's over 18 years old in Ruleville who are registered to vote, I wouldn't believe it.

I probably know the people there better than anybody. There's not a home there I haven't been in. Not a one that I haven't by the front door. And I'm 10 years older now—I was 13 years older than when I started this. I still try to do it once a year, but my feet are getting a little sore. And we do need help. But we have people that are merging every day in both races—that are doing exactly what you're talking about today.

Mr. Jenkins. Okay.

Mr. Lott. May I make a comment please? Mr. Donohoe, I would like to say that—just an observation. You know in the absence of any government intervention or anybody trying to do anything, I think that it shows great progress that the personal initiative has taken place in Ruleville. And individuals have taken it upon themselves to try to make these things better.

I for one believe that the government cannot tell you what to think or make you believe anything or—sometimes they provide a vehicle to do it. But the people who are most effective and who can make the most difference are those people who live there, that have to live with those programs, and live with one another when everybody else has gone away.

And for that I would just like to say that it certainly sounds like you all are really taking the bull by the horns, and we appreciate you coming.

Mr. Donohoe. But we have a long way to go. We have a long way to go and a lot of problems ahead, and a lot of heartache. But I tell you, when you see young people like Charles and Jackie take over—and they're not the only ones. There're many, many people there.

We have so many people in Ruleville who in Parchman, Mississippi—and counselors and so forth. We have good people there. And we're making progress, but we have a long way to go. But if we could get the economics of the area, it would help a lot of things. That's our biggest problem right now.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much, Mr. Donohoe, for your information, which we will personally include in the record and—thanks for the advice.

Mr. Donohoe. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Mr. Jenkins from the central office will have to leave early. So I have asked him if he wanted to make a few remarks before he departs.

Mr. Jenkins. Thank you, Chair Ward. I am sorry that I have to leave early today. We have been on this trip for many days on race relations in the Southern States and we have many more miles to go. But I do not want to leave you with a thought that because we are here now, we will not return. We and the members of the Advisory Committee are committed throughout the State to work to develop a race relations plan.

Hopefully, we will back in the area in a few short months to release the findings from this meeting this last evening and today. And hopefully we will be able to work with the elected officials and the community leaders of all races to develop a strategic plan concerning race relations in the year 2010. Where do we want to be that time? Those are the remarks I have and I appreciate the opportunity of being with you.

Dr. Ward. Okay. Thank you very much. And have a safe trip. Okay, Mr. Paul McCreary, please come forward. Mr. McCreary, I would like to thank you very much for appearing before the committee. And I will ask you to please state your name and mailing address.

Statement of Paul M. McCreary, President, Chamber of Commerce, Ruleville, Mississippi

Mr. McCreary. Okay. My name is Paul McCreary. My mailing address is Post Office Box 9 in Ruleville. The zip code is 38771.

Dr. Ward. Okay.

Mr. McCreary. I am the president currently of the Ruleville Chamber of Commerce. And currently president of the Planters Bank in Ruleville. This coming February, it'll be 10 years in that position.

I think that leadership comes from the top. And we at the bank or in the chamber have an open-door policy. If it's a bankable deal and the bank can be secured and feel comfortable with its dealings, that's what we do.

We have a lot of these people who have moved in to all-white neighborhoods. I've helped finance

those houses. And I hadn't had any white people burning crosses in my yard. I hadn't had any problem. Not one soul have I had anything related to race mentioned to me that I shouldn't have done that because this, that, or the other.

Number one, I pretty much say what goes on at the bank and that's pretty much my decision. And I don't answer to a committee of concerned citizens or whatever they want to call themselves.

It's unfortunate, it's unfortunate. It's horrible that we have to meet here today and talk about something like this. You think about a church as being a holy, holy place. And for it to be desecrated in any manner, it's horrible. But these are the times I guess we live in.

The thing that it is, as has been mentioned before—and I'll put my two cents in. The thing about it is you've got young people, black and white, that congregate to drink alcohol or do illegal drugs here, there, and yonder. You understand, we're in a farming community. And it's acres and acres and miles and miles from point A to point B. It's not that we're all confined to a city or whatever. Especially in Ruleville, it's surrounded by flat delta farmland. And there're a lot of country roads and places where you could go and do what you want to do, unbothered by law enforcement or people who own the land or live out there.

And the thing about it is I think that these kids are getting together and having a big time and just doing something for kicks. I don't know—20 years ago maybe they used to steal hubcaps. And now they're burning churches. The night that the Mt. Zion church was burned, my church, the Ruleville Baptist Church, was broken into and the sound equipment was stolen. I think it's like Mr. Donohoe said—that it's probably people who are looking to be disruptive or get what they can to sell to get what they need.

I wouldn't say that we have in Ruleville a utopia. But I'll tell you what. I'll put my community beside any community who wants to talk race relations. I think we've got 50 percent—well, you take all the white people in Ruleville—we probably have 5 percent who're thinking like it's 30 or 40 years ago—just won't come forward.

You've got out of the black people—you've probably got 5 percent of them who think that maybe the whites need to be punished for hundreds of years of injustice. The thing about it is, I think if we could sit down and talk and maybe trust each other a little bit, I think we can move forward with 90 percent of the people. You show me a 100 percent that would agree upon anything and I'd like to know what you're talking about.

It's not only race, it's religion, too. You have people who don't like people because they believe something a little bit different. You have people who don't like people because their skin is dark or their skin is white. You have some people who, maybe, don't like fat, bald-headed men. I don't know. So I guess if you look hard enough, you can find people who would argue or disagree about anything.

But I'm proud of my community. And I'm proud of its citizens. All in all, we have a good group of people that—we keep talking about both sides of the track. But I'll say in the white and in the black community—I think, number one, in the meetings and things I've been in for the last 10 years, I know this. I know every family in Ruleville, number one, wants a safe place to raise their children.

Number two, they want a good education for their children. Number three, they want their children to do well and be successful. Those are the same things I want for my kids. And the guy who's working somewhere at minimum wage, and I'm the president of a bank—we come together in the thing that—we want the same things. And this is nothing that's earth shattering or—but like I say, I'm proud of my community. And we're not perfect. We have some improving to do. But I'm proud of where we are. And I'm proud of the people in my community.

And I want to thank you for having me on the agenda and letting me voice these comments. If you have any questions, I'll try to respond to them.

Dr. Ward. Yes. I have two questions. I would like to know what the Ruleville Chamber of Commerce is doing to address the matter of jobs. Mr. Donohoe mentioned that obviously the county and the community needs more jobs. So what measures or plans have been formatted by the chamber of commerce?

Mr. McCreary. The chamber of commerce has

been working through an organization that's known as the Sunflower County Economic Development. It's a countywide organization that's funded through the county. Its director, Jim Murphy, lives just south from Doddsville. His wife has a business in Ruleville.

Jim's been the director I guess about a year now. And since Jim has become the director, the last president—I just took over in April I think. But the last president invited Mr. Murphy to our board meetings to discuss economic development in Sunflower County, and more particularly in Ruleville.

We don't have the resources to do a marketing media blitz to attract industry. We usually ride on the coattail of the county. But he brings us up to date as to what's being done for our area that way. And that way we use their resources.

Dr. Ward. So just to review a point that was made earlier. You feel that the church burnings, vandalism, and other unfortunate activities in this community might be a kind of reaction to frustration—economic frustration?

Mr. McCreary. I don't see that. And this is just my opinion. I don't see that. I think if somebody wanted to draw attention to themselves, it seems like they could do something other than burn a house of worship.

I think, and again I repeat, this is just my opinion. I think it's young people who are high on whatever doing these type things to—nobody in their right mind would be doing this otherwise. And taking the speakers or microphones or whatever that would bring, whatever amount of money to keep this trip going or whatever.

I think this is something that's gotten a lot of attention lately. And I think it's something that maybe that's on the TV. But I think—again this is my opinion—with this particular group of people, whether black or white, high on drugs, if it was stealing tires and hubcaps, that's probably what they'd be doing. It's whatever comes to them.

The churches are easy targets in that they're rurally located, isolated. You have a pretty good chance of getting in and doing your business and getting out without getting caught, because we just don't have the resources in the county or the city or the church to hire somebody 24 hours a day to be there. That you should have to do that is ridiculous.

And I don't know about other towns and—I know about a fire in Greenville of a new church that—they seem to think that it was a young person who started that fire because of the way it was set. It was not expertly, or the person didn't know about combustion or whatever who started or what would burn or what wouldn't.

So, I can't tell you who's doing it. I can't tell you why they're doing it. All I can tell you is 99.9 percent race is not involved. And again that's just my opinion.

Dr. Ward. Okay.

Ms. Keys. Can you just tell us—being the banker, you know what everybody has in the bank. Can you kind of tell me a little bit about the economics of the area? I think you were kind of referred to as maybe the expert. Who are the haves—not by name—in this area?

And then my kind of followup question is I know in the country, people are concerned that there is a growing gulf between haves and have-nots. And quite often, it is minorities that are in the have-nots. And is that happening in this area, and does that contribute to any kind of problems racial?

Mr. McCreary. I would think—

Ms. Keys. So maybe start with telling us about the economics of the area.

Mr. McCreary. All right. My bank in Ruleville, my branch, has about $21 million in deposits. The bank across the street, the Bank of Ruleville, has got about $17 million. I would think Delta Bank up the street—the total statement is about 10 million, but I would think about $5 million came from Ruleville. So in Ruleville, we'd have probably 26 plus 17 is about $43 million in deposit in three banks.

And I would think my bank would be similar to other banks in that I would guess that 20 percent of the people control 85 percent of the deposits. That's not anything particular to the Delta or to Ruleville. I would think pretty much nationwide that you've got that type disparity.

And I don't know what the solution to that is. The thing about it is we've tried to make loans available to those people who qualify and have a

good employment history and meet the requirements that would be approved at the bank or would get. And we're able to help—another thing, too. Eleven to twelve hundred square feet frame house in Ruleville—okay—would probably sell for about $20,000 or $25,000. We've got a lot of low-income blacks who have bought these houses through my house that I have financed them.

And home ownership I think adds to a community. I think when people own property, they try to keep it up. They try to—if something is given to them, normally, they don't take care of it as well. But something that they work and they pay for and over time they repair and they remodel, they build equity and—I invite you to our community to look at it. I think it's a clean community. I think it's pretty. I think that the grounds, the yards in town, and so on and so forth are well-landscaped. It's just some nice, small town.

I get to rambling, Ms. Keys, but we do have that disparity in Ruleville. We need some 10, $12-an-hour jobs that we don't have. We have the minimum wage $5-an-hour jobs. And these jobs are okay for maybe one family, or a family, married husband and wife—maybe one of them could have the—but we need that higher income to add more money to that family so that they can buy maybe a nicer house or a nicer car, do more for their children, so on and so forth.

And that's not a Ruleville problem or a Delta problem or a Mississippi problem—that's a national problem.

Mr. Lott. Mr. McCreary, you mentioned something a little while ago which was sort of an echo on the things that we heard last evening and again this morning, and that is kids—kids doing this. Jobs of course would help increase the standard of living for everybody in the area. But does Ruleville have any type program for kids—summer youth program?

Mr. McCreary. If it does, Mr. Lott, I'm not aware of it. Some of the churches have youth programs and some of the—the town has a youth center that—and that's down by the town of Ruleville. I'm sorry, I just don't know what goes on there. I cannot answer your question. I'm not—

Ms. Keys. Just to follow up on that question. It does concern me about the—and I think we kind of profiled. Last night we got a profile of who might be doing this, and if there was any racial animus that it was coming somewhere from negative stereotyping. And I guess my concern is when you have accepted separatism within a community, how do you come back—what we see everyday, sometimes on TV through news coverage, which seems to perpetuate negative stereotyping. And I hope I am making myself clear.

Mr. McCreary. I don't understand what you're saying.

Ms. Keys. Maybe I am making a statement, but I really feel the community needs to be proactive and examine sometimes some of the accepted things within the community that it is maybe subconscious overtly feeding some problem that you have no control over. We have control over what is coming out of Los Angeles and New York on our television sets unless we turn them off.

But it seems that if you have young people—even if it is one who has some negative stereotype and then feels that they can go ahead and pick on a particular group, somebody has to react or counteract that.

Mr. McCreary. Well, Ms. Keys, I understand exactly what you're saying. And, if I'd make a comment to that, it would be something like—I've have two girls. Both attend academies. Both attend private schools. The thing about it is I think that education is the best. I think—and I say this. I don't want to get off into this. But there is an academy north of Ruleville, and my children go to school in an academy at a private school here in Cleveland. The thing about it is I didn't think the public school nor the private school in my area took care of my needs, okay.

And as a parent, I'm going to do what I think is best for my children. The good Lord gave them to me and he's entrusted with me their care. And I'm going to take care of them. And I bring them to Cleveland to go to private school here.

The thing about it is the school that my children go to—it's not all-white. We have black students in the school. We have other people, blacks, in the Cleveland area who I'm thinking have looked at the educational opportunities available for them and decided this school was the best for them. To that I say, that's fine with me.

I can tell you that my oldest child in the third grade had a—Frank—it was a little black boy in her class. The school pictures came out in October of the class. I didn't know that she had a black in her class until I saw the school picture. It wasn't a big thing to her. It wasn't a big thing to me, because we felt Frank was there for the same reason she was there—was to try to get an education.

The thing about it is I would comment on your question further to say that it's a family thing. If somebody's getting negativism of this group or whatever, and they're small and they're young, they're getting it from somewhere, okay. And I don't know if they get that—I don't know that they get it as much from the TV as they do from the environment that they grow up in.

Being a banker in a small town, I have people of all races to stop by my house after the bank has closed who couldn't get there that day. And sometimes we sit out on my front porch and talk about a loan that this guy needs. I mean we do things a little bit different in a small town.

We work on that loan that afternoon. The next afternoon, I bring the paperwork to my house for him to sign it so I can take the loan back to the bank the next day. I've done that. And it's not that—my children say, oh, there's a black man at the door. Let's hide the women and children. They're fairly used to people stopping by to do business with me or to see their daddy and they don't think anything about it. And I don't want my children to grow up biased or prejudiced. And I think they'll—I'll try to lead my family in church. I'll try to lead them in doing the moral, civil, Christian thing in life. I think that's a responsibility I've been charged with by the god who gave me those children. And that's what I'm going to do.

And if it doesn't suit some people, I'm sorry. But I can't do what other people think I ought to do with my children. I have to do what I think is best for those kids.

Dr. Ward. All right. Thank you very much, Mr. McCreary.

Mr. McCreary. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. We really appreciate this. Congressman Thompson's office? Ms. Carmichael, would you give us your full name and address?

Statement of Erma Carmichael on Behalf of Rep. Bennie Thompson, Congressional District of Mississippi

Ms. Carmichael. My name is Erma Carmichael. My address is P.O. Box 345, Mound Bayou, Mississippi. The zip code is 38762. As I said, my name is Erma Carmichael. I am a field representative for Congressman Bennie Thompson. I am in the Mound Bayou office.

I have a prepared statement from the Congressman. I will read it to you. I will give you a copy of it. I have been asked if you have any questions or comments, to address it to the Congressman in the Washington office, to Mr. Richard Maddox's attention. A statement of the Honorable Bennie G. Thompson, U.S. Congress, Democrat of Mississippi, before the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights regarding the church bombing of African American churches.

Madame Chairwoman, I want to thank you and the members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights for conducting these hearings in Mississippi's Second Congressional District that I represent, and for allowing me the opportunity to testify.

I am deeply concerned about the increasing numbers of churches that have been destroyed by arson over the past several years. These burnings constantly remind me of that early Sunday morning in 1963 when a church in Birmingham, Alabama, was firebombed killing four little girls while they were attending Sunday school. This was a horrible crime, and to allow this episode to repeat itself and to remain unchecked in 1996 would be an atrocity.

Therefore, we must make a concerted effort to assure the American people that the church is a sanctuary from the violence which is rampant in society, and not a place where God-fearing Americans should fear for their lives. Many of us would like to believe that the days of Jim Crow and hate crimes are part of the past, but these church bombings are evidence that the brutal, destructive force of racisms and intolerance is alive and growing in America.

While Federal law enforcement officials conclude that they found no evidence of these crimes being racially motivated, I cannot, knowing the history of the Ku Klux Klan, the Skinheads, the White Aryan

Resistance, and the Christian Identity movement, wholeheartedly believe that these church burnings are just "coincidental." I have received numerous pieces of hate mail that have been attributed to the Klan and other hate groups, which I want to be added for the record.

Knowing that over 95 percent of the church bombings have taken place in southern States, with seven occurring in Mississippi, gives a lot of credence to the theory that they have been perpetrated by the purveyors of hate and division.

Several watchdog organizations, which maintain vigilance at the rough edges of the tapestry of democracy, watching for the rise of anti-democratic sentiments and practices, have discovered that democracy is again under attack in America.

The study prepared by the Atlanta Based Center for Democratic Renewal shows that these episodes have been on the rise in recent years. In 1990, there were two firebombings of African American churches. In 1991, there were two more. In 1992, there was one, and in 1993, two. But in 1994, there were 15. And in 1995, there were 13. This year, in 1996, there have been over 38.

I urge the ATF, FBI, Justice Department, and all local law enforcement officials to do all within their powers to see that these acts of violence are fully investigated and these criminals are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. It is also essential that everyone is vocal against these heinous and deplorable acts of cowardice.

I co-sponsored a bill that was signed into law by President Clinton yesterday that will allow Federal involvement when religious property is damaged for racial or ethnic reasons rather than just religious reasons, as under current law. This new law would allow those injured in church burnings to receive compensation under the 1984 Victims of Crime Act. It will also double prison penalties from 10 years to 20 years, and extend the statute of limitations on church burnings from 5 to 7 years.

This law will allow charitable organizations, including churches, to apply for Housing and Urban Development loans to rebuild destroyed churches. It authorizes $5 million in loan guarantees to lending institutions for up to $10 million in loan principal.

Madame Chairwoman, many of these churches were built years ago with old bricks and wood by the sons and daughters of slaves. The structures may be burned, but their foundations were laid in the spirit of hope, and neither hatred nor evil has the power to destroy them.

It is the spirit of these congregations that will rise, steeped in faith, to take up hammers and nails and brick and mortar to rebuild our churches. Those who come in the dark shadows to bring flames to our churches must stop these painful, but useless actions. It is the faith in God that will piece together old bricks and wood once again to undo these horrible deeds, and no force on Earth will ever break our faith.

Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much. The Congressman's statement will be entered into the record. You will leave a copy for us, of course. And you have told us that all questions regarding his remarks should be directed to his office. If there are any, that will be done. But as the field representative, do you have any observations that you would like to make about the Delta region and the impact that you have witnessed—these events have had on people?

Ms. Carmichael. Well, I'm from the Delta—actually I'm from Mound Bayou. I have lived in Mound Bayou all of my life except for about 12 years. Mound Bayou is an all-black community. We have whites that come in to work and whatever. So we have a tendency not to—in order for us to be around whites, we have to come to Cleveland which is closer—well, Shelby has whites in it, too.

But the impact on me, myself, that I have found since I've lived in other places other than Mound Bayou, it's not—racism is—you can tell those places where you are not allowed to go to. You don't go to them. I assume that everybody in Mississippi might—well, from the area know where they can and cannot go.

But it's a tendency that the church bombings—I don't know if it was racially motivated or if it was just as some been saying some kids that are doing something or it's just people that have no sense of—I guess of being—they have no—I don't know what to say about it. But they have no sense of

whatever that they just would do something like this.

I really don't know of it being racially motivated with me not being—I go to a church that's out in the country and it's like 3 miles from Mound Bayou. It is all-black. So I can't see anyone that would burn a church because of race. I can't see a church that you wouldn't go to because of race. I have gone to white churches. I have been accepted in them. I have not gone to one that they have not accepted me.

Mr. Lott. So you say in your opinion, you do not see that this is a racially motivated—

Ms. Carmichael. In my opinion, no. I don't see it's racially motivated. It might be but—

Mr. Lott. You currently live in Mound Bayou?

Ms. Carmichael. Yes.

Mr. Lott. You have lived there all your life?

Ms. Carmichael. I've lived there most of my life. All except for 12 years.

Mr. Lott. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Well, thank you very much for presenting this to the Commission. Okay. One of the committee members has asked if we would like to have a break. And I think that is allowable. So we might take a 5-minute break and then we will reconvene.

(Break.)

Dr. Ward. Okay. The forum will now reconvene. And I would like to ask Mr. Bill Whitcomb to come forward, please. Is Mr. Whitcomb here?

Mr. Whitcomb, thank you very much. For the record, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Bill Whitcomb, Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice, Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Whitcomb. I certainly will. My name is Bill Whitcomb. That's W-h-i-t-c-o-m-b. And I'm from the regional office of Community Relations Service, Department of Justice, Kansas City, Missouri. And the mailing address there is 323 West 8th. That's Kansas City, Missouri. Zip 64105.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Mr. Whitcomb, do you have a prepared statement that you would like to make?

Mr. Whitcomb. I do have a prepared statement that I would like to read for you this morning on behalf of Ernie Stallworth who was supposed to make the presentation. And also would like to acknowledge another person who's on the special deployment team that was put together by the Department of Justice, Ms. Janet Reno. And he's from our Colorado office in Denver, Ken Cook. And we're part of the team that was put together by Attorney General Reno to respond to the rash of church burnings.

And for those of you who are not familiar with the Community Relations Service, we were mandated by Congress in 1964 as a result of the Title 10 Civil Rights Act. And the purpose of our agency was to respond to community conflicts, disagreements, racial conflicts, based on national origin, discriminatory practices, and race.

One of the things that we do is work very cooperatively with existing public and private agencies in responding to these conflicts and disputes. Let me read to you the statement that I think is very important. I do not want to miss anything because I think it will suggest to you where we think we have a tremendous impact in responding to these church burnings. And also, afterwards, I'll be more than glad to answer any questions that you may have. The community relations service—this is a church burning response team. And this is what we refer to.

The mission of the CRS church burning response team—in response to the upsurge of black church burnings, related community racial tensions, and the President's appointment of a national church arson task force, the Community Relations Service, commonly known as CRS, has established a church burning response team.

It's mission is to one, create healthy relationships between law enforcement agencies and minority communities affected by the burnings. Help prevent future church burnings in potentially affected communities by improving relationships across racial lines. Support the national church arson task force by keeping lines of communication open among the various agencies, officials, groups, and individuals who are responding to the church burnings or are affected by them. And to assist the

national church arson task force in the establishment of a clearinghouse to gather and store and disseminate current and accurate information regarding church burnings.

The background. Between January 1, 1995, and June 25, 1996, Federal agencies and agents investigated 145 suspicious church fires or acts of desecration. Of these, 73 were of African American churches, with the large majority of them in the southeastern States.

The national church arson task force established at the direction of the President of the United States is chaired by Mr. Duvall L. Patrick, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, with the Department of Justice, and Assistant James E. Johnson.

The purpose of the national task force is to coordinate all aspects of the investigation and prosecution of cases arising out of attacks on houses of worship and to recommend other actions the government can undertake to prevent the attacks. A key component of the task force work is as community outreach efforts. That is very important to remember that. And that's one of the reasons why this special task force has been deployed to the States here—myself am assigned to Tennessee. There're others assigned to Georgia and also Kentucky and Mississippi.

Our plan—the operational plan is the CRS as a member of the national church arson task force and as the chair of the task force community outreach working group—it's mission is to serve as the information clearinghouse, help resolve the discrepancies among those reporting church violence, support the work of the U.S. attorneys, local task forces on church burnings, and community outreach, operate as the nerve center for identifying the location of emerging or overt conflicts.

And one of the things that has been repeatedly discussed is that another initiative that we will take is to become more proactive in preventing, in terms of making racial assessments, and to discern potential conflict in the various communities.

Local activities—the most critical aspects of the CRS operation is the CRS assistance to local communities. CRS activities at the local level will be the following: CRS will conduct community tension assessments of each community where black churches have burned or have been desecrated.

CRS will deploy teams of conciliators to assist communities where, according to CRS assessment, racial tension or conflict is evident. CRS will seek to bring about improved racial understanding through cooperative efforts including the creation of partnerships and coalitions.

And one of the things that we have been noted for for the last 30 years is building that partnership between community and local law enforcement, including State and Federal law enforcement. We have found in responding to communities of conflict, that gap is very evident between those two entities. And that has been the focus of our attention.

CRS will deploy teams of conciliators to work with the U.S. attorneys task force in prevention and outreach efforts in vulnerable communities. CRS will deploy teams of conciliators on site to respond immediately to racial conflicts, violence, or tensions during any immediate crisis situation.

Our plan—the CRS church burning response team will consist of 47 personnel. Three staff dedicated to national management and coordination. Four staff dedicated to regional supervision and support. And 20 conciliation specialists. This is currently on the—it's beyond the drawing board stages. There has been approximately $225,000 in resources made available through the President's office and the Attorney General for this special task force.

I don't know if you are aware that CRS was slashed considerably, by 70 percent. And this is why we have the redeployment of staff in responding to these instances. There is long-term expectation to try to restore the Community Relations Service to its full-funding force as it was in 1995. That's something that we're working on because we certainly feel through our monitoring of hate group activities that, obviously the escalation of these kinds of activities are on an increase and there needs to be some proactive responses to them.

That is the substance of my prepared text. I will be prepared to answer questions if you have any.

Dr. Ward. Yes. I would like to open up by asking if you could give us a very brief summary

of what CRS has done in working with other law enforcement agencies in Mississippi concerning the church burnings, and also what contacts have you established in the four communities that we have targeted?

Mr. Whitcomb. In the Southeast?

Dr. Ward. No, no. In Mississippi.

Mr. Whitcomb. In Mississippi. Bear in mind that this is my second day. I was redeployed from the Bureau of Prisons and I did attend your hearing in Memphis yesterday. There were some concerns expressed at that meeting about the fraudulent activities and the insurance not being available to churches. My colleague and myself were prepared to meet with some of the members of Nashville, Knoxville, and matter of fact on Friday. These are some of the things that we're prepared to do.

We intend to make a sweep throughout Tennessee, meeting with community folks, rather small or large, discerning particular problems they are having whether it is church-related or not. And try to affect some kind of conciliation overture to them where they can get their grievances redressed.

This is our plan. We intend to stick with that plan. We think it is needed. We do feel that a lot of the community folks are very suspicious of local State law enforcement. We can be that gap—bridge that gap between that suspiciousness. And we think it's very important that they understand and have a good faith consciousness that we are there to help them, and we are an avenue where their grievances can be redressed.

Dr. Ward. I just want to be very clear because you said this is being planned for Tennessee. But who is responsible for Mississippi?

Mr. Whitcomb. There is Tennessee, Mississippi. There are a number of us that have been redeployed to respond to the church burnings in this region. To be honest with you, the resources are limited, as you well know. We were slashed and that's why we've had to reinvent the wheel to respond to this.

So two in Mississippi, two in Tennessee. There're others in Georgia. Certainly, the full complement of staff is not what it should be, but I think the Attorney General is willing to make the first initial step and this is what we've done so far.

I'm almost certain that that response will be broadened because there is an expectation that there will be some contract service people—conciliators, mediators—that will be deployed in this region.

Mr. Range. Do you know the names of the people who are assigned in Mississippi? Are you and your colleague assigned to Mississippi or somewhere else?

Mr. Whitcomb. We have a regional office in Atlanta, Georgia. And we divided ourselves into clusters relative to States. And my cluster team leader is Ernie Stallworth. The regional director in Atlanta is Ozell Sutton. He has staff, regular staff, after being cut which they have to respond to—as you well know some of the problems that're going to surround the Olympics.

But what staff is available, we expect to work overtime to ensure that there are people out in the field, not just operating out of Atlanta, the main office.

Mr. Range. I have another question. And that is I understand that you started with this—do you have a sense of what some of the preventive measures are that CRS will be recommending to the communities?

Mr. Whitcomb. Well, some time ago—matter of fact in 1988, we were, I won't say responsible, but certainly John Conyers was aware of our work which resulted in the National Hate Crimes Act which made it mandatory that, not mandatory, but in a cooperative spirit that law enforcement report instances of bias crime.

We think that this was very important in terms of how we could track the trends of the presence of these kinds of activities. CRS itself had an alert—racial crime alert system where every reportable instant would be in a repository where we can discern trends accuracy, uniformity of instances that are occurring throughout the country.

With the deemphasis on racial crime, this program was eliminated from our initiative. We thought that they went far in terms of developing response initiative. The CRS was responsible for assisting in the training of FBI agents. We did not participate in the training of ATF. We did participate in the training of Secret Service, local law enforcement in terms of how we respond to hate crimes.

We find that as a preventive and proactive initiative, this is very important. We found, because of our interaction with local law enforcement, that many times law enforcement is not sensitive to the issue of bias crime. It is the treatment of crimes as a routine crime without any consideration of racial motivation.

Those kinds of things, we feel, have been very important in terms of developing proactive kinds of responses to these incidents.

Ms. Keys. Has the CRS done anything in Mississippi in the last 5 years? I guess you are talking about general stuff. I am just wondering, have you responded to anything in Mississippi? What situation? What did you find? What did you do?

Mr. Whitcomb. Since this is not my region—my region is Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri. We did have the staffers, and I think Mississippi was covered by Ernie Stallworth. And I think he has had significant contacts with relevant and important people in that State including the U.S. attorney, local law enforcement, the Governor's office.

So I think the foundation and the homework was done in the State of Mississippi. I cannot say that was done in Tennessee. Based on the hearing that was conducted in Memphis, I got the feeling that more effort, more resources need to be directed in the State of Tennessee.

Ms. Keys. Does CRS either issue a report on its activities in the year so that—I would just be interested to know what you all have responded to in Mississippi in the last 5 years that might help us get a barometer of race relations that is part of our—

Mr. Whitcomb. I will be glad to. The last report that was put out was 1994. But at least that will give you an overview of some of the substantive natures of our work. And I can make that available to you. Leave me your address. Because I think it's important that your body know that there is an agency out there independent of existing Federal agencies that ensure that this gap between the community and law enforcement, regardless of what level, is brought closer together.

And I think this is an appropriate forum for you to know that this is out there and it is working. It needs support as you well know. But you can't support anything that you don't know anything about.

Ms. Keys. I would like us to get that report and have it entered into the record. If you get us that, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Whitcomb. I sure can. I just need a mailing address.

Mr. Range. Even more specifically, I think that we need to provide some questions perhaps to Mr. Stallworth that we can send to him and ask him to respond to us.

Mr. Whitcomb. Absolutely.

Mr. Lott. You mentioned earlier in your statement, and forgive me if I cannot remember it exactly, but you said that there had been 148 church fires that had been investigated by CRS?

Mr. Whitcomb. No. I said there has been 147 church fires that are under investigation—either had been investigated or under investigation.

Mr. Lott. Is that by CRS?

Mr. Whitcomb. Okay. CRS does not conduct investigations. We assess racial tension, potential or otherwise, and we work cooperatively with investigative entities. We are neither investigatory or prosecutory. But we mandate the work very diligently and in good faith with those entities that are responsible for the investigation.

Mr. Lott. Have all of those—of those 147 fires, have they been investigated or have they been looked at by your agency equally?

Mr. Whitcomb. They have not. And I am the reason why they have not because this task force is relatively new. The reason why it was not looked into prior to the establishment of the national task force is that our agency was sliced some 70 percent nationwide. For example, in my office in Kansas City, which is responsible for four States, we were cut from seven staff people—that's senior mediators and conciliators—from seven to three without any support staff.

That's the dilemma that we're in. We have been the cornerstone of responding to these kinds of incidents. But with that kind of resource readjustment, it's just kind of hard to get out there and deal with these kind of issues such as what you're experiencing in the southeast.

Mr. Lott. So the only thing that your agency actually deals with is race-related? You do not look at any other civil rights issues?

Mr. Whitcomb. Yes, we do.

Mr. Lott. You do.

Mr. Whitcomb. Yes.

Mr. Lott. Such as religion?

Mr. Whitcomb. Well, one of the protected classes, of course, is religion, ethnicity, and national origin. So we do look at disparity when religion does occur. We also—civil rights—the whole gamut of reviewing compliance with civil rights issues. We respond to. We just don't get involved in the compliance in terms of compliance.

Mr. Lott. Well, what I am getting at is—okay. So you have 147 church fires. You are looking at it from an aspect of race being a motive on 73. But are you not looking at the total picture of 147 church fires and looking at it as an attack on religion?

Mr. Whitcomb. Yes. I know exactly what you're talking about. We go beyond just responding to the church burnings or the crisis—what was the motivation. What was some of the underlying or systemic causes of why this is beginning to happen nationwide. Church burning—the incidents of bias crime, hate group activities, just didn't happen. There was an origin of racism, origin of supremist groups. We look into that.

A lot of times, the only way that you can get a hold of where these are going is to develop some kind of pattern or trend. We work with the Center for Democratic Renewal, Klan watch, Anti-defamation League which is—historically has been monitoring these kinds of groups. And collectively, we can come together utilizing those resources and see what kind of proactive things can be done.

No, it's not just responding to the crisis. We expect law enforcement as the first line of defense to respond to the crisis itself in terms of investigation. The underlying responsibility in terms of what motivated these incidents, we play a very pivotal role in responding to that.

Mr. Lott. But again, I do not feel that there is any investigation going at it from the aspect that this is an attack on religion. Last night, Mr. Cavanaugh of ATF pointed out that—I don't remember the context of the question, but he said that right after the Oklahoma bombing, initially a lot of news agency put out that Middle East terrorists were suspected. And had that been the only avenue of investigation, you would not be having a trial, okay.

In other words, you should not omit the obvious and you should not leave any stone uncovered. Why is there no investigation into religion taking a hit? Why is it that this is being overlooked? And that race is being the only issue brought up here? I mean sure there is racism. There is always going to be racism to some degree.

But why can't we see that there are also other groups that are being moved over and associated with hate groups, organized religions, Christian Coalition. There are a lot of people in the Federal Government now trying to lump the Christian Coalition in with some of these other groups, and I do not see that as being a fair comparison at all.

Mr. Whitcomb. The questions that you have I think would be more appropriately asked by the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. I think you are talking about either civil liberties or civil rights issues. And certainly denial of religious preference, or to worship without interference is a civil rights issue.

And it is being examined. The perception that it's not being investigated or responded to aggressively—that I don't know. I can't answer that question for you. I do think it's high on the Attorney General's agenda, particularly with Duvall Patrick and the Civil Rights Division to look at all these things that might be associated with church burnings.

Mr. Cook. Hello. I'm Kenneth Cook. I'm from the CRS in Denver. Ernie and I have—I'm sorry Bill and I—

Dr. Ward. Mr. Cook, if you are going to do that to assist him, you will have to give us your full name and mailing address because this does go into the record.

Mr. Cook. Okay. I signed in at the front. My name is Kenneth T. Cook, Community Relations Service, 1244 Spear Boulevard, Denver, Colorado 80204.

In answer to the question on the religious versus the race-based investigations or CRS's activities, when CRS was formed under the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the type of cases that our mandate allows us to look at are community-based problems where there's been discrimination based on race,

color, or national origin. Those are the three original protected classes.

Over the last 30 years, those protected classes have been expanded to include age, sex, religion, and handicap. However, CRS's mandate has never changed. They have never expanded CRS's mandate to include those other four categories. So CRS is limited to looking at community-based problems where there has been discrimination based on race, color, or national origin.

So, as Bill said, another agency, if there is a religious connotation to these—another agency is the one that has the congressional authority to look at those and CRS does not.

Dr. Ward. Well, I would like to thank both of you for clarifying these matters for us. And I just have one final question for Mr. Whitcomb. You mentioned that one of the tasks of CRS is dissemination of information. And from discussions about information that we have had during this forum, apparently, that is really quite difficult. So I would like to know specifically how does your organization disseminate findings?

Mr. Whitcomb. Okay. For example, we know that the church burnings are being responded to, which is according to FBI resources, aggressively by their agents. We need to know before we can disseminate—the communities need to know just what is the status or the terms of the conduct of the investigation. So it's very important for us to relate to law enforcement. It's important for us to get the information so that we can disseminate information accurately and also expeditiously.

Certainly, if the investigative agencies are not cooperative to provide that information because of the status of their investigation like we heard last night, that there are certain things that are not available for public dissemination and we can't get that. But we think that the conduct of the investigation, the resources relative to the investigation, the prosecutorial nature of their response, should be available to the public and we want to make sure that what information we get is accurate before we disseminate it to the public, which has the right to know.

Dr. Ward. I guess I am asking a very specific kind of question though because—let's take a community such as Ruleville. How would you disseminate information within that community?

Mr. Whitcomb. Depending what the incident was, what the community wanted to know. If there was an incident that happened in Ruleville regarding a racial incident and it was under investigation by local law enforcement, and the community had been kept in the dark like is the case quite often—the community is the last person to know about the process or the conduct of the investigation. It is our responsibility to meet with local law enforcement—say your local sheriff, your local fire marshal, your U.S. attorney—and try to get as much information as we can so that we can give it to the community.

Usually, let's say with the churches. If there is a church association in Ruleville and the ministers have not gotten information that they think would be helpful to them, we would try to affect that kind of process with them. Get the information, then meet with the church association. Matter of fact, that's what we'll be doing in Nashville Friday.

Dr. Ward. All right. Thank you very much. We appreciate your coming.

Mr. Whitcomb. Okay. Thank you. And will there be an address where I can send—

Dr. Ward. What I would like for you to do with the prepared statement and the report—give both of those to staff persons from the central regional office so that it can be entered as a part of our proceedings.

Mr. Whitcomb. Okay.

Ms. Keys. I am sure you can get it from JoAnn, a woman out there, the address to send that other report.

Mr. Whitcomb. Thank you.

Open Session

Dr. Ward. Thank you. I am now going to shift gears and have the open session for people who requested some time to make statements. And the first person I will call is Reverend Darrell Johnson. Reverend Johnson, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Darrell Johnson, Mound Bayou, Mississippi

Rev. Johnson. Reverend Darrell Johnson, Mound Bayou, Mississippi. My mailing address is P.O. Box 314. 38762 is my zip code.

Dr. Ward. We would like to hear your statements your remarks.

Rev. Johnson. First of all, I would like to bring you greetings from the city of Mound Bayou where we'll be celebrating tomorrow our 107 birthday. Also, where I also serve as alderman in the city. I'm also a pastor of the Walker Faith Church in Mound Bayou.

I also bring you greetings from a city that was settled by slaves and the exslaves of Jefferson Davis's brother, Joe Davis, where I'm a descendant of four of those people. Two of them were involved with setting up the date in 1909 [sic] for having our founder's day, which will be celebrated tomorrow. And also Saturday and Sunday, we'll have our first annual heritage festival, which will be included with our founder's day.

The city of Mound Bayou is not a group of people that have not faced racism. As a matter of fact, our history is deeply rooted with the face of racism and the effects of racism. As a matter of fact, we have faced one of the greatest burnings in the forties I believe, that our city which had to be at that point self sufficient. The city had to—it was known as an oasis for blacks all across not only our State but for many people it was an oasis for blacks across the Nation where our population was somewhere around 3,000 or 4,000 people during the week. Our population would be somewhere around 20,000 and 30,000 on the weekend because people from all across the State and the country would come to our city to be there.

But then during the forties also we faced a large burning, mostly our businesses were burned through the night without a fire department that could put them out to the people's—during that night they saw that there was no hope to see that everything that they had built from the late 1800s and the early 1900s up until that point was being burned down. We're still recovering from that. We're also recovering from as late as the Mike Espy administration—not as congressman but when he was moved into the Cabinet of the President—that FHA at one point for at least about 15 years had not given a loan in our city for any housing. And there was something that was—which was said under the table that there was some type of moratorium.

We're also facing racism in our city even right now when many of our business people cannot get a loan within our city for businesses from some of our local banks where this county is made up racially maybe on a 60-40 basis—that probably there are only a few, maybe one or two, bank officials who are not Caucasian or may I say bank officials—there may be two of them that may be black.

We're also facing racism whereas in Mound Bayou, just to say for instance—just a few weeks ago—well, just a few months ago, someone wanted to build a house that was approximately valued at $100,000. The banks would not give him money to build it in Mound Bayou because possibly his brick, wood, and mortar would not equal that value if it was bought or built in Mound Bayou. So the banks would not lend the money.

We're also facing racism from the standpoint of real estate that is valued within our city very much lower than it would be valued anywhere else in the county. Therefore, it may be the fact that there is no one or possibly maybe a few—probably a handful of people—who are not black that stay in Mound Bayou.

We understand our history. We understand where we come from. And I believe we got a grip on where we're going. We're facing racism every day. We understand that there is racism. There's not a question of whether there is racism or not. But I think racism is based—it's a little deeper than just a Commission study. I believe it's a little deeper than us just saying well, let's talk about it.

But I think racism is built in fear. Fear that has been there for over the years. Fear that also has come from when there was outward racism. Fear that comes when there was outward slavery. And I believe that fear has been passed down in generations. I had a situation where there was a young white lady who wanted to come to our services and our church in Mound Bayou. By the way, we don't have a black church at Walker Faith in Mound Bayou. We don't call it a black church. We

don't say that it is a black church. As a matter of fact, our last member that joined our church was a white member. And we have people who are in our church who are white people. So we don't call it a black church because we don't believe that there are racists within the Lord.

I had a lady call us and she wanted to come to our services. And her mother got on the phone and she made the statement to me—"Reverend Johnson, I'm sorry, but my daughter will not come to your church." And I asked her why. She said "We're not coming down there in Mound Bayou." She said that it's too dangerous. She said also, "I don't think that a white girl should be going to a black church."

And so I made the statement to the young lady—the mother who was speaking to me, and I told her I said, "Ma'am," I said "what you must understand is that when we all get to heaven, I'll probably be just as close to you as your husband is to you now. And I believe that all of us when we get to heaven—there's not going to be any race." As one young man said that I'm going go on the other side of the tracks down in the corner and I want to hear you all sing because you all sing pretty good. But I don't think that heaven is made up like that. It's all one body. And I believe that that same body, the church, is being transformed into that right now. And I really believe that the church is going to get to be where it's supposed to be.

And I believe that not only the Commission, but I believe that we need to face the facts that we do have a problem. We do have a segregated hour in this county, in this part of the State, in the Mississippi delta. We do have a problem.

This is Mississippi. This is the State where right now our leader, the one that we elected, the Governor, is now putting four white males or pushing four white males to be on a State school board when you have such a mixture of people within the State. So this here's Mississippi. And we do have a problem.

And I think the basis of our problem is that we're scared of each other. We have fears of each other. And we're scared because of what has gone on. But I think that we need to move forward from our fears. We need to go across those barriers. And we need to start facing each other just like we are men, women. And just like Jesus said that there're no more barriers, there're no more bar, no more free. There're no more Jews, no more Gentiles. There're no more male nor female. But we are all one body and that's what we're supposed to be.

I had an occasion to take a notice over to a "white church" and go into the front door. I was nicely escorted back out and told that I could not go to the front door, and asked how in the world did I get in. These are the type of things that should not be. These are the type of things that will not be. And I really believe that when we get over our fears of each other, when we get over our problems with each other as far as race is concerned, being afraid that this person is not going to be somebody that I'm comfortable with, that we'll begin to see not only in the State of Mississippi, not only in the Mississippi delta, but right here in Bolivar County, even in my city of Mound Bayou where people will begin to respect our heritage, respect who we are, respect what we're doing.

We'll begin to see not only a mighty move of the commissions that's appointed by our government, but we'll begin to see a mighty move of God that's appointed by God. Thank you very much.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much for your statement to the Committee. And this will be certainly be taken under consideration with the other statements that have been given to us as we try to have a balanced view of what really exists.

Rev. Johnson. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Our next person would be Mr. George Whitten. Mr. Whitten, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of George Whitten, Jr., Greenwood, Mississippi

Mr. Whitten. My name is George Whitten, Jr. I am at 801 Sycamore Avenue in Greenwood, Mississippi. The zip code—38930.

Dr. Ward. Thank you.

Mr. Whitten. I've been sent by Grace Church in Greenwood because this Civil Rights Commission and Advisory Committee wants to identify the roots of racial hostility. The church there in Greenwood is a body of racially mixed believers and we simply want to tell you as representatives of the

government what we as black and white Christians want from the government.

We ask the government, especially the local and State governments, simply to enforce the criminal law. Arson has been a felony from time immemorial and it is the government's job to investigate and prosecute and then punish those crimes. And we ask you to do that because God has established and ordained government for that purpose.

We do not ask the government to give us money from the public treasury to rebuild the burned buildings. We are not asking for any governmental help in identifying the source of racial hostility.

The source of racial hostility has been identified already and it was exposed a long time ago. The source is in each human heart. Each of us is guilty of hatred whether it be towards our own blood brother as there was between Cain and Abel, or whether it be towards our own mother and father which I've witnessed in my own heart and which was illustrated in the story of Absalon towards his father King David, or whether it be towards people of a different color.

We also know where to find the solution. God revealed that to us. And he commissioned the church to live it and to carry it around the globe.

I simply feel the need—and the under shepherds of the flock there in Greenwood find it necessary—to remind the church, us, ourselves, and other churches, that we Christians must not adopt a victim posture. We must not look to the government to check or eradicate hatred or hostility. That is what we have been commissioned to do. We must not let a victim mentality envelop us so that we become passive while the government comes to our rescue.

We do look to God and not to the government for ultimate vindication and for our protection day by day. And one of his tools, one of his instruments, is the law enforcement agency of our city or our county and the State highway patrol and so forth.

So we have as a church, as Christians, as followers of Christ, a message that will transform the heart of a hateful person into a loving heart. It is the Gospel of Christ that regenerates and creates a new creature out of a fallen creature. And as a governmental body like this one meets here and not only tries to solve the crime but then ventures beyond the enforcement of the criminal law into the motive and the source of hatred in the human heart—as that happens, it is just the necessary response of the church to say we're not going to let that cause us to forget the message we have and the duty that we've been commissioned to carry out.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. Any questions?

Ms. Keys. What is your church doing beyond the church walls to deal with the problems? It is one thing to have church but it is another thing to reach beyond. If you believe that the church is supposed to be dealing with this, what is your church doing?

Mr. Whitten. We don't "have" church. We do meet to worship our one true God—the one true God. And we grow closer as a body of believers as we do that because, as has been said before by the pastor and his wife from Ruleville and by the pastor who spoke prior to me, there is no race or racial distinction in Christ.

We put our money into the crisis pregnancy center in Greenwood which has more significant ministry among pregnant, black women than it does among pregnant, white women. We also put our money into a medical clinic in Mozambique in the continent of Africa where a Christian doctor and his staff perform surgery on very mundane, common illnesses—hernias, and growths that are easily fixed if there is simply a basically trained medical person there to do the fixing.

And they have built not only trust among the people but have become relied upon by some government agencies in Mozambique. And they have an opportunity to bring a remedy for sin in the human heart which is found among Mozambique natives as it is among American natives like you and me.

So those are just two examples of what we do close at home and far away. I think the biggest and most important thing is not organized but it's something that happens as we go about our daily work, go into places of business, deal with our public officials, campaign for candidates. We build friendships with people of both races and we work for candidates of both races who are principled people who have the ideals and commitments that

honor God.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much. Is Dr. Wayne Allen here?

Dr. Allen. Hi—

Dr. Ward. Excuse me. We have three more people so I am going to ask that the next three participants try to stay within the 7 minute presentation.

Dr. Allen. That shouldn't be any problem.

Dr. Ward. For the record, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Wayne Allen, Cleveland, Mississippi

Dr. Allen. Yes, Dr. Wayne Allen, 115 Lynn Avenue, Cleveland—beautiful downtown Cleveland, Mississippi 38732.

I don't have a prepared statement and my statements that I do want to make are essentially ad hoc and extemporaneous. But what I'm concerned with is that observing news reports and newspaper items that have appeared about the recent rash of church burnings, racists to my mind—at least several questions that both people in the news and professional pundants as well as politicians and perhaps even members of this committee do not seem to want to deal with.

I noticed—and let me use this as a foundation. I noticed that Dr. Berry's statement—she makes a statement to the effect that on one of the handouts that you have here—that she does not know and there is no hard evidence that the recent rash of church burnings necessarily has a specified cause. And that without a specified cause, it seems to me like there is a great deal of damage that's being done by assuming that the church burnings are necessarily racially motivated.

From the statistics that I've been able to gather, and they certainly are incoherent at best since the Federal Government does not keep hard facts on this matter, is that roughly half the churches that have been burned have been white. And it seems to me like one of the dangers in what's being done is that there is a tendency to exacerbate current race relations by assuming that all churches that are burned, or at least all black churches that are burned, are necessarily racially motivated.

Some of them, as I'm sure members of this Commission know, are done for purposes of insurance. Some of them are done out of vandalism. And the burnings themselves have a tendency to be a mask covering perhaps theft or sacrilegious activity. But one of the things that bothers me in this particular country, and it refers to what Mr. Whitten just said a couple of moments ago, there is not sense today that the problem might be that churches themselves are being burned, and that this might be more of a religious problem than a racial problem.

To the best of my knowledge, no Muslim mosques have been burned. I don't think any Hindu temples have been burned in this particular country. And it bothers me that race has become a vehicle for, in fact, seeking some kind of reparations for a problem that may not be racial in its origins—that may have other causes, whether personal in some cases, or perhaps just simply an anti-Christian bias for instance.

And it seems to me like one of the things that the Commission must do—and I know this is difficult because in many cases, the source of the cause of the crimes have not been located—but it seems to me like it's essential that we find out who is in fact committing these crimes and try to develop either a psychological or a philosophical or an ideological profile of these particular people, rather than just simply assuming that they are necessarily race-based.

And should we find out that in fact some of these crimes are race-based, does that mean that there is inherently a racial problem? That it is a culturewide problem rather than being a handful, or the responsibility or the cause of a handful of eccentric or idiosyncratic race haters?

And it seems to me like one of the things that we ought to do is to identify not only the source of the problem—that is by locating the culprits who in fact have set the churches on fire—but try to identify their particular cause and motivation.

For instance, even if we discover that a particular white or whites have set fire to a black church, does that necessarily mean that the crime was racially motivated? I believe it was in Georgia just last week. They discovered that there were three teenagers who were involved—white teenagers, who were involved in one of the church burnings.

And according to the evidence, at least thus far, suggests that the crime was simply one of vandalism.

Well, teenagers, thoughtless, feral thugs had nothing to do, so they set fire on a church. That does not ipso facto present evidence that the crime is necessarily racially motivated.

There is a tendency these days to try to locate almost all of human problems in the hands of some kind of racial motivation and I think that it's a danger that we ought to try to avoid, although I do know that there are large numbers of people in this country who have a tremendous financial investment in making sure that race problems in this country are never alleviated. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much, Dr. Allen. Mr. Owen Brooks? Mr. Brooks, the committee would like to thank you for being willing to make a statement to us. For the record, would you please state your name and mailing address.

Statement of Owen Brooks, Greenville, Mississippi

Mr. Brooks. My name is Owen Brooks. My mailing address is Post Office Box 457 in Greenville, Mississippi.

Dr. Ward. Zip code?

Mr. Brooks. 38702.

Dr. Ward. Thank you.

Mr. Brooks. I would like to begin—first of all, I appreciate the opportunity, members of the Commission, Chairperson, for allowing me the time on the agenda. Thank you very much.

I take this issue as a very serious issue for all Mississippians, for black people, for this country. And I think in all fairness, in order to address the issue adequately, one must have some sense of history. And some of the previous speakers, as far as I could determine, either have forgotten some of the history or really were not of the knowledge of it in the beginning.

But let me lift up one very important aspect of the church burning problem. I think we have to differentiate because of our history—we have to differentiate between break-ins and church burnings. I have been in this Mississippi Delta for about 32 years. And I came here when they were burning churches. And there was no question about there being racially motivated—the burnings in those years.

Break-ins of churches go on all the time. I go to a little Episcopal church in Greenville. We get broken in every other year because we live in a high crime area of the black community—that's what they say. And other churches get broken in. And valuables get stolen and insurance companies have to replace our chalices and our crucifixes, etc. We're not talking about that.

We're talking about a climate in this country today that we can relate to because of our knowledge of history, because of our understanding of history. And in Mississippi, it's most particularly—most particularly sensitive as far as the black community is concerned, because they were all of our churches burned—they were not only burning churches, but they were running pastors out of pulpits because they were trying to preach the Gospel the way the Gospel should be preached. Do we need to be reminded of this?

There's a lot of feeling the black community—I'm there every day. I walk the streets and I talk to people. I'm right now doing an oral history project. And I'm talking to old and young. And I'm talking about the past, the present, and then some of them have some words about the future. And there are strong feelings when Congressman Thompson, who incidentally I work for, and Congressman Espy—I worked about 6 years for him. But when he brings the message to the Commission about the sudden rise in the burning of churches—and it doesn't make any difference if they're black or white. And incidentally, the white churches I believe a lot of them were interracial churches.

And I guess to look fairly at the picture, we have to say we're privileged today to be able to sometimes worship together. I say sometimes. In Mississippi 30 years ago, there were no sometimes that I was aware of. But at least today, there are certain white churches that I can enter on Sunday and they don't call the police to escort me out. Or the deacons don't rush to the door in chagrin because I appear at the door. So we have made some progress.

But I think what is necessary—and I know about Ruleville. I buried Mrs. Haney. She lived there, okay. And Ruleville is not essentially—the quality

of life in Ruleville is not essentially better than it was 30 years ago. It just simply isn't. And if you don't believe me, go there and look for yourself. And maybe the Commission needs to visit some of these towns and talk to some of these people in the communities.

And I know about CRS. I knew about them 30 years ago because they were in Mississippi. And sometimes they talk to us and sometimes they talk to the white folks. That's right. That's the way it was in those days. And they don't print—they never did then and I'm sure they don't now—they don't print reports and make them available to communities at large. I hope I'm not wrong about this but I've never seen one that they did. But they come into the community and they'd talk to their contacts and they'd do what they thought they needed to do in order to try to bring people together.

So maybe that's the suggestion for this Commission. Maybe they ought to suggest to CRS that we need regional staff people, okay. We need regional staff people looking at community relations, looking at race relations in certain crisis areas. And there are crisis areas throughout this South as it relates to this kind of a problem.

Now the economic problems—we're being blamed again. Yes, we're being blamed. The poor get blamed. Those people in Washington try their best—the half of them up there—to blame the poor for being poor. And to blame the poor for whatever problem this country is having. Now this heightens feelings—this kind. And it emanates from Washington. Sure it does. When you threaten to take school lunches away, and you threaten to take these kinds of programs, and you're not for giving young people in the summertime something to do. And there's nothing to do in the delta. There wasn't anything to do 30 years ago, and there still is nothing to do for our children here in the delta. And they've cut off the summer program—summer youth programs—that only gave a smattering of jobs to youth who had nothing to do in the summer months.

Now you may say that I'm drifting—I'm getting lost. That what Owen Brooks is saying has nothing to do with the problem. It has everything to do with the problem. It has everything, because as people's needs are not being answered then people start to move away from each other. And feelings get more severe in all of the communities in America and in all of the communities in the South.

And I say to you today, it isn't by accident that they're burning churches again in Mississippi. I don't believe it is. And I've been here long enough I think to understand the prevailing mentality that emanates from the State house. And the mentality that is in the legislature. They talk about education for children. It's never been a priority in all the 30 years that I've been here. It hasn't been a priority.

And we talk about well, I send my child to the private school because I want them to have the best—they've been saying that for years. That's been the excuse. It was most definitely the excuse here in Mississippi to separate people—to separate young people. The rise of the white private school enterprise in this State was a device to escape integration of schools. And there were other devices. I can't just blame the South. The North did too—the South learned from them how to privatize public education or privatize education per se.

This hearing should be in a church in the community, in a little municipal auditorium in the evening when people get off work and can come and hear you and come and say to you how they really feel about church burnings in Mississippi in their town in this delta, the second poorest part of the United States of America. They'll tell you, but you have to go to them. They don't get the invitations from you.

Now if we're really going to address this kind of problem, then it calls for vigilance at every level because we can't afford to go back 30 years, 40 years. We can't afford to do this. So we have to be vigilant at the community, and we can't depend on law enforcement. They have a job to do. They're supposed to do it. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't, okay. But I hope that this Commission continues its effort—and I'll stop. I've taken too much time. I apologize. But I hope that this Commission, if it does nothing else, it will continue an effort to get to the truth and the best way to get to the truth is by listening to the voice of the people. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Thank you, Mr. Brooks. Ms. Ora Butler? Yes, Ms. Butler, for the record, would you please state your name and mailing address?

Statement of Ora Martin Butler, Boyle, Mississippi

Ms. Butler. My name is Ora Martin Butler. And my mailing address is Post Office Box 77, Boyle, Mississippi 38730.

Ms. Evans. I'm Minnie Evans. My address is 824 Cross Creek, Cleveland 38732. The only thing that I wanted to know—because I plan to do—I think I understood someone to say that you could do a write-in. And that's what I plan to do. And it will be concerning the school system. So since I didn't know that I would have this opportunity, I would just wait.

Dr. Ward. Okay, now, just to be sure. You want to send a written statement that should be included in the proceedings of this meeting, right?

Ms. Evans. Well, the only thing I remember—it was a long time ago that you could do a write-in. I didn't want to—

Dr. Ward. You can send us a written statement. That was what I just wanted to clarify.

Ms. Evans. Well, that's what I wanted to go on record—as far as I can remember back, I'd like to—it would take a long time because I worked 37 years. And I'd like to tell the true story. And I do have one.

Dr. Ward. All right. Well, we will be very happy to receive it. I just want to be sure that you know that anything you want included in this report, you can send it later or any time you wish, would have to be sent to the regional office by August 1—

Ms. Evans. Okay.

Dr. Ward. —because the record closes August 12. But if you want to send it later any time, we will be very happy to receive material from you.

Ms. Evans. Okay. I really don't want to make a statement. It's simply because I do not want to ramble. I'm not prepared. And I'd like to make sure that everything is truthful.

Dr. Ward. Okay. Thank you, very much. Ms. Butler?

Ms. Butler. Chairman Ward and Committee members, I take this opportunity as an honor to have the opportunity to express my concerns about racial relations in the Cleveland community, and especially to Chairman Ward who is a former college professor of mine.

But I have lived here all of my life except for being away in college or graduate school. And have heard so many things today and having been called after yesterday's session about some of the things that were discussed yesterday, that are so unrealistic as far as I know my experiences have been here.

As far as the church burnings are concerned, I cannot say that I know that they have anything to do with any kind of conspiracy of any particular group. But also from my history and my experiences, I'm very sure that they in many cases are passionate expressions of feelings of people in our country today resulting from the political climate that we're experiencing across this country and especially in the State of Mississippi.

Concerning racial relations in Cleveland, I, similar to Ms. Evans, have so many concerns about the public school system. I happen to be a parent of two children here in Cleveland. I'm PTA president. I'm a social service director and the parent involvement coordinator for the Bolivar County head start program. So I have a great deal of involvement in the community through my job as well as my daily civic involvement.

I've been a candidate for school board trustee several times here in this Cleveland school system. And for whatever reasons, many I think have a racial root as the problems, I've not been able to win those elections. But it still has not stopped me from continuing my concern in being involved. And not because I'm self-appointed, but because people so often, as I was called last night and asked to please be here today, keep calling on me to stay involved.

We have two separate school systems in the Cleveland community. It doesn't matter what you see on the top. Those of us who are involved in it know that it exists. From the time the schools were integrated in the late sixties when I was still a student in high school here, this problem has grown and in our opinion gotten worse.

We're still integrated according to what I thought was illegal according to the railroad track—

everybody on this side of the track goes to that school. Everybody on that side goes to that school. And we have what we call school choice where if you live—if you're a minority on this side, then you can go on the side—the side where you're a minority, blacks can go across the tracks to the west side of school even if they don't live there. And whites can go to the east side even if they don't live there. That's our system of integration.

We do not have any white students in the east side schools in the Cleveland community. Occasionally, we have had one or two who stay less than a school semester and then they leave and go elsewhere. We cannot get the community to support many things that we need for the schools as far as floating bonds and these kinds of things because so many of the students in the Cleveland community are in the academy. And naturally, their parents are not going to support putting their tax dollars into things for the public school system when they're putting their money into supporting the academy where their children are.

We still desperately see obvious differences in the schools in the two sides of town. Some people pretend it doesn't exist. Those of us who have been in it for so many years know that it still exists. Even down to simple things as books for children every day. If you saw the teacher in our school system who, for whatever reasons, don't openly get out in public and talk but I'm sure would talk to someone in a private interview, that have taught in the west side of school and then moved to the east side for whatever reason, would tell you that it frightens them, the differences that they see and the resources that are available to them when they teach on one side of town versus the other side of town and we're supposed to be one school district.

I've had superintendents in this Cleveland school district tell me—and not privately—in meetings when we talk about why don't we stop wasting all of these funds with these two separate buildings and two separate teams, and we're competing with each other. And our population is 15,000 or less. It makes no sense that we should have one school in this Cleveland community, to tell me that there's no way they're going to handle that with a 10-foot pole.

Or just recently, our present superintendent even said that after they had it evaluated, they determined that it was more economically feasible to maintain two high schools and two junior high schools and—what we got, about eight elementary schools in a community this small.

We've had concerns about—we have something here called open concept in our schools. And we have passionately expressed our disappointment with the effect that it's having on the academic development of our children in these classrooms. And we constantly go and complain and try to offer alternatives for a way for it be dealt with. One being build new schools, or put walls into the facilities. And we were constantly told that this was totally impossible and it would cost millions of dollars and the money was not available. But once we asked that they bring in the architect who built these buildings and explain to us how it could be done and how much it would cost, we found out it would cost less than $500,000 to do the kinds of things that we wanted done.

At that point, these hearings that we were having concerning this were just automatically dropped. However, all of a sudden this year, we noticed walls were put into the school because of tech prep being brought in and tech prep would not put their equipment in our school system unless walls were there. So they brought somebody out of voc tech to do it for less than $100,000—something that predominantly black parents have been begging for for years.

We constantly urge that more emphasis be placed on hiring black teachers in our schools, especially black males, because our children for reasons as many of us know from history back with the pay for teachers and everything else, we lost so many males in the public school system. And our children need these positive black male role models.

We have a serious problem with anybody doing anything who can stay in our schools and teach our children, but that doesn't happen on the other side of town. And these are factual things that if you reference or check, you'll find the things that I'm talking about.

The Cleveland community in general, not just separate schools—if you visit our city parks—if you go to the parks on the west side of the tracks

and then visit the parks on the east side of the tracks, these are parks that are funded by tax dollars or whatever—and see the differences in them, and not differences that are the result of people not caring about it or garbage being thrown on the ground. But there are differences simply in the facilities or the upkeep. You see we have two separate communities.

Again, I say we have a population of less than 15,000 and we have separate city teams that—instead of having one city team, they compete against each other, even when we go out of the town. Right now, just yesterday, the black kids from the east side of town competed against the white kids predominantly from the west side of town when they would have had a much better park team, city team, if there had been one combined team with the most skilled and talented children of all. And this happens constantly.

If you check with our hospital long-term care unit, you'll find that just in the last couple of months we finally had our first black patients admitted. Whereas for years, they've been told that, you know, the waiting list was too long or given whatever kinds of reasons. And there are people I know again that would testify, factual statements, to this existing.

And if you look at the head start enrollment—again, I've worked for head start for 20 years. And as I said, director of social services and parent involvement activities. When I came here, we had an enrollment—when I started in head start straight out of graduate school, we had an enrollment of approximately 2,500 children. Now we're down to a little less than 900 because of some Federal regulations from the top though.

However, we have never had more than 5 percent of our enrollment of white children. And the white children—there's definitely a significant percentage of white children in the Bolivar County area that are eligible for head start and would most definitely benefit from the services of head start. But because of the racial attitude of our county, they don't enroll in the program. It's certainly not because we don't do an all out recruitment effort to enroll those children in the program.

We have actually had young white mothers who saw the benefits of head start and would try and enroll their children in the program and once the school bus started taking the kids home and the community would see them on the bus with so many more black children then there would be problems with them in their own communities, or problems for them in their homes with their husbands.

We have in this Cleveland school district what we call three superintendents. We have a majority black student enrollment, but we've always had a white superintendent. And in order to pacify people, we've had certain tokens employed as assistant superintendents of this and assistant superintendents of that. We've even had a person hold the position of a position such as a title 1 coordinator who would openly campaign in the public and pay persons to work against a parent of a school that is schoolwide title 1 funded who was running for school board candidate.

I urge the people of my community to stop pretending that the racial evils of the past did not have significant impact on our race relations today, as well as still exist in so many, many ways. Until we can all, black and white, accept that we will continue to keep stumbling back and need to have hearings such as these. Again, I thank you.

Dr. Ward. Thank you very much, Ms. Butler and Ms. Evans. I have one obligation following the rules that were set that people could respond. And for the record, and this will be entered, I have a memo from Mr. Wayne Nicholas which reads, Dear Dr. Ward, it was stated last night that "no blacks read the *Bolivar Commercial.*" For the record, within the Cleveland city limits, we have 1,693 white subscribers and 984 black subscribers. The average number of readers per subscription on an American newspaper is 3.2.

The announcement of the hearings ran on page 1 in the same box as an illustrated story about the Ruleville church fire. Sincerely, Wayne Nicholas, the Bolivar Commercial, Post Office Box 1050, Cleveland, Mississippi 38732. And a copy of said article is attached so this will be entered into our record.

As Chairman of this Committee, I would like to thank all who participated who indeed helped us to carry out what I call our magnifying a problem so that everyone can understand the very complicated

nature of it.

I would like to close this forum by asking any members of the Committee and or of the central regional office staff who would like to make very brief closing remarks to do so now.

Ms. Keys. I don't have a prepared statement. It concerns me that—I was just saying something here to Les, the different perceptions that people have of the problem. That—and I just have to say it. White people can say there is not much of a problem or there is no problem, yet, the blacks that have come have said there is.

That to me alone says there is a problem. And I think that grappling with this issue of race relations is something that my Christian brother said, "It will always be there because there is sin in the hearts of man." But I feel that as—I am a Christian. As a Christian and as a citizen of this State, we have to meet it head on. We have to do—if my brother says there is a problem, I have a problem.

And if nothing else, I have to find out why he feels there is a problem. And I think continued open dialogue—and not in the form of meetings. We have to come up with something else that will start people talking and get people experiencing what each other are experiencing day by day before we come to something. But I really appreciate everybody who came. And I appreciate everybody's perceptions. And I just hope everybody heard everyone else. That was part of having these forums was for us to listen—not just us to listen but for you all to listen, too.

And I know down where I am, hopefully people will start listening and trusting and respecting, and then tackling a problem I think we just don't want to deal with, but we've got to if young people are coming up not the way we want somebody's young people are coming up the wrong way. So that's my statement. Thank you all very much.

Dr. Ward. Thank you, Ms. Keys. Mr. Range?

Mr. Range. I think we have had some very valuable testimony here. And I want to especially let people in the audience know that the report that this body produces in the next 30 to 45 days is going to focus on the church burning situation. However, we've had some additional public comment about some other issues.

And it came to my attention last night that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the actual Commission, who meet in Washington and around the country, are scheduling a community forum similar to this in the Mississippi Delta—September 18 to the 20 are the dates that we've been told about and it may change. And I would urge all of you who have concerns about education and some other issues to pay attention. We will certainly make sure that a good effort is made to notify the public about these meetings. And since these commissioners with the national perspective who serve out of Washington, D.C., will be in the community, I urge you to come out then again and make your comments known. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Okay. Mr. Lott?

Mr. Lott. It has got to be hard for a community to withstand people coming in from out of hand and saying tell me your problems and having people in the same room from the same town disagree with each other. It is almost as if you are opening up wounds. And it is not the Commission's intention to try to come to a community and open up wounds and then walk away.

My goal has always been that with open discourse, with communication, people can talk to each other. They can deal with each other on a reasonable basis. My concern would be that we do not fall prey to media hype and a lot of people who are trying to make political hay out of an issue that is so emotional and so close to the heart and souls of people as the church burnings are.

I know that if it were my church, I know how I would feel. The hurt, the disgust—it is immeasurable. And because it is so emotional, that means that we have to be even more conscious of that situation and try to deal with it in an effective and reasonable manner.

I know that we have had testimony from I guess every branch of the Federal Government that is involved in investigating, prosecuting, and evaluating the situation. And we have heard from the State government. I do not think we ever really heard from the local law enforcement on the issue. But I hope that we have had representatives from—I know from Sunflower County—and I hope that some of this information will feed back. Now don't wait for a report. Take it on back and look at it for your county. Talk with your sheriff.

Why are we doing this? Can we offer better protection? Can't we do things?

Don't wait for anybody to tell you to do things. Everybody has openly said what they felt, and I hope that that will continue amongst yourselves when everybody up here is gone away. Thank you.

Dr. Ward. Okay. Mr. Foster?

Mr. Foster. Well, I just would like to echo some of the comments Ms. Keys made regarding facing up to the part that there is a problem. And we do have some differences in terms of perception of racism. And we do have some situations where racism is very thick.

But I feel that racism is just like a sore. If you ignore it, it gets worse. And eventually, it will kill you. So to ignore it is to kill yourself and to kill your whole community. So I feel that if we don't address the problem, it is going to consume all of us.

And you have to face the fact. We do have a problem with race in Mississippi. You have a problem with race in the delta and everywhere else in the country. But for a person to say we do not have a racial problem, I think they are very naive. That is all I have to say.

Dr. Ward. Thank you. And my final comment—some of you heard last night and you did not hear me say this today. My concern is always with this issue—with any issue—that the Commission on Civil Rights and this Committee must deal with is that we have what I call a larger background for understanding local problems.

And I think one of the key things that has been said here is to keep an open mind. And I am not sure what that always means. I think we have to keep all possibilities before us before we draw any conclusions. And that may be one of the reasons that Commissioner Berry said I do not really know who is responsible for this because none of us do.

But what we do know, and we cannot retreat from, is that this is an American issue. It is not a Mississippi issue. It is an American issue. And we probably ought to begin thinking about this problem and other problems that we have in the context of where this country is globally. Because what happens in Ruleville, Mississippi, whether we are willing to make linkages or not—and I do risk making linkages—may, and I stress that, may be related to global attitudes and I will just leave it at that because I think there is a climate—there is a climate we are trying to deal with. And we participate in it. We make it and we have resolve problems in that.

I want to thank the members of the central regional office, U.S. Commission of Civil Rights, for the very hard work that they have done in putting this meeting together and continuing to support the work of the Mississippi Advisory Committee. And my personal thanks will go to each of the people who participated in the forum. I now adjourn the forum for this session.

(Proceedings concluded at 12:26 p.m.)

U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS
Central Regional Office
400 State Avenue, Suite 908
Kansas City, MO 66101-2406