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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDING**

**MEETING OF THE  
ALABAMA ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
TO THE  
UNITED STATES COMMISSION  
ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

**PARAMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL  
COUNTY ROAD 20  
- BOLIGEE, ALABAMA**

**JULY 2, 1996  
5:30 P.M.**

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**EXECUTIVE REPORTING, INC.  
1320 FENWICK LANE, SUITE 702  
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APPEARANCES:

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Advisory Committee Members:

Rodney Max, Chairperson  
Alabama Advisory Committee to the  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Annie Wells

Michael Davis

Rex Morthland

Anne Shumaker

George Munchus

Mary Frances Berry, Chairperson  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Melvin Jenkins, Regional Director  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

## INDEX OF SPEAKERS

	Speaker	Page
1		
2		
3	Speaker	Page
4		
5	Earl Hilliard	12
6		
7	Levi Pickens	23
8		
9	Garric Spencer	31
10		
11	Spiver Gordon	41
12		
13	Booker Cooke	58
14		
15	Baron Langster	62
16		
17	Robert Langford	85
18		
19	Jim Cavanaugh	105
20		
21	Carol Privett	125
22		
23	H. O. Kirksey	131
24		
25	Abraham Wood	150
26		
27	Buddy Lavender	156
28		
29	Abraham Kinnard	177
30		
31	George Hall	180
32		
33	Public Forum	195

1 MS. WELLS: Good evening and welcome. I am  
2 Annie Wells, Acting Chairman of the meeting tonight.  
3 The meeting of the Alabama Advisory Committee to the  
4 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights shall come to order.

5 For the benefit of those in our audience, I  
6 shall introduce my colleagues. We are pleased to  
7 have with us the Chair of the U. S. Commission on  
8 Civil Rights, the Honorable Mary Frances Berry.

9 Also present of the agency, Staff Director,  
10 Mary Mathews. Finally I want to introduce staff from  
11 the Commission's Regional Office in Kansas City,  
12 Melvin Jenkins, Regional Director, and Jo Ann Daniels  
13 in the back.

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

18 Number one, investigate complaints alleging  
19 that citizens are being deprived of their right to  
20 vote by reason of their race, color, religion, age,  
21 sex, disability, or national origin, or by reason of  
22 fraudulent practices;

23 Study and collect information relating to  
24 discrimination or denial of equal opportunity, of  
25 equal protection of the laws under the Constitution,

1 because of race, color, religion, sex, age,  
2 disability, or national origin, or in the  
3 administration of justice;

4 Appraise federal laws and policies with respect  
5 to discrimination or denial of equal protection of  
6 the laws because of race, color, religion, age,  
7 disability, or national origin, or in the  
8 administration of justice;

9 Serve as a national clearinghouse for  
10 information in respect to discrimination or denial of  
11 equal protection of the laws because of race, color,  
12 religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin;

13 Submit reports, findings and recommendations to  
14 the President and Congress;

15 And to issue public service announcements to  
16 discourage discrimination or denial of equal  
17 protection of the laws.

18 The Commission has 51 advisory Committees - one  
19 for each state and the District of Columbia. Each is  
20 composed of citizens familiar with local and state  
21 civil rights issues.

22 The members serve without compensation and  
23 assist the Commission with its fact finding,  
24 investigating, and information dissemination  
25 functions.

1           The Alabama Advisory Committee to the U. S.  
2 Commission on Civil Rights is here tonight to conduct  
3 a community forum on race relations in Greene County  
4 in the aftermath of recent fires at black churches.

5           We also want to focus on federal and local law  
6 enforcement efforts to solve these fires. Hopefully  
7 this forum will give individuals an opportunity to  
8 discuss some of their concerns and ideas about the  
9 reason these first occurred and also provide an  
10 avenue to search for solutions.

11           Our goal is to fulfill the guidelines that have  
12 been set by the Commission in terms of the Alabama  
13 Advisory Committee to be the eyes and ears of the  
14 community.

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

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

22           At the outset I want to remind everyone present  
23 of the ground rules. This is a public meeting, open  
24 to the media and the general public. But we have a  
25 very full schedule of persons who will be providing

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information within the limited time 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 Committee members. To accommodate persons who have not been invited but want to make statements, we have scheduled an open session from approximately 9:45 p.m. until about 10:30 p.m.

Anyone wishing to make a statement during that period should contact Ms. Jo Ann Daniels in the back at the table for scheduling. Written statements may be submitted to Committee members or staff here tonight, or by mail to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. And if you'd like to write the address down, it's U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 400 State Avenue, Suite 908, Kansas City, Kansas 66101. And I'll repeat, 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 2nd, 1996.

Though some of the statements made tonight may be controversial, we want to ensure that all invited participants do not defame or degrade any person or

1 organization. In order to ensure that all aspects of  
2 the issues are represented, knowledgeable persons  
3 with a wide variety of experience and viewpoints have  
4 been invited to share information with us.

5 Any person or any organization that feels  
6 defamed or degraded by statements made in these  
7 proceedings should contact our staff during the  
8 meeting so that we can provide a chance for a public  
9 response.

10 Alternately, such persons or organizations can  
11 file written statements for inclusion in the  
12 proceedings. I urge all persons making presentations  
13 to be judicious in their statements.

14 The Advisory Committee appreciates the  
15 willingness of all participants to share their views  
16 and experiences with the Committee.

17 The Chairperson of the U. S. Commission on  
18 Civil Rights, Dr. Mary Frances Berry, will now make a  
19 few remarks.

20 MS. BERRY: Let me, before I do that, let me  
21 just ask Melvin Jenkins, the Regional Director, to  
22 introduce the other members of the staff who are  
23 present tonight.

24 MR. JENKINS: Okay. We have to my far left  
25 Michael Davis from Mobile, Alabama; Anne Shumaker



1 from Centura; Dr. Rex Morthland from Selma, Alabama;  
2 Chairperson or Acting Chair has introduced herself.  
3 We have at the far end Dr. George Munchus from  
4 Birmingham, Alabama, and Jerome Gray from Montgomery,  
5 Alabama.

6 MS. BERRY: Thank you very much. Let me just  
7 say that before I begin that Bill Lee, who is  
8 standing over there with his hand up, is the press  
9 officer who is in charge of the care and feeding of  
10 the media. That guy there with the blue shirt on  
11 standing up there. He will be able to take care of  
12 any needs that you have.

13 Let me also say that the address that was given  
14 out by Ms. Wells was the address of the regional  
15 office of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. Our  
16 main office, like most federal agencies, is in  
17 Washington, D.C. And we also have a hotline which  
18 takes information and complaints about law  
19 enforcement officials and anything else anybody wants  
20 to complain about, at 1-800-552-6843.

21 Let me just say that the Alabama State Advisory  
22 Committee has done wonderful work and the Commission  
23 as a whole is very grateful to them for putting  
24 together this community forum.

25 They have put together community forums. It's

1 part of their job. They do it all the time on major  
2 issues that occur in their state, as do all of our  
3 State Advisory Committees. They have been  
4 responsible in the past for working on some major  
5 issues.

6 Years ago, like the infamous Tuskegee study,  
7 which brought to light the inhumane treatment of  
8 black men by the U.S. Public Health Service doctors  
9 who deliberately infected these men with syphilis and  
10 withheld treatment long after penicillin was  
11 discovered.

12 In the 1960's they did a number of reports on  
13 race relations in Selma and other reports that were  
14 important for some of the civil rights changes that  
15 occurred and reports also in the 1990's, and also I  
16 want to tell you that the Civil Rights Commission is  
17 very familiar with Greene County and very familiar  
18 with Boligee. We have done reports in the past on  
19 this county.

20 We did one in 1968 called Cycle to Nowhere,  
21 which is available, which was about the social and  
22 economic and racial problems that existed and --  
23 exist in this community.

24 We did another one in the 1980's called Alabama  
25 Rural Communities Revisited, in which we looked again

1 at Greene County and Boligee and Eutaw and looked at  
2 the racial climate here and the social and economic  
3 problems, and found that little change had taken  
4 place, that blacks had political power but not  
5 economic power, and today we find that many of these  
6 features have not changed and we're here to find out  
7 the ones that have and the ones that have not, and to  
8 try to get some kind of understanding of what's going  
9 on with this issue of racial and ethnic tensions in  
10 this community and what kind of solutions might be  
11 made.

12 What we're doing here in particular, these  
13 church fires brought us here, the dramatic rise in  
14 African American church burnings in the Southeast,  
15 beginning last year, but even more sharp this year.

16 And it came as less of a surprise to us at the  
17 U.S. Civil Rights Commission than most people in this  
18 country, and that's because for the last four years  
19 we have been investigating the resurgence of racial  
20 and ethnic tensions in the United States.

21 We have completed a number of reports, which  
22 are called Racial and Ethnic Tensions in American  
23 Communities, Poverty, Inequality, and Discrimination.  
24 And I believe they should be required reading for  
25 those who argue that all is well with the nation's

1 race relations and the church fires can be explained  
2 away at the acts of a few mindless people and that as  
3 soon as we rebuilt the churches, we can move on and  
4 begin dealing with the rest of our lives.

5 At our last meeting the Civil Rights Commission  
6 warned that the destruction of the churches, and I'm  
7 quoting, goes beyond the sanctuaries themselves to  
8 attack the bonds of community and our foundations as  
9 a nation.

10 We begin the forums here this evening, in this  
11 state, and by July 18th we will have held forums in  
12 every one of the southern states in which the  
13 majority of the church burnings will have taken  
14 place, and I have taken it upon myself as chair of  
15 the Civil Rights Commission to go out to attend every  
16 one of these forums, and there will be reports done,  
17 first a transcript, and a summary of the findings  
18 within 30 days of this forum. Then after that a  
19 longer report and there will be one on every single  
20 forum that we have in order to try and figure out why  
21 we think this is happening, what we think the causes  
22 are, what we can do to have racial reconciliation in  
23 this country, and how we can go beyond the idea of  
24 these current arsons.

25 But we do need to find the perpetrators, and

1 one of the things we want to do is to look at what  
2 the state and federal law enforcement people are  
3 doing, and to see whether they are doing a good job  
4 and to see what the complaints are, and can they do  
5 the job better.

6 That is why we have a list of witnesses who  
7 were invited by the State Advisory Committees to give  
8 us the kind of information we need and so that we can  
9 ask them questions and then after that, we will  
10 listen to other people.

11 I have already in this community been talking  
12 to people who will not appear here, today when I was  
13 out, and I'll be talking to more of them tonight, who  
14 don't care to appear in a public forum.

15 There will be others who do and are willing to  
16 appear in a public forum, who will come here. We're  
17 here to get information and we will have a report.

18 With that, let me proceed to recognize the  
19 Mayor of this town, Boligee, Mayor Buddy Lavender.  
20 Where's the Mayor? There's the Mayor of Boligee.

21 MAYOR LAVENDER: First of all, I thank you all  
22 for being able to be here, with all of us being here,  
23 and I'd like to thank you very --

24 MS. BERRY: You dressed up since I saw you  
25 earlier today.

1           MAYOR LAVENDER: That's right. Thank you for  
2 taking the opportunity to come in and hold this  
3 meeting for us. I feel like that this meeting is  
4 very necessary because we've got to get together and  
5 talk. We've got to lay out gripes on the table and  
6 let the healing begin from here.

7           And this is what I hope that happens here this  
8 evening and we really appreciate you all taking time  
9 out to come down to be here to hold this meeting.  
10 And thank you all for coming.

11           MS. BERRY: All right. Well, thank you very  
12 much for thinking of us and we very much appreciate  
13 your greetings. And now I want to recognize the  
14 distinguished Congressman from this district, the  
15 Seventh Congressional District, the U. S. House of  
16 representatives in Washington, the Honorable Earl  
17 Hilliard, Congressman Hilliard.

18           CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: Thank you very much.  
19 Let me first say that I applaud the effort of the Alabama  
20 Advisory Committee to a U. S. Commission on Civil Rights,  
21 and I applaud the effort of the U.S. Commission on Civil  
22 Rights for holding this hearing.

23           I hope that the efforts that results from this  
24 hearing will be fruitful and progressive.

25           First of all, let me invite those of you who

1 are from outside of the state to the Seventh  
2 Congressional District. This is the home of George  
3 Wallace, Rosa Parks, Bull Connor, and Jimmy Lee Jackson.

4           It is also the crater of the confederacy and  
5 the birthplace of the civil rights movement. And it's  
6 the place where Jefferson Davis took the oath of office  
7 as President of the Confederacy, but it's also the place  
8 where Martin Luther King introduced the doctrine of  
9 passive resistance.

10           It is a place that has a history of racial  
11 problems, but it also has a history of solving those  
12 problems, in a confrontational manner and in other ways.  
13 I applaud those who seek the other ways.

14           So for that reason I welcome all of you here.  
15 This is one of the other ways.

16           There are two subject matters I would like to  
17 deal with. The very first one deals with the efforts of  
18 the persons involved with the investigation of the fires  
19 that have occurred. We have had nine such burnings of  
20 churches in this district.

21           I fault the FBI and the ATF because I felt that  
22 they should have intervened at a very early stage and I  
23 think that if they would have done that, then we would  
24 have been able to obtain or ascertain evidence that  
25 perhaps would have shown us an organized pattern.

1           If you look at the location of the fires that  
2 have occurred throughout this country, you will find that  
3 there are basically four clusters. Those clusters range  
4 in area of South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, and  
5 here in the black belt of the State of Alabama, which is  
6 located silently within the Seventh Congressional  
7 District.

8           Since that pattern has been established, the  
9 later fires have been in a scattered pattern, and I think  
10 this is the result of an unorganized effort, a result of  
11 attention being shown, being brought to the problem, so  
12 we have had later on copy-cats and firebugs getting  
13 involved.

14           And I am sure that those arrests of those later  
15 fires will show that it was the result of an unorganized  
16 effort and just the act of individuals of some group --  
17 some individuals acting in small groups without any type  
18 of organization.

19           Secondly, I fault the powers to be, the FBI  
20 basically and the ATF, because they failed to clearly  
21 define the issue, concerning the burning of the churches  
22 in their investigatory patterns they conduct. They  
23 missed the issue of burning fires -- well, that of voter  
24 fraud -- voter fraud is an effort and has been an effort  
25 to intimidate African Americans who have voted in the



1 past and elections in the black belt. It has been used  
2 once before in a pattern that the Justice Department has  
3 stated clearly was unorthodox, that it was not legal, and  
4 the effort that has been used just recently I think may  
5 bear some resemblance to that, and to mis -- to mix those  
6 two investigations I think was a terrible mistake and I  
7 think one of the reasons why we have no had any positive  
8 results, because of that mistake, coupled with the  
9 failure of early intervention.

10           There are two other problems that are very much  
11 concerned with. They are very much in a long-term  
12 nature. I'm concerned about rural churches being able to  
13 finance new construction, not just for today or tomorrow,  
14 but for next year and in the next decade. I'm very much  
15 concerned that they would have difficulty in obtaining  
16 insurance for those churches and that if they are able to  
17 get the insurance, if they are able to get financing,  
18 then the insurance and the financing would be costly,  
19 would be above market rates, and it would have a long-  
20 term impact on them being able to finance these churches.

21           I thank you very much for the opportunity to  
22 come and address this group, and I'll be happy to answer  
23 any questions that you may have.

24           MS. BERRY: Does any member of the SAC have  
25 questions or comments for Mr. Hilliard?

1 (Discussion was had regarding  
2 microphones and hearing in the  
3 room.)

4 MS. BERRY: Ms. Wells has a question for  
5 Congressman Hilliard. Then I have one.

6 MS. WELLS: I had a question in reference to  
7 the amount of money that President Clinton has  
8 allotted; am I correct? For the churches? Six  
9 million dollars, I believe. And I would like to know  
10 how that money will be used. Will it be used for  
11 anything, including insurance, new building?

12 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: I'm sorry. I'm unable  
13 to give you any information concerning that at this time.  
14 I understand that he has authorized certain federal  
15 agencies to get involved. I do not know the level of  
16 those involvements at this time.

17 However, I did talk to some of my contemporary  
18 -- some of the elected officials who are local in nature.  
19 They stated that they have also heard about those things,  
20 but they have not seen any of the moneys as of this time.

21 MS. BERRY: You may be referring, Dr. Wells, to  
22 the idea that the President asked federal agencies to  
23 give assistance from the various categories of  
24 assistance that they have, to the church, as well as  
25 the money that has been requested and allocated to

1 the enforcement agencies to speed up the enforcement,  
2 the package, but I don't know of any specific amount  
3 given to any specific church for any specific purpose  
4 either.

5 Does anyone else -- yes.

6 MS. SHUMAKER: Congressman Hilliard, how would  
7 you assess the benefit of the private donations and  
8 the private services that have been used or have been  
9 given to help the rebuilding of the churches?

10 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: There were two funds  
11 that had been set up at local institutions in this area,  
12 and to my knowledge the last time I checked, there was  
13 only about \$14,000.

14 I also understand that as of yesterday some of  
15 the persons who had come here to volunteer their services  
16 in helping rebuild these churches were complaining  
17 because they were unable to get funds to buy material  
18 with or that the materials that would be needed were not  
19 available, because they had not been purchased.

20 So whatever is being done, it is haphazardly  
21 done. I'm sure that because of the large number of  
22 churches involved in this area, it's not a central  
23 organized effort, and I think that in order for it to be  
24 successful, that there has to be someone organizing it  
25 and I don't -- that might be a little difficult inasmuch

1 as you have so many churches and they are not all in the  
2 same county.

3 MS. SHUMAKER: Since we have so many members of  
4 the media here, would you like to give an address or  
5 name of the bank to which people could make  
6 donations? I didn't mean to ask a hard question.

7 MS. BERRY: There's a staff member there. Do  
8 you have the answer?

9 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: I believe I have that  
10 somewhere in my notes.

11 MS. BERRY: When you have it, pass it up to us  
12 and we'll announce it.

13 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: Thank you very much.  
14 I'll be happy to do that.

15 MS. BERRY: I have one question for you if no  
16 other member of the panel does. Do you -- yes, Mr.  
17 Davis has a question.

18 MR. DAVIS: Congressman, I'd like to know -- I  
19 assume that you're in touch with the federal agencies  
20 who have investigated to this point on what's  
21 transpiring. Have any of them divulged in any way,  
22 shape, form or fashion why they think -- I note a  
23 couple of people have been convicted already and  
24 they've been associated with some hate groups or  
25 whatever the case may be. Have any of these people

1       divulged in any way, shape, form or fashion why they  
2       did it?

3                CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD:  I have not -- the type  
4 of conversations we have had have been basically I have  
5 attended two hearings.  One of them was put on by the  
6 Congressional Black Caucus and the other one we had a  
7 briefing by the ATF, as well as by the FBI, and that  
8 question did not come up.

9                But they did indicate to us that they had  
10 observed some patterns, and they were following those  
11 leads.  And they were looking at those patterns.

12               They were unable to say at that time that what  
13 had happened was a result of organized efforts or  
14 otherwise, because they had not solved any significant  
15 numbers.  I think we're only talking about three and in  
16 those situations most of them were firebugs involved, and  
17 in one situation I think you had some youthful offenders.

18               I think that as we give notoriety to what has  
19 happened, we are in certain ways inviting copy-cats and  
20 firebugs to participate.  Because of that I don't think  
21 you're ever going to be able to get any patterns, enough  
22 evidence to point to any organized group.

23               I think we did not seize that initiative early  
24 and we probably have lost it, so we probably will never  
25 know.

1 MS. BERRY: Could I ask you a couple questions,  
2 Congressman?

3 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: Please.

4 MS. BERRY: The first one is what do you mean  
5 when you keep saying because we lost initiative or  
6 didn't gain initiative early?

7 What you referring to? You said that twice,  
8 but you didn't say -- who didn't gain the  
9 initiative and who didn't do whatever they were  
10 supposed to do?

11 We have some more witnesses here who are  
12 involved in law enforcement and we're going to be  
13 asking them these questions. What --

14 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: Very good. I hope that  
15 you ask them when they initially got involved. As you  
16 know, many of these fires have been set more than two  
17 years ago, and some of the -- it's my understanding that  
18 late in 1995 that the ATF and the FBI get involved, and I  
19 think that at that stage it had become a commonplace  
20 thing and it was too late to really ascertain and really  
21 get evidence that may have established a pattern.

22 MS. BERRY: So you're just saying that they  
23 didn't take it seriously at the beginning and waited  
24 too long to take it seriously? Is that your point?

25 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: I think they waited too

1 long to get involved.

2 MS. BERRY: Okay. The second question I wanted  
3 to ask you, you said that now with copy-cats and the  
4 like, it may be impossible to find a pattern or words  
5 to that effect, and that calling attention to it may  
6 stimulate copy-cats, if I understood you correctly.

7 Are you suggesting that we should not call  
8 attention to the fact that the burnings have taken  
9 place or even be discussing them, and we shouldn't  
10 even be here having the forum and we should all just  
11 not talk about it, or what are you suggesting?

12 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: No, I'm not suggesting  
13 that at all. I'm just saying that because of the fact  
14 that notoriety is being -- and emphasis being placed on  
15 what has happened and what is happening, we probably --  
16 we will have persons who are natural firebugs or who  
17 participate in these type activities decide to do it just  
18 because of the notoriety of the act.

19 MS. BERRY: What should we do about that?

20 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: Well, continue to  
21 investigate. I don't think you ought to stop. Please  
22 don't stop.

23 MS. BERRY: Okay.

24 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: You don't have a choice  
25 in this matter.

1 MS. BERRY: All right. Because I know that  
2 happens every time there is some kind of --

3 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: Yes.

4 MS. BERRY: -- crime, you have copy-cats. The  
5 question of whether you should talk about something  
6 or not is, you know, it's sort of like if you have  
7 vermin all over the place and you don't say anything  
8 about it, maybe it keeps growing or do you expect  
9 them to die if you don't -- I just wanted to be clear  
10 about what you meant.

11 CONGRESSMAN HILLIARD: Well, you have to  
12 continue -- if necessary, you have to accelerate the  
13 effort.

14 MS. BERRY: Okay. Thank you very much. I  
15 appreciate your comments, and if you get that  
16 address, please pass it along to us or we'll get it  
17 from one of these other people here.

18 MS. BERRY: I'll have it to you shortly. Thank  
19 you very much.

20 MS. BERRY: Thank you very much for being with  
21 us. We appreciate it.

22 Our next with is Reverend Levi Pickens, Mt.  
23 Zion Baptist Church, which is a church that was  
24 burned and is being rebuilt and that we went out to  
25 see today and talked to people out there. Reverend



1 Pickens, could you come forward, please, if you're  
2 here? Thank you very much for being with us,  
3 Reverend Pickens.

4 REVEREND PICKENS: I'd like to say good evening  
5 to everybody.

6 MS. BERRY: Let's be sure we can hear you. We  
7 don't want to miss anything you have to say. Mr.  
8 Jenkins is going to come over there and make sure.

9 REVEREND PICKENS: First I'd like to say good  
10 evening to everybody and I'm the pastor of Mt. Zion,  
11 Boligee, where I have been serving for five years, and  
12 our church has been burned.

13 We are in the process of getting it back in  
14 operation again, and I'm just astonished at what's going  
15 on. Every time you turn your radio on or a TV on, you  
16 hear a church fire.

17 It seems to me that it's something that's going  
18 on wrong. We're supposed to be Christian brother and  
19 sister. We're supposed to have love in our heart. And  
20 every time we kill something, then I don't approve and I  
21 don't believe God approves of it.

22 And it's something is the cause of it. First  
23 we want to say that we realize that we're having  
24 problems. If you don't realize that you have a problem,  
25 you don't know you have a problem, then you don't have a

1 problem. Somebody else have a problem.

2 From what I been hearing, that we don't have a  
3 problem here in Greene County. I've been living here  
4 around 71 years, and it's just now -- it hasn't just now  
5 started.

6 And I want to know -- and I wish that we could  
7 do something about it. Somebody said that we don't have  
8 a racial problem. I don't go along with that, because I  
9 know we do.

10 I can remember just a few years ago we had a --  
11 I was in seminar. We had a white teacher and just as  
12 soon as his congregation found out that he was teaching  
13 the black ministers, he had to leave town.

14 We have a problem and we just -- we just was to  
15 admit that we have a problem, and we ought to have enough  
16 love in our hearts to solve our problem where we come  
17 down to living together, God created all of us equally.  
18 God intended for all of us to live in this great big  
19 world.

20 And I can't understand why is it that I have a  
21 plumb line. I can't understand it. I'm supposed to have  
22 all of the rights as anybody else has, but we don't have  
23 it.

24 And I'm praying to the Lord that after today  
25 that we will not have this problem.

1 Thank you. If you have any questions?

2 MS. BERRY: Does any member of the SAC have any  
3 question for Reverend Pickens? Yes, Michael Davis.

4 MR. DAVIS: Yes. A lot of times, Reverend,  
5 crimes of hate are initiated to invoke fear.

6 I'm curious to know how has this affected your  
7 congregation, the members? Has it slacked off  
8 participation, Sunday services, or so forth? And if  
9 that is the case, what type of ramifications,  
10 repercussions are you getting again, trying to spread  
11 your message?

12 REVEREND PICKENS: I don't think that it had  
13 anything to do with the congregation. It looks like to  
14 me they are attending just as they was before the church  
15 burned. And we got the faith that God's going to build  
16 the church back, and I'm getting good response on the  
17 congregation.

18 MS. SHUMAKER: And from outside the  
19 congregation?

20 REVEREND PICKENS: Outside of the congregation?  
21 Yes. Yeah, we're getting response from outside the  
22 congregation.

23 MS. SHUMAKER: Did your church also have some  
24 insurance to cover any of your losses?

25 REVEREND PICKENS: No, we didn't have enough to

1 cover the --

2 MS. BERRY: Mr. Gray.

3 MR. GRAY: Jerome Gray. You mentioned that you  
4 have a race problem still in Greene County, and you  
5 talked about the minister who provided the -- was  
6 teaching at the seminar, he had to leave town.

7 REVEREND PICKENS: Right.

8 MR. GRAY: What has been the response from the  
9 white clergy since the church burning in terms of  
10 support or lack thereof?

11 REVEREND PICKENS: Well, I had response from  
12 two -- two pastors. One invited us to come in and have  
13 worship service with them and use their church.

14 MS. BERRY: And other -- Dr. Wells?

15 MS. WELLS: I have a standard question that I  
16 would like to ask now once and for all, to each of  
17 the ministers and any other presenter, and that is if  
18 you will, you may choose not to, but if you will,  
19 give us a hypotheses as to the reason your church was  
20 burned. In view of the research that I have read, it  
21 indicates there are a variety of reasons that these  
22 churches are burned, and I am sure that the victim  
23 churches that are burned would have a hypothesis, as  
24 to whether it's race or any of those other factors.

25 MS. BERRY: Do you have any idea or any

1 thoughts or any idea why your church burned, since we  
2 don't know who did it?

3 REVEREND PICKENS: Maybe I can ask that  
4 question -- the person that burned down our church, in my  
5 judgment they do not know Jesus Christ and they do not  
6 have love or respect for God's church.

7 Anything else?

8 MS. BERRY: Let me just ask my question. You  
9 said that there is a race problem in Greene County.

10 REVEREND PICKENS: Yes.

11 MS. BERRY: Now, I said before I got the  
12 microphone so you could hear what I was saying, that  
13 the Civil Rights Commission knows this county very  
14 well. We came down here in the '60s and did a report  
15 called -- what was it called -- Cycle to Nowhere.

16 REVEREND PICKENS: Mm-hmm.

17 MS. BERRY: On these rural Alabama counties,  
18 including Greene.

19 REVEREND PICKENS: Mm-hmm.

20 MS. BERRY: And we came down here in the '80s  
21 and did another report called Alabama Rural Counties  
22 Revisited, and have a whole report here on Greene  
23 County. And we talk about the racial segregation,  
24 white academy and the black public school system,  
25 part of which we're sitting in right here.

1           We talked about the need for jobs and economic  
2           development and we talked about blacks having  
3           political power and no economic power.

4           REVEREND PICKENS:   Mm-hmm.

5           MS. BERRY:   And we talked about racial  
6           hostility persisting in that report.   I've been here  
7           today and I've been out running around the county  
8           here.   I found the same white academy I saw the last  
9           time I was here, that's talked about in this report;  
10          the same black public school system; the same poverty  
11          in both races.

12          REVEREND PICKENS:   Right.

13          MS. BERRY:   A lot of catfish ponds.   They don't  
14          seem to take much labor, I'm told.   I've investigated  
15          catfish ponds.

16                 And I've seen a lot of things and talked to a  
17          lot of people.   Now, what has happened in Greene  
18          County since the last time we did this report to make  
19          the economic condition of everybody better, to  
20          relieve the race problem?

21                 What are the changes that have happened that  
22          you can see and why do we still have a race problem  
23          in Greene County?

24          REVEREND PICKENS:   I just cannot answer that  
25          why we have, because I don't know why we have, but I do

1 know that we have it.

2 MS. BERRY: Do you know what could be done  
3 about it?

4 REVEREND PICKENS: No, I don't unless of all of  
5 us, do like David, creator gives me a clean heart, and  
6 renew unto me the right spirit.

7 MS. BERRY: Okay. Well, do you think that when  
8 your church is finished rebuilding -- we went out and  
9 looked at it. It's coming along real well -- do you  
10 think when it's finished, the building is finished,  
11 the other two churches, the building is finished,  
12 they're coming along too --

13 REVEREND PICKENS: Right.

14 MS. BERRY: Will that solve the race problem in  
15 Greene County?

16 REVEREND PICKENS: No.

17 MS. BERRY: Still be here?

18 REVEREND PICKENS: Yes.

19 MS. BERRY: Okay. If nobody else has any  
20 questions -- you've got one -- Mr. Jenkins has a  
21 question for you.

22 MR. JENKINS: Several years ago the Alabama  
23 Advisory Committee issued a report calling for a  
24 State Human Relations Commission, a Commission that  
25 would be able to go into a community, such as

1 Boligee, Eutaw, to sit down and deviate problems  
2 concerning race -- race problems. If we had a  
3 Commission in place in the State of Alabama now, do  
4 you think that would be able to start bringing people  
5 to the table to honestly talk about the race issue  
6 and to carve out solutions for racial justice?

7 REVEREND PICKENS: I think it would help, but  
8 we must remember that -- the racial commission is not  
9 going to stay here. There is a space between the time  
10 you leave and the time you come back.

11 MS. BERRY: That's a good statement, because  
12 there's a space between the last time we were here  
13 and the time we're coming back here.

14 REVEREND PICKENS: That's right.

15 MS. BERRY: Well, thank you very much, Reverend  
16 Pickens, for being with us.

17 Our next witness is the Honorable Garric  
18 Spencer, who is the Chairman of the Greene County  
19 Board of Commissioners. The county seat is in Eutaw,  
20 right down the road, and Mr. Spencer is the Chairman  
21 of the Greene County Board of Commissioners. Thank  
22 you very much, Mr. Spencer, for being with us. We  
23 appreciate you accepting our invitation. Please  
24 proceed.

25 MR. SPENCER: Good evening. First of all, it's



1 a pleasure having you in Greene County and I'd like to  
2 personally thank each and every one of you members for  
3 coming.

4 I'd like to echo a little bit of what our  
5 Congressman said a few minutes ago. And it is my opinion  
6 of the situation is that the FBI and ATF got here too  
7 late. I think that the trail was cold. I think had they  
8 got here earlier and investigated earlier, that we may  
9 have found somebody who set these churches on fire.

10 I also have a very serious problem with the FBI  
11 in particular. I have not had any dealings or I have not  
12 talked to any ATF agents, but the FBI engaged in a very  
13 serious investigation here in Greene County in regard to  
14 absentee ballots.

15 They have intermingled the church burnings and  
16 the absentee ballot probe in Greene County and it in  
17 many instances had tormented senior citizens and those  
18 folks who work out of town on election day or out of the  
19 county on election day, who vote by absentee ballot.

20 I cannot understand how somebody can be  
21 questioning a person about absentee ballots and at the  
22 end of that conversations say well, do you know anything  
23 about those church burnings?

24 They're already intimidated enough and I think  
25 the FBI has done its mission -- it has -- in the last

1 election, if you would look at the results, it has  
2 crippled people who vote -- many of those folks who have  
3 no other means of voting, they can't stay off work and  
4 vote, so they vote by absentee -- but these folks are in  
5 the county and have struck fear into many of the voters  
6 in Greene County, and they've also struck fear into folks  
7 who -- if somebody would possibly know somebody about the  
8 church burnings, they're so afraid of the FBI, that  
9 they're afraid to talk to them.

10 I think that if the FBI or if the federal  
11 government really wanted to do something to help to find  
12 out who burned these churches in these local communities,  
13 that it would behoove them to get with the local district  
14 attorney, the local sheriff.

15 People are more comfortable dealing with folks  
16 that they know. They're intimidated to death by these  
17 guys with these big bags and big -- and who are saying  
18 anything and everything to it -- that's a real problem.

19 You asked a question a few minutes ago, is  
20 there race relations -- is there a problem with race  
21 relations in Greene County? We're not fighting in the  
22 streets or slapping each other every day, but one only  
23 has to ride up through Eutaw and ride right outside of  
24 Eutaw and there's Warrior Academy.

25 Right down the street from there there's Eutaw

1 High School, Paramount High School, the building that we  
2 sit in.

3           It is my understanding and -- that 99 and a  
4 half percent of the children in this school are black  
5 children. One hundred percent of the children in Warrior  
6 Academy are white. Well, there's something wrong.  
7 There's clearly something wrong with race relations this  
8 county.

9           I ponder the question of how can we best go at  
10 solving who is burning our churches in Greene County?  
11 One of the answers I think the way that we can solve it  
12 is that blacks and white of this county have got to come  
13 together and we've got to start one, in the school.

14           We've got to start with children going to  
15 school together.

16           The second place that we've got to start is in  
17 the churches. It's either a black Methodist church, or a  
18 white Methodist church. There ain't no black and white  
19 Methodist church in Greene County. There ain't no black  
20 and white Baptist Churches. We're separate, even at the  
21 churches.

22           I believe that if somehow we could bring  
23 ourselves together in the churches, and then we'd be  
24 really worshiping where love is, and I believe if this  
25 love grewed, then we wouldn't have a problem with burning

1 churches in this community.

2 I'll try to answer as many questions as I  
3 possibly can.

4 MS. BERRY: Okay. Does anyone have any  
5 questions for the Honorable Chairman of the County  
6 Commission, Chairman Spencer? Mr. Davis has a  
7 question.

8 MR. DAVIS: I've always believed that the basis  
9 for any good relationship is communication. You've  
10 already alluded to that, whether it be religious, it  
11 be economic or educational or whatever the case may  
12 be. As the County Commissioner, what are you and  
13 your fellow commissioners doing to spark ongoing  
14 dialogue and integration in business, through your  
15 Chamber of Commerce, what are you doing to again  
16 spark communication say from this Warrior Academy and  
17 administrators of it, and cycle that interest back  
18 into your public school system? What are you doing  
19 to involve recreation with regard to the color  
20 barrier, so on and so forth? Please speak to that.

21 MR. SPENCER: Well, let me -- I want to talk  
22 about the Board of Education and the County Commission  
23 and go from there.

24 When the whites were on the Board of Education  
25 and the County Commission, it was all white. When the

1 blacks took over, it was all black. In an effort to give  
2 whites a voice in county government, Senator Tate  
3 Samuels, who is state senator from this district, and  
4 Lucious Black, some years ago -- I think back in 1986,  
5 decided that they would give -- at our request that they  
6 would give whites a chance to have a voice in county  
7 government and a voice on the Board of Education.

8           So we went to single member districts and  
9 carved out a specific district so that white would have  
10 representation. We felt like that if we put a white  
11 member on the Board of Education and a white member on  
12 the County Commission, specifically the Board, first of  
13 all, we put a white member on the Board of Education,  
14 that the effect of that would be maybe we could get some  
15 whites back into the school system and we could move  
16 forward.

17           To date no white has ran for that seat, and  
18 that seat is probably 70 percent -- 70 to 80 percent  
19 white district. The whites chose to run a person on the  
20 County Commission -- Commissioner Beachum, who has been  
21 on there since that district was established.

22           So we have tried -- in many ways there have  
23 been some -- I believe -- I remember a project through  
24 the Board of Education was called Project Come Back, that  
25 if -- was to try to get whites back into the school

1 system, but to date we have not had any efforts along  
2 those lines.

3 I am not giving up -- over the course of the  
4 last couple of three years, we have had some -- we have  
5 had some involvement with whites, as we're working with  
6 economically and just across the street here we're  
7 building a nine million dollar plant and we've had great  
8 cooperation from the City of Eutaw, from the Industrial  
9 Board, and many whites in this county.

10 So maybe we are -- hopefully we are -- we're  
11 going to break ice with economic development and hope  
12 that we can work towards harmony in this county.

13 MS. SHUMAKER: Just for my own information, I'm  
14 curious. Are there any community-wide ecumenical  
15 religious services, such as a hymn festival or  
16 Thanksgiving service or July 4th patriotic service or  
17 anything along that line, that would involve people  
18 of all denominations?

19 MR. SPENCER: There are a few of those around  
20 Christmas time that involve Christmas singing, and there  
21 are some church groups who are assigned to break the ice  
22 and do that. A church in my community, Johnson Hill  
23 United Methodist Church, is working with a youth program,  
24 and they are involving some whites -- again, they're on  
25 the cutting edge and they're trying.

1 MS. BERRY: I wanted to ask you, Mr. Spencer,  
2 what effect has the competition to the Greene County  
3 Greyhound Park had on the availability of revenues to  
4 make improvements in the public schools and other tax  
5 supported enterprises in the county? When we did the  
6 report, Alabama Rural Communities Revisited, and the  
7 section on Greene County, we were told that the  
8 revenues generated by the greyhound park were very  
9 instrumental in trying to improve the schools and  
10 some of it was funding Project Come Back that you  
11 just was talking about and try to attract white  
12 students back in the public schools.

13 I understand that the greyhound park isn't  
14 doing too well or something, because of competition  
15 from casinos and other things. What impact has the  
16 availability of funding had on your ability to carry  
17 forward some of these initiatives that you had  
18 underway?

19 MS. BERRY: It has hurt, it has hurt, it has  
20 hurt. It's hot in here today. We don't have air  
21 conditioning in the schools, and the reason being  
22 that the Board of Education does not have the money.

23 I don't know if there's one in here that is not  
24 repaired or I don't believe that there's one in here,  
25 period. The Board of Education used what money they

1 were getting from the greyhound track to try to hire  
2 more teachers and to educate our children better, and  
3 we are at the point now where the money is so little  
4 that we have got to find some means of raising some  
5 moneys to even continue where we are -- to continue  
6 the level that we are right now.

7 MS. BERRY: Today we went up and visited the  
8 Warrior Academy, which we also wrote about in that  
9 earlier report. Some reporters followed us up there  
10 and went in with us, and I guess they didn't know  
11 quite where they were or what they were doing.  
12 Warrior Academy is a white private academy, and so  
13 they were using their camera to look at the pictures  
14 of the graduates on the wall.

15 MR. SPENCER: Yes.

16 MS. BERRY: And finally one of them said,  
17 "They're all white." Where -- they're all white from  
18 beginning to end. And I wanted to say well, that's  
19 the point, just as it was 20 years ago, just as it  
20 was 20 years before that, in these communities and  
21 across the country, we have a problem with no school  
22 desegregation and racially aspirated schools, but in  
23 particular here with the flight to the academies,  
24 it's still perpetuated now.

25 That's what I meant when I was talking about



1           whether the problems we wrote about them have  
2           addressed, and so that told us something when the  
3           reporter even said, "What does this mean, all these  
4           people are white?" You know, what happened to the  
5           other people?

6                     Do you have plans to replace the revenues from  
7           the greyhound park with some other kind of economic  
8           development enterprise, which everybody says is  
9           sorely need here in Greene County?

10                    MR. SPENCER: One of the things about economic  
11           development is that in the first few years, the only  
12           benefit that a county would get out of it would be  
13           putting your people to work, because most of the  
14           industries and so forth want you to give so much to get  
15           them in.

16                     So the benefits -- you don't benefit tax-wise  
17           probably ten, twenty years from now -- but our benefit  
18           will be putting ourselves to work, you know. So we've  
19           got to find another way to fund the county government as  
20           well as Board of Education and a way to do that is ad  
21           valorem taxes, and we have been talking and looking and  
22           hopefully in the near future we'll put something together  
23           to try to run something to a place -- with ad valorem  
24           taxes.

25                     MS. BERRY: Okay. One other question.

1 MR. GRAY: Mr. Spencer, I believe you all have  
2 two newspapers in this county. I'd like to know what  
3 has been the experience of that coverage of the  
4 church burnings and what has been the spin put on  
5 that, and also kind of give us some background as to  
6 the -- those two papers in terms of how they have  
7 covered race relations in Greene County say for the  
8 past ten years.

9 MR. SPENCER: Well, and I want to be very  
10 honest with the Committee today. I don't read but one  
11 paper in Greene County. There's one paper in Greene  
12 County that when I pick it up, I know that it's going to  
13 lambast. It is going to lambast folks that I work with.  
14 It's going to find out -- it's going to try to find  
15 anything bad on me and write that about me, and I may get  
16 -- I make it a weekly ritual not to read that paper.

17 I read the Greene County Democrat. I think  
18 that it has done a good job in covering all the events  
19 that's surrounded by the black church burnings.

20 What has been put in the Greene County  
21 Independence, you would have to ask somebody else,  
22 because I just don't know.

23 MS. BERRY: The last question is you have  
24 mentioned the inquiry or the investigation into  
25 absentee ballot voter fraud.

1 MR. SPENCER: Yes.

2 MS. BERRY: What stimulated those  
3 investigations from your perspective and why were  
4 they being carried out at the same time?

5 MR. SPENCER: I don't know why they were being  
6 carried out at the same time. I guess because the FBI  
7 were in here investigating the voter fraud and they just  
8 decided to throw the two together. I think they're in  
9 here investigating absentee ballots to stop black folks  
10 from voting, and I think if one would look at the last  
11 election, the run-off, and the election before that, that  
12 they have accomplished what they came here for, but we  
13 are the black folk, we are black people. We're going to  
14 regroup and in the next election we're going to vote more  
15 folks on absentee ballot.

16 MS. BERRY: Okay. Thank you very much for your  
17 participation. We really appreciate it. I want to  
18 take the opportunity before I introduce the next  
19 witness to introduce the Chairperson of our State  
20 Advisory Committee, Mr. Rodney Max, who is right  
21 here. Mr. Max is a distinguished attorney in  
22 Birmingham, with Sirote and Permutt, and he has  
23 devoted his energies to the State Advisory  
24 Committee's activity and has been one of the most  
25 effective State Advisory Committee members and chair

1 in all the time I've been on the Commission and I've  
2 been on the Commission for too many years.

3 And so I'm very pleased that you've arrived,  
4 but we decided that I will go ahead and introduce the  
5 next witness and that's what I'll do.

6 Our next witness is Mr. Spiver Gordon from the  
7 Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who is the  
8 local leader of the Southern Christian Leadership  
9 Conference here in Eutaw, Alabama. Mr. Gordon -- and  
10 is a member of the City Council of Eutaw. Thank you  
11 very much for being with us.

12 MR. GORDON: Let me just say that I certainly  
13 appreciate the fact that you've come to hear our story  
14 and I want to particularly congratulate you and am  
15 familiar with your work and the good things that you're  
16 doing and what this Committee is doing.

17 I just hope that what we do here tonight in  
18 some way help bring this community together and get some  
19 truth out. One of the things that I understand that  
20 you're trying to do is to ascertain race relations before  
21 the church burnings and race relations after the church  
22 burning.

23 And I listened to much of the testimony that  
24 was given by persons who preceded me, and I hope those  
25 questions are asked of me, because I want to be able to

1 respond.

2           And my response might be a little different.  
3 Let me preface my statement by saying that I don't walk  
4 on eggshells and I don't hide -- I don't put my head in  
5 the sand and pretend that things don't happen that are  
6 happening, and if I offend anybody, it's from the head  
7 and not from the heart.

8           But I'm going to tell it just the way I see it  
9 and just the way I think you want to hear it. Any other  
10 way it would be what's going on in this community now --  
11 denial.

12           And I think that's what's going on in the  
13 state. I think that's what's going on in this next  
14 nation. It is denial that we are in a serious problem  
15 with race relations, and I say to you, Mr. Spencer was  
16 asked by Mr. Gray about news coverage in this county, and  
17 I'll tell you that the number one problem in Greene  
18 County, Alabama, that is responsible for racial discord,  
19 that is responsible for the hate, the division, the  
20 mistrust that's going on in this community is printed in  
21 this what is supposed to be a newspaper, all kinds of  
22 lies, manufactured lies, and I know that tomorrow I'll be  
23 the subject again of an editorial full of lies again.

24           In fact, we were told before we came here  
25 tonight how to behave by the Tuscaloosa News, that we --

1 MS. BERRY: Now, now, you're not supposed to  
2 name --

3 MR. GORDON: Okay, I'll try not to --

4 MS. BERRY: -- people or organizations,  
5 otherwise it violates the defame and degrade portion  
6 of our statute, and we have to give them an  
7 opportunity to respond.

8 MR. GORDON: Well, let them respond but I'm  
9 just going to tell it like it is. I'm not going to  
10 behave the way folks want me to behave. I'm going to  
11 tell what I see as problems, and there are serious  
12 problems and the problems prior to the church burnings  
13 that were here and they're still here.

14 We have problems at the United States postal  
15 system. Black men have complained to me about racial  
16 discrimination that's going on in the postal system. We  
17 have written and we're called and we've tried to get some  
18 investigations going, and hopefully perhaps we'll get  
19 around to having that done.

20 With respect to the church burnings, I agree  
21 with Congressman Hilliard that the initial investigation  
22 was lackey daze, it wasn't intensified. In fact, they  
23 weren't serious at all. The ministers who were spoken  
24 with were asked the question, the one minister who was  
25 asked -- are there any drug dealers in your church,

1 without any context, he was asked that question, which in  
2 my opinion is totally insensitive and it's kind of what's  
3 happened all over the country with all of the other  
4 ministers.

5           The wrong people are being investigated. The  
6 victims are being investigated as opposed to the people  
7 who are the actual people burning these churches.

8           I don't think that the state fire marshal is  
9 right when he says that this is a suspicious fire. You  
10 have to know where these churches are. In my opinion  
11 they were deliberate. Someone burned these churches and  
12 I know who have the history of burning churches. It  
13 ain't black folk.

14           It's the same old group, the Klan, the  
15 Skinheads, Aryan Nation and all of those hate people are  
16 involved in this thing, and whether or not it's a  
17 national conspiracy, I don't know that, but I do know  
18 it's a conspiracy of hate that's out there, that's  
19 perpetuated by people in high places, people who are  
20 fanning the fire and who make it almost fashionable for  
21 people to be racist now, in this community, when the few  
22 ministers who are white, who have come forward and tried  
23 to get the races together at several churches, and I'd  
24 like to name names, but you don't want me to do that --  
25 at several churches -- tried to get the races together,

1 they are no longer preaching at those churches any more.  
2 They are gone. They have been gotten rid of because of  
3 their attempt to bring the races together.

4 Now, I'm not suggesting that anybody is beating  
5 anybody over the head or doing like they did in the '60s.  
6 It isn't done that way any more.

7 We are dressed up folk, using coded kinds of  
8 things, calling themselves coalitions of blacks and  
9 whites, when in reality they are phonies, because they're  
10 excluding the people who have been fighting for 30 and 40  
11 years trying to change things in this nation and in this  
12 county.

13 You cannot have a coalition in my opinion when  
14 you try to do it around politics. And that's the only  
15 way -- that's the only effort that has been put forth by  
16 folk here who want to say we need to come together and  
17 coalesce around politics. We can't do that because in  
18 Greene County, Alabama, the most segregated hour in this  
19 county on a Sunday is still 11:00 with our churches.

20 Our churches are still segregated. You've  
21 heard about the schools. We've got two schools. We've  
22 got two banks. We've got two graveyards. We've got two  
23 swimming pools. We've got two too many of the wrong  
24 things as opposed to trying to bring us together.

25 And the people who stand up and who tell the



1 truth, they are projected as troublemakers, outsiders,  
2 folk who are not concerned about the people and yet when  
3 people get in trouble, when people get in trouble, they  
4 know who stand with them, they know who are with them,  
5 and I just think that this Committee needs to look into a  
6 whole lot of things in this county in terms of what is  
7 going on under the cover.

8           Mr. Spencer's absolutely right. Every week  
9 there's negative articles about black people printed and  
10 if you keep saying that this particular group is wrong,  
11 today they're wrong, tomorrow they're wrong, people begin  
12 to believe that they're wrong.

13           And this is not going to change until folk  
14 recognize that they don't have a monopoly on  
15 accountability and responsibility. There are a group of  
16 folk in this county who think they are the only ones who  
17 are accountable and who are responsible, and just keep  
18 appearing in the news print suggesting our black leaders  
19 are irresponsible.

20           I heard a whole lot of talk and I read in the  
21 newspaper about all this money that's coming into this  
22 county. Well, it isn't coming here. I understand, Mr.  
23 Jenkins, you've brought a whole lot of money in this  
24 county, and there are all kinds of stories about money --  
25 well, it's in the paper.

1 I've been meeting with the Mennonites, a fine  
2 group, with the Quakers, a fine group for young people,  
3 who are working here, and they need money to build these  
4 churches.

5 Now, I know that there is money out there, but  
6 it isn't here. I think to date we've raised collectively  
7 about \$125,000 collectively, I think that's what we've  
8 raised through national media, through getting it on  
9 public radio, and just talking about this thing.

10 I disagree with the representative about  
11 whether or not we ought to expose this thing because of  
12 fear of copy-cats. I'm not worried about that, because  
13 it's the same old thing. There ain't no copy-cats.  
14 They're racists. If they're doing it, if they're copy-  
15 cats, why are the copy-cats passing black churches --  
16 white churches and burning black churches?

17 Why are the thrill seekers passing white  
18 churches and burning black churches? Their race is at  
19 the core and that's what is behind all of this thing is  
20 hate, because it's being fueled by people at the top,  
21 presidential candidates saying things, the governor of  
22 Louisiana against affirmative action, governor of  
23 California against affirmative action.

24 The so-called Angry White Men are pointing at  
25 black people saying we are taking the jobs, when all of

1 us are suffering. When there's downsizing on plants,  
2 they're closing -- there are all kind of problems in this  
3 country and to sit here and try to deny that we don't  
4 have racial problems, because we are affected, just as  
5 the nation is affected.

6           The reaction to the O. J. Simpson jury is  
7 ridiculous but it was a reaction. That's out there. We  
8 all know what that reaction was. The Rodney King  
9 beating, the other kinds of beatings that are taking  
10 place, all have contributed to where we are now with  
11 these churches going up in flames, with people getting  
12 out there burning churches.

13           Now, that's my gut feeling. Conspiracy is a  
14 legal term and I can't talk about that, but I can talk  
15 about the conspiracy hate that I see that's out there,  
16 and some of the same things that's in this nation is  
17 happening right here in this county with so-called people  
18 who say they're for togetherness, and yet we find so much  
19 division at our churches and in our schools and in our  
20 communities.

21           MS. BERRY: May we ask you some questions?

22           MR. GORDON: Surely.

23           MS. BERRY: Does any member of the SAC have a  
24 question of Mr. Gordon? Chairperson Max.

25           MR. MAX: Spiver, what have you seen in terms

1 of a state response to both the church burnings and  
2 the race relations before and after, and when I say  
3 state, I'm referring to the public leaders at the  
4 state level?

5 MR. GORDON: What I've seen has been very  
6 negative. A person has sent a letter to the governor  
7 asking the governor to take a position on these church  
8 burnings, and I cited ten different racial things that  
9 had happened in Western Alabama, and the basis for his  
10 needing to get involved.

11 His response was shortly after my letter was to  
12 establish at every welcome center in Alabama the  
13 confederate flag. That's been his response.

14 And when the President called the governors to  
15 go to Washington to meet with him to discuss this issue,  
16 our governor was too busy and could not attend. The  
17 Attorney General has been playing politics with this  
18 thing, unprecedented in this county, a young black  
19 district attorney -- in fact, the first one in the nation  
20 has been removed from a case.

21 This has never happened before -- by the state  
22 Attorney General -- a case involving a judge whose family  
23 was almost killed. He was almost killed. His family was  
24 shot into -- and I don't care what the rumors are or what  
25 people say, the Attorney General in my opinion has a

1 responsibility to say this is wrong, we're going to do  
2 something about it, and to take an aggressive,  
3 articulate, well-trained, well-committed, young black  
4 district attorney off the case in my opinion borders on  
5 rank racism.

6 MS. BERRY: Any other member of the SAC have a  
7 question? Let's just point out that you were asked  
8 what has been the state officials, Mr. Gordon, the  
9 Civil Rights Commission, the National Civil Rights  
10 Commission has been very interested in this issue of  
11 church fires since early -- late last year, early  
12 January, February.

13 And our State Advisory Committee that's sitting  
14 here, Mr. Max on their behalf, wrote a letter to the  
15 governor of Alabama, Mr. James, asking him for a  
16 meeting to discuss the fires in March of this year.

17 And he got back one of these form letters  
18 signed by some low-level beurocrat -- I'm calling him  
19 that -- does that defame and degrade -- low-level  
20 bureaucrat -- the governor is too busy, has  
21 scheduling problems. The governor appreciates your  
22 interests, however, due to demands on his schedule,  
23 we cannot schedule a meeting between you and your  
24 organization to discuss this issue.

25 We get meetings with the President of the

1 United States. He's busier than the governor of  
2 Alabama, I'm sure. And not just this President, but  
3 other ones. But this governor of Alabama has too  
4 many activities on his schedule to even dare to give  
5 Mr. Max the favor of a reply and have some form  
6 letter sent by somebody.

7 Did he ever call you or write you after that,  
8 Mr. Max, to apologize for dissing you, as we say in  
9 community, and to ask you to meet with him?

10 MR. MAX: I guess I have been dissed, but after  
11 that we sent approximately 3,000 names to the  
12 governor, explained to him that in Birmingham we were  
13 able to through the churches, the synagogues, and the  
14 community sector, private community, shows support  
15 for the churches that were the victims of the hate,  
16 for the individuals who were the subject of the hate,  
17 and we encouraged the governor as the leading public  
18 official of the state to make a statement, and with  
19 these petition encouraged that. To date we have not  
20 heard from the governor.

21 MS. BERRY: Maybe some day the governor can fit  
22 into his busy schedule some concern for this matter.  
23 We may have some recommendations as to what people  
24 might do in that regard.

25 We have one other question for the --

1 MR. GRAY: Mr. Gordon, you were part of the  
2 Commission study in the 1980's, Rural Alabama  
3 Revisited, and the chairperson of the Commission has  
4 indicated and summarized that report.

5 In looking at 1996, we again come back -- we  
6 look and note the lack of progress. Where do we go  
7 from here in terms of racial relations for Greene  
8 County or for West Alabama, period?

9 MR. GORDON: Well, it's what I've always said  
10 and what I say now, we've got to get our hearts together  
11 and not our heads.

12 I believe that the solution to this problem  
13 that we have, this racial gap that exists here, can be  
14 resolved when the ministers of this community, when the  
15 churches of this community, the churches unfortunately  
16 are being destroyed now, in my opinion is the only hope  
17 for us, because there's no much hostility at political  
18 meetings. There's so much division at other kind of  
19 meetings.

20 But I think -- let me just give you an example  
21 of what I saw happen at one of the churches here. A  
22 young minister came in this community at one of the  
23 churches and he invited people, blacks and whites, to  
24 breakfasts, and to sit and to talk, and that went on for  
25 two or three weeks, and in my opinion we were beginning

1 to talk and we were beginning to at least get to know  
2 each other and learn a little thing about each other, and  
3 then suddenly he's gone.

4           He's shipped out. The parishioners have gotten  
5 rid of him and I think that it's going to have to come  
6 through churches. We're going to have to recognize that  
7 we're all God's children, that we're all the same blood  
8 and that we're all human beings and that -- and that's my  
9 hope, that we will come forward and work toward resolving  
10 those problems, but we have to do that from a position of  
11 respect. We've got to respect each other and I don't see  
12 that's happening.

13           MS. BERRY: I would think -- yes, Ms. Shumaker.

14           MS. SHUMAKER: Is there an organized  
15 ministerial association with officers who could lead  
16 an ecumenical type service in the community and  
17 really get this cooperation going?

18           MR. GORDON: I think that -- I think there are  
19 a couple of them here that -- and to answer the question,  
20 yes, that could do that if they choose to do that kind of  
21 thing. But I think what the ministers have done, have  
22 kind of sat back and leaving it to a group that called  
23 themselves coalition of blacks and whites, that have  
24 excluded the elected officials and the civil rights  
25 people from any meaningful discussion, either through a



1 tax or either through not involving them in what they're  
2 doing.

3           So -- and I think the ministers have just sat  
4 back and say well, it's being addressed, when in reality  
5 it's not being addressed or they're afraid that they're  
6 going to get shipped out next, if they get involved.

7           MS. BERRY: Okay. Another question from --

8           MR. GRAY: Councilman Gordon, you indicated  
9 that the only coalition billed and you've seen it --  
10 this county has been limited to politics only. Did  
11 you see or do you see or was there ever an  
12 opportunity with the Greene track, since I know Paul  
13 Bryant, Jr. was a major player in getting that  
14 started, to have an economic coalition of blacks and  
15 whites in this community with I guess Greene track of  
16 being maybe the focus Has that happened?

17           MR. GORDON: No, that has not happened.

18           MR. GRAY: Why do you think it didn't?

19           MR. GORDON: Well, I think because green track  
20 was primarily interested in making money, and in fact I  
21 know that certain people were excluded from any kind of  
22 discussions that was going on a green track.

23           The only discussion that takes place,  
24 meaningful, honest discussion, that takes place between  
25 whites and blacks, happened either at City Council

1 meetings or it happens at industrial development  
2 meetings, Industrial Development Board, that is limited  
3 amount of meaningful, honest discussion that takes place.

4           What people call honest, open dialogue is folk  
5 who have chosen as leaders of black people who meet with  
6 them and say what they want to hear, and they call that  
7 meaningful dialogue, so that isn't happening.

8           MS. BERRY: Thank you very much. Those are all  
9 the questions. Thank you very much, Councilman, for  
10 being with us. Just a minute, Mr. Max wants to make  
11 a statement.

12           MR. MAX: Spiver, before you leave, I think  
13 it's appropriate for me to make this statement now,  
14 and I want you to know that I'm going to make it to  
15 every minister that comes before us tonight, and you  
16 have mentioned bringing ministers together, and I  
17 think that is the place to begin.

18           On July 16th at probably the most famous church  
19 that stands for hate in the South, and that is the  
20 16th Street Baptist Church, a coalition is going to  
21 come together, Spiver, but it's not a political  
22 coalition. It is a coalition of right-minded  
23 citizens from the Metropolitan Birmingham area, and  
24 they have asked me to reach out to you and to every  
25 minister and to every citizen of this community that

1 has been the victim of the hate over the last few  
2 months, to come visit with us on July 16th at 7:00,  
3 at 16th Street Baptist Church. There will be  
4 speeches. There will be prayer. There will be  
5 contributions made, not only to get to your churches  
6 here -- and we aren't going to go through -- to get  
7 to the churches here, and to get to rebuilding of  
8 communities.

9 There will be more said about this as we go  
10 through the night, but I didn't want you to leave  
11 without knowing that and, please in the networking  
12 that you'll do in your community, please make that be  
13 known. We want -- we invite those from this area to  
14 be a part of our community and we want to reach out  
15 to your community because we want to -- whoever it is  
16 out there, whoever it is out there, that thinks about  
17 burning, destroying, or harming any minority, that  
18 this community, our community, my community and your  
19 community stand together and you will not stand  
20 alone.

21 And the result is going to be a bigger,  
22 stronger, church than you ever had before, and please  
23 pass that word along, because we want to see you  
24 there. We want to see ministers there. We want to  
25 see our community at 16th Street Baptist Church on

1 July 16th at 7:00 p.m.

2 MS. BERRY: Mr. Chairman, I just want to leave  
3 with you copies of what I see as a problem that's  
4 happening in this country. This is a copy of a  
5 leaflet that was sent to a 92-year-old black minister  
6 who had his church burned down. Niggers will destroy  
7 America.

8 Then this is a letter that's addressed to  
9 Reverend Nigger Lewis that says, I pray every night  
10 with millions of white people that every Nigger  
11 church will be burned.

12 This is the kind of hate that -- and this guy  
13 has his telephone number, his name and he's a real,  
14 live living person, and I've spoken with him and  
15 perhaps some of you can call and talk to him, because  
16 this brother is in dire need of a doctor. Give it to  
17 the young lady.

18 MR. MAX: Are you telling me that these two  
19 documents you're giving us -- have they been  
20 delivered to the reverend at or about the time of  
21 these burnings?

22 MS. BERRY: He got them a couple of weeks ago.  
23 Reverend Lewis got one and Deacon Henry Carter has  
24 one. The district attorney is aware of that. I've  
25 sent copies to the Justice Department and I'm sure

1 the district attorney is going to do his job and  
2 going to investigate those, but that's the kind of  
3 hate that I'm talking about that's fashionable int s  
4 country, when a man will put his name on it, his  
5 address, his telephone number, and who will talk with  
6 you if you called.

7 MS. BERRY: Thanks a lot. While we're calling  
8 up the next witness, I want to say another word about  
9 the governor of Alabama. Our next witness is Booker  
10 Cooke, who is a staff member of the Greene County  
11 Board of Commissioners in Eutaw, the county seat.

12 But what I want to say about the governor is I  
13 understand from Mr. Max that the governor -- and I  
14 know this, the governor didn't go to the meeting that  
15 the President called of governors -- to discuss these  
16 issues. The governor has yet to issue any statement  
17 concerning these issues.

18 He did ask for a -- announce a reward for  
19 finding the perpetrator, but it's just the kind of  
20 failure of leadership that the Commission has found  
21 over the years is a major problem in the perpetuation  
22 of racial and ethnic violence and hate crimes, when  
23 political leaders fail to speak out, when political  
24 leaders, whatever their political party or political  
25 persuasion, do not exercise the kind of leadership

1 that says that this kind of behavior will not be  
2 tolerated, all it does is to exacerbate racial  
3 tensions and to make people feel that they are  
4 justified in what kind of behavior.

5 So I am tonight inviting the governor of  
6 Alabama again to please speak out and make clear his  
7 denunciation of this and make clear that this kind of  
8 behavior will not be tolerated. He wasn't even  
9 persuaded by 3,000 voters on a petition. I don't  
10 guess he's going to be persuaded by me. I don't vote  
11 in Alabama.

12 But at least I will make that appeal to him, as  
13 I will make an appeal to every governor in every  
14 state where we go to be forthright on these subjects,  
15 and I just think that that's important.

16 But let me now turn to Booker Cooke for his  
17 testimony and let me turn this over now to  
18 Chairperson Mr. Max.

19 MR. MAX: Mr. Cooke, we appreciate your being  
20 with us tonight. We're ready for your presentation.

21 MR. COOKE: In the letter that I received -- I  
22 don't know if I misread it or didn't -- but I thought --  
23 it was my understanding that we were to focus on -- and  
24 which I had intended to do -- I want to give you a  
25 written report. I began to do that and the caretaker for

1 my country house called me and told me they were putting  
2 snakes in the house, so I been killing snakes until 4:30.

3 I didn't write it but I'm going to give you an  
4 overview of what I will write, because I will feel better  
5 if the report is written.

6 But I will give generally some areas, but more  
7 specifically I will talk about black males in particular  
8 in Greene County. I work also as the Department of  
9 Planning and Development as well as the chief of staff of  
10 the Greene County Commission. I am not a Commissioner.

11 One of the population characteristics in -- the  
12 '80 and '90 census, there was an increase of about 12  
13 percent of black males born, but if we continue to have  
14 the murder rate, which has also increased, about 12.9  
15 percent, according to the '80 census -- we don't argue  
16 about the '90 census until we do the 2000 census, and  
17 then the '90 census becomes I guess acceptable, so I'll  
18 use '80 and '90 census.

19 Black male population will decrease by 12  
20 percent or more by the time you would have less black men  
21 who would live to be 55 to 65. That's because of the  
22 increase in violence in our community.

23 Greene County is a micro -- of the nation and  
24 as Shakespeare said, or Hamlet, all in the State of  
25 Denmark are not well.

1           We have the same types of statistics here.  
2 Among black males you have 64.2 percent divorce, while  
3 among white males, which is high as well, 55.5 percent.

4           Educational opportunities, are 12 times higher,  
5 are 12 times more likely than a white child is going to  
6 graduate from high school or even grade school than do  
7 blacks.

8           You have the same degenerative economic  
9 disparities in employment. A white in college -- with a  
10 college degree in Greene County makes approximately  
11 \$5,000 more than do a black graduate in Greene County.

12           The mean income of a black family in Greene  
13 County is approximately six thousand, while whites are  
14 14,000. At the various companies, the few companies that  
15 save that employment, REA, the steam plant, the others,  
16 there is disparities in employment, lower of the  
17 janitors, all of the people who are working on the floor  
18 in the factory are still -- are black -- still exist here  
19 in Greene County.

20           More blacks are -- I think the county jail runs  
21 about 98 percent full of black or young males, and of  
22 course we always have the problems of health mortality  
23 and our suicide has increased. Homicide has increased  
24 about 25 percent, and suicide has increased among black  
25 males by ten percent.



1           Now, one of you asked -- and when I give you my  
2 written statement, you know, I'll go into the sociology  
3 that we all know about that but I think it was Ms. Berry,  
4 who has excused herself, was asked the question why is  
5 this -- why does this continue? Why do -- because these  
6 are the same symptomatic conditions.

7           And that is nowhere -- no way anywhere in  
8 American that I can see that this change, unless the  
9 demonic, the demonic, the demur, elusive, the delusionary  
10 vision of black men inclusive in white folk pathos, black  
11 men pathos from the time of his hypothesis, to despite  
12 the -- despite 500 years and despite the fact that there  
13 are four -- 41 black males -- 41 white males are 41  
14 percent of this population. They own 91 percent of our  
15 land, have been a hundred percent of all the Presidents,  
16 97 percent of all the Senators, 82 percent of all the  
17 CEO's in this country, 87 percent of all the professors  
18 at universities, 88 percent of all the CEO's at the  
19 businesses, 96 percent of all the media in the country,  
20 and it is a conscious design to maintain blacks and  
21 people of color all over the world -- men in particular  
22 and women in general, that we live like 35 percent of the  
23 blacks here in Greene County, that our lives are like  
24 physics without math, like math without numbers, like  
25 philosophy without cause or effect, like fire without

1 heat and like flowers without fragrance.

2           And justice still is in Greene County, like  
3 Martin Luther King said many years ago, no more than a  
4 system of adultery perpetuated by illicit intercourse,  
5 between injustice and immorality.

6           I'll give you a written report.

7           MR. MAX: Thank you, Mr. Cooke. Do you have  
8 any questions, comments from the Board at this time?  
9 May I ask you one question?

10          MR. COOKE: Yes.

11          MR. MAX: In terms of the children growing up,  
12 going to elementary, junior high, high school, and  
13 maybe I didn't catch your statistics, in terms of  
14 coming back to this community, graduating and not  
15 graduating, what are you saying in the white  
16 population and black population of the kids growing  
17 up and staying here, versus kids growing up and  
18 leaving here, black versus white?

19          MR. COOKE: In the 1990 census more black males  
20 are beginning to stay.

21          MR. MAX: And how about the white population?

22          MR. COOKE: The white population has -- it's  
23 about the same. For example, whites move further  
24 distances in the county than do blacks. There -- in fact  
25 -- an increase in the 1990's of black immigration into

1 Greene County.

2 MR. MAX: The statistics that you've read off,  
3 will you share that with us in writing?

4 MR. COOKE: Yes, I'll be sharing it in writing.

5 MR. MAX: Thank you. We appreciate that. I  
6 would like to call at this time Baron Langster. I  
7 realize it's not on your program, but I understand  
8 that he does have to leave and has requested an  
9 opportunity. He is the DA of Greene County, Sumter.  
10 We'll make a few minutes available to you. Thank you  
11 for being here tonight.

12 MR. LANGSTER: Thank you. Good evening and  
13 welcome to the 17th Circuit, wherein I serve as district  
14 attorney. I was elected to office as DA in January. In  
15 fact, I was elected in November and I took office in  
16 January, 1993. Been my pleasure to serve this 17th  
17 Circuit as it's district attorney.

18 Note that I was the first African American  
19 elected district attorney in the history of Alabama, and  
20 the way things are going with the Supreme Court, I will  
21 probably be the last one to be elected as DA, African  
22 American.

23 But I've had the pleasure and --

24 MR. MAX: All speakers, it's the one to the  
25 right. If you would speak directly into it, that

1 would help.

2 MR. LANGSTER: Yes. I would like to say -- of  
3 course I worked in Greene County back in 1972 with OEO.  
4 At that time there were dilapidated housing. In Greene  
5 County there were a lot of homes that did not have indoor  
6 plumbing, running water.

7 Things have changed in Greene County with  
8 respect to housing substantially, dramatically since that  
9 time. I think there has been some progress in Greene  
10 County with respect to the condition that people live in.

11 However, with respect to some things I don't  
12 think there's been much change, and that is the fact that  
13 black and whites in Greene County seem not to be able to  
14 push this county forward economically, and I think that  
15 the reason for that is the question of control.

16 If I am not actually driving the car, then I'm  
17 not willing to sit in the back seat. I don't care where  
18 the car is going, I'm not going to be a part of this  
19 particular trip, because I'm not driving, and to a large  
20 extent that holds the county back.

21 But back in February of 1994 there were three  
22 caucasian individuals who vandalized three churches in  
23 Sumter County, and we were able to get the individuals  
24 involved to confess to their wrongdoing.

25 It was no question but that in those three

1 cases that race was the motivating factor. I went out to  
2 the scene and I saw where there was this white church  
3 that sat on County Road 23 in Sumter County, the old  
4 Belmont Church, that had been passed at least two or  
5 three times by the white youth, who had gone to unusual -  
6 - had gone actually -- it had to be a struggle to get to  
7 those churches, because of the bumpy road.

8           The Books Chapel Church is about three miles  
9 down from this old Belmont Church. The Timetop Church  
10 is about 2.9 miles in another direction from this Old  
11 Belmont Church. Oak Grove Church is about three miles  
12 from this old Belmont Church. This old Belmont Church  
13 sits right in the middle and it's a white church.

14           Now, our thrust at sentencing was the fact that  
15 these vandalism cases were hate and racially motivated  
16 based on race and religion, and that was our thrust at  
17 sentencing.

18           There was one individual who was a juvenile who  
19 we did not certify and of course he died from a gunshot  
20 wound, but he was a juvenile.

21           But there were two individuals who entered  
22 pleas in the cases and we had a four-hour sentencing  
23 hearing, and the thrust of the sentencing is that these  
24 were hate related --they were hate motivated and the fact  
25 that we felt that the Court should send a very strong

1 message that this will not be tolerated in Alabama, in  
2 this circuit as long as we are standing watch in Sumter  
3 County.

4           And it just so happened that on the day that  
5 the story was widely circulated, that is on January 11th,  
6 when the local papers picked up the account of the  
7 sentencing, the paper in Sumter County carried a front  
8 page story, full page story of the thrust of our  
9 arguments, the allegations, and no question but we were  
10 saying that there were hate and racial motivated, that  
11 you had two churches to burn in Greene County, on January  
12 11.

13           We don't think that that's isolated, not to say  
14 that those who were involved in the cases in Sumter  
15 County were involved in the burnings. We know that those  
16 young men were in jail at that time.

17           But we think that there is a correlation. We  
18 think there's a relationship here, and for that reason we  
19 feel that the churches that burned on January 11th were  
20 hate and racially motivated, perhaps having been  
21 motivated or instigated by the coverage that was given to  
22 the sentencing of these young men in those cases.

23           But we alarmed to see the pace at which these  
24 churches are being burned throughout the South, and I  
25 share with the other presenters in saying that I don't

1 think that the governor of this state is sincerely  
2 interested in what's going on with respect to these  
3 church burnings. We requested that the governor post a  
4 reward for information leading to the arrest and  
5 conviction of those parties responsible for the burnings.

6 The governor posted \$1,500 initially, which was  
7 not the maximum. Of course, we felt that the very  
8 maximum should be posted and -- or a very meager amount,  
9 if you're looking at the nature of the offense itself.

10 But the fact that only half of what was said to  
11 be the maximum that was posted, suggests to me at that  
12 time very early on that the kind of seriousness that  
13 should be attached to these incidents was not attached by  
14 our governor.

15 So -- and the fact that he did not go to meet  
16 with our President and with the other governors suggests  
17 also that the seriousness is not there, and I'm not sure  
18 that he really understands the nature of what is  
19 happening, that he really understands the facts of the  
20 investigation.

21 There have been some suggestions about other  
22 things that have absolutely nothing to do in my opinion  
23 based upon the witnesses that I've talked with, based  
24 upon the FBI, the ATF and those folks that I've been  
25 talking with, about the possible drug connection, you

1 know, and I think that if we go off in the wrong  
2 direction, then we're going to lose sight of the main  
3 focus.

4 I think the purpose should be to try to find  
5 out who is responsible rather than trying to sugar coat  
6 or rather than trying to damage control the situation.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. MAX: Thank you very much. Before you  
9 leave, are there any questions?

10 MS. WELLS: I've heard tonight a couple of  
11 reasons why the majority of the cases have not been  
12 solved. I'd like to see what your hypothesis would  
13 be.

14 MR. LANGSTER: Well, I think that there seem to  
15 be an attempt by some people who have responsibility to  
16 try and find what happened. There seem to be an attempt  
17 to try and dischannel motives. There seemed to try to be  
18 an attempt to distance certain motives, such as the  
19 possibility that race may be involved.

20 And you know, I have read instances in other  
21 states where no question but that the person who has been  
22 apprehended is a caucasian, but this was a little prank  
23 or they were out partying or this was a beer thing or  
24 whatever.

25 And it's my experience in trying to determine



1 whether or not something is hate or racially motivated,  
2 you have to look at the facts. Nobody is going to say  
3 that my intent was to do this because those folks who  
4 worship here are black. They're not going to say that.

5           But you look at the facts. You look at the  
6 fact that you have a white church that has been sitting  
7 right here in the middle that has been passed several  
8 times.

9           You look at whether or not this person had a  
10 choice. The individual who is responsible for  
11 vandalizing the churches in Sumter County came from  
12 Demopolis. Well, there are a lot of churches in  
13 Demopolis, both black and white.

14           Why come to Sumter County in a very rural area  
15 to destroy literally black churches? Over \$30,000 in  
16 damage was done to those three churches combined, and  
17 they are very small, they are rural, and when you do  
18 \$30,000 in damage to those kinds of churches, you have  
19 just about torn the churches up.

20           MS. WELLS: Do you feel that a lot of people  
21 are afraid to come up with clues or suggestions as to  
22 who might be doing it?

23           MR. LANGSTER: Well, I'm not sure that people  
24 are afraid to come up with clues. I think that there may  
25 be a situation where people who may be in the know are

1 not forthcoming. It may be because they have not been  
2 asked. It may be because of the nature of the question  
3 or how it's asked, or the thrust of investigation.

4 I don't think that people will not come forward  
5 but it may be the person who is asking the questions, the  
6 parties who are pushing this forward, and maybe the kind  
7 of question that's asked but I think people really want  
8 to see these cases solved and they will come forward if  
9 they're only asked.

10 MR. MUNCHES: I've got a very short question.  
11 George Munches of Birmingham. We've heard some  
12 comments earlier about a district attorney -- a  
13 prosecutor -- I hope I never find myself on the other  
14 side of your efforts.

15 MR. LANGSTER: Thank you.

16 MR. MUNCHES: But the state attorney general's  
17 office had removed some district attorney who was  
18 investigating certain cases, and I'd like to know are  
19 you that district attorney that was removed by  
20 Attorney Jeff Sessions?

21 MR. LANGSTER: Yes.

22 MR. MUNCHES: And if so, could you give an  
23 opinion as to whether or not this has ever happened  
24 to your knowledge since you've been in the practice  
25 of law in the State of Alabama and what might you

1 think might have been the motives for the state  
2 attorney general by the name of Jeff Sessions to have  
3 removed you from a case that is such a serious crime  
4 as the ones that you have been charged with the state  
5 law to investigate?

6 MR. LANGSTER: Yes, sir. Under normal  
7 circumstances if there is a felony that arises in my  
8 circuit, then it's my responsibility to prosecute that  
9 particular felony case or misdemeanor case that does not  
10 occur in the city limits of those cities that have  
11 municipal courts.

12 But I was removed from the case and normally a  
13 district attorney would see and determine whether or not  
14 he has a conflict of interest. Most district attorneys,  
15 if they feel that there is a conflict of interest with  
16 respect to the parties involved, with respect to the  
17 focus of investigation, will ask that the Attorney  
18 General would appoint someone from his office or a fellow  
19 colleague to come in and prosecute the case.

20 Of course, that did not happen in this case.  
21 The Attorney General sent me a letter on March 6  
22 indicating that because of the nature of the case and the  
23 parties, because of the possibility that I may be called  
24 as a witness in the case, that he was asking that I step  
25 down from the case, and that case would be handled by his

1 office.

2           That's unusual. Of course, it does fall within  
3 the discretion of the Attorney General. He does have the  
4 authority under state law to intervene at any time in a  
5 criminal prosecution that the state brings.

6           But it is not a matter that I asked for. I  
7 think that certainly I am well capable of prosecuting the  
8 case involving the firing on the home of Judge Hardaway,  
9 who is the African American circuit judge, the only  
10 African American circuit judge in this circuit, so I  
11 don't think that there was a problem with my ability to  
12 prosecute the case, but nevertheless I was asked to step  
13 down and I acquiesced in that.

14           MS. SHUMAKER: Would you have feared for your  
15 safety if you had prosecuted this case?

16           MR. LANGSTER: No, absolutely not. My job is  
17 to prosecute cases and safety is secondary. I prosecute  
18 cases involving drug dealers, involving people who are  
19 charged with murder, capital murder, and it's an  
20 occupational hazard, but certainly my safety was not a  
21 concern of the Attorney General, I can assure you of  
22 that. It was not the reason why in my opinion I was  
23 taken off the case.

24           I would not think that the question of my  
25 safety had anything to do with my being removed from the

1 case.

2 MS. SHUMAKER: Along another line and I ask --  
3 have you in your position or has anyone else in a  
4 position of authority suggested, requested, required  
5 that these churches that are being rebuilt install  
6 burglar or fire alarm systems?

7 MR. LANGSTER: Well, I think that on a national  
8 level efforts are being made to make sure that things  
9 like this do not happen again, and there's some training  
10 with respect to how to make sure that that does not  
11 happen and the installation of burglar alarms certainly  
12 has been a part of that, to tie that in with the  
13 sheriff's department, to the police department, to make  
14 certain this does not occur again, so I think that was a  
15 good idea and I'm sure that the local ministers will  
16 think that minimum investment would be very, very well  
17 spent.

18 MR. GRAY: Earlier we heard testimony regarding  
19 these FBI agents who come in and were asking  
20 questions regarding the voter fraud and this kind of  
21 thing. Were you aware of their coming in -- did they  
22 try to hook up with your office so that that would be  
23 I guess some interaction between your office and the  
24 FBI so that they wouldn't be going around, you know,  
25 scaring the daylights out of people?

1 MR. LANGSTER: No, there was absolutely no  
2 communication between the FBI with respect to the voter  
3 fraud investigation and my office. We --

4 MR. GRAY: Was that atypical or unusual that  
5 they would be doing this without sort of involving  
6 you all?

7 MR. LANGSTER: Well, it does raise some  
8 concerns because I'm familiar with an investigation that  
9 took place in the Fourth Circuit where I used to serve as  
10 assistant district attorney, and I think the DA in that  
11 particular circuit certainly was advised and certainly  
12 was a part of the investigation or at least offered  
13 opinions and help with respect to the investigation,  
14 certainly was consulted.

15 That did not happen in this particular case  
16 here. I might add though that I don't think that the  
17 mixing of the investigation of the church and the voter  
18 fraud investigation was proper and I think that perhaps  
19 maybe those folks who were involved probably would think  
20 that that should not have occurred.

21 I think it should have been separated, because  
22 you're going to compromise one or the other. You can't  
23 mix voter fraud and church investigations and expect to  
24 be fruitful and even.

25 You're going to compromise the investigation of

1 one or probably both.

2 MR. GRAY: Do you know whether these FBI agents  
3 were in state or out of state?

4 MR. LANGSTER: I'm not sure. As I said before,  
5 I have not been consulted with respect to voter fraud  
6 investigations. I would think, however, that they would  
7 have been from the Northern District of Alabama, which  
8 would have been in state. I would think that, but again,  
9 I don't know for certain.

10 MR. MUNCHES: I've got one last question. What  
11 is the Alabama Bureau of Investigation involved? I  
12 do know that there is an entity called the ABI. Have  
13 they at all been involved with any of these efforts  
14 to try to uncover some of this criminal activity?

15 MR. LANGSTER: The ABI has very much been  
16 involved in the investigation to the shooting to the home  
17 of Judge Ed Hardaway.

18 They have been the lead agency with respect to  
19 that investigation. There's been an agent from the  
20 Attorney General's office who has been assigned to the  
21 church burning cases. I'm not sure that he works  
22 directly with the ABI.

23 I'm not thinking -- that ABI has been actively  
24 on a consistent basis been involved with the church  
25 burning cases. I think basically ATF and the FBI have

1 been the lead agencies with respect to the church  
2 burnings.

3 MR. MAX: I'd like to go back to the question  
4 of your removal from this case. Can you describe the  
5 grounds or why was it that you were removed from the  
6 case? I heard you say somebody about you may be a  
7 witness in the case. But was there some other reason  
8 other than you may be a witness in the case?

9 MR. LANGSTER: Well, actually I can't think of  
10 any other reason and I don't know why I would be called  
11 as a witness, for instance, but that's not for me to  
12 decide.

13 But certainly at two or three o'clock in the  
14 morning I was in bed when Judge Hardaway's home was short  
15 into, so I don't think with respect to the thrust of the  
16 issues in this case, with respect to the crime that was  
17 committed, that I am a witness, but if I am a witness, of  
18 course, I can't prosecute the case.

19 MR. MAX: Are you saying that that was the only  
20 reason given to you that you may be a witness in the  
21 case?

22 MR. LANGSTER: Well, the parties involved.  
23 That was another reason that was given -- of course, this  
24 is a circuit judge, but if you look at the fact that the  
25 circuit judge was a victim, his home was shot into, so I



1 don't see why and how there would be a conflict of  
2 interest.

3           There may be something about the investigation  
4 that I do not know, because I've not been kept abreast  
5 with the ongoing of investigation, so I'm not sure of  
6 exactly what it is I may be able to illuminate with  
7 respect to testifying, but the parties involved -- that  
8 is, he's the circuit judge and I'm the district attorney.  
9 We work together very closely with respect to criminal  
10 cases.

11           That was the only other --

12           MR. MAX: Who has been selected as the re  
13 placement for you on that case?

14           MR. LANGSTER: The Attorney General. However,  
15 Don Delesca, who is a career prosecutor with the Attorney  
16 General's Office, as I understand, is going to head up  
17 the prosecution.

18           MR. MAX: Is he white or black?

19           MR. LANGSTER: He's white.

20           MR. MAX: Out of Montgomery?

21           MR. LANGSTER: Yes. Works for the AG's office.

22           MR. MAX: One other line of questioning. About  
23 two or three years ago the state did pass -- the  
24 legislature did pass some legislation on making hate  
25 crimes -- having higher penalties for hate crimes or

1 increased penalties for hate crimes.

2 These individuals that were prosecuted, did  
3 they fall under this and were they given higher  
4 penalties because it was a hate crime?

5 MR. LANGSTER: Well, certainly they faced  
6 maximum of 30 years, because each one of these offenses  
7 which was criminal mischief in the first degree, carries  
8 a maximum of ten years so we're talking about three  
9 crimes, three churches, three separate indictments.

10 You're talking about 30 years maximum. We  
11 asked for very stiff penalty. I think in this particular  
12 case the Judge was certainly very considerate and he  
13 sentenced these young men to five years in the  
14 penitentiary, six months to be served in the county jail  
15 in Sumter County. They're now out.

16 MR. MAX: They're now out?

17 MR. LANGSTER: The remainder of the time will  
18 be on probation but they began their term back in January  
19 of 1995 -- January 4th of 1996, I'm sorry.

20 MR. MAX: And lastly, there is a reporting  
21 mechanism for hate crimes in this state. Were these  
22 crimes and the conviction, were they reported to the  
23 state office?

24 MR. LANGSTER: Yes. Yes. In fact, what we  
25 tried to do, very early on, because we felt that these

1 were hate crimes, they were based upon religious hatred  
2 and race hatred, and we contacted the U.S. Attorney's  
3 Office. We also wrote Attorney General Janet Reno. I  
4 did to try and get the FBI to investigate.

5 They did come down to investigate and I talked  
6 with the Assistant U.S. Attorney about the possibility of  
7 them filing a civil rights violations with respect to  
8 these cases in Sumter County.

9 They deferred to state prosecution, but they  
10 were made aware of the fact that these were in our  
11 opinion hate crimes and given the option to pursue this  
12 in federal court, and they chose not to.

13 MR. MAX: The reason I mention is that we have  
14 learned that the state is not receiving many  
15 reportings of hate crimes -- they may be reporting to  
16 the federal government but they're not reporting to  
17 the state. Are you doing that?

18 MR. LANGSTER: Yeah, absolutely.

19 MR. MAX: Very good.

20 MR. LANGSTER: They were reported to the state.

21 MR. MAX: Thank you very much.

22 MR. LANGSTER: Thank you. My pleasure.

23 MR. MAX: Now I'd like to call on the Honorable  
24 Brenda Jackson Goree, Greene County tax collector,  
25 Eutaw. Is she here? If not, we will move on. The

1 Honorable Edmund Bell, Sumter County Tax Assessor,  
2 Livingston, Alabama. Is Edmund here?

3 We will move on. Reverend Arthur Coleman, Mt.  
4 Zoar Baptist Church, Boligee, Alabama. Is Reverend  
5 Coleman here?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could not make it.

7 MR. MAX: Could not make it. Thank you very  
8 much. Reverend Willie Coleman, Rising Star Baptist  
9 Church, Greensboro, Alabama? Is he here? Or anyone  
10 from either of those congregations?

11 Next I'd like to call on Robert Langford,  
12 Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of  
13 Investigation. I believe also Jim Cavanaugh, Special  
14 Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of the Treasury,  
15 Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

16 As they come to the microphone, I do want to  
17 say this. I know that for many years there has been  
18 some suspicion about the FBI and their investigation.  
19 I'm going to let Rob Langford tell how long he has  
20 been here in Alabama. I want to be a witness to the  
21 fact that since Rob Langford has been in Birmingham,  
22 Alabama, he has not only been an ideal professional  
23 with the FBI, but he has been most sensitive to race  
24 relations in our area.

25 He serves as co-chair of the Community Affairs

1 Committee of Operation in Birmingham and he's active  
2 with the Coalition Against Hate Crimes, and he has  
3 been involved in the National Conference of  
4 Christians and Jews, Prejudice Reduction Workshops,  
5 and he has been visible in the minority community,  
6 showing his sensitivity and concern in these areas.  
7 Rob.

8 MR. LANGFORD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
9 Chairman and Members of the Committee, I'd like to make  
10 some statements and then I'd be glad to answer any  
11 questions, and I'll address them to the Committee.

12 We presently have four unsolved church burnings  
13 under investigation in Alabama, the three in the Boligee  
14 area and the one in the Greensboro area. There have been  
15 some statements made tonight about the FBI -- and I'll  
16 just address the FBI -- lack of prompt response and let  
17 me address that.

18 There was a church burning in December of '95,  
19 which we were not aware of. I don't think anybody was  
20 aware of in federal law enforcement. Then the two church  
21 burnings in January of '96, we became aware of those and  
22 immediately the next day began an investigation which  
23 continues intensively to this day.

24 In fact, I believe the chairperson mentioned  
25 that possibly your Committee in February or March

1 addressed a letter to the governor and we were  
2 investigating as soon as the second fire occurred,  
3 extremely active investigation.

4           These are very, very rural churches, as those  
5 of you who have visited the sites know, and I'll let the  
6 next person from ATF talk about the evidence, but there  
7 is absolutely no evidence -- forensic type evidence  
8 available.

9           So what do we focus on then? We focus on the  
10 people. Are there witnesses? Are there people talking  
11 who are informants, have information, and that is what we  
12 are doing, trying to develop information.

13           And normally we would not talk about the status  
14 of our investigation. It's not a proper thing to do;  
15 however, I can tell you that at the present time we have  
16 not made significant progress towards identifying the  
17 individuals who burned -- if that was the case -- who  
18 burned these churches.

19           We believe obviously they were burned with  
20 intent. However, because there is total lack of evidence  
21 we cannot say that.

22           We also cannot say that the churches -- the  
23 church burnings in Greene County are connected to each  
24 other. We can certainly assume that due to their  
25 proximity in time and distance; however, again looking at

1 it from our standpoint of evidence, we have to present to  
2 the U.S. Attorney's Office, we cannot say that.

3           So at this point we are looking at every single  
4 possible motive. We are looking at every single possible  
5 way these churches could have been burned. There's been  
6 some criticism of us and comments made tonight about the  
7 fact of us asking are there drug dealers in your church.

8           That's a possibility, if a pastor is preaching  
9 very hard against drug dealing and there are drug dealers  
10 in the church, that is a possibility. It doesn't mean  
11 we're zeroing in on that. It's just one of many -- are  
12 there hate groups? Have there been threats made to that  
13 church?

14           Has there been previous vandalism? We are  
15 looking at the whole broad spectrum of possible motives  
16 so we can try to start -- or try to identify the  
17 individuals who did it. We investigate these cases under  
18 the Civil Rights Statutes of U.S. Code, which involve  
19 conspiracy to violate constitutional rights, which  
20 involve the damage or destruction of religious  
21 institutions, intent to damage religious institutions  
22 where destruction is over \$10,000, and then under another  
23 civil rights statute, just the damage to religious  
24 institutions. So those are the statutes that we use.

25           There's other motives that we're looking at.

1 There might have been a gang ritual to burn a church.  
2 Are there gangs in the area? We've been criticizes  
3 actually for this too, but was there a financial motive  
4 for burning a church?

5           Could it have been an insurance fraud? We have  
6 to investigate a lot of fraud cases, insurance fraud  
7 cases -- could that have been a motive? We're looking at  
8 everything and so I think it's a little unfactual to  
9 single out of these motives when we go around asking  
10 questions.

11           Our investigation is very much a joint  
12 investigation with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and  
13 Firearms, we will hear from in a minute.

14           The State Attorney General's Office and Sheriff  
15 Hall has one of his investigators assigned to from Greene  
16 County. We're working very, very closely together. We  
17 share all the information with each other. Some of the  
18 interviews are joint. Some are separate, but again all  
19 the information comes back to each other.

20           And again, we've used every technique in  
21 investigation that is available to us, and interviews --  
22 and I want to come back to interviews in just a minute  
23 because there's been a lot of discussion tonight about  
24 some of the interviews.

25           The evidence I'm sure Mr. Cavanaugh will



1 respond to -- we've offered rewards. Initially our  
2 thought was when we put out posters all over the county  
3 that we would not put an amount of money on the reward  
4 poster, because sometimes if there's a large amount of  
5 money, then that might trigger somebody to actually make  
6 -- attempt to burn or burn and call in a reward and get  
7 the reward.

8           So we did not -- if you noticed our original  
9 posters, they did not have an amount on them, but there's  
10 approximately \$30,000 reward between ATF and FBI out  
11 there, separate from the state's award or reward, so  
12 we've used rewards.

13           We've looked at all the land owners and some  
14 are local, some are out of state. We looked at hunters.  
15 This is a very active deer hunting area. That was deer  
16 season.

17           We've interviewed over 180 hunters who were in  
18 the area trying again to develop either information or  
19 suspects.

20           We've even used hypnotism to help a witness try  
21 to recall some details about the case. So we have really  
22 I think -- and are continuing to utilize every  
23 investigative technique we have available.

24           And I would like just really briefly to address  
25 the issue of the voter fraud and church burning

1 interviews. Our voter fraud investigation is a large  
2 investigation. It was underway sometime prior to the  
3 church burning, quite a bit prior. It's a joint  
4 investigation between the FBI, the U.S. Attorney's  
5 Office, and the State Attorney General's Office.

6 We had several meetings because we needed to do  
7 about 800 interviews, which is a massive amount of  
8 interviews. We had already set up 800 interviews for the  
9 voter probe investigation.

10 Then the church burnings began and we said what  
11 a resource we have since we're already going to be  
12 interviewing over 800 people, what a resource to go ahead  
13 and while the investigators are out there, ask questions  
14 about the church burnings, which we did.

15 We separated the interviews. We talked to  
16 people about voter fraud, and again these are witnesses  
17 we're talking to, not subjects that we know of and we  
18 don't think so, and then we did ask them, do you know  
19 anything about the church burnings.

20 And the witnesses, again, over 800 interviews  
21 that we have -- were very concerned of course about the  
22 church burnings, responded to us to those questions, and  
23 to date we have not had a single complaint from the  
24 witnesses that we interviewed to us, and we made the  
25 public statement, if you have complaints -- because this

1 issue was raised earlier -- about our methods of  
2 investigation or possible inappropriate actions of our  
3 agencies out there interviewing, please let us know, and  
4 Mr. Chairman, we have not had any complaints.

5           We have looked at that after the fact, you  
6 know, Monday morning quarterbacking, did we do -- was  
7 that an improper or ineffective way to do the interviews,  
8 and we believe again that the utilization of manpower,  
9 having all those interviews already scheduled, it was a  
10 proper way.

11           I don't believe the questions were confusing.  
12 But that was our reason for handling that -- now we're up  
13 to about 1,000 interviews that we've conducted in the  
14 church burning cases, not including probably 800 of the  
15 voter fraud -- but just a massive investigation, a full-  
16 time investigation by the FBI here in Alabama.

17           I'd be glad to answer any questions from the  
18 Committee.

19           MR. MAX: Michael.

20           MR. LANGFORD: While we're bringing the mike,  
21 another issue was raised about the hate letters that were  
22 received. We're very aware of those. I have copies of  
23 them. They were furnished to us immediately.

24           We're very aware of this individual. He is an  
25 81-year-old white male in Georgia. He does take

1 telephone calls and spews out his beliefs and feelings, I  
2 guess.

3 He has been interviewed previous to this in  
4 other cases, so it was an individual we are very aware  
5 of. He is being interviewed in regards particularly to  
6 these church burnings also.

7 MR. DAVIS: Thank you. Are you able to tell us  
8 the type of material that was used in the three  
9 church burnings to burn the churches and if there was  
10 any correlation of that type of material in the three  
11 churches?

12 MR. LANGFORD: That's a good question but I  
13 would defer if I could to the expert on the arson  
14 investigation.

15 MS. WELLS: Yes. In view of the percentage of  
16 unsolved crimes made to the churches, how can the FBI  
17 improve on its strategy and methods for enhancing the  
18 success rate?

19 MR. LANGFORD: We're open to suggestions. They  
20 are very frustrating cases, and I believe I've been  
21 quoted as saying that. It's very frustrating because we  
22 have not been more successful.

23 I think a lot of factors feed into that, but  
24 the very, very rural nature of these churches, there's  
25 not many witnesses around. The fact that in our churches

1 they burn right to the ground, which leaves us absolutely  
2 no evidence, is a factor.

3           But again, we are trying every technique we  
4 know to get information. We have rewards out there, but  
5 again we're very, very open to other ideas.

6           MS. WELLS: Are you using successfully the  
7 local, state and federal investigators?

8           MR. LANGFORD: I believe we are. The sheriff  
9 has an investigator assigned almost full time to this  
10 case. He has a small department so it's hard for him to  
11 do that, and the state authorities are in it full time,  
12 as are the other appropriate federal authorities, ATF and  
13 us.

14           And I believe we are using every available  
15 resource that we have to investigate.

16           MR. MAX: Can I ask you? You said you have  
17 looked into the hate groups in the area. Are you in  
18 a position to be able to identify whether or not you  
19 have found that there are hate groups in this area?

20           MR. LANGFORD: I can't be real specific except  
21 to say -- and I think it's been publicly acknowledged --  
22 that there are hate groups in Alabama that are  
23 identified. I can't be more specific than that.

24           MR. MAX: Well, I guess one other question in  
25 that regard. In the investigation finding that the

1 churches have been burnt to the ground, would that  
2 indicate to you that it is the work of someone who is  
3 just a prankster or would it indicate to you it is  
4 someone who is more professional, knows something  
5 what they're doing?

6 MR. LANGFORD: Well, I think, and again I defer  
7 to the arson expert, but I think it's mostly due to the  
8 very, very rural nature of the churches, and they weren't  
9 even discovered until they had burned to the ground.  
10 There's very little firefighting activity because they  
11 were so rural, until they were noticed burned.

12 MR. MAX: But would it indicate to you in the  
13 profession you're in, is it a prankster or can it be  
14 kids that can do that kind of destruction, or is it  
15 somebody has to know what they're doing in terms of -  
16 -

17 MR. LANGFORD: Many of these churches are very  
18 old and very tender dry, and so even if a prankster set a  
19 fire, because of the dryness and also the remote  
20 location, they would burn like that. Again, ATF is more  
21 of an expert than I am.

22 MR. MAX: Are there any other questions of Rob  
23 Langford?

24 MS. BERRY: I have a number of questions, Mr.  
25 Langford. First of all, I know that the Mayor told

1 us today when we were out that one of the churches  
2 was permitted to burn down completely instead of  
3 stopping it because it was down so far, it was just  
4 easier to clear it out, but we'll ask the ATF about  
5 that, because I know you're not the arson expert.

6 But the questions I have to ask of you first of  
7 all when you said the 81-year-old man in Georgia was  
8 the source of these --

9 MR. LANGFORD: We believe -- he has  
10 acknowledged that he is.

11 MS. BERRY: Right. And you said there was -- I  
12 sounds like since he's 81 years old that we can all  
13 laugh and dismiss it and say move on, but are you  
14 looking into whether he has any connections with  
15 anybody else who may have been involved in this?

16 MR. LANGFORD: Yes, ma'am. I did mention that  
17 we are investigating him as a possible connection to  
18 these. He claims that he is not but that he would love  
19 to see all these churches, burned, so you know, there's a  
20 lot -- something coming out of it.

21 MS. BERRY: Right. How long have you been an  
22 agent of the -- FBI agent here in this area?

23 MR. LANGFORD: I've been an agent 28 years and  
24 two and a half years in Alabama.

25 MS. BERRY: Two and a half years?

1 MR. LANGFORD: Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. BERRY: In view of the sensitivity that  
3 many people in the African American community have  
4 about the FBI, based on the history of the FBI in  
5 Alabama and other areas during the civil rights  
6 movement and since, do you believe that it was  
7 insensitive for you or your agents to question people  
8 about such matters as voter fraud in connection with  
9 the fires and drug people without explaining to them  
10 what it is you were trying to do, and to just assume  
11 that they would not be fearful or feel intimidated or  
12 anything? Upon reflection after the fact, can you be  
13 introspective about thinking of how one could be more  
14 sensitive, or is that just an unfair question?

15 MR. LANGFORD: No, I don't think it's an unfair  
16 question at all. I mean, we're trying to gather  
17 information and then again I was not present at the  
18 interview, so maybe some of the interviews were done in  
19 an insensitive manner. I can't answer that, although  
20 again we have not received any complaints.

21 But upon reflection, merging the two  
22 investigations together, again I do not believe was an  
23 improper way to do it, when we were already going to have  
24 800 interviews out in community, which was a tremendous  
25 resource of possible knowledge.



1 MS. BERRY: In light of what I just said to you  
2 about the feelings of some people in the African  
3 American community about the FBI, do you think it  
4 likely that people who wanted to complain about how  
5 the FBI treated them, would call the FBI to complain?

6 MR. LANGFORD: No, and I understand that very  
7 much, but I don't know -- we can make the offer and  
8 hopefully -- if they don't call us direct, they would  
9 call maybe your Committee or somebody else to get that  
10 information to us.

11 MS. BERRY: Right. But do you realize, Mr.  
12 Langford, why it is unhelpful to keep repeating that  
13 no one called you to complain, when you are asked  
14 whether anyone might possibly have been offended, and  
15 why. Merely the repetition of no one called you to  
16 complain would cause someone like me, who is very  
17 sensitive to the history of the FBI in the black  
18 community in this state and elsewhere, to wonder why  
19 you keep saying that, when it would be obvious to me  
20 that no black person in my family would call the FBI  
21 to complain about what the FBI had done to them. Do  
22 you understand what I'm saying?

23 MR. LANGFORD: Madam Chairman, I do and I  
24 believe I'm very sensitive to that, but we get calls all  
25 the time from members of the black community giving us

1 complaints about various violations, so we do receive  
2 those, but I'm very sensitive to what you're saying.

3 MS. BERRY: Okay. And I would repeat that we  
4 do have a number, 1-800-552-6843, that people can  
5 file complaints.

6 I want to ask you -- and I hope there aren't  
7 any because I would assume and would hope that  
8 everything went the way it was supposed to go -- the  
9 other question I have is a task force -- I want to  
10 know how your activities are coordinated.

11 There have been some suggestions made to me  
12 today by people outside of this room that they don't  
13 believe that the law enforcement agencies are  
14 coordinated and that the different law enforcement  
15 agencies have come up with announcements of different  
16 reasons for the fires or different hypotheses about  
17 who did what, and that it doesn't sound like there's  
18 much coordination.

19 Now, my understanding is that there's supposed  
20 to be a task force in which ATF and the FBI are  
21 involved, along with other people, and the U.S.  
22 Attorney that is supposed to be coordinating this  
23 effort. Is that happening or not?

24 MR. LANGFORD: It's very much happening, Madam  
25 Chairman. Like I say, I've been in the FBI 28 years and

1 I'm -- except for the Hoffa investigation in Detroit that  
2 I was involved in, this is probably the most coordinated  
3 investigation. SAC Cavanaugh and myself talk very, very  
4 frequently. We both have agents assigned full time that  
5 go on interviews together.

6 All of our reports go up to our headquarters  
7 and the U.S. Attorney, who is here tonight, is made aware  
8 of everything. In March of this year we hosted a meeting  
9 between all the FBI, ATF investigators and the U.S.  
10 Attorney's Office from throughout the South, to try to  
11 talk face to face, you know, sending reports to each  
12 other and talking on the phone is one thing, but talking  
13 face to face is another, so we hosted a meeting in  
14 Birmingham to have all these investigators come together.

15 I've been to a meeting at headquarters with us.  
16 The SAC's of the ATF and FBI and the U.S. Attorneys met  
17 together so it's a tremendously coordinated  
18 investigation, I can assure you.

19 MS. BERRY: And how do you coordinate with the  
20 state and local --

21 MR. LANGFORD: Well, again, Sheriff Hall has an  
22 investigator assigned again almost full time to the  
23 investigation, but again he's a smaller department. The  
24 state agencies, State Attorney General's Office, an ABI -  
25 - ABI has not assigned a full-time person but the State

1 Attorney General's Office has and they're with us --  
2 we're altogether making the reports and investigations.

3 MS. BERRY: And how many agents altogether of  
4 various law enforcement agencies are assigned to try  
5 and figure out who did these fires?

6 MR. LANGFORD: I don't know a number but at  
7 least each of us has one full time, and then when there  
8 are massive interviews like we did, we pull more in, but  
9 each of us have at least one full time who knows  
10 everything about the case, so he's a -- he or she is a  
11 repository for all the information and all of us are  
12 using computer data bases to make sure we don't lose any  
13 information also.

14 MS. BERRY: And in the testimony that was given  
15 by the Justice Department and BATF before the various  
16 Committees of the House and Senate recently on the  
17 subject, explicit commitments were made that your  
18 departments would use every effort and not stop until  
19 you found out who committed these fires. Is that  
20 your understanding?

21 MR. LANGFORD: That is my understanding and I  
22 have already committed that we are going to do that. We  
23 are going to continue this investigation.

24 MS. BERRY: Thank you.

25 MR. GRAY: Agent Langford, this picks up on Dr.

1 Berry's question to you regarding sensitive. I want  
2 to know, do you know whether there were any black  
3 agents participating during the interviewing?

4 MR. LANGFORD: There were black agents. Two of  
5 ours, I believe involved in the massive set of  
6 interviews, maybe three in the massive set of interviews.  
7 Our case agent happens to be white but there are black  
8 agents that are assigned to help in the interviews.

9 MR. GRAY: And my second question is were any  
10 whites interviewed regarding the voter fraud issue  
11 and to what extent percentage-wise? How was that  
12 done? How were the people, these 800 interviews of  
13 people, how were they selected? And do you know how  
14 it broke out racially?

15 MR. LANGFORD: I do not know percentages. If  
16 there were any whites, it was very small. I don't  
17 believe there were. The interviews were selected based  
18 on the information that came to us from the absentee vote  
19 -- the absentee ballots. The names that were on there,  
20 there were maybe one name witness -- I think 90 some  
21 absentee ballots, so we tried to interview all of those  
22 voters at those -- that one witness witnessed and it just  
23 happened that all those voters were black.

24 I don't believe there were any white voters,  
25 but I'm not sure about that.

1 MS. BERRY: Any other question?

2 MR. MUNCHUS: I have one question. There's  
3 been some testimony from you about the -- touching  
4 base with the local sheriff in Greene County. What  
5 has been your relationship with the local district  
6 attorney in this area prior to you all coming in  
7 here? I mean, was there any courtesy call or just  
8 what happened, because we're hearing conflicting  
9 testimony from you and the district attorney about  
10 the relationship that's going on between your office  
11 and at his office, and we just sort of want to know  
12 from your perspective what do you think is going on  
13 and why -- what is going on or what happened?

14 MR. LANGFORD: Yes, sir. And I don't believe  
15 you heard any conflicting testimony from me regarding the  
16 district attorney, because to my knowledge we did not  
17 contact him. We're just talking about investigative  
18 agencies in investigating it.

19 So to my knowledge we didn't --

20 MR. MUNCHUS: Is that a standard practice to  
21 contact the district attorney as a courtesy? Is that  
22 a standard practice not to contact the district  
23 attorney's office?

24 MR. LANGFORD: No, sir. I think it depends on  
25 the investigation. Some where they have investigators

1 and they would be feeding us information, in fact we're  
2 working together on several with other district  
3 attorneys.

4 In this case there just was no investigative  
5 area from them, but on retrospect, we should have made a  
6 contact with them, I agree.

7 MR. GRAY: What about on the voter fraud  
8 question? Sir, what about on the voter fraud issue,  
9 since this is a district that is majority black  
10 district, you have a black district attorney -- you  
11 had these 800 people were interviewed and you said  
12 the majority of them probably were black. Was the  
13 district attorney involved in that at all?

14 MR. LANGFORD: Not to my knowledge. When the  
15 prosecutors got together from the State Attorney  
16 General's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office, I'm not  
17 sure if the district attorney was involved in that or  
18 not. From an investigative standpoint, which is where I  
19 come from, I don't believe the district attorney was  
20 contacted because there was not -- he didn't have  
21 investigators assigned but --

22 MR. GRAY: But most times in voter fraud cases,  
23 most times the complaints often go to the district  
24 attorney in the local circuit.

25 MR. LANGFORD: Well, in this case -- again, the

1 prosecutors would have to answer specifically, but they  
2 determine where it's going to be prosecuted. We don't,  
3 and between the state and the federal prosecutors, they  
4 determine if we would work it jointly between the State  
5 Attorney General's office, who is the state prosecutor  
6 for us, and then it would be presented to both the state  
7 prosecutor and federal to determine where best to  
8 prosecute it.

9 I'm not sure if there was any discussion --  
10 maybe it wouldn't even be appropriate for prosecutive --  
11 in the local level there, as opposed to the state. I'm  
12 just not sure because I'm not a prosecutor. I'm not  
13 trying to evade your question but I'm just working at it  
14 from the investigator's standpoint.

15 MR. MAX: Any other questions?

16 MS. BERRY: I just have one. What's your  
17 success rate so I could just know whether I should be  
18 optimistic about your finding anybody.

19 MR. LANGFORD: My success rate --

20 MS. BERRY: How successful are you in trying to  
21 resolve complaints when you have civil rights  
22 complaints? What's your batting average there in  
23 general?

24 MR. LANGFORD: In civil rights complaints it's  
25 probably about 60 percent of the complaints that we get



1 and most of our civil rights complaints are police  
2 brutality. That's the majority of our civil rights  
3 complaints. We have very few discrimination in housing  
4 or discrimination in business complaints.

5 MS. BERRY: About 60 percent.

6 MR. LANGFORD: In our civil rights complaints,  
7 which again are mostly police --

8 MS. BERRY: Police brutality.

9 MR. LANGFORD: Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. BERRY: Okay.

11 MR. LANGFORD: In bank robberies it's 85  
12 percent solution rate.

13 MS. BERRY: Thank you.

14 MR. MAX: Are there any other questions of Rob  
15 Langford? I would like to call Jim Cavanaugh at this  
16 time. Rob, thank you very much. We appreciate your  
17 being here. Mr. Cavanaugh.

18 MR. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Dr. Berry and  
19 members of the panel for having me. I'm Jim Cavanaugh.  
20 I'm the Special Agent in Charge of the ATF.

21 I'd like to tell you a little bit about what  
22 we've been doing in Alabama and Mississippi, and  
23 certainly around the country. My division encompasses  
24 both Alabama and Mississippi, and so I have a little  
25 larger problem than Rob has here in the Northern

1 District.

2 I currently have eight active church fire  
3 investigations going on and I literally as we speak have  
4 agents all over these two states working on the cases.

5 I have five accidental church fires at black  
6 congregational churches in this division in the last two  
7 years. And I also have two cases that have been --  
8 arrests have been made and certainly on the part of Rob's  
9 agents and ATF agents.

10 And I would like to say that on behalf of the  
11 men and women of ATF that have been aggressively  
12 investigating these cases, some of our agents have  
13 actually worked to the point of exhaustion, and to say  
14 that we're not aggressively pursuing these cases is  
15 really not the case at all.

16 We have aggressively pursued every case that's  
17 come to our attention, and we always do. Bomb and arson  
18 is our business and we are the government's bomb and  
19 arson people. I think you'll see if you go to any one of  
20 these fire scenes, you'll see a lot of agencies working  
21 pretty hard in hundred degree heat, digging out these  
22 fire scenes in the field doing interviews. We're very  
23 aggressive.

24 I notice one of the directors was from Kansas  
25 City. I think you'll recall we just solved the case in

1 Kansas City that occurred in 1988, where six firemen died  
2 in the explosion that was an arson case.

3           So we never let it go. And we're not going to  
4 let these go either.

5           Prior to this I was the deputy chief of the  
6 arson and explosive division in Washington and I oversaw  
7 all arson explosive incidents for ATF, and worked on a  
8 lot of case, Uni-bomb and I've seen a lot of cases  
9 through.

10           I think we'll solve a lot of these cases. Dr.  
11 Berry asked about the solve rate. I think the national  
12 arson solve rate is probably about 16 percent. I hope  
13 we'll do much better than that.

14           When we had the abortion clinic cases in the  
15 '80s, we solved probably 60 percent of those, or at least  
16 a high percentage, more so than normal in bombing cases.

17           And I think you're starting to see around the  
18 country and certainly in cases coming to fruition -- and  
19 let me just mention -- I don't want to go into a lot of  
20 statistics, but I do think it's important because one of  
21 the problems we talk about is -- you know, this copy-cat  
22 issue, which I hope we can address in just a minute, but  
23 does the news drive these things?

24           And a lot of the reporters have asked me, you  
25 know -- and genuine concern on their part -- you know,

1 gees, we don't want to drive these things. I hope we're  
2 not driving these things, and I have told all the ones  
3 that have spoken with me that I think we've seen a change  
4 and I'm sure it's not all from what I've said, but a lot  
5 of people says report the arrests, don't just report the  
6 fires. Don't let people think out here that this is a  
7 free ride, that you can get away with this, that you can  
8 do this with impunity, because that's not the case.

9           That is not the case. We've made arrests all  
10 over the country for all sorts of motivations, including  
11 racial hatred, and will continue to do so, but these  
12 numbers are a little bit of interest.

13           Since 1990 over 243 incidents of fire or  
14 desecration of churches and other houses of worship were  
15 reported to federal authorities. Over half of these  
16 occurred in the last 18 months.

17           Since June, '96 there were over 40 fires at  
18 churches. We've solved and prosecuted a lot of these  
19 cases. Arrests have been made in 83 of these incidents.  
20 That's 83 of 243 incidents of arson and desecration.  
21 Forty-one persons have been convicted.

22           Now, in the particular problem that I think  
23 you're here for and I think that we don't want to lose  
24 the particular problem we're trying to address, and that  
25 is the fires at black congregational churches in the

1 Southeast, and certainly in the Birmingham Division.

2 You've seen a lot of arrests in those cases.

3           We were able to assist in making arrests with  
4 the state authorities in Tyler, Alabama, and also in  
5 Jefferson County, Mississippi, in the last 120 days. And  
6 that came from an aggressive response to the fire by  
7 throwing a dozen ATF agents and a dozen FBI agents, state  
8 fire marshals and ABI and Attorney General and sheriff's  
9 deputies, at the fire and coming up with the answer.

10           Sometimes we come up with the answer and it's  
11 accidental or electrical, and sometimes it's very  
12 frustrating because it's undetermined or undetermined or  
13 suspicious.

14           I've been investigating arson since the '70s,  
15 and I would also say that ATF is second to none in  
16 catching white hate and KLAN and Aryan Nations and all of  
17 the apparatus of white hate. I've arrested Klansmen,  
18 Nazis in places -- synagogues as long ago as 1981.

19           And we have always been the people at the  
20 forefront of that, take their bombs and their guns away  
21 and we broke up the skinheads in Birmingham in 1992. One  
22 of the members is from Birmingham, and I think you  
23 remember that case. We undercovered the skinheads.  
24 There was ATF agents that joined undercovered them.

25           We caught the head man, Riccio. He was

1 convicted on federal gun charges. So we are  
2 investigating those groups for firearms and explosives  
3 violations, when nobody else is or nobody is thinking  
4 about it.

5 And of course the FBI is too, but they do it on  
6 a different violations of the law. Our violations are  
7 very unique to ATF, so -- with that just remarks, I'd  
8 like to try to answer any questions I could.

9 MR. MAX: Mr. Cavanaugh, I'm holding the mike  
10 so let me just ask you a few real quick. You're  
11 telling us that there are eight church burnings in  
12 this area; is that correct, between Alabama and  
13 Mississippi; is that right?

14 MR. CAVANAUGH: Right, that I have open now.

15 MR. MAX: And you distinguished that there were  
16 five accidental church burnings. Would you  
17 characterize these eight as being non-accidental?

18 MR. CAVANAUGH: The eight are either classified  
19 or determined to be arson or incendiary fires, or  
20 undetermined suspicious as in Greene County. Those are  
21 under active investigation.

22 MR. MAX: Based on your experience in this area  
23 and I asked Rob Langford this. Perhaps you can  
24 answer it -- from the evidence that you see, is this  
25 work of some pranksters or as you mentioned before, a

1 copy-cat kind of thing that may be an amateur or is  
2 this the work of someone who is more professional in  
3 what they're doing or perhaps more organized in what  
4 they're doing?

5 MR. CAVANAUGH: That's an interesting question.  
6 It varies sometimes from scene to scene. And it varies  
7 from case to case. If we can take the copy-cat issue to  
8 start with, you know, a copy-cat issue is really kind of  
9 hard to define here.

10 I mean, if I commit an armed robbery and you  
11 commit an armed robbery, you're an armed robber. You're  
12 not a copy-cat. If I commit a murder and you commit a  
13 murder, you're a murderer. But if I burn a church for  
14 racial hatred and bigotry and you burn a church for  
15 racial hatred and bigotry, you're a hateful person and a  
16 bigot. It has nothing to do with being a copy-cat.

17 MR. MAX: Right.

18 MR. CAVANAUGH: So I think we ought to probably  
19 lose that word. I mean, if news reports are driving  
20 bigots to do it or other persons, serial fire setters or  
21 whatever, then they must have something in their heart  
22 that drives them to do it.

23 Certainly there's a thrill element part of  
24 being part of a national event that maybe some offenders  
25 will have in conjunction with their hatred, but as far as

1 telling whether the fire was professionally set, these  
2 are very old churches.

3           A lot of them were a hundred years old. We  
4 found that may had termite infestations, but they didn't  
5 have fire walls, sprinkler systems. They're old. They  
6 were built many years ago. There wasn't any fire codes.  
7 It wa a rural area.

8           A small flame set by available material, a hymn  
9 book, paper, in a church where there's no alarm, no smoke  
10 alarm, no witness, no fire break, no sprinkler system,  
11 could burn that church to the ground. We don't have --  
12 and the firefighters will tell you, we don't have  
13 hydrants. When they get there, they're carrying their  
14 own water.

15           I mean, we're fighting everything when we have  
16 a fire in a small, rural church. We're fighting not only  
17 the person who might have lit it, but all the situation  
18 that goes with that.

19           Now, you can tell sometimes from your question,  
20 a very good one, that can you tell -- sometimes it's a  
21 very determined professional effort. Yes, you can  
22 sometimes from the evidence. If there's a lot of  
23 evidence, cans and bottles and flammable liquids, an  
24 integrate type forced entry or burglar alarms cut, you  
25 know, we've seen a lot of those things happen over the



1 years where you can tell this is a professional torch  
2 job, somebody knew how to set a fire, somebody set a fire  
3 before.

4           You know, we can tell that. Now, in Greene  
5 County and in Hale County, which was the fire we just had  
6 in Greensboro, Alabama, the similarities are the fact  
7 that there's nothing. I know that's hard to explain but  
8 what I'm telling you is we didn't find in Greensboro,  
9 Alabama ten gasoline cans and flammable trailers and rags  
10 soaked in flammable liquids. We didn't find any of that.

11           We found basically what we found in Greene  
12 County, undetermined suspicious. We're working these  
13 fires as a cluster. That's a word I've used a lot and  
14 I've been using for a long time.

15           I've seen it now in a lot of reports, but  
16 really it sets the difference between just in my opinion  
17 just church fires in general, which unfortunately we have  
18 in America, a certain level of churches burn because  
19 they're victims of crime, but I've overseen I think in  
20 this situation here in the South, so they might have  
21 somewhat of a cluster event here at Greene and Hale  
22 County. We have it under Northeast Mississippi. We had  
23 three fires in one night. So I think that's a little  
24 different.

25           MR. MAX: One last question. The 1992

1 investigation, what you were able to do with regard  
2 to the hate groups in Birmingham and around that area  
3 were accessible in terms of finding the person,  
4 bringing them to trial and conviction -- since 1992  
5 have you in your investigation with church burnings  
6 in other investigations, have you found evidence of a  
7 rise of hate groups in this area or perhaps asked  
8 differently, what have you seen with regard to hate  
9 groups in this area up or down since 1992?

10 MR. CAVANAUGH: I think after the skinhead  
11 faction was busted up in '92, we arrested a leader Riccio  
12 and back then -- that was before I came to Birmingham,  
13 but we were having all these matches in Birmingham so it  
14 was a very open event, open hatred, but after we busted  
15 them up and the sheriff and the police all played a role  
16 in that, I think they kind of dissipated, sort of knocked  
17 them back if you will. I think they were knocked back.  
18 This leader was so -- he was very much older than the  
19 younger members, which a lot were teen-agers and early  
20 20's. He was very much older than them, and he was a  
21 very important influence on the members of that racial  
22 hatred group.

23 So we did knock them a big blow when we  
24 convicted him, and they kind of just dissipated and they  
25 never completely go away, but certainly have not been the

1 force that you've seen in the past marching and so forth.  
2 Those people are always around.

3           We stay in constant touch with the FBI. Morris  
4 Dees' people, Center for Democratic Renewal, the Anti-  
5 Defamation League. I have agents that talk to them  
6 constantly. The Simon -- we'd be in constant touch with  
7 folks who know what those people do, if we have a  
8 criminal investigation and we need to know.

9           MR. MAX: Very good. Are there questions of  
10 Mr. Cavanaugh?

11           MS. BERRY: I have a couple questions, Mr.  
12 Cavanaugh. First of all, have you been distributing  
13 the church threat assessment guide in this area?

14           MR. CAVANAUGH: Yes, Doctor. Tonight in Hale  
15 County at the courthouse in Greensboro we have invited  
16 and we were hoping to have 75 ministers from Hale County  
17 there tonight with FBI and ATF agents passing those out,  
18 and we have been trying to distribute those.

19           We have not set the meeting yet in Greene  
20 County. The reason is the agents we're going to set it  
21 tonight, and this was the day they had picked and I had  
22 to tell them that this would not be the right night, so  
23 we're probably going to have to back it up to next week,  
24 but Hale County we're doing tonight. We were going to do  
25 them both tonight.

1 MS. BERRY: For those who don't know, this is  
2 the ATF church threat assessment guide, which is  
3 supposed to be, according to the testimony that was  
4 given to the Congress a couple weeks ago, has been  
5 distributed or is being distributed nationwide by the  
6 ATF to tell people how to protect their churches and  
7 how to prevent these fires, so it is being  
8 distributed here.

9 The second thing I wanted to ask you, we were  
10 told by the Mayor today that in one of the church  
11 fires here the church was burning and it was burned  
12 down because it was in a sense permitted to burn all  
13 the way down because it's out in a rural area and it  
14 would just be easier to clean up afterwards if it  
15 burned all the way down.

16 Does that make any sense? Is that because of  
17 the lack of a fire department, and all the other  
18 points that you just made a minute ago or what?

19 MR. CAVANAUGH: Well, as an arson investigator  
20 we always tell firefighters is that if there's no risk to  
21 life or limb, if you won't be injured, put the fire out  
22 as quickly as you can, we'll lay the arson investigation  
23 to let it burn through will burn the evidence.

24 Now, you've got to understand that when you  
25 deal with a rural volunteer fire department, that is

1 sometimes very difficult, and they may only get there  
2 with one or two people. They have a limited water  
3 supply. Could they have put some water on it. It's kind  
4 of a judgment call that they have to make, but we  
5 encourage them to put the fire out, put the fire out, and  
6 my father was a fireman for 32 years in Newark, New  
7 Jersey, and I know a lot about fire and I've investigated  
8 fire a long time, and I think when you go to those big  
9 cities, you'll see these standing hunks of buildings, at  
10 least you used to years ago, and that's because the  
11 firemen put the fires out all the time in those  
12 buildings, because they didn't burn to the ground. The  
13 city firemen got in there and fight them and they're  
14 close. They have equipment and they have manpower and  
15 they have hydrants and they have resources, and they get  
16 in and fight those fires, and it's sometimes in the  
17 smaller communities, you don't have those resources.

18 MS. BERRY: Some of the fires or one of the  
19 fires at least I know was committed by a firefighter.  
20 I've forgotten whether -- was that in your region or  
21 somewhere else?

22 MR. CAVANAUGH: We had an incident here in  
23 Tyler, Alabama, which is Dallas County over in Selma,  
24 where a man, volunteer fireman confessed to a deputy  
25 sheriff, an ATF agent and a fire marshal, he had in fact

1 burned the church. At least that is partly motivated --  
2 party motivated by the fact that he's a volunteer  
3 firefighter.

4 Now, we have referred to the FBI and United  
5 States Attorney to look further into that case to see if  
6 there could be civil rights violations.

7 MS. BERRY: The reason why I ask you that  
8 question, I'm following up on the first question that  
9 I asked you about the burning down of the church.  
10 Now, based on what you've just told me, anybody who  
11 lives in this area knows that it is likely that if  
12 they burn a church in a rural area, it's going to  
13 burn down. First of all, they know the firefighters  
14 don't have anything except water to bring. All the  
15 things you've described -- firefighters would know  
16 that, volunteer firefighters would know that, and  
17 people who live in the area would know that, which  
18 means that if they were firefighters, they would also  
19 know that if you burned it all the way down, the  
20 evidence would be burned, all of which you just told  
21 me, which seems to be common knowledge in the field.

22 So have you folks taken into account any of  
23 this common knowledge and these inferences that I  
24 made just sitting up here listening to you and  
25 investigated where does this lead you?

1 MR. CAVANAUGH: Certain we have, Doctor, and we  
2 do take those things into consideration. We've dealt  
3 with arresting volunteer firefighters with this hero  
4 complex, but what you're saying really generally tends to  
5 be and in the case where the fire wasn't suppressed, the  
6 opposite of what we normally find.

7 In other words, in the hero complex fire  
8 setter, we find they set the fire so that they can put it  
9 out. See, that's the purpose, part of the purpose  
10 anyway, at least part of it, so they can be the hero.

11 If they don't put it out, you know, it's --  
12 there may be another viable reason that's based more on  
13 equipment, manpower, you know, when you see a building  
14 and certainly that is totally almost burned to the  
15 ground, and you know when you've been to fires and you've  
16 fought fires that if you put some water on it, the  
17 building is not going to be saved. Then maybe you won't  
18 do it. We don't ask them to do it to save the building.  
19 We ask them to do it to save the evidence.

20 MS. BERRY: I understand that. That's  
21 precisely my point, that one would know that if you  
22 burned it down, you'd destroy the evidence, which  
23 means a person who was in a position to make these  
24 inferences we've just been making sitting here, which  
25 means that these people know that if they burn down a

1 church in a rural area, that the church is going to  
2 burn down, the evidence will be burned, and you guys  
3 will have a tough time ever finding out who did it.

4 MR. CAVANAUGH: That's correct.

5 MS. BERRY: Which means that is this task force  
6 that you're working on which has all these officials  
7 in it, as well as the FEMA involvement, has anybody  
8 given any thought to trying to beef up local  
9 firefighting on an emergency basis, whether through  
10 FEMA or some other way, so that people won't know  
11 that the odds are that you can burn these churches  
12 down and that you guys will never find out who did  
13 it?

14 MS. WELLS: I think that's a good point and I  
15 hope FEMA does. I know they've been tasked with  
16 working with the fire department to do that. You  
17 know, in some states we have laws that saw --

18 MS. BERRY: Federal Emergency Management  
19 Agency, for people who don't know what FEMA is.  
20 Anyway, go ahead.

21 MR. CAVANAUGH: In some states there's laws  
22 that say you have to have a fire hydrant within a  
23 thousand feet of a school, church or community center.  
24 And you know, many times that may not be the case if the  
25 structure was built prior to the fire code being put in.



1           So I hope that in some cases maybe we can see,  
2 when churches are rebuilt, for example, in Greene County,  
3 that we could see fireplugs put in near the church.  
4 That's one thing that would certainly help the fire  
5 suppression efforts is to have fire plugs, and rather  
6 than the firefighter dragging that water all the way up  
7 there and maybe some funds to help the firefighters do  
8 that.

9           MS. BERRY: Otherwise if you don't, then  
10 churches can be rebuilt and somebody could burn them  
11 down again and nobody could find out who burned them  
12 down the second time from what you're telling me.

13          MR. CAVANAUGH: Very difficult cases.

14          MS. BERRY: Last question I have to ask you is  
15 an inevitable one about the good old boys round-up?.  
16 Now, is there anybody -- I have to ask you this -- do  
17 any of your agents or you ever involved peripherally  
18 or otherwise with the good old boys round-up?

19          MR. CAVANAUGH: Yes. There hasn't been any  
20 involvement with the good old boys up here, but no agents  
21 have ever been there when there was any racial event  
22 occur. I mean, you know that that event occurred over 15  
23 years, and the early years was somewhat of a picnic  
24 event, whitewater raft thing, and the Treasury Department  
25 report I think clearly stated that the racial events

1 occurred after '89 or '90 and the Director and the  
2 Treasury Secretary have disciplined and set for  
3 discipline persons ranging within 31 agents, who had been  
4 there when any of those events occurred.

5           So that's -- and they moved two agents off  
6 these cases based on that.

7           MS. BERRY: And the testimony that was given  
8 and the conversation I had with the Assistant  
9 Secretary who was responsible for your enforcement at  
10 the ATF is that there is no one who is involved in  
11 these investigations who was involved with even being  
12 disciplined or at the good old boys round-up when  
13 these racial things occurred; is that correct?

14           MR. CAVANAUGH: That's correct.

15           MS. BERRY: Okay. Well, thank you very much.  
16 Those are all the questions I have.

17           MS. WELLS: I have no question, sir. One last  
18 question. I've heard tonight that perhaps the reason  
19 why some of the cases have not been solved is that  
20 the investigators have not intervened quickly enough.  
21 I'd like for you to comment on that.

22           MR. CAVANAUGH: The events that first occurred  
23 in Alabama occurred here in Greene County in December of  
24 '95. We were not notified of the first fire that  
25 occurred in December of '95. ATF was notified January

1 the 12th, which was the morning or day after the two  
2 fires that occurred the night of the 11th, before the Dr.  
3 King holiday. And we responded then. And we have been  
4 responding aggressively to all these fires every since.

5 We have uncovered fires in Alabama and  
6 Mississippi that were not reported to us in the past, and  
7 now that there's been some attention placed on it, have  
8 brought those forward.

9 You must understand that ATF does not respond  
10 to every fire. We don't have the agents to do that.  
11 We're not the fire marshal or the fire investigator.  
12 We're federal agents who come in on significant cases  
13 that have a major community impact -- cases that involve  
14 higher traveling arsonists, paid arsonists, organized  
15 ring, organized crime, major losses, major loss of life.

16 We don't respond to every fire, so when we're  
17 notified, we respond aggressively.

18 MR. DAVIS: This would be the job of local  
19 officials?

20 MR. CAVANAUGH: Local officials are the first  
21 to respond. Local police, sheriff, fire marshal, are  
22 first to respond.

23 MR. MAX: Thank you. I'm sorry --

24 MS. WELLS: In these eight fires is there a  
25 common fuel, whatever, substance that was used to

1 ignite these fires?

2 MR. CAVANAUGH: I can answer it somewhat. You  
3 know, we had fires in Kossuth, Mississippi two weeks ago,  
4 two black churches burned to the ground, a white church  
5 that was an incendiary type device found there. We found  
6 flammable liquids at those three scenes.

7 We have not found any flammable liquids at the  
8 scenes in Greene County or in Hale County. These fires  
9 are undetermined but suspicious. If we found flammable  
10 liquids or pour patterns in there, we would have called  
11 it arson.

12 We didn't find that. So there's a difference -  
13 - there's not a difference in his cluster here of Greene  
14 County and Hale County. These four fires seems to be the  
15 same from the absence of evidence, yet Kossuth,  
16 Mississippi, we had three fires that all had flammable  
17 materials used the same night.

18 MS. WELLS: Your method of investigating, would  
19 that indicate possibly that there is some correlation  
20 that these fires may have been started by the same  
21 person, persons?

22 MR. CAVANAUGH: A fire setter can use different  
23 methods.

24 MS. WELLS: But you just said that it was the  
25 site --

1 MR. CAVANAUGH: If --

2 MS. WELLS: No, no. In Mississippi --

3 MR. CAVANAUGH: Mississippi is the same --

4 MS. WELLS: Cluster, right.

5 MR. CAVANAUGH: The Mississippi cluster there's  
6 flammable liquid, but here there's not.

7 MS. WELLS: Right. So my question again,  
8 wouldn't that kind of indicate that the site person,  
9 persons may have --

10 MR. CAVANAUGH: In Mississippi? Yes,  
11 absolutely, and I understand -- I thought you were making  
12 them both together. We're working that Mississippi issue  
13 as a cluster, and we also work -- we have to look at it a  
14 variety of ways.

15 One individually, two as a cluster, three  
16 regionally or nationally. But yes, we do. Thank you.

17 MR. MAX: Thank you very much, Mr. Cavanaugh.  
18 While we're on law enforcement, I would like to  
19 invite Caryl Privett to come up for just one minute.  
20 She is a U.S. Attorney out of Birmingham, and while  
21 we're talking law enforcement, I thought it would be  
22 appropriate to give her an opportunity to make a  
23 brief statement. Caryl.

24 MS. PRIVETT: I would like to thank you first  
25 of all, Chairman Max, and Chairman Berry for the

1 opportunity to address you all. I really had not any  
2 prepared remarks, but a number of questions have arisen  
3 that really come in my jurisdiction as the chief federal  
4 law enforcement officer for the Northern District of  
5 Alabama.

6           The first thing I would like to say is that  
7 yes, we do have a very active task force and that was  
8 done in conjunction with the two gentlemen who just  
9 spoke, the Attorney General for the State of Alabama, the  
10 sheriff.

11           In addition to that, we have -- have an an  
12 Assistant U.S. Attorney who is assigned to this case. In  
13 addition to that I am briefed on it on a regular basis.  
14 My assistant is briefed on it on a regular basis.

15           My criminal chief is briefed on it on a regular  
16 basis and my deputy criminal chief is briefed on this  
17 case on a regular basis, so that there is no gap in  
18 knowledge.

19           We also on a regular basis talk with the  
20 attorneys in the Department of Justice Civil Rights  
21 Division, who are assigned to these cases on a nationwide  
22 basis. We are in constant communication with them so  
23 that there will not be any gaps.

24           We are trying very, very hard to make certain  
25 that all information is shared and that all leads are

1 followed, and we are committed to doing that.

2 I would like to just say -- I was Assistant  
3 U.S. Attorney before I was court appointed to U.S.  
4 Attorney. Been an Assistant U.S. Attorney for 20 years.  
5 Before that I was a civil rights lawyer.

6 I have seen the days when law enforcement did  
7 not cooperate. I have seen the days when FBI and ATF did  
8 not cooperate and they didn't cooperate with locals.  
9 That's not the case today.

10 What you have here in the task force that we  
11 have in the Northern District of Alabama is probably one  
12 of the best examples of cooperation in law enforcement I  
13 have ever seen in 20 years in this job.

14 And the agents are to be commended for that.  
15 So beyond that, I would like to be available. If you  
16 have a question, I will be here to answer it.

17 MR. MAX: Caryl, we appreciate your being here,  
18 and I would just say that Caryl, like Rob, is the  
19 most active, not only in Birmingham but throughout  
20 Alabama in many areas that involve civil rights.

21 Prior to becoming U.S. Attorney -- and we  
22 appreciate the fact that you are the U.S. Attorney --  
23 I think you do an excellent job -- any questions from  
24 the panel?

25 MS. BERRY: See, when you come up to make a

1 statement, you open yourself up to a question. I  
2 know that as U.S. Attorney you are a person who is  
3 supposed to chair this task force, which the agent in  
4 charge of the FBI and of the BATF are involved.

5 Let me just ask you. Why have we not had any  
6 arrests in these cases and what are the prospects for  
7 making any and how optimistic should we be that you  
8 folks are going to find out who did this?

9 And secondly, do you have any recommendations  
10 concerning the exchange I had with the BATF agent  
11 about the susceptibility of these churches to fires  
12 and about the evidence being burned and about the  
13 fact that they could be burned anything and the  
14 knowledgeability, and do you have any recommendations  
15 for what might possibly be done about that, and just  
16 in general give us your reactions to those?

17 MR. PRIVETT: All right. Let me answer the  
18 last question first since I'm remembering it a lot  
19 easier. Double ended questions -- I lack -- I can  
20 now understand why -- but as to what can be done, in  
21 addition to the brochures on the church threat  
22 assessment that ATF has at their -- I had found out  
23 last week that one of the local DA's in another  
24 county had sort of like neighborhood watch type  
25 meetings with the ministers of black churches in



1 Talladega County, which has had KLAN activity in the  
2 past.

3 And the district attorney over there in fact  
4 called those meetings. I found out about it and am  
5 going to -- one of the things I was going to do this  
6 afternoon is before I realized I was supposed to be  
7 here at the request of the Department of Justice, was  
8 to get out a mailing to the -- all of the sheriffs,  
9 all of the district attorneys and all of the police  
10 chiefs in the 31 counties in my district that include  
11 that information, so that they can assist us in  
12 getting the information distributed throughout the  
13 district and throughout the state, because I think  
14 that the sharing of information is extremely  
15 important.

16 The federal government cannot prevent these  
17 fires from happening. We can't do the job alone. We  
18 have got to have the support of local law  
19 enforcement, local fire prevention people, as well.  
20 And so my -- I think my task and my responsibility is  
21 to do what I can do in that regard to get the  
22 information out to encourage my fellow law  
23 enforcement officers to work in their own communities  
24 at fire prevention and preventing this from  
25 happening, at putting together coalitions, to try and

1 prevent this happening in communities, because that's  
2 not something that I as U.S. Attorney can do.

3 All I can do is to give them the information  
4 and encourage it. I can't prevent it.

5 MS. BERRY: How did you federal law enforcement  
6 officials get yourself in the position that everybody  
7 is looking to you to solve this, when really it's a  
8 state and local responsibility, and now you say the  
9 obvious, which is you don't have the resources, you  
10 don't have enough people to go out and watch over  
11 churches or go solve this, but yet everybody is  
12 looking to you to do it.

13 For example, is anybody out watching these  
14 churches tonight, even the ones here in Greene  
15 County? You don't --

16 MR. PRIVETT: I don't have the answer to that  
17 obviously. And I think that -- we do have a role to  
18 play, particularly in whether our allegations that a  
19 hate crime is a motivation here, because we do have  
20 jurisdiction there, and we are -- were it not for the  
21 assumption that there was some motivation, some  
22 racial motivation, we wouldn't have jurisdiction  
23 really to be involved, at least the FBI would not.

24 So we are making that assumption, but we don't  
25 have the evidence to support it in order to further

1 the investigations.

2 Now, your first question had to do with my  
3 optimism about whether or not this case is going to  
4 be solved. I am extremely hopeful that it will be  
5 solved. I desperately want it to be -- want them to  
6 be solved. In terms of making predictions about what  
7 case is going to be solved, I learned a long time ago  
8 that's not my job, I can't do that. —

9 All I can do is put my best efforts into it,  
10 encourage the people who work with me and for me to  
11 do their best jobs and to work as hard on it, as  
12 creatively as possible, and I think in my respects  
13 we've done that and Rob Langford talked about being  
14 frustrated. I share that.

15 MR. MAX: Caryl, thank you very much, and to  
16 you and Rob Langford, Jim Cavanaugh, there is a  
17 community that is crying out for you so we wish you  
18 luck and hope that it comes soon.

19 Pam Montgomery, Citizens for a Better Greene  
20 County. Is she here? Pam Montgomery? All right,  
21 let's go H. O. Kirksey. Mr. Kirksey, Citizens for a  
22 Better Greene County and writer for Greene County  
23 Independence. Good seeing you, Mr. Kirksey.

24 MR. KIRKSEY: Mr. Chairman, Doctor, and other  
25 members of the staff. I received a letter to come to a

1 discussion of race relations before and after the church  
2 burnings.

3           It has been my experience to see that most of  
4 the conversation has been about not concerning racial  
5 issues, and I -- Pam Montgomery had an emergency and she  
6 will not be able to come and I would just like to thank  
7 you for asking me to come, but I have some priorities in  
8 being here.

9           When I walked in, I agree with the -- I went  
10 through and expectations that I don't usually associate  
11 myself with, and there were some remarks made here about  
12 certain things. I think there are some people in the  
13 audience here, if you will ask those people, they could  
14 answer those question for you, such as why there is no  
15 air conditioning and these kind of things here.

16           So I won't tolerate you with a lot rhetoric. I  
17 would just like to say I would like to make some  
18 statements to this Commission but under the conditions  
19 and the reasons one has here -- I will refuse to make any  
20 statements unless myself and those other people who have  
21 made these accusations are put under oath, because there  
22 has been a lot of untruth here, a lot of total untruth.  
23 Some people are not fond of the camera. Some people  
24 every time the camera come on, you see their faces on it.

25           And I want to ask why that happens. So I think

1 if this was a different type where people could be held  
2 accountable to what they say, I think I would be more  
3 willing to contribute to it.

4 Thank you for having me here.

5 MR. MAX: Mr. Kirksey, you spoke to us a few  
6 weeks ago when we were I think in Sumter County. You  
7 were most articulate, spoke very well of what you saw  
8 and observed, and I want you to know that the reason  
9 you're back tonight is because we respected what you  
10 had to say then and it would be most helpful to us --  
11 now, would you be willing to respond to some  
12 questions that we may have of you?

13 MR. KIRKSEY: Well, let me make one other  
14 statement. Then maybe I'll answer some questions.

15 Pam Montgomery and I founded an organization  
16 here in Greene County called the Citizens for a Better  
17 Greene County, and as far as the racial conditions are  
18 concerned, our positions in this organization and most  
19 people that I deal with that I see, and I deal with most  
20 of the people here in Greene County, our problems is not  
21 interracial, it's intraracial.

22 Now, what do you mean by that? Our problems  
23 are black against black basically. Now, I heard some  
24 remarks made by some people prior to my coming and they  
25 make those remarks everywhere they go, but nobody ever

1 tries to make improving themselves.

2 I would like to have a situation where you can  
3 get under oath so you can be held accountable for some of  
4 these kind of statements. I prefer not to make -- there  
5 were some impugning of personalities and I don't want to  
6 do that. There were some references present and I refuse  
7 to do that, so I think that should be done under a  
8 different situation. This is a public meeting and I just  
9 wouldn't --

10 MR. MAX: We appreciate the fact that avoiding  
11 the personalities is what we want to also avoid.  
12 What we do want to do though is to get into the issue  
13 of race relations, and if I may ask you this, you are  
14 a part of this organization, Citizens for a Better  
15 Greene County. It is a bi-racial group; correct?

16 MR. KIRKSEY: Yes, it is.

17 MR. MAX: How long has it been formed?

18 MR. KIRKSEY: About over three -- just over  
19 three years.

20 MR. MAX: How often do you meet?

21 MR. KIRKSEY: Monthly.

22 MR. MAX: And how many members do you have?

23 MR. KIRKSEY: We have over 600 registered  
24 members.

25 MR. MAX: And when you meet on a once a month

1 basis, how many people attend?

2 MR. KIRKSEY: It varies. Depends on what the  
3 agenda is.

4 MR. MAX: I can understand. As many as what an  
5 as few as what on a month basis?

6 MR. KIRKSEY: As many as 180 and as few as 55  
7 or 60.

8 MR. MAX: I see. And what issues do you deal  
9 with?

10 MR. KIRKSEY: We don't -- we don't deal with  
11 racial issues, because we don't have a racial issue in  
12 this organization. This organization is bi-racial by-  
13 law, and it is about 50-50, white and black, and those  
14 who come seek to make living better in Greene County. We  
15 do talk about the voting situation here and I think some  
16 lady said that she don't vote in Alabama, but I got news  
17 for her, she could have if she had talked to the right  
18 ones.

19 MR. MAX: I want to stay away from  
20 personalities. I want to ask you this. In terms of  
21 getting together and making it for a better  
22 community, what does the group do to do that?

23 MR. KIRKSEY: We promote standard meetings. We  
24 are busy organizing other counties and we have six other  
25 counties organized, of which we have an umbrella group

1 that governs most of the black belt, and we are all  
2 working on the same basis to basically came together to  
3 try to have a fair relation and to have fair  
4 opportunities for everybody.

5           Now, there was something mentioned here about  
6 integrating the schools. There was an attempt to  
7 integrate the schools and the Board of Education didn't -  
8 - so it's not that these things have not been tried, and  
9 race relations are good, where people want them to be,  
10 and they are not good where there's an advantage for the  
11 other people.

12           MR. MAX: Mr. Kirksey, one last question from  
13 me. We have found in our community that getting  
14 together at monthly meetings or weekly meetings -- as  
15 a matter of fact, I've got a couple good friends here  
16 -- who have got very frustrated with just a meeting,  
17 because sometimes I think the word is you can talk  
18 the talk and walk the walk, but that's all you're  
19 going to do is meet, greet and you're not going to  
20 get anywhere.

21           And but I will say this, there is a good  
22 purpose for dialogue in that you get to know one  
23 another better, and by getting to know one another  
24 you get to trust one another, and by trusting you  
25 begin to deal together, but there is an extent to



1 which talking, talking, talking gets nowhere and  
2 people get frustrated.

3 What -- and you're a new organization and some  
4 organizations where I am have been meeting since the  
5 60's and are still talking. Now, what do you see in  
6 your group getting beyond the talking stage and  
7 perhaps dealing with more sensitive issues that may  
8 be in people's guts that they may not want to be put  
9 on the table? What's being done to try to get that  
10 out and do something about it?

11 MR. KIRKSEY: We are acting as a conduit  
12 between local and government. We have meetings with the  
13 governor's office. We have meetings with the secretary  
14 of state's office, the attorney general. In fact, down  
15 in Montgomery -- Tuesday and meet with those people on a  
16 regular basis. I am a member of the Alabama Health  
17 Department, the CON Board, and I'm also a member of the  
18 Sick -- Voting -- so I have contact with all of those  
19 people there, and I -- all of this racial stuff is -- a  
20 planned situation. I don't think most people want to  
21 live in those conditions now.

22 I find that they're now on -- whites are as  
23 anxious as blacks and vice versa to not have this kind of  
24 situation.

25 Let me say one other thing. We give two

1 scholarships each year and we just promote -- we organize  
2 to watch over voting places free of charge. We don't  
3 charge for anything we do. Everything we do is on  
4 relations.

5           And we've made a difference here, and that is  
6 why you're hear a cry about this organization all the  
7 time. This administration is totally against the  
8 organization, and I can see the reason why and -- if you  
9 knew as much as I do, you would see the reason also.

10           But we are planning to sponsor a voter  
11 education class and we're working on some things and we  
12 go to the people and get their ideas and what they would  
13 like to have, and we have no problem at all, no problem  
14 at all.

15           MS. WELLS: Well, as an organization by the  
16 name of Citizens for a Better Greene County, can you  
17 go from this meeting tonight to your organization and  
18 come up with some plans, some suggestions that came  
19 out of tonight's meeting that would make this county  
20 a better county?

21           MR. KIRKSEY: Possibly. Possibly, but I've  
22 heard no -- no -- tonight, and you don't deal in  
23 negatives, the situation -- I cast those aside.

24           MR. MUNCHES: I've just got one short question.  
25           Since you're a writer for this Green County

1 Independent, if you know --

2 MR. KIRKSEY: The Greene County Independence.

3 MR. MUNCHES: The Greene County Independent,  
4 what is the history of this Greene County  
5 Independent, and if you know if it's independently  
6 owned by a local family or is it owned by some  
7 corporate entity like Scripps Howard or New House, or  
8 is it owned by a local family which lives here in  
9 Greene County?

10 MR. KIRKSEY: This newspaper is owned by black  
11 and white citizens and it's co-owned by black and white  
12 citizens.

13 MR. GRAY: Mr. Kirksey, you mentioned that you  
14 see many of the problems in Greene County as being  
15 intraracial. I think I've referred to Greene County  
16 as the active kingdom. Let me ask you this. If  
17 whites were in control politically in Greene County,  
18 do you think this coalition would exist?

19 MR. KIRKSEY: Possibly would, if I had anything  
20 to do with it. But we are --

21 MR. GRAY: You say it like that, you had  
22 anything to do with it? If white were in control, do  
23 you think they really would -- there would be a need  
24 for a coalition for a better Greene County?

25 MR. KIRKSEY: There probably would be. There

1 probably would be.

2 MR. GRAY: What would the coalition work  
3 toward? What would be their agenda?

4 MR. KIRKSEY: I'm not able to tell you. I'm  
5 not able to tell you that, because I don't know anything  
6 about what would have been. We're not dealing in the  
7 past. That's our problem. We're not -- we deal too much  
8 in the past. Of course the past matters, it does matter.  
9 But if you keep dealing in the past, the future is going  
10 to leave you standing right there. So we just don't deal  
11 in the past. We go for the future. We plan for today  
12 and tomorrow.

13 MS. BERRY: I have a couple questions, Mr.  
14 Kirksey. The Commission on Civil Rights has done  
15 several reports on Greene County. And I referred to  
16 this earlier, and we have uniformly found in the  
17 reports we did on Greene County segregation and  
18 public education. We have uniformly found a lack of  
19 economic development, great poverty, economic  
20 disparity, employment disparity, poor whites and  
21 blacks. We found some blacks with political power  
22 but no economic power.

23 We have found racial tensions uniformly. We  
24 have found these problems to exist in Greene County.  
25 What has your group done about economic development

1 in Greene County or alleviating school segregation in  
2 Greene County, or do you believe that these are  
3 problems in Greene County and do you believe that  
4 racial hostility is a problem in Greene County?

5 MR. KIRKSEY: Let me ask you a question and  
6 then I'll answer your question. Where did you get your  
7 information at?

8 MS. BERRY: From the Census of the United  
9 States, number one, the data, part of the data. From  
10 interviews and reserach of -- and fact sheets on the  
11 numbers of people who are in education, the separate  
12 academy that exists in Greene County, which I have  
13 visited on more than one occasion.

14 MR. KIRKSEY: What year was that?

15 MS. BERRY: Today. I went there. Today.

16 MR. KIRKSEY: You're talking --

17 MS. BERRY: Today I went there, not years ago  
18 but today.

19 MR. KIRKSEY: Okay.

20 MS. BERRY: This afternoon, as a matter of  
21 fact.

22 MR. KIRKSEY: Very good.

23 MS. BERRY: And so the information that I have  
24 is not only based on research, but it's also based on  
25 statistical reports and talking to people and

1 actually observation, so I'm just wondering what you  
2 think -- whether you think these problems exist and  
3 what your group, or what do you think we should do  
4 about it?

5 MR. KIRKSEY: I didn't say they didn't exist.  
6 They exist everywhere.

7 MS. BERRY: Are there separate swimming pools  
8 in Greene County -- in Eutaw or --

9 MR. KIRKSEY: There are two swimming pools in a  
10 lot of cities.

11 MS. BERRY: Yes.

12 MR. KIRKSEY: They can swim in either pool they  
13 want. There is no restriction.

14 MR. KIRKSEY: So in your view there's no race  
15 problem in Greene County?

16 MR. KIRKSEY: No, I didn't say that. You must  
17 been talking to our present governor. You sound as if  
18 you talked to our present governor.

19 MS. BERRY: I wish I could. Go ahead.

20 MR. KIRKSEY: I mean our local governor.

21 MS. BERRY: Yeah.

22 MR. KIRKSEY: There's racism everywhere and  
23 you'll not be able to stamp out the racism and such.  
24 Now, you have done all this but nobody has ever -- about  
25 these things, and I've been fighting here in Greene

1 County since 1979. I was carried to federal court  
2 because of my position on these things, but nobody ever  
3 says anything to me about it -- just -- I'm not saying  
4 you didn't feel it -- evidently you've been talking to  
5 the wrong people.

6 MS. BERRY: Talking to the wrong people?

7 MR. KIRKSEY: Yes, ma'am.

8 MS. BERRY: I'm talking to you.

9 MR. KIRKSEY: Well, I'm telling you it is not  
10 true.

11 MS. BERRY: Okay. It's not true that there's a  
12 segregation in the school system in Greene County?

13 MR. KIRKSEY: It is segregated, but by choice.

14 MS. BERRY: Oh, okay. Well, I don't have any  
15 questions --

16 MR. KIRKSEY: Didn't you hear me when I first  
17 came on, there was an attempt to integrate the schools?  
18 You left -- and that was turned down -- and that has been  
19 my effort ever since I been here. And you probably seen  
20 fliers around here with my name on them and some other  
21 people, but there are more than 600 people here in Greene  
22 County that -- different from what you are saying.

23 MR. MAX: Let me say this. While it is worthy  
24 for a community to bring itself together, and I  
25 applaud all those who are attempting to do that, I

1 think at the same time you cannot forget the past. I  
2 think that you've got to make sure that the past  
3 doesn't get repeated by understanding and dealing  
4 with the past, and I couldn't help but driving from  
5 Birmingham up Highway 59 to take a look on the left  
6 in Advance, Alabama and see this incredible facility  
7 called I think it's Mercedes, and to see that I think  
8 they have some sign up there about a thousand people  
9 getting jobs, and as I passed Tuscaloosa, coming from  
10 Tuscaloosa here, I saw nothing, and I've got to say  
11 that if there is a group of well-minded individuals  
12 in Greene County, Sumter County, Boligee, Eutaw, I  
13 think you need to sit around a table and begin to  
14 talk to another.

15 The papers, as great as they may be, can divide  
16 you and have divided you, but papers -- papers should  
17 not get in the way of the poverty. They should not  
18 be the ones that get in the way of an education  
19 system where people aren't graduating. If it is --  
20 if some want to think that it is my choice and others  
21 want to say that it is not, I think it's in the  
22 results where kids aren't graduating and those that  
23 are leaving and not coming back, I see that as a  
24 problem that needs to be deal with by right-minded  
25 citizens who are willing to have the courage to deal



1 with it, whatever color, whatever religion it is.

2 If there is segregation, as there is in many  
3 communities, not only in Alabama but around the  
4 country, that are segregated 11 o'clock on Sunday, I  
5 think it behooves us in Alabama -- I think every time  
6 there is an civil rights issue, Alabama gets  
7 targeted. We need in Alabama to be doing something  
8 about it.

9 Now, we can blame the governor, which we have  
10 and we will continue. We can blame newspapers. We  
11 have and we will continue, but the right-minded  
12 citizens of this area must begin to see that it is  
13 going to happen, it's going to happen among us. It's  
14 got to begin to happen among us. Race relations  
15 doesn't just begin to happen.

16 It is not by some federal government or some  
17 Commission coming and saying it and blessing that  
18 it's bad or good and all of a sudden there's supposed  
19 to be a change.

20 If nothing else we've got to leave here and  
21 begin to say the heck with the problems -- it divides  
22 you, but if you're interest in getting together,  
23 let's start working at it.

24 Now, I'm not here to be any holier than thou,  
25 because I'm as much of the problem as you are. Let

1 me say it again. I am as much of the problem as you  
2 are.

3 Now, I really appreciate you agreeing at least  
4 to come to the podium, Mr. Kirksey. I applaud the  
5 efforts of your group. I do hope though that your  
6 community can begin to heal itself and I would like  
7 at this time -- are there any other questions of Mr.  
8 Kirksey? Because I would like if possible --

9 MR. KIRKSEY: I'd like to make one more  
10 statement, please.

11 MR. MAX: As you make that statement, I'll let  
12 Michael --

13 MR. KIRKSEY: I think you said in your  
14 statement we should come together. That's our purpose.  
15 That is our purpose. That organization is not -- does  
16 not keep any person away from it according to race,  
17 color, creed, but it does require people to have some  
18 kind of stature and some ideal right and some chance of  
19 wanting a change.

20 Now, I'd like to say that I wish -- I think I  
21 extended this invitation to you before. I wish you would  
22 come to one of our meetings. I wish -- we would be glad  
23 to have you come to one of our meetings. I think there  
24 are several members still around here that are members of  
25 that organization -- but I don't think they've gotten out

1 of this meeting really what they want to get out of it.

2 MR. MAX: Thank you.

3 MR. DAVIS: Sir, I am a father and if it's true  
4 that children are our greatest resource, and I  
5 believe it's true -- their future -- eventually pass  
6 on -- I'm curious to note what are you and your group  
7 and other people doing to educate -- I mean, what I'm  
8 hearing and what I've heard over the last few months  
9 is that you really do have a very segregated  
10 educational system here, so on and so forth.

11 What are you all doing in your opinion to  
12 enhance the ability that your children won't be what  
13 you've become, and I'm not trying to make a judgment  
14 call. I'm just responding to what I've heard.

15 MR. KIRKSEY: There is no one earth that care  
16 more about the children than I do. I spent part of my  
17 retirement, part of my earnings -- have you ever come to  
18 Greene County? Have you ever asked what was done with  
19 over \$200 million in the 16 years -- what happened to it?  
20 And that's the -- they were talking about bringing  
21 industry here.

22 Twelve of our local people had organized and  
23 went through this county commission, not asking for  
24 money, asking for a lease of some county property, on  
25 which to build a building which would immediately employ

1 175 people or more, and they turned it down flat and went  
2 to Kentucky and got two pieces that they had to furnish  
3 all the money for.

4           See, we -- that money that was put into that  
5 building they were talking about was sent to Greene  
6 County to be distributed upon local entrepreneurs. See.  
7 And that was completed, at most it would employ 25  
8 people, and none of them will come from Greene County,  
9 because nobody there -- didn't have any -- to work there.

10           So these are the things you don't know about.  
11 See. What are they doing now? They have the money --  
12 they have all the money --

13           MS. BERRY: I directed the question to you.

14           MR. KIRKSEY: We are organizing trying to get a  
15 leeway to gain some control here, some equity. We are  
16 totally left out.

17           MS. WELLS: Do you understand though, you point  
18 is that God did -- history is probably going to  
19 repeat itself if something is not done immediately.

20           MR. KIRKSEY: Color -- tell him. Okay. We  
21 appreciate it.

22           MR. MAX: While we're talking about communities  
23 coming together, I think those of you who have been  
24 at the church several months ago, several of you who  
25 were at the meeting that the Commission had several

1 weeks ago, you have seen a group coming from  
2 Birmingham. They've quietly sat in the back. At  
3 times they've been asked to speak briefly.

4 They're here again tonight. They're here not  
5 just to tell you that they have the answer, because  
6 none of us have the answer. But they're here because  
7 they are concerned. They want to reach out, be part  
8 of your community, by way of helping, and perhaps  
9 some of the examples of our failures, as well as some  
10 of our successes will e of assistance to you.

11 And I would like to take a few brief moments to  
12 first of all recognize them. Reverend Woods. Would  
13 you come on up just one second perhaps and address  
14 the group?

15 Next to you is Colonel Stonewall, Sadie Slane,  
16 LaMar Washington, with NCCJ, Glen Hicks, Heads up  
17 Magic in our area -- Justice -- Organization -- I'd  
18 like to give one or two of them an opportunity to  
19 talk to you about what is happening at Birmingham,  
20 not that it's all good, because we've got problems in  
21 Birmingham and I'm sure you're going to hear some of  
22 them -- but what may be done by a group and you see  
23 that there are black and whites and we're from all  
24 different denominations, what we attempt to do in  
25 coming together.

1 Reverend Woods.

2 REVEREND WOODS: Thank you. I did not expect  
3 to come before the mike, but I'll welcome any  
4 opportunity. A long time Baptist preacher, and a civil  
5 rights struggle ever since the 50's. And I certainly did  
6 not want to miss this hearing.

7 I want to applaud you as an example of what can  
8 be done when black and whites get together. I have been  
9 a part of various meetings, of whites and blacks, and so  
10 often what it boils down to is just talk, and I don't go  
11 to too many of the sessions now because I just don't have  
12 time for a lot of rhetoric and dialogue and after that  
13 nothing is done.

14 It reminds me sometimes of what happened in  
15 church after the singing and the preaching and the  
16 shouting. So many of the parishioners go out and that's  
17 the end of it. But we have to do something after  
18 discussion and after talk.

19 I cannot forget your coming forward in  
20 Birmingham. So many times my voice was the lone voice  
21 speaking about issues and I have quite a bit of notoriety  
22 there because I don't pull any punches, and I cannot  
23 forget that when Rodney King was beaten brutally, and  
24 when we had some deaths by the skinheads in Birmingham,  
25 that you were a white brother that came forward and I

1 wanted to know whether or not you were just going to do  
2 that talk and not walk that walk.

3           And I don't have much respect for those who do  
4 the talk and don't walk the walk, but I want to say that  
5 you did walk the walk. You called it like it was and you  
6 became unpopular with some people, but we have to deal  
7 with the truth. It's just the truth and the truth shall  
8 make you free.

9           Frankly, to tell you the truth, after you  
10 started marching with us and speaking out and trying to  
11 change things, we had some good blacks who had been  
12 avoiding us and never did march with us, but when you  
13 started marching with us, they came from everywhere, and  
14 I wondered why they didn't march before you came. I  
15 don't know whether it was your complexion or what it was.

16           But Birmingham is -- used to be a tragic city,  
17 and it's on its way to be the magic city. It used to be  
18 called Bombingham and we can now call it Birmingham, but  
19 what's happening to these black churches is nothing new.

20           We came out of a situation there where one  
21 section of our community was called Dynamite Hill, and  
22 our churches, our homes and of course you know the thing  
23 that shift this nation was the bombing of 16th Street  
24 Baptist Church, and the death of those innocent little  
25 girls.

1           And I listened to my friend Rob Langford and  
2 God bless him, Rob has been to my church and he sat  
3 through all of my service and we last -- I preach a long  
4 time, and we don't turn off early, and I thought Rob  
5 would make his speech and leave but Rob stayed through it  
6 all, and I can appreciate Rob being open and sensitive  
7 and that sort of thing, and I don't know whether he's  
8 still here or not, but my jury is still out on Rob.

9           I'm still looking to see whether or not Rob is  
10 sincere because we have been so pained and hurt by the  
11 FBI down through the years. I sit and listen to the  
12 deception and I'm glad to be in this same building with  
13 this great personality, Dr. Mary Frances Berry. I've  
14 taught for 33 years and I used some book -- memory. I  
15 just wanted to know when she's going to update that book  
16 because I don't want to change, and I sat and listened to  
17 you talking about the relationship that we've had with  
18 the FBI.

19           We're hopeful that it's going to change but my  
20 jury is still out. I had one good FBI agent wanted to  
21 carry me to a religious group. They said that you come  
22 up, carry me, go to lunch, and I told him I would, but  
23 then I got to thinking about it, that maybe he just  
24 wanted to infiltrate me and investigate me, so I didn't  
25 go with him, you see, so we're still sensitive to these



1 kinds of things.

2           But you didn't get me up here to do all this  
3 talking. I think if the FBI -- and I hope that they're  
4 really serious and sincere, but when I see that they  
5 didn't talk to the black DA here, I have some serious  
6 problems with that.

7           When I see they don't want to black judge to be  
8 involved, I have some serious problems with that. It  
9 looks like more of the same thing. We thought if they  
10 had caught those perpetrators who bombed 16th Street  
11 Baptist Church, that a lot of the bombings and maybe the  
12 fires that have been set would not be going on.

13           It took a brave man, Attorney General Axley, to  
14 convict one of them. The FBI had all of that information  
15 and that information on all of the rest of them, but did  
16 not come forward and take anybody to court. You see, now  
17 I want to be optimistic, but I'm still looking and I have  
18 to look real hard. You've got to convince me that you're  
19 willing to change, but things can take place, Rob.  
20 Again, I want to commend you because we have a coalition  
21 against hate crimes and we stand up and we march.

22           We seek to bring about change and time is out  
23 for and black and white group to come together just to  
24 eat and greet. You've got to do more than that.

25           I don't come to meetings because I want to have

1 some socialization and relationship with white folk. I  
2 don't have to have that. I come to meetings with my  
3 white brethrens and sisters because we need to deal with  
4 the problem and it's all of our problem and certainly if  
5 we can do anything, whatever we can do to help from  
6 Birmingham, Birmingham is a better ham, it's not -- it's  
7 going to be better, but a whole lot can happen and again,  
8 I want to thank all of the members of this Commission, my  
9 good friend Brother Mark there, he gets a little  
10 obnoxious sometimes, just like I am. Has quite a bit of  
11 notoriety.

12           But you have to stand up and tell the truth,  
13 whether people like it or not, and so we wouldn't be  
14 anywhere but down here in Birmingham, down here in  
15 Boligee from Birmingham, Alabama, because Birmingham  
16 certainly -- thank God for Montgomery -- the capital of  
17 the civil rights movement. Nowhere in this country did  
18 four or five thousand people go to jail and fill them up  
19 and stay there and pays the dogs, the water hoses and  
20 everything else, so we still got a fire burning in  
21 Birmingham that cannot be put out and as I take my seat,  
22 Rob, I'd like to say this.

23           I'm going to echo what Jessie Jackson has said,  
24 it's not enough to just find some people who set the  
25 fires and stop that. We've got to do something about the

1 atmosphere, the incendiary atmosphere and the climate and  
2 a lot of that is emanated from our high political  
3 position out of Washington, D.C. and some of our other  
4 places all around the country.

5           The atmosphere of the climate is charged and  
6 when the atmosphere takes on certain forms, you're going  
7 to have some tornadoes. You're going to have some fires  
8 and that sort of thing, so you've got to do more than  
9 that and I'm grateful that groups like the Coalition  
10 Against Hate Crimes in Birmingham, that it's seeking not  
11 only to try to help rebuild the churches but to do  
12 something about the atmosphere.

13           Birmingham -- it must be done here, God bless  
14 Brother Kirksey, but you've got to do more than eat and  
15 greet. You've got to do more than come together. You've  
16 got face the issues and that's not going to be easy. God  
17 bless you and God keep you.

18           We are from Birmingham and we are proud of it  
19 and we got some political power up there. We got some  
20 SCIBIS civil rights, but we are a long way from having  
21 our s-i-l-v -- civil rights, Sister Berry.

22           MR. MAX: Thank you very much. Let me say  
23 this. We have not healed in Birmingham yet. We are  
24 trying and what Reverend Woods is saying is standing  
25 up against the hate of these churches is one thing.

1 What we're trying to do in Birmingham is reach out to  
2 everyone here, please join us in Birmingham on July  
3 16th.

4 It is our way of saying to you we not only want  
5 to rebuild these churches, we want to help rebuild  
6 community and by coming here -- not to say here's how  
7 we do it in Birmingham, forget that, but how do we do  
8 it in Alabama and we do it in whites and blacks and  
9 Christians and Jews and please come to Birmingham on  
10 July 16th and join us for an evening of brotherhood  
11 and sisterhood where we can heal together.

12 I feel we need to move on due to the lateness  
13 of the hour. I want to go back to our program where  
14 you see the Honorable Buddy Lavender, Mayor of  
15 Boligee, next on the agenda. We'd like to give him  
16 an opportunity to speak.

17 MAYOR LAVENDER: I'd like to take this  
18 opportunity to thank the Commission for coming down and  
19 taking up time to hear our complaints and listening to  
20 us.

21 I'm real disappointed tonight the that real  
22 issue hasn't hit the tables. We hadn't talked about what  
23 the problems are here. We come here and call names and  
24 accuse everybody of doing, and what I had hoped that this  
25 forum would do, would come and bring the races together

1 and talk and let the healing begin, and this hasn't  
2 happened tonight, and I'm real disappointed in it, and I  
3 want to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Caryl and Mr.  
4 Cavanaugh and Mr. Langford for responding when I called  
5 them into this case.

6 I want to thank them for responding in and  
7 working closely with us to try to solve these problems  
8 before I go into it.

9 The first issue that I haven't heard tonight is  
10 an issue that Paul Harvey broke about two weeks ago here  
11 and he stated that 49 churches have burned in the last 18  
12 months.

13 Of this 49, 23 of these churches were white. A  
14 couple of days ago the Tuscaloosa News, which I have  
15 here, reported this not on Page 1, but Page 4, and this  
16 is another article here, they say suspicious fires have  
17 hit more than 40 churches in the south in the last 18  
18 months.

19 Federal authorities have investigated  
20 suspicious fires in a roughly equal amount of white  
21 churches during this same period of time, and we haven't  
22 heard a word about it in the media or nowhere else, and I  
23 don't think we're getting a fair shake here.

24 All right. Our next thing is reported that the  
25 white churches in Boligee were driven by when my own

1 church in Boligee, the Boligee Presbyterian Church, has  
2 been set on fire two different times in the last ten or  
3 15 years, not in the last month, but it's been set on  
4 fire. You don't read that in the newspaper at all.

5           They may only report things that causes tension  
6 between the races, and that's a shame. That's a bad  
7 shame. They're not reporting the truth. We have people  
8 that leave Washington and New York and come down here  
9 with one perception in their mind, they're not getting  
10 down here finding that and they write what they want to  
11 write and not the truth, and that hurts the community.

12           We are here to discuss racial relations. We do  
13 not have a problem as black and white or have it as black  
14 and whites. We do not have a problem -- I feel we get  
15 along well, but as far as job opportunist in Greene  
16 County, if you're not correctly politically aligned, you  
17 cannot get a job, whether you're black, white -- the  
18 organization does not hire people that are qualified, but  
19 they hire people that are politically aligned in here.

20           One perfect example is our school system. They  
21 claim the whites left the public school because they were  
22 integrated. I know for a fact this is not true because  
23 my oldest son graduated from an integrated school in  
24 Greene County.

25           They left the public school system because of a

1 degree of quality of education here and not only the  
2 white children left this education system, but the upper  
3 and middle grade blacks also left this school system and  
4 got to other counties for it to seek a better education.

5 I have been informed that the amount of work  
6 investigating, what is wrong with our education system,  
7 this federally funded system is for the public and not  
8 for a selected view.

9 Federal moneys come into this school system and  
10 the -- have racial imbalanced faculty, administration and  
11 supervisor staff in the central office. If you can count  
12 how many whites have been teaching in this county but to  
13 make it easy, let me say how many whites are in  
14 administration or in the central office in Greene County?

15 When this system allows such conduct as what is  
16 happened in this system, the quality -- the guilty party  
17 are given promotions and raises and the problems, they  
18 should not be allowed in any school system, and I will  
19 talk to you later on that.

20 I have been saddened this morning by the  
21 treatment that I have received recently from certain  
22 people about the church burnings. I feel that the devil  
23 works in all people, even preachers. I feel like they  
24 need to ask their maker for forgiveness, for I've already  
25 forgiven them and even after all the harsh treatment I

1 received, I still love them and I intend to help them  
2 rebuild our churches. I'm a pretty touch fellow and it  
3 takes more than few ugly words to put me down or run me  
4 off.

5           What you really don't understand is that I grew  
6 up in this community and I have lived here since 1935. I  
7 wanted Boligee go from a thriving industrial city to a  
8 city with one store and a post office. I have raised  
9 most of these people that -- I have lived -- I have  
10 helped raise most of these people that continue to bad  
11 mouth me and have watched them and their children grow  
12 up. I have been mayor in this city for more than 20  
13 years, and you don't achieve this goal by being dishonest  
14 and unfair.

15           But most important, I have two interests in  
16 this affair, is to catch the guilty party and see that  
17 they are punished and see that these churches be rebuilt  
18 and see that these races come together, and we have one  
19 more opportunity for this, and there was a mercury --  
20 there -- what the people in Greene County wanted to do,  
21 black and white go down on the weekends and have like a  
22 barn razing and work together, women fix lunch and bring  
23 down and that was a wonderful opportunity for people to  
24 get together and talk, get to know one another, and start  
25 some -- and that did not come about.



1 MR. MAX: Mayor, can I ask you why?

2 MAYOR LAVENDER: Pardon?

3 MR. MAX: Why?

4 MAYOR LAVENDER: I don't know why. I'm  
5 wondering myself why.

6 MR. MAX: What was done to try to --

7 MAYOR LAVENDER: Well, they rejected the  
8 efforts --

9 MR. MAX: When you say they --

10 MAYOR LAVENDER: The preachers and the people  
11 around rejected the efforts of the local people to work.  
12 You can go to any of these churches today and you don't  
13 find any local people working around these churches to  
14 rebuild these churches, because these efforts have been  
15 rejected.

16 MR. MAX: Well, Anne asked the question a  
17 little earlier, when you're dealing with churches,  
18 and yes, they're segregated all over the country,  
19 it's no different than here, but what efforts have  
20 been done with you as the public leader of the area,  
21 and perhaps you can through the constituencies that  
22 keep you in office and put you in office, do you have  
23 the ability to perhaps through the a ministerial  
24 association or the creation of a ministerial  
25 association, reaching out to the ministers of the

1 various Catholic, Protestant, Methodist, whatever,  
2 and through their leadership bring some --

3 MAYOR LAVENDER: I met with the ministerial  
4 association and the white ministerial association. They  
5 had a fund. We met up there and the black ministers was  
6 invited to come. They did not come to that meeting.  
7 They was -- you know, offered -- one of the churches in  
8 Eutaw as a place of worship and that offer was rejected.

9 MR. MAX: In other words, what did the white  
10 ministers agree to do?

11 MAYOR LAVENDER: Well, they offered help. They  
12 were willing to help and I can't speak for the white  
13 ministers, but after all of the accusations come up in  
14 the treatment and all, they pulled completely out of it.  
15 They are not in the fund raising business or anything any  
16 more, and it's sad. It's sad that we can't come together  
17 and work together as one people instead of a black race  
18 and a white race, and we need to be one people in this  
19 community.

20 MR. MAX: I agree with you. Let me ask you a  
21 question. Let's move to a topic of economic  
22 development. Do you see it in the best interest of  
23 the City of Boligee for there to be a group that's  
24 called a task force of white and black men and women  
25 who could discuss together what could be done to

1 bring business and economic development to this area?  
2 Has that been done?

3 MAYOR LAVENDER: We have an industrial board,  
4 which is a combined black and white, and we have a little  
5 director that's really active in getting out and trying  
6 to bring business into Greene County and all, and we're  
7 working real hard, but as far as getting a Committee  
8 together other than this bi-racial board that we have,  
9 there's been no effort to bring anything into Greene  
10 County to my knowledge.

11 MR. MAX: You have a beautiful area here and it  
12 would seem to me --

13 MAYOR LAVENDER: The prettiest in the world.

14 MR. MAX: And you would think that by opening  
15 it up and this world is becoming a browning world,  
16 and that is people that come in to see a community  
17 that is all black and white -- we face it in  
18 Birmingham as well, that companies don't like to just  
19 black and white. They like to see the browning of  
20 American.

21 MAYOR LAVENDER: Right.

22 MR. MAX: The ability for a company outside of  
23 our area to be attracted to this beautiful community,  
24 see that kind of task force or committee I think  
25 would --

1           MAYOR LAVENDER: It would be most helpful and I  
2 would be very instrumental in organizing such a task  
3 force, but now let me give you an example in the past.  
4 We had a German firm that was coming in here and going to  
5 put a \$300 million paper plant right across the road over  
6 there.

7           They brought 512 acres for \$1,078,000, and  
8 intended to come in here but then we had people to go to  
9 them and say if you come in here, you're going to hire  
10 such -- this person or that person or this color or that  
11 color, and the German said this is my money, they went to  
12 Oregon and built a plant, and they didn't come here.

13           MR. MAX: Anyone have any particular questions?  
14           Annie.

15           MS. WELLS: Do you think that in your position  
16 as mayor that the time is right for a coalition  
17 against hate crimes or some kind of human relations  
18 commission or some kind of task force on education or  
19 economic development?

20           MAYOR LAVENDER: The time is always right for  
21 anything that's going to better our community. Why  
22 should we wait for a time? Why hasn't this already  
23 happened?

24           MS. WELLS: Well, is that something --

25           MAYOR LAVENDER: Well, we're looking for help

1 from you all to tell us how to do this, and we would  
2 appreciate anything that you all can suggest to us to  
3 bring us together and help build this community into a  
4 beautiful community that it is, something that I can be  
5 proud of instead of when I go off, I don't want to say  
6 that I'm from Greene County, you know.

7 MS. BERRY: I have a couple questions. Mayor,  
8 we spent some time together today and it was very  
9 informative to me, and -- but now after I listen to  
10 your testimony I'm beginning to understand why we  
11 have such a problem here.

12 And I've been sitting here listening all  
13 evening and part of it is on this issue of why we're  
14 paying attention to black church burnings and not  
15 paying attention to white church burnings.

16 MAYOR LAVENDER: That's certainly a concern of  
17 mine, Dr. Berry.

18 MS. BERRY: Right. How many white churches  
19 have been burned in Boligee in the last six months?

20 MAYOR LAVENDER: None. They've been burned--  
21 but that don't mean that they -

22 MS. BERRY: I just wanted to know.

23 MAYOR LAVENDER: None in the last six months,  
24 no.

25 MS. BERRY: The other thing is, there are about

1 65,000 black churches in the whole country, about  
2 65,000. That's the latest count. There are over  
3 300,000 non-black churches, that is white churches,  
4 and I understand from the data that's been collected  
5 by the federal agents that most of the church arsons  
6 that occurred in the South -- well, since January  
7 1st, 1995, there have been 144, and the arsons --  
8 there are about 80 of white churches and 64 black  
9 churches, and given the disparity in the numbers of  
10 churches, I'm talking about, number of white and  
11 number of black, there clearly are a disproportionate  
12 number of black church arsons.

13 Even more than that, are you aware that racial  
14 motivation has been alleged in the burnings of these  
15 white churches? In other words, are we dealing with  
16 allegations that people are burning white churches  
17 for racial reasons? Such as we're dealing with in  
18 the case of about 70 percent of the black church  
19 burnings?

20 MAYOR LAVENDER: That is a very good  
21 possibility.

22 MS. BERRY: Possibility.

23 MAYOR LAVENDER: Right.

24 MS. BERRY: Okay. Well, then I think we need  
25 to call back to federal agents in charge to ask them

1           whether racial animus has been alleged in the  
2           burnings of the white churches, because to my  
3           knowledge that is not the case, so I want to find out  
4           whether this is true, because from my perspective the  
5           reason why we're here and dealing with this race  
6           issue is to make people address the issue and to not  
7           engage in suspension and belief and before you can  
8           deal with an issue, you have to agree that it is an  
9           issue, and if you don't even agree, how in the world  
10          can you bring people together, so I can sit here all  
11          night long and trying to bring people together, if  
12          you don't even agree that the racial remotivation is  
13          an issue in the case of the black church burnings and  
14          I'm not aware that it's an issue that blacks are  
15          going around burning up all the white churches in the  
16          South -- I haven't heard that, so I want to get the  
17          FBI and the BATF back up here so they can tell us  
18          whether that's the case. I haven't heard it.

19                 MAYOR LAVENDER: I haven't heard it because we  
20          didn't even know until two weeks ago the amount of white  
21          churches that had been burned so if they're not  
22          disclosing the amount of white churches that have been  
23          burned, how can they disclose other evidence of --

24                 MS. BERRY: I gather it in the newspaper, on  
25          the television, it's been in hearings. I've got the

1 numbers, but let's hear from them because I think  
2 that before we can discuss coming together, we have  
3 to have a basis on which we can do that, and that  
4 what I was hoping is everybody understood that there  
5 was a problem.

6 The question was we --

7 MAYOR LAVENDER: There's a problem here and  
8 that's what this Committee is here tonight for is to try  
9 to help us solve this problem -

10 MS. BERRY: Right.

11 MR. MAX: And come together with suggestions  
12 that you're here -- but I feel want to reiterate what  
13 Mr. Kirksey said, I think everybody here out to have  
14 been under oath tonight, and so we would have to tell  
15 the truth. I think there should be come  
16 accountability of these funds coming in here that's  
17 come to build these churches.

18 I think there should be full accountability,  
19 you know, and when you put us under oath, it's not  
20 just the few that's going to tell the truth,  
21 everybody is going to have to tell the truth of face  
22 perjury charges.

23 MS. BERRY: Well, let me just be clear so I'm  
24 sure I understand before I try to ask questions of  
25 the agents.



1           You believe that one of the major problems here  
2           is that people are not really telling the truth about  
3           what's going on.

4           MAYOR LAVENDER:   Exactly.

5           MS. BERRY:   And that until we do that, we won't  
6           be able to really begin to solve the problem.

7           MAYOR LAVENDER:   You're exactly right.

8           MS. BERRY:   And you agree that there's a need  
9           for economic development and the questions that Mr.  
10          Max asked you.

11          MAYOR LAVENDER:   Right.   There is very much a  
12          need for economic development here because according to  
13          the 1990 Census, the average income in Boligee was  
14          \$6,000.   So that right there tells me there is more than  
15          just a need, it's a great need for something to come in  
16          here, so these children that are coming up in Greene  
17          County today won't have to leave Greene County to get a  
18          job, they could stay at home and go to work and until we  
19          get together and we can solve these problems, and work  
20          around them, then that is not going to happen.

21          MS. BERRY:   Okay, thank you very much.   Mr.  
22          Max.

23          MR. MAX:   Mayor and -- sometimes you cannot  
24          make progress unless you deal with some of the tough  
25          things, and I appreciate you addressing them as I

1 appreciate the others --

2 MAYOR LAVENDER: I tried to be as honest as I  
3 could.

4 MR. MAX: I appreciate that.

5 MS. BERRY: I'm not trying to call names. I'm  
6 not trying to bare blame. I'm just trying to be  
7 honest with the situation in Boligee and Greene  
8 County.

9 MR. MAX: I appreciate that and let me say this  
10 to you. It's very sensitive to me to come from  
11 Birmingham and suggest that perhaps we have a way of  
12 helping you, but you have opened that up by saying  
13 you are looking for some help, and the thing I would  
14 like to do is make an offer.

15 MAYOR LAVENDER: And I'd like to accept that  
16 offer too.

17 MR. MAX: And it can be -- let me tell you  
18 about the offer. The offer is not that I have the  
19 answer.

20 MAYOR LAVENDER: Well, I don't think at this  
21 time nobody has the answer, but we can get together and  
22 talk. When we talk, we can start the healing process  
23 which hasn't started here tonight.

24 MR. MAX: Well, yes it has because you've laid  
25 some good seeds, believe it or not, as has the other

1 speakers that are here, even the speakers that have  
2 an opposite point of view. And here's what I'm going  
3 to suggest, and I'm not just speaking to you but to  
4 those in the audience who have spoken before or who  
5 may have opposite points of view of the matter, and  
6 that's this.

7 In Birmingham there is -- sits in the back here  
8 some representatives of the Community Affairs  
9 Committee who have a conciliation, mediation task  
10 force that brings people together.

11 MAYOR LAVENDER: That sounds great.

12 MR. MAX: There is also a representative of the  
13 National Conference of Christians and Jews that deals  
14 with race, prejudice reduction workshops, and the  
15 ability of people to forget prejudice, the ability of  
16 people to better understand one another.

17 What I would offer to you is this. And you  
18 know the citizens of your community as well as  
19 anybody, but I would also like to encourage some  
20 input from others. You know the respected black  
21 members and white members of your community from  
22 opposing points of view.

23 MAYOR LAVENDER: Mm-hmm.

24 MR. MAX: I lean on your courage and I'll lean  
25 on your leadership to identify those people who would

1 be willing to, whether they come to Birmingham or  
2 Birmingham comes to you, through these organizations,  
3 and within the next 30 days, within the next 30 days  
4 let's get ourselves together and let us act as only  
5 facilitator, not with the answers, with the  
6 opportunity to bring the competing sides together.

7 I want to see your children staying in Boligee.  
8 I want to see this beautiful community economically  
9 developed. I want to see your education system  
10 better than it is, so that all the children graduate  
11 and move on to the University of Alabamas, the  
12 Auburns, and all the other higher institutions --

13 MAYOR LAVENDER: The UA's and the Alabama State  
14 Colleges and all --

15 MR. MAX: Yes. Would you accept my offer that  
16 in 30 days -- and I offer it to you as well as to  
17 some of the others in the community, to come to  
18 Birmingham to have that very tough conversation with  
19 some people who may be shaking their heads that  
20 there's no way I could ever get together with that  
21 group or that individual, I am offering that  
22 opportunity, and Saddle Slane, who is a Community  
23 Affairs Committee -- her number is 324-8797. That's  
24 324-8797. She is the director of Community Affairs  
25 Committee, Operation of Birmingham. And I simply

1 invite, if you have the courage, to try -- off the  
2 record, no newspapers, no politicians, from the  
3 standpoint of being Democratic or Republican, we  
4 don't -- I want to talk in terms of what you can do  
5 in the community educationally, economically and  
6 perhaps citizen to citizen.

7 And I you don't want to accept that invitation,  
8 I understand, but if you are willing to, Community  
9 Affairs Committee of Birmingham, to get together with  
10 some other organizations, is willing to do that.  
11 Mayor?

12 MAYOR LAVENDER: I challenge everybody to  
13 accept that offer and come with us up there and sit down  
14 and try to work our problems out. Nobody is not without  
15 problems. That little woman right over there that I love  
16 more than anything in the world, but some nights she  
17 won't let me in the back door, you know.

18 So we all have problems and it don't mean we  
19 can't work these problems out.

20 MR. MAX: I invite you to come aware from this  
21 area only because it's too difficult to --

22 MAYOR LAVENDER: I think we need to be in a  
23 neutral area to try to work this thing out. I don't  
24 think that we can work it out in Greene County in  
25 Boligee, Alabama. I think we're going to have to have a

1 neutral people to referee and thing and not let it get to  
2 be a hollering match -- to be a discussion to start the  
3 healing process in Boligee and Greene County.

4 MR. MAX: We will serve as that facilitator. I  
5 will be disappointed if I do not hear from the  
6 community within 30 days.

7 With that, any other questions of the Mayor?

8 MR. JENKINS: Let me also point out -- I'd be  
9 remiss if I did not point out, we have a  
10 representative this evening remember the Community  
11 Relations Services of the Justice Department, Mr.  
12 Stallworth has been in and out of the area the last  
13 few days, trying to ascertain the status of race  
14 relations.

15 His agency is a federal agency responsible for  
16 working and mediating and conciliating community  
17 disputes, so that's also -- a representative --

18 MAYOR LAVENDER: That's another avenue that we  
19 can take to get together, and we need to take all the  
20 avenues that we can and -- just like I said, from the  
21 civil war to the movement, this much -- but since the  
22 movement to here, we've come a long way and we look like  
23 we was closer together and we've got some people that  
24 want to drive a wedge in between relations for own  
25 personal political reasons.

1 MR. MAX: Mayor, thank you very much. We  
2 appreciate your being with us. Any other questions  
3 from the group at this time? Thank you.

4 MAYOR LAVENDER: Thank you for being here and I  
5 really appreciate you all coming to help us out in this  
6 area. Dr. Berry, I've enjoyed my evening with you.

7 MR. MAX: We'll look forward to hearing from  
8 you. Yes. Before we have our next speaker, I think  
9 there's been a request for Mr. Cavanaugh and Mr.  
10 Langford to respond to the situation with regard to  
11 the white church burnings. Yes.

12 MS. BERRY: Let me just ask you the specific  
13 question. The church fires or arsons that have been  
14 reported and are under investigation of white  
15 churches in the South, in the same period that you're  
16 investigating these black church arsons, is it  
17 alleged that these are civil rights violations and  
18 may have been perpetrated by blacks for racial  
19 reasons as far as you know?

20 MR. CAVANAUGH: I don't know of any situation  
21 as you describe. The number I gave you earlier, Doctor,  
22 about the 243 cases involve all houses of worship,  
23 synagog, white, black, congregational churches.

24 Certainly we respond to any house of worship  
25 that's desecrated. I think the difference we've seen

1 here of note is the mayor makes a good point. There's  
2 white churches that burn too. And that's true and  
3 there's hundreds of churches that burn every year in a  
4 nation with 300 million people.

5           But the particular issue that we've noticed,  
6 that I've noticed in the Birmingham division is that we  
7 seem to have these multiple events or cluster events, and  
8 we have not seen that with white churches. in other  
9 words, it's a more clear shot type event, some of them  
10 more random. I don't know of any that have been racially  
11 motivated.

12           MS. BERRY: Same question for Mr. Langford.

13           MR. LANGFORD: Madam Chairman, we have not had  
14 any reports of any racially motivated white church  
15 burnings. Under new statutes however, there does not  
16 have to be a racial motive. It's just a house of worship  
17 and we have just completed a nationwide survey -- in  
18 fact, in Alabama I've just been told coming down today  
19 that we've -- since 1990 we had 20 white churches and 20  
20 black churches that have been burned for various reasons.

21           So we will start looking at that, but none have  
22 been reported from a racial motive, no white churches.

23           MS. BERRY: Right. I just thought it was  
24 important to clear that up. We're concerned about  
25 the burning of any churches and the Commission too is



1 -- under our jurisdiction we're concerned about  
2 religious discrimination as well as racial  
3 discrimination, but it's just that the point was that  
4 these churches seem to be an issue of racial  
5 motivation, which is why people are focusing in on  
6 this clustering of them.

7 The next witness is Mr. Abraham Kinnard, the  
8 Principal of Paramount High School, on whose premises  
9 we happen to be sitting right now. Mr. Kinnard,  
10 would you please come up?

11 MR. KINNARD: Thank you.

12 MS. BERRY: Thank you for being with us.

13 MR. KINNARD: Thank you and appreciate -- first  
14 of all, I'm Abraham Kinnard, principal here at Paramount  
15 High School, in Boligee, Alabama, which you are visiting  
16 at this time, and on behalf of the Greene County Board of  
17 Education -- we did have one of our board members here  
18 with -- I don't see her now -- our superintendent, Mr.  
19 Joseph Dasma, and all of our staff members -- we do have  
20 some here.

21 We are very happy to greet you and welcome you  
22 to this West Central Alabama rural area. We hope that  
23 your stay has been a very pleasant one and we do  
24 apologize for the heat, but this is the way Alabama is at  
25 this time of the year.

1           So when you come south, you just be prepared  
2 for a little heat. Hopefully as we get back in, we'll  
3 have the place air conditioned and you won't have to  
4 endure all this.

5           Let me just say that we apologize for being  
6 somewhat late. You beat me here today due to some  
7 emergency circumstances. I was unable to get here, but  
8 as we hope that you were able to find your way in and you  
9 found some hospitality, just good old southern  
10 hospitality. That's what we want you to enjoy while  
11 you're here.

12           I'm going to just greet you and leave space for  
13 someone else, because of the time -- and realize that  
14 they are high on your -- we're going to be very brief.

15           Our school was in the midst of the -- this area  
16 of church burning and our school was directly and deeply  
17 affected by the burning of the three churches in this  
18 area.

19           We had staff members who were members of either  
20 one of the three churches. Also students. So we are  
21 very concerned about it and it deeply affects us and we  
22 are just hoping that, number one, that the burnings will  
23 cease, cease and we hope that the persons responsible --  
24 person or persons will be brought to justice.

25           So on behalf of the educational system of

1 Greene County we welcome each of you here.

2 MS. BERRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Kinnard.  
3 We appreciate your hospitality. I assume there are  
4 no questions -- does anybody have any questions for  
5 Mr. Kinnard? They don't have any --

6 MR. KINNARD: Well, we heard something about  
7 our school system. Let me just -- I guess I would be  
8 remiss if I didn't say something in -- about our system.  
9 We've heard a great deal about how the education system  
10 in Greene County -- certainly it has all the problems  
11 that we see in our inner-school system, violence occurs  
12 in our system.

13 Also we have the areas of drugs and that type  
14 of thing, but also some positive things have come out of  
15 our system, and we are appreciative of those.

16 You can see that we are in the midst of poverty  
17 and depravation, but we are -- on ground and we are very  
18 happy of some of the things that have occurred from our  
19 system.

20 We have produced what other systems have  
21 procedure, in terms of leaders, doctors, lawyers,  
22 politicians, professional athletes, and what have you,  
23 have come right through this system.

24 We still have many miles to go before we can  
25 sleep, but -- well, thanks for the distance that we have

1 come and we do minimize the goal -- before the journey  
2 ends.

3 MS. BERRY: Thank you. Thank you very much for  
4 your testimony and for your greetings. Our last  
5 witness before the open forum is the sheriff of  
6 Greene County, the Honorable George Hall. Sheriff  
7 Hall, could you please come forward? Thank you very  
8 much, Sheriff Hall. Could you please proceed in  
9 whatever way you'd like and we'll ask you some  
10 questions.

11 SHERIFF HALL: Good evening, Madam Chairman.  
12 To the rest of the guests, good evening also.

13 I've heard a lot of testimony this evening and  
14 I'm kind of puzzles and baffled as to which direction  
15 that I need to go or what I need to say, and if we stand  
16 here this evening and say there's not a problem in Greene  
17 County, Alabama, I would be lying.

18 And there is a division or a racial problem  
19 between the races, and I guess everybody is wondering  
20 what's the solution to the problem or what do we do to  
21 solve the problem.

22 One thing I think we should do or we need to do  
23 is recognize blacks as being capable of holding political  
24 office.

25 I think if the white community would recognize

1 this and come together with blacks, that we could solve  
2 some of the problems that we now face. I've been kind of  
3 somewhat disappointed every since the burning of the  
4 churches about the way situations and conditions have  
5 arose and the way things have gone.

6 Most of the community is looking at the law  
7 enforcement official to solve the problem, and we realize  
8 this is our job, that we should be looking for those  
9 people that committed the crime or committed the act, and  
10 bring them to whatever justice they deserve.

11 But when the community is led or guided by  
12 misquotes and dislike of leadership by blacks, I think it  
13 add to the problem. Now, I'm not here to discredit  
14 anyone, belittle anyone, but I would like for this  
15 Committee to note and those who are listening that being  
16 sheriff of Greene County, I think I'm the chief law  
17 enforcement official.

18 An I think if anyone comes to Greene County in  
19 the respect to have to do with law, that I should be  
20 contacted. And that has not been the case throughout the  
21 investigation.

22 I talked with the Mayor of Boligee and we had a  
23 long discussion about him and the official from  
24 Washington or wherever else contacting him without  
25 contacting the sheriff's office. And we had changed our

1 law and I'm still uncertain as to why with different  
2 groups, contact the Mayor without consulting myself.

3           Are these fires of the church is definitely  
4 having an adverse effect on the community, and our  
5 department has spent numerous hours along with ATF and  
6 FBI and other agencies trying to locate who committed the  
7 acts.

8           But again, this have spread into the community  
9 and I'll notice how some of the white citizens has  
10 responded to the sheriff's department when they call, and  
11 it's an unprofessional and it's belittling to those  
12 people that work in the sheriff's office to have some  
13 white citizens call and talk to these people that work in  
14 the office.

15           So my thing that I'm suggesting is to the  
16 community, that they realize that I was elected by the  
17 majority of the people. My position is to -- rather than  
18 all the people, and I'm not going to be a sheriff for any  
19 particular group or any particular person, but I expect  
20 and I'm demanding that the citizens of Greene County  
21 understand that I am the sheriff until the election come  
22 again, and if reelected I will be the sheriff again, but  
23 if not, whoever takes the position, then they would be  
24 sheriff.

25           So I ask these citizens to respect the

1 sheriff's office and respect the position. I notice  
2 whenever I'm I the street, my name is George. But if the  
3 Mayor or somebody else comes by, it's Mayor. Now, I'm  
4 confused as to why I'm not Sheriff Hall.

5           And that's all I'm asking for is respect and  
6 I'll give it. So that's the first step I think that's  
7 upon us, that we must as white men, white ladies,  
8 whoever, recognize that black officials can do a job, but  
9 we need the cooperation from these people, not to sit  
10 back and criticize and degrade the officials.

11           And if they come to that grip with reality and  
12 face that point, I think we can move forward. And I'm  
13 not going to continue to say there's not a problem in  
14 Greene County, when people say there isn't, and some  
15 people say there is. I'm saying most people just stand  
16 back and look and observe and see that there is a  
17 problem.

18           I mean, from the office of governmental office,  
19 all the way down to any local office, you can see where  
20 there is a division.

21           And when the blacks cry -- most of them are  
22 reluctant to make complaints or speak out openly, because  
23 they are fearful of what's going to happen, and that's  
24 sad when they feel that they are not going to be  
25 represented or not going to be heard, and if they make a

1 complaint or say something in a negative manner, then  
2 somebody is going to retaliate against them.

3           So then they come and cry on my shoulder and  
4 expect me to resolve the problem. And it's heart  
5 breaking, like I say, when you go to the official that's  
6 in charge and try to communicate and you don't get the  
7 response you think you should get.

8           So I'm very concerned about the situation with  
9 Greene County. I'm very concerned about the situation in  
10 the State of Alabama, when it comes to racism. It  
11 doesn't take much to start a fight or to spar a race  
12 riot, but if we don't come together as a people, we're  
13 going to destroy ourselves, and we've got to do this and  
14 I'm asking that whatever assistance that your office can  
15 give from the President down, that they don't sit there  
16 and say well, okay, let's avoid a decision and see what  
17 will happen and play avoidance with it, because sooner or  
18 later it's just a matter of time.

19           If we don't address the problem, it will become  
20 a bigger problem. So I thank you all and I'm open for  
21 questions.

22           MR. MAX: Sheriff Hall, could you -- and here  
23 we are.

24           SHERIFF HALL: Yes.

25           MR. MAX: What would you ask of us in



1 connection with what we can do for you?

2 SHERIFF HALL: I would like for you or any  
3 other source to talk to the white citizenship of Greene  
4 County and ask them will they work with the elected  
5 officials, not just myself, all elected officials.

6 And put aside the criticism and the  
7 negativeness as to what has happened in the past and what  
8 they accuse some of the officials of doing. I mean, we  
9 can easily discredit someone.

10 But then how many times do we talk about the  
11 positive things that those people elected out here to  
12 serve the people go through, the hardships, the  
13 disappointments, the restless nights, and the public  
14 continue to dog them out.

15 I mean, I can speak to that because I'm an  
16 elected official and I've run into people and they  
17 continue complaining about what you're not doing, but  
18 they don't look at the things that you are doing.

19 MR. MAX: I'm curious. It's interesting. In  
20 many communities we have a situation where there is a  
21 predominantly white police force or sheriff's office  
22 --

23 SHERIFF HALL: Yes.

24 MR. MAX: That will be -- will have problems in  
25 the black community. There has been brutality.

1 There has been harassment. There have been a lot of  
2 things -- for which there is distrust of that police  
3 force or sheriff's office.

4 Here we have a reverse situation and I see  
5 you're very articulate and you present yourself very  
6 well, and yet you have a white community that may  
7 not be as at ease with a black sheriff, sort of like  
8 a black community may not be very at ease with a  
9 white sheriff.

10 SHERIFF HALL: Yes.

11 MR. MAX: Now, do you have within your --  
12 within your offices a community -- let's call it a  
13 community relations division that attempts to go out  
14 -- it attempts to go out whenever there's a problem  
15 and not only deal with the arrest or the problem or  
16 the robbery or whatever it is, but also deal with the  
17 community's perceptions that can probably be as  
18 problematic as the crime itself.

19 What if anything do you have in that --

20 SHERIFF HALL: We are a small department and we  
21 do not have a relations program in effect, so the only  
22 relationship we have is when the officer goes to the  
23 scene, try to deal with the incident or if someone comes  
24 into the sheriff's office, we try to communicate in a  
25 professional way.

1 MR. MAX: How many officers do you have or  
2 deputy sheriffs do you have?

3 SHERIFF HALL: Five.

4 MR. MAX: Five?

5 SHERIFF HALL: Yes.

6 MR. MAX: That's five including yourself of  
7 yourself and then plus five?

8 SHERIFF HALL: Myself and five.

9 MR. MAX: Yourself and five. Okay.

10 SHERIFF HALL: And I think what the public fail  
11 to realize is that there is only X number of hours a man  
12 can perform a job.

13 MR. MAX: I understand.

14 SHERIFF HALL: And for us to be at each church  
15 or each house or each club isn't always feasible and I  
16 think that's what they expect -- if something is going  
17 wrong, they expect us to solve it at that point.

18 MR. MAX: Are there civil organizations in  
19 Greene County that meet on a regular basis, Kiwinas,  
20 Rotary, Civitan or --

21 SHERIFF HALL: There may be but I'm not aware  
22 of them.

23 MR. MAX: Have you ever been asked to speak to  
24 any of them?

25 SHERIFF HALL: No. I mean, this is a problem

1 that we have. I think blacks are excluded for whatever  
2 reason may be. I don't know if they feel uncomfortable  
3 with black being in charge or just a situation of  
4 uncomfortable with blacks.

5 Now, if we can learn to get past this barrier  
6 and associate and deal with each other, and I think we  
7 can move forward.

8 But now, why we can't and I think the problem -  
9 - I don't think it totally lies with the blacks. I think  
10 again, like I said earlier, I think the problem is that a  
11 lot of whites cannot accept blacks being in charge.

12 Now, if they can get past that barrier and work  
13 with blacks, I think things can move forward.

14 MR. MAX: Anne, you had a question or comment?

15 MS. SHUMAKER: I've been listening tonight and  
16 I would really like your opinion on something. Do  
17 you see a problem between individuals among  
18 individuals, black, white, Native American, and Asian  
19 American or is it just among groups, the total  
20 population?

21 Can individuals get along with members of other  
22 races and does that happen easily?

23 SHERIFF HALL: I think they can but I don't  
24 think it happens often.

25 MS. SHUMAKER: I was just curious if you saw a

1 lot of friendships among -- individual friendships  
2 among the different races.

3 SHERIFF HALL: I really don't see that. I  
4 understand this group they was talking about earlier, but  
5 it speaks for a few. It doesn't speak for the masses,  
6 and see the masses -- it may be in opposition to what  
7 their whole objective is.

8 MS. SHUMAKER: The best way to start is with  
9 individuals, I guess.

10 SHERIFF HALL: Yes, I agree.

11 MR. MAX: Can I just ask one, just -- you're an  
12 elected official.

13 SHERIFF HALL: Yes.

14 MR. MAX: When did you run last?

15 SHERIFF HALL: This is my sixth year.

16 MR. MAX: When was -- this is your sixth year?

17 SHERIFF HALL: Yes. Two years ago I ran.

18 MR. MAX: I want to get inside your campaign if  
19 I could just for one second.

20 SHERIFF HALL: Sure.

21 MR. MAX: You're elected by all the residents  
22 of Greene County; is that correct?

23 SHERIFF HALL: Correct, yes.

24 MR. MAX: You have, as most campaigns would,  
25 campaign managers, people that assist you out in the

1 community?

2 SHERIFF HALL: Yes.

3 MR. MAX: Do you have -- could you -- and you  
4 don't need -- I'm not asking you to name names, but  
5 do you have white citizens, residents who are a part  
6 of your campaign committee?

7 SHERIFF HALL: Very little. We have contacted  
8 whites and tried to get them to work with us and they  
9 refused to do that, even with implementing programs into  
10 the jail system, they bag away.

11 MR. MAX: Is there one or two that are there to  
12 assist you in some way in the white community?

13 SHERIFF HALL: No.

14 MR. MAX: So your campaign or election is based  
15 on the strength you have among black constituents  
16 alone?

17 SHERIFF HALL: Yes.

18 MR. MAX: And you -- I presume at the last  
19 election you had an opponent.

20 SHERIFF HALL: Yes, I did.

21 MR. MAX: And was it a white opponent?

22 SHERIFF HALL: Yes, there was one.

23 MR. MAX: And did that white opponent have  
24 black supporters?

25 SHERIFF HALL: Yes, I think so.

1 MR. MAX: Okay. All right. Thank you.

2 MS. BERRY: What I want to ask you, when Mr.  
3 Max started on this line of questioning about how  
4 people in the black community oppose white police and  
5 claim police brutality and a lot of things, and when  
6 it was similar -- you have a white community, the  
7 white community isn't claiming police brutality, is  
8 it?

9 SHERIFF HALL: No, they are not.

10 MS. BERRY: Is what the white community is  
11 complaining about is that you don't enforce the law  
12 the way they want you to or you're not as responsive  
13 as the system used to be before there was a black  
14 sheriff or their perception is -- it's not police  
15 brutality?

16 SHERIFF HALL: No.

17 MS. BERRY: They're not complaining that you go  
18 out and arrest a bunch of white people and beat them  
19 up or anything?

20 SHERIFF HALL: You're right.

21 MS. BERRY: That's not the issue.

22 SHERIFF HALL: You're right on key.

23 MS. BERRY: Well, what is it they're saying  
24 you're not doing? What is it you're just --

25 SHERIFF HALL: It's just like the other agent

1 was saying here, if a case or crime occur, you've got to  
2 try to gather the facts.

3 MS. BERRY: Right.

4 SHERIFF HALL: Before you can make a case.

5 MS. BERRY: Right.

6 SHERIFF HALL: They expect the sheriff or my  
7 department if a crime is committed, that somebody is in  
8 jail before the night, if it happened this morning, and  
9 if that doesn't happen, then we're not doing our job.

10 MS. BERRY: And is very often the person who  
11 they think should be arrested a black person?

12 SHERIFF HALL: That's nine times out of ten.

13 MS. BERRY: So that their perception is before  
14 you had a black sheriff -- I'm just asking --

15 SHERIFF HALL: Sure, go ahead.

16 MS. BERRY: If it was a white sheriff, somebody  
17 would have been in jail by the end of the day?

18 SHERIFF HALL: That's true. You used to do  
19 that under old law.

20 MS. BERRY: And that's the way it used to be?

21 SHERIFF HALL: That's the way it used to be.

22 MS. BERRY: They don't like you because you  
23 don't do that?

24 SHERIFF HALL: You can't do it. The law says  
25 you can't do this any more, so we can't rush the jury as



1 it's said. I mean, if we start doing that, we're going  
2 to create all kinds of problems and I think the public  
3 fails to realize that.

4 MS. BERRY: Yeah.

5 SHERIFF HALL: And we had got slandered in the  
6 papers for incidents of this type. We didn't see the  
7 party commit the offense and nobody gave us information,  
8 it takes days, sometimes weeks, sometimes years to  
9 collect information as to who may have committed the  
10 crime, but then if this person is not in jail or somebody  
11 is not in jail, then we're not doing our job I think the  
12 way they perceive it.

13 MS. BERRY: So what you are suffering is the  
14 kind of thing we've seen elsewhere where blacks get  
15 political power or any out group that gets political  
16 power and doesn't have economic power, when they  
17 first gain power, that there's resentment that you  
18 don't do things the way they used to be done. Is  
19 that what you perceive as -

20 SHERIFF HALL: I do. That's correct.

21 MS. BERRY: And what Mr. Max also was asking  
22 about is whether you got coalitional support -- were  
23 there whites -- are there any whites in the community  
24 who are willing to try to -- you know, change the  
25 perspective or work with you on this or are the lines

1 so hard between black and white that it's your  
2 perceptions that you're not able to do that right  
3 now?

4 SHERIFF HALL: I think that somebody said a  
5 line has been drawn in the sand, now how we get on the  
6 opposite side of the line, I don't know. My situation  
7 happened to be that I'm not going to sugarcoat things and  
8 play partners with anybody that's doing wrong, first of  
9 all.

10 And if somebody is doing something wrong, I  
11 think it's my job to say that it's wrong, especially  
12 being a leader. When you question some of the things  
13 that happen in the system, then you become the bad guy,  
14 and that's what has happened to me.

15 I've questioned some things in the past and  
16 it's there, it's there. It continues. It doesn't go  
17 away.

18 MS. BERRY: So that if Mr. Max's proposal is  
19 taken up of trying to get blacks and whites in the  
20 community, whites and blacks to sit down and deal  
21 with the social context, then it may make your job  
22 easier?

23 SHERIFF HALL: It would make it a whole lot  
24 easier.

25 MS. BERRY: Okay.

1           SHERIFF HALL:  If we could communicate and we  
2 could be of one group, then we could move forward.  But  
3 in the situation where we have here, we have division,  
4 people taking sides, and a lot of times the facts is not  
5 presented to those people that's take the side, so they  
6 have an impression by what somebody was saying, not the  
7 true facts.

8           MS. BERRY:  All right, thank you.

9           MR. MAX:  Any other questions or comments for  
10 the sheriff?  Sheriff, thank you very much.  We  
11 appreciate it.

12           All right.  We are now at the stage of our  
13 meeting that we have an open forum.  And we have some  
14 people who have indicated that they would like to  
15 speak.

16           I'd like to start with Lawton Higgs from  
17 Birmingham, Alabama.  And if I could, Reverend  
18 Higgs, because of the lateness of the hour, if we  
19 could try to limit these comments to say two -- three  
20 minutes at the most for each speaker.  Thank you.

21           REVEREND HIGGS:  Thank you for the opportunity  
22 to share with you.  Listening to the observations tonight  
23 and my own experience with my own racism and struggle  
24 around these issues over the last several years, it seems  
25 to me that what may be happening in our context is the

1 realization of the Los Angeles riots, that the similar  
2 kind of issues that for instance Cornell West in his book  
3 Race Matters, point out that we're at the root cause of  
4 what was going on in Los Angeles, but may also be at the  
5 root cause of what's going on in rural America with the  
6 church burnings.

7           But we're seeing the deadly linkage of economic  
8 decline, which has been talked about here, and the  
9 suffering that black and white communities are  
10 experiencing. We're also seeing the destructive elements  
11 of cultural decline and talked about struggles with  
12 school and other issues, and we also see the struggle  
13 with political apathy and division, and all of these kind  
14 of things were what Dr. West indicated were at the root  
15 of what was going on in Los Angeles and is beginning to  
16 take place -- what's happening in rural America.

17           And I think that we need to understand it's  
18 real clear in this situation that race is the visible  
19 catalyst for this situation. It's very apparent I think  
20 in this situation, but they're not the underlying causes,  
21 and that we need to begin to not address the problems as  
22 a problem in the black community, but start looking at  
23 the flaws in our culture at the present time that are  
24 behind all of this.

25           And one of the key elements through our

1 response I think, and I want to challenge the community  
2 here, is for the white church to take leadership in  
3 respecting the humanness of all people, and I think  
4 that's the key elements in our addressing these issues.

5           As a white pastor of a multi-cultural  
6 interracial congregation, I know it's a very difficult  
7 challenge in the white community, and I think it's time  
8 that the white church and white leadership and others  
9 began to address the issue of the humanness of all  
10 people, the full capability of all people for leadership,  
11 and to affirm these issues.

12           And I would think that it would be helpful that  
13 the Commission might look further into some of Dr. West's  
14 analysis of what took place in Los Angeles and how this  
15 is now manifesting itself rural American with the fires  
16 that are taking place in the churches.

17           MR. MAX: Thank you, Reverend Higgs. We  
18 appreciate your being here. Next Eunice Outland,  
19 retired educator. And I do appreciate everyone  
20 staying to this late hour.

21           MS. OUTLAND: My name is Eunice Outland. I  
22 lived in Greene County for 40 years. I am a retired  
23 educator. I was the first black high school teacher that  
24 worked in the Greene County School System before the  
25 white flight.

1           And as I was listening to all of the dialogue  
2 that was going on, I was compelled to say a few words.  
3 Just prior to my coming here I was listening at the news,  
4 and I didn't have any idea at that time what the agenda  
5 for this meeting was going to be, but the news item that  
6 struck me most was in relation to James Hood -- all of  
7 you are familiar with James Hood.

8           He was the young black African American that  
9 attempted to integrate the University of Alabama when  
10 Governor George Wallace stood in the door. Well, to make  
11 a long story short, today Governor Wallace and James Hood  
12 have a meeting, and this meeting was arranged by a  
13 professor at the University of Alabama.

14           And one of the burning questions that James  
15 Hood had that he wanted to ask Governor Wallace was did  
16 he believe what he did was right. And he asked him that  
17 question today, and Governor Wallace replied, yes, what  
18 he did was politically correct because that was what the  
19 people wanted.

20           But now in retrospect, he thinks it was morally  
21 wrong. So I took that idea to really determine what I  
22 had to say this afternoon, that we do have a national  
23 decline in race relations, a local decline in race  
24 relations, and a state decline, and I think this is  
25 brought about because everybody is trying to do what is

1 politically correct as opposed to what is morally  
2 correct.

3           Another reason that I think we have a decline  
4 in race relations is because of the inability for white  
5 American to get above stereotyping. Now, when I say  
6 white America, I'm not talking about every single white  
7 person, because this is not true.

8           I have -- as to joke always go about whites say  
9 about -- like I have some very good white friends, people  
10 who have been extraordinary kind to me, and I believe  
11 they are sincere people, but I'm saying we do have a lot  
12 of stereotyping.

13           When you talk about crime, welfare reform,  
14 affirmative action, violence, food stamps, drugs,  
15 everybody automatically thinks that this is applied to  
16 the black race only, which is not true.

17           Affirmative action for example not only were  
18 blacks able to profit by this splendid piece of  
19 legislation, but white women were also provided the  
20 opportunity to make some upward mobility steps from that,  
21 so the stereotyping, if we could get above that, I think  
22 that we would be back on the road to improving race  
23 relations.

24           And sometimes there are some things that I  
25 think are done harmlessly by some whites. They don't

1 intend to offend, but it does become offensive.

2           For example, I had the opportunity to work in  
3 the polls during the last election, and when I went over  
4 to vote, some black people were busily looking at a  
5 certificate on the wall in the Mayor's Office and it had  
6 -- this was a certificate that he had earned from the  
7 National Association for the Advancement of White Trash,  
8 and the people that were looking at it didn't know that  
9 perhaps this was a satirical gesture.

10           They were really -- is he really a member of  
11 the National Association for the Advancement for White  
12 Trash? Now, I understood perfectly that perhaps this was  
13 an attempt at humor, but then they said well, let's look  
14 and see who signed it, because they thought it was a real  
15 certificate.

16           Well, the one person that signed it was  
17 supposed to have been Michael Swire, I believe, and he  
18 was a head loser. Now, if I'm not mistaken, I think that  
19 he was one of those boys that were killed in  
20 Philadelphia, Mississippi.

21           And if I'm correct, that was not humor to me.  
22 It was outrage, you know, that you could take a very,  
23 very serious situation and like that and make fun.

24           And the other person that signed it was Lester  
25 Maddux, but I think that it was place there, as I said



1 initially, in a kind of a humorous gesture, but perhaps  
2 it was not realize how other people would really take it.  
3 It was not funny to some and some didn't understand it.  
4 You know, they thought this was a real organization. Of  
5 course, I knew better.

6           So I think that we can improve race relations  
7 by better communication and so therefore, you know, I  
8 kind of struggled with the idea of whether or not I  
9 should mention about this offensive certificate, but I  
10 think that this really needs to be communicated to the  
11 person so that the same mistake will not be made again.

12           MAYOR LAVENDER: Michael Slater on that  
13 certificate and not Michael Swire, so it had no  
14 reflection on anybody anywhere else. You can put a lot  
15 of input into something that's not true if you don't  
16 understand it.

17           MS. OUTLAND: Well, I still think in any  
18 circumstance it was lame humor. It was my understanding  
19 - again, that's communication. That's communication.

20           MR. MAX: I understand.

21           MS. OUTLAND: And one last thing. We have  
22 difficulty corroborating and communicating. When I was  
23 an educator I retired two years ago. We organized an  
24 organization and it was called the Local Greene County  
25 Local Education Foundation, and this was an initiative

1 that was sponsored by Alabama Power Company, whereby  
2 they would give local education systems who had this  
3 organization organized -- they would match the money that  
4 they raised to take care of different projects that the  
5 county or the school system otherwise would be unable to  
6 sponsor.

7 I was instrumental in organizing this local  
8 education foundation here in Greene County. But to my  
9 surprise I read in a paper that the Local Education Fund  
10 was some kind of political arm that was designed for  
11 politics, which was totally untrue.

12 So I --

13 MR. MAX: I apologize. We have a limited  
14 amount of time. If you could bring it to a  
15 conclusion, we'd welcome your written comments if you  
16 wish to make something in writing.

17 MS. OUTLAND: Thank you very much. I just  
18 wanted to see thanks.

19 MR. MAX: Thank you. I'll ask you one quick  
20 question. If the Mayor meets our challenge to bring  
21 together a group of people, would you be willing to  
22 come to Birmingham to be a part of that dialogue?

23 MS. OUTLAND: I'll be right there.

24 MR. MAX: Appreciate it. Next we have Carol  
25 Zippert, Greene County Newspaper. And again, if you

1           could limit your comments to three minutes.

2           MS. ZIPPERT: Good evening. I probably will  
3 limit my comments, but I think it's a little unfair,  
4 because if this hearings was for Greene County citizens,  
5 then I think that other guests should have been expected  
6 to give their comments at the end, so I think it's unfair  
7 for this restriction but because it is late and we are  
8 all tired, but I'll have further words with you about  
9 that later.

10           I did want to talk about our community. It is  
11 polarized in a very serious way that you heard much of  
12 those comments that demonstrate that we have separate  
13 schools, that we have separate churches, we have separate  
14 -- we recreate separately even though there are two  
15 swimming pools and it is true technically children or  
16 anyone can go to either one, but the black children going  
17 to the white swimming pool on the white side of this  
18 town, or the swimming pool on the right side of this town  
19 may be subject to harassment. They may be subject to  
20 being -- just barricaded from going in.

21           It's happened in recent years that some local  
22 children were prevented from even going in, and of course  
23 you have to call the officials and get that straightened  
24 out, so why bother. So they just go to the pool on the  
25 black side of town.

1           So that kind of polarization exists but there  
2 are other kinds of things that keep people in a fearful  
3 state.

4           Just a few years ago state highway 14 was  
5 dedicated and renamed the Martin Luther King Memorial  
6 Highway. The appropriate state signs were put up naming  
7 the highway.

8           But every two or three months the signs have to  
9 be changed where local people -- I guess local  
10 governments can afford to change them because they get  
11 riddled with bullets or they get painted with KKK. This  
12 is in the 90's. This is not 1960. That happens. There  
13 are still some signs that are currently defaced, because  
14 I guess you can only spend so much I suppose on replacing  
15 signs, so those kinds of things continue to happen to us.

16           And we are subject to victims becoming --  
17 victims being blamed for the crime or for the offense.  
18 We saw that very clearly, what happened with Judge Eddie  
19 Hardaway in Sumter County. He is not just the first and  
20 only black circuit judge in the circuit, which includes  
21 three counties, he is the only -- so can you imagine the  
22 power of that position, attorneys at other -- can't go to  
23 anybody else. In adjoining Tuscaloosa there are many  
24 circuit judges. I don't know how many but there's one  
25 black, so that you can -- legal personnel can I'm sure do

1 something to bypass the black circuit judge if they try  
2 hard enough.

3           But they cannot do it in Sumter, Greene and  
4 Moringo Counties. But when his home is shot into, when  
5 he and his family are there, and then -- questions are  
6 raised that would suggest that he may be responsible, you  
7 know, that's blaming the victim. Like the woman who is  
8 raped, you blame her for that. That's blaming the  
9 victim.

10           That's harassment -- that's the kind of  
11 harassment that is going on even today. Some mention was  
12 made about the securing -- getting assistance and funds  
13 for rebuilding the churches.

14           There were at least two groups that were  
15 helping to raise funds but then they -- and these were  
16 predominantly white groups or just white groups, that  
17 were in charge of some -- of raising some of these funds,  
18 the ones I'm speaking to, there were some other groups as  
19 well.

20           But the practice -- I mean, how they wanted to  
21 turn over the funds spoke to the fact that they did not  
22 trust black leadership, that black folks -- that we as  
23 white folks cannot make decisions about our own lives, we  
24 can't decide about how to build a church and how to spend  
25 the money to build a church, so they raised some funds

1 and they said we will give it to you on a reimbursement  
2 basis. After you have spent something, we'll reimburse  
3 you for it.

4 Now, these white folks are not members of those  
5 churches. They are not in any leadership position in  
6 those churches, but yet they say they want  
7 accountability. They want to black members and  
8 leadership of those three churches to account to them on  
9 how they're spending those contributions in building the  
10 churches. What is that?

11 What is that if that's not the old plantation  
12 system, the old plantation mentality of the white master  
13 being in charge, and that we black folk can't be  
14 ourselves? What is that?

15 So about help being refused -- you know, that's  
16 the kind of help that's being refused. You know --

17 MR. MAX: If you could bring your comments to a  
18 conclusion, I'd appreciate it.

19 MS. ZIPPERT: You can leave. I'm going to  
20 finish my comments.

21 You invited us to go to Birmingham but I don't  
22 know, there's something in that that's a little  
23 unsettling too. Why don't you come here and I don't know  
24 if folks would -- if you would get the people there that  
25 would make a difference? But why don't you come here or

1 why don't you walk with a group about what it is you can  
2 do to help, that maybe that isn't the first step. That  
3 may be a second or a third.

4 I don't know if we're there. You know, we're  
5 separated in so many ways. A key way that we're  
6 separated, if we could work together on, and that's  
7 having our children share their lives in some way.

8 Black and white children don't share their  
9 lives in this county in any significant way. Perhaps in  
10 small numbers or some groups somewhere, I don't know --  
11 I'm not aware of it, but we don't go to school together,  
12 we don't worship together, we don't recreate together.  
13 Our children don't know each other and I think that that  
14 is what is perpetuating the continuation of racial  
15 problems in our community. Our children don't know each  
16 other. We don't give them the opportunity to learn our  
17 different cultures so that we can appreciate each other,  
18 so that they will not have the same struggles with change  
19 that we do, and it is hard for me to change as a black  
20 person.

21 I'm on the defensive. I mean, I've always had  
22 to fight. I don't know how not to fight, but I want my  
23 children to learn how not to fight, but I wasn't --  
24 please don't do that.

25 MR. MAX: Ma'am, let me ask you this. You have

1 some very, very good points that are worthy of us  
2 continuing beyond three minutes to listen to and I  
3 want to give you that opportunity. I want to give  
4 you the that opportunity. Could you please summarize  
5 them to conclusion so we can move on?

6 MS. ZIPPERT: I would like to challenge our  
7 community to come up with ways to let our children come  
8 together and learn each other. You don't have to marry  
9 each other. It worked for me but it may not work for  
10 everybody. You don't have to marry each other.

11 You know, unless that's a personal choice, but  
12 at least they could learn who we are and learn to respect  
13 the fact that we may be different but there are a lot of  
14 things about us that we have in common.

15 MR. MAX: I would invite you and your family to  
16 some dialogue with some NCCJ representatives here who  
17 I think can help in some of the things you're  
18 raising. I have Jan Lavender, citizen of Boligee.

19 MS. LAVENDER: Since I only have three minutes,  
20 I'll try to limit my time, so I'm going to read this very  
21 quickly.

22 I'm upset to see that most of the people that  
23 need to be here to hear what I say have already left. I  
24 really do feel that for a group of people that came here  
25 not to call names -- some people have certainly done a



1 lot of that, particularly of our Honorable Governor Bob  
2 James.

3           So this person who says that our number one  
4 problem in this county is the Independent Newspaper, let  
5 me ask him, but he's already left -- do you believe  
6 everything that you read? I was taught in grade school  
7 not to believe everything that I read.

8           I would say that our number one problem in  
9 Greene County is paid agitators. Those of us in Greene  
10 County know who those paid agitators are. Our number two  
11 problem is our so-called public school system.

12           What white mother or father would be expected  
13 to send their children to a school system in which there  
14 are no white principals, no white administrators, no  
15 white supervisors, and no one working in the central  
16 office that is white?

17           As far as the number of white teachers, last  
18 count I had last summer was 19. But I'm sure it's  
19 increased somewhat since then.

20           Qualified whites who have applied for these  
21 supervisory positions are not hired. And, of course, off  
22 the record the statement was made by one of our public  
23 officials that the reason whites are not hired in the  
24 public education system is it's payback.

25           I hope they have enough back pay to cover their

1 discrimination against qualified white people.

2           My last comment pertains to someone whose name  
3 that I can call, Mayor Buddy Lavender, who is my husband.  
4 For a person who has been so giving of his own time and  
5 money, who has consented to over 100 interviews  
6 pertaining to these church fires only, who serves as  
7 Mayor and fire chief and acting police chief, and who is  
8 paid a meager \$275 a month for all of this, he has been  
9 horribly mistreated.

10           His only sin has been that of having too big a  
11 heart, a problem that he's always had, but God bless him,  
12 I pray that he keeps that heart because those of us who  
13 really know him realize that one day he will be with his  
14 maker. Some of us need to ask ourselves where we're  
15 going to be.

16           Those who choose to attack my husband so  
17 wrongfully are either not here or like I said, they have  
18 already left.

19           Two swimming pools in Eutaw? Yes. There are  
20 two swimming pools. I visit one of those swimming pools  
21 and frequently I do see black children and no, they are  
22 not mistreated. They are not mistreated. I've seen it  
23 myself.

24           When 34 percent of the votes is absentee ballot  
25 in Greene County, and the normal is four percent, there's

1 got to be a problem somewhere, and in response to the  
2 certificate on my husband's wall that was to be so  
3 offensive, I have personally seen a constant do not  
4 disturb sign hanging on one of our retired principal's  
5 doors.

6 Thank you for listening to a wife who has heard  
7 it and had it all.

8 MR. MAX: Thank you, Ms. Lavender. We do  
9 appreciate it. Our last speaker is Lamar Washington,  
10 Executive Director of the National Conference of  
11 Christians and Jews for three minutes.

12 MR. WASHINGTON: Thank you, Mr. Max. It won't  
13 take three minutes.

14 We've heard an awful lot of things this  
15 evening. I come from Birmingham. I live in Birmingham.  
16 I 'm executive director of the National Conference of  
17 Christians and Jews. Our mission, the national mission  
18 is to promote tolerance, respect and understanding.

19 And the thing that I have not heard a lot of  
20 this evening is the fact that this crisis presents this  
21 community with an opportunity. We've heard a lot about a  
22 lot of problems, but we have an opportunity now to  
23 address those problems, to address those issues, and  
24 rather those of us from Birmingham come here or you come  
25 to Birmingham, we can certainly work that out.

1 I'm sure that Mr. Max was simply made a  
2 statement and as to whichever way we go and whatever we  
3 can do to help this community, because it's our  
4 community, we're not from Birmingham, we are Alabamians.  
5 We are all in this together.

6 When our country as a whole is attacked, such  
7 as the Persian Gulf, we all pull together. We sent black  
8 soldiers, white soldiers. We sent Americans to the  
9 Persian Gulf to fight those wars, and we are in a crisis  
10 now.

11 This is the battle ground now for us in Alabama  
12 addressing the issue of race and other things that seem  
13 to divide us.

14 So we have got to reach beyond ourselves and  
15 face the issue. We can do that without a lot of  
16 screaming and name calling. We get hot, we can take a  
17 break, and we can come back to the table, but we can get  
18 beyond this if we simply work together.

19 MR. MAX: Thank you, Lamar. Very much  
20 appreciate it. I don't wear a watch. I don't know  
21 what time it is, but I do know I haven't eaten dinner  
22 so I'm a little bit hungry, but I do appreciate  
23 everyone for being here, for your comments.

24 This is only a beginning. Please, this is only  
25 a beginning. It does not solve your problems today,

1 I would have liked for this Commission to see a  
2 Community Affairs Committee of Operation in  
3 Birmingham, the National Conference of Christians and  
4 Jews. I want to reach out to your community and be  
5 of every help that we can.

6 The Advisory Committee remains the eyes and  
7 ears of the Civil Rights Commission. Use it. You  
8 can contact us through any of the phone numbers of  
9 the individuals here from the various cities we're  
10 from. You can contact Melvin Jenkins and his staff  
11 at their office in Kansas City.

12 Melvin, do you have anything in concluding  
13 remarks?

14 MS. BERRY: I just want to say how pleased I am  
15 that the State Advisory Committee held this forum.  
16 It's been very informative and I hope it proves to be  
17 useful and I do hope the community takes up Mr. Max's  
18 offer of trying to help people meet together and see  
19 if we can begin to discuss these issues.

20 I think tonight we opened up the issues. And I  
21 have seen people talking today. People told me they  
22 talked to each other today before we got here, or  
23 talked at each other who haven't talked to each other  
24 at all, so at least you've made a beginning and can  
25 reach out -- and I just want to thank you on behalf

1 of the Commission and I'm glad I was able to be here  
2 with with you.

3 MR. MAX: Before we close I think it would be  
4 most appropriate -- this is the first time that we  
5 have had someone from the United States Civil Rights  
6 Commission come to our area, the very first time. I  
7 mean, not only do we have somebody, we have the  
8 Chairman of the United States Commission on Civil  
9 Rights and I want you to know, Commissioner Berry, I  
10 very much appreciate this.

11 I hope it's not the last time we will see  
12 commissioners come to our are, whether it's Alabama,  
13 Mississippi, Arkansas -- this area needs your  
14 presence, needs your vision, needs your insight and  
15 we very much appreciate it.

16 (Proceedings concluded at 10:50 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

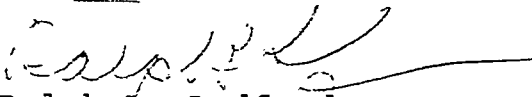
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STATE OF GEORGE:

COUNTY OF GWINNETT:

I, Ralph L. Ledford, a notary public in and for the State of Georgia, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true, complete and accurate transcript of the proceeding held.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this 3rd day of July, 1996.

  
Ralph L. Ledford